

LONDON & US

LONDON

&

Us

FROM DREAMS TO

REALITY TOGETHER!!

PRESENTED BY:-

NAAZISH WRITINGS..

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1.

AUTHOR'S OPINE

"London and Us" is not only about reaching a place on the map , it's about the internal landscapes we cross on the way there. It is the story of every young soul who dares to dream beyond borders, beyond fear, and beyond expectations.

As student writers, we have lived this journey from silent prayers at the Gateway of India to wide-eyed wonder at Tower Bridge. Every page of this book captures the bittersweet ache of leaving home, the rush of first flights, the quiet courage in cold nights, and the joy of building a life from scratch in a new city.

Through this book, we wanted to immortalize not just the destination of London, but the transformation that happens on the way. Because going abroad isn't only about education it's about evolution.

We believe in the dreams of the youth the ones who sit under night skies wondering "*Will I ever get there?*" This book is our answer: Yes, you will. If you dare, prepare, and believe.

Our hearts are full of gratitude to our families, friends, mentors, and every single dreamer who picks up this book.

This is more than a story.

This is a mirror.

This is *London and Us*.

And this... is *you and your dream*.

With courage and compassion,

Naaz and Ishan,

(Naazish Writings)

2.

INTRODUCTION

"London and Us" is not just a travel story.

It is the voice of every young dreamer who once looked up at the sky and whispered

"One day, I will go."

This book is our journey of students from India, carrying dreams in our hearts, suitcases full of hope, and the courage to chase a better life in a faraway land called London. but London wasn't just a city on the map.

It became our teacher, our mirror, and our companion.

In these pages, you will find everything that makes a real story:

- Tears at the airport.
- The cold air of a new beginning.
- Noodles for dinner and books as best friends.
- Lonely nights, loud laughter, and learning who we are.

"London and Us" is for you :-

If you've ever dreamt of going abroad...

If you've ever felt scared but still took the step...

If you've ever found yourself in the middle of unknown streets... and smiled.

We have written this book with love — to inspire, to comfort, and to remind you that your dream is not too far.

This isn't just our journey.

This could be your journey too.

So come, walk with us through foggy mornings, riverside evenings, and the quiet power of growing up in a city far from home.

**Because in the end, it's never just about reaching
London...**

It's about who you become on the way.

Welcome to "London and Us."

Let's dream, fly, and grow together.

3.

The Gateway of Dreams

The Ocean Asks Nothing. But Listens To Everything.

The sun hadn't risen yet, but he had, it was 6:30 am.

The boy stood at the edge of the pavement, at the iconic **Gateway of India**, clutching a small bag and a heavier heart.

Mumbai was still half-asleep, but his mind was wide awake full of thoughts that refused to rest.

A gentle breeze blew from the Arabian Sea.

The waves kissed the shore quietly, as if not to disturb the boy's conversation with the sky.

He stared at the vast ocean before him and whispered more to himself than to anyone else:

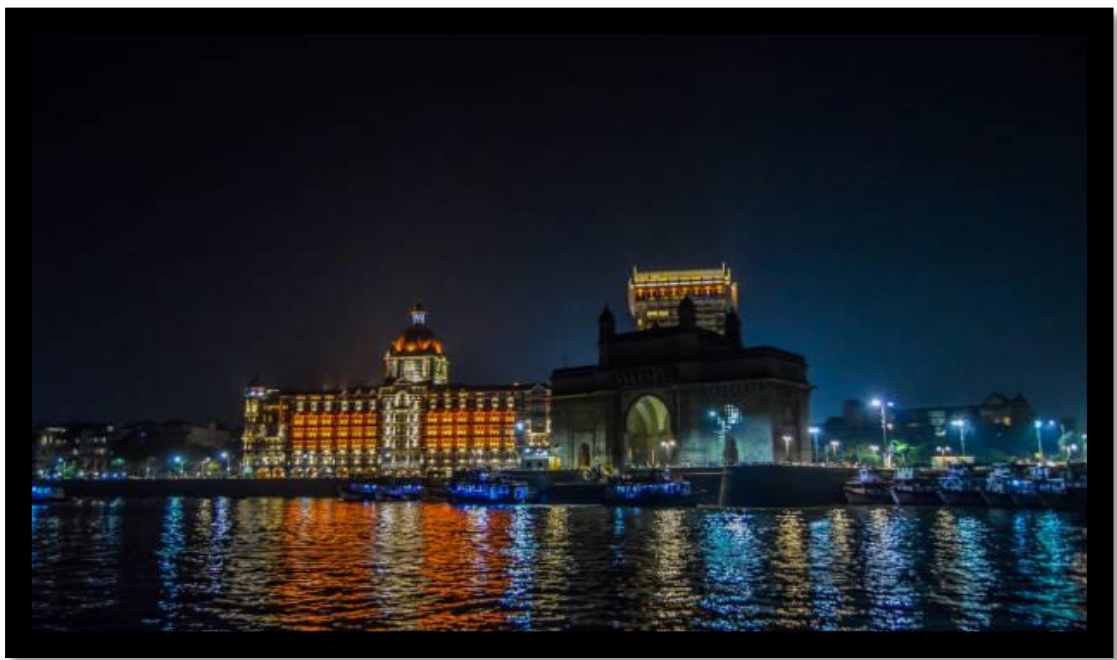
"Kya sach mein mumkin hai?

Ek normal middle-class ladka...

Gateway ke us paar ka... sapna jee sakta hai kya?"

He had no fancy background. No wealthy relatives. No passport-stamped childhood vacations.

Just a small room in a chawl, second-hand books, sleepless parents who cut corners every month to afford tuition fees, and a dream... that somehow didn't understand the word *"limit."*



1.1_EXOTIC VIEWS OF GATEWAY

HE REMEMBERS:-

A House Where Dreams Cost Too Much

In the narrow bylanes of a town where the sun rose with urgency and hope smelled like masala chai, he grew up in a house where dreams were luxuries, not rights.

In that house, dreams weren't pursued they were preserved, stretched, made to last like gas cylinders in a subsidy system.

His father, a clerk in a government office, lived by routine and resignation a man of principles . Every crease in his ironed shirt told a story of missed promotions, of compromises, of unwavering dignity. He was always the first to rise, and the last to complain.

His mother was the rhythm of that home Bangles clinking against steel dabbas at dawn, turmeric-stained fingers packing tiffins that weren't for her own child but for the children of strangers who paid just enough to keep their son's education fund afloat.

She didn't serve food. She served futures.

The night before his flight, they sat cross-legged on the cold floor, dinner plates in hand. That's when his father said, almost whispering:

“Beta, London bahut mehenga sheher hai... lekin tu mehenga sapna hai humare liye — tujhmein sab kuch de diya hai humne.”

He had never heard love spoken so nakedly before. That sentence... it didn't comfort him. It haunted him a lullaby that made sleep impossible.

And now, here he was standing at the Gateway of India. Not to click selfies or pose for social media, but to search for strength.

He wasn't looking at the pigeons or even the monument. He was looking straight at the **sea** vast, unknowable, untamed.

He stood still and Questioned:- whom?? To his Own self!!

- ***“Will I make it?”***
- ***“Will I ever be able to repay them not just in money, but in moments I missed?”***
- ***“Will London even understand a boy raised on cutting chai and compromise?”***

The sea didn't respond.

But it didn't turn away either.

It **kept moving** soft waves brushing the edge of the stone.

As if to say:

**“You don’t need to have all the answers today. Just move.
Just flow and Just see!!”**

**"Woh samundar se poocha tha ek sapne ne darr ke,
'Kya meri lehar kahin tak jaa payegi?'**

**Samundar muskuraya, bola 'Bas chal pad, tu to aandhi
hai.'"**

He wasn't going just to study.

He was going to break the ceiling his life was born under.

He was going to become the first in his family to go abroad.

He was going to write a new chapter for his surname.

Just then, his phone buzzed. A message from his father:

***"Beta, yaad rakhna sapne jitne bade hote hain, unka darr
bhi utna hi bada hota hai. Lekin tu darr se bada ban ja."***

He looked up again. This time, the sea didn't look so scary.

He took a deep breath and turned around.

It was time to pack, prepare, and say final goodbyes.

It was time to chase London — not just as a city, but as a
dream worth everything.

4.

Sleepless Skies

“Zameen chhoot rahi thi, par sapne udan bhar rahe the.”

The Last Embrace at Terminal 2

The sprawling glass facade of Terminal 2 gleamed like a constellation of diamonds scattered against the night sky. Yet inside the terminal, beneath those artificial lights and bustling crowds, a young boy's world felt dimmer than ever.

His parents stood beside him, their faces carved from years of hardship and hope. His mother, draped in a faded saree that had seen countless days of toil, wore a mask of brave composure. But her eyes betrayed the weight of a thousand silent prayers. With trembling hands, she pressed a tiffin box into his palm one last time packed with the warm aroma of **theplas**, spiced perfectly, and an unspoken promise of home.

His father, as stoic as always, spoke not a word. Instead, he rested a heavy hand on his son's shoulder a simple gesture loaded with more meaning than any speech. It was the weight of sacrifice, of belief, of a lifetime of dreams passed down in silence.

All around them, the terminal hummed with life. Families clung to each other in tearful embraces. Promises hung thick

in the air — whispered assurances of “Call me when you land,” “We’ll see you soon,” and “Take care.” Flight announcements echoed overhead, blending with the cacophony of rolling suitcases and hurried footsteps.

***“Ek taraf boarding ka time ho raha tha,
doosri taraf zindagi ka ek hissa toot raha tha...”***

The boy’s legs felt suddenly leaden as he took the first few steps toward the Entrance counter. Every few moments, he looked back desperate to memorize every line on his mother’s face, every subtle tremble in his father’s forced casual glance at his phone.

He carried nothing flashy a simple duffle bag slung over one shoulder, a checked-in suitcase laden with a few clothes, and a folder crammed with carefully organized documents his fragile bridge to a new world.

Further after Entering T2:

When the immigration officer asked softly, “Purpose of visit?” his voice barely rose above a whisper:

“To study... and to change my life.”



2.1_MUMBAI T2 DEPARTURES

Flying Without Sleep

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is the final boarding call for passengers traveling on Flight AI 131 to London Heathrow.

All passengers are kindly requested to proceed to Gate 27 immediately with your boarding passes and valid identification.

This is the final call for boarding. Once again, passengers for Flight AI 131 to London Heathrow, please make your way to Gate 27. Thank you, and we wish you a pleasant flight."

The airplane's engines roared to life, shaking the cabin with their thunderous might, but inside him, a vast stillness spread. As the plane lifted off, the city he called home a maze of chaotic streets and crowded dreams receded beneath a

blanket of twinkling lights, shrinking into a constellation of golden dots.

Around him, passengers sank into their worlds — a flicker of movie screens, the soft clatter of trays, quiet conversations floating in the recycled air. But his eyes remained wide open, fixed on the window as clouds swallowed the earth beneath.

Sleep was a stranger tonight.

He was not merely flying miles across continents. He was soaring over the landscape of his own heart navigating through fears, hopes, and all the haunting “what ifs” that clung like shadows.

“Aaj pehli baar lag raha tha ki udaan sirf hawai jahazon mein nahi hoti, kuch udaan to dil ke andhar bhi chhupi hoti hai.”

He thought of his friends back home, their teasing laughter echoing in his mind: **“Yaar, fir toh tujhe British accent aayega!”** He smiled briefly, the memory warm yet bittersweet. But that fleeting joy was swallowed quickly by a wave of apprehension.

How would he survive the first week?

Would he find friends?

Would he understand lectures?

Would he belong?

In the dim glow of the cabin lights, headphones cocooning him in solitude, and the endless clouds passing by like silent

witnesses, he whispered to himself — a vow disguised as confession:

“Main darr sakta hu... par ruk nahi sakta.”



2.2_View of the boarding plane

Somewhere Between Two Continents

Somewhere over the Arabian Sea, thousands of feet above the earth, he sat still suspended not just in air, but in identity.

He wasn't in India anymore.

And he wasn't in London yet.

He was in that invisible space in between where time

slows down, where silence is loud, and where the heart wrestles with everything it has left behind and everything it is about to face.

The screen in front of him showed a tiny animated airplane inching forward a blinking dot crawling its way from Mumbai to Heathrow. A simple graphic, but to him, it felt like poetry.

He stared at it like one stares at the sky wide-eyed, wondering how the boy who once traced the world map in an old school atlas was now flying over it.

A smile tugged at the corners of his lips, uninvited and quiet. His mind floated back to a younger version of himself standing barefoot on the cool tiled floor of his home, rehearsing imaginary interviews in front of a mirror, saying in a mock British accent:

“My name is Ishan... I come from a small town, but I have big dreams.”

That line had once felt like fantasy.

Today, it was becoming real.

Around him, the world moved in whispers. Flight attendants passed quietly offering tea and blankets. The low hum of the aircraft filled the cabin like a lullaby

for the restless. Beside him, strangers slept with neck pillows and eye masks. But he stayed wide awake.

Not from jet lag.

But because change doesn't let you sleep easily.

He wasn't just crossing seas he was crossing into a new version of himself. A version that wasn't fully formed yet. A version that had to learn to navigate unfamiliar streets, decode foreign accents, and carry his parents' dreams like a fragile suitcase.

He was somewhere between the past and the promise.

Somewhere between turbulence and tea,
he found a strange kind of peace in the chaos.

It wasn't comfort but it was clarity.

He didn't know what the future held, but for the first time, that didn't scare him.

It thrilled him.

2.3_Out of the plane



**“Plane ke chhote se window se dikhti thi puri zindagi,
Zameen se upar jaa rahe the hum, aur sapne aur bhi kareeb
ho rahe the “**

As the plane soared above the clouds, he looked out of the window — the city behind him, the unknown ahead. His eyes were tired, but his heart was wide awake. The goodbye still echoed in his ears, but somewhere in that silence, a quiet hope was born. He wasn't just flying to London — he was flying toward a new version of himself.

“Udaan thi ek safar ki, par saath le chali thi poori zindagi ki kahaani.”

5.

The First Footsteps

**“Bhasha nayi, log anjaane, par sapne purane saath
the,
London ki zameen par, pehli baar apne akele paanv
the.”**

Heathrow & Unknown

The airplane doors slid open, releasing a gust of icy London air that swept inside like an invisible wave sharp, unfamiliar, and instantly awakening every sense. After nearly nine hours suspended above oceans and continents, my body felt heavy and numb, like a traveler caught between two worlds. But my heart raced with nervous excitement, beating to the rhythm of a new beginning.

Stepping onto the Heathrow terminal 5 was not just a change of geography — it was stepping through a portal into a new identity. The scent of cold metal and damp pavement filled the air, while the fog outside blurred the boundary between the present and the unknown.

Inside the terminal, the long immigration lines stretched like silent rivers of people from every corner of the globe, each face carrying their own story. My fingers trembled slightly as I

reached into my bag and pulled out my documents: passport, visa, university acceptance letter & my entire life compressed into a folder. Each stamp and signature was proof of my passage, yet every word spoken around me sounded strange, every accent a foreign melody that made my mind race to catch up.

I was no longer just a visitor; I was an outsider in a place where even simple conversations felt like puzzles. The fluorescent lights buzzed overhead, reflecting off the foggy windows that shielded the busy runway. The arrival board flickered steadily — *LONDON HEATHROW - LANDED*. It was both a confirmation and a challenge: on time to a new world, on time to face whatever lay ahead.



3.1_Arrivals

The Underground Maze

I had read all about the London Underground before arriving countless articles, videos, advice from friends but reading about it and stepping into it were worlds apart.

Navigating from Heathrow to my new accommodation was an expedition filled with surprises and silent anxieties. Escalators moved swiftly beneath towering ceilings, pulling streams of people upward and downward. I dragged my suitcase behind me, its wheels rattling unevenly over tiled floors. The color-coded Tube maps looked like hieroglyphs red lines, blue lines, green lines twisting and crossing like veins on a map of a living creature.

People around me scanned their Oyster cards effortlessly, a simple tap granting them passage like a secret password. Meanwhile, I held mine awkwardly, hesitant to tap it, afraid to make a mistake or draw attention.

The metallic screech of trains arriving, the echo of footsteps on cold concrete platforms, the muffled announcements in clipped British accents all combined into a sensory overload that made me feel both invisible and overwhelmingly visible at once.

Excitement surged in my chest as I realized I was doing this all alone. But beneath the pride was a quiet ache a wish for a familiar voice beside me to say, *“Chal, main hoon na.”*

In this urban jungle, I was a single story amid millions, trying to find my way.

***“Yeh sheher tez chalta hai, rukta nahi, samajhta bhi kam hi hai,
Par usi bheed mein kahin, main bhi toh ek kahaani hoon.”***



3.2_The Underground

Cold Toes and Curry Cravings

London's cold was more than a weather condition — it was a sensation that crept through my skin and settled deep in my bones. My thin jacket, bought hurriedly in a Mumbai market, did little to shield me from the biting wind that sliced through the streets. I learned quickly that London's chill was relentless, unforgiving a sharp contrast to the humid warmth of my hometown.

My first grocery store visit was an exercise in confusion and discovery. Shelves brimming with foods I could barely recognize varieties of milk that puzzled me, shelves of spices with unfamiliar labels. I missed the vibrant aromas of my mother's kitchen, the comforting sight of turmeric, cumin, and coriander lined up like old friends.

That night, in my tiny dorm kitchen, I boiled Maggi noodles. It was a simple meal, but for me, it was monumental — an act of independence. I misread the salt container for sugar, and the resulting flavor was strange and disappointing, yet somehow delicious because it was *mine*. The hiss of the boiling water, the clink of a pot against the stove, the sting of cold fingers holding a steel spoon all imprinted in memory.

Tears welled up not from sadness, but from the warmth of connection to a distant home.

Outside, the streetlights flickered weakly, casting long shadows over silent pavements. There were no familiar sounds — no honking vehicles, no calls from vendors. Just the hum of a city that was still waking up to me.

Wrapped in two jackets, I held onto a fragile hope — that this journey, with all its discomforts, was necessary.

“Garam roti nahi thi, par apni haathon ka khana tha, Jahan swad se zyada, himmat ki bhookh lagi thi.”

Hot Chocolate and Home in a Cup

On a chilly evening, when the sky wore a soft grey veil and the wind whispered through narrow streets, I found a small café nestled between a bookstore and a laundromat near my university.

I stepped inside hesitantly, welcomed by the rich aroma of cocoa and freshly brewed coffee. The warm glow of yellow lights softened the edges of my loneliness. I ordered my first hot chocolate in London — a simple gesture, but it felt monumental.

The barista handed me a ceramic cup, and I wrapped my cold hands around it, feeling the warmth seep slowly into my skin, like a gentle mother’s embrace. I found a spot by the fogged

window and watched the world go by — iconic red double-decker buses rumbling past, pedestrians hurrying home, umbrellas bobbing like colorful mushrooms.

In that cozy corner, surrounded by strangers, I realized I wasn't just visiting London anymore. I was living in it. I was building a life, one quiet moment at a time.

That cup of hot chocolate wasn't just a drink — it was a symbol of survival, of small victories, of finding comfort amidst chaos.

***“Jab khud se baat ki, toh khamoshi bhi dost ban gayi,
Aur us ek cup mein, thodi si duniya apni lagne lagi.”***



3.3_The Hot Chocalate

That night, wrapped in a borrowed blanket and eating overcooked rice by the dim glow of my desk lamp, I had a quiet revelation.

London was still strange, still unfamiliar — it didn't yet feel like home. But it had gifted me something invaluable: the courage to be uncomfortable, the bravery to start over from scratch.

Because sometimes, the hardest part of any journey isn't the distance traveled — it's the willingness to take that very first step alone.

“ The road ahead is unknown, but my will to walk it is unbreakable.”

6.

Bricks, Books, and Broken Noodles

**“Eet se bani thi woh building, par har kone mein
kahani thi,
Kitaben nayi thi haathon mein, par yaadein ab bhi
purani thi.”**

The Brick Walls and the Blank Room

As I wheeled my suitcase through the long hallway of the student accommodation, I felt a strange hollowness. The bricks outside looked aged yet strong almost as if they had absorbed the loneliness of every international student who'd come before me. When I opened the door to my room, a wave of silence met me. The room was functional, but soulless. White walls, white sheets, a single window, a desk pushed into the corner, and a cupboard that felt too tall for my memories to reach.

There was no scent of home, no noise from the kitchen, no distant sound of the television from the living room—just me and the echo of my own breath. I sat on the bed and stared at the ceiling, unsure of where to begin. Then I remembered the photo I had packed with care—a snapshot of Diwali night back home. Smiling faces, warm lighting, laughter frozen in

time. I taped it on the wall above my bed. That tiny rectangle of memory became my anchor.

It wasn't just about unpacking it was about *occupying*. About turning space into sanctuary.

***“Kamra toh mil gaya tha rehne ko,
Par ghar banane mein waqt lagta hai.”***



4.1_The Accomodation

Books Speak a New Language

Orientation week was a storm I hadn't prepared for. Lecturers spoke quickly, mixing British idioms with academic jargon that my mind couldn't process fast enough. My head nodded even when I didn't fully understand. I smiled politely, even as anxiety churned inside. I was used to being the smart one—the one people asked for notes. Now I was Googling simple phrases and re-reading slides multiple times just to grasp context.

Group discussions were worse. I wanted to contribute, but I feared sounding foolish. I would draft sentences in my head, rehearse them, then abandon them because someone else had already moved on. My notebooks filled with doodles instead of answers. Every evening, I walked back heavy-hearted, wondering if I belonged in this world where even English sounded alien.

But slowly, I learned. That asking for help wasn't weakness. That listening had its own strength. And that even silence, when intentional, could be powerful.

Struggles:

- Understanding fast-spoken lectures.
- Feeling isolated in group learning.
- Imposter syndrome creeping in.

**“Seekhna sirf kitaabon se nahi hota,
Kabhi kabhi toh khud ke andar jhaank ke bhi padna padta
hai.”**

- A desk cluttered with books, notes, and highlighters.
- A student sitting quietly in a crowded classroom, slightly isolated.
- A blackboard or screen with confusing formulas/slides mid-focus.

Broken Noodles, Burnt Toasts

The kitchen became a battlefield. The first time I tried using the toaster, I forgot to adjust the settings the toast came out black as coal. I dropped milk while opening the carton. Once, I left rice boiling and only realized when the smell of burning filled the hallway.

But these failures weren't just comical they were deeply emotional. Each burnt toast was a reminder of my mother's hands flipping hot parathas, of my father brewing tea perfectly. Cooking, once a routine part of life, had now become a test of survival. Yet, there was beauty in the chaos. One evening, I knocked on a fellow Indian student's door just to borrow salt. That small moment turned into a long conversation over chai.

Soon, the shared kitchen became a hub of tiny connections. We exchanged spices, shared stories, and laughed over our

disasters. In that noisy, steamy space, belonging began to grow.

Tiny Joys:

- Discovering the comfort in making something edible.
- Late-night talks with fellow desi students.
- Building routine and rhythm through cooking.

***“Galtiyan se hi rasoi bani, aur rasoi se hi dosti,
Zindagi ke swaad mein, thoda namak zaroori hota hai.”***

- A burnt piece of toast on a plate next to a half-cooked noodle bowl.
- Two students laughing in the kitchen, surrounded by spice packets.
- Close-up of a simmering chai pot, steam curling up into the light.

Library Lights and Loneliness

The library became my refuge. While the world outside moved too fast, the library stayed still. Its silence didn't suffocate it embraced. I found a corner desk beneath a warm lamp and made it mine. Day after day, I returned to that spot like one returns to a place of worship.

Here, I didn't have to prove anything. I could learn at my own pace, breathe deeply, and just be. I'd watch others collaborate—laughing, whispering, borrowing pens. Sometimes it hurt not to be part of their circles. But I also knew I was building something invisible—resilience, knowledge, discipline.

In that quiet corner, with a mug of instant coffee and my laptop aglow, I slowly rewrote my story—not as the student who struggled, but as the one who stayed.

**“Woh library ki roshni thi ya meri lagan, samajh nahi aaya,
Par uss sannate mein bhi, ek sapna barabar jal raha tha.”**



4.2_The Hopes

Every mistake became a milestone. Every awkward conversation, every overcooked meal, every lonely night became a brushstroke in the painting of this new life. London didn't give me comfort it gave me clarity. It held up a mirror and made me face myself.

This chapter wasn't about settling in it was about confronting discomfort, accepting imperfections, and making space for small wins.

"Kabhi kabhi, ek naya jeevan shuru hota hai ek tooti roti aur khamosh library ke kone se."

7.

City Corners and Coffee Cups

"Sheher ke kone mein milta tha sukoon ka ek cup,
Aur Tower Bridge pe khud se milta tha waqt ka sabse
sachcha rup."

The Bridge That Held More Than Steel

It was just past twilight when I reached **Tower Bridge**. The sky had turned a soft indigo, painted with the last blush of a golden sunset. Tourists posed, flashes sparkled like distant stars, and a street guitarist strummed an old classic that melted into the London air like a memory reborn.

And there I stood not just to take in the structure, but to let it take me in.

Tower Bridge wasn't just a landmark. It was *that* image from childhood, the one etched into the back cover of school

diaries and scribbled into dreams. I had traced it with pens during lectures and daydreams now I was tracing its edges with my eyes, in real life.

The bridge glowed with a gentle pride, its twin towers standing like sentinels of the past and future. Below, the **Thames flowed quietly**, almost as if it carried unspoken stories of all the wanderers who had ever come to this city to find something or to lose something.

Leaning on the railing, the wind brushing my cheeks, I wasn't a student anymore. I wasn't an outsider. I wasn't a boy from a small town navigating a big world.

For a moment, I was just **me** — vulnerable, wide-eyed, and filled with a strange sense of arrival.

**“Woh bridge sirf nadi ke upar nahi tha,
Woh mere andar ke dariya pe bhi tha
ek pul jo darr se bharose tak jaata tha.”**

It was the first time I understood how cities don't always speak in noise. Sometimes, they whisper.



5.1_Beauty of Tower Bridge

Big Ben and the Boy Who Learned to Wait

A few days later, I wandered near **Big Ben**. It stood tall — majestic, unwavering like it had waited for centuries to teach people that **time isn't always the enemy**.

The bells began to ring slow, deep royal.

And in that moment, time didn't feel like a ticking bomb or a chasing clock. It felt **present**. Sacred. Steady.

I didn't take photos. I didn't post a story. I just stood and listened. The city around me blurred but the chimes cut through, like the heartbeat of a world much older than me.

For so long, I had rushed chasing grades, dreams, approvals.
But here, time stood still just to tell me:

"You don't have to run all the time. You can breathe too."

I found a nearby bench. Took out my diary. For the first time
in weeks, the words flowed without ache.

Not out of loneliness, but out of quiet.

***"Maybe time won't run away. Maybe I don't have to
either."***

**"Big Ben ki ghadi ne sirf waqt nahi bataya,
Usne sikhaya — rukna bhi ek chamatkaar hota hai kabhi
kabhi."**

Sometimes, growth is just about **pausing without guilt.**



5.2_Big Ben

Oxford Street and Unnamed Victories

Oxford Street chaos in color. Neon boards blinked above my head. Buses rumbled past in red streaks. The air smelt of leather, roasted nuts, and freshly printed magazines.

It should've been overwhelming. It **was**.

But I stayed.

I wandered from window to window. Touched clothes I couldn't afford. Tried on a jacket just to see how confidence might feel. And then, I walked into a **small café** tucked between giant stores fogged windows, yellow lights, a cinnamon scent lingering in the air.

I ordered a coffee. Sat in a corner. Alone.

And something in that moment **shifted**.

No one asked where I was from. No one asked why I had dark circles or why my hands trembled slightly. I was just another quiet boy in a café, drinking something warm, trying to **make sense of his life one sip at a time**.

That blue scarf I bought it wasn't just wool.

It was **proof** of staying, of spending on myself, of choosing *me*.

I wrote a poem on a napkin.

And I smiled.

**“Kabhi kabhi apne liye kuch khareedna bhi jeet lagta hai,
Aur bheed mein khud ke liye ek table dhoondhna bhi ek
azaadi ka ehsaas deta hai.”**

There was a freedom in being **alone without apology**.



5.3_Oxford Vibes

Hyde Park and the Hollow That Healed

It was a Sunday that felt like a sigh.

Hyde Park welcomed me like an old friend. Leaves rustled like lullabies, children giggled in the distance, and the air had that post-rain clarity that makes you want to start over.

I walked aimlessly, without purpose.

And it felt... right.

I sat under a tree — not to think, but just to **breathe**. No phone. No music. Just **silence**.

And slowly, it began to speak.

It told me that healing doesn't always arrive with trumpets. Sometimes, it comes quietly — like sunlight filtering through leaves or a dog resting near your feet or a stranger smiling at nothing in particular.

I rested my head against the tree bark. And for the first time in months, I said it aloud:

"Main theek hoon. Aur main theek ho jaaunga."

Not as a declaration. Just as a possibility.

**"Hyde Park ne mujhe khud se milaya,
Aur bataaya — tanha rehna zaroori nahi hota, par kabhi
kabhi kaafi hota hai."**

Sometimes, you don't need answers. You just need **green stillness** and a little bit of sky.



5.4_Hyde Park

**I came to London hoping it would change me.
But instead, it gave me moments that revealed me —
gently, piece by piece.**

It didn't hand me grand revelations.

**It offered city corners and coffee cups, where I could
quietly meet myself.**

**And slowly, the lostness I carried began to feel like
exploration.**

And exploration began to feel like belonging.

**“Tower Bridge se lekar café ke kone tak,
London ne mujhe har mod pe khud ka ek naya chehra
dikhaya.”**

8.

Echoes of Growth

Mirrors Don't Lie

That evening, after a long day of wandering and quiet reflection, I found myself in my tiny London flat the kind of place where the window barely lets in light and the walls seem to listen.

I stood in front of the bathroom mirror. The glass was fogged from the hot shower, but as I wiped it clear, I stared hard.

For a moment, I expected to see the same uncertain boy who had landed in this strange city weeks ago, eyes wide with hope and fear tangled like an endless storm. But instead, I saw something different.

The hair was still messy that much was true but it no longer felt like a mess. It looked like the crown of someone who had fought battles no one could see. The dark circles under my eyes weren't just fatigue; they were badges of endurance, proof that I had stayed awake fighting battles within.

The smile was faint, almost fragile, but it was there the soft curve of lips that had once been clenched in anxiety now relaxed, as if whispering a quiet, "I'm still here."

But it was my eyes that shocked me most.

The boy who once trembled in uncertainty now looked back with a calm I didn't know I had. The eyes held stories of sleepless nights, awkward conversations, stolen moments of joy, tears that fell silently on a cold floor.

I wasn't sure when the change had happened. Maybe it was in the thousand tiny acts of courage — the mornings I forced myself out of bed, the times I chose hope over despair, the moments I looked at my reflection and didn't turn away.

For the first time, I wasn't running from that reflection. I was meeting it. Recognizing the boy who had quietly survived.

And in that meeting, a fragile peace began to settle.

***“Chehre pe nahi, badlaav to aankhon mein tha —
Jo kabhi darr se bhari thi, ab sapno se chamak rahi thi.”***

The Night Talks I Had With Myself

London's nights were unlike anything I had known. The city slowed. The loud hum faded. The restless energy gave way to something quieter more thoughtful.

Some nights, I wandered out alone. The streets were drenched in soft amber light from old-fashioned lamps. The

cold air bit at my cheeks, but I welcomed it. It made me feel alive, grounded.

I walked without direction, letting the rhythm of my footsteps echo my swirling thoughts. The city was mostly silent, but in that silence, I heard the loudest conversations — the ones inside my head.

There were memories sharp and vivid. Scenes of old friends I had lost touch with, moments of failure, nights spent drowning in self-doubt. There were dreams, too — unspoken, fragile, shimmering just out of reach.

Instead of running away from these thoughts as I once did, I stopped to listen. I stopped to sit with them, even when they hurt.

Sometimes, I sat by the foggy window in my room, watching the rain streak down like tears the sky refused to hold. The world outside seemed paused, waiting for me to catch up.

And slowly, in those quiet hours, I began to understand myself. Not the surface, but the layers beneath — the fears, the hopes, the contradictions.

I learned to embrace the silence, to speak kindly to the parts of me that felt broken. I talked to the boy who felt lonely, telling him, “It’s okay to be tired. It’s okay to not have answers yet.”

For the first time in a long time, I felt like I had a true friend — myself.

In solitude, I stopped running from my thoughts. I began walking with them.

***“Main akele chala tha, magar raaste bolne lage;
Har khamoshi mein, ab jawab milne lage.”***

The Chapters That Changed Me

Growth wasn't something handed to me. It didn't come in grand ceremonies or loud applause. It crept in like whispers, in the small, almost invisible moments that piled up quietly.

I found pieces of wisdom in the most unexpected places.

In a forgotten corner of the university library, an old book fell off a shelf in front of me. I picked it up and read a passage about resilience that brought tears to my eyes.

One rainy afternoon on the Tube, a stranger spoke to me briefly about dreams not the easy kind, but the kind you have to fight for every day. His words lingered long after he had gone.

Even a simple quote painted on the wall of a coffee shop — “This too shall pass” — became a mantra that steadied my shaking heart on hard days.

I also found lessons in my own scattered writings — pages in my diary filled with raw emotion and hope. Each sentence was a bridge between who I was and who I was becoming.

The world outside was no longer just a backdrop for survival. It had become my classroom, my mentor, my endless book.

And I was a student, eager to learn not just facts, but how to live fully, honestly, and kindly.

*“Kitabein badli nahi thi, par main badal gaya tha,
Ab har panne mein, zindagi ka paath milta tha.”*

From Overthinking to Understanding

There was a time when my mind was a labyrinth endless corridors of “what ifs” and “why nots.” Every word I said or didn’t say replayed a thousand times. Every glance from someone else was scrutinized until it lost all meaning.

I lived trapped in my own thoughts, exhausting myself with worries no one else carried.

But one morning, something shifted.

I woke without dread. I didn’t rush to check my phone or rehearse conversations in my head. Instead, I made tea, breathed deeply, and let myself be.

I began to see the beauty in simplicity waking up on time, choosing not to react in anger, saying “no” when needed, embracing quiet moments instead of filling them with distractions.

Slowly, I stopped comparing myself to others, stopped fearing judgment. I accepted that my path was mine alone jagged, uneven, but real.

This quiet peace was not loud or dramatic. It was subtle like the first soft rays of dawn brushing over a dark sky.

It was strength I had never known the strength of loving myself in progress, loving the messy, imperfect becoming.

To love who you are becoming is a silent kind of strength.

***“Main pehle bhi tha, par ab poora ho raha hoon —
Har tooti baat se, main kuch aur jod raha hoon.”***

Growth is not a headline. It is not fireworks or fanfare.

Sometimes, it is a quiet knowing that you are no longer who you were — that the fears, the pain, the tears of the past now live in a different space inside you. Not as chains, but as stepping stones.

I no longer ran from my past. I no longer hid from my reflection. I had become the boy I always hoped to be — not perfect, but whole.

London gave me this gift — not in grand moments, but in city corners and coffee cups, in silent nights and mirrors that don't lie.

I am not changed I am becoming. Slowly. Surely. Beautifully.

“Main badla nahi hoon, main bana hoon — ek nayi roshni mein, khud se milta hua.”

9.

The Bridge We Built

“Some bridges aren’t built with bricks — they’re built within us, between the past and the present, between two homes, and two versions of the self.”

From Gateway to Bridge

The air was colder than usual that morning, but something in me felt strangely warm.

As I stood still at **Tower Bridge**, watching the boats glide through the Thames and the city move at its own poetic pace, my mind flew back not across space, but across time — to **The Gateway of India**, where this entire journey had begun.

I could still remember it vividly —

The cries of seagulls over the Arabian Sea...

The fragrance of cutting chai in the air...

The tremble in my hand as I held my passport like it was a magic key.

The silent prayers tucked into my mother’s tears.

The way my father hugged me just a little tighter than usual, holding back everything he couldn’t say.

That boy, back then, was filled with nervous energy, half-packed dreams, and a heart that beat both fast and soft.

Today, at the edge of Tower Bridge, that same heart beat more grounded — not because the fear had disappeared, but because courage had grown roots around it.

My hands no longer shook.

They held something more powerful now **Memories.**

Milestones. A map of survival.

The vast ocean I once flew across now felt like a line in a story.

Because in truth, I had crossed something even greater —

The ocean between who I was and who I had become.

“Gateway se nikla tha sawaalon ke saath,

Bridge gayer aa-aate jawaab mil gayer aah-raah.”

Bridging Two Selves

The city was draped in evening gold. Shadows grew longer, and the river beneath glimmered like a story being written with light.

I leaned over the edge of the bridge and closed my eyes.

And suddenly, it was as if two versions of me stood side by side.

Version One:

The boy who had boarded that flight to London —
Unsure. Anxious. Hopeful. With too many dreams and not
enough confidence.

He carried notebooks filled with goals and a heart full of
questions.

Version Two:

The man who stood now in the cold wind.
Quieter. Stronger. A little tired, but with stories stitched into
his silence.

He had scars but they weren't wounds anymore. They were
proof.

And slowly, these two versions of me... shook hands.

They didn't compete.

They **merged**.

I didn't become someone new in London.

I simply became **whole**.

I learned that growth isn't about outgrowing yourself —
It's about **gathering** every piece you once dropped, and
fitting them together like a mosaic.

Every fear.

Every sleepless night.

Every small win.

Every moment I stayed kind to myself — even when I was
breaking.

They made me **me**.

“I didn’t lose myself in London. I met myself here — piece by piece.”

London and Home — Together

There was a time I believed I had to choose.

Was I **from Mumbai** with its rains, crowded locals, spices, and softness?

Or was I now **from London** with its crisp weather, sleek tubes, museums, and multicultural chaos?

But slowly, life taught me I didn’t have to pick.

I was never meant to be just one thing.

I was both.

My kitchen shelves had masalas from home,

But my meals often had pasta with a dash of haldi.

My playlists had Arijit and Adele.

I said “bhai” on FaceTime and “mate” at the café.

My soul whispered in Hindi, but my thesis was in English.

I lit diyas on Diwali in a London flat and watched the light reflect on glass walls.

I stopped trying to **fit**.

And instead, I **flowed**.

Because maybe I was born not to **choose between two homes** —

But to **build a bridge** between them.

A bridge where memories walked with ambition,
Where roots met wings,
Where cultures didn't clash — they collaborated.

**This journey was never about proving something to the world
Not about being the best student, or the most successful migrant.**

**It was about returning to myself.
Brick by brick.
Memory by memory.
Courage by courage.**

**It was about building a bridge inside me
Strong enough to carry my dreams,
Soft enough to hold my roots,
Wide enough to welcome all the versions of me.**

And today, standing at this bridge in London, I don't just see a city.

I see a story and I know now...

It was never about the destination. It was about becoming strong enough to carry my journey.

10.

Looking back, Moving Forward

(The Goodbye That Wasn't Really a Goodbye)

Packing the Pieces of a Chapter

The room that once felt too foreign had now become a map of memories.

The faded Post-it on the wall.

The coffee mug with a chipped rim.

The blue scarf hanging behind the door.

Each item I packed wasn't just an object it was a timestamp. A fragment of a version of me I had lived, questioned, built, and become.

I folded not just clothes, but lessons.

Tucked in realizations between socks and books.

Slipped in forgiveness for the days I cried alone, and a small thank you for every morning I chose to rise again.

**"Jab samaan band kar raha tha, toh laga jaise zindagi ke panne rakh raha hoon —
Har ek mein thoda dard, thoda dum tha."**

Reflecting Without Regret

It's easy to measure journeys in degrees, jobs, or success.
But mine? I measured it in courage.

In the nights I stayed up battling fear.
In the mornings I chose not to quit.
In the laughter I shared with strangers who became family.

Yes, there were low points.

But each fall was a teacher.

Each tear, a seed.

And now, the mirror no longer reflected a lost boy — it
showed someone becoming whole.

**"Main waisa nahi raha jaise gaya tha —
Ab main woh hoon jo muskaan mein bhi safar dekh leta
hai."**

Leaving, But Not Empty-Handed"

As the flight took off, I didn't feel sadness. I felt weight
— not the kind that pulls you down, but the kind that
makes you grounded.

I was taking home more than just souvenirs:

- I was carrying discipline wrapped in long silent nights.
- Confidence picked up from coffee shop solitude.

- Love for self, stitched slowly in moments of doubt and clarity.

I wasn't returning as someone who had "made it."
I was returning as someone who had become —
thoughtfully, honestly, and gently.

**"London ne mujhe sirf duniya nahi dikhayi,
Usne mujhe main dikhaya har mod, har moh ke
saath."**

Not every journey ends with applause. Some end with
a soft sigh, a quiet nod, and a heart that whispers *I did
it.*

As I look back, I don't see perfection. I see presence. I
see persistence. I see poetry in the most mundane of
days.

And as I move forward, I carry all versions of myself —
The scared one who boarded a flight,
The lost one who cried in unfamiliar kitchens,
The brave one who chose to stay,
And the becoming one who is still walking, still
learning, still loving.

**"London ne mujhe sirf sheher nahi diya, usne mujhe
main de diya — ek aisa main, jo ab har kahani mein
jeeta hai."**

11.

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First and foremost, we extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who walked beside us in presence or in spirit — throughout the creation of *London and Us*. This book is more than just pages and poetry. It is a reflection of distance, belonging, and becoming and we could not have brought it to life without you.

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To our friends, near and far thank you for being the voice notes in the silence, the shoulders through change, and the reminders that we were never alone, no matter the city we stood in.

To the souls we met along the way the strangers who smiled on the Tube, the café baristas who remembered our orders,

the classmates who became kind you made London feel like home. Thank you for the fleeting kindness that left lasting imprints.

A heartfelt thank you to our readers especially those who saw their own story mirrored in these lines. You are the heartbeat of this book. Your willingness to feel, reflect, and walk alongside us even for a chapter means the world to us.

To London for breaking us open and gently putting us back together. You held our doubts, dreams, and daily discoveries like a sacred secret. From Tower Bridge to Trafalgar, you taught us that identity isn't about choosing one place over another, but embracing the space where both can belong.

And finally, to the version of ourselves that once stood at the Gateway of India, trembling with hope — this is for you. You made it across. Not just miles, but across fear, uncertainty, and self-doubt.

We dedicate this book to every dreamer who left home to find more than a degree — to find themselves. May your journey be honest, messy, beautiful, and whole.

With endless love and light,

Naaz & Ishan

Naazish Writings

12.

Conclusion

As we come to the final page of *London and Us*, know this
This was never just a story about a place. It was about a
person becoming.

You.

This journey began with a suitcase full of dreams, a heart
heavy with goodbyes, and eyes wide with wonder. What
unfolded through these chapters was more than travel — it
was transformation.

From the Gateway of India to Tower Bridge, every step spoke
of growth. Not the kind measured in miles or maps, but in
moments of silent courage learning to cook your own meals,
walking into classrooms where nobody knew your name,
holding back tears in a winter that felt too foreign, too cold —
yet finding warmth in unexpected smiles.

You didn't just study abroad.

You studied yourself.

You met fear and made it your teacher.

You missed home and made peace with distance.

You found strength in struggle, and poetry in pain.

Each chapter in this book was a mirror reflecting the many
selves you've had to become in order to hold both your roots
and your wings.

But this is not the end.

The story of *London and Us* is just one chapter in a larger narrative one that continues to unfold each time you make space for both nostalgia and newness, for tradition and change, for where you came from and where you're going.

You are not meant to choose between homes.

You are meant to bridge them.

You are not torn between identities.

You are made whole by them.

So wherever life takes you from here be it the next city, a new chapter, or just back to yourself carry this truth with you:

You were never lost.

You were simply arriving piece by piece, story by story — into the person you were always meant to be.

***"Main sheher dhoondhne gaya tha,
Par wahan jaake, khud ko hi paaya tha."***

Thank you for walking this journey with us for feeling every line, for remembering your own story as you read ours.

This book is dedicated to every student who left home not just to earn a degree, but to find themselves in assignments, in loneliness, in laughter.

The next part of this journey is still unwritten.

Because now it's your turn to tell the world your version of
"London and Us."

With warmth, wonder, and endless gratitude,

Naaz & Ishan

Naazish Writings

*A heartfelt journey from the Gateway of
India to London's Tower Bridge.
A story of dreams, change, and finding
your place in a new world!!
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