

Dear Janob ,

Happy Birthday, my South Indian–Bengali soulmate in survival.

It's wild to think we've known each other since 2013–14. A whole decade of people coming and going, phases ending, chaos unfolding—and somehow, our very specific breed has just... stayed. Same lens, same humour, same ability to look at the world through a slightly sarcastic, mildly judgy filter that has honestly protected us and given us endless laughter.

We've seen some real wackos at Jai Hind. We could have gone down many strange, questionable routes, but we didn't. We stayed safe, smart, sane, and (mostly) healthy—and I genuinely think that says something about us. Or at least about our instincts.

Over the years, you've let me into more and more of your life, and I've always felt deeply valued in that. The ease, the lack of judgment, the way conversations with you never feel heavy or performative—it's something I don't take for granted. From day one, I've had a very stable sense of who you are: someone who quietly sees everything, understands the behind-the-scenes, and then makes her own decisions without being pulled around. You've always been sure of yourself in the most grounded, unfussy way.

I'm incredibly proud of you. You've had your share of challenges, and I honestly can't think of anyone who has handled things with more strength, grace, sincerity, and realness. So many people get bigaroed by life—but you haven't. You've stayed genuine, kind, and a real beacon of light despite it all. Please never change.

(Except the hairstyle. You could try bangs. I've been saying this for years.)

I can't wait for you to move to Gurgaon or Delhi so we're closer and can do what we do best—exist comfortably, eat well, judge gently, and laugh a lot. I'm so grateful for a friendship that's been long, steady, non-dramatic, chilled out, and deeply genuine. You've never tried to impress the world or be anything other than yourself, and I admire that endlessly. Also, thank you for always giving it to me straight—I need that.

And finally, I couldn't be happier that I now have a South Indian, incredible-cook friend just as I'm entering my kitchen era. If I had to be trained by anyone, I'm glad it's you. I'm also really happy you have a partner who loves you enough to care this deeply about your birthday—you deserve that kind of love.

Here's to doing adult things together: girls' trips, exploring the world, and watching ourselves grow from 21 to 61 to 71 (yes, we're living that long). Thank you for being nonchalant, chilled, and for believing in God—because I need one friend to make that cool for me.

Happy Birthday. I love you so much.

Always,

Shyamoli