

Blog 8: Silent Celebration – Life Beyond Festivals

Many years ago, festivals were a golden dream of my life — a colourful canvas where every hue sang of love, joy, and togetherness. Dashain tika covering the entire forehead with red rice, the tender glow of oil lamps in the courtyard during Tihar, the sky painted with Holi colours — all of these brought an eternal wave of celebration to my heart.

The joy of stitching new clothes, decorating the house with flowers and garlands, sitting surrounded by the laughter of a big joint family and eating sweets — those moments celebrating festivals with my wife, daughter, and son were the priceless treasure of my life. In our little family world, festivals were not mere dates but a living temple of love and memory.

But this beautiful story of life was suddenly shattered by a harsh reality. My 27-year-old son, who had been battling bipolar disorder, was taken from this world by a cruel brain stroke. In that moment my heart was torn — as if a storm from the sky had devastated my entire garden of happiness. He was my light, my dream, the life force flowing in my every breath. The son I had lifted from poverty, struggle, and sacrifice to higher education in America suddenly left in silence. My wife, who was fighting in Nepal's political arena for women's and the oppressed's rights, and I — we both broke like an old tree branch falling away from its trunk. Drowning in this ocean of sorrow we wondered: will our life now only be an empty tale of memories?

After that, festivals became a painful wound for us. When Dashain came the forehead felt not empty but soaked in blood — as if his absence stung with every breath. Lighting lamps on Tihar brought not light but darkness surrounding us. The sweet kitchen aromas carried the echo of our son's laughter, and every bite brought an ocean of tears.

For a long time we simply could not bear those days. The merriment that came in the name of celebration felt like a cruel joke — an empty bell ringing only silence. The song of joy of our small family stopped, and only quiet grief filled the house.

Yet sorrow showed us a new path — like the first ray of sun rising from the depth of night. We made a courageous decision: we will no longer celebrate traditional festivals. This is not running away — this is a new birth. We gave those days a new form — a journey of solitude, service, and introspection.

Now on festival days we walk to mountain peaks, where the wind carries our son's memory and consoles our souls. We visit orphanages and distribute food to innocent children whose smiles give us the taste of new life. Sometimes we sit in deep silence — in profound meditation where words cease and feelings speak, turning sorrow into gratitude.

Some friends and relatives ask: “Have you completely abandoned your culture?” No, dear friends and family. We have let go of the outer shell of rituals and embraced the deeper soul of those traditions. The true essence of festivals is love, family, and remembrance — it is not limited to dates or rituals alone. That soul lives in every moment, like a river that flows forever, no matter the season.

This journey of my life — rising from a poor farming family, becoming a doctor through education and scholarships, studying in Japan and America, returning to the motherland after my son’s departure to begin service —

has taught me this. My Ikigai, this Japanese philosophy that gives life meaning, is exactly this: turning sorrow into strength and illuminating others’ lives through service. I led the construction of a new building, concrete walls, and playground for my childhood school, and adorned it with a bus bought with my own blood and sweat.

And now I am committed for 41 years — to meditation centres, improving pilgrimage sites, old-age homes, and community hospitals. All of this in my son’s memory, in gratitude for life.

Today we have turned life itself into a living celebration. Every morning watching the rising sun, its golden rays sow new seeds of hope in our hearts — like a new birth. Every smile we share feels like a flower blooming, brightening the surrounding darkness. Every revived hope feels like a bird’s free and joyful flight.

Even in silence our hearts hum a sweet song — the tender melody of love, the emotional voice of memory, and the enthusiastic rhythm of rebirth. This song teaches us: life is deeper than festivals; it is an eternal journey where every step has meaning, every breath has love.

We now live — a profound, meaningful life that contains the shadow of sorrow yet is pierced by rays of light. And this silent celebration, this peaceful joy, continues every day, every moment — like a river that forever carries the mystery of life.

If you too wish to join this journey, remember: flowers bloom from sorrow, and true celebration is born from silence.