

Videsh: We, the Strugglers

© Chinmoy Mukherjee 2026-2046. No part of this document may be used without explicit written permission from the author.

This is a work of fiction. All characters, events, and places are entirely fictional, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Videsh: We, the Strugglers
Introduction
Chapter 1: The Flight to Videsh
Chapter 2: The Cheaper Dream
Chapter 3: The Roommate
Chapter 4: The Humiliation Begins
Chapter 5: Odd Jobs of Videsh
Chapter 6: The Lowest Point
Chapter 7: The Punjabi Wisdom
Chapter 8: Small Victories
Chapter 9: The Realisation
Chapter 10: Decision
Chapter 11: The Golden Paper
Chapter 12: The Uncommon Union
Chapter 13: The New Root
Conclusion

Introduction

In the sun-scorched, ochre-dusted villages and the diesel-choked, perpetually honking cities of India, countless young engineers like Satya Reddy grow up believing that a B.Tech degree is the gleaming golden key to a stable future. Yet for many, that key rusts quickly into rough, oxidizing flakes in a job market flooded with graduates. It is a world where the quiet exchange of favors matters more than competence, and “experience” becomes a towering, concrete wall for freshers. Satya’s story is not unique—it is the unspoken, sweat-

soaked reality of thousands who board flights to *Videsh* (foreign lands), dragging heavy, screeching suitcases packed with the fragrant spices of home, the silent prayers of their mothers, and the crushing, invisible weight of their families' debts. This is a deliberate parody and reversal of the iconic film *Swades*, where a successful NRI returns home to build a micro-hydroelectric plant and rediscovers his roots. Here, the protagonist leaves home broken and builds something quieter but no less profound in a distant, often unwelcoming Australia.

Satya completed his B.Tech in Computer Science in India but faced twelve agonizing months of unemployment. The metallic *ping* of generic rejection emails and the deafening silence of unanswered calls eroded his confidence, leaving a sour taste of failure in his mouth until the desperate leap onto a student visa felt like the only breathable air left. What awaited him in Australia was a jarring contrast to the high-gloss, saturated-blue skies printed on the education agents' brochures. He found a cheaper course in a building smelling of stale carpet and industrial cleaner, a cramped room shared with a boisterous Punjabi roommate whose booming laughter shook the thin fibro walls, and a string of odd jobs that tested every raw nerve of human dignity. Through pedaling hot, greasy fast food in freezing downpours, scrubbing soap scum off luxury cars until his knuckles bled, picking rotting fruit under a blinding, blistering sun, and swallowing the bitter bile of insults from customers and bosses alike, Satya endures profound humiliation. Yet, like Mohan in *Swades*, he undergoes a transformation—not by returning to the warmth of his homeland, but by choosing to stay and forge a new identity in the cold forge of adversity.

This story captures the raw, unfiltered, and deeply sensory struggles of international students in Australia: the suffocating

financial pressure of high-interest loans, the heavy emotional toll of smiling through pixelated video calls while lying to families, the jarring cultural shocks, the cold reality of wage theft, and the constant, anxiety-inducing navigation of visa rules. It highlights how dignity is bartered for sheer survival—sharing cramped rooms that perpetually smell of damp socks, cheap bleach, and lingering cumin, tolerating casually racist remarks that sting like a physical slap, and working graveyard shifts that leave the eyes bloodshot and the body hollowed out. Satya's journey mirrors the spirit of *Swades* in its core message of responsibility and purpose, but flips the direction: instead of coming back to India, he decides to stay in Videsh, building small, vital contributions within the Indian diaspora community.

Written with unflinching empathy and realism, *Videsh* does not romanticize migration. It shows the bruises—the purple physical aches, the invisible emotional scars, and the psychological exhaustion—but also the quiet, golden victories. It is about resilience learned on the cracked pavement, friendships forged over shared, burnt rotis, and the stubborn, fiery refusal to return defeated. Through Satya's tired but determined eyes, we witness how the pursuit of a better life demands stripping away one's pride, only to rebuild it, brick by hard-won brick, on foreign soil. This is a tale for every student who has ever balanced a steaming food bag at midnight, squeezed into a squeaking bunk bed with a stranger, or stared at the stark white glow of flight booking pages wondering if going back is easier than pushing forward. Ultimately, it asks: What does true belonging mean when home rejects you and the new land tests you daily? Satya's answer lies in the **thirteen** chapters ahead—a modern, gritty parody where the hero stays abroad not out of soft comfort, but out of calloused, hard-won conviction.

Chapter 1: The Flight to Videsh

Satya Reddy clutched his worn, frayed backpack tightly against his chest as he settled into the cramped middle seat of the Air India flight bound for Melbourne. The cabin was bathed in the dim, amber glow of overhead reading lights, casting long, exhausted shadows across the faces of his fellow passengers. The air inside the steel tube hung heavy with the warm, cardamom-laced scent of masala chai from the rattling service trolley, mixing uncomfortably with the nervous, sour sweat of dozens of young men and women chasing desperate dreams abroad. Every jolt of the aircraft sent a tremor through Satya's bones. One year. That was exactly how long Satya had rotted in the suffocating heat of India after completing his B.Tech in Computer Science from a mid-tier, factory-like college in Uttar Pradesh. Three hundred and forty-seven job applications had yielded nothing. Zero callbacks. His inbox was a graveyard of automated rejections. When he did manage to face interview panels, they either ghosted him or openly laughed at his lack of "industry experience," their condescending voices echoing in the stark, fluorescent-lit offices.

His journey was the precise, brutal inversion of Mohan Bhargava's legendary return in *Swades*. Mohan was a celebrated Project Manager at NASA, orchestrating the launch of a Global Precipitation Measurement satellite, tracking rainfall from the sterile, air-conditioned comfort of a multi-million-dollar command center. Satya, on the other hand, had spent his last year in a sweltering, dust-choked cyber cafe, tracking a relentless, global downpour of rejection emails while the ancient ceiling fan clicked ominously above him. Mohan returned to India in a plush, climate-controlled caravan equipped with endless bottles of filtered mineral water and GPS, shielding himself from the raw poverty of his homeland. Satya

was leaving India in a bruised economy-class seat, hurtling toward a foreign land with absolutely nothing to shield him from the incoming storm.

His father, a retired school teacher with failing eyesight and a permanent cough, had quietly sold the last piece of their ancestral farmland in the village to fund this desperate escape. The weight of that colossal sacrifice pressed down on Satya's chest, making it harder to breathe than the violent turbulence they hit over the pitch-black void of the Indian Ocean. As the plane climbed higher, tearing through the cloud cover, Satya stared out the scratched acrylic window. The sprawling, chaotic, golden-orange streetlights of Delhi slowly faded into an endless sea of darkness. "Just two years," he whispered like a sacred mantra into the persistent, deafening drone of the twin jet engines. "Get the Australian qualification, secure the post-study work visa, maybe even Permanent Residency. Then I'll bring Ma and Papa over. No more humiliation. No more locked doors." The education agent in Delhi, a slick man smelling of strong cologne and cheap tobacco, had promised a golden ticket—a private college on the outskirts of Melbourne that practically guaranteed a red carpet to a wealthy future.

Landing at Tullamarine Airport felt like stepping violently into a sterile, hyper-illuminated alternate universe. The cold, bluish fluorescent lights reflected off the immaculately polished floors, blinding him after fourteen hours of dim cabin darkness. The moment the automatic glass doors slid open, the crisp, icy bite of the early autumn air slashed through his thin, faded cotton jacket. His assigned Uber driver, a burly, bearded Punjabi man in his forties named Balwinder—the second of the twelve unique characters who would define Satya's grueling thirteen-chapter exile—pulled up in a