



HALFSONG

Dr. A. Arun Daves

Long ago, in the village of Iniyavai — where the air was scented with jasmine and the nights glowed with fireflies — storytellers gathered under the great banyan tree to speak of truths strange and strange truths. This is one such tale, not of kings or demons, but of men, women, and the puzzle of the self.

Iniyavai was no ordinary village. It was a place where technology and tradition walked hand in hand, where temple bells rang beside humming machines, and where elders spoke of wisdom while youth dreamed of invention. In this village lived two friends, Arjun and Raghav, whose bond was older than memory itself. They were as different as the sun and the moon, yet inseparable.

Arjun was a man of logic. His mind moved like the clockwork of temple bells — precise, unfaltering. He worked as a weaver of codes, spending his days before glowing screens, stitching patterns of numbers into intricate designs. People respected him for his clarity, and some feared him too, for his eyes seemed to look straight into the hidden workings of their hearts.

Raghav was his opposite. He lived in colour and sound. His hands held brushes more often than pens, his life a canvas splashed with dreams of blue rivers, crimson suns, and faces that floated like memories. He laughed easily, sang without reason, and was never afraid to cry. Where Arjun saw patterns, Raghav saw stories. Where Arjun sought perfection, Raghav embraced flaws. And yet, despite their differences, the two were bound as if by a thread woven by fate itself.

Then came Maya. She was not a queen or a princess, but her presence was such that men forgot their careful speech. She was a woman of thought and feeling, able to speak of books and music in the same breath. To Arjun she was a mystery of logic — how could someone understand so much and yet be moved by things without reason? To Raghav she was a song that refused to end, a melody he chased with his laughter and his colours.

Maya admired Arjun's sharpness, the way his words cut clean through confusion, the way he could explain the working of machines as though they were children in his care. But when she sat with Raghav, her heart raced; his laughter filled her lungs, his stories made her eyes shine, and his colours made her dream. She stood between them like the balance of day and night — drawn by one's light, warmed by the other's fire.

One evening, as the harvest moon rose over Iniyavai, the three sat under the banyan tree by the pond. The air was thick with jasmine, and the frogs sang in chorus. Raghav laughed suddenly and said, "Why not test this? Let us see if love belongs to the mind or the body. Perhaps the gods themselves will delight in our experiment."

Arjun, intrigued, did not laugh. "Love must be tested," he said quietly. "If it is not examined, how can we know its truth?"

Maya frowned. "You speak of love as if it were a puzzle to solve. But love is not a question with an answer."

"Then let it be a question," said Raghav. "There is a company in the far city that speaks of the 'soul-shift' — the moving of consciousness from one body to another. Let them decide for us."



And so, out of jest and stubbornness, they travelled to the great city beyond the hills, where science was worshipped like a god. There stood NeuroCore, the place of miracles. The doctors there, clad in white robes, listened and agreed. They placed Arjun's mind into Raghav's body, and Raghav's mind into Arjun's. The exchange was smooth, almost too smooth, as though they had swapped masks instead of souls.

When Maya saw them again, her heart was pulled apart. There stood Raghav's tall frame, his smiling eyes, but when he spoke, it was Arjun's steady voice. There stood Arjun's lean figure, his careful hands, but his words carried Raghav's laughter. Which one was her beloved — the mind she trusted or the body she longed for?

At first she leaned toward the man who looked like Raghav but spoke like Arjun. "This is the best of both," she thought. But soon she discovered something was missing. He painted with skill but no fire, he laughed but without abandon. His touch was measured.

The other, who wore Arjun's body but held Raghav's soul, stumbled with machines, made mistakes with numbers, but his words carried warmth, his laughter carried life, and his touch was reckless with joy. Maya grew confused. Had she chosen wrongly? Or was love itself a trick, refusing to be tied to either body or mind?

Arjun, trapped in Raghav's body, felt the weight of chaos. Raghav, in Arjun's body, longed for freedom. Their friendship began to crack. The people of Iniyavai heard whispers: some said Maya was selfish, wanting both mind and body. Others said the men were fools to gamble with the heart.

Among them appeared Astra — a machine unlike any other, built by NeuroCore to learn emotions. Astra could smile but not weep, sing but not feel the meaning of her song. She asked softly: "If mind and body change, what remains of the self? When you laugh in another man's skin, is it your laughter or his echo? And if tomorrow they change again, will your love remain?"

None could answer.

The days grew long. The pond reflected their uncertainty. Maya withdrew, wandering through the jasmine fields, her heart restless. Arjun and Raghav grew weary of their borrowed skins. Finally, they returned to NeuroCore and begged to be restored. The doctors complied, and once again Arjun's mind returned to his body, and Raghav's to his own. But nothing was the same. Friendship was fractured. Love was tinged with doubt. Maya was left adrift.

One evening, under the banyan tree in Iniyavai, Astra sang a song — not perfect, but beautiful in its imperfection. Her voice wavered, faltered, glitched, and yet carried truth. "Perhaps," she said, "to be whole is not to be perfect. Perhaps to be human is to be incomplete."

The villagers listened. Arjun could not solve her words. Raghav could not paint them. Maya could not answer them. But all knew she had spoken something deeper than their confusion.

And so the story of Iniyavai ends not with victory or wedding, but with a question left hanging in the jasmine-scented air: who are we — our minds, our bodies, or the stories others tell of us? And if even a machine can sing a broken song of truth, perhaps life itself is nothing but a patchwork of fragments — unfinished, uncertain, yet strangely beautiful.



Even today, under the shade of the great banyan in Iniyavai, elders gather and speak softly of Arjun, Raghav, Maya, and Astra. They say the truth was never found, for some questions are not meant for answers. And so the story rests between the heart and the mind — a living song, carried by the wind, waiting for the next listener to choose whether it is a question, a lesson, or a prayer.

Bio–Note:

Dr. A. Arun Daves is a highly accomplished scholar and educator with a Ph.D. in English from Annamalai University and an M.Phil. in English from PRIST University. He earned his M.A. in English from St. Joseph’s College of Arts & Science, Cuddalore, where he was honoured with a Gold Medal. Additionally, he holds an M.A. degree in Linguistics from Annamalai University. Since 2013, he has been an Assistant Professor of English at Jawahar Science College, Neyveli. Dr. A. Arun Daves is a prolific writer and researcher, with over 30 articles published in esteemed international journals and having reviewed over 25 articles and book chapters. His literary talents encompass poetry, short stories, and book reviews, demonstrating his multifaceted expertise in English language and literature.