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Tree-dom!

A simple school project turns out to be the stepping-stone to an especial creation. In conversation with Manju Jain and Padmini Sharath Kumar on their venture...

Who was your first crush? Where did you go on your first date? What is your grandma called affectionately? What are the traditional family recipes? Penning down the answers to these questions in a workbook is what HUM is all about. Authors Manju Jain (wife of Arun Jain, CEO - Polarix) and Padmini Sharath Kumar, Senior Vice President - Polarix have co-authored HUM. "A social studies project for my daughter Aarushi Jain, motivated me to share many things with my close friend Padmini, and we ended up talking of countless prized moments and memories in our lives," says Manju. This is an era where families connect electronically, brides and grooms-to-be meet each other on chat portals and siblings bond through SMS. "We didn't start HUM with the intention of making it so big," says Padmini. "It was a keepsake from the company to some of our employees for their wedding anniversary.

However, later by word of mouth, the book caught everyone's attention and they all wanted personal copies!"

According to the authors, HUM is not a mere workbook; it is a legacy for future generation, which instills in them a passion to trace the family's roots and heritage. "The interactive format in which the pages have been laid out is the star attraction, and you'll automatically pick up your pen to write down every detail that you'd otherwise never have thought about answering," says Manju. Padmini adds, "Many sensitive questions that our children ask put us in a fix and we sometimes feel inhibited, not knowing how to reply. This inhibition is erased when we write it down. As it is, nowadays, they are so restless when asked to sit down and listen to details about the family tree!"

Manju and Padmini feel that every family has its own HUM time - be it a Saturday

afternoon or Sunday morning with a cup of coffee. "That moment is what will be lost in generations to come. We have family awards to each rewarding member so that they feel special about themselves," says Manju, smiling. "For instance, have you ever thanked your grandma for cooking up a feast when guests arrive unexpectedly? We never thank our family enough and often take them for granted."

The whole assignment turned out to be so far-reaching for one reason - they tripped upon the personal diary of ADK Jain years ago, when he had his version of HUM with details on his entire family written in his own handwriting. Padmini elaborates, "We are not writers. Hence, we do not want to publicise ourselves as 'authors'."

The Banyan tree logo has been aptly chosen for this book, which contains 11 chapters. Copies are available at leading bookstores across the city.