

# Book Excerpt

12 November 2018

(Chapter 8: Transforming tresses the Tanveer way!)

Dear Tanveer,

You are an awe inspiring, grounded person. Always filled with warmth and positivity, your optimism towards life is contagious. Given your humble beginnings, you believe in giving your 100 percent in every walk of life - personal and professional. One can never know if you are having a bad day, since you are always committed to giving the best possible service to your clients across age groups and treating each one as 'special'. Your belief in all-round excellence rubs off on everyone you meet. Every time I meet you, I come away learning something new...Do you have a magic wand, my friend?

Yours affectionately

Aparna

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Tanveer is the chief creative director and founder of the well-known brand TAS (Tanveer's hair studio and Academy) whose buzzword is 'Transformation.' Although his father insisted that he join the family hairdressing business, which he was not at all interested in, he decided that he would do so only after being formally trained in his art. Realizing the need for customized and systematic training in this profession, he decided to teach young, would-be professionals this creative skill. He is well known in the film (Bollywood) and fashion industry alike for creating sensational looks, skilled styling, teaching as well as the excellent service he provides to his clients. He was an integral part of the prestigious Lakme Fashion week for ten years. The miracle maker he is, he turns bad hair into great hair for life.

"It's gorgeous Tanveer! I never thought I could look so beautiful!" Gushes Kumud, an upcoming Bollywood actress after her hair 'transformation.'  
"You're the best in the world! God bless you!"

"Okay friends, today we learnt how to transform unruly hair into lovely locks! Any questions?" I turn to address my students at TAS (Tanveer's Hair Studio and Academy).

"That was a miracle, Sir! Will, I also be able to do this?" quips wide-eyed, eighteen-year-old Rahul.

I laugh. "It's no miracle. What seems like a miracle is born out of sheer dedication and lots of hard work."

"Everybody loves the way you 'transform' them with a simple haircut. You must be getting blessed many times over, isn't it?" asks Kabir.

I laugh again. “Sure, I do feel I am blessed! But you would be surprised to know that the first time I cut someone’s hair, she cursed me, and my career is a result of that curse!”

They look at me bewildered and in silence. “Tell us all about it. In fact, tell us everything about yourself,” they say interested.

“Okay....” I begin...

### **Beginnings in Bombay**

The eldest of two brothers and three sisters, I am a small-town boy from Bijnor (in the state of Uttar Pradesh). Although my grandfather’s father was a teacher, my grandfather came to Mumbai (then Bombay) in search of work and opened barber’s shop in Bombay’s Fountain area. That was the time of World War II. The shop enjoyed the patronage of the British officers and my grandfather earned handsome tips as well. Gradually, he became financially well-off. After I was born, my father who also carried on the family profession brought us to Bombay.

### **Teething Troubles**

Throughout my growing years, academics and I played a game of hide-and-seek! We had just begun to attend an English-medium school when my younger brother Imran was afflicted with Polio. So, we went back to our village for his treatment. Here, I was enrolled in the Arya Samaj School where I studied till class 2. This school was quite different from the one in Bombay. We had no notebooks, so we studied on slates (a sheet of thin, hard rock in a wooden frame, used to write in schools). My parents spent all their money on Imran’s treatment. However, they realized that there was no hope for his ailment and also no opportunities for him in the village.

Once more, we shifted to the land of opportunities — Bombay. My parents were able to find a school for the physically challenged where they enrolled Imran. I began to attend the Municipal School (which was till class 7). This was my third school.

My father rented a small shop in the Kalina area near Santa Cruz in Bombay. Our accommodation at Shastri Nagar in Kurla was far from comfortable. Water would flood our house in the rains. As compared to the huge spaces in the village, our house was cramped. Gradually, my father bought 125 sq ft of space behind the Kalina Masjid lane and we went to stay there in the year 1988. It was a lane where small entrepreneurs like barbers, washermen etc, lived and worked. I guess, this is where the seeds of entrepreneurship were sown in my mind.

Honestly, I was not at all an academic person. In fact, I failed in class 3 and such was my disinterest that I often bunked school as well.

### **Teenage Tales**

After class 7, I joined a private Hindi medium school called Pathak Technical High school (which was till class 10). Here, apart from studies, students could

also learn useful professional skills and train to become blacksmiths, carpenters, electricians, etc. I was fond of electronics and loved to play around with appliances like radios, televisions, fans, and wished to become a technician. This was where I found something that I liked for the first time. My teachers suggested I take up carpentry and I found that I was in my element while doing engineering drawing. Drawing and its symmetry attracted me and studying it for three years almost made me half an engineer. I use the views, patterns, and symmetry I studied then, in my designs even today.

Although I discovered that I was fond of and good at technical things, my father was constantly persuading me to learn hairdressing from him. He used to say, "If you have art in your hands, you will never suffer! No matter what the economic situation, you will definitely be able to feed yourself." However, I was dead against this!