

# The Ghost in My Body

## Introduction

I'm a Silicon Valley technology CEO with an electrical engineering degree from the University of Notre Dame. For over two decades, I built my career on data, logic, and measurable outcomes. I founded and sold a financial technology software company to State Street, a global financial giant managing 11.5% of the world's assets, by identifying patterns others missed and solving complex systems problems through rigorous analysis.

My religious convictions aren't deep. Regular meditation and yoga retreats aren't a part of my routine. I believe in science, evidence-based medicine, and rational explanations for observable phenomena. I am not the person you might expect to write about spiritual healing saving my life.

Following chest pain, I underwent an angiogram. When my blood sugar spiked, a doctor diagnosed me with type 2 diabetes, and I started taking insulin. When mysterious symptoms appeared, I sought specialist after specialist, driven by the same curiosity that had built my career, the refusal to stop digging until I found the root cause.

Yet for fifty-five years, my body staged increasingly desperate rebellions that twelve specialist doctors couldn't explain. Chronic urticaria covered 80% of my skin. Sleep disorders that defied every specialist. Asymptomatic heart conditions that four cardiologists initially missed, blockages that nearly killed me if left untreated.

Each doctor measured everything about my condition, but each specialist examined only their piece of the puzzle—dermatologists saw skin, cardiologists saw hearts, endocrinologists saw hormones. No one stepped back to see the complete picture hidden behind the curtain of symptoms.

For decades, these doctors measured everything about my condition: IgE levels, iron counts, blood sugars, even heavy metals in my liver. But none ever asked about trauma. None explored my complete life story or whether my immune system might respond to invisible wounds from decades past. Doctors treated each symptom in isolation. Medicine's greatest failure isn't lack of knowledge—it's the inability to see beyond the fragment each expert touches in the darkness, missing the magnificent, interconnected creature that is human health.

The breakthrough came not from another blood test or MRI, but from two strangers: an Ayurvedic doctor in a Costa Rican jungle and a spiritual healer at a California wedding who delivered an identical diagnosis that shattered everything I thought I knew about healing. Their prescribed medicine contradicted every principle of evidence-based treatment I'd ever trusted.

Yet when I finally followed their guidance, the urticaria that had plagued me for over a decade simply vanished. No more monthly injections. No more medications.

This is the story of that improbable journey: how a data-driven engineer was forced to embrace healing methods contradicting his training, and how that experience exposed fundamental flaws in our medical system that technology might finally solve.

My symptoms didn't disappear because of another drug. They disappeared because I finally addressed wounds that no blood test could measure. Now, as a Silicon Valley entrepreneur, I believe the future of healthcare requires algorithms that know where to look, not just at lab results, but at our stories, our traumas, and the invisible connections between mind and body that medicine has long ignored.

If a physicist's son, who spent his career trusting only measurable data, can find healing through spiritual means, then perhaps all of us need to expand our definition of what's possible in medicine. This book isn't about choosing between science and spirituality. It's about integrating them to solve problems that neither can address alone. It's about finally pulling back the curtain to see the whole elephant—the complete, interconnected system that is human healing.

If sharing my story of healing, no matter how unconventional or mysterious it may seem, helps even one person find their way from suffering to wholeness, then every moment of this journey will have been worth it. This book is for anyone who has been told their condition is incurable, anyone seeking answers beyond conventional approaches, and anyone brave enough to consider that sometimes the most rational next step is admitting that reality operates on levels we don't yet understand.

Einstein believed that "the most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious." He understood that the deepest truths often exist at the intersection of the known and the unknowable. My story lives at that intersection, and it changed not just my body, but my understanding of what healing really means.

## **Chapter 1: The Accident**

Colorado, August 1967

The excitement had been building for weeks. Our small apartment at 608 Remington Street in Fort Collins buzzed with the energy of new beginnings as boxes accumulated in corners and my father's colleagues stopped by to wish us well. My dad, Praful, had completed his master's in physics at Colorado State University, and we were finally leaving Colorado for his first job as a professor of physics at St. Anselm's College in New Hampshire.

The day before our departure, the actual work began. The August heat made the packing feel like manual labor as my parents crammed our entire American life into our brand new dark green Plymouth Valiant. I can still picture my mother, Vidya, in her cotton sari, methodically folding our clothes while my father wrestled with the logistics of fitting four years of graduate school possessions into a compact car.

The trunk was so full it could barely close. My father had to lean his full weight against it while my mother worked the latch. We had boxes stacked on a carrier he'd bought, transforming our modest car into something that looked like the Beverly Hillbillies heading east instead of west. Then came the blankets and pillows from every bed and couch in our apartment, stuffed into the back seat until the floor disappeared entirely.

When I jumped into what had become my nest for the journey, it felt like the world's most comfortable trampoline. The soft batting and fabric created a cocoon that made me feel safe and snug, though I probably got scolded for bouncing around too enthusiastically. My parents focused on adult concerns: checking their carefully drawn route on AAA maps, counting the cash they'd need for gas and motels, and ensuring my father's new employment papers were safely tucked in his briefcase.

The details of actually getting into the car that final time escape me. It had to be the middle of the night. Perhaps my father wanted to drive the boring stretches while I slept, or maybe he hoped to avoid the heat of a Colorado summer day. What I know is that one moment I was in my familiar bedroom, and the next I was nestled in my mobile fort of blankets, watching the streetlights of Fort Collins slip past the windows.

The first thing that struck me was how the road seemed to roll like gentle waves beneath us. Highway 14 stretches straight across northeastern Colorado, but the subtle hills make it feel like a child's roller coaster: up and down, up and down, in a rhythm that was both soothing and hypnotic. Outside the windows, darkness swallowed everything beyond our headlights.

This was prairie country at its most elemental. No mountains, no trees, just endless expanses of wheat and corn that disappeared into black infinity. Occasionally, the distant lights of a farmhouse would flicker past, a tiny beacon of human presence in the vastness. The isolation was both beautiful and slightly unnerving. We could drive for miles without seeing another car, just the white and yellow lines painting their path through the darkness.

We stopped at a rest area somewhere along the way. I can still feel the shock of stepping from the warm car into the cold night air. The wind was sharp and constant, carrying the scent of wheat fields and dust. It was that peculiar high-plains cold that cuts through summer clothing and makes you hurry. The rest stop was nothing more than a concrete building with basic facilities, surrounded by prairie that seemed to stretch beyond the edge of the world.

Getting back into the car felt like returning to our own private ship sailing through an ocean of darkness. My mother asked my father something about finding the next town to get something to eat, unusual for her, since she wasn't typically focused on food during travel. The request struck me as strange, but then I settled back into my blanket cocoon as we pulled back onto the empty highway.

For the next stretch, I kept popping my head up every few minutes to peer out the windows, watching the hypnotic rhythm of our headlights illuminating the road ahead. The car's heater hummed softly, and the radio played low, probably country music, though I can't be sure. Then

I'd sink back down into my nest and drift toward sleep, lulled by the steady vibration of tires on asphalt.

This continued for a while: up to look, down to rest, up to look, down to rest. The world outside remained unchanged: straight road, rolling hills, endless darkness punctuated by the occasional distant grain elevator or farmhouse light. We were just three small people in a heavily loaded car, carrying our hopes eastward across the vast American prairie.

Then, in an instant that would divide my life into before and after, everything exploded into chaos.

The first sound was the screeching of tires, a high-pitched shriek that seemed to go on forever. Even now, more than fifty years later, closing my eyes brings that sound back with perfect clarity. It was the sound of physics taking control, of my father's reflexes fighting against momentum and gravity and losing.

What followed was a symphony of destruction that unfolded in a strange, contradictory time. It happened incredibly fast — seconds, really — yet each moment seemed long, giving me time to notice impossible details. The thud as we first hit the ground. The metallic scream as the car's roof scraped against asphalt. The explosive pop of windows giving way. The grinding, sliding, tumbling percussion as our Plymouth Valiant transformed from a vehicle into a projectile.

I felt weightless, then pressed down, then weightless again as we rolled. The blankets that had been my comfortable nest became a swirling storm of fabric, some flying toward the front of the car, others wrapping around me like protective arms.

How many times did we roll? Ten? Fifteen? The count became meaningless. The world outside the windows became a kaleidoscope of stars, ground, stars, ground, painted in the sickening strobe of our headlights spinning through space. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, everything stopped.

Silence.

Not peaceful silence, but the profound quiet that follows violence — heavy, unnatural, pregnant with shock. The car had come to rest upside down, and I found myself buried in blankets that had somehow cushioned me through the entire ordeal. No tears came. No panic seized me. Some protective mechanism in my six-year-old brain simply accepted what had happened and waited to see what would come next.

Those blankets saved my life.

My father was hanging upside down, suspended by his seatbelt, which was unusual for 1967, when most people didn't bother with such precautions. Even in a crisis, he was thinking clearly. "Haresh," his voice came, steady despite our circumstances, "you need to get out of the car. I'm afraid of a gas leak."

The scent reached me too — that sharp, chemical smell that made the air feel dangerous. "Be really careful," he continued. "Maybe stretch some of these blankets out first and then crawl out on top of them. I don't want you to cut yourself on the glass."

So, I carefully worked my way out through what had been the back windshield, using the blankets as a carpet over the broken glass. As I emerged from our destroyed car, the immensity of our situation became clear.

Dawn was just beginning to paint the eastern horizon with the faintest suggestion of light. We were in the middle of absolutely nowhere, two miles before the tiny farming community of Bethune, Colorado, on a stretch of highway that might see a dozen cars on a busy day. This was prairie country at its most elemental: flat land stretching to every horizon, broken only by distant grain elevators and the occasional windbreak of trees around some lonely farmhouse. Fields of wheat and corn extended like a vast, empty ocean under the enormous sky.

The nearest house was probably miles away. The nearest real town, Burlington, was a twenty-minute drive in a working car. We had tumbled and rolled so many times that we'd ended up a good couple hundred feet from the main road, our destroyed vehicle sitting like a broken toy on the edge of a wheat field.

My father freed himself and crawled out through the same opening I'd used. Together, we stood in the predawn cold, surveying the wreckage and trying to understand what had just happened to our lives. The wind carried the smell of wheat and dust.

Our first thought was of my mother. We ran toward the front of the car, where the passenger seat had been. My father tried to force open her door, putting his shoulder against the crumpled metal, but it wouldn't budge. The impact had twisted the frame, sealing her inside.

"Vidya! Vidya!" he called, his voice carrying across the empty fields. There was no response from within the wreckage.

"Haresh," he said, and I could hear the controlled panic in his voice, "I need you to go to the main road and flag down some cars and get some help."

So I ran across those couple hundred feet of prairie grass and weeds, my small legs working to cover the distance between our accident and the possibility of rescue. The highway stretched empty in both directions, just two lanes of asphalt cutting through the vastness. I stood there in my pajamas, a six-year-old boy in the middle of nowhere, waving my arms at the gradually lightening sky.

It must have been quite a sight: this small figure on a desolate highway at dawn, frantically signaling for help. When the first car finally appeared, probably a rancher heading to early chores, it didn't hesitate to stop. Here was a child, alone, on a road where children simply didn't appear.

"What happened?" the driver asked.

"We had a car accident," I replied with the matter-of-fact clarity that shock sometimes provides. "Our car is over there, and my dad sent me here. We need help."

"Okay, I'm going back to town to call the police and an ambulance," one gentleman said. This was 1967, before cell phones or emergency call boxes. Help meant driving to find a telephone. The rest of the people who had stopped rushed toward our overturned car, joining my father in his increasingly desperate efforts to reach my mother.

At some point, they managed to force open her door. The blankets that had protected me tumbled out onto the prairie grass.

There was nobody. There was no mom inside.

A wave of panic swept through the gathered crowd, probably ten or twelve people now, ranchers and travelers who had stopped to help. Everyone began talking at once, trying to make sense of what we were seeing.

"Let's scatter out and see if we can find her somewhere between here and the road," someone suggested. "Looks like she was thrown from the car."

So they spread across the prairie, calling her name, searching through the wheat and weeds for any sign of my mother. I stood with my father, watching these strangers comb the empty landscape for the most important person in our world.

What felt like an eternity was probably only minutes before somebody finally called out, "Here she is."

We all ran toward the voice. My mother was lying flat on her back in the middle of a wheat field, surprisingly intact considering the violence that had thrown her there. She must not have been wearing her seatbelt, and perhaps her door hadn't been fully latched when we left that rest stop. The force of our tumbling had somehow ejected her from the car and deposited her in this field of grain, under the vast Colorado sky.

She was unconscious but breathing. My father knelt beside her, trying to communicate, asking questions that she answered with small nods and shakes of her head. Her eyes never opened. There was a small cut on her lip, the only visible sign of injury, but no other obvious damage. It seemed impossible that someone could survive being thrown from a rolling car with so little apparent harm.

The ambulance arrived with its red lights painting the prairie in urgent flashes. The paramedics were efficient but gentle, moving her carefully onto a stretcher. They seemed to know what they were doing, though I realize now that a small-town ambulance crew in 1967 probably had limited experience with major trauma cases.

Meanwhile, the police had begun their investigation. Since it was a single-car accident on an empty highway, the questions were straightforward but thorough. They measured skid marks, took photographs, and interviewed my father about what had happened.

When it was time for the ambulance to leave, my father made a decision that would prove crucial to our story. "I think you should go in the ambulance with your mom," he told me in his calm, professorial voice, "and let me take care of business over here."

Before I climbed into the ambulance, he pulled me aside for a private moment. Putting his hands on my shoulders, he looked directly into my eyes and said something that would echo through our family for decades.

"Listen, if anybody asks you in the ambulance or the hospital, or if another policeman comes to ask you what happened, tell them I was trying to avoid hitting an animal. I don't know if it was a deer or a rabbit, but I was trying to avoid it, and that's what caused the accident."

I accepted this explanation without question. I was six years old. I had been in the car. Something had happened, and my father, the smartest man I knew, was telling me what was true. It seemed entirely reasonable and matter of fact.

What strikes me now is how composed I remained throughout this entire ordeal. For an experience that should have been traumatic beyond measure, I was fully conscious, fully aware, but somehow emotionally detached. My heart wasn't racing, my palms weren't sweating. I was floating through the crisis like an observer of my own life.

The ride to Burlington took about twenty minutes on roads that seemed to roll endlessly through the prairie. The ambulance swayed and bounced, and I could hear the paramedics working, though they weren't doing much beyond monitoring vital signs. My mother continued making soft sounds, not quite moans, just the gentle vocalizations of someone drifting in and out of consciousness.

Burlington in 1967 was a small county seat, probably no more than 3,000 people, serving the farming communities scattered across Kit Carson County. The hospital was a modest, multi-story building, nothing like the medical complexes we know today, but the best medical care available for hundreds of square miles.

Upon arrival, the smell struck me immediately. Hospitals have their own distinct scent: disinfectant and floor wax and something else, something medical and slightly sweet. It's a smell that would stay with me for decades.

We entered through the emergency doors, which seemed enormous from my six-year-old perspective. The hallways were tiled in that institutional green that was popular in the 1960s, lit by fluorescent lights that hummed softly overhead. Everything echoed: footsteps, conversations, the squeak of gurney wheels on linoleum.

But the most profound moment came in the elevator.

I was standing next to my mother's stretcher as we rose to whatever floor housed the treatment rooms. The elevator was small and cramped, filled with paramedics and hospital staff, all focused on my mother's condition. And then, in that confined space between floors, all the sound stopped.

The gentle moaning she had been making since the accident, it simply ended. There was no dramatic moment, no violent jerking or gasping. The sounds just disappeared, leaving an eerie silence that seemed to fill the small elevator like a presence.

All the sound just disappeared. Eerie silence.

Death remained a mystery to me, not really understood. No frame of reference existed for understanding that I might have just witnessed my mother's last moments. The silence simply became another part of this strange day, and I continued floating through the experience like a leaf on a river.

When the elevator doors opened, nurses and doctors took charge. They whisked my mother away to places I couldn't follow, and I was left in the care of hospital staff who seemed to understand more about my situation than I did. They checked me thoroughly: X-rays for my limping ankle, examinations for cuts and bruises, questions about pain or dizziness.

But mostly they were kind. Nurses offered me candy and talked to me in gentle voices, trying to keep me comfortable while the adults handled the serious business of medicine and tragedy. In hindsight, I think they knew what had happened long before anyone told me.

Eventually, I was taken to meet my father, who had finished with the police and made his way to Burlington. He was sitting on an examination table in a small, narrow office, with just a desk in one corner and the examination table where he waited. The room smelled of antiseptic and had harsh fluorescent lighting that made everything look slightly unreal.

He was crying.

Never before had I seen my father cry. This brilliant man, who had mastered physics and navigated our immigration to America, was sitting on that examination table with tears streaming down his face. The meaning wasn't immediately clear to me, but some part of me knew that crying adults meant something fundamental had changed.

When he finally spoke, his words were simple and direct: "Haresh, your mom died."

The meaning was immediately clear and complete. My mother was gone forever. She would never come home with us. Our family of three had become a family of two.

But again, no emotional reaction came. No crying, no sobbing, no desperate hug for my grieving father. This information was simply absorbed the way I had absorbed everything else that day, with a strange, protective detachment that would stay with me for decades.

We made our way to a small strip motel on Burlington's main street, probably the only place in town that rented rooms to travelers. It was a typical 1960s motor lodge: double-story, rooms opening directly to the parking lot, with thin walls and cheap furnishings. We were on the second floor of the two-story section, overlooking a parking lot.

By evening, my father's college friends had begun arriving. Word had traveled through the small community of Indian graduate students scattered across Colorado's universities, and they were making the drive to Burlington to offer support. There were seven or eight people crowded into our small motel room, all of them speaking in the mix of English and Gujarati that marked our immigrant community.

I fell asleep surrounded by these voices, comforted by the familiar sounds of adults handling a crisis. But when I woke up, I was alone.

They had moved to another room to give me quiet space to sleep, but this wasn't clear to me. All I knew was that I opened my eyes to find myself abandoned in a strange place, my father nowhere to be seen.

I screamed as loud as I could.

They all came running, alarmed by the panic in my voice. I think it was my first real emotional reaction to everything that had happened — not grief over my mother's death, but terror at being alone. My father gathered me up and held me while I trembled, and I think we both understood that being apart, even briefly, was more than either of us could handle.

The next day, we went to see our car at the auto body shop. Nothing could have prepared me for the sight of what had been our home on wheels. It looked like a crushed soda can, every surface dented, every window shattered, the roof caved in and the doors hanging at impossible angles. It was hard to believe that anyone had survived what was clearly a complete destruction.

All of our belongings were scattered throughout the wreckage: clothes, books, the photographs that documented our American life, everything twisted and torn and mixed with broken glass and prairie dirt. I don't think we retrieved any of it. I don't think my father had the emotional strength to sort through the debris of our former life.

But he did save one thing: an electrical engineering textbook, muddy and torn but still intact. Years later, when he finally told me the truth about the accident, he gave me that book. "Here," he said, "this will come in handy. I think one day you'll become an engineer."

His aspiration for me was for me to become a doctor. But when that didn't work out, I did indeed become an electrical engineer. Sometimes I wonder if that damaged book carried some kind of prophecy within its torn and muddy pages.

The next day brought the surreal experience of my mother's funeral. Someone had found a suit for me to wear, not black, so the funeral director provided little black lapel patches for those of us who lacked proper mourning attire. Taking my place in the front row of a small chapel at the

Burlington cemetery, I was surrounded by my father's friends, who had driven from across Colorado to pay their respects.

The service was conducted by a local minister who had never met my mother but did his best to say appropriate words about a young woman who had died far from home. The chapel was simple and plain, probably serving Burlington's small Protestant community, not designed for Hindu ceremonies or Indian traditions.

At one point, my father asked if I wanted to see my mother one last time. I said yes; I did want to see her. But then he changed his mind. "I think it's better we don't," he decided, and we left the casket closed.

The funeral director had asked what she should be wearing, and my father had retrieved one of her saris from our belongings. But the funeral home had no experience with Indian dress. "How do we wrap it?" they asked. When my father couldn't explain, they did their best, probably draping the beautiful silk around her body in some approximation of proper form.

He left her jewelry on—the mangal sutra necklace that marked her as a married woman, the gold bangles that were almost like wedding rings in our culture. In traditional Hindu death rites, all jewelry is removed before cremation, but in his shock and unfamiliarity with Hindu customs, my father made the decision to let her keep these symbols of our family bonds.

In a proper Hindu funeral, her body would have been laid on a bed of wood along a holy river. A priest would have guided me through the sacred ritual of placing wood on top of her body, offering rice, coconut, and fruits for her long journey toward eventual reincarnation. This rite is given to the oldest son, and in my case, I was her only son. There would have been thirteen days of mourning. On the thirteenth day, a big feast and celebration would occur—it was believed the soul would depart only after the celebration was in full swing.

We did none of that. There was no priest or family guidance on the dos and don'ts. This was the late 1960s in rural Colorado, and there was no Hindu priest available to us. So, my dad did what he could and, most importantly, honored my mom's strange request from a month earlier to be buried, not cremated.

The burial took place on a bright, sunny day. Standing beside the open grave as they lowered the casket into Colorado soil, I watched this final separation between my mother and our family. Once again I was an observer, taking in every detail with my senses wide open: the smell of fresh earth, the sound of machinery, the sight of that simple casket disappearing into the ground.

Then, something in my memory shuts down. I have no recollection of the drive back to Denver or of getting on the airplane. The next thing I know, we're flying through the night toward Pittsburgh, leaving Colorado and my mother behind forever.

What I didn't know then, what wouldn't be revealed for another ten years, was the real reason our car had left the highway. My father hadn't been swerving to avoid an animal. He had been looking at a map, trying to navigate our route in the darkness, when he glanced up to see a reflector pole directly in our path. His reflexive yank of the steering wheel at eighty miles per hour had turned our car into a tumbling projectile.

What I also didn't know was how the lie he asked me to tell would follow us across continents. When we returned to India years later, village gossip would transform our tragedy into something darker. How could father and son, totally unscratched, survive while the mother died? The whispers would suggest intentional harm, turning our family's greatest loss into a source of shame and suspicion.

But those discoveries would come much later. On that August day in 1967, I was simply a six-year-old boy who had crawled out of a mangled car into a world that would never be the same. I carried with me the blankets that had saved my life, a story that wasn't quite true, and a loss so profound that it would take fifty-five years to fully understand its impact.

I didn't cry that day. I wouldn't cry for a very long time.

The ghost in my body was born in that wheat field outside Bethune, Colorado, and it would haunt me for the rest of my life, until I finally learned to listen to what it was trying to tell me.