

# **Everything has meaning.**

Inspiring stories about small moments and profound insights.







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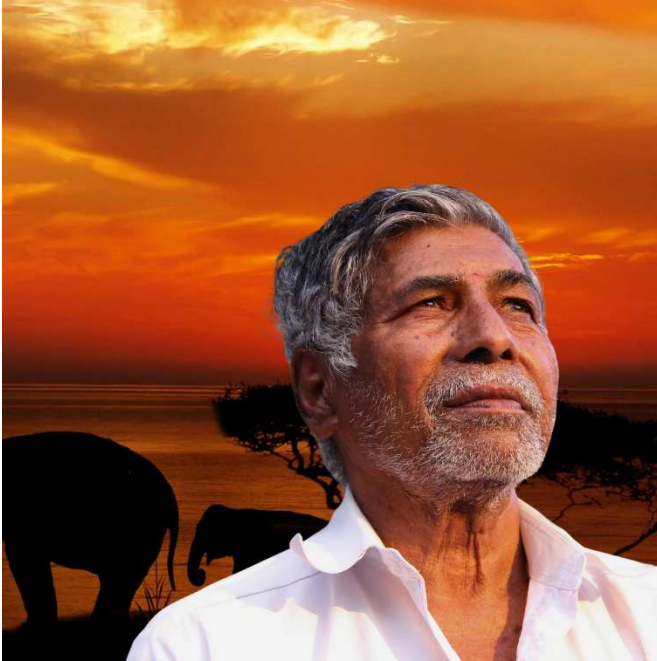
# Johnny the good guy

## Prolog

Trust is the cornerstone of every relationship, whether personal or professional. But what happens when that trust is repeatedly broken? When promises turn out to be empty words, and collaboration is disrupted by self-interest and mistrust? This is the story of a man who, despite everything, continued to believe in the power of honesty and connection, even in a world that kept letting him down.

Johnny, a man of Hindustani descent, was not one for grand speeches but for actions. He had a keen eye for opportunities and an unshakable belief in the potential of others. Yet, early in life, he learned that not everyone shared that same belief. In his pursuit of success and collaboration, he often encountered deceit, insincerity, and broken agreements. But instead of growing bitter, he chose to learn. Every obstacle, every disappointment became a stepping stone toward his vision of what it means to persevere in an unjust world.

This story takes you on a journey through a complex reality where morality and self-interest often collide. It is a tribute to the struggle of one man – and many like him – to find balance between hope and realism. Because sometimes, when trust seems to be at its lowest point, there's still a glimmer of light that reminds us why we keep trying.



## **Africa**

Africa is often associated with poverty, injustice, and corruption, particularly when it comes to international trade and business relations. Entrepreneurs attempting to establish partnerships on the continent frequently encounter obstacles that undermine their trust in fair collaboration. Stories of betrayal, unreliable partners, and disappearing investments are, unfortunately, not uncommon.

It seems like a vicious cycle repeating itself, where agreements are not honored, and promises from partners are often unfulfilled. Bureaucratic red tape, vague excuses, and hidden costs are frequently used as barriers to delay or even avoid payments.

This perception often leads to the view that the systems in some African countries are so intertwined with corruption and a lack of transparency that conducting business without the risk of being deceived appears almost impossible. This situation affects not only the entrepreneurs but also the broader economies of these countries, which are further distanced from the opportunities that fair and transparent trade could

provide. It creates a cycle of distrust, making it difficult to establish sustainable business relationships.

A deep-seated sense of insecurity and fear of scarcity seems to drive many people in these regions. The belief that one must take everything one can get, fearing future shortages, fuels a culture of short-term gain, prioritizing quick profit over building sustainable and fair business relationships. These survival instincts can lead to behaviors perceived externally as greedy or unreliable. However, at its core, such behavior stems from a profound fear of losing what one has or failing to meet basic needs.

Yet, it is crucial to remember that Africa is not a homogeneous entity. Numerous countries and communities are evolving, growing, and striving for progress. There are inspiring stories of entrepreneurs achieving success through honesty and cooperation, helping their countries and communities advance through fair trade and investments. These entrepreneurs prove that there is room for change and that despite the challenges, there are opportunities for sustainable progress.

However, the scale of the challenge should not be underestimated. The road to a fair, transparent, and sustainable business environment is long and fraught with obstacles. Negative stories often resonate the loudest, casting shadows of disappointment and betrayal over those who have lost faith in the system.

When discussing failed business deals and financial losses, we must ask ourselves: where does the root of this failure lie?

In many cases, it stems from a lack of trust – not only in others but also in the systems in which people operate. The absence of reliable infrastructure, difficulties in obtaining fair information, and the presence of corrupt intermediaries make conducting business with certainty a daunting task. Entrepreneurs driven by hope and trust continue to invest and believe in a better future, only to learn time and again that the path to success is rarely straightforward.

These stories should prompt us to reflect on the broader challenges facing Africa. As the world becomes increasingly globalized and business transactions cross borders, it becomes ever more apparent that structural

reforms are needed to establish the foundation for a more transparent and equitable business climate. This process will undoubtedly take time, and the changes will not occur overnight. Yet, we must continue to believe in the potential for positive change, even if the path forward is riddled with obstacles.

In the meantime, caution remains essential for entrepreneurs looking to do business in Africa or other parts of the world facing similar challenges. It is important not to rely solely on the promises of others but to systematically evaluate, identify risks, and create safety nets wherever possible to avoid vulnerable positions. It is a delicate balance between optimism and realism, between trust in others and maintaining healthy skepticism. The ultimate goal is to create an environment where mutual trust can flourish, businesses can thrive, and partnerships between various parties can stand the test of time.

Johnny shared this vision. He firmly believed in the power of collaboration, in honest Africans, and in the possibility of building a successful enterprise with reliable business partners. For him, it was only natural

that if he placed his trust and made an investment, it would lead to mutual benefit and a brighter future. Johnny wanted to provide the opportunities he had created for himself and bring his belief in the positive power of cooperation to life.

Unfortunately, he quickly realized that reality is often more bitter than the dreams one cherishes. The honest Africans he had hoped to find were, in practice, hard to come by, and the scoundrels he so fervently wanted to avoid were ready to take advantage of his kindness and trust. The system he thought he was operating within was not the transparent and cooperative one he had envisioned. Instead, he found himself confronted with a harsh lesson about the fragility of trust in a world often unwilling to uphold the same values and standards.

Johnny's story is a tragic example of how hope often succumbs to the harsh reality of unreliable partners and systems that hinder rather than support. The disappointment he experienced is a painful reminder for anyone who believes that cooperation and trust are always the keys to success, without considering the broader context in which they operate. It was a lesson

he had to learn at a steep price, but it was also one that could help others view their own entrepreneurial ventures with more realism.

Johnny was always a man of grand dreams, a heart full of ideals, and an unwavering belief in justice and collaboration. Despite the setbacks he had endured in his personal life, he decided in 2022 to breathe new life into his entrepreneurial spirit. His zest for life was not diminished by the challenges he had faced but sharpened instead. With renewed energy, he set his sights on Senegal, a country he saw as a land of promise – a place where the people were warm and hospitable, and where opportunities for fair trade beckoned.

With his carefully saved money in hand and a head full of ambitious plans, Johnny left for West Africa with confidence. His goal was clear: to establish partnerships with local entrepreneurs, whom he saw as the key to the growth and development of the country. He wanted not only to build a better life for himself but also to contribute to the advancement of local communities. His optimism was contagious, and he believed that



together with the people there, he could create something meaningful.

Johnny saw Senegal as a country brimming with potential, a place where he could use his experience and business acumen to make a real difference. He envisioned creating a platform for fair trade, centered on mutual trust and collaboration. His goal was to generate value for both parties: he would offer his expertise and provide local entrepreneurs with the resources they needed to grow their businesses. Johnny firmly believed in the power of partnership and was convinced that African markets, if approached correctly, held immense economic prospects.

His departure for Senegal was not merely a business decision but also a personal mission. Johnny felt a deep sense of responsibility to contribute to the development of a country he saw as promising, despite the challenges it posed. He had a clear vision: to make the world a better place, starting by conducting honest business and creating new opportunities for those around him.

Yet, despite his confidence, he knew that the path to success would not be easy. It would be a process of trial and error, but Johnny was willing to give his all to turn his dreams into reality and fulfill the promises Senegal seemed to hold. However, what he could not foresee was how quickly his optimism would be tested by the harsh realities of working on another continent.

From bureaucratic hurdles to cultural differences, Johnny faced situations that pushed him to his limits. The idealized vision of opportunity and freedom had to be reconciled with the reality of daily struggles and the need for adaptability. But it was precisely in those struggles that the essence of Johnny's journey lay: discovering that success is not solely determined by the end goal but by the perseverance and self-belief one exhibits along the way.

His story promised growth and resilience, of falling, rising, and finding strength in adversity. Yet, as life often is, his journey was unpredictable and full of twists. Where Johnny had hoped for a straightforward path to his dreams, the obstacles were sometimes

overwhelming. "Tough luck" – not every chapter of his journey went as planned.

Nevertheless, Johnny did not give up. Each disappointment, no matter how painful, brought him new insights. It was the blend of setbacks and triumphs that gradually unveiled the true essence of his journey: success was not in perfection, but in the unwavering determination to keep moving forward. With every stumble, he learned, and with every victory, he grew.

In this ongoing struggle, Johnny discovered his strength – not in grand gestures, but in the quiet resilience that arose from within. He made a promise to himself: despite all the warnings and doubts surrounding his support for Africa, he would persevere. This resolve became his anchor, a steady force that propelled him forward through the uncertainties, knowing that the path ahead might be difficult, but it was his path to walk.



Despite the warnings from experienced friends who had told him about the difficult business relationships they had encountered with African partners in the past, Johnny decided to follow his own path.

Even 30 years ago, Johnny's friends had warned him against doing business with Africans. Not out of hostility or hatred, but because of the deeply rooted cultural and historical barriers that had developed over the years. They were not against African people themselves but against the system in which they were operating, a system deeply influenced by the traumas of the colonial past.

This painful history of oppression and exploitation under white rulers had left a lasting impact on the way African societies evolved. It had not only weakened the economies of these countries but also eroded trust and the willingness to cooperate fairly, both among the people themselves and with outsiders. The legacy of mistrust and lack of transparency cast a shadow over every business relationship. For generations, people in many African countries had learned to be cautious to survive, often needing to protect their own interests through opaque or unreliable dealings.

Johnny, however, did not see this – or perhaps he chose not to see it. His optimism and belief in the goodness of humanity were stronger than the warnings he received. He firmly believed that history would not define the future, that Senegal was different, that the people there had changed, that the country and its markets were on a new path, and that he could contribute to this positive change.

He chose to believe in the power of individual enterprises and the possibility of breaking the system, despite the painful scars left by the past. For him, it was

a matter of trust: trust in his partners, trust in the promise of Africa, and trust in the possibility of an honest and transparent business relationship. But that unresolved history and the resulting patterns would ultimately test his plans and dreams.

The warnings he had received, though born out of experiences of mistrust and disappointment, would turn out to be a hard lesson. What began for him as an opportunity to advance both himself and his African partners would ultimately lead to the realization that the trust he had placed in others was not always reciprocated.

At first, everything indeed seemed promising, and it looked as if the business would run smoothly. Johnny was immediately surrounded by a group of charismatic business partners who presented him with a vision of success. They flocked to him like bees to honey, all enthusiastic about the opportunities that would open up for them. These people, with their radiant smiles and confident talk, assured Johnny that his investments were safe and that they would collectively build something great. The future seemed full of possibilities,

and Johnny, driven by hope and ambition, decided to fully commit to this collaboration.

The partners, with their charming stories, spoke passionately about a series of projects that seemed to magnetically attract them. They mentioned agricultural initiatives, tourism, and the trade of local products as the cornerstones of their shared success. Mangoes, cashew nuts, and handmade jewelry would form the basis of their enterprise – products that were not only valuable in the region but also gaining worldwide interest. The possibilities seemed endless, and Johnny felt drawn to the promising future being presented.

With trust in the smiles and reassuring words of his new partners, Johnny plunged into the collaboration. His enthusiasm was immense; he firmly believed in the vision that was being laid out before him. It seemed the start of something beautiful and successful. But Johnny could not yet foresee that these dazzling promises would slowly transform into a darker reality, where interests were not always genuine, and the cost of blind trust would prove high.