From Adversity to Achievement: The Inspiring UPSC Journey of Sushmitha and Ishwarya Ramanathan

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The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Civil Services Examination (CSE) is often regarded as the toughest and most prestigious examination in India. With an extensive syllabus, rigorous selection process, and fierce competition, it demands an extraordinary level of dedication, resilience, and perseverance from aspirants. While many dream of clearing this exam, only a few make it to the final list. Among those who have triumphed over immense hardships to achieve their goal are two remarkable sisters—**Sushmitha Ramanathan and Ishwarya Ramanathan**, daughters of a humble farmer from the **Cuddalore district in Tamil Nadu**. Their journey from financial struggles to securing top ranks in UPSC is nothing short of inspiring.

Humble Beginnings and Unwavering Determination

Born into a small agricultural family, Sushmitha and Ishwarya faced numerous hardships growing up. Their family struggled with financial constraints, making it difficult for them to access quality education and resources. However, the most devastating moment in their lives came in **2004**, when the **Indian Ocean tsunami** destroyed their home and left them in deep distress.

While such a tragedy could have broken their spirit, the sisters chose to rise above their circumstances. Instead of succumbing to despair, they used their challenges as motivation to work harder and pursue a career that would not only transform their own lives but also help uplift others in society.

A Tale of Grit: Ishwarya’s UPSC Journey

Among the two, **Ishwarya Ramanathan**, the younger sister, was the first to clear the **UPSC Civil Services Examination**. Her journey is an example of persistence and the will to improve.

- **2018 Attempt:** She first cracked the UPSC exam in **2018**, securing an **All India Rank (AIR) of 628**. She was allotted the **Indian Railway Accounts Service (IRAS)**, but her heart was set on becoming an **IAS officer**.
- **2019 Attempt:** Not satisfied with her initial rank, Ishwarya decided to attempt UPSC again in **2019**. This time, she worked even harder, refined her strategy, and successfully secured an impressive **AIR 44**, making her eligible for the **Indian Administrative Service (IAS)**.
- At the age of **22**, Ishwarya achieved her dream and joined the **Tamil Nadu cadre** as an **IAS officer**. Currently, she serves as the **Additional Collector (Development) in Tamil Nadu’s Thoothukudi district**, where she plays a key role in governance and public service.

Sushmitha’s Struggles and Ultimate Triumph

Unlike her younger sister, **Sushmitha Ramanathan** had a much tougher journey. Her path was filled with setbacks and repeated failures, but she refused to give up.

- **First Five Attempts:** Sushmitha appeared for UPSC multiple times but failed to clear the exam in her first five attempts. Each failure tested her patience and resilience, but she remained determined.
- **Sixth Attempt (2022):** After years of perseverance and self-improvement, she finally **cleared UPSC in 2022**, securing **AIR 528** and earning a place in the **Indian Police Service (IPS)**.
- **Current Posting:** Sushmitha is currently serving as the **Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) in the Kakinada district, Andhra Pradesh**. Her story is a testament to the fact that failure is not the end—it is just another step toward success.

Lessons from Their Journey

The success story of **Sushmitha and Ishwarya Ramanathan** is more than just an inspiring tale—it is a roadmap for every UPSC aspirant who faces obstacles in their journey. Here are some key lessons to take away:

1. **Resilience Overcomes Hardship:** No matter how difficult the circumstances, perseverance and hard work can lead to success. The sisters’ ability to rise above financial struggles and personal losses is a lesson in resilience.
2. **Failure is a Stepping Stone to Success:** Sushmitha’s repeated failures did not stop her from achieving her dream. Instead of giving up, she used her setbacks as an opportunity to improve.
3. **A Strong Support System Matters:** Despite their hardships, the unwavering support from their family played a significant role in their journey. Surrounding yourself with people who believe in you can make a huge difference.
4. **Consistency and Hard Work Pay Off:** UPSC preparation requires long-term dedication. Both sisters remained disciplined, consistently worked on their weaknesses, and refined their approach over multiple attempts.
5. **Never Settle for Less:** Ishwarya’s decision to reappear for UPSC even after securing a respectable rank in 2018 shows that one should always aim for their true goal rather than settling for something less.

Motivation for Future IAS Aspirants

The journey of Sushmitha and Ishwarya Ramanathan is a **beacon of hope** for all UPSC aspirants. It proves that **background, financial struggles, or past failures do not determine success**—it is **determination, hard work, and persistence** that shape one’s destiny.

If you are an **aspiring IAS, IPS, or IFS officer**, remember:

- The road may be long, and challenges may be many, but **every setback is an opportunity to grow stronger**.

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- Believe in yourself, stay **consistent with your preparation**, and never hesitate to **rebuild your strategy** if needed.
- **Success is not about how fast you reach your goal but about how determined you are to never give up.**

Let the story of **Sushmitha and Ishwarya** serve as a **reminder that no dream is impossible**. If they can do it, so can you! Keep striving, keep learning, and one day, you too will achieve your dream of serving the nation. **Your journey starts today!**

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