

A-man who never gives up

Journey of a life time

AMAN KUMAR SHARMA

Do you know life?

Life, as defined by dictionary, is the period of time when a person is alive. The experience of being alive.

But how do you define it? How do you see it? How does it affect you?

After having a typical experience, if you'd ask me, I define it as 'hilarious'. Hilarious because sometimes it will make feel comfortable for a while then after some time it will leave you hanging. It will make you feel joy but at the same time sad. It will make you say 'maybe I'll get it next time' but then you don't. It's funny how it will give hope and then you embrace it, but after some time, you'll end up with nothing in your arms. It will sometimes knock you down and wait for you until you get back on your feet and hit you again on your tummy. Life's a game made for everyone. And everyone must play. Life will make you fat. Life will make you feel some wonders. Life... is not always positive. Life can be hell but sometimes can be heaven. Life has too many adjectives to define. Life is hard but simple. Life is I don't know. It's very complicated. Life is cruel and unforgiving, yet so damn beautiful. See, life has many definitions. It depends on how life showed its dark corners and colorful edges to the person and on how people took life's contact.

This story that I'm going to tell you is a four-year story of my life. I hope you'll learn many things from it and may it change your view towards life.

*The explanation given below is based on a true incident happened with AMAN KUMAR, who has been hijacked on a vessel and stayed for 4 years in one of the world's most known **PIRATE AREA, SOMALIA**. This story reveals about bravery, faith in god, will power, hope, calmness, and kindness.*



I am “AMAN KUMAR”, a seafarer. I finished my studies in a maritime academy in Kolkatta during 2009. I first joined the seas in the year 2010. At this time my age was 18 years old and I was on my maiden voyage on “ M.V.ALBEDO”, a container ship which was owned by the company named “ MAJESTIC ENRICH SHIPPING” from MALAYSIA. The owner of the ship was an IRANIAN named “OMID KHOUSHIRO JARDI”. I flew to join the ship from INDIA to DUBAI on 16 Oct 2010 and stayed in the hotel for a day. On 18 Oct 2010 I joined the vessel on JEBEL ALI PORT, DUBAI. The ship was being chartered by “IRISL” before, but when I joined the vessel the charter, along with the route, were changed under the guidance and thorough inspection of a surveyor.

After changing this charter and route, the vessel sailed for the first time on a different run from PAKISTAN to IRAN then DUBAI. On 18 NOV I had a discussion with my family regarding the place named “Mombasa “(KENYA). I told them that it’s not a safe place to sail. We were 23 crew members on the vessel with 5 different nationalities onboard which are as follows: 7 Pakistani, 3 Bangladesh, 6 Sri Lankan, 2 Indian, and 1 Iranian.

On 19 Nov 2010, we departed from Dubai to Mombasa, where we must reach on the 2nd Dec. On 26 Nov 2010, in the early morning, I was in bed. At exactly 07.13, an emergency alarm was sounded. The Chief Officer announced through PA saying, “ALL CREW ON STANDBY WITH THE HOSES. PIRATE BOAT IS NEARING TO OUR VESSEL.” As soon as I heard the alarm ringing, I got up from my bed and immediately rushed to the poop deck. There I saw the duty crew and a small thing heading towards our ship from the port quarter. I was unable to see it properly because of the obstruction caused by the rays of the sun.

The pirate boat was approaching from the same direction. After couple of minutes I, with the duty crew, switched on the supply to the wire and closed all the emergency exits and the doors. After finishing with this work, we again came to the poop deck. We both saw the pirate boat approaching our ship and approximately one nautical mile away from our ship.

At this situation, I went blank as I saw the boat, with pirates holding guns in their hand, and asked myself a question “Is this really happening?” The pirates on boat were dark in color, like tar, with no clothes on them. They looked to me like chimpanzees. Watching them in this appearance, I got afraid and decided to leave the place and rush towards the accommodation. I went inside and saw that everybody was running towards the bridge. So I too followed them and accompanied everybody to the bridge. After getting into the bridge, I saw that the pirate boat was already alongside and they were ready to be onboard as they hung the ladder onto our vessel’s deck. One of the pirates was onboard. There were all together four pirates. Three of which were on our vessel, while one of the pirates stayed on the boat. The remaining two started to climb the ladder. The most frightening thing was that the pirate who stayed on their boat was holding a rocket launcher in his hand pointing towards the bridge. The other guys who were boarding onto our vessel had AK47s. As we had closed all the emergency escapes and doors, there was no route for pirates to get inside the accommodation, but unfortunately they found the way. In our container ship, we had a ladder from the deck straight to the bridge from front side of the accommodation. The pirates were able to come up to the bridge and as they arrived on the bridge, the first thing they did was to start shooting on the windows and broke them apart then got inside the bridge. When these pirates were firing to break the glass, the whole crew was afraid and rushed immediately down inside the engine room.

They started announcing from the bridge to the whole ship using their local (SOMALIAN) language that everybody must gather on the bridge within 10 minutes. After this, they started moving one deck down (the deck below the bridge). This deck in accommodation had 3 cabins comprising the captain, third officer and captain's office. Everybody was hiding in the engine room except for the captain and third officer. Both these guys were in the captain's office, busy in sending the mail to the company and to anti- piracy center in Kuala Lumpur. The pirates first entered into the captain's cabin and started firing but found nobody inside the cabin. Same happened with third officer's cabin. At last they started to shoot the captain's office, which was the only remaining cabin on that deck, but both of them had locked it from the inside. Unfortunately, the pirates managed to open the door by breaking the lock. From there they entered inside the captain's office and found our captain with third officer. As they found both of them, they started beating them with AK47 butts and hands, then took them to the bridge. While going to the bridge, the pirates broke the third officer's hand. When they reached the bridge, the pirates started to ask the captain, "Where are the others?" Captain replied, "I am unaware of their actions." The pirates didn't accept this answer so they were asking the same question every time. Approximately after 10 minutes they threatened the captain by saying that if our whole crew is unable to come to bridge within 10 minutes then they will hang the both of them to death.

The captain made an announcement through PI from bridge "Attention all crew, please do come here on the bridge. Failure to such will mean the death of me and the third officer." The whole crew was listening to the conversation between the pirates and captain for the last 20 minutes or so. We could hear the firing going on on the bridge just to create a frightening atmosphere to the whole ship. Nobody arrived to the bridge after 10minutes. After some time, there was again an

announcement by the captain, “They gave us a 5 minute maximum or else they will start to shoot us.” The chief engineer and chief officer said to the whole crew, “We all here are on the same ship and like a small family, so we will go to the bridge and be ready to face these pirate’s torture or any other situation which will be created in front of us.” We then left for the bridge. As everybody was entering the bridge, the pirates started beating each crew one by one. After finishing with their slamming to crew members, they started sending us one by one to the bridge wing. On the bridge wing, the pirates ordered the whole crew to kneel down on knees with their hands raised in air. We were in the same position mentioned above for an hour with only 3 pirates. The other remaining one pirate was still down in their boat. At that very moment, you can say that the pirates already captured our vessel.

After capturing the vessel and while the whole crew was on their knees, one of the pirates showed the captain a small vessel and said, “That is our mother ship and our other colleagues are waiting over there. So start moving your vessel towards the mother ship.” The mother ship had 8 other pirates onboard plus the weapons were there. The captain followed them and shifted the vessel to their mother ship. The pirates, through the skiffs, transferred the weapons along with the other pirates on that mother vessel to our ship. So all in all, 12 pirates were now onboard. They ordered the captain to lift their skiff and secure it on our vessel. The captain did it by sending chief officer, bosun and two deck crew. They lifted the pirate’s skiff and secured it onboard by the means of crane. They left their mother ship (fishing trawler) in the sea. Then one of the pirate’s leaders said to the captain, “Don’t you dare to cheat us or otherwise we will shoot everybody.” Then the leader of the pirates handed over one position to the captain and ordered him to get the ship onto that position. So the captain positioned it accordingly in his GPS program and we started to move with a course. The position where we were

captured to the final destination, which was Somalia, counted approximately 1200nm. I was too afraid and started crying in front of the crew members and started asking them, “What will be happening to us? Can we still go home?” Various questions started to arise in my mind. They had just allowed only the chief engineer and the oiler to go to the engine room and watch over the main engine. Chief cook was in the galley, preparing food. This was the routine that continued for two days. The cook used to prepare the food and brought it to the bridge. The whole crew used to have food in the bridge and the pirates were advising the whole crew that as we get our ransom, we will be free and can go home safe. They will give us a chance to make a call to our families as we reach the Somalia. They used to tell the crew “NO PROBLEM. MONEY COME. YOU HOME”.

After 2 days, a warship crossed our ship and at this moment, all the pirates onboard were afraid. They ordered us to maintain a CPA (distance) of around one nautical mile. They called the whole crew to the bridge and kept pointing the gun every time onto our heads. The security around the crew was very much tight. Finally, 1st Dec 2010 we reached Somalia and dropped the anchor on the Somali coast, morning at 08.00. All the pirates were too much happy and they started calling their higher authorities. Then after few hours, these higher authorities were onboard and started to celebrate. All the pirates were happy and brought more security force onboard. This time the security was made of 30 people. Two pirates who hijacked the ship went out and went to their native places while the other two stayed. After finishing with the celebration, the bosses (pirate head commander and the leader) were back on the ship with their language transmitter carrying with them for 20 days. The local Somali guys were not able to speak the English language thoroughly. They then called the owner of the vessel from the ships satellite telephone and they spoke with the owner. “We have hijacked your vessel.

We want \$20 million for the ransom.” The owner was in panic and agreed to pay the pirates \$300,000. They were not happy with the agreement and raised their nose. They started speaking with owner, “We are not beggars. If you fail to give us the demanded cash, then we will start harassing the crew and kill one by one.” After finishing the conversation between the pirate leader and the owner, the Somali guys locked everybody in one room. The captain gave the standing orders to his crew that one officer, along with one deck crew member, will be doing 4 hrs watch on bridge and if in case the pirates require any food or anything else, it will be these two guy’s duty to provide them. This lasted for one month.

The pirate’s translator came onboard on 20 Jan 2011, after a month, and had a conversation with the owner. They made the same agreement which they had before with the owner. The owner was saying that he’s trying his best to collect the required amount as he himself was unable to get the ransom they have agreed. After this, the translators went off from the ship and then they started contacting with the owner. At the end of Feb 2011 these guys came onboard again and had a chat with the owner. The owner now agreed to pay the pirates with \$700,000. During that time, the pirate commander started torturing the whole crew and asked them, “What is inside the containers?” The captain replied that he knew nothing about the insides of the containers for the vessel was only chartered. The pirates started to think that the captain was only fooling them. They claimed that the containers had guns and rifles stored inside which the captain was avoiding to be revealed. After some time, the pirates asked the captain to call the chief engineer. After the chief engineer arrived, they started to ask the same question. The chief engineer answered the same. Then they started to question him with regards to how much quantity of fuel remained onboard. The chief engineer gave them answers but they were unsatisfied. The pirates got angry and started to torture and beat the

chief engineer with guns. They also tied his hands and legs and started shooting with bullets near to his head. The chief engineer cried and spilled the exact amount of the fuel remaining onboard but the pirates were not responding and this went on for 2 hours. The pirates went to the engine room and started searching everything they wanted from which they can make money. Whenever they came across any valuable things on the vessel, they used to remove them from the location and carry them ashore. At the end of Feb 2011, the water, food or whatever was present on vessel was finished by this time. Then, the pirates started providing food from land like pasta, rice, potato, onion, flour and sometimes mutton.

We were making freshwater through the freshwater generator by running the main engine which we were using for our daily purposes. By the time, we were almost out of diesel oil. We started to explain this to the pirates but they were unable to believe us. They used to say that they don't know anything. They were also claiming that we were just hiding diesel oil somewhere on the vessel. The engine crew showed them all the possible tanks in the engine room but still they were stuck with the same reply. Then the chief engineer and the captain made a plan to try and explain to the pirates that they will only start the generators at night for cooking and electricity and switch it off during morning because we were falling short of diesel oil. After explaining this, the pirates agreed with the decision made. We started the routine afterwards.

On 5th of March 2011, the diesel oil which was remaining onboard ran out totally. The pirates were unable to believe this and started torturing the crew one by one. They took the chief engineer to the forecastle and tied him with ropes and started to torture. They opened his clothes and made him lie down on a hot plate with his chest resting on it. Not only that, but when they finished with this, they also started beating him. Along with this, they were asking him to start the

generators but he was consistently convincing them that we already ran out of diesel oil. He said that we were not having a single drop of diesel oil anywhere in the engine room. With this, they started hitting him to start the generator and after approximately 45min, the chief engineer became unconscious. Then they called second engineer, whose age was 60, and started doing the same things they did with the chief engineer. The reply of the second engineer was the same as the chief. This lasted for about half an hour. After that they brought the second engineer inside the accommodation leaving the chief on the forecastle in an unconscious state.

The pirates then called captain and said to him that the chief engineer was in a state of dying and told him to bring the chief to the accommodation. Immediately, the captain sent me and the bosun to the forecastle with a stretcher and we both brought him back to the accommodation. The pirates and the commander told the captain that until the time we start the generator none of the crew of our vessel will be provided with any kind of stuff. Slowly, the time was going and started to become darker. The pirates started getting angry and called the whole crew in bridge. They again started hitting us one by one and took everybody to B deck. There they threw everybody into the swimming pool and started harassing us one by one. The chief engineer was still unconscious during that time. Then they called the second engineer again and asked him to start the generator, but he replied with the same answer and again they started beating and shooting him to make a frightening atmosphere. For that, the second engineer got frightened and in a panic state, he raised his hands and got shot with one bullet in his hand. It started bleeding which caused everybody to get more afraid. After that, the pirates then called the captain and started searching diesel oil in the engine room. These pirates didn't supply us with any food or water for 36 hours. They were pissing on

the crew members from the bridge into the swimming pool, where the rest of the crew was dumped.

This was one of the most unforgettable nights of my life. After searching for almost 3 hours, they found the incinerator diesel oil tank. Upon seeing it, they asked captain, "What is there inside the tank?" The captain started explaining what that is actually and what it does. Then they asked captain how much diesel oil is present inside that tank. To this, the captain replied that we might be having around 100l metric tons of diesel oil inside. As the captain gave his answer, the pirates started torturing the captain and said, "You are a liar together with your whole damn crew! Call the engineers and start the generator!" They sent one of the pirates near the swimming pool and asked him to call the engineers to start the generator. The third engineer and the oiler went on the bridge and transferred this diesel oil from the incinerator to the main diesel oil tank. After starting the generator, the pirates started beating these 2 guys and this was the moment where pirates lost trust in us. They started creating problems to us. After 2 days, this diesel ran out but still pirates didn't believe us and said that they don't have diesel in Somalia. They said that they don't know anything about the generator and just start the generator. They also said that if we can convert sea water into fresh water, then we can convert heavy fuel oil into diesel oil. The engineers explained that it's not possible but they had lost trust so they just wanted the generators to be started. They kept us again for 48hrs without food and water. They again started searching the ship but unfortunately they were unable to find anything in the engine room. They started torturing each and every engineer and finally brought 200l metric tons of diesel from the land. Then they sent the chief cook for preparing the food. The main problem then came because of the lack of fresh water. The 200l metric tons of diesel we got from Somali pirates were finished by running main engine and

generator. With this quantity of diesel oil, we could only generate 1.5 tons of fresh water. After few days, we were done with that diesel oil too. All the crew members were getting 5 liters of fresh water for their daily usage. Let it be for waste, bathing, drinking, etc.

On the 20th of March, the pirate commander arrived onboard and again had a chat with owner for ransom. This time, the owner offered them \$1 million , but still they stuck to their old demand. Finally, after finishing the conversation, the translator said to the commander and to the other pirates that the owner is not good and he will be unable to get the amount they require, so it's better to make the deal with him for a million dollars. He also advised to keep our vessel as a mother ship and hijack other ships in the Indian Ocean to collect some cash. The owner agreed to pay and take all the crew members from the Indian Ocean. Some pirates did agree with this but there were also a few who were not agreeing with this. At last, they said to the captain that they will discuss this ashore and inform us. They left the vessel afterwards.

On the 1st of April 2011, the pirate's head commander arrived on the vessel with a new plan and with a new translator. This new translator was motivating us and said that we will be released soon. He also said that we mustn't worry because he was there for the negotiation. Our officers asked him if we can talk with our family as it had been almost 6 months since we conversed with them. The commander agreed and made everybody talk with their family. It was over 6 months since I talked with my parents. We all informed them that our ship had been hijacked by the pirates and asked our family members to convince the owner to pay the money and relieve us from there as soon as possible. On the last time, the translator talked with the owner and said, "I am the new translator and this is my mobile number." He made the captain talk with the owner to make sure that

he's the new translator and not a fake guy. The owner replied that he has only 1 million dollars and can't pay more than that. He also said that in the ransom, half of this money is paid by the Malaysian government and he hung up the call. The commander and the translator became angry and called the whole crew to the bridge. They said to the captain that from now on, no one is allowed to move from the bridge. Everybody has to stay only on the bridge. Then they assembled the whole crew on the bridge and left ashore by evening. The pirates were tight, even going for toilet or any other sort of like that, we should ask permission from them. If they deny this, then we will be unable to pass. In this case, they allow us to do such things within just two minutes. Within which, we should finish with whatever work we had and come again or else, if it gets late, then the pirates will start torturing and asking the reason for coming late. After ten days, the commander together with the translator went onboard again. They started torturing the captain, chief engineer and chief officer because they had got information that we are carrying weapons within our containers. They started to unlock the containers and found rice, lube oil, dinner sets. In a container they found a car and sanitary items. In others, they found a big truck. On April 10, they took the captain, chief officer, and chief engineer ashore and kept them in the jungle. They started beating and torturing them very badly and talked to the owner. They were asking to increase the money or they will kill the third officer that night. Even with this, the owner replied with same answers every time. The owner was telling that that was the maximum amount of money which he can pay to the pirates. So pirates kept third officer, captain, and chief engineer in the jungle. After a few days, they kept the above mentioned crew in a small village, where they built a house in a canopy shape for 35 days. They tortured them as usual and in this period, the pirates were

still constantly trying to increase the amount, but the owner stayed with his statement and didn't increase the amount.

After 35 days they arrived back on the vessel. At the same time, the Indian Navy had captured some Somali pirate boats, which caused the pirates in Somalia to be angry with Indians. On the 20th of June 2011, all the pirate commanders and the translator came on the vessel and they called again the owner. They started threatening the owner by saying that he only has 5 five days remaining to pay the ransom. Failure in paying the amount will lead to the death of 5 crew members. The owner replied, "If you harm my crew I will finish your families." The pirates heard this statement from the owner and they became angrier. Thus, the countdown began. On June 25, 2011, they called the owner but he didn't receive their call. They tried more than 30 times but he refused in picking up the call. The pirates called all the crew members in the bridge around 2:15 pm. All the pirates were on standby with their normal wear of guns and rifles. One of the pirate commanders arrived on the bridge and started watching one by one each of the crew and after having a glance of the overall crew, he went out. This commander went outside and told another pirate to go inside and call the crew member named "RAJOO PRASAD RAJBHAR", he was from India. They brought him on the aft of the accommodation and tied him with the ropes on his hands. They shot 3 bullets in his chest using AK47 at 2:25pm. We heard the sound on the bridge and after one hour the pirates called the captain and told him that they have already killed one of our crew members because our owner refused in answering their calls. They also threatened the captain that if the owner doesn't increase his amount, they will start killing us one by one. The pirates made a video to say they had shot one already and send it to the owner. Then the captain came inside the bridge and told that they have already shot Rajoo because our owner was unable to give them the money

they required. He also mentioned that if the owner is unable to pay the money, they will start shooting us one by one but we, the whole crew, didn't believe him.

I was too afraid at this moment because this was the time when the Indian navy had captured a few of their pirates. They were angry with Indians and I thought that I will be the next member from our vessel that was going to be hung to death. I started begging God to spare my life. After 3 hours the pirates called the chief engineer in order to ask what he wants. Whether we want to keep Rajoo's body in the fridge or just throw his body in the sea. The chief engineer replied to them that he will first discuss it with the chief officer and let them know afterwards. Then the chief officer sent 4 crew members to take the body of Rajoo and keep it in the deep freezer. That time I was also unable to believe, together with anybody on the ship, that they had killed my friend. I started to believe when both of the chiefs arrived on the bridge, with other 4 crew members, saying that they had killed him. The pirates didn't feel any pity for what they did. As for them, shooting a person or killing them is just like a cricket game in which the ball is being hit by the batsman with no regrets. There are groups made by pirates for catching ships and we were so unlucky because the group which had hijacked our ship is one of the deadliest groups of Somali pirates. This was their first ship they had hijacked. Again on 26th June 2011, the owner was being called. The owner replied that he can't give more than \$1million. The pirates started shouting to captain by saying, "Your ship is big, so the ransom is also big. Your owner is a fuck man. He is a liar. He has more money but he doesn't want to pay us. He is giving us an offer of only \$1million. Do we look like a beggar?" Our captain suggested to the pirates if they can lend him some money to call his wife and tell her about the whole story. Then his wife can collect some money from the NGOs

and raise funds. He also suggested that the pirates better start calling each of the crew's family to raise a fund and get the money they require.

All the crew members was informed about the situation and started to tell each of their family members to start collecting money otherwise the pirates will start killing us. After a couple of days, the pirates called the owner and he offered the pirates \$1.2million. The pirates talked to him loudly. The owner too started talking with them regarding with bullshit things and they hung up the call. The captain, along with the senior officers, sat together and decided not to talk with the owner because he used to talk something different other than the main issue. This time the pirates started pointing their finger on me and said that it's my turn after Rajoo. The chief officer decided to send me to the galley to help the cook so as to make me away from the pirate's visibility rather than being in front of them.

On 10 August 2011, a person called from Pakistan whose name was "Ahmed Chennoy." He was the head of an NGO. He started a negotiation with the pirates for all the crew and the ship and informed the pirates that he will be the mediator from the owner's side. From that day, he will negotiate about the money matters. Then the pirates replied that their demand is \$20million. If the owner can't pay, they will kill the crew members. Chennoy explained to the pirates that if they behave with the crew like that, they will not get any money. He pleased them to calm down and he will sort out this problem and come up with some solution. He warned the pirates that if they harm the crew, they will not get a single penny from the owner's side. From that day, negotiation between them started and the condition was getting worse until the time where we had a shortage of everything. The pirates handed over a small Honda generator to our vessel for phone charging and for lighting purposes. However, this was also fucked up till the end of august 2011. They started blaming the vessel members and kept the whole crew without

food and water for 48 hours. They started taking out cargo from the ship and said that if we take out 200 bags of rice every day, they will start serving us with food and water. We started working like this and looked like slaves for pirates. The weight of each load was 50kg not only the rice bags but also the lube oil. We used to carry them along. We were unable to carry the 50kg bags and because of that we were not served for 48 hours. Nobody complained about this to the pirates as everybody had fear in their mind that if we complain, they will shoot us. The generator was no more same as the lighting. We started to cook via fire.

In the month of Sept 2011 they took out the engine of the life boat and took it ashore. They started modifying this generator ashore so that they can generate electricity on vessel. First, they made the base and fitted the life boat engine on to the base and on the other side they fixed a dynamo. Between the dynamo shaft and the lifeboat shaft they connected the rubber pieces in between the both shafts. As both of the shafts were not aligning properly, they made an arrangement for this and created a rubber type of link in between and started the generator. This started producing electricity. This modified engine was then handed onboard and started the normal works of the vessel. They told all the engineers onboard that if this engine stops for any reason, then it will be the turn of all engineers to die. Chennoy was continuously negotiating with the pirates but the pirates' negotiator was not good. His name is "Killo". This Killo used to talk something with Chennoy, but the information which he used to give to the pirates was another thing. For example, he used to say to the pirates that the owner is having more ships but the real thing behind it was different. By this time, as I was working with the cook from Somalia, I had started learning their local language. Within few months, the pirates came to know that Killo was playing with them. Finally, Chennoy gave the pirates an offer of \$2million, but the pirates' negotiator said to the pirates that he wants a ransom

of \$6million. The pirates were now ready to accept this money but the pirates' negotiator had another plan in his mind. He wanted to keep this ship for a long time so that he will get more money. He lied to the pirates but at the same time he was in fear that the pirates will agree for \$6million. He brought the \$4million to the pirates but they were fully aware that he is playing with them, so these pirates started fighting with the negotiator and started hitting him badly. After this, the pirates' head commander called the captain and chief officer to call Chennoy and to ask him how much he's paying. Chennoy replied that he only have \$2million and trying his best to collect money by conducting seminars with NGO's and elsewhere.

In March 2012, the pirate's head commander arrived onboard and allowed chief officer and captain to talk with their families. The head commander ordered them to say to their family that they must tell Chennoy to increase the money somehow because our condition over here is very horrible. Without food and water, we don't know when death knocks. On 9th March, captain talked with Chennoy and pirate's demand now is \$6million. Chennoy replied that they should talk on the next day. So the next day, Chennoy offered the pirates \$2.5million however, all the pirates were so angry that everybody wanted to finish the deal as soon as possible. The pirates themselves were short of money. They cannot pay for the whole crew's needs every day which caused them to become angry plus the pirates' negotiator used to come and play his game. The pirates became angrier because of this. This time, the crew's condition was very much worse because as we were discharging the container items out for the Somalis, we were not served with food, water, with no clothes to wear and daily needs. The crew members were just surviving alive as it was going day by day. On 11 March 2012, the pirates head commander and the ship catcher called the captain and chief officer at 17.00 to

call Chennoy. He offered them \$2.85million for the last time. Chennoy said that he will not be able to pay more than that. In that amount, the \$1.25 million was the ship owner's share and the \$1.65 million was the Pakistani NGO's share. He promised to pay the pirates on 20 April 2012. The deal was on but afterwards the owner didn't give Chennoy any responses. On that day, the owner called and asked the pirates that he wanted to talk with the captain and the bosun. The owner said to the captain that we should navigate our vessel to Oman because they are going to give the money there. He said that he will be preparing an oil tug and a warship for our security. After couple of times we tried to talk to the owner but he refused in picking the call again. Chennoy told us that the owner was refusing in giving his share to him. The owner wanted Chennoy to give the money he had collected and the owner will give it to the pirates. Chennoy called the captain and asked for his advice. The captain advised Chennoy to never take a risk because that money was the only chance we could get out from that scenario. Chennoy then devised a plan that both of them must give each other's money to a third party and that third party will give that money to the pirates. Sadly, the owner didn't agree to this. After this, the owner didn't talk with Chennoy and the crew. The owner was sending some Malaysian government personnel to Pakistan to meet Chennoy and say to him that they were with the government and Chennoy must give his share to them and let them handle the situation. Nevertheless, Chennoy denied this agreement as he was firm with captain's statement. Afterwards, the owner was nowhere to be found. On the month of May, the pirates came with a new negotiator whose name is Mohammed Gafanjee. Mohammed was the second senior pirate of Somalia. He had more than 500 guards.

On the 1st of June 2012, the pirates took us from ship and kept us inside the jungle. The captain, chief and third officer, and fourth engineer were Pakistani, I

from India, one from Iran, one Bangladesh, and one Sri Lankan. We were 7 different people from 4 nations. The pirates started to torture the crew. On the next day, at 02.00, they ordered me to talk to my family and tell them that the pirates are going to kill me. They said that my family should collect money around \$1.25 million to save myself. The owner had done his deal and disappeared. During that time, the pirates made a deal individually. They were complaining that the Pakistani ransom, together with other nations, were already prepared so why can't India produce theirs? I was so afraid that time. I started speaking to my father crying and shouting in distress and was saying that the owner was playing with us through. The pirates have threatened me that if the owner is not paying or my parents they are going to kill me. The pirates also opened an agreement that if the Indian government will release the 200 pirates they have captured, I can be released from captivity. They beat me that night for about 2 hours and made the crew members call their family to pressure them. They never kept us in one place. Every day was a new environment. They kept us moving from one place to another. On the 2nd of June 2012, we started cooking food in the jungle where they had kept us. However, we were very unaware how to cook food so the pirates who were there taught us how. We were not having water with us, so myself and one Bangladesh crew was being called by the pirates and gave a 20-liter can. They ordered us to follow them and took us somewhere in the semi-desert which might be 2-3 kilometers away from where they were keeping us. The water which we used to bring for drinking purposes came from a canvas inside a pit hole on the ground made by the pirates. The rain water was collected inside that hole and we drank it without filters. Every three times a day, we walked barefoot to that pit hole to fill the can. This was how we lived. During the times of tardiness, we usually stop to regain our strength for 2 minutes. The pirates didn't like it so they will start

abusing and beating us. We stayed for 3 days on that place where we didn't have any shelter, blankets, bed sheets, just all the prickly bushes around us. We used to sleep on sand. One day it was raining and I was sick. I asked the pirates for some painkiller but they said that I should call my family and tell them to send money for medicines. We then changed places every 2-3 days because they were afraid of some tribes called Al-Shabaab. .

In July 2012, the pirates' negotiator had a chat with our captain and asked him if the ransom is ready so that we can go home already. The captain talked with Chenoy and he said that he's still trying and hung up the call. The chief officer talked with his wife in his own language and informed her to call Chenoy and tell him to take his time and do it for the whole crew. Throughout 10 days, Chenoy didn't pick the pirates' call as he was giving his full efforts to collect money and relieve the whole crew. In the mid of July 2012, the pirates started pressurizing our captain and chief officer. Chenoy finally said that he only had \$1million for 7 Pakistanis. The pirates got angry with this and started punishing the captain and chief officer. The pirates were getting angry because Chenoy said before that he collected \$1.65 million and now he's claiming that he only had \$1million. Chenoy defended that he was only told about the \$1.65 million but on his hand, he only got \$1million from the Pakistani government and NGOs. The pirates then started torturing all the Pakistani crew but suddenly, they agreed for that amount and released the Pakistanis. On 25 July 2012, Chenoy took 2-3 days for transferring the money to Somalia. He transferred the money from Dubai. The pirates gave the Pakistanis the flight tickets and the rest of the unreleased crew, including me, was held captive inside the jungle. We were separated from the Pakistanis. During this time, I thought that this will be my ending and never see that familiar place I called home. This time they gave me a chance to talk with my

family and inform them about Rajoo. They also ordered me to tell my family that it's my turn to die that night. I told my family that the Pakistanis are going to be released soon and begged them to collect the money as soon as they can. Mohammed Gafanjee had 3-4 troops and had his own base. He kept the 4 of us in his own security base. We were in a small room made up of wooden sticks. The roof was made up of tin and from the inside; we can see what was going outside. They used to keep it locked every time. We still have the same problem in there; lack of food and water. If they cook something for themselves, they used to give us little from that so we can survive. On the same night which they brought us to that base was the same time when the military commander of that base arrived. He warned us that we cannot escape from there in any circumstances and that everybody there was trained and were good shooters. We stayed 3 nights in that room. One night, they called one Iranian crew and started to torture him. They put a handcuff on one of his hands and the other was tied under the axle of the jeep. The pirates commenced in torturing him like hell. After midnight, they released his hand from the axle and removed his clothes. They started throwing chilled water on his body. Our colleague started to shiver and shout. The pirates closed his eyes with some cloth and started to torture him again while firing their AK47. We were inside the room and were secured. During that time, we thought that we lost another crew member. After 3 days passed, we did hear the sound of planes at night. The pirates got afraid and thought that some navy had arrived for rescuing the 4 of us. The pirates came inside the room, where we were kept, and we were tied up with handcuffs; one handcuff for two crews. As we were on Somali lands, we were not having any electricity. This was all happening under the dictatorship of Mohammed Gafanjee.

After couple of days, they changed our place and kept us inside a small town. In the end of August 2012, they made one video clip and sent it to the Indian government and to my family. My family then forwarded this video clip on to the news channel and media. This process was going on every day. In the month of September, they took the Bangladesh and Iranian into the jungle with their hands tied. Fifteen days passed as we begged God to spare our lives. Any pirate who used to come to our room used to say that the other two were already dead and frightened us that it will be our turn soon. On the 18th of September 2012, they brought the two crew members back to our place because that day was some Muslim festival called EID. They slaughtered a goat and gave us the meat as our meal. After few days, 4 ladies came to our place. We don't have any idea who were the ladies but when they saw our condition, they were shocked and felt pity on us. At that time, our clothes were too dirty with long hair and beard. A lady then went to a shop and brought us some new clothes along with food and water. That time the pirates didn't serve us any food for 2 days. She called the boss of that military base and told him to give 200 liters of water every day on us. That water was used for shower. She also asked us whether we smoked and we said yes. So she sent some lady to buy things for us like comb, cigarettes, scissors and blades for cutting our hairs and even brought some snacks and food to cook. She told us that those things are for us and not for the pirates. She told us that if we have any problem we should tell the boss then the boss will convey the message to her. If a message will reach her, she will come immediately. Actually that lady was an investor who used to provide food, snacks, water, and oil on the ship. We used to eat the food which they gave us for 10 days. After 10 days, 2 cars arrived and took us to some other place. We travelled for about 10 long hours. During that time, Gafanjee asked me if my money was ready. I didn't reply to him and stayed quiet.

He made me call my family and ask them how much money had been collected until that time. I talked with my family and informed them about my situation and asked them of what's going on with the money status. My father explained to me that they were trying harder to collect money. I told Gafanjee that my father was alone but was also trying his very best to collect the money. After I confessed to them the security guards started to abuse me and asked of how much money my family collected. I told them that we don't have any and that my father was visiting government agencies. My father will come up with a better result soon. They were not happy with my answer. They were saying that they need money and not excuses and I was hit again with guns. Until that time, I was with the 2nd engineer and the other two, which were the Bangladesh and Iranian, were on a different place. I and the second engineer started to think that we should run away from there or snatch some guns from the pirates and kill few of those terrorists and then get killed by them.

On Oct 2012, the pirates arrived to our place at night with Gafanjee along with his drivers and guards. They made us sit inside the car and the other two crews were also inside the car. The four of us were united once again together with the head commander of the ship who caught us. They took us to a jungle where there were two crooked type houses. We walked for about 30 minutes to reach the house after they dropped us. Inside that house, they start to torture us. The commander said that from day onwards he will start to kill everybody one by one because they were already fed up with our zero money updates. At first, they tied up the Iranian guy on his hands using a rope and started to torture me. Then they closed our eyes with some cloth and began to hit everybody. This was the most painful night of my life. The pirates took out our nails from our fingers. I was shouting and crying and begged them to just kill me in order to stop the suffering. I

cannot bear the hurt during that time. I told them that my family is poor and can't afford the ransom. The same thing happened to others too. After this punishment, they made us call our family and ask how much money they have collected. The pirates warned us that if we get nothing we will be killed on that spot. I called my family but the news was still the same. The government was not responding too well even though they already tried them. I told the pirates that my family was still collecting money but I'm not aware of how much it was. More than 8 days passed and the torturing situation was still there. After all the tortures, they separated us again. After couple of days, a fight broke between the Somali pirates and the militants because the pirates received \$1million from the Pakistanis but they didn't share this money with the investors. By this time, the pirates' commander said that they will take us over and will make money from us. However, Mohammed Gafanjee refused and didn't allow the commander to take us. In result, the lady investor's team took over the 4 of us.

On 25 Oct 2012, the guards took us from that place and kept us all together near the beach but even under their supervision we faced the same food problem. There were two small huts and families were living there. They saw our situation and felt pity for us. They saw that there was no food for us and then they started giving us 5 litres of milk in the morning and evening, this lasted for three days. On 28 Oct 2012, one car arrived and they ordered us to come inside the car. They started moving from the side of the beach. Everybody got panicked as nobody was aware of what's going to happen the next morning. We drove for two hours and saw our ship in the distance. The driver told us that we were all going into our ship. By hearing these words from his mouth, we felt a little bit relieved and happy. Then we sat on a small boat accompanied by 4 men with guns and they dropped us on our vessel. When our boat was already alongside, the whole crew onboard was

happy to see all of us. I saw that the security guards onboard were new. When we arrived onboard, all the new pirates were having their duties on vessel. The crew members then hugged each other and started asking any news regarding our disembarkation. We told them that we don't have any idea about that for we also asked the same question. There was no such news. I asked my friend, "Who are these new pirates? Where do they come from?" Then the crew started to explain and said, "When the Pakistan gave the ransom to the pirates who caught us, they didn't share the money to the investors. That's why before one month, these investors are taking the ship and us." So now, we are on the investor's hand. In contrary with the pirates, these investor guards are better because they are not shooting, hitting and torturing any crew. We were happy because of that. Then the investors replaced the old translator but latter changed him again with the first translator. In December 2012, the translator gave me a chance to talk to my family and ask about the status about the money they have raised. However, my family said that they haven't had the money yet and that they have a meeting in Delhi for the following days. A follow-up meeting also will be held after 20 days in Mumbai. Afterwards, I explained the news to the translator. Under the investor's domination, our life was better than with pirates because during those times we have freedom. We can go here and there even without permission. We, I and my Bangladesh friends, caught more fish there to pass the time. In the middle of December, they gave me a chance again to talk to my family and ask what's going on. My family was trying their best to gather more help. They also said that they have an NGO helping them, connected to three other NGOs. My mother told me to stay calm and not fight with the pirates, don't try to run away, stay in one place and also tried to cheer me up by saying that they will take me very soon. At that moment, hope whispered to my ears and I embraced it with no hesitation.

The investor guards were giving us food and 200 liters of water every day. When rain comes, all the crew members were too happy because we can take proper shower on the deck and collect some water for drinking. We also gave the pirates some water we collected. On some times when we don't have any food to eat, we beg to a lady guard via phone. That lady guard was very nice and never ignored our request even once. This process continued until mid- March. For a period of 3 days it rained and the ship was starting to stink. Then we started to investigate where the smell came from. We checked first the cargo holds and found out that half of it was already filled with water. After checking the hold I became senseless for 5 minutes because of the mixed fumes coming from it. And because of that our boatswain never allowed us to enter the hold. The boatswain only allowed himself to enter the hold with a breathing apparatus to operate the pump. Then, a fishing vessel requested us to make fast their fishing trawler on the stern of our ship. We took one current wire from their ship and connected it with ours to start the pump. Then the pump did its work to pump the water out from the hatch. However, the water increased because a hole was getting bigger and bigger at times. A hatch was then filled with water also. To counter the filling of water, we put three pumps on that hatch. Afterwards, the pirates gave us a chance to talk to our ship owner because they want the deal to be closed immediately. When the ship owner answered us, he didn't ask for the crew's condition but rather he was more concerned with his ship. Our ship then became trim by the forward. In June, the water also came to the engine room and nobody knows where the water came from.

On the 7th of July, we were 15 crewmembers onboard. At 7 pm I was cooking food for the Somalian pirates and for our crew. I and my Bangladesh friend were talking with the boatswain while the sea was rough. We predicted that

if this continues the ship will sink within 3 days. So, we better take the lifejackets and lifebuoys from the engine room and keep it up in the cabin. Then, both of my friends went to the engine room and brought 3 lifejackets and the three of us went to the bridge. Along the way, the ship listed to the port side without returning to the starboard and I started shouting. Then, the bosun started to ask me of why am I shouting. He warned me not to because the pirates might hear us and may cause some problems. On the same time, the ship was more listing to port side and some of the containers started to fall into the sea which caused us to shout, "The ship is sinking!" I hurriedly called the bosun and begged him to give me a lifejacket because of the fact that I don't know how to swim. I was too afraid back then. Other lifejackets were given to the crew. The entire crew was going to the poop deck because a fishing trawler was there. Everyone thinks that they will come and rescue us. Unfortunately, they don't have diesel oil to start their engine. One of the oilers, without a life jacket, jumped into the sea and swam towards the trawler. On the other hand, three of our Bangladesh crew jumped on the sea with 4 or 5 twenty liter cans made fast on their waists. They also reached the trawler. Then, some trawler crew creatively made a floater in order for them to save us. As we pass the floater they will grab us and make fast a rope, then they will suddenly pull us towards them. Upon seeing their plan, our crew started to jump one by one. In my case, I was hesitant to jump because I don't know how to swim. Then, my Bangladesh friend pushed me a little bit and I was falling towards the sea. After 5 seconds, he also jumped. He was the last to jump. Then after around 2 minutes the ship sank. I was stuck on a rope with the chief engineer. But until now, I still don't know the reason why I got out there. Then the swells slowly pushed me near the fishing trawler. The trawler crew saw me and tried to grab me using a bamboo stick and was successful after 3 times of trying. After that, they grab me and put

me on the fishing trawler. Lastly, the fishing trawler pirates cut the rope because they were also sinking as our ship sank. When the rope was cut, the chief engineer, who was still hanging on the rope, drowned. We were 11 who survived. Three of our crewmen didn't jump and sank with the ship. Nine pirates were still onboard but two jumped and survived while those remaining had their last breaths with the ship. During that time, I felt like I was just dreaming. I didn't have an appetite to eat and the rolling was too much. The fishing boat was also stinking. After some days, I felt sick because 41 people were staying on the trawler including the 11 of us. They gave us some of their clothes and slippers. We stayed on that trawler for 10 days. On July 16, our ship investor and the pirates head commander came to the sea and picked us from the trawler. They brought us to the beach and kept us there for 5 hours. There was lot of people. At night, they brought us to the jungle with new investor guards. They kept us in the jungle for two days. On the 18th of July, Abdulahi, a new translator, came to us and asked me if I am an Indian. And I said yes! He asked me "where are the other Indians?" I replied, "You don't know?" He then said, "Yes, and I'm sorry for that." I said, "These pirates are crazy. I keep my friend's dead body in deep freezer for one and a half year. But on the last moments, the body starts to spoil and stink. It sank together with the ship." He said, "No problem, I will finish this deal very quickly.." The lady investor also came to help us. She gave us some clothes, blankets, bed sheets, foods and rations. She comforted us by saying, "Don't worry, you will go home very soon. The translator will help you to talk with the negotiator." The translator then gave us a chance to talk to the head of the negotiating team of the Hostage Support Partnership. His name was John Steed. John Steed wanted to talk to the entire crew. He was worried. He talked to us and gave us hope by saying that they are trying to take us from there. He also told the translator to give us proper shelter,

clothes and food and he will start the negotiation. On the same night, they brought us to a house inside a town. After 20 days, the translator talked to John Steed claiming that he provided everything to the crew. I was asked how much the ransom will be. Then I told them, "I will let you know after I asked the pirates." The entire crew called the pirates and asked them how much their demand is. We advised them to not ask like before \$20 million or else they will never pay and run away, but to just say any amount which they can pay. The pirates didn't believe any of the crew except me because I know their language better than anyone. They gave me more chances to talk to the negotiator. Afterwards, the translator talked to the pirates and came to a conclusion to have a ransom of \$ 1 million. The translator then told John Steed. He replied that they will try their very best to raise the money but on condition that the crew must not be harmed. Two weeks after, I talked to John Steed and he said that the crew's family are poor and he was trying to get help from charities and NGOs. Suddenly in September, a call came from Leonardo, a colleague of John Steed. Leonardo came with bad news saying that John had a heart attack and open heart surgery. So Leo's taking Steed's job. Leo was like John. This kind of news lasted for a month.

In October, he sent a message to the translator that the crew's family is poor and there was no ransom yet. This news made the pirates so shocked. The translator's reaction was very predictable; he called the crew's family and told them. He also pressured them by saying that our lives might be in danger. I talked to my father and he said not to worry . He also said that the Indian Government and some NGOs are helping us. At the end of October, many of our crew got sick. We informed the pirates and they relayed it to the Hostage Support Partnership. They sent some money for medicines afterwards. I went with the pirates to a small town and bought some medicines from a chemist. There were small shops in the

town. The guards brought me in the food shop and bought me good food. When I was eating, many people surrounded me because I was a stranger to their eyes. After that, they brought me back to the same place. The crew was worried about not giving the ransom. Ironically, the bosun didn't take the news that much but instead gave us more hope and positive thoughts. He was saying that we should not lose our hope and that we will go home soon.

November 3 came and we got feedback from John Steed. He was straight forward and said that they will never pay the ransom. The crew was also complaining that they didn't come from a wealthy family. They were also asking why the pirates were doing that. From then on, the pirates sort of understood us. On November 15, the translator came with two pirate bosses. They then gave us a chance to talk to the negotiators with full pressure. As I was calling them, I was turning the mobile speaker so that the pirates can have an assurance that I'm not hiding anything. I talked to Leo saying, "The pirates are angry. They are not giving us food and water anymore. If you will not pay the ransom they will kill us!" However, they said that the charities and other NGOs were not giving funds so that's why they can't give any money. Leo said that the only way for us to be saved is when the pirates will leave us harmless. When I heard the news, I started to cry and begged for our life. After I cut the phone, we hurriedly explained the prevailing situation on the pirates. Like, we are not wealthy enough to pay the ransom and also, the NGOs and charities cannot raise funds. Luckily, the pirates did understand us but they wouldn't let us go without the money. The pirates also said that we should make an agreement to some investors about the situation. The pirates were ready to send us without the money but they were also concerned with other investors. Days came and the other investors also did. We explained to them the situation and they agreed except for the two persons who were the main

investor and the ship catcher. On the following days, we tried our very best to explain it to the persons who didn't agree and fortunately their decisions were changed. At the end of November, all the security guards and translators told us that we will go home very soon without problems. Conversely, in December the lady investor, ship catcher and the pirate's head commander came on us and said, "You still can't go. We need the money." But the translators and security guards didn't agree with them. They told them that they will not do their jobs anymore unless they release us. They justified this by saying that we came from poor families. After that, the lady investor became angry and started to shout at everyone. The tension was then in the air. Many people were throwing their opinions at each other. As a conclusion, the translators and security got their things and went to their homes. The lady investor was stubborn. She took a gun and started to shout again to the pirate's head commander. She shouted, "I need money! I really don't mind how or where will you get. I invested too much for this. I will kill you if I don't get my money!" The lady came to our room and told us, "Now, all the security guards are changed. New people will come. They were the ones who caught you at sea." I started to cry and asked her using the Somalian language, "Why are you doing this to us? Please leave us. We are poor. Why do you like to kill us? Do you have a son? You should know the feeling of a mother!" I begged her for our lives on behalf of the crew. She replied, "Aman, I don't mind the money I've spent for your foods, water, khat, etc. All I care about was the money I've invested for this (\$500,000)." At the end, I begged for her apology and she went out. The entire ship catcher group came with their things and guns including the person who killed my friend Rajoo. Then they ordered me to clean all their guns. Two days after, they prohibit us to go outside the courtyard. They told us that they will be the ones who will give us water. Much moving was restricted

in those times and after two days I heard them talking too much. I heard them talking about our family and some are related to torture. The pirate's head commander doesn't want to talk with the Hostage Support Partnership.

On the 20th of December they allowed us to talk with our family. Pirates gave my family a deadline of 10 days to give them a ransom worth \$1 million or otherwise they would kill me. Within those ten days the pirates were watching us closely, even the times when we are going to bath and toilets.

On the 30th of December the deadline had arrived. At night, they call the Iranian bosun. They took them to the jungle and started to torture. Base on his stories, the pirates were shouting, "Where is the money? You are the player. You're family is wealthy and when you're talking with them you're not saying the main things maybe because you don't want to pay!" They first tied his hands and feet and started hitting him with a wooden stick. After that, the pirates ordered him to cry and shout while they were calling his family. They also ordered him to tell his family that they are going to kill him on that night if they will not give the money soon. The pirates then cut the phone and brought him back to the house at 02.00 hrs. When morning came, we saw some black wounds on his back. However, even with that situation he still speaks words of hope. He told us that we will go home very soon. The next day, the pirates took me together with the second engineer to the jungle. They drove for about half an hour and when we arrived to the destination, they throw us on the ground. Then, they ordered us to sit on our knees and started to ask about things. They showed us their guns and told us that those guns will kill us when the night comes. They put their guns on my head. During that time, I was so scared. In my mind and heart, I was begging my life to God. They load their guns and started to mock us. They even shoot a bullet near my ear. I got shocked. I was helpless that time. They started to ask again "Where's

the money?” I replied, “My father is trying his best to get some.” He said, “How much?” I said, “I don’t know.” The pirates started to hit me with their guns and legs. They hit my head with guns. After that, they took me and put me on the car. Then they started to torture the second engineer. Second engineer was 60 years old back then but still they hit him with AK-47. The second engineer was shouting, “God save my life!” It lasted for 2, almost 3, hours. I was just listening back then. After that, they tied his hands and feet together and throw him on the thorny bushes. After 3 and a half hours, they kept the second engineer on the car and took me. They started to play with me again. “How much money?” they still asked me. I still replied the same. They told me that they will definitely kill us that night. Suddenly, they hit me with a machine gun on my head which causes me to become senseless. After two hours of being unconscious, they threw water on my face. I was awake because of that. They started to hit me hard and because of that I shouted. Then they gave me a phone call to talk to my father and ordered me to ask him the money’s amount. On the 31st of December, that was the first time I talked to my father with a large a voice and I was shouting. I even used bad words for the first time. At that time, I told my father to help us and do something or otherwise they will kill us on that night. The only thing remaining in my body was only breathing. I told my father that the pirates will kill us on the jungle at that night. I also told him to tell the Indian government and NGO that if they want to pay the money, they should pay on the right time or else it will be useless. After that, the pirates cut the phone. I informed the pirates that my family was still trying. After that, they discuss with each other about my matter for an hour. Then they brought me back to the house at 02.00 hrs. In the morning, I saw them hitting the second engineer. It was harsh. I saw the second engineer’s eyes turn black. His back was full of blood and black wounds. Suddenly, they just hit me behind my lap. It

caused too much swell on my skin. I can't even sit straight when I go to the toilet. My back was also full with blood clots. Our crew then used hot water therapy to heal our backs. When the bosun woke up and saw the second engineer's condition, he got shocked and started to mock the pirates. He said, "Is this your religion? Can't you see that he is a 60 years old man? Where's your mercy? He's like your father don't you think?" He kept mocking them for more than 30 mins. After that, they locked us inside the room and only allowed one person to go out for cooking. They just open the room three times a day. During those times you'll get the chance to make your personal needs. Inside the room was very hot. The room temperature was about 40 degree Celsius. It was like hell. The pirates also did stop us to take showers.

On the 25th of the first month of 2014, the pirates called me and said to talk to my father. They were still asking of the money's amount they gathered. In evening, I called my father and I asked, "What's going on? You had any news?" And my father talked to me slowly, "Don't worry. Money has already been paid to the Somali Admiral. We will be having a meeting with the Directorate General of Shipping Ministry in Mumbai after two days." I explained to the pirates that my father will be having a meeting with the Directorate soon. Then, they sent me to the room and I heard them talking about torture again. I was so scared that time. They started to prepare their guns and also their car. I was praying to God to give me more strength to conquer the night. One of the pirates then called the three Bangladesh crew and brought them to the jungle. They start to torture them like us and they were brought back to the house after four hours. The entire crew members were too angry that time. We were thinking do or die that time. Do kill the pirates or just die here?

In the end of January, while I was going to the toilet, I heard the pirates talking to a person using English via mobile. They were talking about \$900,000 but I don't know who is on the other line. During the next day, they started to make a friendly relation with us and because of that we thought that maybe something better is going to happen.

In the middle of February, the pirates head commander came on us and gave us a phone call with the Hostage Support Partnership. I talked with John Steed and he said, "Aman don't worry. We already had a deal with the pirates with \$900, 000 . The money came from the charity and we will bail you out from there very soon." John Steed also asked about the condition of everyone. I shouted and say, "Everybody is going to die. We don't have more power and energy to bear more hits. The only thing remaining is our breaths. Please, save our lives as soon as possible." After that, I cut the phone. John sent two agreement papers for the pirate's head commander and the crew's head for them to sign it. He told the pirates that they were having a negotiation with the Somali government to land their private plane on the Somali airport Addado. The deal was finally made.

The Hostage Support Partnership promised to pay the money to the pirates on the 21st of March and release the crew afterwards. They wanted the deal to be hand to hand. Everybody was touched by the grace of hopes and was just waiting for the day that we will be released from the chains of ghastly fate. However, between those days, we didn't have food. We were only eating once a day but it was not enough to fill our hunger. We were just surviving that time. On the 20th, John sent a letter to us saying that the \$300,000 is with them in Kenya and the rest will be coming from Europe which they collected from some charity. However, the money that will be coming from Europe was delayed due to immigration problems. The immigration was confused to where will the money be heading. The

immigration took the all the money and arrested the person who brought the money. Fortunately, the negotiator sent us a message that they will be taking the money very soon. This kind of situation continued for days. They were taking much time and caused some delays. Suddenly, they gave us a due date; 23rd of April 2014. The entire pirates were expecting the deal on 23rd. The big day came but the promised deal was broken. Nothing and no-one was there. The next day, Hostage Support Partnership sent us a message containing that the \$700,000 that came from a German charity was being taken by a German. They were trying their best to catch them but no one knew how much time it will take. They claimed that they have only \$200, 000 on hand. The head commander's patience was already at its peak. He was saying that he will never again talk with them. He also said that they were liars for not keeping their promise and because of that, the pirates started to play with everybody again. They locked us again inside the room and gave us rations for food. They gave us a call to our families and order us to tell them that they don't want to talk with the negotiator ever. They were also asking for a new negotiator, a person who's better in dealing. My family said that I should not be worry because the NGO and Hostage Support Partnership were again trying their best to solve the matter. Again, I hoped for the best. I started to think, "Why is everybody playing with our life?" The Hostage Support Partnership granted our request. They arranged a new negotiator. He was from UK and his name is Leslie. He start to talk with the pirates and explained that they cannot raise the money above \$200, 000. He also said that the pirates should release the crew with that money or otherwise no alternatives will be given. The pirates were not satisfied with that deal. They were complaining that they already spent much money for us. The translator, pirates, and other pirates started to argue with each other. The pirates head commander complained to the translator that they were getting under-

table money which caused the delays of the deal. The pirates didn't trust each other starting from that time. After few days, I saw the pirate's head commander and talked to him using the Somalian language. I told him that they should just get the money and leave us. It caused him to become angry and slapped me afterwards. During that time I could possibly tell that he will agree soon. I can tell because the situation was much twisted.

On the 5th of May, I again ask him the same question shamelessly. "Better take this money and leave us." He replied, "Talk with your lawyer. Tell him that we don't agree on his deal and the amount must be increased otherwise we will never leave you." Then he gave me a chance to talk with Leslie and I said, "The entire crew was getting sick because of the lack of basic needs. Send some money for medicines and for food." Leslie responded, "I will send some money." After that he sent some money good for 10 days. The pirate's head commander got interested on the situation and took advantage on it. After 12 days of spending the money, the head commander ordered us again to ask money from the lawyer. Little did the other pirates know that this kind of thing was happening. I talked with the lawyer and I said directly that the pirate's head commander is now interested in the \$200,000. They had a connection with the Somali government. The government convinced the head commander to release us and just take the money. One day, the head commander came in our room while it was raining. He sat beside me and asked, "Is it possible to get the \$200,000? Can you arrange for me?" He also told me to not talk with anyone regarding this matter. He then gave me a call to the lawyer and told what he said. The lawyer said that they will think about it. The place and time also was being thought. After two days, he came to our room at night. I and my friend told him that he should not come again to our room because the pirates are keeping their eyes on him. They suspect that something really fishy

is happening. But this story was just too good to be true. We requested that if possible a mobile should be provided, with SIM card, in order for us to communicate with him freely. I also told him that using the phone, we can communicate with the lawyer to arrange the money for him. He agreed with no hesitation but he told us that if we will be caught, it will be our responsibility. After two days, he gave the phone with SIM card and some money. On the next night, he called me via mobile and said, "Call your lawyer and ask him when they are going to pay the money." During this time, the pirates were fighting with each other. They were thinking that there is no money and everybody was playing their roles. That's why the head commander wants the money as soon as possible. We called the lawyer and told him that the pirates head commander already agreed. He was also asking when and where the deal will be held. The lawyer replied, "We are arranging the money. Don't worry; we will give you the date soon." And again, hope slapped us again. On the other hand, I let the crew use the mobile to talk with their families. The deal was on. The head commander's plan was to get us out from the room with a distance of 500 meters, pick us up from there and give us to the government. The plan was very risky. I was so unsure about it. I told the pirate commander that I will first discuss this with the other crew. Everybody had their trauma for the 3 years. Luckily, after I discussed this with the crew, they all agreed except for me and my Bangladesh friend. We didn't agree because we are the only sons of our family. We faced so much trouble and we were thinking that if will get caught, then they will surely shoot us without hesitation. After couple of days, we talked to Leslie and explained that some of the crew were hesitant. We were seeking for suggestions of what to do next. We also told him, "You're taking guarantee that this will work? Are you really sure that he will be handing over us to the government?" Leslie was also uncertain for the next action. He put the

responsibilities and decisions in our hands. We tried to convince Leslie to raise the money more and to accomplish their demands. We were just making sure that we can go home safe. Even after hearing this, Leslie can't do anything. He said that the money can't be raised further. I told Leslie that if they can't raise the money further, they can take us by force. They can send some troops to get us. But he replied, "You're not French neither a European. You are an Asian. Your government doesn't care about you."

On the next month, I asked my mother if they collected some money. My mother told me that they were still trying. I asked her, "What's the amount?" She said, "You know our situation Aman. No one is helping." I kept quiet for a while and just told her that we will be released really soon. I told her to pray to God to give me more patience. Then I cut the phone. I also told my Bangladesh friend to have a contact with his family. He also did the same. His family told him that they have collected more than half a million dollars. After he cut the phone, we discussed the situation with the entire crew. The other crew got angry with us. We then called Leslie and asked him about the money status. He said, "It's still the same. Nothing changed." We told him that we were ready to escape from there as per the head commander's plan. We notified him again that if we will be caught on the act, we will be shot with no hesitation and for that time, they should be there to confront the pirates. We can endure the torture but we can't still accept death. We had dreams. Leslie reminded us that we should not take risks and be safe always. Anything that we do, we take responsibility. The phone was cut afterwards. Using the phone was really a risk. We did safety measures just to hide it from the eyes of pirates. We kept a look-out near the door. We even put it inside plastic, dug a hole, put it there, and covered it with mats. Next day, I told the head commander that the entire crew agreed with his plan. He said that everything will be okay as long as

he's not near within the area. The pirates were starting to suspect him and kept close to us via phone. On the next days, he stopped coming near us. He devised some plan and gave us some sleeping pills to put on the other pirate's food. If the plan succeeds, then we will go during that night. At first, I put some ten pills on their foods but nothing ever happened because they were using khat. So in response with the pills, they were much alive. On the next night, I put twenty. I tasted the food and it became bitter. I discussed it with the crew and asked for their suggestions. Everybody gave their own suggestions but I followed my instinct. During that time, it rained hard. While I was carrying the casserole and walking outside, I acted like I slipped and I threw the food. Witty me. I cooked again for the pirates and put some 15 pills and I tasted it. It was okay, so I put 2 more. I tasted it again and it was starting to get bitter so I kept it like that. Later, the head commander arrived with his new clothes and car. Everyone was confused and started to suspect him more. On that night, we had a tight security. We didn't succeed with our plan. Everyone was keeping an eye on him and he made some distance with them. Those days were getting worse. We lacked food. But we made some actions to satisfy hunger by getting some bitter guard and some chilli from the plant we plowed at some time lately. On the same night, the Hostage Support Partnership came to the government to pick us up but the plan was not successful. However, the lawyer told us not to be worry and not lose hope.

On the following days, our second engineer got sick. He had some hiccups and was vomiting too much, I presumed that it was the lack of nutrients and his body was too old to bear the problems. He was eating only small amounts of food and water then afterwards, he will just vomit it. He can't even sleep that time. The entire crew was afraid that he will be dying soon. For this, we informed the pirates about the second engineer's condition. Upon seeing it, they were also shocked and

immediately brought some vitamins from ashore. The nearby civilian ladies were good. We were strangers by their eyes but still they gave us food to satisfy our hunger. Foods like potatoes, pasta, onions and some live chickens. They were kind-hearted.

In June, the commander tried to take us out again and devised another plan. His plan was to cut our courtyard wall, which was made of tin, with scissors. The plan was risky, so we denied that plan. He gave us again another plan. His plan now was to dig a hole under the wall of our room which was made of wooden sticks. He send us a hacksaw blade to cut the sticks. We tried this plan but it was not a success. This situation was bothering us. Our plans were not succeeding. Thus, we gathered all up and develop another plan. The plan was to cut the frame of the window at the back of our room. At that night, we cut the frame and checked if the fattest guy of the crew can fit. He did fit. After that we fixed the frame and informed the head commander. We also asked the head commander's opinion of our plan. He agreed with it. Unfortunately, we don't have enough sleeping pills to start the plan. I told the head commander about the problem and he did send about 50 pills immediately. During that time, the pirate commander was already with the Somali government's side. He was hasting us to make the plan soon. I talked with the pirates head commander and told him to not send more khat. If the pirates won't eat khat then they will feel much sleepy and hungry. But I they eat khat with the sleeping pills; they will feel more dizzy and alive. And surely, he agreed. He didn't send khat to our place.

On the 5th of June, he called me on the morning and he said that we will go tonight. Everybody was ready for it. He told us that he will be going with his car and stay a little bit far from the house behind from our room. He said that we should come out from our room and go near the car in order for him to pick us up.

That day, our mobile phone's battery was getting low and I told him about it. He sent his one friend to us and got the battery for charging. His friend charged that battery and brought it back at 8 o'clock at night. His friend also told us that we will go that night. I talked with the head commander about our current status and confirmed that we will go for good after midnight. I called the entire crew and informed them about the situation. Our bosun arranged our main documents and put inside a file. We took out dark clothes and wore it for the escape. We told everybody that we should proceed with the plan quietly. Sign languages were on the air that time. All the crew well understood that. After some time, he called me and asked if we are ready. I answered him, "Yes, we are ready!" After few minutes, a watchman came to our room and checked if everyone was sleeping or not. He counted if everybody was there or not. Then he went away and took one round around the house. Afterwards, he sat on the front of the house and took his watch. This time seven pirates were guarding us. Two were sleeping in the courtyard. The other 4 were sleeping in their room and one was having his watch. The six who were sleeping had the effect of the sleeping pills we put on their food. Luckily, they didn't have some khat that night. The plan was being delayed. The head commander called us during 3 o'clock and asked if everything was ready. He called me called me 3:30 again and said, "Now is the time, come out quickly. I am outside inside the car." He wanted us to hurry because his friend was keeping the watchman busy. Then I and the bosun woke up slowly. We opened the window with caution and tapped the fattest guy among the crew. We sent him out from the window slowly and called the next fatter guy. We did this again and again with regards to the size of the crew. The process was complicated. We used the luggage as stairs and slowly came out from the window starting with our elbows. The first three guys were already out and I was the fourth one. They pulled me from the

outside and some were also guiding half of my body from the inside. On a span of 3 minutes, the 11 of us went out. Our bosun was the last one who got out with our documents. The intensity of the happenings started to affect us. Some were started to shake while I was only thinking do or die! When everyone got on their knees, I called the head commander and asked his location. He gave us instructions and directions about his location. When we were about to get to the final point, we saw the car and a driver. We hurriedly jumped inside the car even though it was just small. Everyone was trying to fit in it. It was compressed. Then, I asked the driver, "Where is our head commander?" He replied, "He's on the other place. Don't worry. I'll bring you there soon. Your head commander sent me here." He started the engine and drove us for 30 minutes. He dropped us in the jungle. There were two subways there. He gave me a flashlight for signaling and showed me the way. Then he told me that some people will pick us up. We stayed there for 15 minutes but nobody came to pick us up. It was 4 o'clock in the morning back then. I called the head commander to solve the questions in my head. He told me that he was sitting with the government and told us also that we should not be frightened for they will come very soon. After that, I called Leslie and updated him about our current status. We were already around 20 kilometers away from home. Leslie then called the Hostage Support Programme and informed about our situation. The message was also relayed to the Somali government. However, the Somali government already sent people to pick us up. I was doubtful that time and so I called again the head commander. I asked him the phone number of the people who will pick us up. He gave the number and I started talking with the person. The person advised us to never stop moving from place to place until they arrive. We just moved straight from there and walked for about 2 kilometers. Upon walking, we reached a three-way path. We got confused and asked the person for the correct

path. He said on the East side, but we don't what direction we are heading. So, we advised him to shoot a bullet from his gun to give us signal on his location. He suddenly gave us a signal but only using his flashlight. After that, I climb to a tree and gave them a light signal too. Upon seeing it, they confirmed what path to go and it was the center. We quickly ran through the path. Everyone was barefooted and the pace of second engineer was getting slow 'till he can't walk no more. We supported him by lending our shoulders to him. From time to time if someone is available we carry him with no hesitation. The time was our enemy. We walked and walked until we reached the people, who will pick us up, at quarter to five. Upon meeting they gave us an assurance that they were the people who will pick us up. I was in doubt at first but I called the mobile to confirm. It rang. So, I was so relieved to know that they were the right people. They told us to walk faster. We walked 4 kilometers with them. At 6 in the morning, we reached the beach. Four cars came and picked us up from there. We jumped into the cars and they started to move from the beach. They started to ask questions about our experience during the captivity. "How and where did you stay? When did your ship sink? How did you escape? How much money did you pay?" Many questions were asked by them. About 9 o'clock in the morning they stopped their car inside the jungle. They ordered us to get down from the car and stay under the designated tree. Then, they started to make a contact with the government and also made some arguments with them. They were complaining that they ran out of diesel and told the government that they should come and pick us from there. They were comforting us and giving us assurance that the government will pick us up. However, based on their actions and words something fishy was going on. Nobody came until 12 o'clock. We were losing some guts and hope that time. A car came during 1 o'clock but that was not the government. Everyone was still waiting. After some

time, I talked with their leader to arrange us some food and water because during last night we didn't take anything to fill our stomachs. At 2 o'clock they fulfilled their promise. They brought food and water. I tried to make a contact from outside using the phone. I wanted to talk with the negotiator or the head commander. But, upon seeing this, a person slapped me on my face, making my ears ring. About 14.30, ten land cruisers, five jeeps, with fixed anti-craft gun, and more than 50 armed guards, came to us. They hastily secured the vicinity with no wavering. Then, two men came to us. One handling the anti-piracy and the other one from the fisheries. They started to talk and gave us comfort plus guarantee. They said, "No need to be afraid, you are now under the government's hand. Nobody can touch you from now on." Then they gave us some bread and tuna fish to eat. As the tension was getting low, we started to know that the people who brought us there had a deal with the government with \$4,000. The people who brought us there took advantage on the situation and tried to raise the deal to \$20,000. That's why they brought us to the jungle. When the government secured us, they had an argument with the people for about 2 hours. The argument was concluded with \$8,000 at 16.00 hrs. The security arranged us by two crew members in each car. Then we started to get out from there. The anti-piracy guard took us to his mother's home. His mother prepared a good lunch (Mutton with fried rice, fizzy milk) good for 100 people but we got delayed and arrived there at 5:30 in the afternoon. At 6 o'clock we bid our goodbyes with the good hospitality offered to us and started to move. After 2 hours of driving we reached a hotel. They put us there. It was in the Galamadug province of Somalia. That hotel belonged to the government. They provided us with a good dinner and gave a chance to talk with John Steed. He congratulated me on our bravery. He also said that he will meet us very soon. The hotel gave us each rooms for accommodation. My Bangladesh friend came into

my room and talked until midnight came. I slept afterwards. Everyone woke up at 5 o'clock because we were excited to go home. I had mixed emotions that time. The anti-piracy guard called me together with my bosun and the Bangladesh friend. John Steed was on the mobile that time. He said, "Don't worry. An American guy will pick you up at 9 o'clock. He will protect you 'til you come to the airport." The anti-piracy guard announced, "Inform your family using this phone that you are now safe and are now with the government." That same guy provided us with clothing, garments and shoes. They took too much photos of us. That time we were the center of attraction. People were talking about us. You can hear rumors from them that the investors were already searching for us. We get ready and the American guy came at 9 o'clock. He told us that he's there to protect us. After that, the families of the government employee came and also bid their goodbyes. Everyone was nice that time. I can still remember their big smiles and overwhelming support. At 10 o'clock, the government picked us up and drove us to the airport. There were 20 cars with full guards. When we already came to the airport, one of the generals was there. He started to take some interviews and it took 15 minutes to quench his questions. After half an hour, one private plane came and landed on Galmadug airport. The first two to get down from the plane were John Steed and Leonardo. They shook hands with the government people then came to us. He said, "Oh Aman! So you are the one whom I talk to always." After that, he started to shake the hands of everyone and gave congratulations. One Kenyan journalist also came with them. She also interviewed us. During that time, I was only 70% sure that we can go home that time. Not a hundred percent because that time we were still on their land. They had a conversation with the government for two hours. Then they called us and took some photos. The eleven of us boarded the plane with 3 more freed captive persons, taken at the same time with us. When

our plane took off, that time, I was really 100% sure that I can go home and be with my family. After two hours, they landed in one airport. There, the immigration and Visas were arranged. John Steed gave us a phone call to our families. I talked with my family, and told my mother, “Mother, I and the entire crew still haven’t reached Kenya. Don’t tell anyone that I am already released.” After that, we boarded a plane again and after 2 hours, at 7’oclock in the evening, we reached Kenya. During those 2 hours, the interviewer asked us many questions. Questions like, “How did you survive? How was your stay in Somalia?” Most of the questions were WH. Leonardo told us that they already arranged the hotels. He also said that all of our country ambassadors will also come.

When our feet touched the lands of Kenya, the four nation ambassadors were already waiting for us. They welcomed and congratulated us. When they saw me, they gave me a tight hug and tears flowed on my cheeks. Happiness invaded every part of my veins that time. I was already breathing flowers! During that time it was also raining. I guess that was a symbol for too much blessing. In a snap, all our document clearance was done in the airport. Then, they put us inside a car and brought us to the hotel near the American embassy. They gave us each a room. The Indian ambassador and navy chief adviser came to the hotel and started to ask me about the other Indian crew. The questions were, “What happened? How did he die? When did he die? How did you survive?” I satisfied their questions for an hour. They gave me 15,000 shillings Kenyan money: to buy personal effects or anything I liked. They also gave me their visiting cards and told me, “If this money is not enough, please let us know and we will provide you money.”

On the 8th of June, John Steed and Leo gave us 15,000 Kenyan shillings and said, “Get ready! We will go to the shopping center.” We looked around the mall and observed that most of the workers and the owners were Indian. John Steed and

Leo brought us to a barber shop. The owner was their friend. He cut our hair and beard nicely. On the same morning, Chirag Bahri came to the barber shop. He shook the hands of everyone and introduced himself. He said, "I'm Chirag Bahri, regional director from South Asia. I'm from India and am working on one of the NGO (MPHRP)." MPHRP stands for Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Program. He congratulated everyone and asked me if I already talked with my mother. Then, he gave me a chance to talk with my mother. I informed my mother that I was already in Kenya with Chirag Bahri. My mother confirmed that this was the person who did so much effort to get me out. Chirag Bahri had also contacts with the Shipping Ministry and some of the Indian government personnel. After some time, everybody was done with their haircuts. Bangladesh, Sri Lankan and Iranian ambassadors bought some clothes and handbags for their designated crew. I was alone that day because my ambassador didn't come that time. Upon seeing me, Chirag then came to me and asked if I bought something for myself. I said, "I haven't had." Then he said, "Come with me." We went to the mall and bought something for me and for the other crew. After that, we went to the hotel and there a surgeon was waiting. He was an Indian living in Kenya. He was the person who operated John Steed's heart. He was also a Punjabi. He asked a little bit about of the captivity. He invited me, Chirag and John for a dinner for the next night. That night, John Steed and Leo took us in a restaurant for dinner and gave us some drink. After that, Chirag brought us to shopping mall and bought us shoes. Next day, John and Leo took us on a hospital for our check-up. They were wondering if we had diseases or none. Thank God, everybody was good. That time, my ambassador called John and said, "I am sending a car there. Please send Aman to me." So, I and Chirag went to the location of the ambassador. We had a meeting and had a long conversation with the ambassador, chief adviser, and the

commissioner for couple of hours. They asked me too many questions about the captivity, shooting of Rajoo, the keeping of Rajoo's body, staying with the pirates, survival in the jungle and other things. Then, we went back to the hotel. I, Chirag, John and his assistant went for dinner with the surgeon. The restaurant was like self service. They gave us the cooking materials and we cooked. The surgeon made a Punjabi chicken with chapatti. We also had some drink on that night. The dinner was very astonishing after 3 years. My stomach was filled so hard. I can barely move. We talked so much until my experience became the topic. The conversation lasted for 4 hours. We finally came back to the hotel. After that John and Leo asked the entire crew if they want something. They will gladly fulfill their wishes. The crew wished to see the National Safari Park of Kenya. John agreed to go there tomorrow. Next day, they arranged everything in order for us to go there. The call time was 7 o'clock in the morning. We went to the park afterwards inside an open roof car. There was a really nice view. The animals were freely moving. When I saw that, I realized that the animals were far better than us. They can move and do whatever they want while us back there, living with fear. On the afternoon, Chirag brought us to the shopping mall and bought suitcases on each of us. When we got back on the hotel, Chirag showed me some photos of him with my family in Mumbai. When I've seen the pictures of my mother, I cried. I recognized some black lines around her eyes. Maybe it's because of her searching for me. That time, the Bangladesh ambassador cooked food at their house and brought it to everyone. The next day, the entire crew were already preparing for their departure. Everybody will be parting their ways that time. The first one who left for home was our bosun. I was booked on the afternoon. The chief adviser advised me to take the car he arranged and have a lunch with him. When I left the hotel, I bid my goodbyes and thank yous to everyone. The bidding wasn't that easy. Mixed

emotion was felt that time. My heart ached and at the same time it jumped. It meant that I will have a small chance to meet them in future. We did have a very long journey. All the smiles, pains and hopes will surely be missed. I also asked for their apologies if I did something wrong. I took the car with happiness and sadness on my heart. When I reached the embassy, the chief adviser was already waiting for me. We had some small talks and had an Indian lunch with him. During the lunch, he gave me a ticket. After that, we went to the airport. He sent a person to guide me until my flight went off. At 14.00, I flew from Kenya. It was the 11th of June 2014. The next day, I arrived at 03.00 hrs. When I went out of the plane, I saw the employees of the Shipping Ministry and Indian government to clear my documents . They welcomed and congratulated me. After that, I exited the airport and saw my family. Upon seeing them, I ran immediately and hugged my father. I can still remember the flowers on my lungs and the butterflies on my stomach. I felt that strong familiar feeling again. I also hugged my mother and sister afterwards. Tears then flew down on everyone's cheeks. It was the first time I saw my father's tears. When I saw my entire clan, I recognized that some are weak. All of my family's expense to get to Mumbai and stay there for days was sponsored by Chirag and Deepak Shetty, the Director General of the Shipping Ministry. After an hour, we went to a hotel. My family started to talk to me. You can feel the excitement on the air. All of my relatives called my father and talked to me. My experience was the spotlight during that time. On the next morning, Deepak and his colleagues congratulated me and my family. They also asked some questions and we had lunch with them. After some time, a psychologist named Harish Shetty came to examine me. He started to ask WH questions. After that, Deepak Shetty sent us one car for sightseeing in Mumbai. The driver took us to a shopping mall

and from there my father bought me some nice clothes and suits. When we went back to the hotel, there was too much media around.

On June 14, 2014 we departed from Mumbai by plane to Punjab airport. When we arrived there, some of my relatives and friends were waiting to welcome and congratulate me. Hugs and kisses flew on the atmosphere. From there, we started to move to home. At midnight, home was only 3 kilometers away. But even if home was still a distance away, I can already see more than 2,000 people, including my relatives and friends, were waiting for me. When I got down from the car, one of my maternal brothers hugged me and everyone started to clap. My cousins welcomed me with their crackers. I faced everyone with big smiles. When I was still meeting everyone, it started to rain. I guess God was also crying that time. My family put me in a car and brought me to a temple near home. My mother was always praying at that temple when I was still in captivity. After that, at 3 o'clock on the morning, I reached home. When I stepped inside the house, I saw everyone dancing under the DJ's music. I also started to dance. I shared my happiness with them. The celebration continued for three days. When my mom and I had a chance to talk, she explained how much effort Chirag and Deepak Shetty put just to save me. She also said that during my captivity, Deepak gave them financial support. After ten days, I received an invitation from National Union of Seafarer of India to be one of their guests on the seafarer's day. On the 25th, I and my cousin went to the seafarer's day. There were many people from shipping industries and the chief guest was the Transport Minister of India, Nitin Gadhakari, and Deepak Shetty. From there, many gave me money in a form of check. It came from some shipping owners, companies, and the Union. They told that my 4 years cannot be brought back but they can help me for my future. They asked of what I want to do. I firmly replied, "Yes, this is my profession. I will be continuing this

kind of life but with the consent of my family.” After that, they guaranteed that I can get a support from them. After the celebration, I went back to home. Every day, more than 100 people go to my house and ask the same question, “How did you survive.” This kind of situation continued for days. After two months, Chirag came to our home and my family welcomed him. They welcomed Chirag the same way as they welcomed me back then with Himachali culture. Everyone was very happy to see the man who made much effort to save me, even though we are not related by blood. Chirag is really a very good guy. During that time, he gave my sister a money check for her studies. He asked for my father’s permission to bring me to United Kingdom for IMO. During that time, Chirag asked me personally what my plans are for the future. I told him that if my family permits then I will be continuing the shipping line because it’s what my heart desires. After that, he convinced my father. He made him understand that such things will never happen again and guaranteed for my safety. My father agreed and Chirag paid my expense for UK. And from there, Aman Kumar Sharma’s story was revealed to the world.

Role of MPHRP: I just want to tell something, I never understand how they help some strange bunch of people who are surviving for their lives in mid sea against the cruelest mankind. MPHRP is doing everything for the sake of the seafarer’s welfare and rights. They won’t get anything in return from us; our families have nothing but wishes and blessings for them. We’re still connected and we’ll always be. Our relation with MPHRP is like just, it starts but never ends. I feel so proud for coming here as a MPHRP team. These were the people who were there with my family when I was not with them, telling that they are trying their best to bring me back to my parents, to my family. MPHRP, they are doing something that most people can’t. Not only me, there are thousands of families, who are grateful to MPHRP for wiping their tears, when the family members faced the most difficult and painful

situation of their lives. MPHRP members are still worried if I'm ok or in any condition, if I have any problem or anything. I'm thankful to Mr Roy Paul & Mr. Chirag Bahri for making me a part of this conference. I owe my life to them. To all the people who prayed and helped for the recovery of my life, thank you. To Mr. Deepak and Mr.Chirag, I will never ever forget your efforts.

I'm The Sailor

Sailing on water far from land

We toil hard to earn the grand

Leave our families back ashore

The risks at sea are even more

Everyone thinks we only have fun

One day pirates will point out their gun

That's near Somalia where a few ship go

In your street you can get raped, robbed and murdered you know

Many tell us, new ports and new wife

On land is there any safer life?

Men cheat their ladies and have an affair

Oh yes that can happen anywhere

They think we sail with the ladies onboard

We only get to see them once we walk on road

So yeah we are back on the land

Where you see girls running on the sand

Now days we got ladies working on the ship

People assume they are like Shakira shaking their hips

Officers also bring their wives onboard which is nice

These are the ladies who love them more and realize

What life we have and that we deserve more

She will go back proudly and explain the same ashore

There are also brave navigating officer

Or graduated lady marine engineers

We are like a team onboard I say

We fight all emergencies come what may

Sea sickness, fire storms, pirates so what?

We don't cry

On land you have earthquakes, bomb blasts and accidents where plenty die

Life is all about trust and luck at times

On land and sea we have equal crimes

Before you talk about the sailors again

Hold your tongue and use your brain

So you stay on land and also have fun

We are Sailors

We are proud to be one