

SALARY PLUS

SALARY TO LEGACY

NILABJO CHAKRABORTY



BlueRose ONE^{.com}
S t o r i e s M a t t e r
New Delhi • London

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

India | U.K.

Copyright © Nilabjo Chakraborty 2026

All rights reserved by author. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author. Although every precaution has been taken to verify the accuracy of the information contained herein, the publisher assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions. No liability is assumed for damages that may result from the use of information contained within.

BlueRose Publishers takes no responsibility for any damages, losses, or liabilities that may arise from the use or misuse of the information, products, or services provided in this publication.



For permissions requests or inquiries regarding this publication,
please contact:

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

www.BlueRoseONE.com

info@bluerosepublishers.com

+91 8882 898 898

+4407342408967

ISBN: 978-81-6744-766-1

Cover Design: Avijit Karmakar

Typesetting: Manisha Rawat

First Edition: October 2026

Disclaimer

This book is a work of storytelling and self-help. The views, examples and discussions presented in it are intended for general informational purposes and should not be treated as financial, investment, medical, legal or professional advice. Readers should exercise their own judgment and seek qualified professional advice where appropriate.

The characters, names, events and conversations in this book are presented as part of a work of storytelling. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is coincidental.

Dedicated to my son, Hriyan

Acknowledgment

No book is ever written by one person alone. Salary Plus may carry my name, but its pages carry the influence of many people, experiences, conversations, and lessons.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my mother, Amrita Chakraborty, who introduced me to an unconventional platform that changed the way I looked at people, work and life. The experiences and stories I encountered through it became the foundation of Salary Plus.

I am deeply grateful to my father, Kishore Chakraborty, whose guidance, constructive criticism, and constant support challenged my thinking and helped shape this book.

My heartfelt thanks to my beloved wife, Anamika Chakraborty, whose encouragement gave me the courage to turn an idea into my first book. Her unconditional faith in me gave me the strength to keep going.

My heartfelt thanks to my uncle, Kuntal Chakraborty and my childhood friend Pallavi Roy, for helping me find the right words, refine my thoughts, and bring greater clarity to these pages.

I am also grateful to my seniors, colleagues, professionals, and friends whose stories, experiences, and honest conversations added depth and authenticity to these pages. I also thank those who questioned my ideas and challenged my assumptions; their criticism helped make the book stronger.

Finally, to everyone who listened, encouraged, questioned, or simply said, “Keep going”-Thank you.

This book carries my name on its cover, but the journey behind it carries a little of each of you.

With heartfelt gratitude.

Preface

You work for your salary every month.

What if your salary could start working for you?

For most of us, a salary means security, paying bills, managing responsibilities, saving a little and waiting for the next payday. But a salary can be more than that. It can be the starting point of a bigger journey.

Salary Plus is about exploring that possibility.

It is about how an ordinary salaried person can use income wisely, develop better financial habits, build skills, explore additional opportunities to create wealth and eventually build something meaningful for the future.

This book does not tell you what you *must* do. Instead, it invites you to think, question, evaluate and make your own choices. Along the way, you will find practical ideas, questions, checklists, real experiences, mistakes and lessons that may help you look at your own journey differently.

The real question may not be “How much I earn?”

It may be: “What can I build with what I earn?”

The journey begins with a salary. It grows through opportunity which develops into wealth. And, hopefully, it becomes a legacy.

Welcome to ***Salary Plus-Salary to Legacy.***

Contents

1. Corporate Life Begins.....	1
2. AI Meets HI.....	3
3. Art of Becoming Valuable.....	7
4. Retiring by Choice.....	12
5. The First Call.....	22
6. The First Appraisal	25
7. The Switch	31
8. Golden Cage.....	37
9. Checklist Before the Switch.....	45
10. Exploring Salary Plus Options.....	53
11. Business Proposal	60
12. Everyone Has an Opinion.....	66
13. Personal Research.....	79
14. Health is Wealth.....	88
15. The Leader Unveiled.....	94
16. First Taste of Salary Plus.....	103
17. Life of Significance	108
18. A New Beginning.....	116
19. Salary to Legacy	118
20. The Notebook Lives On.....	120
Now the notebook is yours.....	123

1.

Corporate Life Begins

Aditya almost missed the metro.

As the familiar chime echoed through the station, he broke into a sprint, weaving through the morning crowd with his backpack bouncing against his shoulder. Just as the doors began to close, he slipped inside. Leaning against the side of the coach, he let out a long breath and smiled. “First day... I can’t be late today.”

The train sped through the city while Aditya stood quietly near the door, occasionally glancing at the appointment letter stored carefully in his phone. Years of studying, countless interviews, and months of waiting had finally led to this morning.

An hour later, he reached the office building. The security guard directed him towards the reception. It was still a few minutes before reporting time.

“Please have a seat. HR will call you,” the receptionist said with a polite smile. Aditya sat down, trying to appear calm. For the next five minutes, he simply observed. Employees walked in confidently, greeting one another as they tapped their ID cards on the attendance machine before disappearing through the glass doors. Some carried coffee cups, some discussed meetings already scheduled for the day, while others hurried towards the elevators without looking around. Everything fascinated him.

The polished floor, the quiet hum of air conditioners, the neatly dressed professionals, the soft ringing of office phones, the reception desk, the company logo on the wall—it was his first glimpse of corporate life. Until yesterday, offices existed only in YouTube videos and interview preparation guides. Today, he was part of one. His thoughts were interrupted by the ringing telephone at the reception desk.

The receptionist looked towards him. “Mr. Aditya? HR has asked you to report to the third floor.” He thanked her, walked towards the lift and pressed the button. As the elevator climbed floor by floor, he straightened his shirt, adjusted his backpack and looked at his reflection in the mirror. “This is it.” The HR executive welcomed him warmly. The rest of the day disappeared in a whirlwind of joining formalities identity verification, document submission, declarations, photographs, policy briefings and signatures on what felt like an endless stack of papers. Every completed document made his employment feel a little more real. By evening, he was mentally exhausted but deeply satisfied. When he stepped out of the building that day, he was no longer a job seeker. He was an employee. The next morning, Aditya reached even earlier than before. His freshly issued ID card hung proudly around his neck. This time, instead of signing the visitor’s register, he tapped his own card on the attendance machine.

Beep.

A tiny sound yet it marked the beginning of a new chapter in his life.

The first half of the day was dedicated to orientation. He met colleagues from different departments, learned about the company’s values, safety procedures, work culture and ongoing projects. There was so much information that he wondered how anyone remembered it all. After lunch, one of his teammates walked over to his desk. “Welcome to the team,” he said with a smile. “Why don’t you start by going through our latest project? Don’t worry if everything doesn’t make sense today. Just try to understand the bigger picture.” Aditya nodded eagerly.

He opened the project folder, unaware that this ordinary assignment would soon introduce him to a man whose influence would shape not only his career, but the way he looked at success, money, relationships and life itself.

2.

AI Meets HI

The third day at the office felt different. The excitement of joining had slowly settled. The formal introductions were over, the HR sessions had ended and now came the real work. Aditya logged into his system, opened the project folder assigned to him began reading through the documents once again. This time, he wasn't simply trying to understand what the project was about. He wanted to understand how everything connected. Every few minutes he switched between Excel sheets, Power BI dashboards, emails project documents.

Numbers.

Charts.

Tables.

Filters.

Reports.

Everything seemed connected, yet nothing made complete sense. As he tried to trace the source of the data, his eyes wandered across the office floor. People moved with purpose. Some were discussing project deadlines. Some were speaking to clients over headsets. Others typed continuously without even looking at the keyboard. In the middle of this organized activity, one person quietly caught his attention. He appeared to be in his mid-forties. Around six feet tall. A neatly pressed white shirt. Deep blue trousers. No flashy watch. No expensive-looking accessories. Just a calm, confident walk. Unlike everyone else, he never seemed to be in a hurry. He greeted people with a gentle smile as he passed. A young employee walked up to him. "All the best, sir."

The man smiled warmly. "Thank you."

There was no excitement, no display of authority, just a simple nod before he continued walking. A few moments later, he knocked softly on a cabin door.

The nameplate read: Director

The director himself stood up to welcome him. They exchanged a few words before the door closed behind them. Aditya looked for a second longer. *“He must be someone important”* he thought. But another notification appeared on his screen, pulling him back to work.

An hour passed. The dashboard refused to make sense. Aditya could see sales numbers, regional reports, customer segments and performance indicators, but he couldn’t understand where the information originated or why the report had been designed in that way. He opened another Excel sheet and then another. Each file referred to another file. Every answer seemed to raise two more questions.

Finally, he leaned towards the colleague sitting beside him. “Excuse me... could you help me understand this report for a minute?” His colleague looked apologetic. “I’m sorry, Aditya. Client meeting. Give me half an hour?”

Aditya smiled with approval. Ten minutes later, he tried another teammate.

“I’ll definitely explain it,” she whispered, adjusting her headset. “Just let this meeting finish.” Aditya nodded again. He understood.

Everyone had deadlines. Everyone was occupied. He looked back at his screen. The more he stared at the numbers, the less they seemed to make sense. He sighed quietly.

At that very moment, a calm voice came from behind him. “Looks like a new joinee is having a difficult time with the data.” Aditya turned around.

It was the same man in the white shirt. The one who had entered the Director’s cabin earlier. For a brief moment, Aditya wasn’t sure whether to remain seated or stand. Instinctively, he stood up.

“Yes... I mean... actually... I joined just a couple of days ago.” The man smiled. “Oh, please sit down.” Aditya sat. The gentleman pulled a nearby chair and sat beside him.

“I’m Raghav.” He extended his hand.

“Tell me... what exactly is troubling you?” The introduction itself brought an unexpected sense of relief. Thank God, Aditya thought. Finally, someone I can ask without feeling embarrassed. He rotated his monitor slightly. “Sir... I’m trying to understand this report.” Raghav looked at the screen without saying a word. Aditya continued. “I can see the dashboard, but I don’t understand where these numbers are coming from.” He opened another Excel file. “This sheet is connected to another workbook.” Then another. “And this workbook is linked to Power BI.” He paused. “I don’t know what I’m actually supposed to analyse.” Raghav quietly observed the files for a few moments. Then he asked a simple question. “Aditya, if I asked you to present this report to the management this evening, what would you do?” Aditya hesitated.

“I... honestly don’t know.”

Raghav nodded. “Fair enough.”

Then he asked another question. “Would you rather learn how this report was built...”

“...or understand the business story it is trying to tell?” Aditya looked thoughtful.

“I think... both.” Raghav smiled. “That’s it.”

He leaned back slightly. “Many fresh graduates believe Excel, Power BI, Copilots etc are the job.”

“They’re not. They’re only tools. The real job is understanding the business.” He pointed towards the dashboard. “Every number here represents a customer. Every customer represents a decision. And every decision eventually affects someone’s business.”

He paused before continuing. “If you understand the business, the reports begin to make sense. If you only understand the software, you’ll always be dependent on someone else to explain the story.”

Aditya listened carefully. Raghav continued. “Corporate life is interesting, Aditya. Every single day is an examination. The only difference is... The syllabus keeps changing.”

Aditya smiled. Raghav continued. “So never stop sharpening your two most important tools.” He raised two fingers. “AI.....and..... HI.”

Aditya looked confused. “Artificial Intelligence helps you work faster” Raghav said, pointing to the laptop.

Then he gently pointed towards his head. “But Human Intelligence...helps you ask better questions.” He smiled. “The professionals who learn only AI become efficient.” “The professionals who keep developing their Human Intelligence become valuable.” Aditya looked at the dashboard once again. Since morning, the numbers didn’t seem intimidating. They looked like a puzzle waiting to be solved. Raghav stood up. “We’ll go through the report together.” “But first... He closed one of the unnecessary spreadsheets. ...let’s understand why this report exists.” Aditya smiled. Without realizing it, his first real lesson in corporate life had just begun.

3.

Art of Becoming Valuable

By the fourth day, the office no longer felt unfamiliar. Aditya had figured out where the meeting rooms were, how to book a discussion room, which printer worked without jamming even the quickest route to the cafeteria before the lunch crowd arrived. The nervousness of the first day had slowly given way to curiosity.

Every task taught him something new. Every spreadsheet seemed to hide another story. And every now and then, he found himself recalling something Raghav had said the previous day. *“If you understand the business, the reports begin to make sense.”*

Since then, Aditya had stopped looking only at numbers. He had started asking what those numbers represented. It made the work a little less confusing. But what intrigued him even more was Raghav himself. Over the next few days, Aditya found himself observing him almost unconsciously. Not because Raghav demanded attention. Quite the opposite. He never raised his voice. He never hurried through the office. He never seemed eager to prove how busy or important he was. Yet somehow, people naturally walked towards him. A software engineer stopped by with a technical question. A finance executive asked for his opinion on a presentation. Someone from Human Resources greeted him while passing through the corridor. Even the housekeeping staff exchanged warm smiles with him. What surprised Aditya wasn't that people respected Raghav. It was how comfortable they seemed around him. Nobody appeared intimidated. Nobody hesitated before approaching him. The conversations were brief, but every person walked away looking lighter than before. Aditya wondered what made that possible. Was it experience? Was it knowledge? Or was there something else that couldn't be mentioned in a résumé?

By lunchtime, the cafeteria had begun to fill. Employees occupied their usual tables.

Some discussed project deadlines between bites of food. Others debated the previous night's football semifinal match. A few sat quietly, scrolling through their phones while eating. Carrying his lunch tray, Aditya looked around for an empty seat.

Just then, he heard a familiar voice.

"Aditya." He turned. Raghav was sitting alone near the window.

"If you don't have plans, join me." Aditya smiled.

"I'd be happy to." As they settled down with their lunch, there was no immediate discussion about work. Raghav asked where Aditya was from, where he had studied how he was finding the city. The conversation felt surprisingly natural. There was none of the formal distance Aditya usually expected from senior professionals. After a few minutes, Raghav looked at him and smiled. "How has your first week been?"

Aditya laughed. "Honestly? Exciting... and confusing." Raghav nodded as if he had expected exactly that answer. "Good."

Aditya looked surprised. "Good?"

"If everything made sense during your first week, the company probably wouldn't need you." They both laughed.

Aditya hesitated before asking the question that had been on his mind since the previous day. "Can I ask you something?"

"Of course" Raghav welcomed.

"I've noticed that people from almost every department come to you. Freshers... managers... even senior people. You always seem willing to help."

"How do you find the time?"

Raghav smiled. "I don't think of helping people as separate from my work."

Seeing Aditya's puzzled expression, he continued. "Tell me, Aditya."

"If I solve your problem today, who benefits?"

"I do."

"And if I help you learn how to solve similar problems yourself?"

Aditya smiled. "I'll probably solve many more."

"And maybe help someone else someday."

"Exactly." Raghav took a sip of water before continuing. "The best professionals don't create dependency. They create capability."

Aditya quietly repeated the sentence in his mind-*Create capability*.

It sounded simple. Yet the more he thought about it, the more meaningful it became.

For a few moments, they continued eating in silence. Then Raghav asked another question. "What do you think companies actually pay people for?"

Aditya answered confidently. "For doing their work."

Raghav nodded. "That is partly true."

Aditya waited. "Companies don't reward people for being busy."

"They reward people for solving problems."

"The larger the problem you can solve the more valuable you become."

He pointed towards the cafeteria. "Look around."

"Most people here have access to the same software."

"The same Excel. The same AI tools. The same internet."

"So why do some people grow much faster than others?" Aditya looked around before replying quietly. "I don't know."

"They ask better questions. They communicate better. They earn trust. They understand people. They connect ideas. Above all, they remain curious. As a result, they address bigger problems more comfortably."

Aditya realized that almost every answer Raghav gave began with a question. It was different from the way teachers had taught him in college. There, the goal had always been to provide the right answer. Raghav seemed more interested in helping people discover it themselves. As if reading his thoughts, Raghav smiled.

“You must be wondering why I keep asking questions.”

Aditya laughed. “A little.”

“Because questions make people think.” He paused. “When someone gives you an answer, you remember it for a while. But when you discover the answer yourself, you remember it for a lifetime.”

Aditya nodded slowly. The idea stayed with him.

As lunch was coming to an end, several employees walked past their table.

“Good afternoon, Raghav sir.”

“Good afternoon.”

Another stopped for a moment.

“Best Wishes once again, sir.”

Raghav smiled politely.

“Thank you.” The employee continued on his way.

A few minutes later, someone else repeated the same greeting.

“All the Best, sir.” Again, Raghav simply smiled.

Aditya noticed it but chose not to ask. Perhaps it was a completed project. Perhaps an award. Perhaps something personal. Whatever it was, Raghav didn’t seem interested in talking about it. Instead, he turned the conversation back to Aditya.

“So tell me...”

“What do you want to become five years from now?”

Aditya thought for a moment. “I want to become successful.”

Raghav smiled. “That’s a destination. What kind of person do you want to become while getting there?”

Aditya had never thought about success that way. The question remained unanswered. Not because he lacked ambition. But because nobody had asked him that question before.

As they walked back towards the office, Raghav slowed near the security desk.

“Good afternoon, Mahesh. How is your daughter now?” The security guard smiled warmly.

“Good afternoon, sir. She is much better now sir.”

“That’s wonderful.”

“I’m glad.”

The conversation lasted barely ten seconds before they continued walking.

Aditya couldn’t help noticing it. Raghav hadn’t just remembered the guard’s name. He had remembered something important about his family. It was a small gesture. Yet it spoke volumes.

That evening, Aditya found himself thinking less about dashboards and reports more about people. College had taught him formulas. Online courses had taught him software. But in a single lunch break, Raghav had introduced him to something he had never considered. Technical skills could help someone get hired. But the ability to understand people, ask thoughtful questions, earn trust help others grow that was a different kind of skill altogether. Perhaps the most valuable one. Now, Aditya began to understand why everyone in the office seemed to know the man in the white shirt. Not because of his position. But because of the person he had become.

4.

Retiring by Choice

Friday mornings always felt different.

Moreover, this Friday was the last working day of the month the entire office seemed to be moving a little faster than usual. The calm conversations of the previous week had been replaced by quick discussions, urgent phone calls constant notifications.

“Did we receive the client’s confirmation? Please close the pending invoices before lunch. The monthly review starts at four. Every department was busy trying to finish the month strongly. Aditya had barely settled at his desk when his team lead walked over.

“Aditya, I have a simple task for you.”

“Sure”. Aditya replied

“Prepare a dashboard showing all the receivables for this month. Nothing complicated. Pull the data from the finance workbook and summarize it department-wise. We’ll review it before the monthly meeting.” Aditya smiled. “Okay.”

Compared to the reports he had struggled with earlier in the week, this one seemed manageable. He opened Excel, connected the files began organizing the numbers.

As he worked, something unusual caught his attention. Employees walking across the floor kept stopping near Raghav’s desk.

“All the best, sir.”

“It was wonderful working with you.”

“We’ll miss you.”

“Please stay in touch.”

Every few minutes someone came to shake his hand. Some smiled. Some looked emotional. Raghav responded to each one the same way with his usual calm smile. Just genuine smile with gratitude.

Aditya frowned.

He had heard congratulations earlier in the week. Today everyone seemed to be saying goodbye. Unable to control his curiosity, he leaned towards Sneha, the teammate sitting beside him.

“Sneha...”

“Hmm?”

“Why is everyone wishing Raghav sir?”

She looked surprised.

“You don’t know?”

Aditya shook his head.

“Today is his last working day.”

For a moment Aditya thought he had misheard.

“Last... working day?” “Yes.”

“He’s leaving the company.”

The words hit him harder than he expected. Leaving? Already?

He had known Raghav for barely a week. Yet in those few conversations, he had found someone he could ask questions without hesitation. Someone who explained concepts instead of showing authority. Someone who made corporate life seem less intimidating.

And now...

He was leaving.

Aditya stared silently at his monitor. The numbers on the spreadsheet blurred before his eyes. A strange disappointment settled inside him.

“I just found a mentor and now he’s gone...”

Throughout the morning, his thoughts kept wandering. What would happen now? Who would he ask when he got stuck? Why would someone leave such a respected position?

From everything he had observed, everyone admired Raghav. Even the Director treated him with unusual respect. Then why would he resign?

His thoughts were interrupted by another voice near Raghav's desk.

“Best wishes for your future, Raghav.”

Raghav smiled. “Thank you.”

Aditya noticed something else.

Usually, on an employee's last day, people looked emotional. Some looked anxious. Some appeared uncertain about what came next. But Raghav looked exactly the way he had looked every other day.

Calm.

Relaxed.

Cheerful.

Almost as if today was just another Friday.

Aditya couldn't understand it.

By lunchtime, the cafeteria was already crowded.

Aditya picked up his tray and instinctively searched for the familiar table near the window.

It was empty. He waited.

Five minutes later, Raghav walked in, carrying his lunch as casually as ever.

Seeing Aditya, he smiled. “Waiting for someone?”

Aditya smiled awkwardly. “Actually... yes.”

“Come.” They sat together.

For a few moments neither of them spoke. Finally, Aditya broke the silence.

“Can I ask you something?”

“Of course,” welcomed Raghav.

“Why are you leaving?” Raghav looked at him quietly. Instead of answering, he unfolded his napkin and began eating. After a few seconds he smiled.

“I really want to know. You’ve helped me so much in just a few days. I thought I’d learn a lot more from you.”

Raghav looked at him for a long moment. Then he smiled.

“You will.”

Aditya looked confused.

Raghav placed his spoon on the tray. “Tell me Aditya.”

“Is anyone permanent in a company?”

Aditya thought for a second. “No.”

“Can anyone become indispensable?”

Aditya hesitated. “I... don’t think so.”

Raghav nodded. “Exactly.”

“No one is permanent.”

“And no one is irreplaceable.”

“That isn’t a sad truth. It’s simply reality.” He took a sip of water before continuing.

“I’m actually happy this day has arrived in my life.” Aditya looked surprised. “Happy?”

“Very.” “When I was almost your age,” Raghav continued, “I once heard from my senior, something that completely changed the way I looked at my career.”

Aditya leaned forward. Raghav continued slowly.

“As an employee, your income is the company’s expense. Your increment will increase the company’s expense.”

He paused.

“Your financial freedom is not the company’s responsibility.”

Aditya remained silent. Raghav continued.

“That day I realized something. Most employees spend years negotiating for a higher salary. But very few spend those years increasing their own value.”

“They fight for increments...”

“...instead of investing in themselves.”

Aditya listened carefully.

“Skills,” Raghav continued, “are different.”

“Skills can be marketed.”

“Skills can create opportunities.”

“Skills can generate additional income.”

“Salary comes from one employer.”

“Skills can earn from many places.”

He smiled.

“From that day onward, I made myself a promise.”

“I would never depend on a single source of income forever.”

Aditya asked softly,

“So... you’ve been preparing for this?”

“For more than ten years.”

“I loved working here. I learned enormously. I met wonderful people.”

“But I never wanted my entire future to depend on one monthly salary.”

He looked towards the cafeteria where hundreds of employees were having lunch.

“This is what often happens in corporate life.”

“As we grow older, companies can hire couple of energetic young professionals for nearly the same cost as one experienced employee.”

“There is nothing wrong with that.”

“Businesses evolve.”

“Technology changes.”

“Costs matter.”

“So instead of fearing that day...”

“I prepared for it.”

Aditya remained completely silent.

Raghav smiled and asked.

“How many seeds are there in a mango?”

“One.”

“And how many mangoes are there in one seed?”

Aditya smiled.

“Infinite... if we keep planting the seeds and nurture them.”

Raghav’s eyes lit up.

“Exactly.”

“Your salary is the seed.”

“It isn’t the fruit. It isn’t the tree.”

“It is simply the beginning.”

“If you consume every penny, you earn...”

“...the seed disappears.”

“But if you nurture it with knowledge...”

“...invest it wisely...”

“...develop new skills...”

“...and keep learning...”

“One salary slowly becomes the foundation of multiple sources of income.”

He paused. “Eventually...”

“You don’t just earn money. You earn choices.”

The sentence stayed with Aditya.

Raghav continued softly.

“I’ve enjoyed this job.”

“It has given me experience...Friendships...Confidence...

And countless lessons.”

“Now I’m ready to enjoy another chapter of life.”

Before Aditya could ask another question, someone walked up to their table.

“Raghav sir...”

“The Director is calling you. The farewell arrangements are starting.”

Raghav looked at his watch and smiled.

“So, lunch is over.”

As they stood up, Aditya spoke quickly.

“Raghav sir...”

Raghav gently interrupted him.

“No ‘sir’. Just Raghav.”

Aditya smiled.

“Alright...”

“Raghav...”

“How do I stay in touch with you?”

Without saying a word, Raghav reached into his wallet and handed him a simple visiting card. A phone number. An email address and one line beneath it.

Update... Before Life Outdates you.

“I’ll always be happy to hear from someone who’s still asking questions.”

With that, Raghav smiled and walked towards the Director’s cabin.

Aditya stood there for a few moments, holding the card.

Back at his cubicle, he pulled out his phone and started a new page in his notes app. Instead of writing formulas or shortcuts, he began noting down every sentence he could remember.

No one is permanent. No one is irreplaceable. Salary is the seed. Skills create choices.

Invest in yourself before asking others to invest in you. As he wrote, something changed inside him. Only an hour earlier he had been upset because Raghav was leaving.

Now he felt something entirely different.

Hope and Direction.

He was thinking about the kind of life he wanted to build. With renewed energy, he completed the receivables dashboard well before the deadline and mailed it to his team lead.

“Good work,” came the reply within minutes.

Aditya smiled.

At four o’clock, the entire floor gathered near the conference area.

A projector displayed photographs from different years.

Twenty-five years.

Different offices. Different teams. Different projects.

But One person. Raghav.

The Director stepped forward.

“Today, we are not saying goodbye to someone who is leaving us.”

“We are celebrating someone who spent twenty-five years helping this organization grow.”

He smiled towards Raghav.

“Most people build careers. You built people.”

The room erupted in applause.

Aditya joined in.

This time the applause meant something different. He wasn't applauding twenty-five years of service. He was applauding twenty-five years of preparation. Because he finally understood something. Raghav wasn't retiring from work. He was graduating from dependence.

Just before leaving the office for the final time Raghav gave a sheet to Aditya and told him try to understand the Time Span of Life.

TIME SPAN OF LIFE

Every Stage Has a Purpose.
Live It. Learn From It.
Grow Through It.



“

Life is not a race.

Every stage has a purpose. **Live** it. **Learn** from it. **Grow** through it. ”

5.

The First Call

Six months had passed since Raghav's farewell. Aditya had grown more confident in his role, but corporate life had begun to reveal its tougher side. Deadlines clashed, meetings overlapped misunderstandings between departments often turned small issues into big problems.

One Monday morning, Aditya faced a situation that left him unsettled.

The finance team claimed the sales data was incomplete.

The sales team insisted finance had misread the numbers.

The client was waiting for a consolidated report Aditya was caught in the middle.

Emails flew back and forth, each longer than the last. Voices rose in meetings. Everyone wanted to be heard, but nobody seemed to be listening. By evening, Aditya felt drained. He remembered Raghav's number was saved in his phonebook. Almost instinctively, he dialled the number.

"Hello?" Raghav's calm voice answered. "Raghav... it's Aditya. I hope you remember me." A warm laugh came through the line. "Of course I do. How are you, Aditya? How's your family?" Aditya now had a smile on his face "Yes, they're fine. My parents visited last month. Work has been... challenging." Raghav's tone softened. "That's good to hear. And challenges? Well, that means you're growing. Tell me, what's troubling you?"

Aditya explained the situation the Finance Team and Sales Team clashing, deadlines slipping, everyone talking but nobody listening.

Raghav paused before replying. "Aditya, let me share something with you: ***listen with your eyes see with your ears open.***"

Aditya frowned. "Listen with eyes? See with ears? I don't understand."

Raghav explained patiently:

- “Listening with your eyes means noticing what people don’t say - their body language, hesitation, tone. Often, the truth hides between the words.”
- “Seeing with your ears means hearing beyond the literal words - catching the intent, the emotion, the concern behind what is spoken.”

He continued, “The Finance Team is worried about accuracy. The Sales Team is worried about speed. Both are right. If you only hear their words, you’ll think they’re fighting. But if you listen with your eyes and see with your ears, you’ll realize they’re both trying to protect the client relationship just from different angles.”

Aditya thought for a moment. “So instead of proving who’s right, I should help them see that *we* are on the same side?” “Exactly,” Raghav said. “Shift the language from *you versus them* to *we together*. When people feel understood, they stop defending themselves and start collaborating.”

The Next Day

Aditya walked into the meeting room determined to try a different approach. The Finance Team sat on one side, arms folded, concerned about accuracy. The Sales Team sat opposite, restless and eager to move fast. Operations hovered in between, waiting for clarity.

Instead of diving into explanations, Aditya first observed the tension in Finance team’s expressions, then tried to understand the impatience in Sales teams’ tone. Finally, he spoke calmly:

“Finance Team, you’re worried the numbers may mislead the client if not verified. Sales Team, you’re worried the delay may upset the client. Both concerns are valid. But instead of competing with each other, let’s complete the work together. We want accuracy and speed but not one without the other. If we combine our strengths, we can deliver a report that is both reliable and timely.”

The room fell silent, both teams looked at each other instead of past each other. Slowly, heads nodded. The Finance Team agreed to fast-track the

verification process, while the Sales Team promised to hold off sending the report until the joint review was complete.

By the end of the meeting, the atmosphere had shifted. It wasn't Finance versus Sales anymore. It was we as one team solving the client's problem.

He realized communication wasn't all about speaking louder or writing longer emails. It was about listening deeper, seeing clearer reminding everyone that they were part of the same team.

Before going to bed, Aditya opened WhatsApp and typed a short message to Raghav: *"Thank you for yesterday's suggestion. It worked brilliantly."*

Aditya closed his phone, feeling lighter than he had in weeks.

6.

The First Appraisal

“The first appraisal doesn’t just test your performance. It tests your expectations.” One year had passed since Aditya had joined the company. The nervous young graduate who once hesitated before entering his manager’s cabin had changed. He had learned to prepare reports independently, coordinate with different departments and manage deadlines. More importantly, he had earned the trust of his manager and colleagues.

April had arrived, bringing with it the season every corporate employee waits for—annual appraisals.

The office atmosphere changed almost overnight.

The cafeteria buzzed with predictions, rumours and comparisons.

“I heard our department has a good appraisal budget.”

“My manager hinted at a promotion.”

“This year I’m expecting at least a fifteen percent hike.”

Everyone had a story.

Everyone had an expectation.

Aditya was no different.

After a year of hard work, he quietly believed this would be his first big reward. During his metro rides, he caught himself comparing smartphones, browsing laptops and even looking at holiday packages. He smiled every time he imagined surprising his parents with a family vacation.

One afternoon, while having tea, Sneha noticed him scrolling through an online shopping app.

“Shopping already?” Aditya smiled. “Just looking.”

“Or spending your increment before receiving it?”

The entire table laughed. Aditya laughed too. But deep down, he genuinely believed he had earned a good increment. After all, he had worked sincerely. He had stayed late when required, taken additional responsibilities and continuously upgraded his skills.

Finally, appraisal day arrived. An email appeared on everyone’s screen. Annual Performance Review. Within minutes, the office became unusually quiet. Aditya opened the email.

His manager had appreciated his sincerity, willingness to learn and positive attitude. His performance rating was very good. A smile appeared on his face. Then he looked at the revised salary. The smile slowly disappeared. The increment wasn’t bad. It just wasn’t what he had imagined. Around him, conversations had already started.

“How much did you get? My friend in another company got double.”

“I think it’s time to switch.” By lunchtime, the joy of receiving a good performance rating had disappeared. Aditya had unknowingly started measuring his success against other people’s numbers.

That evening, he returned home unusually silent. His mother asked, “How was your appraisal?”

“It was okay.”

Just okay. Later that night, while taking out some cash from his wallet, a visiting card popped up. Raghav’s name clicked in mind & Aditya smiled.

It had been months since they had met. He immediately called him.

“Sunday morning?”

Raghav asked.

“The usual tea stall?”

“I’ll be there,” Aditya replied.

Sunday mornings had a different rhythm. The city was slower. The tea stall beside the lake was already crowded with walkers discussing

politics, cricket and rising prices. Raghav was sitting at their usual table, holding a cup of tea. “You look disappointed,” he said with a smile as Aditya sat down. “I received my appraisal.”

“And?”

“My rating is very good.”

“That’s good.”

“My increment isn’t.” Raghav nodded, as if he had heard the same sentence many times before. Instead of replying immediately, he asked, “Aditya, would you like to hear a true story?”

Aditya nodded.

“It was my first appraisal, almost twenty-five years ago. I worked harder than anyone in my team. I stayed late, never said no to work and honestly believed I would receive the highest increment.”

He smiled.

“I even planned how I would spend the extra money.”

“What happened?” Aditya asked.

“I received a decent increment. Not the one I expected. I was upset for almost a week.”

“I blamed my manager.”

“I blamed the company.”

“I even updated my résumé.”

Aditya smiled. The feelings sounded familiar.

“One afternoon, my manager called me into his cabin.”

“I thought he would explain why my increment was low.”

“He didn’t.”

“He asked me only one question.”

Raghav looked at Aditya.

‘What can you do today that you couldn’t do a year ago?’

“I didn’t understand the question.”

“He continued... Your salary is the reward for what you already know. Your future income depends on what you’re capable of learning next.”

“That day I realised something.”

“I had spent an entire week thinking about what the company had given me.”

“I had not spent even ten minutes thinking about what I had become.”

Aditya remained silent.

Raghav took a sip of tea before continuing.

“Aditya, every young professional makes the same mistakes. They compare salaries.”

“They compare designations. They compare LinkedIn announcements. They compare cars.”

“But they rarely compare skills.”

He picked up a paper napkin and drew two columns.

In one he wrote Salary. In the other he wrote Skill. “Salary grows once a year.”

He pointed to the second column.

“Skills can grow every single day.”

“Salary is decided by your employer.”

“Skills are decided by you.”

Aditya looked at the napkin.

“So, should salary not matter?”

“Of course it matters.”

“We all work to earn salary, and salary takes care of our expenses.”

“But if salary becomes the only measure of success, disappointment will visit you every year.”

He paused before adding,

“Your first five years are not meant to maximise income. They are meant to maximise learning. The market eventually pays for skills.”

“The company only pays for your current role.”

The sentence stayed with Aditya.

After a brief silence, Raghav smiled. “Tell me honestly.”

“If another company offers you a much higher salary tomorrow, will you join?”

Aditya answered without hesitation.

“Probably... yes.”

Raghav smiled knowingly.

“I thought the same at your age.”

He folded the paper napkin and handed it to Aditya.

“Keep this.”

“You may need it sooner than you think.” The conversation slowly shifted to family, books and cricket before they parted. On his way home, Aditya kept unfolding the napkin and reading the two words.

Salary. Skill.

He realised that while he had been waiting for the company to increase his salary, he had quietly increased something far more valuable. Himself.

That evening, he bought a simple hardbound notebook from a stationery shop.

On the first page he wrote, Inkdown Journal.

Then he noted the lessons he never wanted to forget.

As he closed the notebook, Aditya smiled.

His first appraisal hadn't increased his salary as much as he had hoped. But it had quietly increased something much more important- the way he looked at his career.

He didn't know it yet, but that notebook would soon become his most valuable possession.

Over the next two years, Aditya quietly put Raghav's lessons into practice. He focused on learning, improving his skills, taking on greater responsibility becoming someone his team could depend on.

7.

The Switch

It had been a little over three years since Aditya had joined this company as fresher.

The nervous fresher who once hesitated before asking a question was now one of the dependable people in the team. New joiners often walked up to his desk whenever they got stuck someone would eventually say, “Let’s ask Aditya once.”

Back then, every morning had felt like an exam. Now, work had become a part of his routine. The office had become familiar too. Every day around four in the evening, someone would ask, “Tea?”

Nobody knew who started the tradition, but within minutes half the team would gather in the cafeteria. They spoke about deadlines, cricket, football, movies, weekend plans sometimes nothing at all. Those short breaks had become the best part of the day.

Life wasn’t exciting. But it was comfortable.

One Tuesday afternoon, while reviewing a client’s report, Aditya’s phone started vibrating.

Unknown number & he ignored it. A few seconds later, it rang again. This time he answered.

“Hello.”

“Hi, am I speaking with Aditya?”

“Yes.”

“My name is Anjali. I’m calling from Recruiters Consulting. Is this a good time?”

Aditya glanced around. His manager was busy in a meeting. “Yeah, go ahead.”

“We found your profile through LinkedIn. One of our clients is hiring someone with your experience.”

“I’m actually not looking for a change.”

“I understand,” she replied with a smile in her voice. “Most people say that initially.”

Aditya laughed.

“Then why do recruiters keep calling us?”

“Because sometimes we’re lucky.”

That made him smile.

She continued, “If someone offered you almost eighty percent hike... would you at least attend an interview?” Aditya stopped looking at his monitor.

“Eighty?”

“Approximately.”

He listened carefully.

She explained the role, the company and the interview process. Aditya didn’t commit to anything, but before hanging up, he agreed to receive the job description.

The email arrived within minutes.

Good company.

Interesting role.

Almost double the salary.

He leaned back in his chair.

Rakesh noticed.

“What happened? Recruiter! So?”

Aditya turned the monitor towards him.

Rakesh looked at the salary figure and almost laughed.

“Why are you still sitting here? Go attend the interview.”

“It’s just an interview.”

“Exactly. Nobody is asking you to resign today.”

Aditya nodded. That sounded reasonable. And that’s how it started.

Not because he was unhappy. Not because he wanted to leave. Just because one interview didn’t seem like a big deal.

Over the next three weeks, one interview led to another.

Every time Aditya thought the process was over, another round got scheduled. He stopped guessing the outcome and simply focused on preparing for the next interview.

One Monday evening, just as he was shutting down his laptop, an email popped up.

Subject: Offer Letter

He opened it immediately.

The salary was exactly what the recruiter had promised. He read the figure twice. Then a third time. The offer was real.

The news spread through the office much faster than Aditya had expected. Almost everyone had the same question.

“How much is the hike?”

The moment he answered, the advice followed automatically.

“Take it.”

“Don’t think twice.”

“People wait years for opportunities like this.”

Even colleagues from other teams dropped by his desk just to congratulate him.

By evening, his manager called him into the cabin.

“I’ve heard about the offer,” he said with a smile. “Honestly, if I were in your place, I’d probably make the same decision.”

Aditya walked out feeling lighter than ever. If even his manager believed he should leave, what was left to think about?

That evening, he shared the offer letter with his parents. His mother looked at the salary and smiled.

“So, this is what you’ll earn every month?”

Aditya nodded.

His father quietly adjusted his glasses and looked at the figure again.

“Good... now your mother can finally stop worrying about every little expense,” he said before handing the phone back.

Over the next few days, every conversation somehow ended the same way. His college friends congratulated him. Relatives called after months just to ask about the hike.

Everyone had an opinion. And strangely, every opinion was the same. “Don’t miss this opportunity.” After hearing it repeatedly, Aditya slowly stopped feeling that he was deciding. It felt as though the decision had already been made for him.

That night, after wrapping up the joining formalities, Aditya lay on his bed feeling unusually relaxed. He opened WhatsApp and started scrolling through the status updates without much thought. A few familiar faces flashed by. Then Raghav’s status appeared. Aditya smiled instinctively & paused.

For the last three years, almost every important decision had somehow ended with a conversation with Raghav. He opened the chat window.

His fingers rested on the keyboard for a moment. Then he looked at the offer letter once again. A reputed company.

A better role.

An eighty percent hike.

His parents were happy.

His friends were excited.

Even his manager thought it was the right move.

Aditya smiled to himself.

“What exactly am I going to ask him?”

He locked his phone.

I’ll surprise him once I join...”

Without realizing it, he had skipped the one conversation he never thought he would miss.

Aditya’s last working day arrived sooner than expected. The team refused to let him leave quietly.

There was a cake in the cafeteria, endless photographs and the usual jokes about not forgetting old friends after becoming “rich.” Someone had even found a photograph from his induction day. Aditya looked at it and laughed. He looked completely different.

Rakesh stood beside him and smiled. “You know... the first week you barely spoke to anyone.”

“And now?” Aditya asked.

“Now you’re the one everyone comes looking for.”

Before leaving, Aditya walked through the office one last time.

The same desks.

The same cafeteria.

The same people who had unknowingly become a part of his daily life.

Three years earlier, he had entered this office carrying nothing more than a backpack and a head full of doubts. Today, he was leaving with confidence, experience and an opportunity that felt like the reward for all those late nights.

His first day at the new company brought back memories of his very first job.

Only this time, everything felt different. Three years ago, he had walked into an office wondering if he was good enough. Today, he walked in knowing he belonged there. The office was certainly bigger. The welcome process was smoother. His laptop was ready before he arrived.

The HR team had already planned his induction his manager personally introduced him to everyone in the team. But the biggest difference wasn't the company.

It was Aditya.

He no longer felt like a fresher trying to survive his first day. He knew how meetings worked. He knew how to introduce himself. He knew that the nervousness of the first few days would eventually disappear.

During lunch, he clicked a few photographs and sent them to his parents.

His mother's reply came almost immediately.

"The office looks beautiful."

A few minutes later, his father replied.

"Nice."

Aditya smiled.

As he looked around the office, he couldn't help comparing it with his first company.

Back then, every face had seemed unfamiliar. Today, unfamiliarity didn't bother him anymore. That evening, while returning home, he looked outside the cab window as the city lights slowly came alive.

Three years ago, he had started his career with uncertainty. Today, he had started a new chapter with confidence. A bigger, better company carrying the hope of a brighter future. Aditya felt that life was moving exactly the way he had imagined. He leaned back, closed his eyes for a moment and smiled.

Some journeys begin with a difficult choice. His had begun with one that seemed obvious.

At least, that's what everyone believed.

8.

Golden Cage

It had been three months since Aditya had joined the new company. The excitement of the first few weeks had slowly settled into routine. The office was everything he had imagined.

Modern interiors. International clients. A beautiful cafeteria. A salary that still made him smile every month.

Whenever his parents spoke to relatives, they proudly mentioned the new company.

His college friends often joked, “Now you’ve become the rich guy.”

Aditya laughed every time. From the outside, life looked perfect.

Inside... something had quietly begun to change.

During a team meeting. Aditya had spent two days preparing a presentation. After a few slides, his manager stopped him.

“Wrong.”

The room became silent. Aditya looked at the screen.

“What should I correct?”

His manager pointed towards a small formatting mistake.

Then he looked around the room.

“This is what happens when people don’t pay attention in detail.”

Nobody spoke for the rest of the meeting.

As everyone walked out, a teammate smiled at Aditya.

“Don’t worry. He does this with everyone.”

Aditya smiled back. But something felt strange.

In his previous company, mistakes had become learning opportunities.

Here...

they became public lessons.

Over the next few weeks, Aditya noticed a pattern.

People rarely asked questions.

Nobody disagreed with the manager. Most conversations happened only after meetings were over. Every evening, employees looked towards the manager's cabin before shutting down their laptops. If he stayed...

everyone stayed. Weekend messages slowly became normal.

“Need a quick update.”

“Can we jump on short call?”

The Short calls were never short anymore.

One evening, while returning home, message notification popped up.

His salary had been credited. He looked at the amount and smiled. Almost double what he used to earn. A minute later, he locked his phone.

The smile disappeared. He looked outside the cab window. A strange thought crossed his mind.

Why do I enjoy salary day more than working days?

The question stayed with him.

That evening, he opened the notebook he had started after meeting Raghav. He slowly read the pages.

- *Never compare your salary with someone else's journey.*
- *Learn more to earn more.*
- *Salary is paid by your employer.*
- *Skills are rewarded by the market.*

He smiled.

Then another thought appeared. I never discussed this job with Raghav.

For the first time since they had met, he had taken an important career decision without speaking to him. Everyone had asked only one question. “How much is the hike?”

Nobody had asked, “Who will be your manager?”

“What will you learn?”

“How is the culture?”

Neither had he.

Aditya wasn't unhappy because the company. The projects were interesting. His colleagues were talented. Yet every morning, he felt a little less excited than the day before. Slowly, he began realising something. When he accepted the offer, he had compared everything he could see.

The salary, the designation the brand name.

But some things cannot be seen before joining.

The manager, the work culture, the freedom to learn.

Perhaps that was the hardest part about making career decisions.

We all choose before we know. The future never introduces itself in advance.

One Monday morning, Aditya's manager walked to his desk.

“Aditya.”

“Yes.”

“I want you to visit our client in Pune this Thursday.”

“The quarterly review is important.”

“You'll represent our team.”

Aditya nodded.

“I'll prepare.”

A few minutes later, the travel itinerary arrived.

Departure: Thursday morning.

Train journey. Approximately three hours. Aditya leaned back in his chair. For weeks, his mind had been carrying questions he hadn't shared with anyone. Maybe the journey would help him think.

Aditya reached the station a little earlier than usual. The platform was unusually crowded. He found his seat beside the window and placed his bag on the overhead rack. As the train slowly pulled out of the station, he leaned back and looked outside. The city slowly disappeared. Buildings gave way to open fields. There were no emails. No meetings.

No notifications.

Just silence.

He closed his eyes.

“Travelling for work?”

The familiar voice made him open them immediately.

He turned.

“Raghav?” Raghav smiled.

“What a surprise.”

Aditya laughed. “I was about to say the same.”

After exchanging a few words, Raghav moved to the empty seat beside him.

“How's the new company?”

Aditya smiled. “It's good.”

Raghav looked at him for a moment. “That's not your ‘good’ face.”

Aditya laughed softly. “You still notice.”

“I've had enough practice.”

For a few seconds, neither of them spoke.

Then Aditya finally said, “I think I made a mistake.”

Raghav didn't interrupt. Aditya continued.

“The salary is great.”

“The office is beautiful. The company is well known.”

“But...”

“I don't enjoy going to work anymore.”

He spoke slowly. About the long hours. About the manager who corrected people more than he guided them. About employees who stayed late because everyone else stayed late. About how questions had

become something people avoided. When he finished, Raghav simply nodded.

Then he asked,

“When you bought your first phone...”

“Did you compare only the price?”

Aditya smiled.

“No.”

“What else did you compare?”

“The camera. The battery. The reviews. The performance. The service.”

Raghav nodded.

“You compared everything that would affect your experience.”

Aditya agreed.

Raghav looked outside the window before asking another question.

“When you accepted this job...”

“What did you compare?”

Aditya answered almost immediately.

“The salary.”

After a brief pause, he added,

“The designation.”

“The company name.”

“And?”

Aditya couldn’t think of anything else.

Raghav smiled gently.

“Aditya...”

“The easiest thing to compare is salary.”

“Unfortunately... it is rarely the most important thing.”

The train passed a small station without stopping.

People on the platform disappeared within seconds.

Raghav continued. “Tell me.”

“Who decides whether you enjoy coming to work every morning?”

Aditya thought for a moment.

“My manager.”

“And who decides how much you learn?”

“My manager... and the team.”

“And who decides whether you’re respected?”

Aditya nodded before Raghav could finish.

Again...

“My manager.”

Raghav smiled.

“So you didn’t choose only a salary. You also chose a manager.”

Aditya looked outside. He had never thought of it that way.

Raghav continued, “We often believe we’re making decisions based on facts.”

“But many of the important facts are invisible.”

“You can read an offer letter. You cannot read a work culture.”

“You can compare salaries. You cannot compare tomorrow’s experience.”

Aditya remained silent.

“The strange thing about life,” Raghav said, “is that we all live mostly in the unseen future.”

“We make decisions without knowing what tomorrow looks like.”

“If the future could be seen...”

“Decision-making would be easy.”

Aditya smiled.

“So how do we make better decisions?”

“By asking better questions.” Raghav replied without hesitation.

“When everyone asks...’How much is the hike? You ask...’Who will I report to?”

‘What will I learn?’

‘Will this role make me more valuable after five years?’

“The answers to those questions rarely appear in an offer letter.

“Aditya slowly nodded. “I wish I had asked them.” Raghav smiled.

“So do most people.”

They both laughed. After a few moments, Aditya asked quietly,

“So... should I resign?”

Raghav looked at him. “Why?”

“I’m not happy.”

“Are you learning?”

Aditya thought for a moment. “Yes.”

“Not from my manager.”

“But from the work.”

“And from seeing the kind of manager I never want to become.”

Raghav smiled. “Then you’re still learning.”

He leaned back in his seat.

“Aditya...”

“Experience is a wonderful teacher. The only problem is...”

“it sometimes charges a very high fee.”

Aditya laughed. “So, this company is my tuition fee?”

“Perhaps.”

Raghav laughed too. Then he added, “Value comes from experience.”

“And experience often comes from bad experiences.”

The words stayed with Aditya. Outside, the fields stretched endlessly.

Raghav pointed towards them. “Life serves us both lemons and mangoes.”

“You don’t get to choose what arrives. But you always choose what you make from it.”

Aditya smiled. “So, I should make lemonade.”

“Exactly.”

“Don’t waste your energy wishing the lemon was a mango.”

“Use it well.”

The announcement for Aditya’s station echoed through the coach.

He picked up his bag.

Before getting down, Raghav said, “One last thing.”

“The next time you change jobs...Don’t choose the company.”

“Choose the career.” Aditya smiled.

“This time...”

“I’ll ask better questions.” The train came to a halt.

As Aditya stepped onto the platform, his company hadn’t changed.

His manager hadn’t changed. His salary hadn’t changed. But something else had. since joining the company, he had stopped regretting his decision. Instead, he decided to learn everything he could from it.

After all, even a golden cage could become a classroom if one chose to keep learning.

While riding to the client’s office, Aditya unlocked his phone. He opened the Notes app in his mobile, the one that had quietly become his

personal journal when InkDown Journal is not handy. Every conversation that changed the way he thought found its way there. He tapped “Raghav’s Page” and added important points

Aditya read the list once more. Then, almost as an afterthought, he added one final line.

- The future can’t be predicted, but it can be prepared for.

He smiled, locked his phone slipped it back into his pocket. Outside, the cab continued through the morning traffic. Inside, his mind was quieter than it had been in months.

The experience taught Aditya that a higher salary could improve his lifestyle, but it could not guarantee satisfaction or security or peace of mind. Over the next four years, his career and personal life continued to evolve, quietly changing the questions he wanted his life to answer.

9.

Checklist Before the Switch

Four years passed quietly. Life had changed in ways Aditya had never imagined. He was married now. The apartment he once dreamed of owning had become his home. Weekends were no longer spent worrying about office deadlines. They were filled with grocery shopping, family dinners, short road trips and conversations about the future. Life wasn't more exciting. It was simply more meaningful. Work had changed too. The difficult years in his current company had taught Aditya something valuable. He had stopped expecting a perfect manager. Instead... he decided to become the manager he once wished he had.

One morning, a young analyst walked up to his desk.

“Aditya, do you have a minute?”

“Sure.”

“I think I messed up yesterday's report.”

Aditya looked at the spreadsheet.

The analyst had linked the wrong data table.

It was a genuine mistake.

He smiled.

“I'm glad you caught it.”

The analyst looked surprised.

“I thought you'd be upset.”

Aditya shook his head.

“If you're afraid of making mistakes, you'll stop taking ownership.”

“And if you're afraid of asking questions...”

“You’ll stop learning.”

The analyst nodded.

Together, they corrected the report.

Before leaving, the young analyst smiled.

“Thanks, Aditya.”

“I’ll remember this.”

Aditya watched him walk away.

For a moment, he remembered his first few days of corporate life.

Someone had once shown him the same patience.

A few days later, Aditya was having lunch in the cafeteria.

As he returned his tray, he overheard two employees from another department.

“I wish I worked in Aditya’s team.”

“Why?”

“My friend is in his team.”

“He says everyone is encouraged to speak.”

“No one gets embarrassed for asking questions.”

The other employee laughed.

“That’s rare.”

Aditya quietly walked away.

He wasn’t meant to hear the conversation.

But it stayed with him throughout the day.

The company had changed too.

His old manager had moved to another business unit.

The new manager believed in trust instead of fear.

She believed good teams were built by empowering people, not controlling them.

One afternoon, she called Aditya into her cabin.

“Please have a seat.”

Aditya smiled.

“Is everything alright?”

She nodded.

“More than alright.”

She handed him a performance report.

“Your team’s delivery has been consistently among the best.”

Aditya thanked her.

She continued. “But that’s not why I called you.”

Aditya looked up.

“I’ve been receiving feedback from different departments.”

“They all say the same thing. People enjoy working with your team.”

“They’re confident. They collaborate. They take responsibility.”

She smiled.

“Processes can improve performance. But leaders improve people.”

A week later, Aditya received his promotion letter.

He was promoted as Team Lead.

That evening, he shared the news with his wife. She hugged him.

“I knew this day would come.” Aditya laughed.

“What made you so confident?”

She smiled. “Because people don’t just appreciate your work.”

“They appreciate how you make them feel.” Aditya didn’t reply.

He simply smiled.

Sometimes...the people closest to us notice our growth before we do.

Over the next few years, recruiter calls became a regular part of life.

“Hi Aditya, we have an exciting opportunity.”

“We’d love to discuss a leadership role.”

“The compensation is significantly higher.”

Aditya always thanked them politely. But he declined every offer. The memory of his previous switch was still fresh. He had promised himself one thing. The next move would not be made in excitement. It would be made with clarity.

Then something unusual happened. Within two weeks, three different companies approached him. Each offered a senior leadership role. Each came with an impressive salary hike.

His wife looked at the emails and smiled.

“So...”

“Which one pays the most?”

Aditya smiled. “Four years ago...”

“That would’ve been my first question.”

She looked at him curiously. “And now?”

“Now...”

“I want to know who I’ll be working with. What I’ll learn.”

“And whether I’ll still enjoy going to work five years from now.”

She smiled.

“I think Raghav would be proud.”

Aditya smiled too.

“I hope so.”

The next morning, instead of replying to the recruiters in a hurry, Aditya opened his laptop.

He did not open the salary pages first.

He opened Excel.

On a blank sheet, he typed a simple title:

Checklist Before the Switch

He looked at the words for a few moments.

A gentle smile appeared on his face.

The young professional who had once chased the biggest hike was gone.

Experience had changed him.

This time... he wasn't looking for the highest-paying company.

He was looking for the right one.

He turned the page.

Picked up his pen.

And began writing the questions that salary alone could never answer.

In the first row, he wrote the checklist point and the three companies. In the first column he wrote the questions that would decide his daily life after the excitement of the offer letter disappeared.

Aditya stared at the fifth question for a long time. It was not a question he had seen in any career article. It was not something recruiters discussed. It was not written in job descriptions. But it mattered.

Checklist Point	A	B	C
1. Who will I report to what kind of manager does that person seem to be?			
2. What will I learn in this role that will make me more valuable after five years?			
3. Does the company culture encourage questions, ownership and honest discussion?			

4. How stable is the team what is the employee retention ratio?			
5. Are sick leaves unusually high in the team? Could stress or work culture be affecting people's health?			
6. Will I still enjoy going to work after the excitement of the salary hike fades?			
7. Does this role support the career and life I want to build?			

During his research, he had noticed something unusual. In his current team, sick leaves were rare. People took leave for genuine reasons, but there was no pattern of frequent absence. In one of the companies that had approached him, however, he heard from two former employees that sick leaves were surprisingly common in the team he was expected to join.

At first, Aditya almost ignored it. People fall sick. That was normal. But then another thought came to him. Sometimes people do not fall sick only because of weather, food or infection. Sometimes people fall sick because of stress, fear, pressure and a work culture that slowly exhausts them.

He typed carefully: ***High sick leave may not always be a health issue. Sometimes it may be a culture signal.***

That evening, Aditya invited Raghav home for tea. His wife had heard so much about him over the years that she smiled the moment he entered.

“So, you are the famous Raghav Sir,” she said warmly.

Raghav laughed. “I hope Aditya has not exaggerated too much.”

Aditya opened his laptop and showed them the Excel sheet. For the next twenty minutes, he narrated everything like a story how each company had approached him, what he had found through LinkedIn, what former employees had said, how the salary differed, how the teams worked and why the retention ratio mattered.

This time, Raghav did not interrupt. He listened patiently. Aditya's wife listened too, occasionally asking a simple question that made Aditya explain his reasoning more clearly.

Halfway through the explanation, Raghav raised his hand gently.

"Aditya, may I interrupt once?"

Aditya stopped. "Of course."

Raghav smiled. "Do you realize what you have developed?"

Aditya looked confused. "A checklist?"

"No," Raghav said. "A storytelling skill."

Aditya's wife smiled immediately. "I was thinking the same."

Raghav continued, "You are not just comparing jobs. You are connecting facts, people, risks and future possibilities into a clear story. That is a rare skill. Nurture it. Storytelling may help you far beyond salary."

Aditya smiled. "I never thought of it that way. I was just trying to make sense of everything before making a decision."

He paused, then opened his comparative sheet again.

Then Raghav pointed to the sheet. "Now tell me your decision."

Aditya looked at the three columns again. Company 1 offered the highest salary hike. Company 2 offered a better designation. Company 3 offered the least hike among the three.

But Company 3 had the strongest retention ratio. People stayed there longer. The team feedback was healthier. The manager seemed calm and open. The role promised learning, ownership and long-term growth.

Aditya smiled. "I'm accepting the third offer."

His wife looked at him. "Even though the hike is the lowest?"

Aditya nodded. "Yes. Because this time I am not choosing the biggest number. I am choosing the better future."

Raghav smiled but said nothing. Aditya had answered his own question. After some time, Raghav congratulated Aditya on his decision and wished him all the best in his new company. They exchanged a few final words before Raghav left.

For years, Aditya had thought of his professional skills in terms of Excel, reports, dashboards and presentations. He had never considered that the ability to connect information, explain decisions clearly, and turn complex analysis into a story could itself become a valuable skill. That night, before sleeping, Aditya opened his notebook and updated the InkDown Journal.

A few weeks later, Aditya completed his notice period and joined the new company. The transition felt surprisingly smooth. Unlike his first job change, he was not walking into the unknown with excitement alone; this time, he knew what he was looking for.

His new manager welcomed him warmly, introduced him to the team encouraged him to ask questions from the very beginning. The people around him were approachable, discussions where open ideas were welcomed rather than judged. Slowly, Aditya settled into the new environment. He enjoyed the freedom to take ownership, the opportunity to learn from experienced colleagues the feeling that his work was being valued for more than just the numbers on his salary slip. The office began to feel familiar with the morning conversations, the occasional tea breaks, the lunch-table laughter the satisfaction of solving meaningful problems.

Aditya felt that perhaps he had finally learned to make a career decision not merely for a better salary, but for a better life. He settled into his new role with quiet confidence, unaware that the journey ahead would soon make him question what “better” truly meant.

10.

Exploring Salary Plus Options

Almost a year now in this company. Monday mornings in the office always began with deadlines. Emails flooded the inbox; meetings occupied the calendar everyone seemed to be racing against time. By lunchtime, however, the atmosphere changed. The cafeteria became a place where work took a back seat and conversations took over.

Aditya joined his colleagues with his lunch box and found an empty chair at the corner of the table.

As everyone settled down, Rohit looked around and asked an unusual question.

“Suppose your salary suddenly stops for six months. What would you do?”

The question silenced the table for a moment.

Then the answers began to flow. Sandeep explained how he had been teaching Mathematics to Class X students every evening for the last two years. It required only a couple of hours after office, but the additional income had become a comfortable financial cushion.

Amit wasn't interested in teaching. He admitted that after spending the entire day in the office, he preferred learning about the stock market instead. According to him, investing was another skill that deserved serious attention.

Someone immediately joked that the stock market created experts during rising markets and silent investors during falling markets moreover one need enough money to invest in stock market too. Laughter spread across the table.

Another colleague spoke about his cousin who had recently purchased a food franchise. The investment was substantial, but he admired the

idea of building something independently instead of depending entirely on a monthly salary.

Others quickly pointed out the practical challenges like rent, employees, compliance and operational headaches finally no time for family or self.

The discussion gradually became more interesting.

One engineer spoke about creating YouTube videos after office hours.

Another had started freelancing on weekends.

Someone believed Artificial Intelligence would create entirely new opportunities over the next decade. Others wanted to start online businesses. Within minutes, the lunch table had turned into a brainstorming session.

Everyone had a different opinion.

Every option sounded attractive.

Every option also came with uncertainty and challenges.

Aditya hardly participated in the discussion.

Instead, he quietly observed something that fascinated him.

Not a single person believed salary alone was enough.

Some wanted additional income. Some wanted financial security. Some dreamed of financial freedom. Some simply wanted the confidence that one unexpected event would not disturb their family's life. The conversation ended when everyone returned to their desks. The thoughts, however, remained with Aditya.

On his way home, Aditya replayed the discussion in his mind. It wasn't the individual ideas that interested him. It was the common concern behind them. Most of his colleagues were educated professionals working in reputed companies. They earned respectable salaries, received annual increments and enjoyed stable careers. Yet almost everyone was searching for something beyond salary. The thought stayed with him throughout the drive home.

During dinner, he casually narrated the cafeteria discussion to Nisha.

She listened with interest, occasionally smiling at some of the suggestions his colleagues had shared. But as Aditya spoke about everyone's search for an additional source of income, her expression slowly changed.

She became unusually quiet.

Aditya noticed it immediately.

Instead of continuing the conversation, he waited.

After a long pause, Nisha looked at him and said softly, "I've seen what happens when a family depends on only one income."

Aditya looked at her curiously.

Although they had been married for several years, there were still some parts of each other's childhood that surfaced only occasionally.

Nisha rarely spoke about this one.

She had been studying in higher secondary school when her father fell seriously ill.

At first, everyone believed he would recover within a few weeks.

The weeks slowly turned into months.

Hospital visits became frequent. Medicines replaced business meetings.

The family business, which had comfortably supported them for years, began slowing down. Her father had personally handled almost every important aspect of the business. Customers trusted him. Suppliers negotiated with him. Most relationships had been built over decades.

After his illness, Nisha's mother stepped forward with remarkable determination.

She learned everything she could.

She met customers.

She spoke with suppliers.

She tried to manage accounts.

She worked tirelessly to keep the business alive.

But some things cannot be replaced overnight.

Experience.

Relationships.

Trust built over years.

Slowly, customers began moving elsewhere.

Orders became irregular.

Payments were delayed.

Within a few months, the business had almost disappeared.

Nisha still remembered those evenings.

Her mother sitting quietly with a cashbook, calculating expenses repeatedly before deciding which payments could wait another week.

Conversations about vacations and festivals disappeared.

Discussions about medicines, school fees and household expenses took their place.

“I didn’t understand finance then,” Nisha said quietly.

“But I understood fear.”

Aditya remained silent.

He had always known that Nisha’s father had passed away after a prolonged illness.

He had never realised how deeply that period had shaped her thinking.

She smiled gently before continuing.

“We spent years studying in school.”

“We learned mathematics, science, history.”

“But nobody taught us what happens when the only earning source of a family suddenly disappears.”

“Nobody taught us income diversification.”

“Nobody taught us financial planning in the real sense.”

“It was something life taught us.”

The words stayed with Aditya long after dinner.

Later that night, as he sat alone in the balcony, the cafeteria discussion and Nisha’s childhood memories blended into one thought.

Perhaps exploring another source of income wasn’t merely about earning more.

Perhaps it was also about reducing risk. Almost instinctively, he picked up his phone and opened WhatsApp. Whenever an important career question had confused him in the past, one conversation had usually brought clarity.

He typed a short message to Raghav.

Within a few minutes, the reply arrived.

Raghav was travelling for work throughout the week but suggested meeting the following Saturday morning at a nearby coffee café.

Aditya agreed.

Saturday mornings had a slower rhythm than weekdays. The café was peaceful, with only a handful of customers scattered across different tables. After exchanging greetings, they ordered coffee and spent a few minutes discussing work and family before the conversation naturally moved towards the reason Aditya had requested the meeting.

Aditya narrated the discussion from his office cafeteria.

He also shared Nisha’s childhood experience.

Raghav listened without interrupting.

When Aditya finally finished, he smiled. “It sounds like you’ve already started asking the right questions.”

Aditya admitted that the discussion had left him more curious than confused.

“There are so many options,” he said. “Sometimes it feels impossible to know where to begin.”

Instead of recommending any opportunity, Raghav asked Aditya what he had observed about the people discussing.

Aditya realised that almost everyone had spoken about possibilities.

Very few had spoken about difficulties.

Most examples focused on people who had succeeded.

Hardly anyone mentioned those who had failed.

Raghav nodded. Over the years, he had developed a simple habit whenever he explored something new. He never relied only on success stories.

Success stories explained what was possible. Failure stories often explained what was practical.

Both were necessary before making any decision. Aditya found the approach surprisingly sensible.

For nearly an hour, they discussed different ways people created additional income.

Teaching.

Investing.

Franchising

Freelancing.

Small businesses.

Digital content.

Consulting.

Every option demanded a different combination of skills, capital, time and patience.

None of them looked easy anymore.

Towards the end of the conversation, Raghav mentioned Direct Selling Business Model that had not appeared in Aditya's office discussion.

Aditya admitted that he has never heard about it.

Raghav smiled.

He was not interested to explain the business himself in the café.

Instead, he mentioned someone much younger who had chosen to build his career in Direct Selling with remarkable seriousness.

According to Raghav, Manish regularly participates in weekly business presentations where anyone could attend, understand the business model and ask questions freely.

“There is no obligation,” Raghav explained. “Attend it as a learner. Listen carefully. Ask whatever you want to ask. After that, decide whether it deserves further exploration.”

The suggestion felt reasonable.

Before leaving the café, Raghav assured him that Manish would get in touch and invite him to the next open meeting.

A week earlier, he had been searching for another source of income.

Now he was searching for something more valuable.

A framework for evaluating opportunities.

Perhaps that would prove useful long after this conversation was over.

11.

Business Proposal

Next day afternoon, Manish called.

Am I speaking to Aditya?

Aditya asked who's this?

This side Manish, Raghav asked me to give a call regarding the Open Opportunity meeting scheduled this Sunday.

"I'll attend," Aditya said. "But I won't decide immediately."

Manish laughed. "That is fine. Just come with an open mind."

That evening, Aditya entered a conference hall where around fifty to eighty people were already seated. The stage had bright lights, a large screen a banner that read:

Build Your Own Business. Build Your Own Future.

The host then invited a successful business leader and his wife onto the stage. The couple appeared sharp, confident and well prepared.

The lady began by explaining the products, their benefits, usage and how their cost compared with what people were already spending on similar everyday needs. She explained with few demonstrations about the efficacy and safety of the products.

Then her husband took the microphone and wrote on the whiteboard:

Time →

←Money

"We all trade our time to make money."

He paused.

“Time is for life. Money is for style. And when we trade our life for money, we often struggle to have both together - a choice of lifestyle.”

Again, he wrote on the Whiteboard:

Rate × Time = Income

“If either rate or time becomes zero, what happens to your income?”

“Zero.” came a response from the audience.

He then asked, “and what happens to your expenses?”

The answer was obvious.

“They don’t become zero. In fact, with the passage of time, they continue to rise because of inflation.”

The family still needs food. Household products are still consumed. Life continues. He pointed to another simple equation:

Income = Savings + Expenses

“Some of these expenses are already going to happen. The question is, can the products we already need and use become part of a business-building process and, over time, help create an additional source of income?”

Aditya stared at the board.

The concept was remarkably simple.

For years, he had been taught how to earn money, save money and spend money. But no one had ever made him look at the connection between time, income and expenses this way.

Now, Aditya began to see the opportunity differently. Not simply as another way to make money, but to gradually create additional income and greater choice in lifestyle.

One question kept coming back to him:

If our expenses don’t stop when our working time stops, shouldn’t we learn how to make our everyday consumption work more intelligently?

The thought stayed with him as the presentation continued.

After the open meeting, Manish introduced him to two senior leaders. They were polite, confident and enthusiastic. They spoke about products, training, mentorship and the power of duplication.

“So, Aditya,” one of them asked, “when do you want to start?”

Aditya smiled. “I want to understand first.”

“That is understandable,” the senior member said. “But don’t delay too much. You know early birds get more bugs.”

Aditya nodded politely. The old Aditya might have felt pressured. The new Aditya heard another checklist question forming in his mind.

That evening, after returning home, Aditya was eager to tell Nisha about the open meeting. He described the products, the presentation and most of all the business concept that had made him look at the opportunity differently.

Nisha listened patiently.

“So, what did you actually learn today?” she asked.

Aditya smiled. “Quite a lot. But the more I heard, the more I realised there is still a lot I don’t understand.”

“Especially the products?”

“Yes, the products,” he admitted. “I heard about their benefits and how they fit into everyday use, but I think I need to understand them properly ourselves.”

Nisha nodded.

“Then perhaps that’s the best place to start.”

Aditya smiled. “I was thinking the same thing.”

Aditya called Raghav.

“I attended the Open opportunity meet as you mentioned. I have a request,” he said. “Can we meet this weekend? I’d like your opinion before taking any decision.”

“I’ll come,” Raghav replied. “But before we discuss the business, try the products. Decisions become much easier after experience.”

Aditya immediately called Manish & asked him to share some products to gain some hands-on experience. The next afternoon, Manish visited their home carrying a small bag. He quietly placed a few home-care and personal-care products on the dining table.

For the next half an hour, he explained how each product should be used and why many of them required a much smaller quantity than ordinary brands. He answered every question patiently and never once mentioned income, bonuses or recruitment.

Before leaving, he simply said, “Use them for a week. If you genuinely don’t like them, let me know. I’ll collect them and return them under the company’s return policy to get 100% money back on these products.”

Aditya looked at him in surprise.

“You mean... we’ll get money back? Even after the seal of the products are opened?”

“If the products don’t satisfy you and they qualify under the policy, yes.”

After leaving a product brochure on the table, Manish checked his watch. “I should leave now.”

Within a minute, he was gone.

Aditya looked at Nisha and smiled. “That wasn’t what I expected.”

Neither of them discussed the business again for the next few days. Instead, they simply used the products as instructed.

Gradually, Nisha began noticing small differences. The kitchen cleaner required only a small quantity. The laundry detergent seemed to last longer than expected. Even the toothpaste felt different from the one they had been using.

One evening she smiled and said, “Whether we join the business or not, I think I’d like to continue using some of these products.”

Saturday evening arrived Raghav came over for tea as promised.

Aditya narrated everything that had happened since the seminar from the meeting with Manish to the products and the return policy. When he finished, Raghav looked at Nisha.

“What do you think?”

“I don’t know enough about the business,” she replied honestly, “but I do like the products. If they continue performing this way, I’d happily buy them again even without any business.”

Raghav smiled. “That’s the first answer you should always look for.”

He leaned back before continuing.

“Aditya, direct selling is simply another way of taking products to consumers. Like every industry, it has excellent companies, average companies and unethical ones. The important question is not whether direct selling is good or bad. The real question is whether you’re choosing the right company and the right people.”

Aditya immediately reached for his notebook.

Raghav laughed. “I thought that notebook would appear.”

He continued, “Before joining any company, ask yourself a few questions. Would people still buy these products if there were no business opportunity?

Are the products worth their price?

Does the company stand behind them with a fair return policy?

Does the leadership educate people, or do they only motivate them?

Can you leave the business respectfully if one day you decide it isn’t for you?

And most importantly, do you genuinely trust the people you’ll be working with?”

Aditya quietly noted every point.

“Remember,” Raghav added, “a good opportunity never fears questions. In fact, the right leaders encourage them.”

For the next hour, they discussed the business honestly. There were no promises of easy success, only a clear explanation of the effort, patience and learning required to build it alongside a full-time job.

When the discussion ended, Aditya looked at Nisha.

She smiled.

“I think we’ve taken enough time to understand it.”

Aditya nodded in agreement. This wasn’t a decision made from excitement. They had attended the seminar, tried the products, asked their questions and understood the business.

Only then did they decide to begin their journey slowly, on a part-time basis and with realistic expectations.

12.

Everyone Has an Opinion

Aditya had expected that joining the business would be the difficult part. He was wrong.

The real challenge began the moment he started telling people about his decision.

Two days after completing his registration, Aditya and Nisha were enjoying a quiet dinner at home when Aditya's phone rang. The name flashing on the screen was Manish-

After exchanging a few pleasantries, Manish asked, "Are you both busy this Saturday evening?"

Aditya looked at Nisha before replying, "No, nothing planned. Why?"

"I'd like you to meet our mentors, Pravesh and Meera," Manish said. "They've been building this business for many years. Don't worry, this isn't another seminar. Just come with every question you have."

Aditya smiled.

"Questions? I have plenty."

"Good," Manish replied with a laugh. "Bring every one of them."

As he ended the call, Aditya felt a quiet sense of anticipation. Something about Manish's confidence made him curious. This didn't sound like another business presentation. It sounded like an opportunity to understand what he had stepped into.

The following afternoon, the subject came up naturally during lunch at the office.

Aditya wasn't trying to recruit anyone. He wasn't giving a presentation or promoting products. He simply mentioned that he had recently came

across a direct-selling business that could also be built on part-time basis.

That was enough.

Within seconds, opinions began flying across the table.

One colleague looked up from his laptop.

“So... you’ve joined one of those chain marketing businesses?”

Another leaned back in his chair with a knowing smile.

“Be careful. My cousin lost money in something similar.”

A senior executive overheard the conversation and added his own warning.

They’ll ask you to involve your friends and relatives. I was trapped in a similar scam a long time ago. One of my relatives got me involved in that business. They made me attend big seminars and recruit other people. Eventually, we lost a huge amount of money, and it damaged our reputation as well. Looking back, it was a very painful experience.”

Someone giggled and commented, “Just don’t start selling toothpaste and shampoos to us!”

The table burst into laughter. Aditya forced a smile, but inside he felt uncomfortable. None of them had asked what company he had joined. None of them knew anything about the products or the business model. Yet everyone seemed certain they already knew the ending of his story.

The same pattern continued outside the office. That evening, Aditya mentioned the business to one of his uncles to get his suggestion. His uncle frowned immediately. “I hope you haven’t been trapped or brainwashed.”

“It’s not like that, Uncle,” Aditya replied calmly.

“They all say that in the beginning. Please keep such business out of our home” his uncle answered before Aditya could explain further.

Over the next two days, similar conversations repeated themselves.

One relative advised him to focus on his job because “shortcut businesses never work.”

A neighbour confidently claimed that only the people at the top ever earned money.

By Friday evening, Aditya had heard more opinions than facts.

As he sat beside Nisha after dinner, he let out a long sigh.

“Have you noticed something?” he asked.

She looked up from her plate. “What?”

“Nobody has asked me why I joined.” He paused before continuing.

“They’ve only told me why I should quit.”

Nisha smiled.

“Maybe tomorrow,” she said softly, “you’ll finally hear the other side.”

Saturday evening arrived.

Following the address Manish had shared, Aditya and Nisha drove to a quiet residential neighbourhood. As they pulled up outside the apartment building, they noticed Manish waiting near the entrance with his usual cheerful smile. “You found the place!” he said, waving as they stepped out of the car.

“I’ve been looking forward to introducing you to them.” Manish led them into the building and up a flight of stairs. As they walked through the quiet corridor, Aditya wasn’t sure what to expect.

Somewhere in his mind, he had imagined successful mentors living in a luxurious bungalow with expensive cars parked outside and walls covered with awards and trophies. Instead, they had arrived at a modest apartment in a simple residential building.

There was nothing extravagant about it. The surroundings were clean, peaceful unpretentious. Oddly enough, Aditya found that reassuring. Manish stopped outside one of the apartments and rang the doorbell. The door opened.

A gentleman stood there with a warm, welcoming smile.

“You must be Aditya,” he said, extending his hand. “Welcome. I’m Pravesh.”

Before Aditya could respond, a cheerful lady appeared beside him. “And I’m Meera,” she said warmly. “We’ve heard a lot about both of you. Please come in.”

Manish smiled as he ushered Aditya and Nisha inside.

Within minutes, everyone was comfortably seated in the living room with cups of hot tea and homemade snacks.

To Aditya’s surprise, nobody spoke about business.

Instead, Pravesh and Meera asked about their jobs, their family, how long they had been married what dreams they hoped to achieve together. Manish quietly joined the conversation from time to time, allowing his mentors to lead the discussion while making Aditya and Nisha feel completely at home.

The conversation felt less like meeting business mentors and more like visiting old family friends.

Nearly half an hour passed before Pravesh leaned back with a gentle smile.

“So,” Pravesh asked with a smile, “how many people have already told you to leave the business?”

Aditya & Nisha both laughed together.

“You guessed?”

“I didn’t guess,” Pravesh replied. “We’ve lived it.”

The room filled with laughter the conversation immediately became more relaxed. Aditya began telling them about the reactions he had received since joining. Some people had called it a scam. Others had warned him that he would lose his friends, use his family, or end up spending all his time trying to recruit people. Someone had told him that the products were too expensive, while another had confidently said that very few people succeed in this business.

Pravesh listened without interrupting.

When Aditya finished, he smiled.

“Do you know something? Most of these opinions are so common and old. I heard almost the same things when we started.”

Aditya looked at him curiously.

“Then how did you handle them?”

“I didn’t learn clever answers,” Pravesh said. “I learned to ask better questions.”

That caught Aditya’s attention.

Pravesh explained that an objection often sounded bigger than it really was because people reacted to it instead of understanding where it came from.

Aditya immediately brought up the first one.

“I don’t know enough people. That’s a genuine problem for me. My network isn’t that big.”

Pravesh smiled.

“When you joined your first job, how many people did you know there?”

“Almost nobody.”

“And now?”

“Quite a few.”

“How did you meet them?”

“By working with them.”

“Exactly. You didn’t need to know everyone before you started. You started with the few people you knew your circle grew along the way.”

The simplicity of the answer made Aditya smile.

Pravesh continued, “You don’t need a huge list of names to begin. You need to learn how to talk to people, ask right questions to understand their needs, explain what you are doing and follow up properly. Your network can grow as you grow.”

Then he pointed toward Manish.

“And this is where your team becomes important. You are not starting from zero.”

Aditya looked at Manish.

“Manish has already learned things from us & system. You can learn from him too. If you face something you don’t understand, you don’t have to sit alone and figure it out. Just ask and someone from the team would help you with the appropriate tool.”

Manish smiled.

“I’ve already made enough mistakes for him.”

Everyone laughed.

“But that’s actually the advantage,” Pravesh continued. “Why should Aditya repeat every mistake we made just to learn the same lesson?”

That thought stayed with Aditya.

Until then, he had thought of a senior mostly as someone who guided the business. Now he was beginning to see something more valuable: an upline a term used for the senior in direct selling business could shorten the learning curve.

Nisha then brought up the product pricing objection.

“Some people have already told me that the products are too expensive.”

Pravesh nodded.

“Did they tell you which products they had used?”

Nisha paused.

“No.”

“What about the people who told you?”

Aditya thought about it.

“Actually, none of them have used the products.”

Pravesh smiled.

“Then next time, don’t argue about the price. Just ask them a simple question: ‘Which product have you used? What did you find expensive about it?’”

Aditya laughed.

“I can already imagine the answer.”

“What?”

“I haven’t used them. I’ve just heard they’re expensive.”

Everyone laughed.

Pravesh nodded.

“And that’s the point. *There is a big difference between an opinion based on experience and an opinion based on others opinion.*”

He was not suggesting that every product was right for everyone or that nobody could legitimately find a product expensive. His point was much simpler: before accepting an objection as a fact, understand where it came from.

“If someone has used a product and genuinely feels the price isn’t right for them, that’s their decision,” Pravesh said. “You don’t need to change their mind. But if someone has never used it and is simply repeating what they heard, you don’t need to defend yourself either.”

Aditya nodded.

“So, the first step is to understand the objection instead of reacting to it.”

“Exactly.”

Nisha was quiet for a moment before bringing up another concern.

“I don’t like the idea of approaching friends and family. I don’t want to take favours from them.”

Pravesh smiled.

“Would you recommend a good doctor to your friend?”

“Of course.”

“A good restaurant?”

“Yes.”

“A school you thought was good?”

“Yes.”

“And would you call that taking a favour?”

“No.”

“Then why does it suddenly become a favour when you’re recommending something connected to your business?”

Nisha thought about it.

“Because they might feel that I’m talking to them only because I want them to buy.”

“That is the real concern,” Pravesh said.

He explained that the problem was not talking to friends or family. The problem was treating relationships as a list of people to sell to.

“If something genuinely solves a problem for someone, you can share it. If they’re not interested, respect their decision. The relationship should always be more important than the transaction.”

Nisha nodded.

That made the whole idea feel less uncomfortable.

Aditya then remembered another comment he had heard.

“Someone told me that the success rate is too low. They said most people don’t make it.”

Pravesh didn’t try to deny it.

“Some people don’t.”

Aditya looked surprised.

“Really?”

“Of course. Look at a gym. How many people join with great enthusiasm in January?”

“Lots.”

“And how many continue six months later?”

“Not many.”

“That mean exercise doesn’t work?”

Aditya smiled.

“No.”

“Then what usually happens?”

“People stop going.”

“Exactly.”

Pravesh explained that the same thing could happen in almost anything people started. People bought books they never finished, joined courses they never completed, started learning languages and stopped after a few weeks when the initial excitement disappeared.

“Success isn’t only about starting,” he said. “It is also about learning, following the process and staying consistent.”

Pravesh added another point, “Many join this business expecting quick results, without investing the time required to learn, practice, and master the system. When results do not come, they quit, blame the business, and create excuses instead of taking ownership, learning from failure, and staying committed to the process.”

Aditya understood the point.

Perhaps the question wasn’t simply whether people succeeded or failed. It was also what they did after they started.

“And then there is the time objection,” Aditya said. “I have a job. I can’t spend the whole day building this.”

Pravesh smiled.

“You shouldn’t.”

Aditya laughed.

Pravesh explained that building the business part-time does not mean finding several completely free hours every day. It meant deciding what could realistically be done with the time available.

“You already have a job, family and responsibilities. Don’t ignore them. Start with what you can manage. Learn. Talk to people. Follow up. Attend the training. Improve yourself. Then repeat.”

“So, it’s more about consistency than having unlimited time?”

“Exactly.”

The conversation had gradually moved away from the objections themselves.

Aditya looked at Pravesh.

“Then what are we supposed to follow? I don’t want to keep guessing what to do.”

Pravesh picked up this diary from the table and opened it.

He wrote three words on a fresh page:

Basics. - Rules. - Steps. (BRS)

Aditya looked at the page.

“Why these three?”

“Because you don’t need to invent this business from scratch,” Pravesh said.

He explained that the people who had come before them had already made mistakes, tried different approaches, learned what worked and discovered what created problems. Over time, those lessons became the basics, rules and steps that could be taught to the next person.

“Think about learning to drive,” he said. “You don’t begin by creating your own traffic rules. First, you learn the rules. Then you learn the controls. Then you practice the steps. Once you understand the basics, you become more confident.”

Aditya nodded.

“And the upline is the person who has already travelled that road.”

“They can tell us where people usually make mistakes.”

“They can help you avoid unnecessary mistakes.”

“And if Manish doesn’t know something?”

“He asks us.”

“And if we don’t know?”

“We find someone who does.”

Everyone smiled.

Now Aditya understood the real value of the team.

An upline was not simply someone above him in the business. It was a source of experience. The team was not there merely to motivate him when he felt discouraged. It was there to teach him, correct him, guide him and help him learn from mistakes that others had already made. This was a real form of guided entrepreneurship.

He didn’t have to know everything.

He didn’t have to figure out every step alone.

He didn’t even have to make every mistake himself.

He simply had to remain teachable and follow the process.

As the evening began to wind down, Pravesh closed his diary.

“There is one final thing I want you both to remember.”

Aditya and Nisha looked at him.

“Don’t waste your time trying to convince everyone.”

Aditya smiled.

“But what if someone keeps objecting?”

“Let them.”

“What if they say the product is expensive?”

“Let them.”

“What if they say they don’t have time?”

“Let them.”

“What if they say they aren’t interested?”

Pravesh smiled.

“Then they aren’t interested.”

He paused for a moment before continuing.

“Think about a thirsty person. If someone is thirsty and you have a bottle of water, what do they ask for?”

“A bottle,” Aditya said.

“Do they first ask you how much the bottle costs?”

Aditya shook his head.

“No.”

“Why?”

“Because he is thirsty.”

Pravesh smiled.

“Exactly.”

He looked at both.

“Remember this in the business. The person who is thirsty will not first ask for the price of the bottle. He will ask for the bottle.”

The sentence was simple, but it stayed with Aditya.

The lesson wasn’t to ignore people’s objections.

It was to stop wasting energy trying to convince someone who didn’t have a need, interest or desire in the first place.

Understand the person. Understand the need.

Share what you know. Give them the choice.

And move on if there is no interest.

On the drive home, the city lights moved quietly across the car window.

For several minutes, neither Aditya nor Nisha spoke.

Finally, Nisha broke the silence.

“So, what did we really learn today?”

Aditya thought for a moment.

“That I don’t have to know everything.”

Nisha smiled.

“And?”

“I don’t have to build everything alone.”

He continued, “I have a team. I have people ahead of me who have already made mistakes and learned from them.”

“And?”

“Learn the basics. Follow the rules. Take the steps.”

Nisha nodded.

“And don’t waste time convincing everyone.”

Aditya smiled.

“Simply look for the lookers.”

When they reached home, Aditya went to his study table and opened his notebook and updated InkDown Journal.

13.

Personal Research

Next evening after returning from office Aditya opened his laptop & Notebook, placed a cup of tea beside him wrote one heading on the top of a fresh page:

Direct Selling Business on his InkDown Journal followed by few questions and some points to make things simple and easy to understand.

What exactly is direct selling?

The first few articles confused him. Some people called it network marketing. Some called it direct selling, Multi-Level Marketing, Chain Business and many more. Some praised it as entrepreneurship. Others dismissed it as a risky business. Aditya realised that if he wanted to recommend anything to another person, he first had to understand the model without excitement and without fear. So, he created his first research heading.

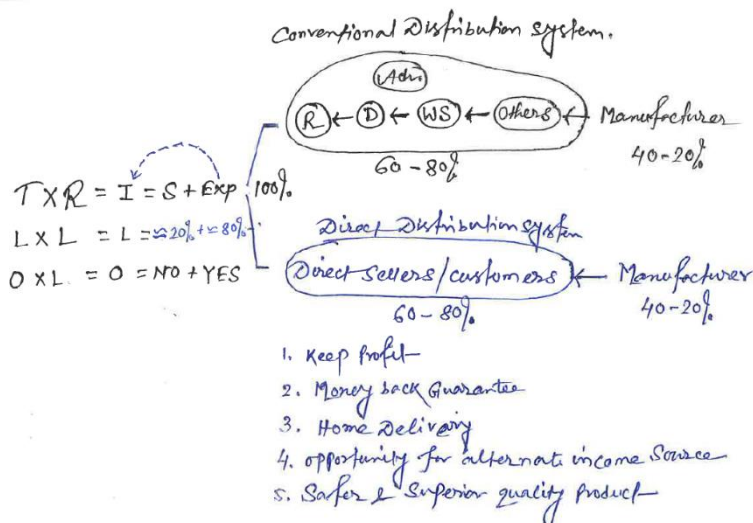
Facts or Opinion what to choose.

For the next few evenings, Aditya studied the difference between a conventional distribution model and a direct selling model. In a conventional model, a product usually moves from manufacturer to carrying and forwarding agent, stockist, wholesaler, retailer and then finally to the customer. At every stage, someone handles storage, transport, promotion, credit risk, shop rent, staff cost and margin. By the time the product reaches the customer, the final price carries the cost of the entire chain including advertisement cost.

Direct selling worked differently. The customer was connected more directly with the company through an independent direct seller. There was still manufacturing, logistics, warehousing, compliance and

service. But the traditional retail chain was reduced. The money that was normally distributed among many intermediaries could now be shared with direct sellers depending on actual product movement, customer volume and business volume.

He opened the diagram and flowchart he made during the open meeting to understand the flow properly.



Aditya wrote slowly:

Direct selling is not magic. It is a different distribution method.

That one sentence cleared his thought. If the company had strong products, fair pricing, genuine customer demand and a transparent income plan the model could make sense. If the model depended mainly on joining fees, pressure, hype or recruitment without real product value, it could become dangerous.

The next heading was even more interesting.

Can expenses become income?

Aditya and Nisha already spent money every month on home care, personal care and wellness products. That expense was certain. The question was whether part of their regular consumption could shift to

products they genuinely liked from the direct selling company. If those products became part of their monthly household purchase, their own usage would not feel like an additional burden.

Then, if other customers also bought the same products because of genuine experience, a small business volume could develop. If the volume grew steadily and ethically, the income from that business model could gradually become larger than their monthly product expenses. Aditya did not write this as a promise. He wrote it as a possibility that depended on repeat customers, product satisfaction, discipline and time.

“The income model is not only about selling once,” Nisha said when he explained it to her.

Aditya nodded. “Exactly. It is about repeat usage, customer retention and business volume. If there is no genuine product movement, there is no real business.”

His next research point was legal compliance. Aditya read about various Act and Rules notified by the Government. The rules made one thing very clear: direct selling entities and direct sellers must not promote pyramid schemes or money circulation schemes in the name of direct selling. They must focus on the sale of goods or services, provide transparent information, maintain grievance redressal systems and safeguard consumer interests.

For Aditya, this was important. It meant the government had not rejected direct selling as a concept. It had created rules to separate legitimate product-based direct selling from illegal and unfair practices.

He wrote another line in bold.

If income comes mainly from recruitment, question it. If income comes from real product consumption, study it.

Then he studied the money-back policy. Earlier, he had looked at it only as a customer-friendly feature. Now he understood its deeper value. A fair return or refund policy reduced fear for first-time customers. It also tested the confidence of the company. If the company truly believed in

its products, it would not be afraid of a dissatisfied customer returning them under policy conditions.

“This will help in sampling” Nisha said.

“Yes,” Aditya replied. “But only if we explain it honestly. **Money-back guarantee is not a trick to push products. It is a trust bridge.**”

Product uniqueness became the next subject. Aditya asked a difficult question: where these products truly unique, or were they ordinary products sold at a higher price through emotional presentation?

He researched labels, concentration, usage quantity, product claims, manufacturing details and price per use. He learned to distinguish between price and value. A product could appear expensive at first glance but become economical if it lasted longer, performed better or replaced multiple products. At the same time, a high price without uniqueness, quality or manufacturer accountability was a warning sign.

Another question bothered him. If the direct selling company was merely selling products manufactured by some unrelated company, then why should the products be priced higher? What protected the customer from ordinary rebranding? What protected the distributor from recommending something that could be available elsewhere at a lower price?

But if the company itself manufactured, owned, controlled or had strong accountability over the product formulation, quality, patents, supply and brand promise, the question changed.

Then product uniqueness, distributor genuineness and customer trust could be protected better. Aditya realised that the manufacturer-supplier relationship was not a small technical detail. It was central to trust.

He underlined another point.

Products travelling through the company’s authorized supply chain helps ensure their authenticity, traceability, and trustworthiness.

Aditya became very clear on this. Products should not be encouraged through random online sellers, unauthorised discount platforms or unknown sources. If customers bought from outside the company’s own

supply chain, there could be issues of expired stock, duplicate products, improper storage, broken guarantee, lost customer service and damaged trust. A direct seller's responsibility was not only to recommend a product but to protect the customer's buying experience.

By the end of the week, Aditya had prepared a list of questions for newcomers. He wanted simple questions that could help people understand the business with confidence.

- Would I use these products even if there were no income opportunity?
- Are customers buying because they like the products, or only because someone is persuading them?
- Does the company have a clear return or money-back policy?
- Is the income linked to real product volume or mainly to recruitment?
- Are the products unique, concentrated, patented, research-backed or meaningfully different?
- Who manufactures or controls the product quality?
- Can I explain the business model without exaggeration?
- Does the company discourage unauthorised selling outside its official supply chain?
- Can a new person start slowly as a customer before thinking like a business builder?
- Would I be proud to recommend this company to someone I respect?

When Nisha read the list, she smiled. "This is easy to understand. It doesn't sound like a lecture."

"That is the point," Aditya replied. "If a newcomer cannot understand the model simply, they cannot explain it honestly."

Over the next few weeks, Aditya and Nisha gradually became genuine customers. They did not use the products to prove a business point. They used them because the products had entered their household routine. The kitchen cleaner replaced their old brand. The laundry product became

part of their monthly shopping. Nisha reordered some personal-care items without Aditya reminding her.

One Sunday morning, while checking monthly expenses, Nisha said, “If we are recommending these products, we should first be customers ourselves. Even if nobody joins us and nobody buys from us, would we continue using them?”

Aditya smiled. “That is the real test.”

From that day onward, they made a rule. They would not recommend any product they had not personally used, understood and felt comfortable explaining. If someone asked about a product they had not tried, they would simply say, “We are still learning about that one.”

That honesty gave them confidence to begin sampling. Since the company had a money-back guarantee for eligible products, they prepared small trial packs for close friends and neighbours. There were no speeches and no pressure. Only simple instructions.

“Use this for three to five days. If you like it, we will show you how to order from the company directly. If you do not like it, no problem.”

At first, the response was mixed. Some people forgot to use the samples. Some said the products were good but did not order. Some promised to call and never did. Aditya felt disappointed, but Nisha handled it better.

“We are not selling pressure,” she reminded him. “We are offering experience.”

Then the first real customer came. A neighbour called Nisha and said, “The dishwashing liquid is good. Can you get one for me?”

Nisha looked at Aditya and whispered, “Our first customer.”

The amount was small, but the feeling was large. Someone had bought because of product experience, not because of pressure. That mattered.

Slowly, a customer base began forming. One customer reordered. Another asked for a different product. A third referred Nisha to her sister. Aditya noticed that genuine customers did not appear because of big promises. They appeared because trust was repeated in small experiences.

One afternoon, during a short tea break in the office cafeteria, two of Aditya's colleagues casually brought up the subject.

"Aditya, we heard you have started some part-time business," one of them said with a curious smile. "What exactly is it?"

Another colleague leaned forward. "Is it related to those products you were talking about earlier? Tell us once. Maybe we can also understand."

For a moment, Aditya was tempted to explain. They were asking politely there was genuine curiosity in their voices. But he looked around the cafeteria the office ID cards, the company logo on the wall, the laptops waiting on desks and reminded himself where he was.

He smiled and replied calmly, "I'm happy that you are curious, but I don't discuss my personal business in office."

One of them laughed. "Come on, Aditya. We're only asking. It's tea break."

Aditya shook his head gently. "Still, this is office time and office space. My salary comes from this company. Salary Plus is my personal effort outside office. I don't want to mix the two."

The colleagues looked at him for a second, slightly surprised by his clarity. Then one of them nodded. "Fair enough. After office, then?"

Aditya smiled. "After office, if you are genuinely interested, we can speak. But not here."

The conversation ended there. It was a small moment, but it strengthened something inside him. He realised that ethics were not tested only in big decisions. Sometimes they were tested during ordinary tea breaks.

While the business was growing slowly, another challenge began growing with it.

Time.

Aditya was now juggling office responsibilities, family life, product learning, customer follow-ups, sampling, weekend meetings and personal research. At first, it felt exciting. Then it became tiring.

One night, Nisha found him staring at the customer list without typing anything.

“You are exhausted,” she said.

Aditya rubbed his eyes. “I thought building this part-time would be easier.”

“Part-time does not mean anytime,” Nisha replied gently. “If we do not plan it, it will enter every empty space of life.”

The sentence hit him deeply. Until then, Aditya had believed discipline was needed mainly in office. Now he realised that dreams also demanded discipline. Without structure, even a good opportunity could create chaos.

The next morning, he called Raghav.

“I think I have found the first real challenge,” Aditya said.

Raghav laughed softly. “Let me guess. Time?”

Aditya smiled. “Exactly.”

“Good,” Raghav replied. “That means the business has become real. But remember, if you do not manage your time, time will manage your dream.”

That evening, Aditya and Nisha created their first weekly business schedule. Two evenings for customer follow-up. One evening for learning. Saturday morning for product demonstration or sampling. Sunday evening strictly for family. No business during office hours. No business during meals. No late-night calls unless urgent.

It was not perfect. Some weeks still went out of control. Some customers called at odd hours. Some meetings got cancelled. Some plans failed. But slowly, Aditya began understanding that time management was not about doing everything. It was about deciding what deserved his best energy.

As the business activities increased, Aditya and Nisha began feeling the strain. Both were often tired their irregular routines were starting to affect their energy and daily activities. Even customer follow-ups and other business tasks sometimes felt difficult to manage. They became concerned that their health was beginning to come in the way of their plans. One evening, they spoke about it seriously and realised that building a better financial future would mean little if they did not have the health and energy to enjoy it. A few days later, when Nisha mentioned another learning session organised by the company, Aditya agreed to attend. This time, the topic was something they both needed to understand—**Health**.

14.

Health is Wealth

The following Sunday, Aditya and Nisha attended another session organised by the company. This time, the subject was not business volume, customer creation or income plan. The banner on the screen read:

LEARN to EARN Optimum Health

The leader explained that EARN stood for four pillars of optimum health:

- **E** - Exercise
- **A** - Attitude
- **R** - Rest
- **N** - Nutrition
- Aditya looked at the words carefully. The spelling was unusual. It was simply *LEARN* to *EARN* Optimum Health. The difference made him curious.

The hall was quieter than the earlier business seminars. There was still energy, but it felt different. People were carrying personal diaries. Some had brought product catalogues. A few elderly couples sat in the front row. Young professionals, homemakers and retired employees occupied the remaining seats. It felt less like a motivational event and more like a classroom.

Nisha whispered, “This looks serious.” Aditya smiled and opened his notebook. “Good. Serious subjects deserve serious attention.”

A senior leader walked onto the stage and began without any dramatic introduction.

“Most people want good health,” he said, “but very few are willing to Learn to earn it.”

The room became still. He continued, “Health is not earned in one day. It is earned through daily choices -what we eat, how we sleep, how much we move, how we handle stress and how consistently we nourish the body before it starts complaining.”

Aditya wrote the first line of the session:

Health is not claimed. Optimum Health is Earned.

The leader explained that food was the foundation of health. We are what we eat. No supplement, no tablet and no health drink could replace a disciplined lifestyle. The body needed real food, clean water, sufficient rest, regular movement and a balanced mind. But he also asked a practical question.

“Are we truly getting enough nutrition from our daily food?”

He spoke about modern eating habits, rushed breakfasts, irregular meals, excess fried food, refined sugar, low vegetable intake, stress eating and dependence on packaged snacks. He did not blame people. He simply said that modern life had made convenience easier than nourishment.

Then came the subject Aditya had been waiting for.

What is the role of food supplements?

The leader made it clear that supplements were not medicines and not magic. They were meant to reduce the nutritional gap in the diet, not replace food. He then gave a simple example.

“Think about specs,” he said. “If your eyesight needs support, specs can help you see clearly. But they do not create your eyesight they certainly cannot replace your eyes. They simply provide the support you need.”

Vitamins, minerals, protein, fibre, probiotics, omega fatty acids and plant nutrients could support the body when chosen properly and used responsibly. But supplements had to be understood before being consumed.

“A supplement is not good merely because it is expensive,” he said. “And it is not bad merely because it is unfamiliar. The right question is:

what does it contain, why is it needed, how is it made, how should it be used whether it is suitable for the person taking it?”

Aditya and Nisha began taking continuous notes.

The leader listed a few points for choosing supplements carefully:

- Check the label and understand the active ingredients.
- Know the dosage and the recommended method of use.
- Do not treat supplements as substitutes for prescribed medicines.
- Check whether the product is manufactured under reliable quality standards.
- Understand whether the nutrition is plant-based, synthetic, isolated or whole-food derived.
- Be cautious about exaggerated disease-cure claims.
- Discuss with a qualified health professional when pregnant, nursing, taking medicines or someone dealing with a medical condition.
- Observe the body patiently instead of expecting overnight results.

Nisha underlined one point twice: *Supplements support nutrition. They do not replace discipline.*

After the leader’s session, a doctor was invited to speak. Aditya immediately sat straighter. He expected the doctor to fully support the idea of supplements, but the doctor surprised everyone with his opening sentence.

“Many doctors are sceptical about supplements. And there are reasons.”

The hall became even quieter.

The doctor continued, “We are trained to identify disease, diagnose it and treat it. We spend years learning how medicines act in the body, how they reduce symptoms, how they control disease and how they can save lives. That training is valuable. But in most medical education, nutrition and prevention do not receive the same depth of attention.”

Aditya looked at Nisha. This was a different kind of honesty. The doctor added, “Please do not misunderstand me. Medicine is essential. If there is an infection, trauma, emergency, severe pain, high blood pressure, uncontrolled diabetes or any serious condition, medical care is not optional. But medicine and nutrition are not enemies. Treatment and prevention should work together.”

Then he gave an example that Aditya would remember for years. “Imagine a fire breaks out in a building,” the doctor said. “The alarm starts ringing loudly. People feel disturbed by the sound. Now suppose the security guard switches off the alarm so that the noise stops. For a few moments, everyone feels comfortable. But has the fire gone?”

Several people in the audience shook their heads.

“No,” the doctor continued.

“The alarm has stopped, but the fire continues spreading. If nobody investigates the cause and nobody extinguishes the fire, the building may be destroyed.” He paused before adding, “Pain is sometimes like an alarm. Painkillers may reduce the signal between the affected area and the brain. That relief can be necessary and compassionate, especially when pain is severe. But if we only silence the alarm regularly without understanding the underlying issue, the problem may continue inside the body.”

Aditya wrote quickly:

Relief is not always recovery. Painkillers may reduce pain, but what about its cause?

The doctor continued, “The body repairs, rebuilds and recovers using nutrients. Medicine may control a condition, but the body still needs raw material like protein, vitamins, minerals, enzymes, antioxidants, water, oxygen and sleep to do its work. If nutrition is poor, recovery may become slower and resilience may reduce.”

He continued, “Good nutrition does not make a person disease-proof. Supplements do not guarantee health. But prolonged nutritional deficiency, poor diet and lifestyle negligence can silently weaken the

body's ability to function well gradually reduce the health span in long run."

Immediately one leader from the audience asked to explain the Health Span as it was a new term to all. The Doctor explained, "Health Span is how long a person stays healthy in his or her life."

Finally, that doctor ended his speech by encouraging audience by saying "If the sickness industry and the wellness industry cooperate and supplement each other, society as a whole can gradually move toward a healthier and better life."

For Aditya, this balanced approach felt powerful. He was expanding the conversation from treatment to prevention. Nisha whispered, "This is empowering." Aditya nodded. "And knowledge oriented."

The session then returned to the idea of EARN:

- **E-Exercise:** Move the body regularly so circulation, strength, stamina and metabolism remain active.
- **A-Attitude:** Keep the mind positive, disciplined and willing to make better daily choices.
- **R-Rest:** Give the body enough sleep and recovery so repair can happen naturally.
- **N-Nutrition:** Nourish the body through balanced food, clean water and responsible supplementation to reduce nutritional gap.

Aditya liked the simplicity. It made optimum health feel less like a distant dream and more like a daily discipline.

The Host finally closed the session and his final words were: Our business model and ethics teaches us to replace "I" into "WE" and by doing so even ILLness becomes WELLness. Everyone was standing with a huge round of applause and excitement.

During the break, Aditya and Nisha visited the product display area. Earlier, they have looked at bottles and boxes only by price. Now they looked at labels, ingredients, serving sizes, usage instructions and cautions. They asked questions about who should avoid certain

products, whether the supplements could be taken with meals whether someone on medication should consult a physician first.

By the time the session ended, a whole new segment had opened before them. Until then, they had seen the business mainly through home-care and personal-care and other products. Now they understood that health and nutrition could become a serious area of learning, service and responsibility.

On the way home, Nisha said, “We should not recommend supplements casually.”

“Agreed,” Aditya replied. “Let us first explore and experience the benefit before sharing our true story to others.”

That evening, they created a simple health journal. They noted their current eating habits, water intake, sleep pattern, energy level, digestion and exercise routine. They decided not to make dramatic claims or expect sudden transformation. They would begin with basic supplements, follow the recommended usage, improve their food habits and observe the difference over time.

Now health did not feel like something to worry about only after falling sick. It felt like something to build before sickness arrived.

Before sleeping, Aditya opened his notebook and wrote what he learned from the session.

15.

The Leader Unveiled

Few months since Aditya and Nisha had started building their business. They were enjoying the journey. Meeting new people, learning every day and gradually becoming more confident. One evening, Manish called.

“Next Sunday is our Annual Leadership Seminar. Both of you must come.”

Aditya smiled. “What’s so special about it?”

Manish laughed. “I could tell you now... but I’d rather let you experience it yourself.”

“Fair enough,” Aditya replied. “We’ll be there.”

The following Sunday morning, they reached the indoor stadium well before the programme began. Manish gave them the passes of the mega event. Even before entering, Aditya realised this was no ordinary business event. The roads leading to the venue were filled with cars and buses. Volunteers welcomed people with cheerful smiles and guided them towards the parking areas. Families walked in together. Young professionals, elderly couples, students, homemakers, doctors, engineers, teachers. People from every background seemed to be gathering for the same purpose.

Aditya looked around. “I honestly didn’t imagine something like this.”

Nisha smiled. “Neither did I.”

As they entered the stadium, both instinctively slowed down. The massive indoor arena was almost full. Music echoed through the hall.

Manish led them toward Pravesh and Meera. The full team was sitting together on the balcony near the stage. Large LED screens displayed inspiring stories from different parts of the country. Teams waved

colourful flags. Friends greeted one another with hugs. Some people danced joyfully while others clicked photographs with their families.

There was an energy in the air that was difficult to describe. It didn't feel like a business seminar. It felt like a celebration.

Aditya whispered, "Are we sure we've come to the right place?"

Nisha laughed. "I've been wondering the same thing."

The programme began.

One by one, successful Independent Business Owners shared their journeys. A homemaker explained how she had built confidence while contributing to her family's income. An engineer spoke about creating and engineering their family's finance and how so many people got the benefit out of a simple decision of building this business without giving up his profession.

A simple graduate shared how persistence had transformed his family's future.

A bus conductor narrated how he had built his business after completing long working hours every day.

Even doctors and senior professionals explained why they believed financial freedom gave them the freedom to serve society better.

Every story was different. Every background was different. But every story had one thing in common. Ordinary people... who had decided not to settle for ordinary possibilities.

Aditya found himself listening more carefully with every speaker. Then he noticed something interesting. Almost everyone around him had a notebook. People weren't merely applauding. They were writing. Some highlighted key sentences. Others wrote action points beside every lesson.

Nobody looked distracted.

Very few people were busy with their phones. The entire audience seemed eager to learn.

Aditya quietly took out his own notebook. He uncapped his pen. Soon, he too was writing.

Only practical lessons.

“Listen more than you speak.”

“People buy trust before they buy products.”

“Consistency creates credibility.”

“Leadership is service.”

Every few minutes he paused, reread what he had written. He wanted these notes to stay with him long after the seminar ended.

Nisha looked at him and smiled. “I haven’t seen you taking notes like this since your MBA.”

Aditya grinned. “I think these notes are going to become valuable.”

During lunch, they walked around the venue. Groups of people discussed the morning sessions. Some congratulated leaders who had been recognised on stage. Others happily introduced complete strangers to one another.

Children played together while parents discussed books, health, travel and business.

There was success but very little ego. There was achievement but even more encouragement. Aditya quietly observed everything. “So many people told us this business doesn’t work.”

Nisha looked around the packed stadium. “And yet thousands of people have chosen to spend their Sunday here.”

Aditya smiled. “I’ve realised something.”

“I’ve stopped believing opinions.”

“I’d rather observe facts.”

For a moment, both remembered Raghav’s words.

“Never form an opinion before collecting enough evidence.”

The afternoon session began.

The lights dimmed. Soft music filled the auditorium.

The host announced that the company's top leadership session was about to begin.

One after another, senior leaders came onto the stage and shared their experiences.

Aditya continued taking notes enthusiastically.

Page after page filled with valuable lessons.

He had almost completed the notebook.

He was already thinking about reorganising everything neatly once he reached home.

And then...

The host returned to the centre of the stage. The excitement inside the stadium instantly rose. His voice echoed through the hall.

“Ladies and Gentlemen...

It is now my privilege to invite one of our Global Leaders who has shown the world that extraordinary success does not require an extraordinary beginning.

Together with his life partner, he has built this business across multiple countries while remaining humble, grounded and committed to helping people become better versions of themselves. Thousands of lives have been positively transformed through their leadership. Please rise to your feet... and welcome our respected and beloved Global Leader...

Mr. Raghav Bhattacharya on staaageeee....”

Aditya's pen stopped.

For a second...

he thought he had heard the wrong name.

Slowly he looked up.

Nisha looked at him. Both turned towards the stage. The entire stadium stood up.

The applause was deafening. Spotlights swept across the audience before settling on the entrance. A familiar figure walked calmly towards the stage.

The same gentle smile.

The same simple white shirt. The same humble walk. It was Raghav.

Aditya felt a wave of disbelief. For years, he had known Raghav as a senior colleague.

A mentor. A guide. Never once had Raghav mentioned that he had built a global business.

Never once had he spoken about titles. Never once had he tried to impress anyone.

For several moments...

Aditya and Nisha simply stood there.

Speechless.

Then Aditya noticed something beautiful.

Many people around them had tears in their eyes.

Almost everyone opened a fresh page in their notebooks.

Without saying a word...

Aditya did the same.

He turned to a blank page.

At the top, he slowly wrote...

Raghav the mentor, the leader unveiled.

For the next fifteen minutes, Raghav spoke.

Not about money. Not about luxury. Not about becoming rich overnight. He spoke about values. Integrity, serving people, building trust, creating leaders. Developing character before developing income.

Aditya smiled quietly.

Almost every lesson sounded familiar. Not because he had read it somewhere.

But because he had heard these very thoughts during tea breaks...

office lunches...

long conversations...

and countless moments over the years.

Thousands of people were listening to Raghav for the first time.

Aditya had been listening to him for years.

After the seminar ended, Aditya and Nisha waited near the backstage exit.

When Raghav walked out, he greeted them exactly as he always had.

“Hello, Aditya. Hello, Nisha.”

The same warmth. The same simplicity.

Nothing about him had changed.

Aditya laughed.

“You knew all this time?”

Raghav smiled.

“Yes.”

“And you never told me?”

“No.”

Aditya shook his head.

“I don’t understand.”

Raghav smiled gently.

“Do you remember our first conversation?”

Aditya nodded immediately.

“You told me...

Artificial Intelligence helps you work faster.

Human Intelligence helps you ask better questions.”

Raghav smiled.

“And today?”

Aditya looked at him with admiration.

“Today I realise...

all these years...

you were answering questions I didn’t even know to ask.”

Both smiled. After a brief silence, Raghav asked,

“Tell me honestly. Suppose on your third day in the office I had said...

‘I am a Global Leader.’

‘I have built an international business.’

‘Come with me.’

What would you have done?”

Aditya thought for a moment.

Then answered honestly. “I would probably have joined...because of you.”

Raghav nodded. “And if someday you faced difficulties?”

Aditya smiled. “I might have blamed you.”

“Exactly.” Raghav gently placed his hand on Aditya’s shoulder.

“I never wanted you to borrow my conviction.”

“I wanted you to build your own.”

He paused before continuing.

“Advice should guide your thinking.

It should never replace your thinking.”

Then he added, “When people join because of personalities...

they often leave because of circumstances.

But when people join because of understanding...

they stay because of conviction.”

Aditya remained silent.

Everything suddenly made sense.

Why Raghav had never spoken about his business.

Why he had never tried to recruit him.

Why Manish had introduced the opportunity instead.

Raghav wanted Aditya to make his own decision.

Not because someone successful believed in it.

But because he himself understood it.

As they slowly walked towards the parking area, Raghav stopped once more. “There is one more lesson I have learnt in life.” Aditya listened carefully.

“The biggest limitation in life isn’t what we know.”

“It’s what we don’t know that we don’t know.”

Aditya looked at him thoughtfully. Raghav continued.

“If someone had asked you about this business ten years ago, what would you have said?”

“I would have rejected it.”

“Had you studied it?”

“No.”

“Had you experienced it?”

“No.”

“So why would you reject it?”

Aditya smiled.

“Because I would have believed what everyone else believed.”

Raghav nodded.

“Exactly.”

“Most people don’t miss opportunities because opportunities don’t exist.”

“They miss them because they never become curious enough to understand them.”

“Think about life.”

“How many books remain unread, skills remain unlearned. How many businesses remain misunderstood. How many relationships never begin...simply because we think we already know enough?”

He smiled gently. “Life quietly places extraordinary opportunities before us.”

“The tragedy is... we don’t know what we don’t know.”

And because of that...we unknowingly walk past some of the greatest possibilities life has to offer.”

Aditya suddenly realised that his notebook is no longer contained only business lessons. It contained a new way of looking at life.

As he walked towards the parking area with Nisha, he looked back at the now-empty stage one last time.

Years ago, he had met Raghav as a senior colleague.

Today, he had discovered a global leader.

But perhaps the greatest discovery was not about Raghav.

It was about life itself.

Sometimes the biggest opportunities are not hidden from us.

They simply remain invisible...

until we become curious enough to see them.

16.

First Taste of Salary Plus

Life has a unique way of testing every lesson it teaches. By this time, Aditya and Nisha had settled into a rhythm. Their direct selling business was steadily growing alongside their regular jobs. The weekends were filled with meetings, training sessions, home presentations mentoring new team members. Every small success of their team felt like a personal victory. Amidst this busy phase, life gifted them their greatest blessing—a baby boy.

The arrival of their son brought immense joy to the family. Sleepless nights, tiny smiles countless precious moments made every struggle worthwhile. Aditya and Nisha now had an even stronger reason to build a better future. But happiness and challenges often arrive together.

Just a few months later, Aditya's mother met with a minor accident. Although the injuries were not life-threatening, the doctors advised complete bed rest for several months. As his father was too old and being a single child of their parent, the responsibility to taking care of his parents naturally came on him.

Aditya took extended leave from his office. The leave was approved, but without pay.

For the first time in his professional life, Aditya experienced the harsh reality of depending on a single source of income. The monthly salary that had always arrived on time suddenly stopped.

Many families would have panicked. Aditya and Nisha did not. Because something remarkable had already begun happening in the background. While Aditya was away from work, his direct selling business did not stop. In fact, it continued to grow.

Why?

Because unlike a traditional job, where income depends solely on personal effort, their business was powered by people. Over the past few years, they had invested time in developing leaders rather than merely recruiting distributors. Their team members were conducting meetings, guiding new people expanding the network independently.

Aditya now truly understood the meaning of a real human asset. Assets are often imagined as land, buildings, gold, or investments. ***The most valuable asset is a team of capable people who continue creating value even when you are temporarily unavailable.***

As their organization expanded, Aditya and Nisha qualified for a higher leadership pin. Along with recognition came a significant increase in income. Ironically, the month when Aditya received no salary from his employer became one of the strongest months for their business income.

That experience changed his financial thinking forever. He realized there are two very different equations in life. One source earning ₹100. And 100 sources earning ₹1 each.

1 Source x Rs.100= 100 Sources x Rs.1

Mathematically, both equal ₹100. Financially, they are worlds apart. If one source stops, everything stops. But if one small source disappears from a hundred, the overall income barely changes. That day, income diversification stopped being a theory in a book. It became a lived experience.

Aditya often reflected that most people spend years protecting one income source while ignoring opportunities to create multiple streams. The accident in the family became an unexpected lesson in financial resilience.

The salary had paused. The business had not. That was the uniqueness of its income-generating process of a genuine direct selling business: ***one makes money when others make money.*** During that difficult period, the business income carried the family through with dignity.

Back at the office, Aditya returned with greater confidence. His interactions with hundreds of people through direct selling had transformed him. Listening patiently, understanding different

personalities, handling objections building trust had sharpened his communication skills.

Clients noticed the difference. Colleagues noticed the difference. Management noticed the difference. Aditya gradually became known as someone who could negotiate difficult situations without creating conflict. His ability to understand people before discussing numbers made him one of the preferred executives for important client meetings. His people skills had multiplied many times over.

During one corporate learning session, employees were invited to volunteer for short presentations.

Aditya chose an unusual topic. “Marketing vs Shopping.”

The audience expected a technical discussion. Instead, Aditya began with a simple question. “How many people here believe they are not salespersons?”

Almost every hand went up. Aditya smiled.

“Interesting,” he said. “Now let me ask another question.”

“Have you ever recommended a good movie to a friend?”

Everyone nodded. “Have you ever told someone about a restaurant you liked?”

Again, everyone agreed. “Have you ever appeared for a job interview and tried to convince the interviewer that you were the right candidate?”

Laughter filled the room.

Aditya continued. “If someone proposes marriage, what is he actually doing?”

The room burst into laughter once again. “He is presenting his qualities and hoping the other person says yes.” He paused. “That is also selling.”

The audience became completely attentive. Aditya explained that selling is not forcing people to buy. Selling is simply communicating value.

Every recommendation, reference, interview, proposal, even every idea shared with conviction... is a form of marketing.

Without someone willing to sell, no one gets the opportunity to buy.

Then he introduced another thought. “Marketing skills increase your ability to earn potentially unlimited. Shopping skills help you save but you cannot save more than you’re earning. Both are useful. But many people spend their entire lives becoming expert shoppers while never learning how to market themselves, their ideas, or their work.”

He smiled and added, “Negotiating a discount may save you a few hundred rupees. But learning how to create value can earn you thousands.”

The simplicity of the explanation left a lasting impression. Complex business concepts suddenly became easy to understand. Even the company’s director appreciated Aditya’s practical storytelling style and the confidence with which he connected everyday life to business principles.

Soon after, with special approval from the management, Aditya was invited to support the Human Resources team in employee engagement and training initiatives while continuing his responsibilities with the Finance Department.

His growing ability to connect with people had become as valuable as his financial expertise. Not long afterward, Aditya received another promotion. As he walked out of the manager’s cabin with the promotion letter in his hand, he couldn’t help but smile. Years earlier, he had joined direct selling to earn a little extra income. What he had earned was far greater. Leadership skill, communication skill, people skill, improved health span & financial security.

And above all, the realization that true wealth is created not by working harder alone, but by helping people grow along with you.

SHOPPING VS MARKETING

Two Different Mindsets. Two Different Results.

SHOPPING		MARKETING
 <p>You spend money Money goes out of your pocket.</p>	 <p>FLOW OF MONEY</p>	<p>You create value Money comes into your pocket.</p> 
 <p>Expense It is a cost. No financial return.</p>	 <p>NATURE</p>	<p>Income Opportunity It is an investment in yourself.</p> 
 <p>Consumer You buy for yourself.</p>	 <p>ROLE</p>	<p>Entrepreneur You help others and build a network.</p> 
 <p>One-time Benefit Satisfaction is temporary.</p>	 <p>TIME IMPACT</p>	<p>Long-term Benefit Income grows over time and effort.</p> 
 <p>Limited to You Ends with your purchase.</p>	 <p>REACH</p>	<p>Expanding Network Multiple people, multiple opportunities.</p> 
 <p>Dependency More wants, more spending.</p>	 <p>OUTCOME</p>	<p>Freedom More time, more choices, more financial freedom.</p> 

“

STOP BUYING THINGS YOU DON'T NEED.
START BUILDING A LIFE YOU DON'T NEED A VACATION FROM.



17.

Life of Significance

Aditya often smiled when he looked back at his younger self. There was a time when every salary credit felt like the finish line of a month's hard work. Now, it felt like the starting point of a new opportunity.

His income had increased over the years, but something far more valuable had changed his mindset.

Earlier, whenever he received a salary hike or a bonus, he would think about buying a better phone, a bigger television or upgrading his lifestyle. Today, those thoughts rarely crossed his mind. Instead, he would ask himself a simple question.

“Will this expense make my future better, or will it only make today look better?”

The answer guided every financial decision.

One evening, while strolling through social media, Aditya saw many of his friends proudly displaying their latest luxury purchases. A premium car, an expensive watch and lavish weekend parties filled his screen. He smiled and quietly switched off his phone. Nisha noticed his expression. “You don't feel like buying these things?” she asked.

Aditya smiled. “I do. I'm human. But I have learnt something.”

“What?” Nisha asked

“Luxury gives happiness for a few days. Knowledge keeps giving returns for a lifetime.”

Instead of spending more on lifestyle inflation, Aditya invested more in himself. He enrolled in courses on Artificial Intelligence to understand how technology would reshape every profession. He learnt how AI could simplify repetitive office work, improve presentations, analyse

large datasets and help professionals become more productive rather than fearful.

At the same time, he deepened his understanding of the stock market. Unlike many who searched for quick profits or listened to market rumours, Aditya approached investing the same way he approached corporate compliance with patience, discipline and due diligence.

He read annual reports. He studied business models. He analysed financial statements. He understood management quality before investing a single rupee. Years of reading balance sheets in his professional life had become an unexpected advantage. He also realised that not every investment needed to promise extraordinary returns. Safety had its own value.

After carefully considering safe avenues, he placed a share of his savings into tax-free bonds. The steady, predictable income and the relief of tax-free returns gave him a sense of security, while the rest of his portfolio stayed committed to long-term growth opportunities. His knowledge of direct taxation, once used only in office discussions, had now become a practical tool in managing his own family's finances.

Every investment was planned with taxes, risk, liquidity and long-term goals in mind. One Sunday evening, Nisha asked him while updating their household budget, "Don't you ever feel tired of studying? Most people stop learning after getting a stable job." Aditya laughed.

"I realised something long ago."

"The biggest asset on my balance sheet isn't my house or my investments."

"Then what is it?" Nisha asked with curiosity.

"Being teachable for lifelong."

Months passed. Life became busier but more balanced. The family finally planned a much-awaited vacation to Goa. For a few days, spreadsheets, compliance deadlines and meetings were replaced with beaches, sunsets and long family walks. Little Vaibhav spent hours building sandcastles while Aditya and Nisha enjoyed watching the waves.

One evening, as they were walking along the beach after dinner, someone suddenly called out, “Excuse me... are you Aditya Sir?”

Aditya turned around. A well-dressed gentleman, probably in his late thirties, walked towards him with a broad smile. Before Aditya could recognise him, the man folded his hands respectfully.

“Sir... thank you.” Aditya looked surprised.

“I’m sorry... have we met before?”

The gentleman smiled. “You may not remember me. My name is Sameer.”

He continued, “I work in a multinational company. Few years ago, I attended one of your virtual business meetings sessions and we decided to start the business. I am in your business team.

Aditya searched his memory. Faces from hundreds of meetings flashed before him. Sameer continued, “You probably spoke to me only a few times. But those conversations changed my thinking.”

Nisha watched the conversation with curiosity.

Sameer said, “I stayed in my job, just as you advised. I never left my career. But I also continued building the business consistently. Today my additional income is helping me pay my parents’ medical expenses, my daughter’s education. We have a small business team in Goa too. Sir, this is your extended family.”

He smiled gratefully. “Meeting you here today feels like a blessing.”

Aditya stood silently. The appreciation was unexpected. They spoke for nearly half an hour. Before leaving, Sameer introduced his wife and daughter, they took few selfies and thanked Aditya once again before leaving.

For a few moments, Aditya simply watched the waves. Nisha gently broke the silence.

“What are you thinking?” Aditya smiled thoughtfully.

“I was never Sameer’s boss.”

“No.”

“I wasn’t his teacher either.”

“No.”

“I simply shared an opportunity. Most of them rejected and few people like Sameer believed and did something.”

He paused before continuing.

“And today I realised the true power of this business. We never visited Goa before but our business already growing here in Goa.”

Nisha listened quietly.

Aditya looked towards the sea.

“We often think success is measured by our own income. Real success is how many people are better off because of you.”

He held Nisha’s hand.

“I genuinely feel every person should understand this business model at least once in life. Not everyone will choose it. Not everyone should. But everyone deserves the opportunity to evaluate it with an open mind.”

Nisha nodded.

She had seen the journey from the beginning, the struggles, the rejections, the late-night learning sessions and the gradual transformation.

She smiled.

“You’ve earned much more than money.”

Aditya looked at his son laughing on the beach. For a few seconds, he remained silent.

Then he said, “Nisha, do you know what I have started thinking about lately?”

“What?”

“Legacy.”

Nisha looked surprised and asked. “Legacy?”

“Yes.” Aditya watched Vaibhav carefully as he ran along the beach.

“When we started this business, I was thinking about additional income. Then I started thinking about financial freedom. Later, I began thinking about helping other people create a better life.”

He paused.

“But now I think there is something bigger we can build.”

Nisha smiled. “What do you mean?”

“I don’t want this business to end with me.”

Nisha looked at him silently.

“I want to build something that can continue long after I am no longer involved in it. Something that carries our values, our experience and everything we have learned. Something that can become a legacy for our family.”

Nisha glanced towards Vaibhav.

“You mean for him?”

Aditya nodded.

“Yes. For Vaibhav, someday.”

He smiled.

“But not because he is our son. And certainly not because we want to decide his life for him.”

Nisha listened carefully.

“I want him to study. I want him to see the world, build his own knowledge, make his own mistakes and discover what he truly wants from life. If he chooses a completely different profession, I will support him.”

He paused and then added,

“But when he is old enough, experienced enough and capable enough to understand what we have built, I want to give him the opportunity to take it forward.”

Nisha smiled softly.

“So you are already planning his future?”

Aditya shook his head.

“I am planning what I can leave behind.”

He looked at the sea.

“There is a difference.”

Nisha remained quiet.

Aditya continued, “A business can create income for one generation. But if it is built with the right values, systems and people, it can create opportunities for generations.”

He looked back at Vaibhav.

“I don’t want him to simply inherit money. Money can disappear. I want him to inherit something that teaches him how to create value.”

Nisha nodded slowly.

“And if he wants to take it forward?”

“Then he won’t have to start from zero,” Aditya said. “He can continue from where we stop. He can take everything we have built and add his own ideas to it. Technology will change. Markets will change. The way people work will change. He may build it very differently from the way we did.”

A faint smile appeared on his face.

“And that would be perfectly fine.”

“Why?”

“Because legacy isn’t about making the next generation live our life. It’s about giving them a stronger foundation from which they can build their own.”

Nisha looked at him with quiet admiration.

“So, this is what all these years have been about?”

Aditya smiled.

“Perhaps I didn’t understand it in the beginning. I thought I was building a business.”

He looked once again at his son.

“Now I realise I am building something that may outlive me.”

For a moment, neither of them spoke.

The sound of the waves filled the silence.

Aditya gently held Nisha’s hand.

“If one day Vaibhav chooses to take this forward, I want him to receive more than ownership. I want him to receive our experience, our mistakes, our relationships, our reputation and the trust we have earned.”

“And if he doesn’t?” Nisha asked.

Aditya smiled.

“Then we will respect his decision. A legacy should be an opportunity, never an obligation.”

Nisha nodded.

Perhaps that was the first time she understood what Aditya was really trying to build.

It wasn’t simply a business. It was a foundation.

A foundation that could begin with them, grow through their son perhaps one day become something much larger than either of them had imagined.

Aditya looked at Vaibhav and smiled.

“We don’t know what he will become.”

“But whatever he chooses, at least he will have a choice.”

“I’ve earned perspective for Personal Social Responsibility (PSR) toward society and life as whole.” Aditya leaned back in relax.

The sun slowly disappeared beyond the Arabian Sea.

For Aditya, it wasn’t just another beautiful sunset.

It was the beginning of a thought that would stay with him for years—the thought that the greatest wealth a parent could leave behind was not merely money or property, but a foundation strong enough for the next generation to build upon.



18.

A New Beginning

Time had quietly done what it always does: it moved on. The young man who had once rushed into his first office with nervous excitement had now crossed fifty. His hair had turned grey at the temples, but the discipline he had built over the years kept him energetic. Experience had replaced anxiety confidence had replaced the fear of the unknown. Life, however, was changing once again.

Their son had secured admission for higher studies in another city. The house that had echoed with laughter, scattered school bags late-night exam discussions suddenly became quiet.

On the drive back after dropping him at the campus, Nisha looked out of the car window and smiled faintly. “We spent years teaching him to become independent. Today, he finally is.”

Aditya nodded. Every stage of life had its own purpose.

The next morning, as she prepared breakfast, Nisha instinctively called out, “Vaibhav, come eat before it gets cold.” The silence that followed pressed against her heart. She paused, realizing he wasn’t there and tears filled her eyes.

Aditya walked over, gently placing his hand on hers. “It’s alright,” he said softly. “He’ll be fine.”

To ease her, Aditya picked up the phone and dialled Vaibhav. When his son answered, Aditya asked casually, “Where are you now?”

Vaibhav’s cheerful voice came through: “I had my breakfast, Dad. Heading to my morning classes.”

Nisha wiped her eyes, listening quietly in the background. Hearing his voice brought comfort, even though the ache of distance remained.

Aditya smiled at her, reassuring, “See? He’s already settling in. And we’ll always be just a call away.”

The following years brought both joy and sorrow.

His father fell ill first later his mother too. Aditya spent as much time with them as he could. Work never became an excuse because he had built a stable career, sound finances and a supportive family.

When both his parents eventually passed away, the grief was deep, but so was the satisfaction. They had lived their final years surrounded by love. They had watched their grandson grow up. There were tears, but there were no regrets. Life moved on.

Years passed almost unnoticed.

Their son completed his studies, started his career and built a life of his own. At work, Aditya became known less for his designation and more for the people he had mentored. Younger colleagues often sought his guidance he never refused anyone willing to learn.

One morning, as he opened his office mailbox, an email from Human Resources caught his attention.

Subject: Superannuation Notice

He read it slowly. His final working day was just a month away. Aditya leaned back in his chair and looked through the glass wall of his cabin. A young employee hurried across the reception area, adjusting his tie, trying not to be late.

Aditya smiled. It felt strangely familiar. Many years ago, he had walked through the same entrance with the same dreams, the same nervousness and the same hope. He closed the email, picked up his diary and quietly whispered, “Every end has a beginning.”

19.

Salary to Legacy

The farewell ceremony had finally come to an end. Aditya stood for a few moments, looking around the hall.

The applause, the smiles, the flowers, the photographs—all of it was overwhelming. His colleagues thanked him for his leadership. His managers appreciated his contribution. His team spoke about the confidence he had given them over the years.

Aditya accepted every gesture with humility. Deep inside, however, he knew that no success belongs to one individual alone.

Every stage of his career had shaped him. The first organization had given him a beginning. The second had challenged him to grow. The third had given him the opportunity to lead and leave behind something more valuable than performance numbers a culture of trust, learning respect.

He silently thanked every organization that had become a chapter in his professional journey. He thanked every manager who had trusted him. Every colleague who had supported him. Every team member who had walked beside him.

Success, he realized, is always a collective achievement.

Above all, his thoughts returned to one person. Raghav. The one had been the sounding board during his early professional life. The one who made Aditya understand why Questions are the Answers.

Time had taken him away years ago. Yet not a single important decision in Aditya's life had been free from his influence. A mentor's greatest achievement is not that people remember his words. It is that they begin to live them.

It was only after retirement that Aditya finally found a name for what Raghav had quietly practised throughout his life.

Personal Social Responsibility.

We often admire organizations that give back to society. But every individual also carries that responsibility.

Sometimes by sharing knowledge. Sometimes by encouraging someone who has lost confidence. Sometimes by asking a question that changes someone's life.

Aditya smiled. Perhaps that is why Raghav never truly left.

Every time Aditya encouraged someone instead of criticizing them... Every time he listened before judging... Every time he developed a person instead of merely completing a task... Raghav lived on.

That evening, Aditya returned home. He placed the farewell bouquet on the table and opened his old notebook.

The journey that had begun with a simple question had come full circle. Perhaps every ending is simply another beginning. And perhaps... every notebook deserves a new owner.

Aditya closed the notebook and looked out of the window to ask you something...

I don't know where you are in your own journey. Perhaps you are starting your first job. Perhaps you are waiting for your next promotion. Perhaps you are wondering whether to change careers. Or perhaps you are preparing to retire, just as I did.

Wherever you are... may I ask you one last question?

When your career comes to an end probably many years from now...

What will remain?

A salary that was spent...

Or

A legacy that continues to grow through the lives you touched?

20.

The Notebook Lives On..

Lessons from Aditya's InkDown Journal Notebook worth carrying for Life

1. Salary

- A salary is a foundation, not a destination.
- Live below your means before living beyond your dreams.
- Never depend on a single source of income.
- Protect your job but prepare for uncertainty.
- Increase your value before expecting a higher salary.

2. Money

- Save first. Spend later.
- Assets buy freedom; liabilities buy comfort.
- Every rupee should have a purpose.
- Compounding rewards patience, not speed.
- Money is a tool- use it wisely.

3. Career & Skills

- Learning is the best investment with lifelong returns.
- Increase your value before expecting greater rewards.
- Master technology but never neglect people skills.
- See with your ears and hear with your eyes open.
- Listen deeply. Observe carefully. Learn continuously.
- Your reputation is built long before your résumé.
- Stay curious. Stay relevant.

4. Time

- Everyone receives the same 24 hours.
- Invest time before expecting results.
- Replace scrolling with learning.
- Small daily improvements create extraordinary lives.
- Today's discipline becomes tomorrow's freedom.

5. Health

- Learn to EARN Optimum Health.
- Health is your first wealth.
- Energy creates opportunities.
- Sleep, nutrition and exercise are investments—not expenses.
- Your family needs a healthy you.
- Take care of your body before life forces you to do so.

6. Relationships

- Real life begins where reel life ends.
- Family is your greatest support system.
- Listen more than you speak.
- Build trust before seeking influence.
- Help people without expecting immediate returns.
- Gratitude strengthens every relationship.

7. Business

- Solve problems; profits will follow.
- Build trust before building income.
- Think long term, not overnight success.
- Serve people ethically.
- Success grows through consistency.

8. Investing

- Start early, even if the amount is small.
- Never invest in what you don't understand.

- Diversify wisely.
- Let your money work while you sleep.
- Patience beats prediction.

9. Legacy

- Wealth is what you build.
- Legacy is what you leave behind.
- Teach values before teaching money.
- Success means lifting others as you rise.
- Personal Social Responsibility is to help enough people become successful.
- Live today in a way that tomorrow's generation will thank you.

Now the notebook is yours

Please Continue writing but before that, kindly take a minute to share your thoughts by scanning this QR or browsing the link below.



<https://forms.gle/xRXHGWs9u6bYhPKL8>

Your feedback is precious.

