



**GOOD MORNING
SHER/SHERNIYO !**

2ND APRIL HAI AAJ !!
123 DAYS LEFT !!
1ST AUGUST KO EXAM START HO JAYENGE
LAMBA JANA HAI
SELECTION LENA HAI
TO , MEHNAT KRNI PDEGI !!

The Thumbnail Boy

The office used to glow long after the city outside had surrendered to darkness. Rows of screens flickered like restless minds, each one carrying a fragment of ambition, urgency, or exhaustion. In one quiet corner of that relentless workspace sat Aarav—an engineer by degree, but a thumbnail designer by circumstance. His fingers moved mechanically across the keyboard, adjusting hues, sharpening edges, selecting fonts that screamed

urgency: “Last Chance,” “Crash Course,” “Selection Guaranteed.” Ironically, the boy who spent his days designing promises of success had begun to lose faith in his own.

Two years earlier, when he had first stepped into this edtech startup, he had carried within him a fragile but fervent conviction. The job, he had told himself, was temporary—a mere stepping stone. He would earn, stabilize, and then prepare for the prestigious Engineering Services Examination. IES had not been just an exam; it had been an identity he had imagined for himself, a future that shimmered with respect and accomplishment. His father’s voice still echoed in his mind, filled with pride whenever he spoke of it to relatives. But life, Aarav realized, rarely dismantles dreams abruptly. It erodes them slowly,

almost imperceptibly, until one day you wake up and find them gone.

The startup demanded everything. Time ceased to belong to him. Days stretched into nights, nights dissolved into mornings, and somewhere in that ceaseless cycle, his aspirations began to suffocate. The IES syllabus loomed like an insurmountable mountain, vast and unforgiving. After ten or twelve hours of work, even opening a book felt like an act of rebellion against exhaustion. At first, he tried—he truly did. But consistency slipped through his fingers, and with it, his confidence. What had once felt achievable now appeared distant, almost delusional.

There was a peculiar kind of humiliation that accompanied his routine. Faculty members—many younger than him—walked through the office corridors with authority and admiration trailing behind

them. They were creators of knowledge, voices that thousands listened to, faces that students trusted. Aarav, meanwhile, existed behind the scenes, cropping their images, enhancing their smiles, making them appear larger than life. Each time he adjusted the brightness of their faces, he felt a quiet dimming within himself. “Main bhi engineer hoon,” he would whisper sometimes, as though reminding himself of a truth the world had forgotten.

One evening, as the office emptied and the hum of activity softened into a tired silence, Aarav remained at his desk, working on yet another thumbnail. The clock read 10:30 PM. His eyes burned, but he continued. Deadlines, after all, had no regard for fatigue. It was then that Riya ma’am walked past him. She was one of the English faculty members—respected, composed, and

known for her remarkable clarity of thought. She paused when she noticed him still working.

“You’re still here?” she asked, her voice gentle but perceptive.

Aarav looked up, startled. “Yes ma’am, just finishing this.”

She glanced at his screen and then at him, her expression softening. “Do you always stay this late?”

He smiled faintly. “Almost every day.”

There was something in that smile—something weary yet restrained—that caught her attention. She lingered for a moment before asking, “What did you study?”

“Engineering.”

“And is this what you wanted to do?”

The question struck him with an unexpected intensity. It was simple, almost casual, yet it unearthed

something he had carefully buried. Aarav hesitated. Words felt heavy in his throat. Finally, he spoke, his voice quieter than usual. “I wanted to prepare for IES... but with this job, it feels impossible. The syllabus is too vast, and there’s no time.”

Riya ma’am did not respond immediately. She simply nodded, as if acknowledging not just his words but the unspoken weight behind them. That night, she left without saying much, but something had shifted.

Over the following days, her attention towards him became more deliberate. It was never intrusive, never overwhelming—just small gestures that carried quiet significance. A question here, a brief conversation there. “Kya padh rahe ho?” she would ask. And more often than not, Aarav’s answer would be the same: “Kuch nahi.” Yet each time he

said it, it felt less like a statement and more like a confession.

One evening, she placed a pen drive on his desk. “These are my English lectures,” she said simply. “Start with this.”

Aarav looked at her, confused. “Ma’am, but...”

“No buts,” she replied with a faint smile. “Just start.”

There was no elaborate motivation, no grand speech about success or perseverance. Just a quiet act of belief. And sometimes, that is all it takes to ignite a dormant spark.

The first lecture he watched felt almost trivial. Subject-verb agreement—something he believed he already understood. But as the lecture progressed, he realized the depth he had overlooked. Concepts he thought were basic unfolded with nuance and

precision. For the first time in a long while, his mind felt engaged, challenged, alive. It was a small beginning, but it carried within it the promise of something more.

Gradually, a routine emerged. He began waking up early, stealing an hour from sleep before the day's chaos began. During lunch breaks, he would solve questions. His bag, once burdened only with his laptop, now carried notes, books, and a fragile sense of hope. The journey was far from easy. There were days when exhaustion threatened to overwhelm him, days when self-doubt whispered that he was too late, too behind. Yet, he persisted—not with fiery motivation, but with quiet discipline.

When he cleared the prelims of a banking exam, it felt like a distant echo of the confidence he had once known. "Shayad ho sakta hai," he thought. But

the mains examination was unforgiving. The result shattered him. For a moment, it felt as though all his efforts had dissolved into nothingness. The silence that followed was heavy, suffocating. He considered giving up—not just the preparation, but everything.

One night, as he sat staring blankly at his screen, he came across an old thumbnail he had designed. It read, “Don’t Quit—Success is Closer Than You Think.” He laughed—a hollow, sarcastic laugh. The irony was almost cruel. He had crafted words of encouragement for others, yet had never truly believed them for himself.

But something about that moment lingered. Perhaps it was the absurdity of his own cynicism, or perhaps it was the faint, stubborn resilience within him refusing to die. That night, he opened his books again. Not because he felt

motivated, but because he chose not to surrender.

Months passed. The journey remained arduous, filled with moments of doubt and fatigue. Yet, slowly, imperceptibly, things began to change. His accuracy improved, his understanding deepened, and with it, his confidence returned. It was not a dramatic transformation, but a steady evolution.

When the final result came, he stared at the screen in disbelief. RRB PO. Madhya Pradesh Gramin Bank. For a long moment, he felt nothing—no joy, no excitement, just a profound stillness. It was as though his mind needed time to reconcile this reality with the countless moments he had doubted it.

When the realization finally settled, his eyes filled with tears—not of relief alone, but of gratitude. Gratitude for the struggle, for the failures, for the nights

that had seemed endless. The next day, he walked into the office one last time. Everything looked the same, yet nothing felt the same. The desk, the screen, the thumbnails—they were no longer symbols of defeat, but reminders of a journey that had shaped him.

He found Riya ma'am and simply said, "I cleared." His voice trembled.

She smiled—not with surprise, but with quiet pride. "I knew you would," she said.

Years later, when Aarav reflects on those two years, he does not see them as wasted. He sees them as formative—years that humbled him, tested him, and ultimately prepared him. He understands now that success is not defined by the absence of struggle, but by the courage to persist through it.

And somewhere, in some office, under the dim glow of a screen, another young

man might still be designing thumbnails, feeling lost and insignificant. He may not realize it yet, but his story too is unfolding—quietly, patiently—waiting for him to believe in it once more.

