

STORY TO READ – 12 NOVEMBER 2025

## “The Road to Kekri — The Story of Arjun Rathore”

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### 1. The Town that Stood Still

There’s a small town between Ajmer and Bhilwara where buses stop only long enough for tea and dust. The board says *Kekri*, but locals call it *Kismet Nagar* — the town of fate — because nothing seems to change there.

Cows don’t hurry, people don’t dream fast, and news arrives slower than trains.

Arjun Rathore lived at the edge of this town, in a yellow house that always smelled of kerosene and hope. His father was a tailor who stitched uniforms for schoolchildren; his mother ran a small tiffin business. Arjun was their only child — the boy everyone believed would “do something big.”

He was bright, good with numbers, and his teachers often said, “Arjun, tu toh officer banega.”

By the time he finished college, the dream was clear—*banking exams*. Delhi coaching ads flashed on his phone daily, but money was the missing chapter in his plan.

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## 2. The Journey Begins

In 2022, after saving for six months and borrowing ₹10,000 from his uncle, Arjun boarded a bus to Jaipur—the nearest city with serious coaching centres.

He rented a single room near Gopalpura Bypass: one bed, one bulb, and walls covered with motivational quotes from seniors long gone.

There he met two other students—**Meena**, a shy girl from Tonk, and **Satyam**, a street-smart boy from Kota who could solve any

puzzle in minutes but could never wake up before 10 a.m. Together they formed a small “mock test family.”

For a year, life was routine: 6 a.m. library, 2 p.m. coaching, 8 p.m. Maggi, 10 p.m. revision. Arjun wrote “IBPS PO 2023 – Final Attempt” on his wall. He believed it.

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### **3. The Storm Nobody Predicted**

In June 2023, his father suffered a sudden heart attack while delivering stitched uniforms to a school. By the time Arjun reached Kekri, it was too late.

The world went silent, except for the sewing machine that still sat half-threaded.

He wanted to quit studies and take over the tailoring shop. But his mother held his hand and said,

“Beta, teri silai kitab se hoti hai. Main

sambhaal lungi yahan. Tu bas exam clear kar.”

He returned to Jaipur with his father’s old watch on his wrist and guilt heavier than any syllabus. His rent was due, his savings were gone, and concentration came in fragments. He took part-time data-entry work at night just to survive.

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#### **4. The Crack and the Choice**

By September, results of prelims came out—he missed the cutoff by one mark.

One.

He stared at the screen for a long time, then laughed, then cried, then laughed again.

Satyam said, “Bhai, ek mark hi toh hai, next time nikal lega.”

Arjun whispered, “Agla time? Mujhe lagta hai mera time hi khatam ho gaya.”

For the first time, he felt what every long-term aspirant fears—the vacuum after endless attempts.

He began scrolling reels, skipping study hours, avoiding phone calls from home.

One evening, he saw a post: *Delivery partners required— instant joining.*

He applied. Within two days, he was zipping through Jaipur traffic with a red bag strapped to his back, delivering food to people studying just like he once did.

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## **5. Lessons from the Road**

The roads became his classroom.

He delivered biryani to libraries, pizza to coaching hostels, chai to lonely rooftops.

He listened to every accent of struggle—students laughing to hide panic, parents calling for updates, couples fighting over failed prelims.

One night, while waiting outside a hostel, he met a blind watchman who said, “Beta, main duniya nahi dekhta, par awaaz se samajh jaata hoon kaun haar maankar gaya aur kaun fir se koshish karega.”

Arjun asked softly, “Aur main?”

The old man smiled, “Tere awaaz mein rukne ki thakan hai, girne ka dard nahi. Tu wapas uth jayega.”

Those words worked like electricity.

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## **6. The Restart**

Arjun returned to his room, opened his dusty books, and created a new timetable—simple and ruthless.

4 hours sleep.

8 hours work.

8 hours study.

He stopped complaining about fatigue; he treated it like background music.

He recorded current-affairs notes while riding, listening to them between deliveries. He converted reasoning questions into voice notes. When red lights turned long, he solved arithmetic in his head.

Slowly, the boy who had fallen into routine became a man who balanced chaos.

By December 2023, he quit delivery work, having saved enough for one last exam season.

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## **7. The Friend Who Fell Behind**

Meanwhile, Satyam gave up.

“I’m going to join my cousin’s business,” he said. “Bas, ab aur nahi hota. Tu bhi soch le.”

But Arjun couldn’t.

He had seen too many people surrender right before sunrise.

In January 2024, he registered for *RRB PO and Clerk*. It wasn’t the grand IBPS PO dream, but

it was still a ladder.

He didn't tell his mother; he wanted to surprise her.

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## **8. The Night of Fire**

The night before prelims, a fire broke out in his lane. A short circuit in the next building lit up the sky. People ran out carrying whatever they could grab.

Arjun helped an old woman out, then went back inside his smoke-filled room to rescue his books.

He found his notes half-burnt, edges curling like dried leaves.

Instead of crying, he smiled.

“Shayad kismet chahti hai main sab yaad se likhu,” he whispered.

He slept on the terrace under stars coated with smoke.

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## 9. The Exam

The exam day was raw and real. He travelled 80 km to Ajmer centre, bus rattling like his nerves.

The English section felt like music. The reasoning clicked. The quant was tough, but manageable.

When he walked out, he didn't feel victorious—just peaceful.

Mains came two months later. He faced it with steel inside.

Then came the waiting—longer, heavier, crueler than any paper.

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## 10. The Result

On a hot May afternoon in 2025, while fixing the ceiling fan, his phone buzzed.

Subject: *RRB Clerk Final Result.*

He hesitated, wiped sweat from his forehead, and clicked.

**“Congratulations! You have been provisionally allotted...”**

He screamed so loud the entire lane gathered. His mother came running with wet hands, still smelling of wheat flour. He hugged her tight, whispering, “Maa, ab silai machine band kar do.”

Tears, laughter, disbelief—everything arrived together. The town of Kekri had its first banker.

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## **11. The Twist**

A week later, while buying sweets, Arjun saw a newspaper headline:

**“Fake Banking Exam Centers Busted in Jaipur — Candidates Involved in Proxy Scam.”**

Below it was a photo of *Satyam*, handcuffed, head down.

Arjun froze. The same friend who had shared tea, jokes, dreams.

He read the article—Satyam had paid a group to give his exam through remote access. They caught him when the system camera detected duplicate IDs.

That night, Arjun didn't celebrate. He sat silently on his terrace, staring at the same stars that had watched him sleep through fire.

He realised something profound— *You don't fail when you come last; you fail when you quit being real.*

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## **12. The Return to Jaipur**

A month later, before joining his posting in Jodhpur, he visited Jaipur one last time. The coaching lane looked smaller, the posters older, the tea stall quieter.

The librarian recognised him. “Arjun beta! Sunaa hai select ho gaya?”

He nodded.

“Fir toh ek photo le lein. Pehle humesha result board pe doosron ki photo lagata tha, ab teri lagayenge.”

He smiled.

While leaving, he saw a new student sitting where he once sat—dark circles, trembling hands, same nervous eyes.

Arjun went up and said, “Bhai, ek line yaad rakhna—thakan se result nahi rukta, rukta hai bas bharosa.”

The boy smiled faintly. A new circle began.

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### **13. The Posting**

In Jodhpur, Arjun received his first official badge: *Clerk Grade II, Rajasthan Gramin Bank*.

The office smelled of fresh paint and paper.

On his desk sat an old desktop and a nameplate that gleamed more than it should.

He didn't care about the pay; he cared about the peace.

Every morning, he tied his father's watch around his wrist before signing in.

His colleagues teased, "Officer banne ka plan hai kya?"

He'd grin, "Haan, lekin bina shortcut."

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## 14. The Letter

A month later, he got a letter from jail—handwritten, uneven.

"Arjun,

Tu sahi tha. Main galat tha. Maine shortcut liya aur lamba route mil gaya.

Mera career khatam hai, par shayad meri samajh shuru hui hai.

Tujhe dekh kar lagta hai, patience bhi ek talent hota hai.

—Satyam"

Arjun folded the letter gently and placed it inside his father's old watch box.

Some memories, like pain, deserve careful storage.

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## **15. The Festival of Triumph**

By Diwali, he received his first salary. It wasn't much, but it was *earned*.

He bought his mother a new sewing machine anyway—not to use, but to remind them of beginnings.

That night, as fireworks colored the sky, he thought, *Success isn't light; it's the courage to reach the matchbox again after every failure.*

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## **16. The Closing Scene**

At 11 p.m., when the town went quiet, Arjun wrote in his diary:

“I once thought Delhi had all the opportunities.

But it turns out, courage travels anywhere you take it.

Some people burn out chasing big cities; others build light in small towns.

I didn't become an officer yet—but I became responsible.

And that's a promotion life rarely gives.”

He closed the diary, turned off the light, and slept under a fan that hummed the lullaby of hard-earned peace.

Outside, the road to Kekri glimmered faintly under moonlight—silent, simple, endless—just like determination itself.

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**Moral:**

You don't need to change cities to change destiny.

Patience, honesty, and quiet work travel faster than any “hack.”