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I had this habit of carrying chits in colleges.

Well, before we get going, I have a confession to make. I became an actor because I had a problem. I was an introvert. You know, I'm the youngest in my family. And I was so pampered in my house that when I used to step out, I didn't know how to deal with people. So, I gradually became this very shy, introverted kid who could not talk. Well, I still cannot talk. And I have stage fright. So, in case, so what I do generally as an actor is I hide behind all these fascinating characters, and then I'm confident. But, like right now as I'm not acting, so... I will screw it up. So, excuse me if I falter. Excuse me if I don't make sense. Excuse me if I get a panic attack right now. But I will try my best.

We love you anyway.

Alright. I would love to share my journey with you, my learnings, and in case you decide to drop out and join me in Bollywood, it will come very handy. So, I was thinking in the car, what do I talk about? What can I tell you that you already don't know? I'm assuming, and I think most probably, you guys are way much smarter and better than what I was when I was your age. You know, you already know about the cut-throat competition, you know the importance of hard work, perseverance, and vision, focus, self-belief, etc., etc. So, I don't need to talk about that.

But after deep thinking, I zeroed down into two things that I can actually discuss about. These two things talk about chasing your dreams and actually living your dreams, which unfortunately nobody mentioned to me when I was starting out. And those two things are, can I write them, can you see enough words? Alright, so yeah, so those two things are the biggest lie and the only truth about success that I was told about.

Now the biggest lie was money plus recognition is equal to happiness, is equal to success. So, let me begin by mentioning that I come from a very middle-class family. And when I was growing up, money was a big, big, big differentiator in my life. Also, in the three generations of my family that I know of, that are documented, nobody knew what fame felt like. So, basically, both money and recognition were missing when I started out. So, I already started out as a failure, let me be very precise.

My family told me that I had to become an engineer, medicals were booked for my sisters. So, once I'm an engineer, then I can, you know, try civil services examination and then probably, yeah, that would be

like opening the doors for all kinds of happiness and I'll be forever successful, I'll be forever happy. This is the condition that I experienced when I was growing up. Alright, fair enough, good deal.

So, I became very good in studies, did fairly well in my 10th board exams, and then off I went to Delhi for my +2, got myself enrolled in a nice school and Vidya Mandir and FIIT JEE and half a dozen of another coaching institutes. And I used to share my room with three other similar aspirants. What it meant was every day after finishing my assignments, school assignments, and preparing for my engineering entrance exam, I had to wash my clothes and I had to cook food for myself. But I wasn't complaining. Well, it was worth it because after all, I was for the very first time in my life, I was so close to become successful, for the first time in my life. So yeah, finally I slopped, I got selected for several engineering colleges and I decided to take admission in Delhi College of Engineering, which is...

DC.

Now known as DTU, thank you. Were you my senior or junior?

So, yeah, so there was a celebration like this in my family too. I could finally stop for a while and breathe, you know. I was telling myself that, you know what, now you have made it. You should be happy because you're supposed to be happy, but it wasn't working that much. Something was missing, there was a void that I could feel. So, I thought maybe something bigger was required. For some reason, incessantly while the first 18, 19 years of my life, the future me was much happier, much successful than the present me. So, I was like, alright fine, so I was forcing myself. As I promised, I started preparing for civil services examination and I was forcing myself to slog, but I was bored.

UPSC exams were still far away. In the meantime, I thought of doing theatre and I thought to learn dance because to counter the shyness that I had, still have, and also because there were no girls in my engineering college for some reason. I felt cheated man, we slogged so much, you cracked your entrance exam, and you find that there are no girls. So yeah. So, somebody told me that there are very good-looking girls in dance schools. So, I was like, fine, I enrolled.

And once I started with performing arts, I knew one thing for sure, I knew that I quite liked it. And three years later, imagine me sitting in the campus and I'm thinking, alright, I'm really interested in performing arts. And all I want to do is to earn money and to be recognized. So, if I become a movie star, hmm, I actually was very serious. And I dropped out of my College in the third year, when I was just two semesters away from getting the degree, engineering degree.

Came to Mumbai, got heavily into theatre and also the skills that I thought were necessary to become an actor. And by the way, this time I stayed with six other guys in a single room kitchen. But this time I was prepared for it. This time, there was one difference, I was driven. My self-respect was at stake. My ex-college mates, one of them is sitting right here in the black shirt. They thought that I was that disaster that folks in engineering and B schools should never become. So, I had to prove a point to everybody. I had to prove a point to my family. Most importantly, I had to prove a point to myself.

And this was the time when I was also a background dancer. So, I was dancing behind all the possible stars that you can think of, Shahrukh Khan, Shaheed Kapoor, everybody. And I was thinking, I was thinking to myself while I was performing, okay, it's just three steps away, there I have to get, and everything will be sorted. And I kept going like that. And two years later, guess what, I got myself my first big break. I was selected for a prime time show on TV.

Now hear me out. It was seriously a big break because I started earning, people started recognizing me. To be honest, I would deliberately go and roam in all these malls so that people could look at me, smile, ask for my photograph.

And I was watching myself on TV for the first time. You have no idea how it feels for somebody like me to, you know, just looking at me for, and I was looking at myself every day on TV. It was a big, big, big high. I also suddenly discovered that I actually had many friends, who were absent all this while, but suddenly they popped up. And the show became popular. I was making good money to a point that money stopped being a differentiator in my life. And I was becoming more and more popular. Now I cannot go to all these malls that I was going all alone. So, I wanted somebody to be with me, to save me.

So, you know what I'm saying? I bought myself my first dream house. I bought myself my dream car. And just a note, to you as well, I was getting such female attention that my engineering college friends could only possibly dream of.

So, I was having a time of my life. And then something unusual happened, I got used to everything and I felt cheated. I stayed with all these dreams for 10 and 15 years of my life. I was promised happiness and I was promised success. But all these things stayed with me just for a few days. And I'm punctuating me because I started from zero money and zero recognition. So, I was not happy. How could that be? I didn't like this version of success. And the future me, again, was hearing the present me. But this time, I decided otherwise, I would do something else.

So, that gets us to the second point, which is the only truth, I won't take too much time, I will just try to keep it short. I figured something, I figured that something, seemingly big things, were not that big once I got them. And looking back in the past, I realized that maybe smaller things were way bigger. And there was one thing that was missing in my life, that was the cause of this illusion. And that thing that was missing was NOW. I was all of these years, just I was obsessed about what's going to happen. I used to draw those flow charts that we're taught in schools. If this happens, I'll do that. And six months from now, I'll be here. So, I want it to be in control. I was so obsessed about my future, I was taking the entire responsibility about the past, but all I was doing was frequently swinging from past to future, not living in actual sense.

Well, I also figured that when I perform on stage or in front of the camera, I'm so much excited. I am so much interested. I was paying so much attention that there was no room to think about the future or the past. I was just there in the moment; I was alive in true sense when I was performing. And for the first time, trust me, in a long time, I understood the true meaning of success, which was not money plus recognition, but it was NOW plus excitement.

So, here I am right now, five years down the line, money, and fame although still could not earn back their reputation in my life. But let me show you one thing, I have much more of them than I had ever planned. And the best thing, my college, one of the professors was very dear to me, called me recently about asking me to plan this interaction with students. And I very humbly requested that can I get my degree back.

And it's happening. And I'm very excited, again. Thank you so much, guys.

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