

Cricket 102

Chapter 102

With the IPL over, I found myself in a strange situation. No more matches, no more practice sessions, no more stadium roars—just silence. The Indian team was set to play a series against Australia, followed by the ICC World Cup 2019. But I already knew I wouldn't be a part of it.

I had played only 2-3 ODIs for India before, and expecting a direct entry into the World Cup squad was unrealistic. Selectors always preferred experienced players for such big tournaments. It wasn't a shock, but it still stung a little. After such a great IPL season, I had hoped for at least some recognition, maybe a call-up for the Australia series. But there was nothing.

So, for the first time in months, I had no cricket for nearly three months. No team meetings, no net sessions, no pre-match tension—just a long break while the world focused on the biggest tournament in cricket.

But then, I remembered Sachin sir's words.

"This is cricket. It has both ups and downs. You're young—just play. Your journey is long."

His number was still saved in my phone. Maybe it was time to send him a message. Maybe it was time to train harder than ever.

Sachin sir had been checking in on me for the past few days, sending short but meaningful messages. Not like a full-time mentor, but more like a senior player guiding a junior. Small pointers, little pieces of advice—subtle but valuable.

I had been hesitant to text him first, not wanting to seem too eager, but today, after watching Australia series squad announcement on TV, I finally sent him a message:

Me: Sir, I hope you're doing well. I've been thinking a lot about our last conversation. I really want to improve and work on my game. If you have any advice, I'd love to hear it.

To my surprise, my phone started ringing almost instantly. It was Sachin sir.

I quickly answered, my voice a little nervous.

"Hello, sir?"

"Aarav, how are you?" His voice was calm, familiar, and reassuring.

"I'm good, sir. Watching the Australia series Squad announcement but wishing I was there."

Sachin sir chuckled. "That feeling is normal. It shows you care. But you know what's more important than wishing? Doing something about it."

I nodded, even though he couldn't see me.

"Yes, sir. I want to improve, work on my weaknesses. I want to be ready when my time comes."

"Good," he said. "Then come see me. Day after tomorrow. My house. We'll talk properly."

For a moment, I just stared at my phone screen. Sachin Tendulkar just invited me to his house.

"Sir... are you serious?" I stuttered.

"Of course, I am!" He laughed. "You want to learn, don't you? Then be there. And bring your kit."

"Yes, sir! I'll be there!"

As the call ended, I sat there for a while, still processing what had just happened. The God of Cricket had just invited me to his home.

This was it. The break wasn't an end—it was an opportunity.

(This Interaction or Addition of Sachin Tendulkar scene is done just to add few more interactions between Aarav and Female Lead)

As I sat on my bed, still buzzing with excitement from Sachin sir's call, a thought crossed my mind.

"System," I said out loud, staring at the ceiling. "I know you don't give rewards for domestic leagues and all, but come on—this was the IPL! That's as big as it gets outside of international cricket. Shouldn't I get something?"

For a moment, there was silence. Then, the familiar robotic voice echoed in my head:

[System Notification: Due to host's request, the system has been updated. If the host plays in a league or domestic tournament at an international level, such as the IPL, a season-end reward will be granted!]

I shot up from my bed in excitement. "No way! You actually updated the system for this?!"

The system responded in its usual neutral tone: [Affirmative. The host's performance in IPL 2019 has qualified for a season-end reward.]

I grinned like a kid in a candy store. "Alright, System! Give me my reward!"

A golden light flashed in front of my eyes, and a new notification appeared.

[System Notification]

🔊 Congratulations, Host! 🎉

Although your team did not qualify for the playoffs, you will not receive any direct cricket-related offers at this moment. However, due to your outstanding performance, you have earned special non-cricket rewards!

🏆 REWARDS UNLOCKED 🏆

✈️ Make in India Package IN

You now have access to exclusive Indian technological and startup resources, providing a boost in AI, tech, and entrepreneurship—laying the foundation to build something revolutionary in India and even the world.

❖ ↴ OpenAI & DeepSeek Research Package

Direct access to OpenAI's advanced research papers, internal analysis, and direct installation of OpenAI models directly till deep research model!

Includes DeepSeek AI research and all its learning material, allowing you to understand and improve upon their models.

❖ 🛡 Build Your Own Indian AI Model

The system has granted you an AI development framework—allowing you to create India's and world's next big AI company!

You now have resources to build an independent AI ecosystem for India, rivaling global tech giants.

The ability to train, fine-tune, and innovate on AI models without dependence on foreign AI frameworks!

❗ System Message:

"Host, this is your opportunity to take India's AI industry to the next level. Whether in cricket or technology, your potential is limitless. Will you take on this challenge?"

I sat there, stunned.

This... this was HUGE.

Cricket was my passion, but this? This was something bigger than just me.

I clenched my fists, my heart pounding with excitement. "System, I accept the challenge!"

A new journey had begun.

I took a deep breath, staring at the rewards I had just unlocked. The Make in India Package, OpenAI & DeepSeek Research Access, and the ability to build my own AI model—these were all game-changing opportunities, but my heart was still set on cricket.

"This is for later," I muttered to myself, storing all the information in my mind. Right now, my focus was clear—cricket.

And the biggest thing on my mind? Meeting Sachin Sir.

Just thinking about it gave me goosebumps. The God of Cricket had personally invited me to his house! This wasn't just a casual meet-up; this was an opportunity to learn from the best, to improve, and to grow.

With that thought, I decided to rest for a bit. Tomorrow was going to be one of the biggest days of my life.

I walked into my room, lay down on my bed, and closed my eyes.

"Sachin Tendulkar, sir... I'm coming."

As I woke up the next morning, I could feel the excitement bubbling inside me. Today wasn't just any ordinary day—it was the day I was going to meet Sachin Tendulkar, the God of Cricket, at his own house.

After freshening up, I put on a simple yet stylish outfit—a black polo t-shirt, blue trowser, and white sneakers. I didn't want to overdress, but at the same time, I wanted to look presentable. This was Sachin Tendulkar I was meeting, after all.

Taking a deep breath, I grabbed my car keys, my kit and stepped out of my home saying bye to my parents.

Waiting for me in the parking lot was my Mercedes-Benz G-Class (G-Wagon)—a car that was a statement in itself. Sliding into the driver's seat, I ignited the engine, and the powerful roar filled the silent morning air.

I put the address into my GPS:

19-A Perry Cross Road, Bandra (West), Mumbai.

The location of Sachin Tendulkar's farmhouse.

As I started driving through the streets of Mumbai, I couldn't help but think—

"Is this even real? Just a few months ago, I was dreaming of making a name in cricket, and now... I'm on my way to meet the greatest cricketer of all time."

The roads were moderately busy, but my mind was racing faster than my car.

What would Sachin Sir say?

Would he give me tips on my batting?

Would he share stories from his playing days?

I was deep in thought when suddenly, my phone rang. I glanced at the screen—it was Sachin Sir himself!

I quickly answered, trying to sound as normal as possible.

"Hello, Aarav, where are you?" his voice came through, calm and warm.

"Sir! I'm just a few minutes away," I replied, gripping the steering wheel tightly.

"Good, good. Just come straight to the gate. The guard knows you're coming, so don't worry about anything."

"Yes, sir! Thank you, sir!"

"See you soon." He hung up.

I let out a deep breath. This was happening. This was really happening.

A few minutes later, I turned onto Perry Cross Road.

The neighborhood was lined with lush trees, and the atmosphere felt different—calm, peaceful, almost surreal.

Then, finally, I saw it.

A grand yet elegantly designed farmhouse, standing tall with a beautiful lawn in front. It wasn't overly flashy, but it had a charm that screamed grace and legacy.

As I approached the entrance, the massive gates opened automatically.

The security guard standing at the side gave me a respectful nod.

"Welcome, sir. You can go right in."

I nodded back, still processing the fact that I was being welcomed into Sachin Tendulkar's house.

Slowly, I drove my G-Wagon through the entrance, rolling through the long driveway.

And then, I saw him.

Sachin Tendulkar. Sitting on a wooden chair in the garden, with a cup of tea in his hand. Beside him was his wife, Anjali Ma'am, also enjoying her tea.

I parked my car near the entrance, took a deep breath, and stepped out.

As I walked towards them, Sachin Sir turned his head towards me.

A warm smile spread across his face.

"Aarav, welcome!" he said, getting up from his chair.

"Namaste, Sir!"

Sachin Sir chuckled. "Arey, namaste, namaste! No need to be so formal, beta."

Anjali Ma'am also smiled. "Welcome, Aarav. Come, sit down."

I nodded, still a bit overwhelmed.

As I sat down, Sachin Sir poured me a cup of tea.

Sachin sir took a sip of his tea and looked at me with a calm, knowing smile.

"So, Aarav... how are you feeling after the IPL?"

I let out a small sigh, looking down at my cup. "Honestly, sir... it feels weird. I performed well, but we didn't qualify. And now, with the World Cup coming up, I have no cricket for months."

He nodded, listening patiently. "Hmm... that's understandable. You've been in a high-intensity environment for weeks, and now, suddenly, there's a void."

I nodded. "Exactly, sir. I don't know what to do with myself. It feels like everything's just... stopped."

Sachin sir leaned back in his chair, smiling slightly. "You know, when I was young, I felt the same way after certain tournaments. Cricket becomes your whole world, and when there's no match to look forward to, it feels like you're lost."

I looked at him eagerly. "So, what did you do in such times, sir?"

He chuckled. "Well, I never stopped preparing. Just because you don't have a match doesn't mean your game has to pause. This is the perfect time to work on your skills, both mentally and physically."

"You are young, Aarav," he continued. "You have a long career ahead. Ups and downs will always be there. Don't waste time worrying about selections. Instead, spend time becoming a better player."

I nodded slowly. "You're right, sir. But sometimes, the uncertainty is scary."

He gave a small laugh. "Cricket is all about uncertainty, beta. You never know what will happen on the next ball, let alone in your career. The best thing you can do is prepare so well that when your moment comes, you grab it with both hands."

His words made so much sense. I had been overthinking everything instead of just focusing on my game.

Sachin sir then took something out of his pocket and slid it towards me. "Here, take this."

I picked it up—it was a small, folded paper.

"What is this, sir?" I asked curiously.

He smiled. "My personal number. Call me anytime you need guidance. I may not always have the answer, but I'll always be here to listen. The previous number with you was also my number but that number is not always with me, but this number is my personal, and I had shared it with my family and friends"

I was stunned. "Sir, I... I don't know what to say."

He patted my shoulder. "No need to say anything, Aarav. Just remember, cricket is a journey. If you ever feel lost, talk to someone who's been through it. That's what seniors are for."

I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude. "Thank you, sir. This means a lot."

He simply smiled. "Now, finish your tea. Then, let's take a walk. I want to hear more about your game."

I couldn't help but grin. This wasn't just a meeting with a legend—it was a moment that would stay with me forever.