

KING OF CRICKET

Chapter 8: A New Beginning

It had been a week since the grand victory at the Gurukul Winter Tournament, and Aarav was savoring the rare moments of leisure with his parents. After a long practice session at the field, they sat together in the cozy living room, the aroma of freshly brewed tea filling the air. Aarav's mother, always the picture of warmth and strength, sat beside him, while his father, ever so focused and determined, lounged on the armchair, flipping through some papers.

Aarav watched his father's expression shift as he put down the papers and looked at him with a mix of curiosity and concern. Taking a deep breath, Aarav spoke, his voice serious yet resolute.

"Father, I looked at the accounts book you left on the table. I know it's not something you'd want to discuss, but I saw the numbers weren't good. This year, we're expecting a profit of 53 lakhs, but that's down from last year's 93 lakhs, which, I know, was already less than the 1.34 crores the year before."

A flicker of frustration crossed his father's face, his brows knitting together. "Aarav, you shouldn't have gone through that," he said, his tone sharp, almost defensive. Before the tension could deepen, Aarav quickly spoke again, his voice sincere and hopeful.

"Dad, please listen to me. I have a plan to turn things around. I'm serious about this, and I need you to hear me out."

Aarav's mother, sensing the rising tension, placed a reassuring hand on her husband's arm. "Let him speak, dear," she said softly, her eyes meeting his with gentle encouragement. His father sighed and leaned back, still wary but curious enough to let Aarav continue.

Aarav turned to his father, eyes glistening with determination. "Dad, we have 11 big shops in Mumbai, 4 in Pune, 8 in Delhi, 18 in Bangalore, and 4 in Lucknow, not to mention the 2 in Amritsar. We're doing well, but we're primarily selling vegetables and ration items. This is fine for now, but with increasing competition, we need to think ahead."

His father raised an eyebrow, the question hanging in the air. Aarav took a deep breath, sensing the critical moment. "Dad, I want us to open a new kind of business. It's a different approach, and I know it sounds risky, but hear me out. I propose we invest 15-20 lakhs to create a new venture—a café. Not a

full-scale restaurant but something like McDonald's in the USA or Starbucks. We can start with just a few dishes—burgers, pizza, sandwiches, French fries, coffee, tea. The focus should be on the ambience and the service. We can make it a place where people come not just for food but for the experience, for good service, and the atmosphere."

His father looked puzzled, a hint of doubt in his eyes. His mother, too, furrowed her brows, her lips pressing into a thin line as she tried to grasp the idea. Aarav continued, his voice steady. "It's simple, Dad. We can start small, like near Pune. We create a café with great ambience, friendly staff, and good food. I can help advertise it. I have 14,000 followers on social media, mostly from Pune and Mumbai. We could run ads there, and Mom, you could help with them too. Your creative ideas are unmatched."

His mother's expression softened as she pondered. Aarav pulled out her phone and opened YouTube, showing her a few popular vloggers in the USA who documented their restaurant openings and daily work. "Mom, you can do the same. Film vlogs of our café journey—the renovations, the first customers, recipes, even little behind-the-scenes moments. It's simple. We just need a camera and can hire a freelance editor for about 2,000 rupees a month for 15-20 videos."

His father rubbed his temples, still torn. Aarav leaned forward, his eyes bright with excitement. "One more thing, Dad. Let's add Wi-Fi to the café. Unlimited

internet is still a luxury for many, and customers would appreciate the option to stay connected while they relax."

There was a pause as Aarav's father took in his words, the gears turning in his mind. Finally, he nodded slowly. "It's a bold move, Aarav. But maybe it's time to think outside the box. I'll give it a try, but let's start small, as you suggested."

Aarav's face broke into a grin, and before he could say more, his father's fingers found their way to his ribs, tickling him playfully. Aarav burst out laughing, his mother joining in with a chuckle. It was a moment of lightness, a reprieve from the weight of decisions and responsibility.

As the laughter died down, his father spoke again, this time with a softer tone. "I've already submitted your form for the trials at Shivaji Park. You need to take a break from school and focus on your goals. The business can wait for a bit."

Aarav's eyes widened, and his heart leaped. "Thank you, Dad!" He hugged his parents tightly, gratitude radiating through him. With a renewed sense of purpose, he set off to practice, the echoes of laughter and new plans buzzing in his ears.