

PRACTICE SMILE

A Emotional Drama 1-Character Solo Monologue in Hinglish

Genre: Emotional Drama	Format: 1-Character Solo Monologue (Single Actor)	Runtime: 4 - 6 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 1-Character Solo Monologue (Single Actor) Character: Former TV News Anchor Facing Retirement (Male, 60-68)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Aaj dressing room mein bas ek hi awaaz hai — meri. Vanity bulbs ki peeli roshni mirror par pad rahi hai, aur saamne main khada hoon: ek former news anchor, ek retired voice, ek aadmi jise duniya ne roz dekha, par shayad kabhi jaana nahi. Silver hair perfectly comb ki hui hai, blazer fit hai, tie dheere-dheere seedhi kar raha hoon, jaise kisi final broadcast ke liye taiyar ho raha hoon. Par is room mein koi live show nahi hai. Bas ek chhota television monitor hai, jismein khali broadcast desk dikh raha hai. Desk par koi nahi. Studio mein koi nahi. Aur shayad meri zindagi mein bhi ab koi nahi.

Main practice kar raha hoon. "Good evening, and thank you for being with us." Pehli line bolte hi awaaz stable lagti hai. Professional. Anchorman wali. Wohi voice jiske liye log mujhe pehchante the. Main mirror mein khud ko dekh kar muskuraata hoon, practice smile. Woh smile jo har tragedy, har riot, har election night, har breaking news ke baad camera ko di thi. Smile jo sach ko cover karti thi, aur sach jo dheere-dheere mujhe kha gaya.

Cue cards haath mein hain, par un par likha text sirf farewell speech ka nahi hai. Unke piche maine kuch aur likh diya hai, jaise kisi confession ko chhupane ki aadat ho. "I served the truth," likha hai. Neeche, bahut chhote letters mein: "But I lied at home." Yeh line padhte hi room thoda aur chhota lagne lagta hai. Main remote uthata hoon, monitor off karta hoon, phir on. Khali desk phir se dikhai deta hai. Jaise duniya ne mujhe bataya ho ki meri jagah ab empty hai, aur main us emptiness ko dekhne se bach nahi sakta.

Main rehearsal dobara shuru karta hoon. "Tonight is my final sign-off." Phir rukta hoon. Mirror mein meri aankhon ke neeche thakaan hai. Woh thakaan sirf age ki nahi hai. Woh saalon ki hai, jab main din bhar sach dikhata raha aur raat ko apne ghar mein jhooth bolta raha. Meri wife ne ek din poocha tha, "Tum kab ghar ke ho? Kabhi news ke bina?" Main has diya tha. Maine kaha tha, "Bas do minute." Woh do minute pachaas saal ban gaye. Aur mera beta... mera beta meri awaaz se bada hua, par meri maujoodgi se nahi.

Main tie ko dheela karta hoon. Saans gehri leta hoon. Aaj pehli baar lag raha hai ki final sign-off news channel ke liye nahi, mere khud ke liye hai. Main mirror se aankhen nahi hataata aur bolta hoon, "Maine duniya ko sach sunaya,

lekin apne ghar mein sabse bada jhooth bola. Maine kaha tha kaam important hai. Sach yeh tha ki main dar gaya tha. Dar gaya tha ki agar main ghar gaya, toh mujhe woh aadmi dekhna padega jo husband bhi nahi ban saka, aur father bhi nahi.”

Room mein silence aur gehri ho jaati hai. Main makeup kit kholta hoon, powder brush ko haath mein leta hoon, phir rakh deta hoon. Ab face set karne ki zarurat nahi. Ab jo dikhna hai, woh dikhne do. Main monitor ki taraf dekhta hoon, phir mirror ki taraf. “Mera last broadcast,” main dheere se bolta hoon, “yeh nahi hoga ki kaun jeeta, kaun haara. Yeh hoga ki ek aadmi ne finally maana — ki usne apni zindagi ka sabse important headline kabhi read hi nahi ki.”

Main cue card ka ek naya page palat-ta hoon. Is par sirf ek line likh deta hoon: “Sorry, beta.” Awaaz kaanp jaati hai. Pehli baar practice smile toot-ti hai. Uske neeche ek asli chehra aa jata hai — thoda thaka hua, thoda sharminda, par finally honest. Main camera ke imaginary lens mein nahi, mirror mein apne andar ke bachche ko dekh raha hoon. Jo apne baap se permission maangta raha, aur jo baap kabhi waqt de hi nahi saka.

Main final line bolta hoon, slow, clear, bina newsroom polish ke: “Aaj main retire nahi ho raha. Aaj main chup rehne se retire ho raha hoon.” Phir ek lambi saans. Smile aati hai, par ab fake nahi. Fragile hai. Human hai. Main blazer ka button band karta hoon, tie straight karta hoon, aur mirror ke saamne khade-khade ek aadmi ki tarah khud ko salute karta hoon — career ko nahi, sach ko. Television monitor par empty desk chamakta rehta hai. Main uske saamne se dheere se hat-ta hoon, jaise finally apni life ki frame se bahar nikal raha hoon.