

THE FAMILY PHOTO

A Slice of Life/Family 3-Character Screenplay in Hinglish

Genre: Slice of Life/Family	Format: 3-Character Short Film (Trio Cast)	Runtime: 6 - 9 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 3-Character Short Film (Trio Cast) Character 1: Mahesh (47)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Late afternoon ki golden roshni terrace par dheere-dheere naram ho rahi hai. Kapde ki lines par sookhti hui laundry halki hawa mein hil rahi hai, potted plants ke leaves pe dhoop ka aakhri chamak raha hai. Mahesh, formal shirt pehne, haath mein camera remote pakde, tripod ke saamne aise khada hai jaise koi life-changing moment capture karne wala ho. Neelam, sari mein, apni purani practiced patience ke saath usko aur Sahil ko frame mein set kar rahi hai. Sahil hoodie aur sneakers mein hai, phone ko pocket mein dabaye, face par wohi classic college-son boredom—par aankhon mein thodi si softness bhi, jo bas kabhi-kabhi bahar aati hai.

Mahesh baar-baar posture theek karwata hai. “Thoda left, nahi, aur left. Sahil, smile kar. Aise nahi, beta, jaise attendance lag rahi ho.” Sahil mutters karta hai ki photo hi toh hai, wedding invitation thodi na. Mahesh usse quiet rehne ko kehta hai, aur Neelam dono ke beech mein literally aur emotionally khadi ho jaati hai. Woh Sahil ke hoodie ka hood seedha karti hai, Mahesh ki collar smooth karti hai, aur bina dekhe un dono ki old habits ko sambhalti rehti hai. Dialogue mein chhote-chhote teekhe nishaan nikalte hain—Sahil ko yaad hai kaise Mahesh ne uske first college fest pe aane ka promise karke last minute cancel kiya tha; Mahesh ko yaad hai kaise Sahil ne ek baar uske saamne “uncool” bol diya tha. Neelam har baar ek halka sa “bas, bas” bolkar tension ko comedy mein badal deti hai.

Mahesh repeatedly says the photo is for a “wedding invitation draft,” and Neelam notices the phone screen tucked near his palm. On it, a template flashes—formal, clean, almost like a card. Sahil notices too, but doesn’t care enough to ask. He keeps refusing to smile, saying, “Papa, fake smile se better hai no smile.” Mahesh gets irritated, then embarrassed, then suddenly quiet. Neelam, who has been watching him more than the frame, asks softly why he looks so nervous if it’s just a photo. Mahesh dodges, adjusts the tripod, and clicks the remote too early. The photo is blurred. Sahil finally laughs—real, unexpected—at his father’s panic. Mahesh almost smiles back, but catches himself.

Then the twist slips out in the most ordinary way. Neelam, while moving the potted plant to create a cleaner background, finds a folded paper near the tripod bag. It’s not a wedding invitation draft. It’s a job interview email printout, with the company name, date, and a note: “Please attach a professional family photograph if possible.” She looks at Mahesh. Sahil looks at Mahesh. The terrace suddenly feels quieter than before, even with the laundry fluttering. Mahesh tries to laugh it off, but the awkward smile breaks. He admits, in a low voice, that he’s been

unemployed for months. He didn't tell them because he didn't want Neelam to worry and didn't want Sahil to think his father had become "useless." He wanted one good photo for the interview, something neat, stable, respectable—something that said he still held the family together, even if he wasn't holding a job.

The emotional turn lands softly, without melodrama. Sahil's face changes first. The boredom drops. The teenage defensiveness drops. He looks at his father not as the man who keeps correcting his posture, but as someone who has been quietly carrying shame. Neelam doesn't scold. She just steps closer, straightens Mahesh's collar one more time, and says, almost smiling, that he should have told her earlier because "main toh photo mein bhi tumhari tension dekh leti hoon." Sahil, after a beat, takes the remote from Mahesh and says, "Theek hai. Ab main smile karunga. But only if you stop saying left, left, left like traffic police." Mahesh lets out a real laugh for the first time. Neelam positions them again—this time not as a perfect family, but as an honest one.

The final photo is taken at the exact moment the sun dips softer behind the water tank. Mahesh's smile is still a little awkward, but genuine. Sahil is smiling without trying too hard. Neelam stands between them, calm and steady, as if she has always been the frame. The wedding invitation never existed. What existed was a father's fear, a mother's quiet intelligence, and a son's reluctant love finally finding a way to show itself. In the last beat, Sahil glances at the interview paper, then at his father, and says, "Job mil jaayegi, Papa. But next time photo ke liye jhoot mat bolna." Mahesh nods, embarrassed and relieved. Neelam presses the camera remote into Sahil's hand and says, "Ab is family ka photographer tum." The terrace glows. The laundry moves. And the family, for one honest second, looks exactly like itself.