

Mohnish Pabrai's Q&A Session with Dakshana Scholars at Dakshana Valley, Pune on December 26, 2025

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Mohnish: Are you enjoying the winter in Dakshana Valley? The coldest winter ever. All right. Sounds good. Well, it's good to be here and hang out with all of you. So that's wonderful. Welcome to Dakshana Valley, even though you've been here for a few months. So, who has the first question? Go ahead.

Shraddha: Hello, Mohnish. Good morning. I am Shraddha Niware from Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Harda, Madhya Pradesh. And my question to you is why your interactive sessions with the students are scripted?

Mohnish: So, I prefer this when I'm interacting or giving a talk. And in fact, in most circumstances, I tell the group that I'm going to meet with or interact with that I do not want to know in advance what questions they want to ask. And the reason I don't want to know that is because if I know the questions, it's extremely boring for me. I would rather be required to think on the spot and have the challenge. So, I give them two criteria. Number one: I say, "Please don't tell me the questions in advance." And number two: "Please make the questions as hard as possible." Because *easy question main kya maza hai* [what is the fun in easy questions?]; the excitement is to have really hard questions.

Now, I have been having these sessions with Dakshana scholars for 18 years now. I used to have a head full of hair when I started. *Ye haal ho gaya hain 18 saal main* [this is the state I've come to in 18 years], and I used to do it the same way, which is I used to just not want to know the questions and have them surprise me. What I noticed is that the same questions kept coming up. And as you can see in these sessions, I recorded some of these videos. When they get posted on YouTube, they have tens of thousands of views. And some of my videos have had millions of views. So, I don't want that audience to get bored with getting the same content over and over. Because they watch one video, they see the question, and then they watch another video.

So, for example, if I did not select the questions or control the questions, "Why did you start Dakshana?" will come up every time. "What do you expect from us?" will come up every time. "How did you create this?" will come up every time. *Bahot boring questions hai. Isse boring or koi questions ho hi nahi sakte hai* [These are very boring questions. There cannot be any questions more boring than these]. I know you guys are interested in the answers to these questions. *Thak gaye hai jawab de deke ab aur nahi de sakte hai same jawab* [I am tired of giving these answers; I can't give the same answers anymore]. So, these questions that, from your point of view, are important questions—the answer is already there. When you finish at Dakshana Valley—not now, but when you finish—go on YouTube. All the

questions you want to know answers to are all there. So, what I try to do is pick questions which are different and new. So, I'm not bored, the YouTube audience is not bored, and we move on. So that's why we're doing what we're doing. Next question.

Yamuna: Hello, Mohnish. Good morning. I am Yamuna Deshmukh from JNV Durg, Chhattisgarh. My question to you is: why can't we ask you the questions that we previously asked? We also want to know their answers.

Mohnish: *Ye sab answers YouTube pe hai* [All these answers are on YouTube]. And so, in the last Dakshana annual report, I wrote about this girl at Dakshana Valley. Her name is Muskan Soni. She was here last year, and Muskan has had very difficult times in her family. So, her father had some health problems which led to him being paralyzed in one half of the body. And after that, he could not work. And when he could not work, the family lost the only breadwinner in the family.

So, Muskan's mother knew a little bit of tailoring—how to make clothes. And they are three sisters: Muskan and two sisters. So, she taught the elder two sisters whatever she knew about sewing clothes. And they had one old sewing machine. They started offering tailoring services to the local community. The mother's skills in tailoring were okay; they were not that great. So, both the sisters spent a huge amount of time on YouTube and learned the ins and outs of tailoring. They became much better. *Agar kuch bhi sikhna hai, YouTube pe chale jao shikh loge aap free main* [If you want to learn anything, go to YouTube and you will learn it for free]. And then their sewing machine broke down. It had some problem. YouTube again showed them how to fix the sewing machine because they had no ability to get it fixed otherwise. So, through a combination of the mother's skills, YouTube, and the fact that Jio had made internet data very cheap in large parts of the country, they were able to make some money and get going. So, I think YouTube is a wonderful platform from that point of view, which is great because it's helped this family so much. So, next question.

Ayush: Hello, Mohnish. Good morning. I'm Ayush Varma from Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Delhi. My question to you is: I want to become the Prime Minister of India. What do I have to do to achieve this position after becoming an IITian? And I would like some guidance from your successful life. Thank you.

Mohnish: What a wonderful question. So, there was a US president, Lyndon B. Johnson—Lyndon B. Johnson—who became the president after President Kennedy got assassinated. So, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, and Lyndon Johnson was the vice president. And so, he was sworn in as President. And then in 1964, he ran for election. And he won a big landslide victory. And he became president again.

Lyndon Johnson came from an extremely poor family in a very remote part of Texas in the US, not very far from where I live—maybe 100km away from where I live right now in Texas. And he was not a good student. He was not a very bright student. And he went to a very useless college at that time when he went to that college. It was totally

useless. Even now, it is totally useless. Even though that college produced a US president, it is still not a highly rated college.

But when Lyndon Johnson was 17 years old, he told his friends that, "I'm going to be president of the United States." An extremely poor family, extremely poorly educated, with no connections to anyone in the world—and this is his dream. Just like your dream, at almost the same age. And we think that these dreams are just dreams. They are not dreams. Everything starts with a dream. And so, I'm going to talk to you today. This is why I don't want repeated questions. Because *kya jabardast questions hai and answer to us se bhi jyada jabardast hai* [what fantastic questions these are, and the answers are even more fantastic].

So, I'm going to talk to you about something known as mental models. Mental models are not in the CBSE curriculum, not in the JEE or NEET curriculum. And they will not teach them to you at IIT, AIIMS, or NIT. After about 30 years, they will get the *wisdom ke yeh padhana important hai, lekin unko 30-40 saal lagenge ye samajhne ko ke ye important hai sikhane ko, to aap ke paas to 30-40 saal to he nahi* [wisdom that teaching this is important, but it will take them 30–40 years to understand that it is important to teach this, and you don't have 30–40 years]. So, I want to give you an accelerated course on mental models.

Mental models are what I would call—they are a hack. They are kind of a legal way to cheat. A legal way to get an advantage over other humans. So, I live my life with about 30 or 40 of these models. *Ye jo 30-40 models hai* [These 30–40 models that are there], these are things that most humans either do not understand or do not believe. And the first model, which I would call the Aadhaar model, is the foundation of all other models. And *humare jo* [our] Lyndon Johnson, *he, jo president bane* [who became president], didn't realize this. But he had cracked a few models. And because he cracked a few models, it did not matter how poor he was; it did not matter that he did not know anyone. It did not matter that he went to a useless college. None of that mattered because he had the models. If you have these models, it is superior to an IIT rank one; you get more advantage from that.

So, the first Aadhaar model is: take a simple idea and take it seriously. The most important word there is "seriously," which means that when you encounter some unusual idea—an unusual *funda*—don't just say, "Oh, that is interesting." No, that's not the correct response. The correct response is to go all in, full on—that this is it; this is what I'm going to do. And what Lyndon Johnson did was he went all in on two or three models. And when he went all in on two or three models, he became president. And so, the first model, which was "take a simple idea and take it seriously," is very, very fundamental. It's what I would call the Aadhaar model.

The second model: Lyndon B. Johnson—people know him as LBJ. They used to call him by the initials LBJ, right. So, I'm going to refer to him as LBJ. LBJ used the second model, which I'm about to put down, but the model I'm putting down is coming from the Upanishads. It was written 2,000 years ago, and it was written 2,000 years ago so LBJ could become president. Those guys who wrote this down 2,000 years ago—you know why they wrote it down? They wrote it down to help

me. They knew I was going to come 2,000 years later, and I would need that model. So *unhone likh diya* [they wrote it down]. Now, *unhone to Sanskrit me likha tha* [they wrote it in Sanskrit], and *meri Sanskrit to bahot poor hai* [my Sanskrit is very poor]. So, I'm going to give you that model in English, but it's a direct translation. Okay.

Mohnish:

So, the second model is straight from the Upanishads: "As is your wish, so is your will. As is your will, so is your deed." *Yeah aap jo board dekh rahe ho na, jo slide ho raha hai, ye maine inko bola tha ki mereko ye board chahiye, aisa sliding board chahiye* [This board that you are seeing, the one that is sliding, I had told them that I want this board, a sliding board like this]. The people at Dakshana had never heard of such a thing. They had never seen such a thing. And they repeatedly told me *ke yeh possible nahi hain* [that this is not possible]. I said, "Let me just assure you that we are going to have sliding boards in Dakshana." Even though nobody else has them, we have the boards. And you know why we have the sliding boards? Because of a different model—*sare funde models ne crack kiye hain* [all these principles have been cracked by models]. But we will get to the sliding boards and the different model in a second. Let me finish this model. *Thoda detour le liya hain* [I've taken a bit of a detour].

"As is your will, so is your deed. As is your deed, so is your destiny." And then the punch line from the Upanishads: "Your deepest desire is your destiny." So, LBJ had not read the Upanishads; that college he went to had not even heard about the Upanishads. But that's the model he used. And so, what does this model say? So again, like I said, these models only work if you go all in and believe them. If you just read it and say, "Oh that is so nice," *kuch nahi hone wala hain* [nothing is going to happen]. You have to *tan, man, dhan* [body, mind, and wealth], full on say, "I believe these models." I believe that I have to take a good idea seriously. I believe that if I wish for something, if I really want something, it is going to happen. If you don't have the belief, it is not going to happen. But if you have the belief, then it's going to happen.

Now, model 2.1. Now you know the sliding board—just going back to the sliding board for a second. As you can see, I am writing at eye level because the board slides. *Kya zabardast idea hain* [What a fantastic idea]. *Ki mereko aise jhuk ke nahi likhna padta* [That I don't have to bend down like this to write]. That was what I was trying to explain to them. Now, I'm not smart enough to come up with an idea like the sliding boards. In fact, what you will discover very soon is I'm not smart enough to do anything, but I'm smart enough to copy ideas from somewhere else. So, I take classes at Harvard Business School. I saw these sliding boards. I said, "*Wah kya funda hain, laga dete hai isko*" [Wow, what a great principle, let's install this]. And there is no other coaching in India, as far as I'm aware, that has sliding boards; they don't exist. So nice because they didn't overdose on it anyway.

So, model 2.1, which is part of these models, is: belief comes before capability. So, what does that mean? What that means is we don't need to know anything. We don't need to know how something is to be done. When LBJ at 17 said that "I want to be president," he didn't know how to become president. You don't know how to become Prime Minister. Belief. Belief comes before capability—not after

capability, before capability. Right.

Mohnish:

So, if you study different humans, you'll find that. So, let's take an example of our hero, Elon Musk. Now, humans have been sending rockets into space for 65 years, okay. And what they did for the first 60 years when they sent rockets—before Elon—a rocket was used once you light it. It goes up. Then the second stage goes further higher, and *jo first stage hai* [the first stage], falls in the ocean. Or wherever it falls, it burns up upon entry. It cannot be used again. *To Elon dekh raha hai ki yeh jo rocket hum bhej rahe hain upar* [So Elon is seeing that this rocket we are sending up], it's an extremely expensive piece of machinery and it's used once, right. So, he said, "This is like taking an Airbus A320 aircraft, *jo Indigo chala raha hai* [which Indigo is operating], *ek baar fly karke usko fenk do* [fly it once and then throw it away]." Just imagine if when you took a flight, every flight, the plane could only be used once, and then the plane is discarded. Nobody would be able to fly. It would be so expensive, right? The plane has to be reused over and over and over again so that flying is inexpensive.

So, he said, "How can you use a rocket only once? I need the rocket back." So, he said, *wo rocket jo upar aayega woh usko reverse thruster lagake gravity use karke niche layenge and vo gravity use karke niche layenge* [that rocket which goes up, we will bring it down by using reverse thrusters and using gravity—we will bring it down using gravity]. We will use the thruster of the rocket—the fuel—to control the descent so that when it hits Earth, it hits very lightly. Nobody had ever done this before. Belief before capability. He did it with the first lab rocket. *Crash ho gaya, second crash ho gaya, bar bar crash ho gaya, abhi nahi hota hai crash* [It crashed, the second one crashed, it crashed repeatedly, but now it doesn't crash]. Now they are reusing the same rocket; sometimes they have reused it more than 20–30 times.

ISRO—we are so proud of ISRO. ISRO has never reused a rocket. They don't know how to do that. They don't know how to bring it back without crashing. And Elon did not know how to bring it back without crashing. So, what has happened with Elon's company, SpaceX, is when they send the payload up on a rocket and you use SpaceX, SpaceX's cost for sending a payload up is 10% of the cost of all his competitors. So, you want to send some satellite up. You go to Boeing, you go to ISRO, you go to SpaceX. *SpaceX bolta hai* [SpaceX says] \$100,000 "*Main aapko bhej deta hoon* [I will send it for you]," *baaki sab companies bol rahi hain* [all other companies are saying] 1 million dollars. *Kyunki rocket phirse use nahi hoyega, one and done* [Because the rocket won't be used again; it's one and done]. He'll wipe them all out, right? If I'm selling a product for ₹10 *baaki sab ₹100 main bech rahe hain kya hone wala hai unka* [and everyone else is selling for ₹100, what is going to happen to them], okay? They all will be wiped out. *Padi hui he unki* [They are in trouble]. They don't know what to do. *Abhi vo koshish kar rahe hain ki lao vapas. Kuch karo* [Now they are trying to bring it back. Do something]. But Elon did not know. He did not know. And even now, he doesn't know. He comes up with these ideas; when he comes up with the ideas, he does not have the ability to execute the ideas. He only has belief, *to belief to free main aata hai na* [and belief comes for free, doesn't it]. If you believe you're going to be Prime Minister, what does it cost you? Zero. I can have belief.

Anyone can have belief. Right?

So now we have put down two models. Now, the way these models work—*so aisa hai, jo baaki humans hain unko models ka funda pata nahi hain, kyuki CBSE curriculum main nahi hain, JEE curriculum main nahi hain, koi curriculum main nahi hai* [so it is like this, other humans don't know the principle of models because it's not in the CBSE curriculum, not in the JEE curriculum, not in any curriculum]. So, here's the way the models work: when you use two models at the same time, like let's say model one and model two, one plus one becomes eleven. When you use three models at the same time, one plus one plus one becomes one hundred eleven. When I use seven models at the same time, it's over a million. And so, when I start putting more models together, I have exponential effects that are coming in. And many times, with many of the things that I'm doing or my gurus who are doing these things, they have multiple models working at the same time.

Abhi jaise aap Dakshana main ho, Dakshana is a copied model, right? [Now, since you are in Dakshana, Dakshana is a copied model, right?] Like the boards are copied. So, the third model—let's put it over here, *thoda isko niche laate hain phir idhar model no three lagate hain* [let's bring this down a bit and then put model number three here]. Model number three is cloning or copying. *Abhi humko sikhaya gaya hain copying buri cheez hai. Totally galat sikhaya gaya hain* [Now, we have been taught that copying is a bad thing. We have been taught totally wrong]. *Ye jo aapke previous [previous] teachers aaye hain na* [These previous teachers of yours who have come], they have done you a big dis-service. Copying is beautiful. The way he is going to become Prime Minister is by using model three, because he just has to copy LBJ. LBJ has already given the full *funda* of how to go from zero to hero, and I'm about to give it to him. Are you ready? When the student is ready, the teacher appears. Let me put that down. *Kya jabardast model hain* [What a fantastic model]. "When the student is ready, the teacher appears," as you can see. Look at what has happened. The teacher has shown up because the student is ready. Connection has been made. Four models—we have four models going on at the same time right now.

Aur bhi bohot sare models hain but ye jo cloning aur copying ka model hain [There are many other models too, but this model of cloning and copying], so some of you may have heard of Super 30. Dakshana is a model that was copied from Super 30. When I decided to copy the model in 2007, at that time I had never worked in education. I had never worked in a nonprofit. I did not know how to spell IIT-JEE. I did not know anything. I could not teach a math class, but we have model 2.1: belief. We have model one. So, first I tried to convince Anand Kumar—I liked his model, right? I thought that the Super 30 model was a good model. So, I said, "*Anand ji aap tees bacho ko le rahe hain saal ka, tees ko teenso kar dete hain* [Anand ji, you are taking thirty kids a year, let's make thirty into three hundred]. I am happy to fund you. You run it as you want. Never hear from me. I'll just send you the money." He said, "I don't want any money from anyone. I want to run it with 30 kids. I don't want even 31 kids. I don't want to grow, and I don't want any money." So, I tried to convince him. And I was not successful. So, then I said, "I know what the answer is—*model*

hain na hamare paas, agar models hain to kuchh bhi kar sakte hain, koi bhi funda crack kar sakte hain. Aap dekh rahe ho funda crack hogaya ki nahi?" [I know what the answer is—we have the model, don't we? If we have models, we can do anything; we can crack any principle. Are you seeing whether the principle got cracked or not?], right.

Mohnish:

So, I just asked him, "Do you mind if I copy your model?" He said, "*Nahi ye to badi achhi cheez hain aap copy kariye hum aapki madad karenge*" [No, this is a very good thing, you copy it and we will help you]." So, I said, "Good." Copying has been blessed by the guy I'm going to copy. And now what happened when we copied the model is there was a basic problem. What I noticed with Anand Kumar is he's a brilliant mathematician, a gifted math teacher. If he announces that "I'm going to have a selection test for Super 30 in Bihar," ten thousand kids will come to take the test. *Wo das hazar log test denge usmese tees aap select karoge, of course tees me se twenty-eight will go to IIT* [Those ten thousand people will give the test, and you will select thirty from them; of course, twenty-eight out of thirty will go to IIT]. Any time you take thirty kids out of ten thousand, you're going to get some very smart kids. The filtering is so good.

So, I said—*maine to usko bol diya mein copy karunga* [I told him that I will copy it]. If Mohnish announces that there is going to be a test, *kaun aayenga test dene? Koi bhi nahi aayega* [who will come to give the test? No one will come]. They have never heard of me. Even though I'm trying to tell them that I'm a good person and I can give you a test, and I can then pick you, and I can send you to IIT, nobody will come for that test. So, the model will fail and the cloning and copying will fail. But we have model number two: as is your wish, so is your destiny. How can you fail? So I started Dakshana without knowing *aela dhela* [a single thing] about how we will do anything, but just with belief. And when we started Dakshana, we did not know that JNV exists. No idea. Right? Never heard of JNV.

So, what did I do to crack the Dakshana model? Basically, Dakshana was very easy—*koi challenge hi nahi hain is me; challenge to prime minister banne me hain* [there is no challenge in this; the challenge is in becoming Prime Minister]. But *wo bhi* [that too] by the time we finish this session, we will have cracked that challenge so well *ki 10 jane yaha prime minister banne ke liye ready ho jayenge* [that 10 people here will be ready to become Prime Minister], because becoming Prime Minister is so easy. It's not a big deal. Okay? So, I decided I'm going to clone Anand Kumar. Nobody knows me, nobody knows anything. I don't know anything. And I'm not even in India. You know I'm in California. I'm not in India. This model has to be executed in India. So, the first thing I realized is, I need somebody in India to execute this. Even though I don't know what to execute, somebody has to be there to execute it. *To bindaas* [So, be carefree]. Don't worry about what you know and don't know. Just go through and do it.

So, I was talking to—not even a friend of mine, just some guy I know. I don't know him very well. He had gone to IIT Madras, and I told him, "*Mein ye soch raha hun ye IIT, free IIT coaching karenge Super 30 ki tarah*" [I am thinking this, we will do IIT, free IIT coaching like Super 30]. And I need somebody in India who can start doing some work for me

on this, some research, some things to get going." So, he said to me, "Why don't you put a description together—what kind of person you're looking for? And I will post it on—there's an IIT Madras alum message board. *Alum ka message board hain* [It's an alum message board]. I'll post it on the message board. We'll see who reads it." So, I said okay.

So, I put together some description that I was looking for a consultant who can help me figure out something. *Whatever jo bhi mere man me aaya tha likh ke post kar diya* [Whatever came to my mind, I wrote it and posted it]. To ek hi response aaya [Only one response came], only one person responded. He was a retired guy, more than 60 years old, and he was a graduate of IIT Madras. And he said, "I read your posting and I'm a retired guy and I'm free, so I can do whatever you want me to do." I said, "Ramesh, that's a great thing." So, I told Ramesh, "This is what we're going to do. Every day you work on this activity—whatever I'm telling you to work on—I'll pay you ₹5,000 per day. So, if you work three days in a month: ₹15,000. If you work less than a day—I said, if you work for like three hours or something, I'll pay you ₹800 an hour." So, Ramesh said, "*Thik hai jo bhi aap paise dene ko bol rahe ho* [Okay, whatever money you are saying you will give]. Sounds reasonable to me. No problem. I'm okay with that."

So now I have a guy on the ground. Only one applicant was there. It's not like I had thirty people to pick from. It was one out of one, *lekin belief hain na to koi farak nahi padta hain* [but there is belief, so it doesn't make any difference], doesn't matter. All these things have deter [All these things are determined]. So, I'm thinking, okay, so how do we find smart, poor kids who need help to crack the JEE? So, I thought that Kota has a big industry for coaching, and there must be people going to the coaching institutes in Kota who are poor, who are trying to get coaching there, but they cannot afford it. So, I told Ramesh, "You go to Kota." He was living in Bangalore. I said, "Go to Kota—*jo bhi aapka travel expenses hain* [whatever your travel expenses are]." I gave him a credit card. I said, "*Aap credit card me dal do jo aapka travel hain ab directly mere paas aa jayega bill* [You put your travel in the credit card and the bill will come directly to me]." So, I said, "You go to Kota. You meet all the coaching institutes, and you tell them that if anyone has passed their selection test but cannot afford to pay, they should just give us the name of the person, and we will pay the fees and room and board and everything of that person."

So, he went one by one to the coaching institutes because he's on the five thousand per day, eight hundred per hour. And he gave them this message. The coaching institutes are thinking *koi sarfira NRI aadmi hain jisko kuch aila dhela nahi aata hain wo aise paise baant raha hain* [there is some crazy NRI man who doesn't know a thing and is distributing money like this]. So, what happened is that like at two o'clock he went to Bansal Classes and met Mr. Bansal; at four o'clock he got a call from Bansal's office. Because these people have no memory. *Ek ghante baad some family came* [After an hour, some family came], they were crying ke [that] "Our son has cleared your exam, but we cannot pay the fees." And this and that. To [So] Bansal said, "*Abhi do ghante pehle wo aaye the Ramesh ji* [Ramesh ji came just two hours ago]," *usne apne assistance se bola inko Ramesh ji se connect kara do* [he told his assistant to connect them with Ramesh

ji]. "*Rona dhona mere office me bandh karo, Jao usse jake baat karo* [Stop this crying in my office, go and talk to him]."

So, Ramesh met that family and I told Ramesh *kuchh filtering karne ki zaroorat nahi hain, kuchh karne ki zaroorat nahi hain* [there is no need to do any filtering, no need to do anything] if Bansal is willing to take him. We are not going to do any checks of whether he is rich or poor, whether he is smart or dumb. I said, "Just pay the fees, get him a place to live, pay the boarding lodging, give him a meal plan, get him a cycle so he can go back and forth. Get him set up." That person, Shashank Dube, became scholar number one. *Jaise he na Hero Number One* [Just like Hero Number One]. Scholar number one *aa gaye* [has come]. So, I said, "*Sab system set ho gaya abhi* [Everything is set now]." One scholar has come, right? Like from nowhere, we have got one scholar. Now, we don't know whether he can crack JEE or not, but at least we got somebody. And like this, he went to all the coaching institutes. And very soon we had six scholars from different institutes. There were two girls and there were four boys. And Kota has all the infrastructure; we got all the scholars.

Then as he was going—Ramesh was going and meeting these different institutes—they were saying, "You should go talk to JNV. JNV can get you the talent you need." He had never heard about JNV. *Wo pehli baar kisine bola* [The first time someone said it], he ignored it. *Doosri baar phir kisine bola, phir teesri baar phir kisine bola to bolta hai* [The second time someone said it again, then the third time someone said it again, so he says], he said, "They are talking about some government schools, JNV." *Ye maine dekha ki Delhi me unka headquarters hai* [I saw that their headquarters is in Delhi]. I said, "Go, go meet them—*hamara kya jata hain, hamara kya jata hain, jake mil lenge kya hoga?* [what do we have to lose, what do we have to lose? We'll go meet them, what will happen?], right." *Wo JNV gaye bole ki ab mujhe yahi karna hain* [He went to JNV and said that now I want to do only this]. And he met the head of academics at the Navodaya Joint Commissioner Academics. He met that commissioner and they had a problem. Their problem was that they knew that they had very smart kids. And they also *knew ki* [that] after 12th, there was nothing for these kids. If you are in the middle of Chhattisgarh and you have topped your school and topped CBSE and all of that, *uske baad kya karonge?* [what will you do after that?] *Chhattishgarh me koi coaching nahi hain, coaching hai bhi to aap afford nahi kar sakte ho* [There is no coaching in Chhattisgarh, even if there is coaching you cannot afford it], so it's a dead end. And they knew that.

So, *andho me kana Raja* [in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king]. JNV had no choice. They don't have five NGOs on their doorstep saying, "I will do JEE coaching for you." There is only one NGO on their doorstep which they have never heard of, which has no track record, no history, has never sent anyone to IIT, has never coached anyone. And they said, "We will work with you because there is nobody else we can work with."

So, I hired Ramesh in March 2007. By September 2007, we had 320 scholars in eight locations in India from JNV. Alhamdulillah. Well done, Mohnish. *So jo funda crack karna tha ki scholar kaise milenge, mil gaye fatah se right?* [So the principle that had to be cracked—how we

will get scholars—they were found instantly, right?] Like we had no idea what we are going to do. But when I studied the JNV system, I said, "This is a gold mine." And from then till now, we have taken JNV very seriously and we went all in on the first idea: Take a simple idea, take it seriously. Cloning. As you wish. Believe before capability. These are only four models. I have another 35. Okay, *to koun compete karenge mere sath, agar main 6-7 models saath me laga du and koi dusra aadmi hai jo bina models ke idhar udhar jaa raha hai* [so who will compete with me, if I apply 6–7 models together and some other man is wandering here and there without models]? How can they compete? So, Dakshana today has better coaching than any institute in India. The guy who started Dakshana is not a coaching guy. All the other guys who started coaching—all teachers—they've come from that background, but they don't have the models. They went to it; they don't have the models. *Abhi kya hone wala hai woh video dekhenge, ye video aayenga na vo video dekhenge, bolenge humko abhi samaj aaya kaise chalana chahiye, kaise karna chahiye* [Now what will happen is they will watch the video, when this video comes they will watch it, they will say 'now we have understood how it should be run, how it should be done'] and that's good. I'm here to help the world.

So now, to get to the real meat of the question: how to become the Prime Minister of India. *Yeah, yeh to upar ki baate ki haina abhi actual to prime minister kaise ban na hai?* [These were just high-level things; now, how to actually become Prime Minister?].

So, there's a guy named Robert Caro. Robert Caro, I think, now is about 95 years old. He's still alive; he is 95 years old. Robert Caro, in my opinion, is the best researcher and the best writer I have ever read. His research is fantastic and his writing style is fantastic. Robert Caro has written—I think he's written five books. Each book takes him more than ten years; it takes him ten to 15 years to write one book. Each book is about a thousand pages, and the last four books that he has written are on LBJ. The last four books are on LBJ now—Lyndon Johnson.

One of the things you learn in engineering is you can only optimize an equation for one variable. You cannot optimize an equation for two variables. You can only optimize an equation for one variable. Lyndon Johnson's focus was—what did he say? "I want to become president of the United States." He did not say, "I want to become the best president of the United States." He was not the best president. He didn't care whether he was the best president. He did not say, "I want to be an honest president of the United States." He said, "I want to be president." He was a dishonest man. Okay, so Lyndon Johnson was a dishonest man, but it did not matter that he was dishonest because his criteria were very simple: I want to become the president. I don't care whether I'm the best president. I don't care whether I'm honest or dishonest. I don't care what I have to do to become president. I just want to become president. He's optimizing one variable, right?

And Robert Caro is the most intense researcher you can ever come across. So, Lyndon Johnson grew up in an area called the Hill Country of Texas, in a remote, very rural area. Almost nothing grows there. The soil quality is very poor. Summers are very hot. When he grew up, there was no electricity in that area. It was a very tough life. So, the books Robert Caro wrote—the four books on LBJ—the first book starts off

when Lyndon Johnson is born, right, and covers the first 20 to 30 years of his life. Then he covers another 10 to 15 years of his life. Then the third one, which is *Master of the Senate*, is when Lyndon Johnson was a senator in the U.S. Senate. He covers that portion of his life. And the fourth book, which is *The Pursuit of Power*—that's the last book. And then the fifth book, which he's working on right now, covers the period of Lyndon Johnson as president till he died. Okay. He died in the 1970s.

And each of these books that Robert Caro has written—one of the things I'm very sad about is I have read about three of the books on LBJ. Two books I've read completely—the first two—the third one is about 70% done, and then the fourth one I will finish in maybe the next year or something. And then after that, Robert Caro will release the last book, and five minutes after he releases that book, he will leave planet Earth. That is his plan; that is what I think his plan is. What a beautiful life.

And all you have to do is read the Caro books in order. Every year I come here on December 26th. On December 26th night, I take a flight to Kerala, and I go to a resort in Kerala. And when I go to the resort in Kerala, I have only two things going on in that resort. I don't leave that resort; I just stay in the resort, okay? I don't go sightseeing or on some houseboat. All that is boring; I'm not interested. So, there are two men who massage me for 90 minutes in the morning and 90 minutes in the evening. Kerala massage—some 2,000-year-old technique. It's awesome. And the rest of the time, I'm in my room reading the Caro books. Every year in Kerala, I take one Robert Caro book with me, and I get up in the morning, get my massage, get my breakfast, sit in my room, and read the book. The most beautiful way to spend the week. And then I come back, and I don't read the Caro books anywhere else. I just read them in Kerala, and I feel that *abhi ek do saal main all the Caro books will be over fir main kya karunga zindagi itni viraan ho jayengi* [in one or two years all the Caro books will be over, then what will I do? Life will become so desolate]. It will become so sad, but we are not there yet. We still have some Caro books to go, and the good news for all of you is you have six Caro books to read—at least six to seven thousand pages. And in those books, he lays out in detail—in excruciating detail—how Lyndon Johnson became president and what things he did which led to his path to power.

So, for example, one of the things Lyndon Johnson did—I told you he was a dishonest man. People did not know he was a dishonest man till the Robert Caro books came out, because it took Robert Caro a lot of research to find all the hidden data. He went and lived in the Hill Country where Lyndon Johnson grew up. He talked to people who knew him when he was 10 years old, 15 years old, 25 years old, and so on and so forth. And so, you can pursue that, and that'll be a great way to go. So, let's move to the next question.

Aarsh:

Hello, Mohnish. Good morning. My name is Aarsh Dongre from JNV Seoni, Madhya Pradesh. And my question to you is: is it practically possible that a less talented but hardworking person can surpass a naturally talented person? If so, then why is the donkey not treated like a horse? Sir, I would be grateful if you could guide me on the right way of doing hard work so that I could achieve the maximum possible output.

Mohnish: *Yeh to funda humne already crack karke batadiya hain aapko* [We have already cracked this principle and told you]. So, hard work is not enough. The mental models with the hard work—you blow everybody out because everybody else you're competing with, they have no models. They are wondering aimlessly in the wilderness. They don't know which way to go. So, it's okay; you have an advantage but keep it a secret. Let's go to the next question.

Komal: Hello, Mohnish. A very pleasing good morning. This is Komal Yadav. I am from JNV Koderma, Jharkhand. My question to you is: how can I distance myself from certain friends who, intentionally or unintentionally, make me feel inferior? Thank you.

Mohnish: Okay, it's time to add another mental model. Now, you know what the sad part is? *Hamara aadha ghanta abhi khatam ho jayenga and atleast 35 mental models to maine aapko bataye bhi nahi hain* [Our half hour will be over soon and I haven't even told you about at least 35 mental models]. Lekin [But] no problem. Eventually, on YouTube, I'll put all the models because we are not going to repeat the models; we're not going to ask people to ask the same questions.

So, the next model, model number five—time to use a board so that I don't have to bend. Here we go. Model number five: if you hang out with people who are better than you, you will get better. And if you hang out with people who are worse than you, you will get worse. So there is a gravitational pull. If your friends have qualities that are excellent qualities, that is going to improve you as a person. If your friends have qualities that are questionable qualities, that will reduce your qualities as a person. So, we have free will on who our friends are. We control that. And we have free will on who we spend time with; we also control that.

So, what most humans are not willing to do—sometimes what happens is they feel loyalty to some friends who maybe are not that great. They know they have some issues with them, but they feel, "He's my friend. I need to be loyal." It is a violation of the model. We are all about the mental models. We are not interested in violating the models. So, when we notice that we are interacting with someone where there is some issue with the quality of the person, we have to cut it off. As hard as it is, we have to cut it off. I am continuously going through a process of looking at who I spend time with, and I maximize time with the individuals who I think are the highest quality and I minimize time with others.

So a mental model that's very important—which is part of this model—number 5.1: be a harsh grader. *Sabko A dene ki zaroorat nahi hain* [There is no need to give everyone an A], okay. So, carefully evaluate humans. Be very harsh in how you grade them. And then based on that grading, you work hard to have the highest quality group of friends that you could have, because then the gravitational pull will take care of the rest. Okay, so many of these mental models require us to take actions which sometimes are not pleasant actions. They are unpleasant actions. So, you have a choice to make. Do you want to maximize your capabilities and abilities, or do you want to hang out with a bunch of friends that you are just happy to be with? Those are

the choices. Next question.

Shruti: Hello, Mohnish. I am Shruti from SOSE Civil Lines, Delhi. My question to you is: who are the people involved in the formation of the Dakshana Foundation? And also, what inspired you to start Dakshana? Thank you.

Mohnish: *Yeh bhi funda hamne already crack kardiya hai* [This principle we have also already cracked]. So, the thing to keep in mind is when I started Dakshana, I was not concerned about making mistakes. So, it gets us to model number six: mistakes are a blessing. We don't learn when we do something well—*usme kya learning hain achha sab ho gaya to what are you gonna learn* [what learning is there in that? If everything went well, then what are you going to learn]? Nothing. It is when we fail and when we make a mistake.

So, when the first rocket coming down crashed, it was a blessing. Elon could learn from it. He put one gazillion sensors on that rocket, so he's gathering all kinds of data. Then the second attempt, they tried to fix some issues that they saw. *Phir se crash ho gaya, aur data aa gaya—another blessing* [It crashed again, more data came—another blessing]. So, each crash was a blessing, right. And basically, in Dakshana I use that model. So, I was not concerned that I've hired one person who was the only person who applied for the job, right. It didn't matter, because if I made a mistake, that's a blessing. If I didn't make a mistake, life is good. How can I lose? I can't lose.

And so, the first time we had the first batch in Dakshana, we had the 320 kids. We didn't know how to teach anything about JEE. So, we outsourced everything to these Kota companies. And we told them, "*Yeah ek center hain Odisha mein, Cuttack main* [There is one center in Odisha, in Cuttack], send your faculty to teach them." And we were going to pay everything. We paid them everything. They either did not send the faculty or they sent useless faculty. All the faculty would show up and not show up sometimes. And the result was terrible. The first batch at Dakshana, hardly 10 or 15% of the kids cleared IIT. A very low number. If you look at the numbers now, it's a very low number. I was least bothered about it. I said, "Very good. We have the data. We know what the problems were."

So, we get to the seventh model: fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. *Kitni baar mera bewakoof banaonge* [How many times will you make a fool of me]? Only once. Right? So, if I hire a company to do JEE coaching in Cuttack and they are sending poor faculty or no faculty or whatever else is happening, I fire them. They're gone. Bring in the next company. Put more conditions on them this time. So, I knew that what was success is—the first year it's going to increase, the second year it's going to keep increasing after that, because we will keep fixing the problems with the rocket. Every time there's a crash, we will fix something, right? So, we are not concerned about failure. We're not concerned about mistakes. We're not concerned about any of those things. All irrelevant. Next question.

Aditya: Hello, Mohnish. Good morning. I'm Aditya from JNV Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, and my question to you is: what is your opinion about being in love during our struggling years? We have to work hard to build a

good future. What do you think? It's normal to feel attracted to someone.

Mohnish:

I want to give you some history about these questions. So, all of you created a very large list of questions. As you can see, *ek ek questions ko adha ghanta lag raha hain replay dene ko* [it is taking half an hour to reply to each question], *kitne questions cover hoyenge* [how many questions will be covered]? *Bahot kam questions cover hoge* [Very few questions will be covered]. So, there were so many questions.

So, I asked the team at Dakshana, "Please look at the questions and please sort them by the questions you think we should put at the top of the list." So, they sent me a revised list which said, "This is what we recommend from most recommended to least recommended." *Inka jo question tha* [This question of his] about being in love while you are studying was put at the bottom of the list because they said, "*Ye kya question puchh rahe hain* [What question are they asking]?" *Maine uthake upar daal diya aur abhi main jab aa raha tha wo puchh rahe the wo love wala question* [I picked it up and put it at the top, and just now when I was coming, they were asking about that love question]. I said, "*Haan, maine upar daal diya hain* [Yes, I have put it at the top]." *To bola humne niche dala tha* [So they said we put it at the bottom], I said, "*I know aapne niche daala tha, hum upar le aaye* [I know you put it at the bottom, we brought it up]." Because we want a diversity of questions.

So, it is not that—is it okay to love somebody when you're studying or not love someone? I would say it's the other way around. It would be unnatural not to have feelings for the other sex at your age. That would actually be unnatural. What would be natural? Because all of you have hormones raging, it is to have feelings. *Wo hai na Hindi song, 'daba daba hi sahi dil main pyaar hai ki nahi'* [there is that Hindi song, even if suppressed, is there love in the heart or not?]. So, for most of you, it is *daba daba hi sahi* [even if suppressed]. And that's okay. And so, these are natural feelings. A natural part of the human existence. Very natural to have wonderful feelings about the opposite sex and also very natural to have difficulty expressing it. All of the above is part of the deal, right?

And when I was in high school, there was a girl I used to like in high school, *lekin itni himmat nahi hui ki jake bol de, kuchh bhi bol de* [but didn't have enough courage to go and tell her, to say anything]. And when I went to school, there was no internet, there was no Facebook, and I moved to a lot of different schools. So, when I finished school and college and everything, I lost touch with most people I went to school with. And then what happened is, about 20 or 25 years later, Facebook came, and there were these groups set up, and all these old friends of mine and everyone—we got reconnected, right? And I got reconnected with that girl I liked, and I asked to meet her. Right now, several decades later, I'm married. She's married. Whatever else, no problem, you know. And we met a few times and it's been wonderful meeting. I have never expressed my feelings, right. But what became clear to me in those meetings is that I never needed to say anything, and she never needed to say anything. And I realized she had the same feeling. So that was so wonderful, right? *Dono taraf se daba daba hi sahi* [from both sides, even if suppressed], so... it's a friendship, which is great. Next question. We have only 300 seconds left.

Abhishek: Hello, Mohnish. Good morning. I'm Abhishek Lama from JNV Alipurduar, West Bengal. And my question to you is: can a person achieve great success in a field where he has zero natural talent, but deeply loves it? With continuous discipline and hard work, can a person defeat natural talent? Thank you.

Mohnish: Of course, the answer is yes. *Models main likha hain, agar models main likha hain so it has to be true* [It is written in the models; if it is written in the models then it has to be true]. And we don't need to have knowledge. We don't need to have expertise. We just need to have a burning desire. And if you have intensity of desire, intensity of pursuit, the world will be malleable. It will surprise you how much the world is willing to change and bend for you. If you ask it to change or bend, it will change for you. Next question.

Tanvi: Hello, Mohnish. Good morning. I am Tanvi from Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Vidhyalaya, Yavatmal, Maharashtra. My question to you is: can I earn lots of money while also helping people?

Mohnish: We need to put another model down. So, this eighth model is the important model: the purpose of business is not to make money. *So hamko ulta sikhaya gaya hain. Humko ye sikhaya gaya hai ki the purpose of having a business is to make money* [So we have been taught the opposite. We have been taught that the purpose of having a business is to make money]. What have I written on the board? The purpose of a business is not to make money. And we know what is on the board is true. Because how can it not be true if it's on the board?

So, what is the purpose of having a business? I get a lot of questions from Dakshana scholars, many of whom come from families which have a lot of financial hardships, a lot of struggles. Right? And they have noticed that whenever I'm asked a question—how can I get rich? How can I be a good investor? How can I get wealthy?—I always reply saying that when you are in your third year in IIT or third year in medical, send me an email and I will give you some books to read, and that will solve your problem. Right. And so, I always tell them—*mera email address hain mpabrai@dakshana.org ki edhar email bhejo jab aap third year main ho* [my email address is mpabrai@dakshana.org, send an email here when you are in your third year].

So, I got some different questions this time: "How can I make money when I'm in college?" Because they know I'm going to say the 3rd-year issue. They are not interested in that; they want to make money right now. So, my reply to them was that it's the wrong question. You cannot make money if you want to make money. *Kya zabardast line hain. Isko bhi daal dete hain idhar* [What a fantastic line. Let's put this here too]. So, let's make it model 8.1: you cannot make money if you want to make money.

And then there's another model; we'll call it 8.2: the Karma Yogi. So, Karma Yogi is a concept that comes from the Bhagavad Gita. The people who wrote the Gita did not realize they were talking about how to make money, how to become wealthy. So, what is a Karma Yogi? What the Gita says is our job is to focus on our duty, not to aspire to or want any reward. We are here to do the Karma. We are not here to

extract any benefit from the Karma, right?

So, the purpose of business is to deliver some great product or service to humans that improves their lives. That is the purpose of business. We start a business to create something that improves the lives of at least some human. And if you do that, the money is a side effect. So, if you focus on the money, it will not come. If you don't focus on the money, it will come.

When Google was founded, the two guys who founded Google, Sergey Brin and Larry Page, they came up with a new search engine. A very amazing search engine. Google had no idea when they came up with that search engine how this would make any money. Neither Larry nor Sergey ever figured out how. So, Google got formed; two years after it was formed and people were using the products and all that, an Iranian guy who was an employee of theirs figured out a business model of advertising to make money. And Google made an incredible amount of money, extreme amounts of money—one of the most profitable companies in the world. But it did not start with the idea of making money.

Elon did not start with the idea of making money by sending satellites up. He wanted to reuse rockets, right? So, his focus was: if I reuse rockets, I am helping humans. And if I help humans, the money is a side effect. So, this is a very powerful model because the people I compete with—you know, if I'm doing any business—they think they're in business to make money. So how can they compete with me? They have already lost. *Ek to models ele dhele hain nahi ok upar se phir soch rahe ho ki, main business suru karunga paise banane ko that know the flawed model* [First of all, they don't know a single thing about models, and then they are thinking that 'I will start a business to make money,' that is a flawed model]. So, when you have these flawed models, you just make my life easier.

And so, we got to eight models, which is pretty good. We got 120 seconds—180 seconds past time. Thank you so much. It was a pleasure hanging out with you and all the best. And eventually, you can go on YouTube. You'll find all the models and everything will be laid out. And the future Prime Minister of India is in your class. Make sure you become good friends with him. *Baad mein thoda kaam aa sakta hain* [It might come in handy later]. All the best!

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