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The Innocent Salesman

Saurav Bagchi

Part I

It was the month of May. The last year was good in terms of the performance of the company. The entire team has got great appraisals this year. Everyone was elated with add-on cash in hand they had received, especially the fat bonus.

Lunch hour was going on. Bikram came to me "Arindam, I am planning to buy a car. Finalized the newly launched Ford Ecosport. What do you think?" Both of us were in the same team. He used to take my guidance on many occasions. So, a purchase like a car, he thought of reaching out to me.

"Yeah, it has good reviews. You should try a test drive once" I replied.

"I am planning to go to the showroom. Can you come along? I need an expert like you. You should also buy a new car, your current one is already 6 years old." He questioned.

I said "It is running fine. So, no plans as of now. But I will come along with you. Let's go tomorrow after lunch. We have a light schedule tomorrow post lunch."

"Thanks" He said and left.

Next Day, as planned we left for the new showroom of the Ford 'Miracle Motors' in Newtown, Kolkata. Bikram had already spoken to a salesman of the showroom for the test drive. As soon as we reached, we met the salesman, a middle-aged man who seemed like an experienced fellow in the trade. Within 10 minutes, we were in the new car on test drive. "Sir, as you have come in the middle of week, we could arrange the car within 10 minutes as rush is less during this time. Otherwise, on weekends,

even with pre-booking, we take around 1 hour to get the car for a test-drive because of the huge rush for the vehicle". The salesman said from the back seat.

From our initial conversations he understood that it was Bikram who was going to buy the vehicle and started putting his entire energy to wooing him. He was answering my questions as well as he knew that I could sway Bikram's decision. But I got that detachment vibes while conversing with him. "How does it matter, I was anyway not planning to buy?" I muttered to myself. The car was good, the drive was smooth and most of all, Bikram had already made up his mind to buy this one. He still asked for my feedback on the car. I gave a thumbs-up and said go for it.

We finished our test drive and reached the showroom. We were offered coffee at the reception. Bikram was discussing with the salesman on payment and delivery. "Bikram does not need my help" thinking that I got up from the sofa and went to the display zone. I was casually strolling mindlessly in the the display zone and looking into the sleek mean machines on display. "Which colour do you like Sir" suddenly a voice appeared. I looked towards the source of voice. A well-dressed innocent looking young salesman of around 25 years was standing. He repeated "which colour do you like Sir", "the red one is the hottest selling model". "I am not buying one. I am here with a friend who is buying one" I replied and pointed towards Bikram who was busy with his salesman working out the details. "No problem, Sir. Let me tell you more about the car. In case you decide to buy or go for another test drive, do let me know." Says Ajoy who introduced himself. The conversation went for around half an hour and we fixed up an appointment for a test drive on Saturday. He offered to come with the car and take me for the test drive from my home. But I told him that we would come to the showroom ourselves and come. I thought of bringing my wife also for the test drive. We exchanged our numbers and left. By that time, Bikram had finished discussing everything and gave the booking amount. When I came to them, his salesman said "If you are planning to buy one, you can also book right away". I said

“No I don’t want to right now” I was not at all impressed by him who was not at all keen in putting up efforts on me and then expecting me to book a car from him.

While returning, I told Bikram about the Saturday test drive. He said “Great! You check it out once more and then you can book one. I will have a partner.”.

I told him “I am not that keen to buy. But I just want to try the car as Ajoy was kind of persuasive. It’s highly likely that I will not buy one. In fact, Aditi may not let me buy one. She is happy with our current car and this year; we are supposed to get Arnika to get admitted into the new school from current prep school. Too many expenses.”

Bikram said “Take the best out of the test drive and take Aditi also for the test drive. Even if you don’t buy one. At-least it will be a good pass time for both of you.

“Yeah, it will be a good outing. Arnika would be in her school anyway. Aditi also does not have her office. Both of us can go” I replied.

Friday night, I got a whatsapp message from Ajoy reminding me of the test drive the next day. I was pleasantly surprised that he is following up diligently. “A salesman should be like this” I said to Aditi.

“But the thing is you are not going to buy the car. Once this sales guy gets to know about it, he will be disappointed.” Aditi said.

“So what? In future when I am going to buy, I will consider him for the process. Plus, I can recommend him to others as well. He is much better than the other salesman who was dealing with Bikram” I retorted.

Aditi sighed and went to sleep.

Next morning, I woke up and checked my mobile to see another message from Ajoy about the test drive. I thought to myself “He is really persuasive”.

We reached the showroom five minutes before the scheduled time of 10.30 AM. Ajoy was already ready with the car. We did not even have to enter the showroom. We directly got into the car and then went for test drive. I liked the driving experience and asking a lot of questions to Ajoy who was responding in an excited manner. Aditi was involved in a non-committal way probably not to keep Ajoy's spirit so high for the sale.

Overall, the test drive went well. We returned to the showroom.

Ajoy asked me "I hope you liked the car. What do you think of booking it right away?"

"It is really a smooth car. I am keen. I need time to think over it to make the purchase. Let me get back to you" I replied.

From the corner of my eyes, I could see Aditi giving me a hard stare for still giving Ajoy a strong hope of making the purchase.

Ajoy said "Sure sir. I will follow-up with you in sometime". "Yeah. Sure" I replied.

We got into our car and returned home. On the way back, as expected, Aditi gave me a lecture on this, sympathising with Ajoy. I told her not to think much as this is part and parcel of a salesman's profession journey.

What wrong I was in this case!!!

Part II

Next day, Sunday morning, I got a message from Ajoy "Sir, I am sure you would have liked the car. Hope to see you book the car soon". I nonchalantly replied, "Sure Ajoy, will come back to you" and kept the mobile away.

On Tuesday, I was in the office engrossed in my laptop and my office phone rang. I picked up the call, it was from reception.

"Arindam, someone named Ajoy has come to meet you. He says he has an appointment with you" The receptionist said.

I got irritated and thought of saying no for the meeting. But then I thought it is better to tell him the truth so that he realizes that I am not going to buy a car at this moment. Then he can stop pursuing or rather pestering me. I said "Okay, I am coming, can you please make him sit in one of the visitor's conference rooms".

Upon seeing me in the conference room, Ajoy gave a smile and said "Sorry Sir, I came to meet you to check whether you have made up any decision"

"You could have simply called me Ajoy. In fact, I would have called you up, in case I had made up my mind." I told him. "Now since you have come here, let me tell you my decision. I will not be able to purchase a car right now." I continued.

"Did I do anything wrong sir" Ajoy immediately asked. He was visibly very disheartened.

"No, not at all. In fact, you are a very good salesman. I am just deferring my decision and will buy in future. Whenever I buy in future, you would be the first salesman I would reach out to" I said.

"Sir, if you plan to buy one anyway in future, why not prepone it. You will get a good car" Ajoy insisted.

"Ajoy, I am right now in tight budget, so will not be able to purchase"

"Sir, you are working in such a plush office. I cannot believe that you are on a tight budget. If we say something like this, it is believable but not from you. Did Maa'm not like the car? If you are worried about deal, I will get you the best price." Said persistent Ajoy.

I was irritated by then. I said "I have got work in the office. Right now, I am not able to buy the car. In case I buy it in the future, I will contact you" I curtly said. Saying this, I stood up.

Ajoy said "Okay sir, I will stay in touch with you. I am sure you will make up your mind soon to buy this car."

I reluctantly smiled and went back to my office. I said to myself "Now he should stop bothering me".

Just after a day, I got a call from Ajoy. I did not pick up. He called me again after an hour, this time I picked up. "I told you Ajoy. I am not going to buy it at present. Please don't bother me"

"Sir, the car is really good and a great deal is available. I know you are interested and just need a little motivation to buy it" He said.

"No Ajoy, I am not interested right now and please do not call me anymore" I disconnected the phone.

I reached home and told Aditi "You won't believe what happened today". I already told her about Ajoy visiting my office yesterday.

"You won't believe what happened to me. Your favourite salesman Ajoy called me today and requested me to convince you to buy the car. He said you are interested but having a little confusion and thus need a little nudge from me" Aditi said.

I was shocked. I asked "How did he get your number?"

"I also asked Ajoy how he got my number. He said I gave him my number on the day of our test drive. But I clearly remember that I have not given him any number. Anyway, I told him the same thing that we are not buying any car right now and he does not need to call any of us." She replied.

I was very irritated and told Aditi "I will complain to the showroom manager tomorrow first thing. How dare he call you on your personal number which I don't even know how he managed to get"

Next day, I called Miracle Motors and asked for the manager. The receptionist said the manager would call me back.

After some time, I got a call from my mobile. The voice on the other side said, "This is the manager of Miracle Motors. How may I help you?"

"A few days back I visited your showroom to check out a car. Since then, the salesman of your showroom, Ajoy, who showed me the car then, is harassing me by continuously chasing me and following-up with me and my family. Can you please ask him to back off and leave us in peace?" I told him and explained the entire situation in detail.

"Well Sir. Sorry to hear that. However, we had fired Ajoy this Sunday because of his odd behaviour towards his customers and especially other colleagues. He should not have bothered you after that as he is not employed with us. Are you sure he called you yesterday?" The manager asked.

"He called both me and my wife separately yesterday. Can somebody from your side call him and ask him not to bother us" I told him in a frustrating tone since he doubted me.

"Sure sir. I will have somebody warn him not to bother you. I am not sure whether he could get employment so fast with any other dealership in this area. Rest assured, he has nothing to do with us. He is not associated with us anymore."

"Thanks" I then disconnected the call.

I was now even more confused on what to do next.

I went to sleep hoping that he would not be disturbing me anymore. But boy was I wrong.

Next day morning, I went to drop Arnika off at her school. After parking her car, Arnika and I were walking to her school gate. There I saw Ajoy standing at the gate and looking at me with his typical innocent smile which I was not finding innocent anymore.

Arnika went inside the gate. By that time, Ajoy came to me “Sir, if you have the new car, your daughter will also feel so proud. She would be able to tell her friends about the new car”.

I was furious. “How did you get to know that I will be here? Are you stalking me?”

“No sir. You told me that Arnika studies in this school”

“Aditi and I may have spoken about Arnika when we took the test drive, so he may have known her name but in no way, we spoke about her school.” I thought.

“Don’t lie. I never mentioned that. Why are you following us? I spoke to the Miracle Motors manager. They said you are no longer working over there. Then why are you even bothering me to buy a car.” I was losing my temper. But as it was Arnika’s school and a lot of parents were still there, I did not want to create a scene. To be honest, I was angry as well as now scared from Ajoy.

“Sir, there is some confusion. They did not understand me well. But I am positive that when I land up a customer like you, then I will get my job back.” He explained. The way he was saying all this, I got a feeling that he was really believing what he was saying.

“I am not going to buy anything right now. Now if you pester me anymore, I will approach Police” I told Ajoy.

“Sir, Arnika would really like it if her dad bought this new car” he said this completely ignoring my threat about reporting to police.

Frustratingly, I left the place. The day went without any other surprises.

Next day, while leaving for the office, my car had a problem starting up. Eventually I had to take a cab to the office. I thought “I do need a new car now”. Within an hour of reaching office, I got a call from Ajoy and I was bemused to notice the coincidence. On picking up the call, Ajoy said “Sir, do you realize now how much you need a new car?”. Suddenly, a scary thought came to my mind “why do you say that?” I asked,

wondering that I already knew the answer. "Your car was not working today, that's why you took a cab today. Right?" He said.

"Did you do anything with the car? It was completely fine yesterday. You must have done something. Tell me the truth." I was convinced that he was the culprit.

"No Sir, I have not done anything. I am your well-wisher. I want you to buy the new car to get out of all these troubles"

"You are my biggest trouble" I disconnected and switched off the phone.

Same evening, I told Aditi about the morning incident. She got worried as well as very angry at Ajoy. Till now, it was all verbal harassment but tampering with the car means he accessed our house. She immediately asked me to complain to the police. She spoke to her father who immediately called up their neighbour who was DCP-South of Kolkata. An appointment was fixed up with him.

Next day, I met DCP. I explained the entire matter.

He calmly listened to me and said "It is strange. Generally, boys stalk girls or even vice versa. Sometimes dejected employees harass their employers. Even students harass their teachers. But this is something new. But you need not worry, Arindam. You submit a formal complaint to my office on this. I will have my officer take action immediately and straighten out this Ajoy fellow".

I thanked him, came out of his office and submitted the formal complaint to the police. I did not know why I was feeling bad that now the police would handle Ajoy in their own way. But then he only brought this to himself, I thought.

A day later, DCP called me and said police were searching for Ajoy in the city. Apparently, they did not find him at his house and he did not return to his place later as well. He told me that Ajoy might have got to know about the police behind him so

he might have left the city. He assured me that Ajoy problem could be considered as good as over.

Two weeks, there was nothing from Ajoy. My life was back to normal.

I was engrossed in my work and suddenly I got a call from an unknown number. I disconnected it as I did not pick up calls from unknown numbers. The phone rang again. Suddenly a bad vibe struck me and with dread I picked up the call to hear the voice "Sir, you have complained to police. I am now with no job and no house because of your complaint to police" It was Ajoy.

I said "You are a psycho, Ajoy. Everything is your fault." I was quite loud. All the people sitting at nearby desks turned towards me.

I then dashed to a vacant conference room. "Can you please leave us in peace?"

"Sir, I have always been a well-wisher for you. I want you to take the car for your well-being only."

"You are still thinking about selling the car. Police is behind you. You have no home and no job, yet you are worried about the car" I said frustratingly.

"Sir, I am very hopeful that all these confusions will get cleared out once you buy the car" he said.

"I don't need a car, Ajoy. I already have a car and right now I don't need to change this one" I don't know why I was explaining myself to him.

"Sir, you can buy another one. See Aditi ma'am has to come to her office daily by a cab. If you have another car, she can avoid the daily hassle of cabs. It is difficult to find cabs in the evening in Park Street." He said.

My heart sank. Aditi's office was in the Park Street area.

I shouted at him "You fucker, how did you know where is her office. Are you stalking her as well now?"

“No Sir, you only told me during the day of our test drive.”

“You said “comes” to her office and not “go”. Are you... are you near her office right now, you mother fucker?”

“Sir, why are you abusing me? I was pained to see your wife’s troubles that’s why I called you.” Ajoy’s voice had no emotions.

I disconnected the call and dashed towards office parking. I immediately called Aditi and told her not to come out of office for any reason. I called up DCP as well and explained the matter to him. He said he would be sending a team to Aditi’s office right away.

By the time I reached Aditi’s office, police were already there and talking to Aditi.

“Are you okay?” I asked Aditi. “Yeah, I am fine. These guys have scouted the entire area but there is no sign of Ajoy. He might have sensed you would call the police. They traced the mobile number also from which you got the call but they could not get anything.” Aditi replied. Aditi seemed composed. But I was completely shaken up.

We came back to our house.

We decided to take work from home from both of our offices till the matter gets sorted out. We also got Arnika to take a few days leave from her school citing a family emergency.

Part III

We were at our home for the last 7 days since the Park Street incident. We did not venture out at all. Everything from groceries to medicines, we got it home delivered.

Only family friends and relatives were visiting us who got to know about the situation. My uncle Dr. Nath was visiting us. He was a famous psychologist of the city.

“We cannot be sitting at home all the time. We must figure out something. We cannot depend on the police perennially” Aditi said.

I stayed silent as I had no answer to that.

“Hearing your entire event about this guy, Ajoy. Can I suggest one thing?” Uncle asked.

“Yes Uncle”

“Why don’t you say yes to Ajoy on buying the car” He suggested.

“Uncle, he is mad. He does not work in any showroom. He is just harassing me. His intention is not to sell me a car. He is a psychopath who is torturing me and my family.” I replied.

“Yes, but no harm in saying yes to him, when he calls. Uptil now, you have kept saying no to him and he has continuously pestered you on this. Let’s see what he says, and do once he gets to hear yes?”

Aditi agreed with Uncle’s idea. I also thought about what go wrong in trying this option.

Next day, I get a call on my landline number. It was Ajoy. He knew our landline number which was not a surprise anymore.

“Sir, how are you?” He asked me as if nothing had happened.

“Yeah, I am okay” I replied tiredly.

“Sir, you buy the car. Once a new addition happens in your family, all of you would be very happy.” Ajoy said.

This time as planned earlier. I said “Okay Ajoy, I will buy the car”

There was a silence on the phone from his side for a few seconds.

“Did I hear it right Sir” I could feel his exhilaration. I thought he started crying as well at that time.

“Yes, I have decided to buy the car from you. Now tell me what I need to do” I asked.

“Thank you, Sir. Now everything will get sorted out. You just need to give a cheque of INR 50,000 in the name of Miracle Motors” He replied.

I was surprised as he was not an employee of Miracle Motors anymore. But as Dr.Nath suggested I said yes to him.

He said “Sir, you can give the cheque to your society’s security desk of Gate no. 2. I will collect it from there. Actually, I would have come to your house to pick up the cheque, but I may be caught by the police.”

“I will keep the cheque at Gate no. 2 tomorrow morning. You can collect it then.

Next day I kept the cheque as per instruction of Ajoy. I was sure this psycho would not let me live in peace even after this. I returned to my house after telling the guard that the envelop would be collected by a person named Ajoy.

Two hours later, I got a call from security that the envelop has been collected by man who called himself Ajoy.

Now, my anxiousness increased for the next steps. I started waiting for Ajoy’s call. There was no call on that day.

Days passed by. Weeks passed by. After three weeks, we resumed our offices and Arnika started her school.

Even after a month, there was nothing from Ajoy. He just vanished. Even the money was not deducted from my bank account.

Dr. Nath had come to visit us. He explained, “It has been observed in many people who have obsessive compulsive disorders (OCDs). It seems Ajoy has an OCD of completing things. He feels a manifestation of incompleteness unless the activity is

completed and that's why he sets up his mind to achieve a goal. In this case, to sell the car. Since he got the cheque, his goal of convincing you to sell the car is achieved. He does not need to pursue you anymore."

I saw Aditi relieved after hearing all this. But I was thinking in my mind now what would be Ajoy doing.

Somewhere, in Delhi, in a car showroom, a couple was checking out new car models.

A voice came from behind them, "Which colour do you like, Sir?"