

₹10,000 a month for 31 years became ₹21 crore. Time did the work

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Maxim: *Get rich slowly — compounding needs time.* — Morgan Housel

One of India's best-known fund records is less a story about stock picking than about waiting. Compounding pays almost nothing for years, and then pays nearly everything at once.

Compounding is not a reward for being clever. It is a reward for still being there.

The SIP that went nowhere for four years

On 1 January 1995, the fund now called HDFC Flexi Cap opened for business. Anyone who set up a ₹10,000 monthly SIP that day and never touched it has, by the fund house's own [May 2026 factsheet](#), put in about ₹37.7 lakh. On 29 May 2026 the holding was worth about ₹21.3 crore, an annualised return of a little over 20% in the regular plan.

That is the headline. The first chapter reads very differently. In 1996, the fund's unit value fell from ₹10 to ₹5.3, and it did not get back to ₹10 until February 1999, [Value Research recounted](#) in 2025, telling the story through an investor it called Mr Stoic. For more than four years, a disciplined saver had little or nothing to show for it. Then came the dotcom peak of March 2000, and another long fall after it.

The same factsheet hides a second lesson in plain sight. A ₹10,000 SIP started in the same fund fifteen years ago has put in ₹18 lakh, nearly half as much money, and is worth about ₹64.5 lakh. Half the contributions; about 3% of the result. Same fund, same instalment. The extra sixteen years made the difference.

And compounding does not move in a straight line even at the end. When Value Research checked in June 2025, the 1995 SIP was worth about ₹21.6 crore. Almost a year and a dozen instalments later, the factsheet figure was slightly lower. Someone who began the same SIP a year ago is sitting on a loss of about 5%.

Why the slow part is the hard part

Morgan Housel made the case in his 2018 essay [The Psychology of Money](#). More than 2,000 books have been written about how Warren Buffett built his fortune, he noted, yet none carries the title that would explain it best: that Buffett has been investing consistently for three-quarters of a century. His suggested title for the most important investing book was blunter: "Shut Up And Wait."

Housel took the arithmetic further in his book of the same name. Of Buffett's \$84.5 billion net worth at the time, about \$81.5 billion was added after his 65th birthday, [CNBC reported](#), quoting Housel's line that if Buffett had retired at 65, "you would have never heard of him." Skill mattered. But the skill was given seven decades to work.

Humans struggle with this. Housel quoted the physicist Albert Bartlett: "The greatest shortcoming of the human race is our inability to understand the exponential function." We expect each year to add

roughly what the last one did. Compounding does the opposite: the early years feel wasted, and the later years feel unearned. Both feelings tempt people to quit, the first out of boredom and the second out of fear of losing what they have.

Housel's conclusion is the maxim in one sentence. "Good investing isn't necessarily about earning the highest returns," he wrote, but about "earning pretty good returns that you can stick with for a long period of time."

The quitting is happening now

Indian savers have embraced the SIP habit; keeping it is another matter. In September 2026, SIP contributions hit a record ₹32,490 crore and more than 10 crore SIP accounts were contributing, according to AMFI data [reported by Angel One](#). But 49.68 lakh SIPs were stopped or matured in the same month, against 63.26 lakh new ones. The stoppage ratio was 78.53%, down from a peak of 95.46% in May, when for almost every new SIP started, one ended.

The data does not separate SIPs that matured on schedule from those abandoned midway, so it overstates quitting. The timing still tells a story. May 2026 was when the Nifty was heading for its first calendar-year loss since 2015, [Invezz reported](#). A weak year is exactly when a young SIP looks most pointless, and exactly when its units are cheapest.

None of this guarantees that the next 31 years will look like the last. The 1995 fund's record is exceptional, not typical, and even the best long-run figure hides years of pain. Past returns are not a forecast. The narrower claim is the one that holds across Buffett's fortune and the SIP data alike: whatever return you earn, most of the money arrives late, and only for those still invested.

If you do one thing: Decide today what would make you stop an SIP, and make sure "the market fell" or "it has done nothing for two years" is not on that list. Tie every SIP to a goal at least ten years away, and review it once a year, not once a week.

Getting rich slowly is not a consolation prize for people who could not get rich quickly. It is the only route most of us will ever have, and its toll is patience, paid mostly at the start.

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