

Pichhla Darwaza

Part 1: Ghar Jahan Khamoshi Rehti Hai

Sheher ke ek purane hissa mein, jahan nayi buildings ke beech abhi bhi kuch purane makaan zinda reh gaye the, wahi ek do-manzila ghar khada tha — **Makaan No. 27.**

Us ghar ko dekh kar pehli nazar mein kuch ajeeb nahi lagta tha. Safed rang ki paint thodi si peel ho chuki thi, balcony ke lohe ke grills par halki si zang lagi thi, aur neeche ka main gate hamesha aadha band rehta tha. Par jo cheez us ghar ko alag banati thi, wo thi uski **khamoshi.**

Aisi khamoshi jo normal nahi hoti.

Aisi khamoshi jo awaaz ko bhi pee jaati hai.

Armaan jab pehli baar is ghar mein aaya tha, usne sabse pehle ye hi mehsoos kiya tha. Sheher ka shor gate ke bahar hi ruk jaata tha. Jaise hi wo andar kadam rakhta, hawa bhari lagne lagti — bhaari, thandi, aur bina wajah ke bojh ke saath.

“Bas kuch mahine ki baat hai,” usne khud se kaha tha.

Job nayi thi, salary theek-thaak, aur rent kam. Practical decision tha.

Us waqt usne ye nahi socha tha ki kuch ghar **sirf rehne ke liye nahi hote.**

Ground floor par Armaan ka flat tha. Upar wala floor band rehta tha. Malik ne bas itna kaha tha, “Upar ka hissa use nahi hota. Purana hai.”

Aur phir baat khatam.

Shuru ke kuch din sab normal rahe.

Subah office, shaam ko thakaan, raat ko neend.

Par raat ke waqt... kuch chhoti-chhoti baatein theen jo Armaan ko samajh nahi aati thi.

Jaise raat ke bilkul beech mein, jab poora sheher so raha hota, tab ghar ke andar kisi ke **chalne ki awaaz.** Halke, dheeme kadam.

Kabhi living room ke paas, kabhi kitchen ki taraf.

Armaan pehle ise imagination samajh kar ignore karta raha.

“Naya ghar hai... aadat lag jaayegi,” wo khud ko samjhata.

Par teesri raat, jab wo pani peene ke liye utha, usne dekha ki **kitchen ka darwaza khula hua tha.**

Usse yaad tha — usne sone se pehle darwaza band kiya tha.

Poore sure tha.

Us raat usne pehli baar ghar ke pichhle hisse par dhyaan diya.

Kitchen ke peeche ek chhota sa passage tha. Passage ke end par ek **darwaza.**

Purana.

Lakdi ka.

Aur hamesha band.

Malik ne kabhi is darwaze ke baare mein kuch nahi bataya tha.

Na hi Armaan ne poocha tha.

Usne socha tha — store room hoga, ya koi unused exit.

Par us raat... us darwaze ke neeche se **thandi hawa aa rahi thi.**

Aisi hawa jaise kisi band jagah se nahi, balki kisi gehri, andheri jagah se aa rahi ho.

Armaan ne ek kadam aage badhaya.

Dil ki dhadkan bina wajah tez ho gayi.

Aur tab...

thak... thak...

Darwaze ke doosri taraf se koi dheere-dheere **knock** kar raha tha.

Armaan freeze ho gaya.

Us ghar mein uske alawa koi nahi tha.

Wo is baat ko jaanta tha.

Knock dobara hui.

Is baar thodi tez.

Usne peeche mud kar dekha — poora ghar andhera tha.

Sirf kitchen ki tube-light jal rahi thi, jo ab halki si flicker karne lagi thi.

“Hello?”

Awaaz uske muh se nikal to gayi, par usmein confidence nahi tha.

Knock ruk gayi.

Kuch seconds ki khamoshi ke baad...

Darwaze ke peeche se ek awaaz aayi.

Bahut dheemi.

Bahut kareeb.

“Darwaza... khol do...”

Armaan ka gala sookh gaya.

Awaaz kisi aadmi ki thi — par usmein kuch **toota hua** tha. Jaise bolne wala insaan ho, par poori tarah zinda na ho.

Us raat Armaan ne wo darwaza nahi khola.

Usne kitchen ki light band ki, bedroom ka darwaza lock kiya, aur poori raat jagta raha.

Par usse ye nahi pata tha...

Ye sirf shuruaat thi.

Kyuki **pichhla darwaza...**

sirf bahar jaane ka rasta nahi hota.

Kabhi-kabhi...

wo andar aane ke liye hota hai.

Part 2: Jo Ghar Batata Nahi

Agli subah jab Armaan ki aankh khuli, to use sabse pehle ye ehsaas hua ki wo **thakaan ke bawajood bilkul fresh nahi** lag raha tha. Jaise uski neend ne uska jism chhua hi nahi ho. Ceiling fan dheemi ghoom raha tha, par hawa ab bhi bhaari thi. Raat ke waqton ki thandak ab ek chipchipi si ghutan mein badal chuki thi.

Usne phone uthaya.

Time — **6:17 AM.**

Armaan ko yaad tha ki raat bhar usne ghadi dekhi hi nahi thi. Jaise waqt ruk gaya ho. Ya shayad... us ghar ke andar waqt ka apna hi koi hisaab ho.

Bed se uthte hi uski nazar bedroom ke darwaze par padi.

Lock band tha.

Chain bhi.

PURCHASE THE WHOLE BOOK AT JUST 29

Written by: SHAIK JAHASH AHMED