

COUSIN LOVE

Bachpan Se Mohabbat Tak

Ghar ke aangan mein shaam ki halki si dhoop padh rahi thi. Purane neem ke ped ke neeche Ahmed aur Ayesha bachpan se hi khelte aaye the. Mitti ki khushboo, hansi ki awaaz, aur un dono ki chhoti si duniya — sab kuch us aangan mein basa hua tha.

Ahmed thoda shararti tha. Har waqt kisi na kisi mazaak mein laga rehta. Lekin jab baat Ayesha ki aati... toh uska lehra badal jaata. Uski awaaz narm ho jaati. Uski aankhon mein ek ajeeb si fikr aa jaati.

Ayesha bachpan se hi thodi masoom, thodi ziddi aur bohot zyada emotional thi. Agar Ahmed kisi aur cousin ke saath zyada baat kar le, toh woh muh phula kar alag ja baithti.

Un dono ke beech ek ajeeb sa connection tha. Cousins the... lekin dosti sabse gehri thi. Har Eid saath. Har family function saath. Har secret ek dusre ke paas amanat.

Lekin waqt kabhi rukta nahi.

Bachpan dheere dheere jawani mein badalne laga. Aawazon ki shararat aankhon ki sharm mein badalne lagi. Hansi halka sa khamosh ho kar muskurahat ban gayi.

Ab Ahmed aur Ayesha roz nahi milte the. Dono apne apne gharon mein rehte the — lekin khandaan ek tha. Milna sirf family gatherings tak seemit reh gaya tha.

Har Eid par milna. Shaadiyon mein ek hi table par baithna. Family dinner mein aankhon ka milna... aur phir jhuk jaana.

Pehle jo sirf shararat hoti thi... ab usmein ehsaas ghul chuka tha.

Ayesha jab drawing room mein aati, Ahmed ki nazar be-ikhtiyaar us par tik jaati. Aur jab Ahmed kisi baat par hasta... Ayesha chupke se usse dekh kar muskura deti.

Dono ke beech ab lafzon se zyada khamoshi baat karti thi.

Lekin in sab ke beech ek teesra chehra bhi tha.

Nadeem.

Dono ka common cousin. Har function mein Ahmed ke saath hi nazar aata. Log kehte the:

“Ahmed aur Nadeem toh ek hi jaan hain.”

Aur waqai, bachpan se dono saath hi pale-badhe the.

Lekin Nadeem ka apna ek chhupa hua maqsad tha.

Uski nazar thi Sana par — jo Ayesha ki best friend thi. Sana khoobsurat thi, confident thi... aur Ayesha par bohot trust karti thi. Nadeem ko lagta tha, agar Ahmed aur Ayesha kareeb rahenge, toh usse Sana tak pahunchna aasaan hogा.

Iqliye woh aksar Ahmed ko tease karta:

“Bhai, Ayesha tumhe bohot dekhti hai.”

“Sach bata, kuch chal raha hai kya?”

Ahmed bas muskura deta...

Lekin dil ke andar sach mein kuch chal raha tha.

Woh Raat

Ek family function ke baad sab log jaa chuke the. Ghar mein khamoshi thi. Raat ke 11 baj rahe the.

Ahmed ne phone uthaya. Kaafi der tak screen ko dekhta raha. Phir himmat karke message bheja:

“Kya tumhe bhi lagta hai ke hum dono ke beech kuch badal raha hai?”

Phone ke dusre side Ayesha ka dil zor zor se dhadak raha tha. Woh message ko baar baar padh rahi thi.

Kuch minute baad usne reply kiya:

“Haan... aur mujhe darr bhi lag raha hai.”

Ahmed ne likha:

“Darr mat. Main hoon. Aur main kahin nahi jaunga.”

Us raat dono ne apne dil ka izhaar kar diya.

Bachpan ki dosti... mohabbat mein badal chuki thi.

Us din ke baad har din chat. Har raat lambi calls. Har function ka bechaini se intezaar. Har mulaqat mein chhupi hui khushi.

Unka pyaar saaf tha. Sachha tha. Masoom tha.

Lekin duniya utni saaf nahi thi.

Nadeem ka Pehla Zakhm

Isi beech Nadeem ne himmat karke Sana ko apni feelings bata di.

“Main tumhe pasand karta hoon.”

Sana ne seedha jawab diya:

“Sorry Nadeem... main interested nahi hoon.”

Bas.

Ek lafz ne uske ego ko tod diya.

Us din Nadeem ne pehli baar mehsoos kiya ke uski khushi kisi aur ke haath mein nahi hai.

Usne dekha —

Ahmed khush hai.

Ayesha khush hai.

Aur uski khud ki mohabbat reject ho chuki hai.

Uski aankhon mein pehli baar jalan nazar aayi.

Aur usi jalan ne is kahani mein andhera laane ka faisla kar liya.

Jalan, Zeher aur Izzat

Mohabbat jab khamoshi se palti hai na... toh duniya ko sabse baad mein pata chalta hai.

Lekin nafrat?

Woh sabse pehle awaaz karti hai.

Ahmed aur Ayesha ki mohabbat ab sirf ehsaas nahi rahi thi. Woh aadat ban chuki thi. Har subah “Good Morning” ke bina din shuru nahi hota. Har raat “Khayaal rakhna” ke bina neend nahi aati.