

# 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, hans 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 lehja 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.

“Ahmed bhai, pakdo mujhe!”

Woh hasti hui bhaagti... aur Ahmed jaan-boojh kar dheere bhaagta — sirf isliye ke woh jeet jaaye.

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 hoga.

Isliye 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 Zakham**

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 ehssaas 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.

Unke messages mein bachpana bhi tha... aur gehra pyaar bhi.

"Tum aaj function mein blue pehnogi?"

"Kyuuun?"

"Bas... mujhe acha lagta hai."

Ayesha ke honton par halka sa muskurahat aa jaati.

Family functions ab sirf rasmon ke liye nahi hote the... woh dono ke liye mulaqat ka zariya ban chuke the. Drawing room mein sab log baithte, lekin unki aankhein sirf ek dusre ko dhoondti.

Lekin kisi aur ki aankhein bhi unhe dekh rahi thi.

### **Nadeem.**

Sana ke rejection ke baad uske andar ek ajeeb sa khokhlapan aa gaya tha. Usne khud se ek sawal poocha:

"Main kyun nahi? Ahmed hi kyun?"

Usse lagne laga jaise Ahmed har cheez mein usse aage hai. Izzat bhi, personality bhi... aur ab mohabbat bhi.

Ek shaam, jab Ahmed aur Nadeem terrace par khade the, Nadeem ne dheere se baat chhedi.

"Bhai, ek baat poochun? Gussa mat hona."

Ahmed ne hansii mein kaha, "Tu kab se itna formal ho gaya?"

Nadeem ne thoda serious hote hue kaha,

"Yaar mujhe lagta hai Ayesha thodi immature hai. Tum itne serious ho... pata nahi woh sambhal payegi ya nahi."

Ahmed ka chehra turant badal gaya.

"Seedhi baat kar Nadeem."

"Bas itna keh raha hoon... ladkiyon par jaldi bharosa nahi karna chahiye."

Ahmed ne uski aankhon mein dekha.

“Main Ayesha ko jaanta hoon. Tum nahi.”

Woh pal chhota tha... lekin Nadeem ke liye ek signal tha.  
Ahmed ka pyaar mazboot hai.

Aur mazboot cheezein todne mein zyada maza aata hai.

### **Zeher ka Pehla Daana**

Nadeem ne seedha hamla nahi kiya.  
Usne sabr kiya.

Family gathering mein jab Ayesha kisi aur cousin ke saath hansi mazaak karti... Nadeem jaa kar  
Ahmed ke kaan mein dheere se bol deta:

“Bhai, dekh raha hai? Thodi zyada friendly nahi ho rahi?”

Ahmed pehle ignore karta.

Lekin zeher boondon mein diya jaaye... toh asar karta hi karta hai.

Ek din Ayesha ne message late reply kiya. Bas 20 minute ka delay.

Ahmed ne casual tone mein poocha:

“Kahan thi?”

“Ammijaan ke saath bazaar gayi thi.”

Nadeem ne usi din Ahmed ko bola tha:

“Bhai, ladki agar sach bol rahi ho toh explain karne ki zarurat nahi padti.”

Chhoti chhoti baatein... dil mein chhoti si daraar daalne lagi.

Lekin har baar jab Ahmed Ayesha ki awaaz sunta... uska doubt pighal jaata.

Unka pyaar abhi bhi zinda tha. Saaf tha. Loyal tha.

Aur yahi baat Nadeem ko andar se jala rahi thi.

### **Izzat ka Khel**

Nadeem ne plan badla.

Agar Ahmed ko tod nahi sakta... toh uske aas paas ki duniya ko tod dega.

Sabse pehle usne Ayesha ke ghar mein baat ghuma kar daali.

Ek din chai pe baith kar usne casual andaaz mein kaha:

“Chacha, aaj kal Ahmed aur Ayesha kaafi close lagte hain.”

Ayesha ke abbu ne bhonhein chadha di.

“Kya matlab?”

“Matlab... bas phone par baat zyada hoti hai shayad.”

Seedha ilzaam nahi. Bas shak.

Shak beej ki tarah hota hai.  
Lag jaaye... toh ugta zaroor hai.

Us raat Ayesha ka phone check hua.

Usse poocha gaya:  
“Ahmed se itni baat kyun?”

Ayesha ne seedha jawab diya:  
“Woh mere cousin hain.”

“Cousin hain... ya kuch aur?”

Us pal uska gala sookh gaya.

### **Lekin Ek Diwaar Thi**

Ayesha ke gharwale Ahmed par seedha ilzaam nahi laga sakte the.  
Kyun?

Kyuki Ahmed ke abba ki poore khandaan mein sabse zyada izzat thi. Unki baat final mani jaati thi. Unka naam hi kaafi tha.

Isliye gussa sirf Ayesha par nikla.

Uski phone restrictions shuru ho gayi.

Bahaar jaane par sawaal.

Dost se milne par sawaal.

Aur Nadeem?

Door khada sab dekh raha tha.

Uske andar ka sukoon sirf tab aata jab woh dekhta ke Ahmed ki khushi dheere dheere kam ho rahi hai.

### **Aag Phail Gayi**

Nadeem ne dheere dheere baat poore khandaan mein phaila di.

“Tumhe pata hai?”

“Ahmed aur Ayesha ka chakkar chal raha hai.”

Logon ne seedha yakeen nahi kiya...

Lekin jab ek hi baat 10 log alag alag jagah bolte hain — toh afwah sach lagne lagti hai.

Family functions band hone lage.

Ek dusre ke ghar aana jaana kam ho gaya.

Salaam tak formal ho gaya.

Aur Ayesha?

Us par sakhti badh gayi.

Kabhi uska phone cheen liya jaata.  
Kabhi usse rula kar kaha jaata:  
“Hamari izzat mitti mein milaogi?”

Woh chup rehti.  
Bas ek hi naam dil mein hota — Ahmed.

### **Ahmed ka Faisla**

Ahmed ko dheere dheere sab samajh aane laga. Lekin usne haar nahi maani.

Ek raat usne Ayesha ko message kiya:

“Chahe jo ho jaaye... main tumhe nahi chhodunga.”

Ayesha ke aansu screen par tapak gaye.

“Main bhi nahi.”

Unka pyaar ab imtihaan mein tha.

Lekin kahani yahin khatam nahi hoti.

Nadeem abhi rukne wala nahi tha.

Usne dekha —

Shak ka asar hua... lekin tod nahi paaya.

Ab woh kuch aisa karega... jo seedha Ahmed ke dil par vaar karega.

Aur jab mohabbat ko bewafai ka shak ho jaaye...

Tab sabse gehra zakham lagta hai.

Ghar ke mahaul mein ab ek ajeeb si khamoshi thi. Pehle jo rishton mein garmahat thi, woh dheere dheere formal lafzon mein badal rahi thi. Salaam bhi ab sirf adaigi ke liye hota, dil se nahi. Ahmed ko mehsoos ho raha tha ke hawa badal rahi hai, lekin usse abhi tak poora sach nahi pata tha.

Nadeem ne apna kaam aur tez kar diya tha. Ab woh sirf ishare nahi kar raha tha, balki kahaniyon ko shape de raha tha. Har ghar mein alag lafz, lekin matlab ek hi — Ahmed aur Ayesha ka rishta hadh paar kar raha hai. Woh kisi ko seedha saboot nahi deta, bas itna kehta, “Main toh bas fikr kar raha hoon. Log baatein bana rahe hain.” Aur log waqai baatein banane lage.

Ayesha ke ghar mein mahaul sakht hota ja raha tha. Uske abbu zyada khamosh rehte, lekin unki aankhon mein shak saaf dikhne laga tha. Uska bhai us par nazar rakhta. Phone kabhi bhi le kar check kar leta. Ek din uska phone zabardasti le liya gaya. Chats delete kar di gayi. Usse kaha gaya, “Aaj ke baad Ahmed se baat nahi hogi.”

Us raat Ayesha ne pehli baar toot kar rona mehsoos kiya. Usse samajh nahi aa raha tha ke mohabbat gunaah kaise ban gayi. Usne Ahmed ko chhup kar message bheja, “Ghar wale sab

jaan gaye hain.” Ahmed ka dil ek pal ke liye ruk sa gaya. “Kaise?” usne turant poocha. Ayesha ne likha, “Pata nahi... shayad kisi ne bataya.”

Ahmed ko andaza ho gaya tha. Uske zehen mein sirf ek naam aaya — Nadeem. Lekin bina saboot ke woh kuch nahi keh sakta tha. Usne Ayesha ko tasalli di, “Main sab theek kar dunga. Main hoon na.”

Lekin cheezein itni aasaan nahi thi. Do din baad Ahmed ke ghar bhi baat pahunch gayi. Kuch rishtedaar milne aaye. Hasi mazaak ke beech ek jumla chhoda gaya, “Aaj kal bachche hadh bhool jaate hain.” Ahmed ke abba ne bas unki taraf dekha, unki nazar itni gehri thi ke saamne wala chup ho gaya. Unki izzat poore khandaan mein sabse upar thi. Koi seedha ilzaam lagane ki himmat nahi karta tha. Lekin hawa mein shak ghul chuka tha.

Nadeem ne Ahmed ko alag le ja kar kaha, “Bhai, maine suna hai log bohut gandhi baatein kar rahe hain. Shayad Ayesha ne kisi ko khud hi bata diya ho.” Ahmed ne uski aankhon mein dekha. “Tu kehna kya chahta hai?” Nadeem ne kandhe uchka diye, “Bas itna ke ladkiyan kabhi kabhi emotional ho kar baat phaila deti hain.”

Yeh pehli baar tha jab Ahmed ke dil mein sach mein chubhan hui. Usne turant khud ko sambhala. “Ayesha aisi nahi hai.” Lekin Nadeem ka beej zameen chhoo chuka tha.

Is beech Ayesha ke ghar mein sakhti aur badh gayi. Usse relatives ke saamne neecha dikhaya jaane laga. “Ladkiyon ko apni hadh pata honi chahiye.” Uska bhai gusse mein kehta, “Agar dobara Ahmed se baat ki toh acha nahi hoga.” Woh chup rehti. Sirf apni ammi ke saamne ro leti. Lekin ammi bhi majboor thi. Izzat ka bojh aksar sach ko daba deta hai.

Family functions ab band ho gaye. Dono gharon ka aana jaana ruk gaya. Jo bachpan ek hi aangan mein guzra tha, ab usmein deewar khadi ho chuki thi. Ahmed ne kai baar koshish ki ke kisi tarah baat clear kare, lekin uske abba ko kuch batane ki himmat usmein nahi thi. Woh jaanta tha, agar baat un tak pahunchi, toh ya toh sab khatam ho jayega ya sab saamne aa jayega.

Ek raat Ahmed ne Nadeem se seedha pooch liya, “Sach bata, kya yeh sab tune kiya hai?” Nadeem ne seedha uski aankhon mein dekha aur muskuraya, “Main kyun karunga bhai? Main toh hamesha tera saath deta hoon.” Uski muskurahat mein masoomiyat thi, lekin andar zeher tha.

Ayesha ab kamzor padne lagi thi. Mohabbat apni jagah thi, lekin roz roz ke ilzaam usse tod rahe the. Ek din usne Ahmed ko likha, “Shayad humein baat kam karni chahiye. Ghar wale bohut pareshan hain.” Ahmed ne turant jawab diya, “Tum darr rahi ho?” Usne likha, “Main nahi... lekin main nahi chahti ke tumhari wajah se sab tumhare khilaaf ho jaayein.”

Yeh lafz Ahmed ke dil par lage. Pehli baar usse laga ke kahin na kahin Ayesha peeche hat rahi hai. Nadeem ne agle hi din aag mein aur tel daal diya. “Bhai, mujhe lagta hai Ayesha pressure mein aa kar tumse door ho rahi hai. Shayad usne decide kar liya ho.”

Ahmed ne gusse mein kaha, “Bas kar Nadeem.” Lekin uska gussa uske andar ke darr ko chhupa nahi paa raha tha.

Khandaan ab do hisson mein batne laga tha. Log ek dusre ke ghar jaana chhod chuke the. Shaadiyon mein alag baithna, dawat mein formal baatein, aur har jagah ek unsaid tension.

Nadeem door khada sab dekh raha tha. Uski planning ka asar ho raha tha. Lekin usse ab bhi sukoon nahi mil raha tha. Usse Ahmed ko sirf pareshan nahi, toot te hue dekhna tha.

Aur Ahmed? Woh ab bhi Ayesha se mohabbat karta tha. Lekin shak ka pehla saaya uske dil par pad chuka tha. Mohabbat mazboot thi, lekin insaan ka dil kamzor hota hai. Aur Nadeem jaanta tha ke usse bas ek zor ka dhakka dena hai.

Toofan ab sirf hawa nahi raha tha. Ab woh aandhi banne wala tha.

Mohabbat par jab pehla shak padta hai na, toh insaan use jhooth samajh kar hata deta hai. Lekin jab wahi shak baar baar saamne aaye... toh woh sach lagne lagta hai. Ahmed ke dil mein ab bhi Ayesha ke liye wahi paak mohabbat thi, lekin uske aas paas itni awaazein ho chuki thi ke kabhi kabhi uska dimaag uske dil se zyada bolne lagta.

Nadeem ne samajh liya tha ke waqt aa gaya hai. Ab chhoti baaton se kaam nahi chalega. Ab seedha vaar karna hoga.

Ek shaam woh Ahmed ke paas aaya. Chehre par fikr, awaaz mein bojh.

“Bhai, mujhe tumse zaroori baat karni hai. Aur main chahta hoon ke tum gussa hone se pehle poori baat suno.”

Ahmed ne halka sa chidh kar kaha, “Seedha bol.”

Nadeem ne gehri saans li. “Maine kal Ayesha ko dekha.”

Ahmed ka dil ek pal ke liye ruk sa gaya. “Kahan?”

“Market mein. Akeli nahi thi.”

Ahmed chup raha.

“Woh kisi ladke ke saath thi. Bohot close. Haste hue. Aur jab maine dekha toh woh thoda ghabra gayi.”

Yeh lafz Ahmed ke kaano se takraye aur seedha uske dil mein utar gaye. Usne turant kaha, “Tu jhoot bol raha hai.”

Nadeem ne turant jawab nahi diya. Bas dheere se bola, “Main kyun jhoot bolunga? Main tera bhai hoon. Main bas tujhe bewakoof nahi banna dekh sakta.”

Ahmed ne gusse mein kaha, “Naam kya tha us ladke ka?”

Nadeem ne jhooth ko aur mazboot banaya. “Mujhe naam nahi pata. Lekin mujhe itna pata hai ke woh pehli baar nahi tha. Log baatein kar rahe hain. Isliye main tujhe pehle bata raha hoon.”

Us raat Ahmed ne Ayesha ko message nahi kiya.

Ayesha phone haath mein liye intezaar karti rahi. Har minute screen check karti rahi. Lekin Ahmed ki taraf se khamoshi thi.

Dusre din Ahmed ka message aaya.

“Kal kahan thi tum?”

Ayesha ne seedha jawab diya, “Ghar par.”

Ahmed ka dil phir se hil gaya. “Pakka?”

“Ahmed, tum aise kyun pooch rahe ho?”

Ahmed ne seedha nahi bola ke Nadeem ne kya kaha hai. Lekin uske lafzon mein thandak aa gayi thi.

“Sach batana.”

Ayesha confuse ho gayi. “Main jhoot kyun bolungi?”

Lekin Ahmed ke zehen mein woh tasveer ghoom rahi thi jo Nadeem ne bana di thi. Market. Koi ladka. Hansi. Ghabrahat.

Shak ka zeher ab poori tarah ghul chuka tha.

Nadeem ne agla kadam aur tez kiya. Usne Ahmed ko ek fake screenshot dikhaya. Kisi unknown number se message — “Kal milte hain wahan.” Screenshot edit kiya hua tha. Naam save nahi tha. Bas itna kaafi tha.

“Main nahi chahta tha tujhe dikhana,” Nadeem ne kaha, “lekin main aur chup nahi reh sakta.”

Ahmed ke haath kaanp gaye. “Yeh kahan se mila?”

“Bas mil gaya. Samajh ja.”

Ahmed ke andar ka bharosa aur uska gussa ek dusre se ladne lage. Dil keh raha tha, “Ayesha aisi nahi hai.” Dimaag keh raha tha, “Saboot saamne hai.”

Us raat Ahmed ne Ayesha ko call kiya.

“Aakhri baar pooch raha hoon. Kya tum kisi aur se mil rahi ho?”

Ayesha ka dil toot gaya. “Tum aisa soch bhi kaise sakte ho?”

“Jawab do.”

“NAHI.”

Ahmed ki awaaz sakht ho gayi. “Phir log kyun keh rahe hain?”

“Kaun log? Ahmed tum mujh par bharosa nahi karte?”

Woh pal sabse zyada khamosh tha. Sirf saansen sunai de rahi thi.

Ahmed ne dheere se kaha, “Shayad maine galti ki tum par itna bharosa karke.”

Yeh lafz Ayesha ke liye teer se kam nahi the.

“Tumhe mujh par yakeen nahi hai?” usne ro kar poocha.

Ahmed ka gussa ab uske dard par bhaari pad chuka tha. “Ab nahi.”

Aur usne call kaat di.

Us raat Ayesha toot kar roti rahi. Usse samajh nahi aa raha tha ke usne kya galti ki. Usne kisi aur ko kabhi dekha tak nahi tha. Lekin uska apna Ahmed us par shaq kar raha tha.

Ahmed bhi chain se nahi so paaya. Lekin uska ego usse wapas message karne nahi de raha tha. Nadeem ne subah usse dekha aur poocha, “Baat hui?” Ahmed ne bas itna kaha, “Sab khatam.” Nadeem ke honton par halki si muskurahat aayi... jo usne turant chhupa li.


Ab khandaan ke beech jo deewar thi, woh aur unchi ho gayi. Ayesha ke ghar wale us par aur sakht ho gaye. “Dekha? Isi liye mana kiya tha.” Uska phone poori tarah le liya gaya. Bahar jaana band. Uska bhai us par chillaata, “Izzat mitti mein mila di.”

Aur Ahmed? Usne faisla kar liya ke woh ab Ayesha se baat nahi karega. Usne apne aap se kaha, “Jo ladki sach mein mohabbat karti hai, woh bewafai nahi karti.”

Lekin har raat jab woh akela hota... usse Ayesha ki awaaz yaad aati. Uska “Main bhi nahi chhodungi” yaad aata.

Dono ek dusre se baat nahi kar rahe the.

Lekin dono ka dil ab bhi ek dusre ke naam se dhadak raha tha.

Aur kahani ab us mod par aa chuki thi jahan sach chup gaya tha... aur jhooth jeet raha tha. 

Khamoshi kabhi kabhi cheekh se bhi zyada dard deti hai. Ahmed aur Ayesha ke beech ab lafz nahi the... sirf yaadein thi. Na good morning, na good night. Na woh bechain intezaar, na woh chhoti si muskurahat jo ek notification se aa jaati thi. Dono ne baat karna band kar diya tha, lekin dono ne mehsoos karna band nahi kiya tha.

Ayesha ke liye har din ek imtihaan ban chuka tha. Ghar mein us par sakhti apne shikhar par thi. Uska phone poori tarah le liya gaya. Uski dostiyan tod di gayi. Sana se milna bhi band. Uska bhai aksar gusse mein kehta, “Agar dobara uska naam liya na, toh acha nahi hoga.” Uske abbu ki khamoshi sabse zyada chubhti thi. Woh usse dekhte bhi kam the. Jaise usne koi gunaaah kar diya ho.

Lekin Ayesha ke dil mein ek hi sawal tha — Ahmed ne yakeen kyun nahi kiya?

Usne kabhi kisi aur ke baare mein socha tak nahi tha. Uski duniya sirf Ahmed thi. Aur wahi duniya ab usse bewafa samajh kar door chali gayi thi.

Ahmed ki taraf bhi sukoon nahi tha. Usne gusse mein faisla toh kar liya tha ke woh Ayesha se baat nahi karega, lekin dil itni aasani se faisle nahi maanta. Raat ko jab sab so jaate, woh purani chats kholta. Uski hansii wale voice notes sunta. Phir khud se kehta, “Agar woh sach bol rahi hoti toh main aise mehsoos kyun kar raha hoon?” Shak aur pyaar ek hi dil mein lad rahe the.

Nadeem door khada sab dekh raha tha. Usse mehsoos ho raha tha ke Ahmed toot raha hai. Lekin usse yeh bhi nazar aa raha tha ke Ahmed ke andar kahin na kahin Ayesha ke liye mohabbat ab bhi zinda hai. Aur jab tak mohabbat zinda ho, tab tak poori jeet nahi hoti.

Ek din Nadeem ne Ahmed ko aur bhadkaya. “Bhai, maine suna hai Ayesha ke ghar wale uske liye rishta dekh rahe hain. Shayad isliye woh tumse door ho gayi.” Ahmed ka chehra sakht ho gaya. “Achha hai,” usne thande lehje mein kaha, “Mujhe farq nahi padta.” Lekin uske dil ne uski baat ka saath nahi diya.

Us raat Ahmed ne bahut der tak neend ka intezaar kiya, lekin neend nahi aayi. Uske zehen mein bas ek tasveer thi — Ayesha kisi aur ke saath. Woh tasveer jo shayad kabhi thi hi nahi, lekin Nadeem ne itni baar repeat ki ke ab sach lagne lagi thi.

Khandaan ke rishton mein daraar ab poori tarah nazar aane lagi thi. Do ghar jo pehle har khushi gham saath baant te the, ab ek dusre se milna band kar chuke the. Shaadi ka invitation bhi formal taur par bheja jaata. Log baatein dheere se karte, lekin sab jaante the ke beech mein kuch toot chuka hai.

Ayesha dheere dheere andar se khali hoti ja rahi thi. Usne khana kam kar diya. Muskurana band kar diya. Ek din uski ammi ne use ro kar poocha, “Sach bata, kya tha tumhare aur Ahmed ke beech?” Ayesha ne aansuon ke saath kaha, “Sirf mohabbat... aur kuch nahi.” Lekin mohabbat ka lafz ghar ke andar aur bada jurm ban gaya.

Ahmed ke abba ko ab bhi poori sachchai ka andaza nahi tha. Lekin unhe mehsoos ho raha tha ke rishton mein thandak aa gayi hai. Ek din unhone Ahmed se poocha, “Sab theek hai?” Ahmed ne jhooth bol diya, “Haan.” Kyunki sach batane ka matlab hota poore toofan ko khud bulaana.

Nadeem ko lag raha tha ke uski jeet ho chuki hai. Ahmed aur Ayesha alag ho chuke the. Dono ke beech baat band thi. Khandaan toot chuka tha. Lekin usse yeh nahi pata tha ke kabhi kabhi doori mohabbat ko khatam nahi karti... usse aur gehra bana deti hai.

Ek shaam Ayesha ne purani diary nikali. Usmein Ahmed ke saath bitaye hue pal likhe the. Usne dheere se likha, “Agar tumne mujh par yakeen nahi kiya, phir bhi main tumse mohabbat karti hoon.” Usne diary band kar di. Shayad yeh lafz kabhi Ahmed tak na pahunchein, lekin uska dil jaanta tha.

Aur Ahmed? Usne bhi us raat pehli baar khud se ek sach maana — “Main usse ab bhi chahta hoon.”

Lekin dono ke beech ego, shak aur jhooth ki itni deewarein khadi ho chuki thi ke unhe todna aasaan nahi tha.

Kahani ab us mod par thi jahan dono zinda the, mohabbat zinda thi... lekin rishta mar chuka tha.

Ab aage kya hoga?

Kya sach kabhi saamne aayega?

Ya yeh mohabbat hamesha ke liye khamoshi mein dafan ho jayegi? 💔

Kabhi kabhi zindagi insaan ko us mod par la khada karti hai jahan sach saamne hota hai... lekin usse dekhne ki himmat nahi hoti. Ahmed aur Ayesha ki kahani ab us mod par aa chuki thi.

Teen mahine guzar gaye the. Teen lambe, khamosh mahine. Na koi call, na message, na kisi function mein aamna saamna. Dono ne khud ko busy karne ki koshish ki, lekin dil ko kaam dena sabse mushkil hota hai.

Ahmed apni padhai mein doob gaya tha. Dusre sheher ki zindagi tez thi, lekin uska andar khaali. Class ke beech mein jab kabhi hansne ki awaaz aati, usse Ayesha ki hans yaad aa jaati. Library ke kone mein baith kar jab woh notes likhta, usse yaad aata kaise Ayesha uski handwriting ka mazaak udaati thi. Har chhoti cheez yaad ban chuki thi.

Ek din uska phone baja. Unknown number. Ahmed ne call uthaya.

“Hello?”

Dusri taraf se halki si saans ki awaaz aayi... phir khamoshi.

Ahmed ka dil tez dhadakne laga. “Kaun?”

Phir dheere se ek awaaz... “Main...”

Woh awaaz Ayesha ki thi.

Ahmed ka jism jaise jam gaya. Teen mahine ki khamoshi ek pal mein toot gayi. Lekin uske lafz sakht the. “Ab kyun call kiya?”

Ayesha kuch pal chup rahi, phir boli, “Bas ek baar sach kehna tha. Uske baad dobara kabhi pareshan nahi karungi.”

Ahmed ke dil ne zor se dhadakna shuru kiya. Lekin usne apne lehje ko thanda rakha. “Bolo.”

Ayesha ki awaaz toot rahi thi. “Maine kabhi tumhe dhoka nahi diya. Jo bhi suna hai tumne... sab jhoot hai. Main aaj bhi wahi hoon jo pehle thi.”

Ahmed ke zehen mein Nadeem ke lafz goonj uthe. Tasveerein, baatein, shaq. “Saboot hai?” usne sakhti se poocha.

Ayesha chup ho gayi. “Mohabbat saboot se prove hoti hai kya?”

Yeh lafz seedha Ahmed ke dil par laga. Lekin teen mahine ka gussa itni aasani se nahi pighla. “Tumhare ghar wale rishta dekh rahe hain na?”

Ayesha hairaan reh gayi. “Kisne kaha?”

Ahmed ke paas jawab tha... Nadeem. Lekin usne naam nahi liya. “Mujhe sab pata hai.”

Ayesha ki saansen tez ho gayi. “Toh phir mujh par yakeen kyun nahi kiya? Ek baar pooch lete... main sab samjha deti.”

Ahmed khamosh ho gaya. Kyunki sach yeh tha ke usne poocha hi nahi tha. Usne bas maan liya tha.

Ayesha ne dheere se kaha, “Mere paas zyada waqt nahi hai. Ghar wale mujhe dusre sheher bhej rahe hain khala ke paas. Shayad wahan mera rishta fix kar dein.”

Yeh sunte hi Ahmed ka dil hil gaya. “Kya?”

“Main nahi chahti thi ke tum kisi aur se suno. Bas itna kehna tha... main bewafa nahi thi.”

Call cut ho gaya.

Ahmed phone ko dekhta reh gaya. Uske andar kuch toot gaya tha... ya shayad kuch jaag gaya tha. Agar yeh sab jhoot hai toh phir jhoot kisne bola?

Usne turant Nadeem ko call kiya. “Sach bata... Ayesha ke rishton wali baat tujhe kisne batayi?”

Nadeem pal bhar ko atak gaya. “Woh... log keh rahe the...”

“Kaun log?” Ahmed ki awaaz pehli baar itni sakht hui.

Nadeem ne baat ghumane ki koshish ki. “Bhai, maine toh sirf teri bhalai ke liye—”

“Sirf haan ya na bol. Kya tune apni aankhon se kuch dekha tha?”

Khamoshi.

Us khamoshi ne sab bata diya.

Ahmed ka dimagh ghoom gaya. Teen mahine ka dard, nafrat, doori... sab ek shak par khada tha. Aur shayad woh shak jhoot par bana tha.

Us raat Ahmed ne neend nahi ki. Usne purani chats phir se padhi. Har line mein sachchai thi. Har lafz mein wahi Ayesha thi jo usse bepanah chahti thi.

Subah hone se pehle usne faisla kar liya.

Woh wapas jaayega. Sach saamne laayega. Chahe jo ho.

Dusri taraf Ayesha apne kamre mein baithi ro rahi thi. Usne socha tha Ahmed us par yakeen karega. Lekin call ke baad usse laga sab khatam ho chuka hai. Usne apne aansu pochhe aur dil ko samjhaya — “Bas. Ab aur nahi.”

Lekin use kya pata tha... ke iss baar Ahmed bhaagne nahi, ladne aa raha hai.

Ab kahani ek naye mod par hai.

Sach saamne aane wala hai.

Lekin kya der ho chuki hogi?

Kabhi kabhi insaan sach jaanne ke liye nahi... apni mohabbat bachane ke liye laut ta hai. Ahmed ke dil mein ab sirf ek hi cheez thi — jawab. Teen mahine ki doori, teen mahine ka gussa, teen mahine ka dard... sab usse andar se kha chuka tha. Aur ab jab Ayesha ne khud phone karke kaha ke woh bewafa nahi thi, uska dil use chain se baithne nahi de raha tha.

Subah hone se pehle hi Ahmed ne ticket book kar li. Usne kisi ko nahi bataya. Na apne abbu ko, na Nadeem ko. Yeh safar sirf uska tha... aur uski mohabbat ka.

Train ki khidki ke bahar manzar badalte rahe, lekin Ahmed ke zehen mein sirf ek tasveer thi — Ayesha ki. Uski aankhon mein woh dard jo call ke waqt mehsoos ho raha tha. Agar woh jhoot bol rahi hoti, toh uski awaaz mein itni sachchai kyun thi? Agar woh bewafa hoti, toh teen mahine baad sirf safai dene ke liye call kyun karti?

Jab Ahmed sheher pohoncha, shaam dhal chuki thi. Ghar ke bahar khamoshi thi. Wahi darwaza, wahi deewar, wahi aangan... lekin sab ajnabi lag raha tha. Usne gehri saans li aur bell bajayi.

Darwaza Ayesha ke bhai ne khola. Dono ki nazrein mili. Hawa mein tanav tha.

“Tum?” usne teekhe lehje mein poocha.

“Mujhe Ayesha se baat karni hai,” Ahmed ne seedha jawab diya.

“Zarurat nahi. Jo kehna tha keh diya usne.”

Ahmed ne pehli baar himmat jamaa ki. “Mujhe usse nahi... sach se baat karni hai.”

Andar se awaaz aayi. "Kaun hai?"

Ayesha ke abbu drawing room mein aaye. Ahmed ko dekh kar unka chehra sakht ho gaya.

"Yahan kyun aaye ho?"

Ahmed ke paas lafzon ki kami thi, lekin jazbaat ki nahi. "Uncle... agar galti meri hai toh main maan lunga. Lekin agar galatfehmi hai, toh use aaj khatam karna chahta hoon."

Ghar mein gehri khamoshi chha gayi. Kuch pal baad seedhiyon se halki si chaal ki awaaz aayi. Ayesha neeche aa rahi thi.

Usne Ahmed ko dekha... aur waqt ruk gaya.

Teen mahine baad pehli baar woh saamne the. Na phone ke peeche, na yaadon mein. Haqeeqat mein.

Ayesha ka chehra pehle se zyada kamzor lag raha tha. Aankhon ke neeche halka pan, lekin un aankhon mein wahi gehra pyaar tha.

Ahmed ne dheere se kaha, "Ek sawal hai... aur bas sach chahiye."

Ayesha ne sir hilaya.

"Jo kuch maine suna... kya woh sab jhoot tha?"

Ayesha ki aankhon se aansu tapak pade. "Maine kabhi tumhare siwa kisi ke baare mein socha tak nahi. Jo tasveer tumhe dikhayi gayi thi... woh meri nahi thi. Woh edit ki hui thi."

Room mein sab log ek dusre ko dekhne lage.

Ahmed ka dil zor se dhadka. "Edit?"

Ayesha ne apna phone nikala. "Mere paas sab proof hai. Maine us din bhi tumhe batana chaha tha... lekin tumne call cut kar diya tha."

Usne gallery kholi. Original picture aur woh fake edited version. Farq saaf tha.

Ahmed ke pairon tale zameen khisak gayi. Usne yaad kiya... woh tasveer sabse pehle Nadeem ne hi dikhayi thi.

"Yeh sab kisne kiya?" Ayesha ke bhai ne gusse mein poocha.

Ahmed ke zehen mein sirf ek naam tha.

Usne seedha jawab diya, "Nadeem."

Room mein halki si halchal hui. Ayesha ke abbu ne teekhi nazar se poocha, "Saboot?"

Ahmed ne apna phone nikala. Nadeem ke messages. Woh lines jahan woh baar baar shaq paida kar raha tha. Woh waqt jab sirf usne tasveer bheji thi.

Sach dheere dheere saamne aa raha tha.

Ayesha ke abbu ne gehri saans li. "Agar yeh sab jhoot tha... toh humne apni beti ko kyun saza di?"

Ayesha ki ammi ro padi. "Humne tumhari baat suni hi nahi..."

Ahmed ki aankhon mein pachtawa bhar gaya. Woh Ayesha ke saamne aaya. “Mujhe maaf kar do. Maine tum par yakeen nahi kiya. Maine sirf suna... poocha nahi.”

Ayesha ki awaaz dheemi thi, lekin mazboot. “Mohabbat mein sabse pehle yakeen hota hai, Ahmed. Tumne wahi tod diya.”

Yeh lafz teer ki tarah lage.

Ahmed ke paas koi bahana nahi tha. Sirf afsos.

Us waqt darwaza zor se khula.

Nadeem khada tha.

Uske chehre par pehle wali confident muskurahat nahi thi. Shayad use andaza ho gaya tha ke sach saamne aa chuka hai.

“Tum?” Ahmed ki awaaz thandi thi.

Nadeem ne dheere se kaha, “Main sirf tumhe bachana chahta tha...”

“Jhoot!” Ahmed cheekha. “Kis se bachana? Us se jo mujhse mohabbat karti thi?”

Nadeem ki aankhon mein jalan saaf thi. “Main bachpan se tumse peeche raha hoon. Har cheez mein tum aage. Ghar walon ka laadla, sabka favourite. Aur jab maine dekha ke Ayesha bhi tumhe chunti hai... toh main bardasht nahi kar saka.”

Room mein sannata chha gaya.

Yeh sirf jhoot nahi tha. Yeh hasad thi. Jalan thi.

Ayesha ke abbu ne sakhti se kaha, “Tumne do ghar todne ki koshish ki.”

Nadeem ke paas koi jawab nahi tha. Woh chup chaap nikal gaya.

Ab kamre mein sirf Ahmed aur Ayesha ke jazbaat reh gaye the.

Ahmed ne dheere se kaha, “Agar tum chaho toh main sab ke saamne maafi maangunga. Har cheez theek karne ki koshish karunga.”

Ayesha ne uski aankhon mein dekha. “Sab theek ho sakta hai... lekin jo teen mahine maine jhele hain, woh wapas nahi aayenge.”

Ahmed ki aankhon mein aansu aa gaye. Pehli baar.

“Ek mauka de do.”

Ayesha khamosh rahi. Uski khamoshi mein toofan tha.

Kya woh us par dobara yakeen kar payegi?

Kya mohabbat phir se zinda ho sakti hai?

Ya sach saamne aane ke baad bhi kuch cheezein hamesha ke liye toot jaati hain?

Mohabbat jeetegi ya dard?

**The Last Decision**

Raat gehri ho chuki thi. Ghar ke sab log apne apne kamron mein chale gaye the, lekin drawing room ki woh hawa abhi tak bojhal thi. Sach saamne aa chuka tha... lekin sach har zakhm ka ilaaj nahi hota. Kabhi kabhi sach sirf yeh batata hai ke dard kis wajah se hua tha.

Ahmed aangan mein khada tha. Chand ki roshni zameen par padi thi, lekin uske dil ke andheron ko roshan nahi kar pa rahi thi. Usse samajh nahi aa raha tha ke woh jeet gaya hai ya haar gaya hai. Nadeem ka jhoot pakda gaya... lekin us jhoot par usne yakeen kiya tha. Aur wahi yakeen Ayesha ka sabse bada dard bana.

Seedhiyon par halki si chaal ki awaaz aayi. Ayesha aayi. Safed dupatte mein, aankhon mein thakan aur gehra sukoon dono saath saath. Shayad woh bhi iss kahani ka aakhri safha band karne aayi thi.

Kuch pal dono chup rahe. Sirf raat bol rahi thi.

Ahmed ne dheere se kaha, "Mujhe lagta tha main tumse bohot mohabbat karta hoon... lekin aaj samajh aaya ke mohabbat sirf ehsaas nahi, zimmedaari bhi hoti hai. Aur main apni zimmedaari nibha nahi saka."

Ayesha ne uski taraf dekha. "Mohabbat mein sabse mushkil cheez hoti hai yakeen. Tumne mujhe khona tab shuru kiya jab tumne mujh par shaq kiya."

Ahmed ke paas lafz kam pad gaye. "Main darr gaya tha. Mujhe laga kahin main tumhe kho na doon... aur us darr mein hi maine tumhe kho diya."

Ayesha ki aankhon mein aansu aa gaye, lekin iss baar woh kamzori ke nahi the. "Teen mahine Ahmed... teen mahine main har raat sochti thi ke shayad tum call karoge. Shayad tum poochoge. Lekin tum chup rahe."

Ahmed ne sar jhuka liya. "Har din call karna chaha... lekin ego beech mein aa gaya."

"Ego aur mohabbat ek dil mein saath nahi rehte," Ayesha ne dheere se kaha.

Yeh lafz dono ke darmiyan faisla bankar khade ho gaye.

Andar se Ayesha ke abbu aaye. Unka chehra pehle jaisa sakht nahi tha. "Humne bhi galti ki," unhone kaha. "Bina poore sach ke faisla suna diya. Lekin ek baat samajh lo... rishton ki bunyaad sirf jazbaat par nahi hoti. Bharosa aur himmat chahiye."

Ahmed ne seedha unki aankhon mein dekha. "Agar aap ijazat dein... toh main iss rishte ko izzat ke saath maangna chahta hoon. Chhup kar nahi. Sab ke saamne."

Yeh pehli baar tha jab Ahmed ne mohabbat ko darr ke bina qabool kiya.

Ayesha ne uski taraf dekha. Uske dil mein ab bhi pyaar tha. Woh pyaar kabhi gaya hi nahi tha. Lekin us pyaar ke saath ab ek nayi samajh bhi thi. "Agar hum phir se shuru karen," usne dheere se kaha, "toh iss baar bina shaq ke... bina ego ke... sirf sach ke saath."

Ahmed ki aankhon mein umeed chamak uthi. "Main wada karta hoon."

Lekin kahani itni aasaan nahi thi.

Khandaan mein baatein chalne lagi. Kuch log support mein the, kuch khilaaf. "Cousins ka rishta theek hai ya nahi?" "Log kya kahenge?" "Pehle itna hungama hua, ab kaise sab theek ho jayega?"

Har taraf sawal hi sawal.

Ek hafte tak faisla lataкта raha. Ahmed roz aata, baithta, baat karta. Is baar woh bhaaga nahi. Usne har sawal ka jawab diya. Har ilzaam ko sabr se suna. Usne sab ko yeh mehsoos karaya ke yeh sirf jazbaati zid nahi... balke samajh kar liya gaya faisla hai.

Ayesha bhi pehli baar khud ke liye khadi hui. "Agar galti meri hoti toh main maan leti," usne apne abbu se kaha, "lekin iss baar galti bas galatfehmi ki thi. Aur agar hum sach jaante hue bhi darr gaye, toh phir mohabbat ki kya qeemat?"

Unke abbu ne apni beti ko dekha. Pehli baar unhe woh chhoti si ladki nahi... ek samajhdar aur mazboot aurat nazar aayi.

Do din baad sab ko drawing room mein bulaya gaya.

Hawa phir se waisi hi thi... lekin iss baar faisla todne ka nahi, jodne ka tha.

Ayesha ke abbu ne dheere se kaha, "Rishte galtiyan se nahi... unhe sudharne ki himmat se mazboot hote hain. Agar tum dono waqai itne mazboot ho... toh humein koi aitraaz nahi."

Woh pal... dono ki zindagi ka sabse gehra pal tha.

Ahmed ki aankhon mein aansu aa gaye. Ayesha ne chupke se apni palken jhuka li. Teen mahine ka dard, intezaar, aansu... sab us ek jumle mein pighal gaye.

Nadeem us din maujood nahi tha. Shayad use bhi apni galti ka ehsaas ho chuka tha. Lekin iss kahani ka hero ya villain koi aur nahi... bas do log the jinhone seekha ke mohabbat sirf chahne ka naam nahi. Mohabbat himmat ka naam hai. Bharose ka naam hai. Ego ko todne ka naam hai.

Kuch mahine baad ghar phir se roshan tha. Is baar shaadi ki tayariyan se. Hansi wapas aa chuki thi. Woh hi aangan, woh hi deewarein... lekin iss baar beech mein koi deewar nahi thi.

Shaadi ke din Ahmed ne Ayesha se dheere se kaha, "Agar us din tum call na karti... toh shayad main zindagi bhar galat rehta."

Ayesha muskurayi. "Aur agar tum wapas na aate... toh shayad main zindagi bhar toot jaati."

Dono ne samajh liya tha — mohabbat ko bachane ke liye sirf pyaar nahi, waqt par sach bolna aur sach sunna bhi zaroori hota hai.

Iss kahani ka naam "Cousin Love" tha... lekin asal mein yeh kahani thi bharose ki. Galtiyan ki. Aur un galtiyan ko maaf karke aage badhne ki.

Har mohabbat perfect nahi hoti. Lekin jo mohabbat imtihaan se guzar kar nikle... woh kabhi adhuri nahi rehti.

Aur iss baar... unka ishq adhura nahi tha.

*Galat fehmi hawa ki tarah hoti hai,  
Nazar nahi aati par ghar gira deti hai.  
Ek sawaal pooch lena sau dard se behtar hai,  
Kyuki khamoshi aksar mohabbat ko maar deti hai.*

*Yakeen toot jaaye toh awaaz nahi karta,  
Magar andar hi andar sab kuch jala deta hai.  
Isliye rishton mein sach ko zinda rakhna,  
Warna shak ka ek zarra bhi ishq ko dafan kar deta hai*