

## MOZAIL

*Mozail*<sup>1</sup> by Saadat Hasan Manto in Urdu

Translated into English by

**Nayeem Ahmad Shah**

It was for the first time in four years that Tarlochan had seen night-view of the sky and that too because he was petrified and felt out of sorts. He had come to the terrace of Advani Chambers merely to think for a while in open air. The sky was clear, bereft of clouds and spread over Bombay like a big ash-coloured tent. Lights were lit as far as the human eye could see. Tarlochan felt as if a lot of stars have fallen from the sky and were caught by the buildings which seemed like gigantic trees in the darkness of the night. They were glistening like glowing worms.

To be under the canopy of the sky at night, was a new experience and new ecstasy for Tarlochan. He felt as if he had locked himself in a dungeon (his flat) during those four years and was deprived of one of the most important benedictions of nature. It was nearly three and there was a light breeze. Tarlochan was used to the mechanically stirred air of the fan which would bring heaviness in his entire being. Every morning he would wake up with a feeling of tiredness as if he was beaten to a pulp throughout the night. But now in the morning natural breeze, every pore of his body would suck the freshness of the air. When he had come up to the terrace, his heart and mind was strongly agitated and perturbed, but now only half an hour that agitation and restlessness which would made him feel very uncomfortable had now receded to some extent. Now he could think clearly.

He started thinking about Kripal Kour, who lived along with her family in a *mohalla*<sup>2</sup> which was the centre of ferocious Muslims. Here, a few houses had caught fire claiming a few lives as well. Tarlochan would have evacuated all of them but the curfew was imposed in the area and that too for indefinite hours, perhaps for forty eight hours. Tarlochan was definitely a suppressed Sikh because everywhere there were Muslims and very ferocious Muslims. Sometimes the news would pour in from Punjab that Sikhs displayed too much ferocity towards Muslims. Any Muslim could catch the delicate Kripal Kour by hand and would push her in the gorge of death.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is considered as one of the best short stories of Manto based on the backdrop of 1947 partition of British India into India and Pakistan. It was written in early 1950's after the author emigrated from India to Pakistan. For the source text used in the present translation see *Kulyaat-e Manto (Manto ke Afsane)* Vol. III (Delhi: Educational Publishing House, 2005) pp.224-244.

<sup>2</sup> An area of a town or village; a community

Kripal Kour's mother was blind, and her father a cripple. She had a brother who was in Deolali for some time. He was there to take care of the new contract he had taken in hand.

Tarlochan would get furious over Kripal Kour's brother, Niranjana who used to read about the riots in newspapers every single day. A week ago, he had intimated him about the swiftness with which the disturbances spread and had told him categorically, "Look Niranjana, keep aside these contracts. We are passing through a very sensitive and critical period. First you should come and stay with me. There is no doubt that we have paucity of space, but during testing times man lives by whatsoever means." But he didn't agree. After listening to his big lecture, he merely smiled through his thick moustaches. "Dude you worry unnecessarily. I have seen a lot many such conflicts. This is not Amritsar or Lahore but Bombay. You have only been here for four years and I have lived here for twelve years...a full twelve years."

Who knows what Niranjana would think of Bombay. For him, it was a city which would recover from the effects of conflicts automatically if there were any. He pretended as if he possessed some magic wand or that a fairy-tale citadel which will never fall prey to any catastrophe, but Tarlochan would see clearly in the morning cold air that the mohalla was totally jeopardizing. He was even mentally ready to read in the morning newspapers that Kripal Kour and his parents have been put to sword.

He didn't care a pin for Kripal Kour's crippled father and blind mother. It was good for Tarlochan if they die and only Kripal Kour survived. He also wished for the death of Niranjana so that he will not face any hindrance in his aim. As far as Niranjana, he was not only a stumbling block but a huge boulder in his way. That is why whenever he talked with Kripal Kour about Niranjana, he would call him *Khingar*<sup>3</sup> Singh instead of Niranjana Singh.

The morning air was blowing slowly and gradually. Tarlochan's head was unmindful of the hair, and was feeling pleasant coldness. But in his inner being a lot many doubts were clashing with each other. Kripal Kour had newly entered in his life. No doubt she was the sister of robust *Khingar* Singh. But she was soft, delicate and malleable. She was brought up in a village and had witnessed there some summers and winters but she didn't possess the hardness, the form, the manliness which represents the common village Sikh girls who have to face hardships.

Her body was slim as if yet incomplete. She had small breasts on which there was need of accretion of more layers of fat. As compared to the common village Sikh girls, she had white complexion. But she was flawless having whitish body refined to the extent of the mercerised cloth. She was very shy.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Khingar*: Punjabi word for a huge boulder

Tarlochan belonged to her village but he had not lived there for long. After primary education he entered the high school of city and never returned. After high school, he went to college for further education. During that period he went countless number of times to his village but he didn't hear even the name of Kripal Kour perhaps because every time he was in a hurry to reach the city as soon as possible.

The college days were now a thing of past and the building in which he occupied presently was called Advani Chambers. It had been almost ten years since he left the college. In Tarlochan's life those ten years were full of strange and uncanny events related to Burma, Singapore, Hongkong and finally Bombay where he had been living for four years. In those four years, he had seen for the first time the night-view of the sky, which was very charismatic. The roof of the ash-coloured sky was lit with the thousands of stars. The air around was cold and blowing gently.

Thinking about Kripal Kour, thoughts of Mozail came across his mind as well; the Jewish girl who lived in Advani Chambers and with whom Tarlochan had fallen in love 'up to the knees' as he used to say. He had not experienced that intensity of love during his thirty five years of age.

The day he took a flat in Advani Chambers with the help of a Christian friend, he encountered Mozail who appeared to him horribly mad at the very first sight. She wore brown hair which was messed up completely. Her lips were smeared with lipstick resembling the scattered clots of blood. She wore loosely-hung long white gown. From the upper part of the gown appeared about three quarters of big breasts with the blue veins quite visible. Her arms were covered with a fine down. She appeared as if she has freshly come out of a salon with her hair cut. Her Lips were not too thick. But the crimson colour lipstick was applied in such a way that they appeared like thick beefsteaks.

Tarlochan's flat was adjacent to hers, separated by a narrow lane. When Tarlochan moved ahead to enter his flat, Mozail stepped out of hers, wearing wooden sandals the sound of which made him stop. Mozail looked through her perturbed hair towards Tarlochan and laughed. Tarlochan went nervous and instantly pulled out key from his pocket and headed towards the door of his flat. One of Mozail's wooden sandals slipped on the shiny and cemented floor and she fell on him. When Tarlochan recovered, Mozail was on him in such a way that her long gown was tied up and her two big, bare and robust legs were on his both sides. Tarlochan tried to get up in nervousness, but he entangled with her in such a way that he smeared himself like soap on her body.

Tarlochan felt like panting .He apologized her with suitable words. Mozail corrected her gown and smiled. "These sandals are *ekdum kadam*<sup>4</sup>" Then she inserted her big toe in her sandal and walk out of the corridor.

---

<sup>4</sup> of no use

Tarlochan thought it was pretty hard to befriend Mozail. Only after some time, she came closer to him, but she was very conceited. She would never give him due regard. She would eat and drink with him and would go to cinema with him. She would spend all day with him and would even bath at Joho beach with him. Whenever he tried to make advances beyond hands and lips, she would reprimand him and tell him to stay away. She would thunder on him in such a way that all his enthusiasm to carry on would get entangled in his beard and moustaches.

Tarlochan had not been in love before Mozail barged in his life. In Lahore, Burma, Singapore he would buy girls for some time. It wasn't even in his wildest dreams that just after reaching Singapore, he would immerse himself 'up to the knees' in the love of a stubborn Jewish girl who would treat him casually and with strange indifference. Whenever he asked her to go for movies with him, she would instantly get ready with spectacular makeup and adornment. In Cinema, the moment they would take their seats, she would start looking here and there. If any acquaintance would come by she would shake her hands vigorously and without permission from Tarlochan she would go and sit next to him.

If they were staying in a hotel, Tarlochan would order special feasts particularly for Mozail. But if she caught the glimpse of her old friend, she would leave the morsel at once and would go and sit with him. He would feel very disheartened and jealous by this.

Sometimes Tarlochan would get agitated, because she would leave him completely and would go with her old friends and acquaintances and she wouldn't meet him for some days altogether. She would feign headache, or her upsetting stomach. Tarlochan knew her stomach was as hard as steel and would never get upset.

When she would meet him, she would tell him, "You are a Sikh. You wouldn't understand these subtle things." Tarlochan would get roasted and would ask tauntingly, "Which sensitive things ...about your old lovers?"

With her both hands on her hips Mozail would spread out her legs and would say, "You taunt me about them. Yes they are my lovers and I like them. Why do you get burned up?"

Tarlochan would ask, "In this way how would we carry on?"

Mozail would laugh out loudly "You are not only a Sikh, you are an idiot. Who told you to be loyal with me? If it is the case of loyalty, then go back to your native village and marry a Sikh girl. With me, you have to compromise."

Tarlochan would give in. Actually Mozail had become his Achilles' heel. He wished her nearness come what may. There was no doubt that he had to pocket many insults because of Mozail. He would feel small in front of ordinary Christian lads who had no worth at all, but compelled by his heart, he had vowed to put up with it.

Usually insult or disgrace paves way for revenge, but such was not the case with Tarlochan. He had shut a lot many eyes of his heart and mind and had plugged his several ears with cotton just because he liked Mozail. Not only liked as he would share with his friends he had sunk in her love completely. He couldn't help it now. He wished that whatever portion of his body was left, that too must sink in the bog of her love and the story may end.

He bore insults for two long years, but remained unwavering. At last, one day when Mozail was in jovial mood, he took her in his arms and asked, "Mozail, Don't you love me?"

Mozail freed herself from his arms and sat on chair and looked towards the circumference of her frock, brooding intensely. Then she raised her big Jewish eyes and batted her thick eyelids and said "I cannot love a Sikh."

Tarlochan felt as if someone had kept burning coal under his turban. This fired him up. "Mozail! You always make fun of me. You don't make fun of me. You make fun of my love." Mozail got up and deflected her brown cut hair and said, "You shave your beard and let loose the hair of your head. I promise you many lads will wink at you suggestively. You are alluring"

Again Tarlochan's hair was set on fire as if more burning coals were put under his turban. Moving ahead he forcefully dragged Mozail to himself, squeezed her and inserted his lips along with the moustaches into hers.

Mozail separated herself from his clutches and produced sounds "phoon phoon". "I brushed my teeth this morning. Don't hurt me."

"Mozail!", Tarlochan screamed.

Mozail pulled out a small mirror from the bag she carried with her always. She looked towards her lips on which there was thick lipstick and the scratches drawn by Tarlochan's moustaches. "I swear by God. You don't make right use of your beard and moustaches. Your hair is so good that it can easily dust off my navy- skirt. All one needs to do is to put some petrol on them."

Tarlochan had reached to that stage of anger where he had turned cold completely. He sat on sofa comfortably. Mozail also sat and started to unpin his beard. She put the pins one by one under her teeth. Tarlochan was really alluring and good-looking. When he did not grow his beard and moustaches, people would get deceived seeing his open hair. They would take him for a young and beautiful girl, but now the heaps of hair had concealed all his facial expressions like bushes. He was a devout Sikh and would never do away with the formalities of his religion.

When the beard opened completely and hung on his chest, he asked Mozail, “What are you doing?” With pins pressed under her teeth, she smiled, “Your hair is very soft. My idea was wrong that they can clean my navy blue skirt. Give them to me. I will glue them and make a first class wallet for myself.”

Tarlochan burned up and spoke to Mozail with seriousness “I have never made fun of your religion. Why do you always mock mine? Look, playing with the religious sentiments of a person is not good. I would never tolerate this but only because I love you a lot. Do you know that?”

Mozail stopped playing with his beard, “I know.”

Tarlochan did his hair with extreme dexterity after taking pins from Mozail’s teeth. “You know it clearly that my love is not trash. I want to marry you.”

“I know” she said and giving her hair a trivial stroke she rose and looked towards the picture hanging on the wall. “I have nearly come to the same conclusion of marrying you.” Tarlochan sprung to his feet, “Really”?

Mozail put on a wide smile on her crimson coloured lips and her white teeth glistened for a while, “Yes!” Tarlochan hugged her with his half opened beard and said, “So...when?”

Mozail moved aside, “When you cut this hair.”

At that time Tarlochan was in come-what-may attitude. Without thinking anything he said, “I will have them cut tomorrow only.” Mozail started tap dancing on the floor. “You speak trash Triloch. You don’t have such daring.” This pulled out the remaining ideas of religion from his mind.

“You will see.”

“I will see” she said and moved ahead with quick pace. She kissed the moustaches of Tarlochan and produced the sounds “*phoon phoon*”<sup>5</sup> and went out.

Throughout that night, Tarlochan underwent many torments. Next day, he went to a barber in the fort area and had him cut his hair and shave off his beard. All this happened and he kept his eyes shut. When everything became clear, he opened his eyes and for a long time gazed on the mirror at his reflection which would entice even the prettiest girl of Bombay to think for a while.

Tarlochan began to experience the pleasing coldness which he had experienced already while coming out of the salon. He started walking fast on the terrace where there

---

<sup>5</sup> The sound one produces after tasting something unpleasant.

was the cluster of tanks and taps. He wished that the remaining part of the story may not come to his mind, but that came.

On the first day after having his hair cut, he didn't come out of his house. Next day, he sent a note to Mozail through his servant saying that he is out of sorts and that she must come for some time. Mozail came. Looking at Tarlochan without hair for a moment she became wonderstruck and hugged him, "My darling Triloch" and made his face crimson with kisses.

She moved her hand on the clean and smooth cheeks of Tarlochan. She combed her English-style beard with her fingers and started sloganeering in Arabic language. She made such a noise that her nose started running which she wiped out with the circumference of her skirt. Tarlochan felt shy. He drew her skirt down and said to her in reprimanding tone, "At least wear something underneath".

It didn't have any effect on Mozail. She smiled with her lips on which lipstick had turned stale and scattered, but only said, "It gives me a funny feeling."

Tarlochan was reminded of the first day when he had clashed with Mozail and they had encountered with each other very strangely. With a smile he hugged Mozail and said, "We will get married tomorrow."

"Certainly", she said, rubbing his chin.

It was decided that the marriage ceremony will take place in Poona. Since it was a civil marriage, they had to publish a notice of ten to fifteen days prior to marriage because it was a court matter. Therefore, Pune was considered as a suitable place. It was near and Tarlochan had friends there also. Next day they had to go to Poona as per schedule.

Mozail was a sales girl in a store in the fort area. There was a taxi stand only at some distance from there. Mozail had asked Tarlochan to wait there. Tarlochan reached there on the scheduled time, waited for one and a half hour, but she didn't turn up. Next day he came to know that she had gone to Deolali with a lover of hers who had recently purchased a car, and she would stay there for some indefinite time.

What befell Tarlochan is indescribable. In short he braved the situation and forgot her. Meanwhile, he met Kripal Kour and started loving her. Only after a while, he noticed that Mozail was an ignoble girl. She was hard hearted and her intensions would fluctuate every now and then, but he was gratified that he didn't fell into the trap of marrying her.

In spite of this, Mozail would come to his mind constantly and she would clasp his heart. She didn't care a straw for the feelings of anyone. She was still liked by Tarlochan. Therefore, sometimes, he would get coerced to think about her, wandering what she would be doing in Deolali for such a long time. Was she with that fellow who had purchased a new car

or was she with someone else? He would feel great torments while thinking that instead of him she would be with someone else, although he was quite familiar with her character.

He had spent money for her like water, but according to his own choice. Otherwise Mozail was not so costly. She would like the low-priced things. Once, Tarlochan planned to give her golden earrings which she liked very much, but in the same shop she chose the copy and the low priced earrings and entreated Tarlochan to buy the same for her.

By now Tarlochan had not understood her way of living. What was her composition and what was her plan? She would allow him to kiss her for some hours. He would smear himself like soap on her entire body, but from that point she wouldn't allow him to move even an inch. In order to vex him, she would only say, "You are a Sikh. I hate you!"

Tarlochan would feel that Mozail didn't hate him. Had that been the case she would never meet him time and again. She would not tolerate even the minor things not to talk of spending two years in his company. She would give a flat denial. She hated underwear because she would get perturbed by it. Many a times Tarlochan informed her about their strong necessity. He recommended them for the sake of chastity, but she never wore that thing.

Whenever Tarlochan talked about chastity, she would get irritated. "What nonsense is this chastity? You shut your eyes if you think about chastity. Tell me, which is that garment through which a man cannot become bare? Or through which body of a person doesn't become visible. Don't speak this trash to me. You are a Sikh. I know you wear silly underwear under your pant which has the semblance with the knickers. This too, like your beard and hair of your head falls in the jurisdiction of your religion. You must feel ashamed. You are now a grown up fellow, but you still think that your religion is hidden in underwear!"

Earlier when Tarlochan was not accustomed to such diatribe, he would feel enraged, but after pondering over it he would roll and would think that perhaps Mozail is right. When he had cleared his head off the hair and beard, he had clearly felt that till date he had walked with the weight of the hair only which didn't make any sense at all.

He stopped after he reached near the water tank. He cursed Mozail like a pagan and stopped thinking about her. Kripal Kour was a chaste girl with whom he had fallen in love. She was in peril for she lived in a mohalla which was teeming with brutal Muslims. Several mishaps had happened there also, but the trouble was that in that area curfew was imposed for forty eight hours. Let alone curfew, if only the Muslims of that area willed, they would put to sword Kripal Kour and her parents with greater ease.

Tarlochan sat on a fat faucet, brooding about the same thing. Now his hair had grown very long. He was sure that within one year it will reach to its original length. His beard had grown fast too but he didn't want to grow it long. In fort area, there was a barber. Tarlochan



would have his hair cut with such an adroitness that it would never appear cut to an ordinary person.

He stroked his long and soft hair with his fingers and heaved a cold sigh. No sooner had he got up that the harsh sound of sandals reached his ears. He thought about who could be there? There lived several Jewish women in that building and all of them wore sandals in their homes for some reason. The sound started to come nearer. All of a sudden he saw Mozail near the second water tank. She wore a long and loose shirt of typical Jewish style. She was yawning loudly, so loudly that Tarlochan felt that she would devour all the air around him.

Tarlochan got up and thought, "Where from she emerged all of a sudden. At this time, what has she come for at terrace?" Mozail yawned again. Tarlochan felt as if she will now split his bones.

In her loose shirt, her breasts beat. Several blue circles began to appear in front of Tarlochan's eyes. He coughed loudly. Mozail turned and looked towards him. Her response was very trivial. Dragging her sandals she reached near him and looked towards his beard, "You became Sikh again, Triloch?" His beard began prick him. Mozail moved ahead and rubbed his chin with the back of her hand and smilingly said, "Now this brush has become capable of cleaning my navy blue skirt, but they are there in Deolali."

Tarlochan remained silent.

Mozail pinched his arm, "Why don't you speak *Sardar Sahib*<sup>6</sup>?"

Tarlochan didn't want to repeat his earlier follies. Still in the dim morning light he looked towards Mozail's face intensely. There was no particular variation in her. She only looked a little bit emaciated than before. Tarlochan asked him, "You look weak. Were you ill?"

"No", Mozail said, giving her hair a trivial stroke.

"You look weak?" she repeated his words

"I am dieting". Mozail sat on the fat faucet and started tapping on flour with her sandals. "It means you want to become a Sikh again."

"Yes", Tarlochan said with slight persistence.

"Congratulations", said Mozail. She put off one sandal and started striking it against the water tap. "Have you started to love some other girl?"

"Yes", Tarlochan said slowly.

---

<sup>6</sup> A title of nobility that was originally used to denote noblemen and aristocrats, but here denotes leader of a tribe.

“Congratulations. Does she belong to this building?”

“No”

“This is a very bad.” Mozail put on sandals and got up.

“Man must take care of his neighbours always.”

Tarlochan remained silent. Mozail got up and stroked his beard with her fingers.

“Did that girl suggest you to grow your hair long?”

“No.”

Tarlochan was in a great bewilderment. He felt as if the hair of his beard had entangled badly and he was desperately trying to comb it. When he said “No”, there was the sign of impudence in his demeanour.

The lipstick on the lips of Mozail appeared like the pieces of stale meat. When she smiled, Tarlochan felt as if the butcher from his village has cut a piece of meat into two halves.

“You shave this beard now. I swear I will marry you”, she said laughingly.

Tarlochan thought that he would tell her that he loves a very kind, chaste and a girl of pure-disposition and would marry her soon. On the contrary Mozail was a prostitute, ugly, unfaithful and merciless. But he was not such a cheapish man. He only told her, “I have decided about my marriage. The girl I am going to marry is a modest one. She is from my village and has great reverence for religion. It is only for her that I decided to grow my hair long.”

Mozail wasn't accustomed to brooding, but she thought for a while. She moved on her sandals, making a half-circle and said, “She is a staunch follower of religion. How would she accept you? “Does she know that you have cut your hair once?”

“She doesn't know up till now.” I started to grow my beard only when you departed for Deolali; only for revenge. Then I happened to meet Kripal Kour. Also, I wear my turban in such a way that only one in hundred will come to know that my hair is cut. But now they will grow to their original length very soon.” Tarlochan started to comb his soft hair with his fingers.

“When are you getting married?”

“I don't know yet” he said, thinking deeply.

They went silent for a while. Then Mozail saw that he is in deep thought and asked him with a serious tone, “Tarloch, what are you thinking about?” Tarlochan felt the dire need of a

compassionate friend, be it Mozail. He told her the whole matter and unbosomed himself to her. She laughed. “You are the idiot of the first water. Get her here. What is the problem?”

“Problem, Mozail, you will never understand the seriousness of this matter or the seriousness of any other matter because you don’t care a straw. That is why we parted for which I will feel sorry as long as I live.”

Mozail stroke her sandals against the water faucet forcefully. “Sorry...damn it... silly... Idiot... You think about your...what is her name... You need to think only about how can we get her safe and sound from that Mohalla... You cry about break up and all that. We won’t get along ever. You are very silly and coward. I need a bold man. Leave that matter. Come let us get your Kour here.” She took Tarlochan by his arm.

“From where?”, Tarlochan asked her fearfully.

“The place where she is. I know every nook and corner of that Mohalla. Come along.”

“But listen, curfew has been imposed”.

“Curfew is not for Mozail...Come on”

Taking Tarlochan by the arm, she dragged him towards the door which opened towards the stairs going downwards. After opening the door, she was about to descend the stairs that she stopped and looked towards the beard of Tarlochan.

Tarlochan asked, “What is the matter?”

“Your beard...but let it be. It is not so long. If you walk bareheaded nobody would take you for a Sikh.”, Mozail said.

“Bareheaded!” Tarlochan said with nervousness. “I wouldn’t go bareheaded.”

“Why?”, Mozail asked very innocently.

“You don’t understand. It is not good for me to go there without my turban”, he said correcting a lock of his hair.

“Why?”

“Why don’t you understand, she has not seen me bareheaded till now. She understands that I have a full head of hair. I don’t want to let the cat out of the bag.” Mozail stroked the sandals on the sill of the door loudly and said, “Actually, you are the idiot of the first water. You ass, it is the question of her life, your that Kour whom you love.”

Tarlochan tried to make her understand, “Mozail, she is a devotional and religious minded girl. If she saw me bareheaded, she would start detesting me.”Mozail got irritated,

“Oh! your love, damn it! She is in danger and you speak of wearing a turban at any cost and perhaps your underwear also which resembles with knickers.”

“That I wear every time.”

“Very good but right now, think of that mohalla where dons and hooligans live. If you go with that turban, you will be slaughtered.” Tarlochan answered briefly, “I don’t care for that. If I go there with you I will go with my turban. I don’t want to put my love at risk!”

Mozail got irritated and enraged and said, “You ass, where would your love be when don’t live? What is the name of that girl? When she and her dynasty will perish...You are an idiot Sikh.”

“Don’t speak trash.” Tarlochan said furiously.

Mozail laughed loudly and put her arms round his neck and swung a little, “Darling, do as you please. Go and wear your turban. I will be waiting for you in the market.” She went downstairs. “Wouldn’t you change your clothes”, he said trying to stop her. “No”, she said jerking her head.

She went downstairs making a clattering sound. Tarlochan heard the noise of wooden sandals she wore while descending the stairs of the storey below. Then with his fingers, he rolled together his hair backwards and went down into his flat. He changed his clothes instantly. He had already made his turban. He put it on in a nice manner and locked the door of the flat and went downstairs.

Outside, on the footpath, stood Mozail with her robust legs widened. She was smoking just like a man. When Tarlochan reached near her, out of sheer anger, she blew out a mouthful of smoke on Tarlochan’s face. “You are very contemptible”, said Tarlochan angrily.

Mozail smiled, “This is not something new you said. Before this some others have labelled me as contemptible.” Then she looked towards his turban. “You wore this turban very perfectly. It looks like you have a full head of hair.

The market was very dreary except the wind which was blowing and that too very slowly as if horrified by curfew. Lights were lit but they looked like diseased ones. Usually trams would start running at that time and the people would move from one place to another. There used to be a huge rush of people at that time, but now it appeared like nobody had trodden the road and no one will.

Mozail continued to move on and her sandals were clattering on the pebbles of the footpath. This noise was enormous in that calm atmosphere. In his heart of hearts, Tarlochan cursed Mozail that within only a few minutes she could have put on something else instead of

those vulgar sandals. He wanted to tell her to put off those sandals and walk bare-footed. But he knew she wouldn't agree so he preferred silence.

Tarlochan was very terrified. If only a leaf of some tree rustled, his heart would start pounding faster but Mozail was undaunted. When they reached the chowk, a policeman roared, "Hey you. Where are you going?"

Tarlochan was astounded. Mozail neared the policeman, slightly jerked her hair and said, "Oh, you? Didn't you recognize me? I am Mozail." Then she pointed towards a street, "On that side lives my sister. She is ill, and I am taking the doctor with me." The sepoy was trying to recognize him. God knows where from Mozail drew out a packet of cigarettes and handed over one to him "Take this."

The sepoy took one cigarette. Mozail offered him her already-lit cigarette and said, "Here is lighter". The sepoy took a puff of the cigarette. Mozail winked at him with his right eye and Tarlochan with her left and walked clattering towards that street through which they were to reach the mohallah.

Tarlochan was silent but he was feeling that Mozail was taking an eccentric pleasure by violating the curfew. She loved playing with the danger. When she would go to Joho beach with him she would become a perfect nuisance for him. She would clash with the waves and would go too far in the sea. He always remained apprehensive about her safety. When she would turn up, her body would be full of blues and wounds, but she least bothered about them.

Mozail was marching ahead followed by Tarlochan who was looking here and there fearfully lest some stabber would appear from his side. Mozail stopped. When Tarlochan reached near her, she made him understand "Tarloch dear, it is not good to feel afraid like this. If you feel afraid, something will happen necessarily. I speak truth. This is my experience." Tarlochan remained silent.

When they crossed that street and reached to the next one which opened in that mohallah where Kripal Kour lived, Mozail stopped all of a sudden. Only at some distance a shop was being looted calmly. For some time, she took the stock of the situation and said to Tarlochan, "Don't worry...come on."

The duo started to walk again. The man, who was carrying a large plate of brass, clashed with Tarlochan and the plate fell. The man looked keenly towards Tarlochan who looked like a Sikh. The man instantly put hand in his breeches to draw the weapon, Mozail came. She came staggering as if heavily drunk. She pushed aside the man, and said in intoxicated tone, "Hey, What are you doing? Are you going to kill your brother? I am going to marry him. Then she turned towards Tarlochan, "Kareem, pick up the plate and help him put it on his head."

The man refrained from drawing out weapon from his breeches and looked towards Mozail with lustful eyes. He went forward and stroked her breasts with his elbow, “Go and enjoy, *Sali*<sup>7</sup>. Then he picked up the plate and vanished.

Tarlochan grumbled, “How meanly that bastard behaved!”

Mozail moved her hand over her breasts “There is no meanness...it doesn't matter...come”, she started walking quickly. Tarlochan also quickened his pace.

After crossing the street they reached to that mohallah where Kripal Kour lived. Mozail asked, “Which street?” Tarlochan said slowly, “Third street, that building.”

Mozail started walking towards that building. This way was very silent. The population around was dense but not even the voice of a baby could be heard.

When they reached near the street there seemed some commotion. One man emerged quickly from the building on the one side of the street and went into the building of the other side. After some time, from that building emerged three men. They looked here and there on the footpath and with great haste they went into the next building. “Mozail was wonderstruck.” She hinted Tarlochan to go in the darkness. Then she said slowly, “Tarloch dear, put off this turban.”

“I will never do that.” Tarlochan replied.

Mozail went fretful with rage, “As you wish, but don't you notice what is going on.”

Whatever was going in the front was quiet evident to both of them. There was a mysterious kind of commotion. When the two men re-emerged from the right-side building, they were carrying sacks on their backs. Mozail became shell shocked. Perhaps she was thinking. When both the men reached the other end of the street, they disappeared. Mozail had an idea, “Look, do as I say. I will run fast into that building. You should pretend that you are trying to catch me. Don't think. All of this must happen instantly.”

Mozail didn't wait for his response and went fast towards the building clattering her sandals against the floor. Tarlochan pursued her. Within a while she was inside the building near the stairs. Tarlochan was panting but Mozail was all right. She asked Tarlochan, “Which floor?” Tarlochan moistened his lips and said, “Second”.

“Let's go.”

After saying this she climbed stairs quickly with Tarlochan in hot pursuit. The stairs were smeared with big blood stains. Looking at them his blood stopped circulating because it almost dried up in his veins. They reached to the second floor. Then, at some distance from corridor, Tarlochan knocked at a door slowly. Mozail stopped at some distance near the

---

<sup>7</sup> Wife's sister, but sometimes it is used as slang for a girl.

stairs. Tarlochan knocked at the door once again and taking his mouth to the door called, "Mehnga Singh Ji! Mehnga Singh Ji!" A girl's voice came from inside, "Who is it?"

"Tarlochan!"

The door opened slowly. Tarlochan asked Mozail to follow him. She came quickly and both of them went inside. Mozail saw a slim and thin girl on her side who was very terrified. Mozail looked keenly at her for a moment. She had a lean figure. She seemed to have a cold. Mozail hugged her and wiped her nose with the loose garment she was wearing.

Mozail said to Kripal Kour very lovingly, "Don't be afraid. Tarlochan has come to take you away." Kripal Kour looked at Tarlochan with fearful eyes and parted herself from Mozail. Tarlochan said to him, "Ask Sardaar sahib and your mother to get ready, but be quick." In the meantime shrieks came from upstairs as if fisticuffs were going on.

"They must have caught him.", a hoarse voice came from the throat of Kripal Kour. Tarlochan asked, "Whom?" Kripal Kour was about to answer that Mozail took her by the arm and dragged her towards a corner. "He was served rightly. You put off these clothes."

Kripal Kour was yet to think about it that Mozail helped her put off her shirt instantly. Kripal Kour tried to hide her bare body desperately with her arms and was very much horrified. Tarlochan turned his face to the other side. Mozail took off her kaftan-like gown she always wore. She told Kripal Kour to wear the same. She was now utterly nude herself.

"Take her away," she told Tarlochan. She untied the girl's hair so that it hung over her shoulders. "Go." Tarlochan said to her, "Come" but suddenly stopped. He turned and looked towards Mozail who stood there shivering slightly because of the cold.

"Why don't you go?" Mozail asked in an irritated tone.

Tarlochan said slowly, "She has her parents also."

"Don't care about them...you take her."

"And you?"

"I will come"

All of a sudden a few men came from the upstairs, one after the other. When they reached the door, they started to knock it so vehemently as if they were hell bent in breaking it. Kripal Kour's blind mother and cripple father were moaning in the next room.

Mozail thought about something and then swung her hair a little and said, "Listen, there is only one way out. I will open the door." Mozail continued talking to Tarlochan, "I will rush out after opening the door. I will run upstairs and you will run after me. These men who are breaking the door will get dumbfounded and will follow us."

Tarlochan again asked, “Then?”

Mozail said, “This one here, whatever her name is, will find the chance to slip away. Nobody would say her anything as they would take her for a Jewish woman because of her dress.” Tarlochan made Kripal Kour understand very quickly. Mozail cried loudly, threw the door open and rushed out and fell on the people outside. The men had no time to react and made way for her. She was running up the stairs in her wooden sandals with Tarlochan following her.

She slipped and came crashing down, head first. Tarlochan stopped and turned. Blood was oozing out from her nose, mouth and ears. The men who had come to break the door gathered round her in a circle. Nobody asked what has happened. Everyone was silent and looking at the bare and bruised body of Mozail.

Tarlochan shook her arm and called, “Mozail! Mozail!”

Mozail opened her big Jewish eyes and smiled. Tarlochan undid his Turban and covered her bare body with it. Mozail smiled again, winked at him and said, “Go and see if my underwear is there or not. I mean that...” Tarlochan understood but didn’t want to get up. On that, Mozail said with anger, “You are truly a Sikh, go and see.”

Tarlochan got up and went towards Kripal Kour’s flat. Mozail looked with her faint eyesight towards the men gathered around and said, “This person is my lover. He is a bloody Muslim but he is so crazy that I call him a Sikh”.

Tarlochan turned up. He signalled Mozail that Kripal Kour had gone. Mozail heaved a sigh of relief but with this, blood poured out of her mouth in gushes. “Oh! Damn it”, she said. Then she wiped her mouth with her arms and turned towards Tarlochan, “All right darling, bye”.

Tarlochan wanted to say something but words got stuck in his throat.

Mozail pushed aside Tarlochan’s turban from her body and said “Take away this rag of your religion. I don’t need it”. Her arm fell on her robust breasts and she went silent for ever.

\*\*\*\*\*

### About the Author:

Saadat Hasan Manto(1912-1955) was a prolific writer and playwright who unveiled the naked truths of the society that no one dared to talk about. He wrote twenty two collections of short stories, a novel, five series of radio plays three collections of essays and two collections of personal sketches. He chronicled the chaos that prevailed during and after the partition of India in 1947.He was charged with obscenity six times in India and Pakistan for his writings.



His first work was *Tamasha* based on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar India. His earlier works were influenced by the progressive writers of his times which showed a marked leftist and socialist leanings, and his later works portrayed the darkness of human psyche as human values progressively declined around the partition. His best short stories are held in high esteem by the literary circles. He vehemently opposed the partition of India the glimpses of which can be seen in *Mozail*, *Naya Qanoon*, *Toba Tek Singh* etc. He died on 18 January 1955 in Lahore, Punjab, West Pakistan.

**About Translator:**

Nayeem Ahmad Shah hails from Bandipora district of J and K. He earned his Master's degree in English from University of Kashmir in 2011. Besides being a regular contributor to various English Journals, he has many newspaper articles, book reviews and poems to his credit. His areas of interest are Translation Studies and Postcolonial Literature. He is presently serving as Assistant Professor of English at Govt. Degree College, Pattan, Baramulla. He can be reached at [nayeem.eng.ku@gmail.com](mailto:nayeem.eng.ku@gmail.com).