

## Short Story

### **The Village Boy**

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It was the month of June. Everything had reached near its maturity. Birds were cackling and collecting food grains for their babies. Bees were dancing around flowers in the garden. The sun was reaching the heights of the sky. My village was engirdled with green mountains and was filled with complete silence. Children were going to school. Only one fourth part of families remained at their houses keenly looking after their houses, kids of their sons and daughters. Hassan partly was also supervising his house. He was a smart, tall guy with round shoulders. He kept a thick beard. His eyes were big, round with depth like sea. His countenance depicted kindness, sympathy and intelligence. He was preparing for M.B.B.S as he had got good marks in the board exam. His image was good among his neighbors, relatives and peers. His father Ali was a government employer working on a small amount of salary. He was often contented in the eyes of others. It was his wish that he wanted to see all his children educated. His four sons equally deserved his love. Each son was self dependent except Hassan who was thinking something big in his future. In keeping his son's dream in mind, his father sent him to a local teacher named Sultan. He was a hard worker, passionate and helpful in his job. Hassan's father fixed the time of his tuition. No doubt, Hassan was more inquisitive than other students in the class. It was the general course of three months covering all the subjects. Hassan liked the teacher very much. Every student in the class called him Sultan Sir. Sultan liked only the educational progress among his students. Hassan went everyday with enthusiasm in learning new things. Besides, he did extra reading after tuition. He was a voracious reader and read everything avidly.

It was the tenth day of his tuition when he knew some strange things besides education. It was the boy in the same class. His name was Tariq. His fellows called him 'Toofan Agha' because he was furious, energetic and notorious among his peers and in his village. He hardly came for learning. He was not interested in the class. He often came in the class with manifold tales. Boys in the class were fan of him. Every student was eagerly waiting for his tales. His tales had only one theme, girls. He had had an in depth psychology of girls. It was his business to judge which girl is charactered and which is easy to trap. He had kept unlawful relationships with a number of girls of his locality and outside from 8<sup>th</sup> class. He had now gained a good amount of experience regarding girls. There was not any place where his name was not taken. He had become a household name. Boys often came to him with their tales for some sort of solution. His patients were involved in manifold problems. He had gained such an image that he would not let anybody untreated. He was called a dabbler. His patients regularly visited him, putting

their problems like rejected cases, proposals, long time waiting for a single answer in front of him. He with his devilish mentality was stick in redressing their ailments. He prescribed them like a medical doctor many strategies and tests in coming out of difficult situations. I also came under his impression. His tales related to girls infused in me manly traits from which I had been unaccustomed all those years. Now such a lamp was ignited in me too.

I was known as a kind, simple and intelligent person. But I considered myself shy, ignorant and stubborn. Day by day my interaction with Toofan Aga overshadowed my lamp. He was in the same classroom when our teacher was delivering a lecture on a love story of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. This love story brought in me the feelings of love for a girl. While listening, a lip smile appeared on every student; my eyes began to start looking from one student to another. Suddenly my sight fell on a girl sitting in the corner of the classroom. My eyes did not take the chance of leaving but remained glued to her. The tuition teacher always expected answers from me when everybody failed to answer. But my mind was fixed on my new target. I was now only a heap of meat in the class, my mind and eyes mostly travelled towards her. First time in my life I wanted something entirely different than education. The classroom was not the only place to think about her; even at home her picture appeared before me. She was more than anything to me and was a new course of study for me. I wanted my full entry into her life. She was an ordinary girl for others but for me she was an angel. Her countenance depicted her simplicity, religiosity and modesty. She had an average height, well structured and wearing fairy like attire. Her face was round like a moon, holding walnut sized eyes. Her eyes were always wet. She kept a handkerchief in her delicate hands with which she wiped out the wetness in her eyes. Her ear rings matched her attire. Her throat was as white as snow. She had well sized hands perfectly manicured. Her gait was so attractive for me. I thought it would take me thousand years to admire one part of her body.

In the classroom I was now not the same one who would always talk about education. Everybody in the classroom started talking about my sudden disinterest in learning habits for which I had been known before. Day by day my interest grew stronger in her. After returning from tuition it became my routine to think about my strategies. My mind became the workshop of every single moment of her. I started scolding the time which in my case ended very quickly. Outside everything looked desolate and useless for me. I did not take interest in outside activities like my friends who were always busy in playing after school. My playground was my mind now where the game of how to make her my beloved was being played. She brought reversal in my life. My simple way of dressing no more existed. Sometimes I remembered how often I talked about the extravagance of my friends who spent much on their dressing and other maintaining items. The same ghost of extravagance was entering into my mind. I wanted to become smart and well dressed like my friends. But to become a smart there was a logic that I too had to buy the items in building my personality. Before it the money which I spent on my books now I lavishly spent on puppy jeans, stylish shirts, shining shoes, colorful caps, perfume, powder, face wash. I started decorating my room. I bought my own locker where I kept all my clothes and facial items with a fear of not to be discovered. I was eagerly waiting for the tuition time. It had become usual that I started maintaining myself before two hours. I washed my face with face wash five times during these two hours. There was no part of my body without applying perfume. I used it like water. After washing my face I applied fair and handsome cream which I

had heard from Toofan Agha that it attracted girls more than any other creams. But my use of cream was peculiar I applied three layers of cream painted like painter. It took me fifteen minutes to make my hairstyle. After reaching the classroom everybody gasped when looking at my strange type of outlook. Some among them were gaping about my change but I did not pay a bit heed towards them. They did not interest me at all. The teacher had been delivering a lecture for ten minutes. It was uncontrollable for me, I could not resist any longer now. I slowly tried to turn my head from my teacher and for some time I looked from the corner of my left eye but did not reach her because she was sitting two rows back. My eyes started searching answers of the questions in the answer key. She was the answer for me among the girls. When my eyes reached her eyes, I thought she was waiting for my glance. We looked into each other's eyes for few seconds. She got blushed and her face turned red. She tried to show not a bit of interest in me. But I could not control myself. My eyes again and again crossed limits in order to meet her eyes. This kind of feeling left with me for two weeks without knowing her name. My first curiosity was to know her name which was possible only from her friend Sophia. She was a tall bony girl coming from Fatima's village. Her height only made her attractive. When she walked she was like a Hollywood actress with English complexion. She was sensible, intelligent outspoken than other girls and much interested in boys than girls. She had a pure heart without ill intentions. She often made excuses in order to talk to boys. She was much helpful in the matter of solving complexities in love. She was to some extent like Tariq in that but in other matters she was unlike him in many ways. She came from a wealthy family. Her father was a medical doctor, well known in his locality. She was father's favorite because she had given word to her father that she would top in the 12<sup>th</sup> class exam. Sophia and Fatima often came together. Sophia's intention towards me was different from other boys. She had a strong liking for me. She liked me like a salt. She always tried to find a way to meet and talk to me. She had good feelings towards me. She was a modern religious type of girl. I had overheard from my friends that she wanted to marry me. One day our teacher was late for class and Sophia was sitting outside the classroom as usual she was much punctual and in time for class. I thought it proper time to meet her. But I could not talk directly to her so; I pretended the missing of my pen and asked her if she had two pens. She had not but how could she say, 'No' to her coming world. She made an excuse that the note which the teacher was going to write I had already that note. So you kept mine. I knew the reason why she had given me her only pen. We stood there for three minutes at last I come to my real idea of meeting her. My shyness always accompanied me like a dust to a shirt. I told her a cock and a bull story to make a way easy for my real intention. Not to come directly I indirectly asked her who is your best friend. But it was impossible for me to guess if she would even tell her name. She started to imagine and was about to take the name but she suddenly appeared before us. When she came out of her imagination she pointed towards her and saying this is my real and ever loyal friend Fatima from my own village 'badamechoke' it was a village two kilometers away from my village. This village was famous for the production of almonds. Besides this, the village was a rich source of apple trees and rice. These sources made the village people rich all over Kashmir. The people living in that village were very simple and living an austere way of life.

Even though I had got success in my first step, it took me a long gap of three months without making a single talk to her. My shyness got reflected from my countenance. I was

planning how to meet and introduce myself to her. I did not keep a middle man in maintaining my relationship with her. As I had got a lesson from Shakespeare's comedy 'Twelfth Night' in which the middle man fell in love with the lady to whom he had come with a proposal from other man. My life got entirely changed from this incident. I usually did not miss even a single day of tuition. Every day I built my strength to talk to her but when I came closer and tried to express my feelings, words started drying away from my mouth whenever I attempted to do so. I talked to myself it would not have worked out if I acted like that. I had to take an initiative. There happened many encounters like in the exam the ink in her pen ran off. She said in a slow tone, had anybody got two pens. As my attention was always in the class towards her, I was the first one who caught her voice. Without looking for my second pen, I hurriedly gave her the one with which I was writing my own paper. She said thanks. I had no words how to react back but what I did, I nodded only. I was so happy that her hands were holding my pen. After exam she called my name Hassan and asked me take back your pen. Her way of calling my name sent a vibration like electricity into my whole body. She said thanks once more. This time I opened my mouth and answered in English, 'it's my pleasure.' There was not a paucity of words in giving reply in English, because my English was much better than the rest of the students in the class. My English teacher always gave my example when advising the students in the spoken English class. No doubt there is a craze to speak in English. This was my bonus point that won the heart of people of my locality and outside. Our first incident of sharing the pen opened a gateway and also ended the hard boundary between us. The pen used by her was more worthy for me than a diamond. I kept it covered like the holy book *Quran*. It's obligatory in Islam before touching the Quran we ought to be purified. I did the same while touching the pen. It was my first love in my life. I had often heard tales from my elders and friends that love destroys person's future. The definition and consequence of love varies from one culture to another. But my culture does not allow young boys and girls to fall in love. The people who get involved in such an act they lose their image and are called vagabonds. But there was a different case of mine. My love brought many positive changes in me. I became a regular 'Nimazi.' I was the only boy in my village who offered the Morning Prayer. Offering the morning prayer is not everybody's cup of tea and even the people who are near about death also avoid in coming out for prayers. My regular visit to Mosque made me respectable person in the society and also the Godly work of giving alarm was bestowed upon my shoulders.. Not only praying five times, I became a regular reciter of the holy Quran in the morning and also taught kids at my home. There was a main motive behind coming to the path of God. Perhaps I had heard from Arabic teacher that if people pray profusely by heart, the difficult things become easier for them to achieve. Such was the trust being built upon the religious duties. In the prayer people invoke God to fulfill their numerous kinds of wishes. My wish was not like them. It was peculiar; it was the matter of love which I never left in any prayer without mentioning it. It always came to my lips after prayer like tears to eyes.

Fourth months had passed without putting forward my desire to her. My mind had become the hotbed of positive and negative thoughts. I started talking in the mirror. Like how could I utter a word of love to her? What would be her reaction to that word which was ringing in my mind for the last fourth months. Now fearful thoughts started visiting my mind day and night even during prayers. What could I do, if she said no? How could I resist that rejection? No, No, No, she is mine. She is my world. She is my princess. There is no one who can love her

more than me. She has to accept my offer. My timing to the tuition varied day by day. It had become my habit to come before everyone not for the tuition, but to wait for her arrival. My easiest route also got changed. Although it was a long route for me, it became much shorter for me than the earlier link road. How it would be longer for me, as it was the path where my beloved treads her footsteps. It was the course which connected her home to the tuition centre. This road offered me many chances in encountering her. But I walked as a silent walker alongside her. I had become somehow acquainted about her coming time. Still there were some days when our timing did not match like she went before me but I never surpassed her, I was always waiting for her arrival. I followed her like the attendants of the princess. My heart became as close to her like a dust clinging to a shirt. It was not possible to talk with her while returning from the tuition, because she was always accompanied with her friends. These days she came lonely as she had not a good speaking terms with Sophia. This was a bonus point for me. I had to take the advantage of the power play. But I was at loss whenever I tried to speak words did not give me company. Days came and passed like this. There was a bad news which I overheard from my class fellows that our syllabus was coming to an end. On hearing this news, I could not digest it. I lost my temper and wanted to make my intentions clear now. Suddenly I stood up in the class while the teacher was writing a mathematical equation on the board. I directly asked the Sultan sir when our syllabus would be completed. The whole class laughed at my sudden and irrelevant question. Our teacher took it seriously and asked the rest of the class angrily keep mum. He was so kind to me. He told me my dear; it would hardly take ten to twelve days. It was a great blow to me. I had never thought about it. I was thinking that this was the only place where I had to receive education for my entire life time. I forcefully motivated myself that I had to take a serious initiative. I remembered morals of some of the poems from which I got many good messages, like “time and tide wait for none”, Time is undoubtedly a great destroyer and also the beginning line of our school headmaster whenever he entered our classroom, he always said, “Make best use of your time, time does not come back”. These messages were alarming in my head and provoked me to take an action before the time goes far away. One day it was raining slowly I stepped out of my house for tuition and on the way the thought of time was visiting my mind again and again. Many strategies were coming to my mind like how to speak out the initial words of conversation. As I was walking aimlessly under the umbrella, the sound of the rain that falls on my umbrella pleased and sent me into a great thought that if she had not kept umbrella with her, I would offer her mine. It might open door for our first word. Keeping this thought in my mind a little hope infused in my heart. When I reached the class had already started and the students had taken all the empty seats, there was only one chair left that was on the back row. I sat down on the only chair that was on the back row. As usual my eyes started looking for Fatima. Today she was sitting in the front. There was no chance of catching her sight. I wished when the class gets over. While thinking about the class sultan sir said, it's enough for today. I thanked and implored God that you had fulfilled this wish why not that for which I was struggling all these months. We were about to leave the class when the rain started raining heavily. Some of the students who were without umbrellas stood outside the classroom waiting for when the rain would stop. I was the only one among such students with umbrella still waiting with them. Fatima was also one among them. I came to the side of Fatima with the prior intention was going to work out. I asked her your home is so far you took my umbrella; I would

go without it as my home is near about. She was observing me from many days, my advances towards her. She said, angrily I do not need your umbrella; the rain was going to stop. You took it for yourself. She left no chances of to conciliate her any further. I turned from her side and went off from there like a thief. On my way to home her unexpected reaction knocked my mind again and again. But I could not resist her awkward reply and started giving vent of my painful emotions. I wept like a hungry child under my umbrella, the stream of tears started rolling down from the corners of my eyes, the only thing which was supporting me was my umbrella. It prevented me from the sight of the passers- by who were also rushing to their houses. While reaching my home I tiptoed up to my room and opened the door of my room quietly without knowing them that I had come. Inside my room I quickly shut the door behind me. I flung myself on my bed and hid my head under the blanket as a silencer and started screaming loudly like a pregnant woman. It was the second blow to my heart. But my heart was not willing to give up.

Next day I made up my mind, that today I would have to meet her anyhow. As usual I went out of my home very early. I had been waiting for an hour when she got appeared in a yellow colored dress. She looked much beautiful than before. When I came close to her, I smelled her scent and noticed that her eyes were stained with black collyrium. Her red high cheek bones were much visible, beneath them there appeared dimples on both sides of her face. She was equivalent to an angel for me. I walked along side her without saying anything. When we were near about our tuition centre I opened my mouth and said.

How are you Fatima? I am fine. What about you Hassan.

Not so bad. What happen? Nothing dear.

I want to ask you something, but you have to promise me that you will not think me bad.

Fatima: What do you mean?

Hassan: You know Fatima from five months I kept three words buried inside my heart with a fear of losing you. If I say.

Fatima: Now I can't bear any more.

What are you saying I did not get you; don't beat about the bush come to the point.

Tears started shedding down from his eyes; I wiped my tears with the back of my hand and said, I love you Fatima, I want to make you my life partner, not a girlfriend.

This time Fatima replied very kindly and said, I respect your true feelings, but you know Hassan it's not good at this stage. It is the stage of making our future. If you want to become my best friend then brush out all these negative thoughts away from your mind. If not then I am giving you a warning never ever appear before me with such kind of feeling. How could I put these words into action? I could not control myself. I started following her without noticing people's eyes were gazing at me. I begged her up to her home but all went in vain. She did not look back to me like I was a hideous type of being. I came back with broken heart, exhausted legs and arms, dried eyes like I had been beaten by the Indian army while committing the crime of stone pelting.

It was a breakthrough in my life. I started neglecting every good work. First I left my studies then my prayers. I slept all day and night. I cut off all my relations. I started smoking even cursing the womenfolk. People started talking about my abrupt change and my worse conditions. Even the on looker's of our local Masjid often paid visit to my home for taking the news of my health. But how could I tell them about my disease which was untreatable. I did not

speak to them at all. I was like a corpse. Then one day a friend of my father Mufti Azad sahib visited me. He was a Jami imam of my maternal uncle's Masjid in Shadbag. He was a religious scholar and well known figure in Kashmir. He advised me in the light of Quran and Hadiths. At last his words brought me back into the world of reality when he mentioned, whatever God does to his slaves we should be thankful to him in all ways, because he knows everything. He knows what is good and bad for us. We should not lose hope. There is nothing worthy in the world than worshiping him. He is our care taker. Nothing is impossible in his world. Only does one thing have faith upon him, its key to success.

His words were the turning point in my life. They imparted meaning to my life. It ignited my mind and heart. It pulled me out from the world of hopelessness and destruction. It brought me back to the path of righteousness. I became once again five times Nimazi. It developed in me the same spark of interest of studying. Now my life was once again blissful and I began to work hard for my goal. Thus he became the ideal in my life.