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GLIMPSES OF TRUE LOVE IN “I TOO HAD A LOVE STORY” BY RAVINDER SINGH

JAGJEET SINGH¹, Dr. KULBHUSHAN KUMAR²

¹Ph.D., Research Scholar (Full Time),

²Research Supervisor, Associate Professor and Head, Dept. of English and Communication Studies,
Eternal University, Distt. Sirmaur, Baru Sahib via Rajgarh, (H. P) India



JAGJEET SINGH



Dr. KULBHUSHAN KUMAR

ABSTRACT

Not all love stories are meant to have a perfect ending. Some stay incomplete. Yet they are beautiful in their own way. A celebrated maxim says that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. Ravinder Singh proves the maxim true and believes that love seldom dies. He beautifully depicts the beauty and power of true love through his own heart touching love story. “I Too Had a Love Story” by him, is a memoir of a courtship that doesn’t reach its ultimate destination – marriage. It is a true love story of the protagonist, written in a diary-writing form that is innocent, touching, honest and heart-rending.

The author is a software engineer from Odisha and a rising star in Indian literary scene who has started his writing career with this first novel which is based on real life events. The readers can realize the love and pain from which the protagonist has gone through in a time frame of merely less than a year. It hurts and it surely hurts. The person who has never fallen in love before, the person who has never thought of getting into any sort of fake relationships had to face such a bitter truth of life. He turned into a writer and in several pages he has written heart-warming poems for his lady bird.

Key words: love, fortune, faithfulness, beloved, reliance, chats, accident, death

It is said that love is the embodiment of God and Ravinder Singh’s ‘I too had a love story’ proves it. It is a debut novel in his literary career as the author in real puts up his heart in this true love story that seems to have struck a chord in the hearts of the readers across the country, making it a national bestseller. The book may be put under the category ‘Fiction’, but it is a well-known fact that each and every one of these chapters is imbued from the author’s personal experiences.

My present paper displays the glimpse of love that seldom dies but stays for the generations yet to come and recounts them. The story reveals the touching and authentic side of what happens to

a man’s life when he loves a woman truly, madly and deeply.

This autobiographical love story is written in first person, where the author tries to describe the relationship between him and Khushi, in such a manner that one can’t help but experience the entire thing through Ravin’s eyes. The narrative vibrates with honesty, passion and the innocence that is rare among today’s Indian writers. He communicates the readers of how passionately a man can love and respect the woman he loves and how desperately he can fight for her life in the midst of life threatening crises.

The book narrates the story of two strangers with different goals and dreams in life when they meet on a matrimonial site and their love blooms, until fate put it to its ultimate test. So, the story is dedicated to a loving dream girl, Khushi, whom the author loves much. Her love praises him to start writing and very perfectly he describes the most beautiful days, the splendid moments and his true feelings for the first and everlasting love of his life when on the dedication page he says:

Tere jaane ka asar kuch aisa hua mujh par,
Tujhe dhoondhte dhoondhte, maine khud ko
paa liya...

...otherwise, I wouldn't have come across an
author in me. (Singh, 2009 p. 'Dedicated to')

The story begins on the day of reunion with three of his college friends, Happy, Manpreet alias M.P and Amardeep alias Ram ji (the name given to him by Happy and Manpreet) after three years of completing college. They share their experiences and revive the old memories of their college life and then come on the topic of marriage. As they discuss about their marriage, they decide to open an account on a matrimonial website like Shadi.com, jeevansaathi.com and so on.

After a few days, while recalling the reunion conversation, Ravin decides to register on 'Shaadi.com', but does not find a single girl who can act as his soul-mate. Initially Ravin finds it futile and sheer wastage of time browsing on the matrimonial website. At last, when he has given up all his hopes and has stopped browsing through the website on daily basis as he did earlier, he out of the blue receives an SMS from a girl residing in Faridabad who has responded to his registration in the website, she is Khushi and he starts love with her. And even though, both of them don't meet for a long time, their friendship starts over the phone and soon blossoms into love after many late night chats.

The beauty in which the author captures these conversations is commendable and makes one smile after every page. He beautifully portrays the emotions and feelings of these two people in love, waiting for each other's messages and phone calls with great curiosity as they exchange information, share intimacies, decide that they love each other and declare their intentions to be together forever,

even though they haven't met as yet. So, the story gives us butterflies in our stomach as well as tears in our eyes.

Often, it is said that the couple is built in the house of God, the similarities between the couple shows that God makes them with each other and a series of coincidences like their being born in the same town, and on the same day, provides the initial impetus to their budding relationship:

"I learnt that you were born in the month of February, 1982," she said.

"Yes. 4th February. Anything specific"? I wondered if I was supposed to recall something from her profile. But the only thing I remembered, then, was that she looked beautiful in her picture.

"You might have noticed that my year and month of birth are the same."

"Oh yes! 22nd February. I had seen that," I said, quickly rushing to my computer and scrolling through her profile. (Singh, 2009 p. 18)

In fact, Khushi attracts him for his interest in classical music as he plays the 'tabla'. Ravin is thankful to his father for forcing him to learn 'tabla' because it is a medium of interaction for both of them. As she says to Ravin:

"You know, there is something else we have in common – the classical music thing. I learnt that you hold a degree in playing the **sitar**," I said.

"Yes. And you hold one in playing the **tabla**, right?" (Singh, 2009 p. 19)

During his first conversation with her, Ravin feels that Khushi is the perfect match for him. He is remembering the sweet conversation between them while lying on the bed at night. One day when they are talking on the topic of their marriage, Khushi tells him about essentials of marriage like; marriage based on truth; trust on each other, and to respect each other's feeling:

"See, every person has some likes and dislikes. When we talk about marriage, it's about respecting each other's feeling; it's about trust, a few compromises and much more. And if you are going to be my life-

partner, I sincerely urge you to choose a life without alcohol". (Singh, 2009 p. 24)

These words make him fully mad in her love and increase respect for her. Since then, Ravin used to treat her as the most special girl in his life.

The effect of her love on Ravin is so much that now he follows the couples sitting in the garden and vicinity. He adopts their style like: the way they sit together in the gardens, the way a girl holds her boyfriend on bike, the way they are moving here and there hand in hand. Even he changes his status on Orkut account from 'single' to 'committed', and Khushi has become the password of his entire internet Ids. He is very thankful to the inventor of the Internet, World Wide Web, and Matrimonial websites and especially thankful to Graham Bell for inventing the telephone that he communicates with his beloved.

Khushi always values relations and loves him a lot. She is someone with whom Ravin realizes what it means to have a family, how one feels when one does fall in love. She is an angel for him, simple yet so beautiful. Her love for Ravin is inexplicable. Even they put their love name: 'Shona' for Ravin and 'Shonimoni' for Khushi. Sooner, they become better acquainted and disclose their secret affair to their family too, but never make an effort to meet. October proves to be a lucky month for the two love birds when Ravinder is on his way to USA for 45 days on an onsite project and stops over at Delhi to have an historic meet for the very first time of their romantic, life-long journey. Ravin and Khushi both are very excited to meet each other but they are extremely nervous too as in case if they found that their dream persons are not as they have imagined them to be. Ravinder is too crazy about her at the time of travelling and thinks that:

What if she isn't as beautiful as she appears in her pictures?

What if she laughs in a very weird way?

What if she limps?

- and many other such thoughts played hide and seek in my mind, until I finally asked myself the big question.

Do you love her, Ravin?

Holy shit! Of course it was too late to be asking this.

"Yes, I do. Of course I do," (Singh, 2009 p. 53)

When they meet at the Delhi airport, the coincidence is that their clothes are same. It seems that God also wants to mix them because the similarity between them is not first; there are many similarities between them as she says to him:

"Ok! Tell me, what are you wearing today?"

"Olive-green shirt and dark-blue jeans. You?"

"Oh my God!"

"What happened?" I thought she didn't like the color I was wearing.

"It looks good on me."

"No, no. It's not about good or bad."

"Then?"

"I am also wearing olive-green and blue jeans."

Coincidences seemed always to be following us. Our birthplace, the month, the year, our interest in music, our career, IMS. And now, the clothes we were wearing that day.

"Amazing! We are definitely made for each other." (Singh, 2009 p. 55)

The throbbing curiosity, the irrepressible apprehensions and the overpowering excitement and happiness to meet Khushi in person for the first time takes the story to a crescendo of feelings, emotion and action. Their first meeting is an historic one as both are extremely nervous before the meeting. Their doubts are also dispelled when they actually meet. In fact Ravinder finds Khushi to be even more beautiful than she appears in the pictures that she has uploaded on the website:

Her smile which tried to override my senses. That chilling hesitation in her... Her hand moving across her face... Her beautiful face, which mesmerized me.... In that green, off shoulder top and jeans, her body appeared so perfect, so young, so poised. She was charismatic.... Her eyes... So beautiful! There was something special in them. Something which didn't let me look away. I wanted to hear what they were telling me. The feeling, the truth of the moment, the... the..... I don't know what it

was..... I wrote her a very short SMS, then, "You are beautiful!"..... "Thanks," she said. 2009 pp 56-57-58)

Ravinder, then goes to Khushi's house and meet her family members and their wedding is officially finalized. The writer then touchingly describes an hour which they spent alone together in his hotel room which he claims to be the happiest moments in his life:

"Shonimoni," I whispered in her ears, silently, getting close to her, very close. She was still breathing heavily and couldn't say anything. "This is a wonderful moment. I can't believe this. You are with me..." (Singh, 2009 p. 64)

Next day Ravin takes his flight for the US and Khushi desperately looks forward for his return to Delhi and again they meet in Delhi after 45 days. Both the families have given their consent for their marriage and the wedding date is set for the 14th of November next year but the engagement is to be on February 14, 2007 on the eve of Valentine's Day in Faridabad. Khushi's parents come down to Bhubaneshwar to meet Ravinder's parents to fix the dates and struck an instant chord with each other. He then describes the preparations for the engagement party which is to be held in Faridabad. Ravinder's parents are supposed to accompany Ravinder for the ceremony and both the families are looking forward to the event. Both Ravinder and Khushi are extremely excited about the engagement, especially Khushi, who enthusiastically describes to Ravinder over the phone about the dress that she is planning to wear for the ceremony. Ravinder and his parents have planned to reach Faridabad a couple of days before the ceremony and Khushi has also taken a few days' leave from her office for the event. On the other side, she is doing preparation for her marriage with great curiosity. She is making jars and colouring them. She is singing everywhere in the house and trying new clothes. She prepares an earthen pot filled with water, fresh rose petals and few small candles that will be floating on the surface of water in the earthen pot. She is fully excited to her marriage:

"Arey Mumma, I am going crazy....coz...coz... three days later, IT'S MY ENGAGEMENT!" La... La la... La la... Laa... (Singh, 2009 p. 152)

After fixing the engagement date everyone, in Khushi's family and in Ravin's family is very happy and waiting for the occasion. But perhaps God wanted something else. Five days before of their engagement Ravinder receives a phone call from Khushi's home informing him that when she was returning home at night, the day before her leave started, the car in which she was travelling had met with a fatal accident. While the driver had died instantly Khushi was in the ICU. Ravinder and Khushi had spoken to each other just before she was leaving her office and were planning to continue the conversation after she reached home and Ravinder was in fact waiting for her call when he received the ominous news from Pushkar:

"Ravin, we are rushing to the ICU. Khushi met with an accident".(Singh, 2009 p. 156)

Ravinder immediately takes a flight to Delhi from Bhubaneshwar and goes straight to the hospital where she has been admitted. On reaching there he finds that she is in coma and the doctors have very little hopes of her survival. Ravinder here describes the dreadful condition of all of Khushi's family members who have been in the midst of preparing for her engagement ceremony. He then narrates his own mental condition after seeing his beloved hanging between life and death with her face and body mutilated beyond recognition:

Her innocent face had suffered so many injuries. There were blood clots on her swollen right eye. There were scars, big and small, on her entire face. A thick ventilator tube ran down her nose. Her broken jaw was temporarily fixed with bandages. The soft skin of her right arm bore the marks of so many injections that it had turned blue. I could see multiple tubes of different diameters piercing different parts of her body... I suddenly held her hand and started crying, seeing my dearest bearing that pain all alone. (Singh, 2009 pp 174-175)

He is rushing here and there in the room and is totally confused what to do. He is crying bitterly and recalling words said by his beloved:

“U might be happy 2 win d tournament,
bt someday u might b sad, wen u might
wish 2 tlk 2 me bt I might not b able 2 do
so. (Singh, 2009 p. 186)

But after a couple of days the doctors attending to Khushi feels that she might recover in a few days even though she is still in coma. So, Ravinder decides to go back to Bhubaneshwar to bring to his parents so that they could all be present when she opens her eyes. He returns home to his parents but constantly keeps in touch with her family members through phone. After a few days when he hears that the doctors are a little hopeful about her recovery he starts off on an overnight bus from his village for Bhubaneshwar to book air tickets for his family.

The most touching passage in the entire book is Ravinder’s description of his bus journey where he has a most amazing spiritual experience. He says that it was about four in the morning and all the passengers in the bus were sleeping. He too was dozing fitfully when suddenly he opened his eyes and found Khushi sitting next to him. She was looking just as beautiful as she looked before her accident and was as loving and affectionate as she had always been. She smiled at him lovingly and put her hand on his forehead:

My shocked eye kept staring at her. I tried to speak but could not... She appeared so beautiful... She was wearing her engagement sari... She had a small box in her hands... She brought the ring out and looking up, she took my hand.... She continued... Hey, handsome! Will you marry me?... She slid that beautiful ring onto my third finger and, to my surprise I noticed the ring I got for her was already on her third finger. I hugged her and kissed her forehead and lips. We held hands... She suddenly recalled something.

... “Why did you skip your dinner? You are hungry na.”

“No, I am not,” I said, but she didn’t believe me and opened her bag to get another box out. It was the tiffin-box she used to take to her office.

“See what I have made for you.”

“Hey! Rajma chawal!” I almost shouted, troubling the sleeping passengers. (Singh, 2009 pp 196-197)

Ravinder then took her in his arms and she lay there quietly for some time. She then said, ‘Thank you for giving me the love of my life.’ (Singh, 2009 p. 198)

Ravinder writes that he did not know how long they remained like that but he suddenly hit his head against something and was jolted into reality. It was 4:00 AM. He found that he was in the bus and his phone was ringing shrilly. He looked around for her but she had disappeared and he found that the ring which she had put on his finger had also disappeared. Still in a confused state he picked up the phone and found Khushi’s father on the line. In a broken voice he informed Ravinder that Khushi had left them a few minutes ago. Ravinder writes:

“But she was here with me a few minutes back...” I heard someone inside me screaming but not a sound came out. (Singh, 2009 p. 199)

Parents, friends and a girlfriend are the three most joyful colours of love. These loves are so precious in life that without these, life becomes colour less.

Parents are the ones who show genuine love to a person. A person can expect unconditional love only from his mother and father. They are the ones who help the child to overcome his negative attributes and insufficiency. Without parents it would be very tough for anyone to have a better life. They are the sole people from whom a child can expect unconditional love.

Friends are the arms of our life, without arms we can’t eat or drink and even we are unable to do anything. Friends fight for us and stands with us in every situation, “Night out parties” can’t be imagined without them.

Finding a partner who is first and foremost a friend can have myriad benefits. Being friends does more for long-term survival of a couple than anything else. A girlfriend is like a soul, even she is our soulmate, she laughs when we laugh, she cries when we cry. The True love grows with us and also old with us. She corrects our mistakes and some of her soothing words take away our tiredness in just a

few seconds. Her every kiss works like tranquilizing when in frustration.

Going into the situation, one realizes that the female protagonist in this novel is some kind of angel whose main intention is to make us comprehend essence of true love through eyes of the author as the author has made no attempt to erase the originality. People hate things which make them cry and this story has genuine reasons for them to cry. People also never expect someone to be so much in love that he forgets how to live his own life. There's only one thing in life on which we don't have any control and that is Death. We cannot stop letting things happen on their own. We're not a wizard who knows what will happen next and within a play of seconds we will change it. Life has some bitter lessons which we can only learn while suffering through pain. When we face something which we don't wish to accept, it tears us apart. Therefore, the story makes the readers to cry, makes them realize that there's someone in their life to whom they love a lot, before time runs away cherish every passing moment with that someone special in their life.

Being a true love story, it exemplifies the fact that life isn't always pleasant and if you love someone, love him/her truly, as love stories are meant to stay for generations to come and for them to read; some stay incomplete, yet they are beautiful and innocent in their own way. The quote "The loving memory of the girl whom I loved, yet could not marry" (page Dedicated to) and the occasional one liners like "She died, I survived and since I survived, I died everyday" (Singh, 2009 p. 205) makes the readers cry for Ravin.

His true love for Khushi is well portrayed as he is so attached with Khushi that he never bothers to notice any other girl after her death. He was just a layman doing the same job but after she goes, he becomes an author and the life gets turned up! He has summed up the essence of his story in the most appealing terms. "Not everyone in this world has the fate to cherish the fullest form of love. Some are born, just to experience the abbreviation of it". It's really awesome.

The book ends with a heartrending description of Ravinder's own condition more than a year after Khushi's death. Very eloquently he writes:

She died. I survived. Because I survived, I died every day. I was bound by my stars to live a lonely life. Without her I felt so alone. Though the fact is that it's just she who is gone and everything else is the same. But this 'everything else' is nothing to me...

I miss her in my days. I miss her in my nights. I miss her every moment of her life. And I'll tell you what this loneliness feels like, what it feels like to live a life without the person you loved more than anything or anyone else in the world.

Recalling something about her, you happen to laugh and in no time, sometimes even as you laugh, you taste your own tears.

... And believe me; your life will appear worse than death.

... I remember how she used to tell me that, after our marriage, we would put a success story on the website. I never knew I would be writing a tragedy.

... I got scared of things. I don't know what they were, but they wouldn't let me sleep... If ever I fell sleep, I would wake to nightmares, screaming. The time was always 4:00 AM. (Singh; 2009 pp 205-207)

After her death, Ravin's life becomes miserable. He feels alone without her and he can't concentrate in his daily work and even in the office too. Life appears him worse than death. His soul wounds have taken a long period to recover and still he is recovering. He is praiseworthy for having the strength to fight back the obstacles he came across in his life.

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