

## Notes of a Native: A Short Story

(Emphasizes rural India with people using local dialects)

by

Sarfaraz A. Farooque  
Lecturer  
Jazan University

---

1

As the cab slowed down, I looked outside the window. A thin, dark woman wearing a yellow cotton saree was spreading wheat grains under the sun. Soon, I began to see familiar faces. My neighbors gathered around the cab. “How have you been”? I said “Allah is merciful.” Three boys helped us carry our baggage. The street to my house was too small for a cab, so we walked.

I saw an old woman standing with the support of a stick at the main door of my house, my grandmother. She touched my face with affection, kissed my hands and said “May you live long and healthy”, meanwhile my neighbours gathered in the verandah to welcome us. My mother’s usual gang asked her all sort of question about life in Delhi. Sallo dadi<sup>1</sup>, our neighbor who is an old woman with a limp, called my mother, “Ho! Bahuria”<sup>2</sup>. My mother helped her to come inside. I greeted her; she touched my head and said “tum kitne bade ho gaye ho”<sup>3</sup>, she turned to my mother “Hamar behan ki poti se babua ki baat chalaon? Woh bhi shahar mein padh rahi hai”<sup>4</sup>. She thought that I am a man of fortune or may be her sister’s granddaughter would like me.

-----

2

“Babua, be careful, they might hurt you”, my uncle said while I was trying to feed the bulls. I went to him and got few tips to milk the cow. I tried my hands; however the cow kicked the tub, may be the cow didn’t like my touch. Everyone laughed; I also laughed with everyone else. My uncle said “Gaiya ko pyar se sehlaon phir koshish karoge to baat ban sakti hai”<sup>5</sup>. My grandmother told my father “babua ko bhi khet le jaiya tore sath”<sup>6</sup>. The mustard field covered with yellow flowers reminded me of Kajol running towards Shahrukh in DDLJ<sup>7</sup>. I posed like Shahrukh and my brother clicked photographs of me. I wished to see a desi version of Kajol running towards me, but alas! No luck. My father and uncle were busy in pulling out weeds. We jumped into the pool in front of the bore well to get some respite from the heat.

Munni Buah (My Father’s cousin sister) shook my shoulder breaking the memories of my last visit and said “Which world are you into?” I was in the backyard. Everything was changed now; there were no bulls or cow. My uncle was sitting in the verandah chewing Paan (beetle leaves). He is a short, thin man of dark complexion. He always wears cotton Kurta, Lungi (popular under waist cloth in rural India) and leather sandals. He has three sons working in

Mumbai and they are doing well. He has given the land to the farmers on batai (sharing cultivated crop), life is more comfortable this way.

I walked across the tolas (neighbourhood) in the evening. The village is divided into three parts; Brahmin tola in the north, gwala or milk man tola towards the south and Muslim tola in the centre of the village.

---

### 3

“Assalaam-o-alaikum”, I said, Walekum-as-salam” the old man said approvingly and offered a seat at the muslim Chaupal (A place of gathering). His white beard was touching his belly; he offered a cup of tea and said “Hamare haath ki chai tumko dilli mein nahi milegi”<sup>8</sup>. There were different shops there selling different things like clothes, medicines and paan. The shop owners were gossiping about the cricket match between India and South Africa. The owner of the chemist shop and the youngest among them, Laddo, led the discussion. A boy came and said “laddo chacha, my mother has asked for gotti (Pain killer)”. Laddo quickly went to his shop and resumed the discussion. The gossip was too interesting to be missed.

I reached the Raudi Chaupal in the Brahmin tola. Hariram, the only cobbler of the village said “Bhaiya<sup>9</sup> namaste; Polish”? He was sitting on the other side of Raudi Chaupal, wearing only lungi, Kurta and an old shawl in December. I saw three boys from muslim tola sitting inside the Raudi’s shop. Mamun (one of the three boys) said “Are bhaiya, how are you, kahan ho yaar<sup>10</sup>? Raudi Bhaiya, tea and singhara<sup>11</sup> for pardesi babua<sup>12</sup>”, before I could say anything. My mouth started watering by the aroma of fried potatoes, peas and other spices. I could tell by the smell in the shop that the singhara (samosa) and tea will be amazing. Those Samosas, with a crunchy peanut taste, were the best I have ever had in my life. After few rounds of tea, samosa and smokes Mamun said “let’s go home, we will meet at the cricket field after lunch.”

Mamun told me that the match is between *badkas* the seniors and *Chutkas* the juniors and that I will be a part of the senior team. The Chutkas gave us a close fight but we won the match and there was an uproar “Raudi Bhaiya, we are coming” (they meant tea and samosa party). Hariram was not at his place. I asked Mamun “where is this guy?” he said “dude, he would have made thirty or forty bucks and gone to drink Taari”, “What do you mean?” he said” Oho! alcohol dude, leave it, let me buy you a cigarette” and we moved on. I thought of Hariram’s wife and children working in the house of the biggies of the village.

---

### 4

“Tea” Faisal said, I nodded, we moved towards the Fakirchand’s Chapal in Gwala tola. Fakirchand, fair, with a white moustache and brown eyes looked at me from head to toe. His honey brown eyes reflected the innocence of his soul. He asked “I have not seen you before

Babua”. Mamun interrupted me and said “He has come here after two years” and began to tell the stories of my family. “You should come babua, who will look after your ancestral property after your grandmother” I could not say anything because I knew that I was a son of that village which I never accepted.

Mamun gave me a mobile SIM card; I asked “where did you get this?” He replied “Dude, It is very easy to get a mobile SIM card here, pay Rs. 5 and give a passport size photo, address proof and you also get a complimentary talk time worth Rs. 50. Everyone here has a dual SIM phone. We have a permanent number and a temporary one. We get a new SIM card when the talk time is over. Rs.50 in Rs.5, isn’t it simple math? I felt jealous and angry on the service providers in Delhi.

Mamun called me after dinner. We sat around the bonfire; I asked him about his brother who was working in Saudi Arabia. He said “he is fine and earning well. Look at our house, it was built last year. Papa is really happy with his progress. I will also go to Saudi after engineering”. I came to know that most men of the village are living in the Gulf or earning in different Indian cities. The flow of remittances made life comfortable.

-----

## 5

I called Mamun, Faisal and Farid in the morning and asked them to come to Raudi Chaupal. We had tea, samosa and spent a lot of time gossiping. I thought of reading; however, I could not concentrate, so I decided to go and meet my friends. The weather was not good to play cricket so they were playing cards. Faisal said “watch the game carefully and you will also be able to play with us.” Soon, I got involved with the group.

Tea and Samosa were on stake. Mamun said “dude, be careful, these guys are experts and you may end up giving us a treat.” I lost the game and paid for the treat in the evening.

I visited Muslim Chaupal the same evening. The group was almost the same. It was the last day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> test match between India and South Africa. I said to Laddo “Brother, I bet India will pull off this match”, he replied “well! I want to believe you but it is not India vs. Bangladesh”. Everyone laughed.

-----

## 6

“Mamun calling” my cell phone displayed, I answered the call. “All set”? I said “yes.” He asked me to come to Raudi Chaupal. He gave me a box and said “Thoda sa gaon tere liye”<sup>13</sup>. I opened the box which had some photo capturing the cricket match, card game and the chaupal visits. I looked at him. “Just in case you choose to take a longer break again”, he said. Raudi “one last tea and samosa for pardesi babu.”

I looked back and saw Mamun, Faisal and Farid looking at the speeding cab. I asked myself “Am I going back or leaving home?”

Translations:

1- “dadi” (grandmother) 2- “Ho! Bahuria” (O! Daughter-in-law) 3-“tum kitne bade ho gaye ho” (You have grown to be a big young man) 4 – “Hamar behan ki poti se babua ki baat chalaon? Woh bhi shahar mein padh rahi hai” (Shall I be the matchmaker of your son with my sister’s granddaughter? She is also studying in the city. 5- “Gaiya ko pyar se sehlaon phir koshish karoge to baat ban sakti hai” (caress the cow with affection then try again, you might be lucky) 6 -“babua ko bhi khet le jaiya to sath”(take the young man to the fields with you) 7- DDLJ (Bollywood movie starring Shahrukh Khan and Kajol) 8- “Hamare haath ki chai tumko dilli mein nahi milegi” (You won’t find a tea like this in Delhi) 9- Bhaiya (Brother) 10- “kahan ho yaar” (Where are you buddy) 11- “Singhara” (A popular Indian snack known as samosa) 12- “pardesi babua” (City dweller) 13- “Thoda sa gaon tere liye” (A little of the village for you)