

A BEAUTIFUL ILLUSION

(A SHORT STORY)

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Once upon a time there was a unique valley of flowers. Other valleys also existed. But this was altogether different and extremely beautiful. In the valley, a huge variety of flowers would bloom. Flowers of all colours and names that could be imagined under the sun. One more unique quality of the valley which made it unique was all the flowers would grow in a certain pattern. Lotuses were at the centre, around them the colourful roses, then sunflowers and in a similar pattern all the big plants were at the heart of it and around them a long terrain of small, smaller and smallest flowers. On the fringe, tiniest and colourful flowers would bloom and look like the cute, lovely children of other plants and due to the tiny size and location they were pampered most by big flowers. Plants would bloom in a perfect circle. Flowers kept blooming round the year. But in the spring season the beauty would be at the peak for every single flower bloomed in this season. The tales of the beauty of flower valley disseminated far and wide. People from all corners of the earth used to visit the valley to relish the beauty and find the moment of immense peace. People used to say that this valley is a God gift for the earth as flowers keep blooming throughout the year and that makes the valley unique in all and every way. Many people noticed a spiritual brightness attached to it.

This flower valley gave wings to many aspiring poets by giving them a beautiful terrain of thoughts. Many records were documented in the name of it. Record of the biggest, unique and most beautiful valley in the world. Hearing about the valley, people would feel a craving to see it once and those who saw it once would crave to see it over and over again. It seemed like a paradise of flowers on earth. A paradise which was maintained and preserved only by nature and was far away from the clutch of human touch. A deep gorge was around it and then an empty vantage point where people could gaze at the beauty from and around it a range of high mountains. This was the one more reason that people used to think that the valley was blessed by God.

Theme: "What's in Folklore is NOT in "Grilling"

In this huge bed of colourful flowers, lotuses were the most appreciated. As they were at the heart and biggest in size, which made their presence grandiose. Among all colourful flowers, white would be a palpable colour.

Time was fleeting and the world was changing. Human values were on decline. Materialism was on rise. Bad time set in people's life. Happiness and peace too were few and far between. Diseases and epidemics were rampant all around the world. Misfortune was hovering upon humanity. No one and nothing could be untouched. More or less but all were sufferers. The unfortunate time descended on the valley of flowers too. All appreciative vibes of people made the lotuses think that they are the crown of this flower valley and the throne must be theirs. They thought that they had unmatched beauty and even the size is perfectly fit to be the kings. Swelled with ambition, they began pondering day in and day out what plan may work out. One night when all flowers were in deep slumber, a blueprint was prepared on how to take the seat of supremacy. Roses were the nearest to them, so lotus first tried to cajole them into the ploy. Lure of beauty was given and convinced them that if only they lived in the valley, people would be able to notice their beauty more and more. They would rule the valley of flowers and instead of calling the valley "Valley of Flowers", people would call it the valley of Lotuses and Roses. In the beginning, roses were reluctant and objected to the idea. But soon, greed overpowered them too. After a long ifs and buts proposal was accepted. Then roses convinced the flowers nearest to them. Same pattern was applied with others too. Spring set in. The valley turned again into a huge, soft and fragrant bed of colourful flowers. But this time, an eerie sense of otherness and bitterness was permeated all over the valley. Negative vibes were capturing the whole ambience. On the fringe of the valley like always tiny, colourful flowers bloomed.

But this time, instead of getting pampered, the nearest flowers tried to put them down. They made nasty comments upon their size, their frail constitution and how they live on the fringe and isolated from other big flowers. Innocent small flowers could not understand the politics of other flowers. What were they up to? Why did they all begin to ignore them? Their innocence could not smell that something fishy was cooking. Due to all the criticism and hateful comments of their own friends left tiny plants broken heart and soon they all withered in misery. This game of politics was on and no flower could spare the ill effect. By and by other flowers too were gobbled up by

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this unfortunate continuance of events. Eventually, it was the turn of roses to fall the victim of this game. Lotuses took the lead in the game and began to criticize the roses in unison. They bawled and were so livid that eventually all the roses too got pale. Now roses had an immense feeling of guilt. They all were cursing the fateful day when they were trapped in the net of lotus flowers. The feeling of sin they had and livid comments of lotuses left roses extremely downhearted and one night they all prayed together and apologized for their sin. With a heavy heart they all said goodbye to life.

Now only lotus was left in sight. Initially, lotuses were happy in this win-win situation. They were glad about their discretion and cleverness. Their happiness was in the seventh sky with this thought that in place of calling it valley of flowers people would name it "Valley of Lotus Flowers." They were the self-made kings of the valley and would be appreciated by the world. Inflated with vanity, they were unaware of its repercussions. But very soon this mirage wore off. All hopes were dashed. People, who used to come from every nook and corner of the world, were shockingly surprised at the sight of the valley. Why did the colourful flower valley turn so drab and white only. People got deeply disheartened. No one could understand the reason why and where all other flowers vanished. It left the people in dismay. Gradually, the words spread all over the world about the unfortunate turn of situation. Having heard the negative remarks and changing scenario of the flower valley, people started to lose their interest in visiting it. Very soon it became the simplest of simple valleys. It was no longer the most beautiful and appreciated by people. All records in the name of flower valley were snatched from it.

On other hand, lotuses too began to realize their mistake. Obviously enough, the number of people was dwindling each year. Everyone would desperately miss the beauty of other flowers. A beauty which was the fruit of togetherness and equal significance. People thought that the lotuses were very unfortunate that they lost all their beautiful and colourful friends. Now they are nothing in their absence. Beautiful valley has turned into an ordinary one. People would take pity upon lotuses and say, "God knows how long these lotuses would survive without their dear friends." Disheartening comments of all were making the lotuses more miserable and made them realize their sin deeply. But now, they had no choice except wailing upon their sin and fate they themselves called upon.

Lotuses could see how people were losing interest and kept listening to their heart-breaking comments. They were full of nostalgia and how people were kind towards

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them in the past. But now, everything was making them realize their irrevocable mistake. Lotus flowers knew they are nothing without their all colourful companions. Their hearts were sinking with a deep anguish. Their existence was meaningful in the presence of their friends. Now they are genuinely full of repentance. They knew that nothing could compensate for the huge loss. They realized how their mistake took a toll on them and how dearly they paid for it. Now they realized that size does not matter, nor the position but it is affection, variety and togetherness that makes them beautiful and interesting. Now the centre was an abyss and they were experiencing the inferno. They were confined to the centre and centre only. In the course of time, the bitter truth unearthed in front of the world. They could not endure the acute criticism of people and their extreme sense of guilt overpowered them. Everything left them so heartbroken that one night they all embraced death together and there was no trace of “Valley of Flowers.”

