

INDIVIDUALITY AND INSTITUTIONALISM IN 'AND FARRUKH HUNG UP!' OF KARTAR SINGH DUGGAL

Priyanka Agrawal

Research Scholar in English

Jiwaji University Gwalior (M.P)

Abstract

Kartar Singh Duggal wrote about the Partition but he also wrote about the daily lives of people, about the emotional turmoil of people caught on the fault lines of tradition and modernity; of customs and individuality; of freedom and sensibility. His characters try to battle their innermost feelings while being sympathetic to traditions and values, something very uncommon in contemporary literature, including Punjabi, Hindi or other vernacular literatures of the Indian sub-continent. This paper discusses one such story of Kartar Singh Duggal in which the human side of two individuals is discovered in the background of the horrors of the Partition.

Keywords

Individuality, individualism, institutionalism, customs, modernity, tradition, Partition, emotional turmoil, sub-continent, vernacular literatures

Kartar Singh Duggal was one of the most famous and loved litterateurs of Punjab during his time. He wrote about the travails of common man and more generally the snippets from the common man's life, without trying to engage in ideological battles, or to give value judgments. He wrote about Partition, but reflected more on the human side of the Partition, focusing on small individual stories. (Ramana 181)

One of his primary stories, 'And Farrukh Hung Up!' tells the story of a lovelorn housewife who is conflicted between the love of her former lover who is of a different religion and her own husband who has been very cruel to her. Kamini, the heroine is already a married woman, with two kids. But she has fallen in love with Farrukh, a Muslim man.

The times of Partition were hard. Muslims and Hindus could not see each other without hatred. The animosity between them was historical and was due to the brutal medieval invasions, but during the Partition struggle millions of these had come together in

their united struggle against an enemy who was more foreign than any other, the British. (Seshaderi 45)

This coming together had, for a brief time, created the illusion that there was no fault line in India regarding religion. (Elst 32) But everyone was fooling himself, until Mohammed Ali Jinnah gave in to popular demands of the Islamic fundamentalist organizations and demanded Pakistan. Old hatreds sprung up once again and the relations between the two communities soured to a boiling point. (Goel 73)

It was in this atmosphere, and in the state of a married woman with kids, that Kamini had fallen in love with a Muslim man. At first, the reader is left aghast at the sheer brazenness with which Duggal introduces the deed of Kamini. However, as he sinks in the facts, the reader cannot help but feel sympathetic towards the worldview and mental state of Kamini.

Though Kamini was married, she was not in a happy marriage. Her husband Akhleesh was an abusive man who, though loved Kamini, never respected her. He has a lecherous philanderer himself and kept having affairs with other women, sometimes with Muslim women. His nefarious deeds would become public from time to time and he would ask for forgiveness from his wife and Kamini would forgive him again and again, but enough was enough and gradually she started to feel that her resolve to remain true to her husband was fast failing.

Kamini was nothing if not a brave woman. She had come to terms with her situation and thought that she would confront her husband about his treacheries and would tell him that she herself was in love with another man and soon would leave him for her lover. She thought that the two of them would civilly go to court and settle the matter there; getting a divorce and then Kamini would marry her paramour. The long and tortured years that Kamini had born with Akhleesh were more than enough for her and she could bear that no more.

It was not that easy though. It is easy for a man to get away with an extra marital affair but very hard for a woman. She has to take care of a family, of her children and the society tends to punish the woman more harshly than it does a man, thinking that it is in the nature of a man to be unfaithful, but not in that of a woman. Gender prejudices, even benign ones like this, can sometimes result in painful consequences for women.

Things became more complicated with the socio-political scenario of the country in those days. India was on the verge of getting partitioned and Farrukh was hurrying Kamini to divorce her husband and marry him as very soon he may have to leave India altogether and go live in a new country, Pakistan. Things would become very difficult then to carry

over.

Kamini belonged to the Goswami Brahmin clan and thus her affair coming out would create a big scandal. Meanwhile, something else was troubling her. She was fond of showing her hand to astrologers and all of them concurred in saying that though she has a happy family life, a great turmoil is in the offing and it will shake her world to the roots. How exactly, was anyone's guess, but it kept Kamini on edge.

Even while she was madly in love with Farrukh, Kamini's love with Farrukh was only Platonic. She had resolved that as her love was true, she would also consummate it only when she was married to her paramour. She was going to violate the caste and religious restrictions but she was not going to violate the sacred bond of marriage.

This distinction is visible again and again in the stories and novels of Kartar Singh Duggal. One can see that he does not hate traditions as such and has a healthy respect for them even while exposing their faults thoroughly. His characters are not ideologically bent upon destroying tradition as such. They are truthful to their own inner feelings and their goals are individual. They never become ideological and never universalize their feelings into a social crusade for gender, caste or religion.

He also does not shy away from depicting the violence of the Partition, especially about what happened to the Hindu-Sikh families in the Punjab. Mostly, the ultra-leftist and secularist historians and litterateurs in India try to depict only the Hindu-Sikh side as violent, forgetting the convenient fact that the Partition riots began in Bengal with the Noakhali riots which were orchestrated by the Muslim League of Jinnah. Duggal does not shy away from saying this:

“There were rallies everywhere. Newspapers were full of them. Soon stabbings started on streets. Cities became terrorized. In Noakhali, the Hindus were butchered. Their houses were burnt and destroyed. In Bihar, revenge was taken from the Muslims who were passing through the state and their villages were also burnt. When this news reached the Punjab, in Potohaar, then it became a bonfire. Hindu-Sikh blood flowed on the streets like water. They were targeted one by one and their homes were destroyed, their women were raped.” (Duggal 31)

Farrukh was a government employee and he had to choose very soon whether he wanted to remain in India as an Indian or to go to Pakistan as a Pakistani. He chose to go to Pakistan and Kamini and Farrukh agreed that this arrangement would be temporary and as things cooled down; he would come back to India to take Kamini and finally married her. Farrukh was also very serious about this plan and thus went to Pakistan.

Things did not go as Kamini and Farrukh had planned. The religious zealotry of the Partition made it impossible. Too much blood was spilt and suddenly the whole country, especially North India was engulfed in the flames of communal violence.

Lots of Hindus and Sikhs were killed. In the same violence, the clinic of Akhleesh in Delhi also came under fire and was destroyed. He himself barely escaped.

Akhleesh was caught up in his clinic. The marauding Muslim mobs in Delhi had brutally killed many Hindus and Sikhs in the area and all the Hindu shopkeepers near Akhleesh were already dead. His clinic was also put on fire and he was about to be killed brutally too when the Bohras nearby came to the rescue and took him out of the fire secretly. Thus, the life of Akhleesh was saved.

For Akhleesh, life changed forever with this incident. He started suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. He would imagine mobs coming to destroy his house and kill him. He would not recognize anyone except Kamini. Somehow, Kamini became his only anchor, the only one who could give him some calm.

He had to be admitted to the hospital. Kamini sprung into action and behaved like a devoted wife would. She forgot even her kids and just kept looking after her ailing husband. Despite all the pains that Akhleesh had given her, she paid him back only in kindness and selfless devotion. She remained true to her traditions.

But Kamini was not the only one who underwent a change. Akhleesh did too. He underwent a radical personality change. The worldview that had kept his philandering going had crashed right in front of him. He had become aware of the flimsy character of the world that propped him and his shenanigans up.

On the other hand he became aware of the extreme and absolute devotion of Kamini and finally realized how badly he treated her and her wishes. He turned around and started caring for Kamini like any devoted husband would. Kamini also responded well and the familial harmony that had been missing in his home came back to his life.

The reader would expect at this point that a major upheaval is going to take place as Kamini has already committed herself to another man. But this does not happen. Kamini, at heart had always been one to respect tradition along with her own wishes and as Akhleesh starts responding to her and respecting her, her love of him returns and she becomes quite engrossed in her husband, her children and the happy family life.

Farrukh on the other hand keeps pursuing her from the other end of the Partition line. It is hard for him too but every time he phones Kamini, she responds only by talking

incessantly about Akhleesh and how she is getting along very well with him. At last Farrukh, tired of listening about other man from the mouth of Kamini and realizing the writing on the wall, hangs up the phone and the secret love story of Kamini and Farrukh ends then and there.

Kamini has always been very fond of showing her hand to the astrologers who had always predicted a great upheaval in her family life but outwardly looking nothing happens and her family life goes on like forever. However, Kamini knows what happened; she knows that secretly she had committed her heart to another man and for a time, she had become mad for him. Though she did not pursue it at last, she knows that the astrologers were right and there did come a storm in her life; there did come an upheaval in her life.

Individuality and institutions are the two themes of this story by Kartar Singh Duggal. The individual emotions and feelings are at loggerheads with the social customs but strangely and pleasantly surprisingly enough, Kartar Singh Duggal finds a way to reconcile both and at last, both love and tradition win, both individuality and institutionalism are fulfilled.

Works Cited:

Duggal, Kartar Singh. *Bhagwan Hai ki Nahin* . Shailekh, 2011.

Elst, Koenraad. *The Problem with Secularism* . New Delhi: Voice of India. 2014.

Goel, Sita Ram. *Pseudo-Secularism, Christian Missions and Hindu Resistance* . New Delhi: Voice of India, 2004.

Ramana, Paramjit Singh. *Kartar Singh Duggal: A Reader* . Chandigarh: Pramod Prakashan, 1999.

Seshadri, H. V. *The Tragic Story of Partition* . Freedom Press, 1999.