

Forgotten Love Tales of Indian Sub Continent:- A different Perspective

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Love tales, a sense which creates fascination in everyone's mind but simultaneously everyone tries to hide these emotions. Why? You may have some answers but you are still cautious and very much diplomatic whenever you get a chance to answer. Love is a sacred and pious emotion arising in the heart of a human being on the liking of each other but in Indian context love is mischievously associated with lust that is a very much distorted form of this emotion. Our perception about love and romance is quite different and we deal love as undignified object. There are so many love tales from Indian sub continent but we less talk about such love tales. As per Indian mythology female cannot be associated with Love, Female must be in the form of either Devi or Dasi. Female was never treated a common human being and she is not a common human being so how can be she associated with love. Interestingly love is synonym of lust as per Indian perception so we avoid such love tales in public discussion. Love - A highly dignified emotion considered the least dignified emotion.

**“Kase kah dun behaya aawargi ko Maznoon,
Maznoon,toh Ishak ki mukmmal Ebadaat h.”**

If there is one consistent subject throughout the folklore of North Western Indian sub continent that is love. Why so? Hindu mythology doesn't allow us to talk about this subject but this region was dominant by Sufism. They perform Ishak with Allah (Allah seems to be beloved of Sufi Saints) and they started singing love songs to be loved by their beloved. This credit goes to Sufism that it is the most prominent and notable theme around which many of the notable folktales of Punjab and Sindh revolve. These love stories follow different pathways but arrive at the similar ending – the perishing of lovers while fighting for each other.

There are so many love tales but Heer-Ranjha, Laila-Majnu, Sohni-Mahiwal, Sassi-Punnu and Mirza-Sahiba are so commonly told stories. There are so many Bollywood movies and thousands of love songs based on these love tales.

I would like to discuss two stories not for the purpose of my paper but to open new avenues which were forgotten.

First of all folktale of Kanwar Nihal De which is commonly associated with folklore of Haryana and Rajasthan but almost forgotten in recent times. Nihal De was a subject matter of folktales and songs (raagni) of Haryana and Rajasthan. Nihal De was considered the Heroine of Sawan (shrawan) Month and these folk songs were sung at the time of swings (jhulla).

“Mayad barje e kanwar Nihal de,

E beti bagan jhulan mat na jaiye, bagan me beta sahurkan ka ji,

Teri barzi na rahun e maan meri e,

Koye bagan me jhulan eb jaun, ke karega beta sahurkan ka ji”

This is the story of Kelagarh's princess Nihal De and Kichakgarh's prince Sultan who was grandson of king Chakwa Bain (There are quite evidences found at Satnali, Mahendergarh) and son of Mainpal who died in early age. Sultan was exiled for twelve years by his grandfather due to some reasons. He was wandering here and there during this period and he had completed six years of exile when he met Nihal De. They met accidentally in a garden in the month of Sawan where Nihal De was enjoying swings with her friends. They attracted with each other and finally got married. But they were forced to live separate and Sultan left her in solitude keeping a promise of meeting after six years (as he had to remain in exile for another six years) in the month of Sawan on the occasion of Haryali Teez. Nihal De spends six years desperately waiting for Sultan requesting natural objects and birds (Mor, Paphiya and Koyal) to bring any good news of coming of her beloved husband.

Ek das jhullan baman baniye ji,

Koi ek das mughal pathan, bichale bichale kanwar Nihal De ji,

Rimjhim rimjhim amma meri meh pade ji,

E ji barse musaldhar, padi h panjhali bagh me ji,

Nihal De eagerly waiting for her husband dreams one day and tells her Dasi (Bandi)

Meri bandi manne sapna aaya jal jyana,

Janu lila sa ghoda, arr ghode par baitha patliya aswar,

Chhail chhabila e pota Bain ka,

Bandi pancho lag rahe the jari lapte hathiyar.

The story did not end here, Sultan became a servant in the kingdom of Raja Dholkanwar son of Raja Naal. You have heard a love story of Dhola-Maru (Commonly known as Marwan). Sultan saved Marwan from Bhumi Singh Banzara, a famous abductor. Sultan became religion brother(Dharanbhai) of Marwan and he was promoted as Senapati of Narwargarh where he met Jani Chor who was close friend of him. There are so many folk songs (raagnis) regarding Jani Chor who was extra ordinary intelligent.

Nihal De suspects relationship between Sultan and Marwan and curses to Marwan,

Hansan ne samandar chha liye, kunja ne chhaye e parwar taal,

Chanda chhaya kaali badly, joban ne chha li kanwar Nihal,

Aur ghaneri Maru ke likhun,aaj bhare samandran jyun uthe jhaal,

Jaal kar marungi par narni teez ne, tere pe ho baalam me ghal,

She curses Marwan that her husband will be bitten by a black cobra and thunder storm will destroy her kingdom.

Marwan mera bandhya ri bandhya,

Rah gaya ek kangana,

Paapi feryan ka chola,

Rah gaya e sir par laal.

Nihal De sends a messenger to Narwargarh and Marwan finds what is going on wrong, she instantly sends Sultan back to meet Nihal De. Nihal de prepares her funeral pyre on the occasion of Haryali Teez, the day fixed for their reunion. Nihal De burns herself alive waiting for her husband in Kasna village of Goutam Budha Nagar of Uttar Pradesh. Some tales says that Sultan reaches at the time of fire and saves her beloved wife. But there is a temple of Sati Nihal De in Kasna Village.

Other Story

Mirza and Sahiba grew up together in a small town, Khewa in erstwhile Punjab, now in Pakistan. Mirza was the son of Fateh Bibi while Sahiba was the daughter of Khewa Khan. Mirza's parents had sent him to a nearby village for his education and that is how he came to live at Sahiba's house. Everyone in Sahiba's family – except her father – was against him staying there. They were not comfortable with a stranger living in their midst. While the rest of the family was hostile towards Mirza, Sahiba was indifferent. She wasn't rude towards Mirza's nor was she friendly. They were classmates and soon became friends.

As they grew up, Mirza became a valiant archer, the likes of whom had never been seen before. Stories of his unfailing aim spread far and wide, and everyone came to accept him as the mightiest warrior around. Sahiba on the other hand, turned into a beautiful young maiden. Such was her beauty, that men around couldn't take their eyes off her. One fine day, when Mirza saw Sahiba buying vegetables from a local vendor, he was blown away by her beauty and fell madly in love. It was as though the entire world around him had ceased to exist. All he could see was her!

Soon, they fell in love. And the two of them were lost in their own world. Nothing else seemed to matter to them anymore. But as is the case with such love stories, this didn't last long. There was a twist in the tale!

Sahiba's father and brothers found out about the two and they were furious. They were distraught with her for keeping them in the dark. They were upset with Mirza too, for whom they had opened their home. They sent him back to his village because they felt cheated. The problem lay in the fact that as far as the families were concerned, Mirza and Sahiba were cousins. This was because Mirza's mother and Sahiba's father had been nursed by the same woman. Hence, they were 'milk siblings' and by that logic, Mirza and Sahiba could not be together.

This broke Sahiba's heart and she wept inconsolably. But her family was unperturbed. They immediately planned her wedding with Tahir Khan. Sahiba resisted but no one would listen to her. The moment Mirza found out about this, he got on his horse, Bakki and he rode to Sahiba's village. At that time Sahiba was dressed in bright red joda, looked like a dream, her hands covered in mehendi. She eloped with Mirza in disguise. Meanwhile, Sahiba's brothers realized that she was missing and they were filled with rage. They swore to kill

Mirza and rode out looking for the couple. Eventually, after riding for hours, Mirza got tired. He decided to take a nap under a tree even though Sahiba begged him to keep riding until they were far enough. But being the mightiest archer around, Mirza was arrogant. He knew that no one could touch him as he would see them all off. He refused to listen to Sahiba and went off to sleep.

But Sahiba was worried. She knew that if her brothers arrived and attacked Mirza, he would kill them. So she took his arrows out of the quiver one by one and broke them all in half. She knew that she could plead to her brothers to spare him as she believed that they wouldn't hurt the man who was the love of her life. Unfortunately for Sahiba, that's not how things went panned out. The moment her brothers caught sight of Mirza, they shot an arrow that pierced his throat. Waking up from his slumber, Mirza reached out for his bow and arrow, only to find them broken. He felt deceived. His eyes begged for an answer from Sahiba as another arrow came flying in Mirza's direction and pierced him in his stomach. Sahiba was speechless at the turn of events. Aghast at what had happened, she jumped on to Mirza's dead body, letting the arrow pierce her as well. As the brothers closed in on them, both Mirza and Sahiba died a silent death.

The tale of Mirza-Sahiba is often regarded as the last love story known from Punjab. The reason for this is that Mirza's true love was betrayed by Sahiba, who broke his arrows. In every other folk romance from Punjab – Heer-Ranjha, Laila-Majnu, Sohni- Mahiwal - the girl's name comes first. But since Sahiba betrayed Mirza, his name precedes her name. The story was first penned by Shayar Pillo.

“Frailty thy name is woman,

Oh that this too too solid flesh would melt”

This is the famous soliloquy from Shakespeare's play Hamlet. Again a question arises here, the treatment of patriarchy towards woman's role in society. Who actually betrayed by whom in both the stories? Sultan or Nihal De? Mirza or Sahiba?

Both Nihal De and Sahiba were treated negatively by society. People believed that Nihal De must be waited for day ending of Haryali Teez and she suspected the relationship of religion brother that is against the Hindu mythology. There are so many episodes where Nihal De became the symbol of negative virtues. Was or is a female able to point out any finger at patriarchy? The answer is still-No.

There are so many Punjabi songs that describe that I am not ready to sacrifice my life in stupidity like Mirza Jatt.

Main ni Mirza jatt ishak de vich jaan gawanta,

In the story of Mirza-sahiba, Mirza became the symbol of stupidity in love.

Yaar marata bhaiyan naal, oh sohniye Ranne,

All blame goes to Sahiba and she becomes the symbol of betrayal.

Ranne was used to address any female or wife but the derogatory sense started with the episode of Mirza-Sahiba's tragic end. Ranne or rann later on in distorted form became 'Rand' which is used for a widow.

No one is ready to accept the another version of story which describes that Sahiba killed all her brothers to take revenge of Mirza's killing.

Ammadi de jaye veer marke, jadon main bukal kholya,

Sahiba uncovered her face after killing her brothers. But this concept is against the patriarchy, how it can be accepted?

We tell stories, create stories, write stories and read stories with different perceptions which seem suitable for our belief, mythology and patriarchy.

References

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