

ARTICLE IN FOCUS

***THEME OF LOVE, THE SPIRIT OF SELF SACRIFICE AND TOLERANCE
IN WOMEN IN THE WORK OF SHAH LATIF***

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Introduction:

Shah Abdul Latif Bhatai was born in the year 1689 in Hyderabad Sindh in a small village called *Haala Haveli*. He was a very lovely child. His father wished to make him a well educated personality. Hence he sent him to a great scholar named Aakhund Nur Bhatai for his education. Very soon his teacher observed that Latif was deeply involved in spiritual knowledge. Shah Latif advised all the people to adore almighty every moment. Let your heart be the divine abode of almighty. Hence to create the devotion in the minds of people he wrote seven love stories and he became an adroit writer. He wanted to show the path of devotion to all the human being through the women. He proved the women as the wonder of the world, ocean of love and pity, miracle of almighty. An angel sent by almighty on earth from the heaven. Nature adores her because she adorns its creation. Out of his seven love stories, in “Umar and Maaruee” & “Suhini and Mehiwal” he shows the world that if a women, being a lady can fight with all the dangerous situations bravely in order to get her lover why not we all human being can also get our lover that is our generator, our creator, great god, the almighty. If we would immerse in his love then even the hazardous situation would become soothing.

“Umar and Maaruee”

According to Shah Latif love is ocean of emotions entirely surrounded by expenses. Shah Latif wanted to be drowned in the ocean of devotion. Hence to spread the religion, he applied the best path of love and devotion through very impressive stories, in order to attract the human beings towards almighty. Of the seven stories he has written, “Umar and Maaruee” is the best.

Maaruee was the daughter of “Punuhaar” and Maadohi. They lived in a village named Maker. They owned a field. A person named phogh worked in their farm. Maaruee was the beautiful girl, as she reached the age of “Sweet Sixteen”. Phog was very much attracted towards her. He wanted to tie knot with her, so he requested her father but Maaruee was already engaged with a person named Khetsen. So her father did not accept the request of the Phogh. Phogh felt insulted and he decided to avenge Punuhaar.

There was a country named Thur. An emperor named Umar Sumro ruled over there. Phogh went directly to the emperor Umar who was the just king. Phogh admired the beauty of Maaruee. Then he said to Umar “Almighty Maaruee is the most beautiful Angel of Almighty”. “She should be the queen of your palace. It does not suit her to live in a village like Maleer go and bring her, make her the queen of your palace and adore the beauty of your palace with her beauty”. Umar forgot all about his reputation, he altered his appearance and went to Maleer, the village of Maaruee alongwith Phogh in disguise in order to bring Maaruee from Maleer to Umarmkot. He knew that Maaruee used to fetch the water from the well along with her friends daily at dawn time. He went near the well and hid himself behind the bushes. But unfortunately on that day Maaruee went into sound sleep. She got up late in the morning and went late to fetch the water. Umar was waiting for her arrival. As she went near the well, Umar stepped towards her and requested her “Please give me some water to drink, I am very much thirsty”. In the beginning Maaruee denied to give him water but as her friends convinced her and she accepted.

When she came near to Umar to offer him water he pulled her towards him forcefully and made her to sit on the camel along with him and rode fast towards Umarkot.

In fact Umar was the man with high moral but as he saw the beauty of Maaruee, he was attracted towards her and started loving her from bottom of his heart. In order to allure her he started impressing Maaruee by offering her luxurious items such as delicious drinks, mouth watering foods like briyanis and so on. He wanted to change her way of living like a queen. Hence he forced her to wear rich mulmul clothes. He was obsessed with the beauty of Maaruee, hence he aimed to win her heart at any cost but Maaruee had deep devotion towards her village Maleer and real love and affection for her parents. She rejected all his offerings, she wore the torn and dirty shawl of her parents which was more precious to her than mulmul clothes. She liked to remain hungry more than to eat the delicious foods of Umar to remain thirsty more than to drink the sharbets of Umar. Hence she neither accepted presents offered to her nor combed her hair. She remained calm and her appearance was brooding, she kept on sobbing all the time about her parents and her village Maleer. When Umar's all efforts went in vain he became furious and started giving her troubles in each and every way but Maaruee didn't care about his cruelty. Her only wish was to go back to Maleer and meet her parents. She became frail and numb with grief. She was asked emperor Umar to make her free from his bonds. When he didn't accept her wish, she pleaded him by kneeling down on the floor for mercy. She said "Oh! Umar suppose my death occurs here, please take my dead body to my Maleer, my birth place, my motherland. Let my parents put my corpse under the earth of Maleer. I would be thankful to you for sending my dead body there. My spirit will feel serenity there. When Umar saw her devotion towards her birth place Maleer and her love and affection for her parents, his heart was broken into pieces. He changed his mind. He felt to be sincere with her sentiments and decided to make her free from his bonds.

He sent a messenger to Maleer to convey message to them “That Umaar is ready to make Maaruee free and called her parents to Umarkot to receive Maruee”, her parents came towards Umarkot, Umar greeted them with pomp and reverence. He arranged the most beautiful gifts for them. But among them, all Maaruee was the best, the most precious gift offered by Umar to them. They felt very proud of her. They brought their dear daughter to Maleer. It was the time for their celebrations like the festival of Eid. They enjoyed the presence of Maaruee in the Maleer.

After sometime Maaruees fiancée Khetsen started suspecting her purity. When their marriage took place he always insulted her and blamed her evil relation with emperor Umar. Maaruee tried her level best to ensure him that she had no relation with Umar and she was as pious as the plant of holy basil but Khetsen didn't believe her. He started troubling her in this way or that way. When Umar came to know about the unjust treatment of Khetsen towards Maaruee, he marched towards Maleer with blazing anger. When Maaruees came to know regarding the attack of Umar they got scared and ran helter and Skelter. Umar met Maroose the parents of Maaruee and said them that “Khetsen was not only doing unjust with Maaruee but he was spreading Umar's moral scandal also. When Maaruee saw that Umar was very much furious, she said “Oh! Umar, if you would have not taken me to Umarkot forcefully nothing would have happened. Its all your fault”. On hearing this Umar felt very guilty of his evil deed of arresting her at Umarkot. Then he called Khetsen and said “see, Maaruee is a pious girl, she has got real love and affection for you and you only. She could never think of any other person except you, please believe her and don't trouble her. If you want you can punish me in any way. I am ready to give you any test and prove the purity of Maaruee. Hearing this Maaruee felt pity on Umar and she said “Oh! Umar, if Khetsen doesn't want to believe me he can take my test. I will prove my purity”. Why should you”! Let him take my test.

Finally the matter was decided a big bonfire was lit and an iron bar was kept in that to burn till it got fully red. Maaruee took that hot iron bar in her hand. On looking this hazardous scenario Umar was shocked, suddenly he jumped into the burning bonfire. Everybody was surprised but it is rightly said that “God is great; he loves them who loves him”. Nothing happened to the Maaruee’s hand. She was very much safe as if she had taken a piece of an ice in her hand. On other hand nothing happened to Umar’s body as if he was swimming in the ocean of cold water. All the people who were gathered to watch them got surprised. Khetsen felt shame on himself. He kneeled down near the emperor Umar and pleaded him for apology.

Umar said “There is no need to beg for apology, if you want you can apologize to almighty” and he will accept your confession if you will keep Maaruee happy. You are the luckiest man in the world. Almighty has to bestow you with the most beautiful gift in form of your wife that is “Maaruee”.

From that day onwards Maaruee and Khetsen started their happy and new life.

“Suhini and Mehiwal”

There lived a potter named Tula in Gujrat city of Punjab, a beautiful daughter was born to him. On the other hand there was a man named Meeriza Ali, a rich merchant of Bukhara. He had no child after begging the blessings of almighty. He got a very handsome son named Izat begh. He was brought up with great care, love and affection. When Izat Bhegh grew up, he started doing business like his father. He went to a business trip at Delhi.

There he heard about the well skilled artist, potter Tula. He sent his servant to purchase some beautiful pots of different variety from him. When the servant was buying pots from Tula,

his beautiful daughter came over there. When he saw such a beautiful girl, he was astonished to see an angel of almighty on the land and that also in the house of a poor potter. When he returned back to Izat begh he described the beauty of the girl.

Izat Begh went over there to see that pretty girl and there he saw Suhini. He was surprised to see her. He was ambitious and wished to get that girl at any cost. He forgot to go back to Bakhara. He was an affluent and wealthy person, but as he fell in love with Suhini. He never cared about his business. His only wish was to get adorable Suhini, so he lost all his wealth and became very poor. Finally he went to Tula and took some loan from him, after sometime he started working as a servant of Tula under pretext of paying his borrowed money to Tula. He was appointed as a herdman by Tula to take care of his buffaloes. Here he was given the name Mehivaal, the one who looks after the buffaloes. One day he got a golden chance to share his views with Suhini. He told her that he loved her from bottom of his heart and wished to marry her Suhini also fell in love with him, as she was very beautiful in the same way Mehivaal was also very handsome. They both loved each other sincerely. One day Suhini's mother came to know about their love, she tried to convince Suhini to forget Mehivaal's love. She made strenuous efforts to separate them from each other but Suhini told her mother that no one in the world could take place of Mehivaal, so her mother settled her marriage with the cousin brother of Suhini forcefully whose name was "Daam".

Izat Begh was deeply pained, he broke all the worldly bonds and went across the river Chinaab and became the saint over there. The fishermen on the bank of river admired him, his name and fame spread far and wide. When Suhini heard about the sanyasi, she also went over there to have darshan of that sanyasi. As she arrived there she saw Mehivaal in form of a saint, her joy knew no bounds on looking at him. Then from that moment onwards, she decided to come across the river daily and have his darshan regularly. Every night she took earthen pot and swam towards Mehivaal with the help of that pot as she didn't know swimming.

One day Suhini's sister-in-law saw that at night she goes somewhere daily. She followed her and observed that Suhini went to meet with Mehivaal. She became jealous of Suhini. She planned to take revenge from her so one day she took her pot that was solid to swim and exchanged it with a colourful brittle pot of clay. Suhini, the poor and innocent girl did not know about it. As she took the pot and entered into the river, the pot broke into pieces. Suhini was unable to swim. The tempest was very formidable. All around the dangerous dreadful crocodiles and marine animals were running here and there. The whole atmosphere was filled with darkness. All the fishermen were scared to see the horrid tumult. Suhini started calling loudly Mehiwal! Mehiwal! All the fishermen were unable to help her. On other hand Mehival saw from the other bank of the river that Suhini was drowning immediately he jumped into the river but the waves of the river were very forceful. The water was flowing speedily. Though Mehival was expert in swimming but due to stormy night he was unable to reach Suhini to save her. The atmosphere was antagonist. Both were trying to reach one another dreadful currents excluded their union. Both struggled to reach one another. Finally both came in the middle of the river where there was forceful flowing water. At the end Suhini and Mehival caught the hands of each other. Nobody could forefend their union, both forgathered. But it was the only cradle of death that made their union possible and allowed them to meet each other both went deep down at the bottom of the river to hide themselves from the evil eye of vicious human beings who never allowed them to meet both were drowned. After sometime the whole atmosphere became silent as if it was mourning for the death of real lovers, waves stopped flowing, air stopped moving, ferocious animals slept silently. The water of the river stood still. The entire nature of almighty came to grief over their death. The storm was coy for its wrong and evil deed. Through this story Shah Latif wishes to convince all of us that true love immortal, it never dies. Though Suhini and Mehival's body was mortal but their spirit remained immortal as Suhini loved Mehival deeply in the same way if we would love almighty then nobody would prevent us to reach him through adoration. We must adore him sincerely and honestly after all he is our creator.

Conclusion:

Through his fictional modes, Shah Latif is trying to liberate women and giving voice to the mind of women. In the 19th century, he spoke about women liberation so openly thus anticipating the feminist movement of the 20th century that speaks a lot about his concern for women.

References:

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- 1) Shah Latif: "Umar & Maruee"
- 2) Shah Latif: "Suhini & Melwal"