

Umar Marvi (Umar Maruee)

It is a story of the times when Umer Soomro used to rule over Thar. In the village of Maleer a shepherd named Palini used to live with his wife Maduee. They had a small farm also. They used to look after their herd, cultivate their small piece of land and led a contented life. They had hired a farm boy named Foghsen.

They had a daughter named Maruee. Even at the time of birth she was as beautiful as a fairy and as she grew in years she grew in beauty also. Her fame as a very beautiful girl spread far and wide. As she entered her youth Foghsen was infatuated by her. In spite of being a mere farm hand he had the audacity to ask for the hand of Maruee. This infuriated Palini and he was immediately sacked and Maruee was betrothed to Khetsen. Thus spurned and guided by fire of jealousy and to seek revenge for affront suffered, Foghsen approached Umer Soomro the ruler of Umerkot which was known after the name of its ruler Umer though in fact this fort was founded by Amarsingh Rathore. Foghsen incited the rulers' lust by giving vivid descriptions of the beauty of Maruee. He said that the place of such a beautiful lady was only in the palace of the ruler where due to all the comforts and luxuries her beauty would bloom.

The ruler was naturally quite impressed by Foghsen's narration of Maruee's beauty. He wanted to possess her. Umer Soomro the ruler guided by Foghsen went to Maleer in disguise. When they reached outskirts of Maleer incidentally at that exact time Maruee was going towards the well to fetch water. At the sight of her beauty Umer was quite intoxicated; while Foghsen hid behind trees, he approached Maruee as a thirsty traveler. As Maruee came near to give him water he immediately picked her up on his camel and quickly rode to Umerkot.

At Umerkot she was kept virtual prisoner. She was enticed, cajoled and threatened, but to no avail. Ruler Umer Soomro praised her beauty, professed deep love, promised to make her reigning Queen, but all the allurements of good –luxurious clothes, food, status and all luxuries failed to shake her resolve that she belonged to her clan- her own native people and she would not marry any one else except Khetsen a person to whom she was betrothed to.

In the word of Shah Latif the immortal poet of Sindh, She said:

I will not accept any other husband,
For me that, wearing coarse garments is handsome,
Even if uncouth he occupies the place in my heart.

This infuriated Umer Soomro and she was consigned to prison. She was abducted during winter season; nearly six months elapsed and rainy season came. She would sadly count the seasons and would picture the life of her kinsfolk at her village of Maleer and pine for them. She bore her adversity with stoic fortitude for she knew that her poor kins were not able to rise against the King. She did not waver in her resolve. She did not change into royal garments, did not clean herself and her beauty appeared soiled, to this she became utterly oblivious. Instead she said, (in the words of Shah Latif):

I would not use your oil; my heart is attached to my kin,
Why should I listen to any one, ultimately I belong there.

This is not the way of my kin folks,
To exchange daughter for the sake of Gold,

While at Umerkot I shall not sour this tradition,
The love of hutment cannot be exchanged for a palace.

Having failed in all his endeavors Umer resorted to shaming her by saying. "You crave so much for your kin folks but all this time they have not even cared to send any message to you. It is futile for you to continue to remember them, pine for them and entertain any hope of rescue from them." Maruee was unshaken in her resolve. She did not even look at all the allurements and luxuries kept before her. She would prefer her simple food to the royal feast and the wild flowers to costly scents offered by the ruler.

In the words of Shah Latif:

My bare threads are more than the gold chain,
Don't offer silks to poor cowherds O, Umer!
Even a fold of my own upper garment is dear to me.

She entreated Umer to free her so that she may return to her native place and pour water of her soil on herself. She further told Umer that when she would die in his captivity her body should be sent to her people so that she may be buried in her native soil.

In the words of Shah Latif:

While pining for my land, were I to breathe my last,
My body be handed over to my people,
May the creepers of my native soil cover my body,
I would live though dead, if buried at Maleer.

All this exasperated Umer. He was all the more sullen. At that time his nurse who came to know of the situation rushed to Umer and told him that Maruee and he had par taken the milk from the same wet nurse and thus they are in a way brother and sister. On hearing this Umer was horrified at the enormity of the crime he was to commit. Immediately he sent a camel rider to Maleer to Maruee's parents and asked their forgiveness and gave money and gold to Maruee as behooves a brother.

Maruee returned to Maleer with her parents. As Maruee had remained with Umer at his palace her betrothed Khetsen was suspicious about her chastity. Even in the community Maruee could not get the respect due to lingering doubts.

When Umer heard this he came with army to Maleer. This led to her people abandoning their huts. Maruee went to Umer and told him that he had first committed the crime of abducting her and on the top of it he has attacked them which is totally unfair. Even if they suspected me they were not wrong. How would they know that I am still pure? Now you must go back to your palace.

Hearing this Umer felt ashamed and offered to undergo any trial to prove the truth. Maruee said I am the one who is under suspicion therefore I will face the test. An iron rod was put into fire when that rod was red hot Maruee stretched her palm and held the same in her hand and emerged unscathed. Then Umer the ruler also insisted on the same test and emerged pure. This convinced every one and Maruee and Khetsen lived happily ever after till ripe age.