

***TRAUMA ANXIETY AND SPACE:
A STUDY OF SHORT FICTION BY SHAH ABDUL LATIF'S
"SASUEE AND PUNHOO"***

By Prof. Roma Prakash Jaisinghani

Shah Latif's Bhattai was a suffice scholar. Even today he is considered as one of the prolific poet of Sindhi literature. He was born in 1689 in "Hala Haveli" village near Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan. "Shah-Jo- Rassalo" is his masterpiece in Sindhi Literature. Some of his major themes include deep devotion for Almighty, love for humanity and religious tolerance. Shah Latif's poems deal with seven women characters who are the leading protagonists of Sindhi folklore. They have attained heroic status in "Shah-Jo-Rassalo" and adored throughout India and in Pakistan for their intrinsic qualities like honesty, sincerity, integrity and piety. Even today they are valued for their chivalry and eagerness to risk their lives for the sake of love. Through his poetry, Shah Latif delivers the message of love, patriotism, communal harmony, tolerance, divine affection and devotion. All of Shah's seven lyrical romantic musings have been acknowledged by the scholars as in the case of Sohni, Sasuee, Lila, Moomal, Maruee, Noori and Sorath representing high aesthetic value.

Long ago when King Dilerao ruled, there lived, a Brahmin, Naaun, and his wife, Mandhar, near the stream of Bhambar. After remaining childless for a long period they finally gave birth to a very beautiful girl child. A Brahmin soothsayer prophesied to them that their daughter will marry outside their community. Woebegone, they placed her in a box and threw it into the river.

The strong currents of the river carried the box towards the city of Bhambhor where lived a man named Mohammad commonly known as Laala. He was a washer man by profession with a number of workers under him. One day his workers went ashore to wash clothes where, to their surprise, they discovered the box which they took over to Mohammad. His joy knew no bounds when he found the baby girl within the box. He picked her up quickly into his arms, kissing and hugging her again and again noticing her charmingly round and

immaculate face. He named her Sasuee which meant the “Moon”. With every passing day she grew more and more pretty. And when she came of age she turned to be the most beautiful girl in “Bhambhor”. Her father built a beautiful palace for her where she enjoyed her life surrounded with friends who liked her a lot.

During that time the people of “Kechmakraan” came to Bhambhor to trade with their neighboring county. Punhoo, One such inhabitant, heard about the renowned beauty of Sasuee. So Punhoo travelled to Bhambhor on a camel under the pretext of business.

One evening Sasuee went to the market along with her friends. When Punhoo saw her, he got mesmerized by her beauty while Sasuee herself was surprised by looking at such a handsome man. Both got attracted towards each other and fell in love with one another.

Sasuee returned to the palace and told one of her friends about her feelings for Punhoo. Her friend immediately went to Sasuee’s father and told him of the whole incident and Punhoo’s marriage proposal. Her father did not give his consent for this union because Punhoo was an outsider belonging to another community.

Sasuee’s friend, in an attempt to convince him, said, “Oh no, he does not belong to other community. He is also a washerman, if you don’t believe; you can test him and ask him all about it.” A little convinced, Mohammad gave some clothes to Punhoo to wash them.

As Punhoo was not habitual of washing clothes he thrashed the clothes on a big heavy rock. His hands got wounded; the skin of his palm came out and even the clothes got torn. When Sasuee observed all this she got frightened and said, “Oh no! My father will not agree to this.” So she advised him, “Punhoo never mind, put one “Ashraffi” in each cloth. When these clothes will reach the people, they will not complain to my father. These Ashraffis will keep them mum.”

Punhoo, being very rich and prosperous, followed the advice of Sasuee and succeeded. Finally, they were tied in wedlock and they led a very happy life. Punhoo never thought of going back to his own country. Once Punhoo's brother "Chauree" came to Bhambhor. He came to know of Punhoo's marriage with a woman of lower caste. He returned back to his own country and gave this information to his father "Arijaam". Arijaam became restless when he heard this news. Seeing their father troubled, the three sons; Chauri, Hotti and Notti assured him saying. "Father, we will bring our brother back at any cost. Do not worry".

The three brothers arrived at Punhoo's residence. Punhoo became very happy on seeing them. He welcomed them with great honor and arranged for a celebration which went on for days on end.

One night Punhoo's brothers made him drink wine. When he got heavily drunk, he fell unconscious. At midnight when Sasuee was fast asleep, they abducted Punhoo, who was still unconscious, placing him on the back of a camel; they rode quickly to their own country.

When Sasuee woke up early in the morning, she discovered that Punhoo was nowhere to be seen. Frightened and restless, she enquired about it all around. When the story of last night's treachery was narrated to her, she began weeping loudly saying, "How can it be possible? How would I live without my Punhoo! Friend, Friend, my brother in law has cheated me! Oh Lord! What will I do now?" She broke all her relations with Bhambhor and went in search of Punhoo. All alone she crossed the jungles, mountains, and deserts looking for her lost lover. When she reached a mountain named "Pubh", she became exhausted and thirsty. There she fell down on the mountain looking at her helpless condition the nature also felt compassion for herself. The painful voices echoed all around the sky. The birds and animals couldn't bear her pain and started crying loudly as if they were trying to convince the almighty saying "Oh Lord! Be gracious towards this miserable lady and send her lover, Punhoo back. Have mercy on her! Don't be so much cruel to her." The shepherds who were returning to their houses also felt pity for Sasuee. The tears rolled down their cheeks when they saw the numb body of Sasuee. Each one tried their level best to persuade the almighty by weeping and begging of

his mercy. Finally, God granted their wish. Sasuee's lips had gone dry because of thirst and her body was pale, it is here that the Almighty performed his miracle and a stream of cold, clean water sprang out of the mountain. Sasuee drunk the clean water, refreshed herself and again went ahead searching Punhoo. On the way Sasuee thought, "The big rocks are like God to me, all the ferocious animals are like my relatives. I will bear all the pains bravely which my own brothers in law afflicted upon me. I have to get my Punhoo back at any cost." Then again she cried loudly, "Punhoo! Oh my dear Punhoo! Please come to me, I wish to see your sweet smiling face. Come soon! Come to me my dear." She began imagining her mother's voice, "Oh Sasuee! My dear daughter how did you fall in love with Punhoo! Look now he has abandoned you." Sasuee replied, "No Mom, no! My Punhoo is sincere and honest towards me. If he would have been in senses he would never have gone with my cruel brothers in law. They had hoodwinked me. My Punhoo is very lovely! His sweet voice still echoes in my ears and drives me mad during the day. And when the night falls, my heart gets wounded and I suffer the unbearable pain of separation!"

On and on she went, her feet scalded by the heat bled and made stains on the mountain. Again she thought, "Look Punhoo, you were once a merchant who had come to Bhabhor to sell your goods. And see, now, I have followed your path back. I am heaving the heavy load of pain on my back, but see there is nobody to purchase that from me. All the buyers have run away. They have migrated from this world. Come Punhoo come and tell me what should I do?" She cried calling the almighty and requesting him, "Oh lord! Be gracious to me! Show me my Punhoo just once and I will never let anybody steal him from me. I will hold him tightly in my arms. I will never sleep! I will never sleep again. I will not let him to go anywhere. I would offer myself to Punhoo. If I would have come to know my misfortune I would have washed all the lines that destiny made on my palm with my tears, then I would never have to bear this pain of separation."

Here Shah Saheb encourages her by saying "Oh Sasuee! Go ahead, go ahead, don't stop! Don't lose hope, leave everything on the almighty. You will get your Punhoo definitely. You will get him go ahead and search for him, never show your tiredness. It is the beauty of real

love, call Punhoo! Call his name so loudly that he may hear your voice and come back to you.”

Sasuee replied with overwhelming grief, “Shahsaheb, I am born to bear pain. The comforts of life are not written in my destiny by almighty.” Further she says “Oh Punhoo, I know you will come but only after my death, and you will cry for me, will you be able to unite me after my death, no Punhoo! Its better my darling come to me now. Let me see your charming and lovely face.”

While running in search of Punhoo, she reached a mountain named “Haadi” where a river name “Phod” was flowing speedily. She began to cry loudly and said “Oh! Punhoo what should I do. Please come to me. Again she bravely crossed the river and reached “Maabarne” mountain. There she saw a hut of a man who belonged to Punhaar community. She went near that hut towards the person who was sitting outside that hut, and asked for Punhoo.

That fellow was astonished at her beauty evil thoughts crept into his head. Sasuee immediately discovered his evil eye on her. She called almighty in an agonized voice crying, “Oh almighty! Where are you? Your daughter’s respect is in danger. Save me from this immoral wolf!” The almighty granted her wish and the mountain broke open revealing a big fissure in between. Sasuee went deep down into that gap and the mountain closed again. When the man saw that miracle he was astound and felt guilty of himself. In an attempt to confess to the almighty, he built a tomb over her corpse and sat praying the holy angel of almighty day and night.

Meanwhile, Punhoo upon losing the effect of intoxicant came to his senses and ran away from his brothers looking for Sasuee in Bhambhor. On the way he reached the same place where he saw tombstone of Sasuee. He recognized it and asked that man, “Where is my Sasuee? Please tell me, I cannot live without her, why is her tombstone lying here? Where she has gone?” He was dying to know about her. Then that fellow told him the whole story, and Punhoo, dejected, cried uncontrollably. The tears rolled down his cheeks. He prayed to the almighty, “Oh Lord, please give my Sasuee back to me, have mercy on me don’t separate

my heart from me, you are our real father, how could it be possible for you to see your children suffering and crying? Being a father would you be able to leave your children in doleful sea to sink! Oh father please shows your miracle, break this mountain again let me go to my Sasuee and meet her.” As rightly believed, “If you pray to the almighty sincerely, whatever is impossible for you, he will make it possible.” God accepted his prayer and the mountain broke in two halves. He saw Sasuee lying dead there, maddened with grief he cried, “Oh my Sasuee! Oh my dear darling, how can you leave me alone! Look my dear I have come to you, I have broken all the relations with your cruel brothers-in-law.” He went near her enervated. Some moments later, death welcomed them with open arms. Life did not permit them to live together but death accepted their union happily. And then the nature revolted; the storm blew violently, raising havoc all around. The bodies of Sasuee and Punhoo was covered with the loose earth in the form of coffin since the almighty wished to make their union blissful and soothing by hiding them from the evil eyes of the world.

Shah Saheb named this story “Sur SasueeAabri” where Aabri means weak, fragile. Sasuee always remained weak and fragile. Her body had become weak in search of Punhoo struggling against terrible situations. Her mind had also become weak when she lost her husband. Shah Saheb appreciated Sasuee for her courage. Though her body had become numb yet she sacrificed her life to keep herself pious and pure for her real lover Punhoo whom she loved unconditionally. Shah Saheb compares the people of world with Sasuee showing that she had loved Panhoo from the bottom of her heart and even after suffering relentlessly, she remained true to Punhoo until her death.

In the same way, if we would love and worship the almighty sincerely and honestly then our love will bear the fruits of union with almighty and we would attain Moksha.

In conclusion, one can say that “Sasuee and Punhoo” short story is remarkable for its enigmatic values of love, sacrifice and honour.

Bio

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