

SUHINI- MEHAR

During the Moghul rule in India in Gujrat city of Punjab a famous potter used to stay .His name was Tula Kumbhar. The vessels made in his kiln were used by Kings and aristocrats. As a result he was quite a prosperous man. He had only a daughter as a child. She was clever as well as very beautiful. Therefore she was called Sohini i.e. Beautiful.

During that period in the city of Bukhara situated in Turkistan, lived a business man named Mirza Ali. Though he was very rich and renowned person but he had one unfulfilled desire to have an offspring. Once a holy man visited his city. He confided his desire to him and requested him to grant a boon of a child. The holy man granted him his wish but told him that he will beget a son but at 16 years of age he will be separated from him. Business man was naturally saddened to hear this but accepted it as God's will. After ten months he was blessed with a son. He was named Izzat beg. He was brought up with all the love and affection in the midst of luxuries. When he grew to be a big boy he learnt about the riches and wisdom of India and many exquisite things related to India. He naturally wanted to satisfy his curiosity and visit India. Mirza Ali tried his best to restrain him but to no avail. The boy remained adamant. He took merchandise and set out to India. His mother and father bid him tearful farewell and showered him with all the blessings for his welfare and safety.

When he reached Delhi, then capital of India he indulged himself with all sorts of luxuries. He thought of going to Lahore from where he wanted to purchase delicate merchandise to sell in his city of Bukhara. On the way, on seeing the beautiful city of Gujrat on the confluence of Ravi and Chenab, he decided to spend some time in that beautiful city. There he befriended many people of nobility and aristocrats and he was told about the beautiful pottery work of Tula Kumbhar (potter). He sent his servant to go to his home to purchase some souvenir for his family. There servant saw Sohini and he related to his master about the beautiful girl in Tula Kumbhar's house. Hearing of her beauty Izzat Beg fell in love with her without having even set his sight on her. Next day he himself went to Tula Kumbhar's house on the pretext of making some purchases. When he saw Sohini he was entranced and the same was the case with Sohini.

This seed of love in the heart of Izzat Beg continue to grow and bloomed as strong as a tree. He forsook the idea of returning back to Bukhara instead he opened a shop in the Gujrat city itself where he would purchase earthen ware from Tula Kumbhar and sell it to others. Often he would sale the vessels at loss. He was quite oblivious to everything except the fact that he was deeply in love with Sohini. Seeing him in this state his servants also took away all his money and went to their country. He started taking earthen ware on credit from Tula Kumbhar. At last a stage came when he could not repay the debts, he requested him to employ him as a servant. Tula Kumbhar employed him as a servant and assigned to him the work of bringing clay from the river bank and do sundry domestic chores. Izzat Beg was not used to such a rigorous life and fell sick. Tula Kumbhar out of pity relived him of heavy work and instead gave him the work of looking after his herd of Buffalos. Thus he came to be known as 'Mehtar'.

One day Sohini came into buffalo shed where Mehar was busy milking a buffalo. On the pretext of having milk she came to Mehar. Taking this opportunity Mehar confided his feeling to her and she was also equally attracted to him. Thus they used to meet in the buffalo shed to share some precious moments of intimacy. It is said that the love and scent of musk cannot be confined. Sohini's mother came to know of this affair. She tried to prevail upon her about the dangers and futility of such a move but Sohini turned a deaf ear to her mothers' advice as well as her threats and the mother had to share these going ons with her husband. Tula Kumbhar immediately sacked Mehar and got his daughter married to Damma.

On her being forced to marry Damma she prayed to god that she should remain virtuous.

Miraculously every night Damma would immediately fall into a deep slumber and she remained untouched. All the time she would pine for her Mehar and would think of meeting him.

Similarly, Mehar also all the time was absorbed in her thoughts. He could not bear the separation from his beloved and renounced the world to become a fakir (a medicant). In search of Sohini one day he reached outside the home of Sohini. He loudly asked for alms to be fed. On the pretext of giving food to a fakir Sohini came out to meet him. She immediately assured him that she was pure and very much wanted to meet him. She told him that she was pining for him all this while. It is said about lovers that they can be identified by six signs, i.e. cold breath, yellow color, tearful eyes, anxiety, restlessness and unceasing quest.

Mehar was happy to see his beloved but looking to reality he was overcome with sadness and went into Jungle. There he came upon the abode of guru Gorakhnath. He announced his presence there. One of the followers of guru came out and told him, 'If you are Jogi you may enter.' His appearance and good manners immediately impressed the guru and he was admitted into their fold. He sincerely served his guru who was very pleased with him and granted him a boon. He said that he should be able to meet his beloved. He blessed him and said, 'your wish will soon be granted.'

Whatever wish you have nursed in your heart,
Your desire will be met, you will meet beloved.

Thereafter Mehar came and settled as a Jogi, on the banks of Chenab River on the opposite side of the river from Sohini's house. Soon his fame as a holy person spread and fisher folk would give him food consisting of fish, butter and curd. His fame reached Sohini also and from the description of Jogi she was sure that he must be Mehar. Once she came to meet him. They both were very happy at the turn of events. It was decided that Mehar would every night cross the river and the lovers would meet. This way both continued to meet oblivious to any thing happening around them. Every night Mehar would bring a fish, they would eat it and pass their time in each others company. When Sohini's friends came to know of this they tried to dissuade her from such a dangerous behavior. Sohini replied to them:

If only you were to see the face of Mehar,
You would not prevent me,
But would enter the river with your pots,

One day a severe storm raged. The fisher man could not venture out and Mehar did not get any fish. He did not want to go empty handed to meet Sohini and belittle himself. He cut a flesh from his leg, cooked it and took it as a gift to Sohini. Due to swimming in the river and loss of blood Mehar reached nearly unconscious to meet Sohini. Sohini was surprised at all this. She did not understand the reason of this happening. When Mehar slightly recovered he told her every thing. Sohini was horrified and she pacified him by saying, 'you have done your duty hence forth I will do my duty'. Mehar did not budge and insisted on coming to her every night. Due to extreme weakness he could not go to meet Sohini, inspite of his strong wish he simply could not move. At mid night Sohini came to meet him floating on the baked pitcher. Soon it became a routine. Every night Sohini would come to meet her beloved. She would return before dawn and hide her pitcher.

One night as Sohini went out her sister in law woke up. She followed Sohini. She understood the situation and informed her brother about it. He became very angry. They tried to restrain Sohini from following this ignoble path. Sohini did not pay any heed. They decided to eliminate her. One day her sister in law replaced the baked pitcher by an unbaked pitcher which would soon dissolve in the water.

That happened to be a night of raging storm, strong winds and torrential rains. As if nature was trying to warn Sohini against embarking on her perilous journey that night. Even fishermen along the bank warned her, but Sohini ignored all the warnings and plunged into swollen river. Soon her pitcher disintegrated and she started futile efforts to save herself. She Cried, "Mehar- Mehar" hearing her distress cries Mehar jumped into the river to save her, though the river was very furious at that time. He could not swim due to wound in his leg, some how he struggled to reach Sohini and they both went down embracing each other.

While on the banks many call out for beloved,
Only those who dare to pay with their life would take plunge,
Beloved will meet only those who enter the river without support,

Pitcher is broken, Weather was worst, all the means were lost,
Thereafter Sohini could hear the call of Mehar (Shah Latif)