

## MRS. KHAZAN SINGH

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In best of my belief, I assured myself that he cannot leave us, Mrs. Khazan Singh unescorted, in lurch without anchor, but it was beyond him. A stroke of inevitable, certain, sure death snatched him from us. Mrs. Khazan Singh called me and out of blue. I learned his serious condition, his coma. I could not feel earth beneath, I could not feel sky above, reeling around and revolving as if in space, numbed in my senses. Six days and night, prayer and penance bargain with God, in exchange of my life, but of no avail. He left for his heavenly abode leaving her abodeless, at mercy of those who nursed and exhibited, till his last breath, animosity and aversion to her.

I visited them, men were there in abundance, very revered he was; but women..., the tragedy struck with severest blow, darkness around no senses left. She who was more on her knees and less on her legs, lost what she desired most, only prasad for penance. She lost him, her faith in God, in humans and humanity too. Suffering was her greatest share. It unleashed itself with all its severity.

A woman who could barely tread with a straight spine, stooped to her half height by the weight of grief and gambling of fate, was corralled to his funeral pyre, to witness the last trace of his remnants and her happiness; five km, she walked barefoot, concrete and pebbles underneath. Her eyes due for surgery, teary and bleary captured in all dimness the fading, distancing vision of him, his cares, his love, his support, his succor and his promise. The prop she leant against, lost to shatter her to ground. She sank into earth listlessly but to gain revival for the kids, now her responsibility.

She numbed into silence, petrified by unbelievable stroke. The blood oozed out of the wounds she suffered when her bangles were smashed against his dead self. A man loses a wife but a woman, everything, her happiness, her bangles, toe ring, mangal sutra, her vermilion, everything torn apart from her to intensify further his absence and her grief. Her wrist were now red not with red bangles but with red blood; her neck stiff and swollen by snatching of mangal sutra; her toes red with blood with loss of toe rings; her forehead was ablaze with redness not due to vermilion applied but scraped off. Corporal pain and mental anguish, anxiety of future stunned her into sleepless slumber; not alive, nor dead.

Khazan Singh was not her husband alone but her protector against his family, her family, social storms and her embellishment, above all. Now she lost her gender too; a woman but in man's role.

### II

The doctor asked, “who is Mrs. Khazan Singh? we are to hand over the body.” Hari Kishan said, “Mrs. Khazan Singh is not here, put the body in morgue, we will collect tomorrow, we all need some sleep.”

The night was terrible for her, sleep bade her good- bye since he slipped into coma. She swam and sailed in various thought suddenly her sister-in-law approached her gently, “namaste didi,” she said. The sound fell on her like a honk, untimely salutation terrified her. Now was the concern for the remaining family, concern of a mother. Her motherly duty charged her corpse like body to feed her children to brave the storm. All three dined silently without head of family but only milk for entire mourning passage. Her consummate silence was penetrated by

sudden and piercing outburst of her brother, in a provocative tone he said to her son "o chhore khada hole ,tera baap ja liya "(stand up ,you guy,your father is no more ).The son calmly replied "pata hai mama "( I know , uncle).

The truth is always unpalatable and bitter but sometimes gestures work and words fail; had he hugged him tightly more than an uncle, it would have been the sign that he was now fatherless; now he was uncleless too, sadder than it could be . She was silent, grief burnt her face to darkened visage beyond recognition. She embraced and assimilated her grief gracefully. It was not her fate but her share. She could not tear her heart out into tears with pregnant daughter and unmarried son; everybody suppressed the grief and tears. All were fighting their feelings single-handedly.

Days went by, lengthened by apathy and silence of relations, she had another ordeal ready for her. Her daughter had a tough pregnancy; grace of almighty saved the mother and child by c-section delivery. She nursed the child singlehandedly in her house alienated, cocooned and silent. Eyes raised red flag for surgery and she tried another house for shelter. Time went by but ordeals were ready for her\_\_natural and man made. Her own blood facilitated her alienation from her husband's family in monetary and social terms. Humiliated, she raised shelter from shambles.

Women are very creative, they have zeal to raise offsprings. She restarted and kicked the life again. She was a wife of a person divine in attributes.The divines always take a toll on the humans. She was exacted with exorbitant price for being Mrs. Khazan Singh. Mrs. Khazan Singh served all; had no dwelling of her own; she raised children of Mr. Khazan Singh and all obligations she carried out for family and friends as she was Mrs. Khazan Singh and could not cast slur on his big name.

He was burnt and over: she is burning still, alive, silent and surreptitiously. All witnessed her dwindling self inch by inch but she could handle, she was to look after not to be looked after as she was Mrs. Khazan Singh. All exiles, all agni pariksha, all accusations were her credit as she must be impeccable in her service and servitude. Mrs. Khazan Singh in her marital views took upon her soul to take care of his father's family and till last breath Mrs. Khazan Singh should keep her word to her husband, no matter what his father,s family offers to her in return or exchange, not even a single word of sincere condolence or recollection.

### III

A woman is strong. She is thought to be strong, pliable so she is beaten to the thinnest foil, like silver, she is foiled and used for decoration at her expense.

If something does not break, there is no surety that it will not disfigure itself. Women don't break or breakup, don't quit but they disfigure themselves physically, mentally, emotionally but spiritual strength survives. They cry inward or outward, but they do. Their tears, sighs, silence are overlooked, but they are there.

Silence is not meaningless,

It is grief incarnate.

Women lose but who counts? Women have complaints but who attends to? They are outcaste to fend for themselves, a burden on natal family and a weed for in-law family. A woman who is assumed weak like vine needing a prop to lean against is uprooted and cast away once the prop is lost. A woman is no relation, She is not a bond but bondage, painful, pestering. She fosters everyone but herself festers like a wound, repelled and ignored.

Mrs. Khazan is to prepare herself to heal her wounds, straighten her stooped spine (in service of family)for her kids; with inlaws, her services are no longer required. She is to create resources for her children,but how? It is her choice, her first ever decision. She is to commemorate her

husband, discharge his duties dealing not only with apathy but also hostility and animosity of in-law family over her children's claim to the share in empire, their father raised. Whosoever carries the scepter and stamp is the king. She is to deal with usurper and his unlawful solicitation. All trust her for this new task, never ask even once her state and status, all are very much sure of her never- tested or tried abilities to counter check the fate of her. All uphold the conviction that strong soul strive, sacrifice and survive when thrown to tides and doldrums, only weaklings perish; she was now to show her strength in suffering, women are straight- jacketed for such undertakings, but who cares whether they survive or swept away ,they are long dead for their kinsmen.