

## Umar Marvi

Translated by Abdul Waheed and Kinza Tahir

The folktale of Umar Marvi is a true story of Umarmkot city in Sindh. In a small village of Malir, Marvi was known for her beauty and character. Marvi was engaged to her cousin Khet and was living her life fully in the barren land. She was content with the village traditions and was fully absorbed in her village life. At that time there was scarcity of water: there used to be wells far away from village from where women would fetch water. It was their daily activity. There was a king named Umar Soomro who had reigned there with great prestige and grandeur. One day he went out on a visit to the desert with his friends. He took the necessary things for the journey and his caravan was on camels. Umar was riding on a camel. The sweltering heat of the desert made Umar feel thirsty. He was passing through the well where Marvi and her friends came to fetch water. As Umar reached the well to drink water, he found Marvi and her friends already there. Marvi was very beautiful and when Umar cast his eyes on her, he forgot all his thirst in awe for her.

He abducted Marvi, brought her to Umarmkot and imprisoned her in his palace. Marvi was miserable; she never let the thought of her family and friends leave her even for a moment. On every occasion she yearned for them; she refused to eat, drink and cried endlessly. She appealed to Umar to send her back to her village. Umar was captivated by Marvi's beauty. He repeatedly offered her his wealth, jewelry and palace and asked Marvi to marry him. But Marvi only thought about her family, her goats, and the desert she came from, and considered Umar's proposal suffocating for her. She was always uttering these words: "my family," "my friends". While Umar used every means: offering her fortune and threatening her, nothing worked towards a solution to the problem. Marvi wrapped her own *Chaddar* and yearned for her home, clan, and family. After a year of captivity, Marvi still missed her family. She would weep and utter the same words over and over again: "my family," "my clan". Eventually she stopped eating and drinking and became ill. She would beg Umar to send her back to her village. The true love for her family and friends had turned her into a living dead.

In the end, Umar found himself helpless in front of Marvi; his love for Marvi dwarfed against Marvi's love for her family. Umar gave up. He put her traditional Maru *Chaddar* on her shoulders and left Marvi in her village. While returning Marvi to her family, Umar sent this note: "she is as pure as she was when she had come to me." Thus, Marvi's attachment to her family, clan and village remained so strong that it is still remembered today how she had turned down the wealth and luxuries of a royal life and preferred her ways of living.