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Special Issue: Music and Musicians of Punjab
Guest Editor: Gibb Schreffler

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Music and Musicians in Punjab:
An Introduction to the Special Issue

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This essay serves to frame the theme of music and musicians of Punjab and to introduce the articles in this special issue with reference to that framework. Finding the genre-based and stylistic categories of both mainstream Western and Indian discourses to be generally inadequate, the framework it suggests aims to productively place Punjabi music phenomena along such axes as gender, ethnicity, class, professionalism, and social function. The emphasis is on the local musical landscape of Punjab. Special attention is given to the agents of music, the Punjabi musicians. The essay concludes with an engagement of the contributors to the volume.

As Guest Editor it is my pleasure to present this special issue of *Journal of Punjab Studies* on the theme of Music and Musicians of Punjab. Though its dedicated scholars are few, Punjab's music remains present, at least on the periphery, in many discussions within Punjab Studies. Indeed, in our interactions it becomes at times a common ground, like Punjabi language, food, or geography, about which we might converse with some level of familiarity. Yet this sense of familiarity, as real as it is, can also create the false assumption that we more or less understand the music. Moreover, that which occupies the "common ground" of Punjabi music among scholars, especially in the West, is that which is quite *exceptional* to Punjabi music—as it has existed historically, as it has functioned in traditional cultural spheres, and, significantly, as it is perceived by those involved with music *in Punjab*. Nonetheless many recognize, largely intuitively, that music is important for what it has to tell us about Punjabi history and culture. Indeed, the music *does* have much to say. In order to understand it, however, we require more than intuition and general cultural familiarity. We need a greater sense of the local cultural structures in which it resides along with specific details of when, where, why, and by whom it is produced and consumed. In that manner, the contributors to this volume have conducted research on very particular aspects of Punjabi music. By bringing them together for the first time, I hope the present will become a reference work, both for those

interested in knowing the lay of the land and those who would like to do new research.

This volume endeavors to re-center the focus of Punjabi music discussion through empirical and critical observation, historical situating, and locally based culture perspectives. Casual observations of any kind of music are subject to certain pitfalls. For example, in many cultural regions people are happy to ascribe great antiquity to musical practices without knowing anything about them more than that *their parents know them*. Some individuals within a nation go their lives assuming that the music in their own experience is "more or less" that of every other citizen's experience, forgetting that people live very different lives despite the imagined sense of unity that media products may engender.

The particular case of Punjab brings its particular challenges in these regards. It is a culture where the semblance of tradition as an idea is very often made a priority, even if not reflected in actual practice. One should keep in mind, however, that not all cultural groups are so concerned with the notion of traditionality in music, or else their sense of *continuity* with the past is realized on different models. The late 20th century moment in which expression of cultural identity became so important to Punjabi music is not necessarily mirrored in other culture's music, nor was it a great part of earlier Punjabi music. Let us not assume, therefore, that the narrative of musical development must involve the struggle to "keep alive" old practices in the face of the threatening conditions of modernity. This narrative is common in contemporary Punjabi circles for specific reasons; again, let us not confuse the *narrative* with the actual music as it has existed historically. And while mass media certainly affects the shape of music in most modern societies, the specific social conditions in Punjab have determined those media's particular emphases.

To project our singular outsider or insider experiences of Punjabi music to extrapolate an imagined picture cannot work. That ignores the diversity of the Punjabi people and the often extremely different life experiences and cultural practices of people from different regions, classes, and castes. Indeed, one could also say that, in traditional cultural spheres especially, women's experiences of music are vastly different from those of men. This sort of variety of musical experience is, arguably, minimized in global Punjabi culture. "Bhangra" has been both a boon and a burden. Global Punjabi popular music has raised the profile of Punjabis and provided a cultural reference point. Yet it has sidelined, at least in our discourse, much of what was and is part of the world of Punjabi music and musicians.

While this volume does not purport to cover the entire field of Punjabi music—an impossible task—it does aim to supply a more balanced coverage than has heretofore been presented. This has meant the presentation of some subjects that are rarely discussed, many of

which may be unfamiliar or unknown even to scholars in Punjab Studies. Given the feeling for a need for re-centering expressed above, the focus here is on Punjab. The vast majority of scholarly output on Punjabi music that reaches the West thus far has been concerned with commercial recordings, reading them as texts. The music in those discussions is primarily located in the Diaspora, or else among globetrotters who happen to be in Punjab. So far as this *is* the music of a large number of people and presents both interesting and relevant issues of study, the validity of such research cannot be in doubt. We may distinguish, however, that area of music from that which is fairly particular to the Punjab region and which is, more importantly, embedded in that cultural system. This is not to suggest that Punjabi culture is limited by geography, nor is it intended to essentialize or compartmentalize any cultural group. It is a practical, not an absolute, distinction, for the purpose of focusing study at this particular moment in the development of the field.

Though global Punjabi popular music is related to Punjabi people, for the most part it sits within a Western cultural structure. As such, scholars' discussions of it, while acknowledging the details of Punjabi history that may be relevant, tend to be based in the same Western cultural perspective that is used to approach popular music from nearabout anywhere. (Consider, too, the potential difference between sound recordings and *music*.) By contrast the selection of articles for this volume starts from my assumption (not necessarily shared by the contributors) that there is a reasonably unique area of "Music of Punjab," consisting of music bound up in a particular cultural complex. Indeed, ethnomusicologists like myself study music, in part, in hopes to reveal such cultural complexes. In order to shed light on Punjabi culture specifically (i.e. apart from general theoretical topics it may touch upon like capitalism, nationalism, identity, or gender), one must investigate Punjabi music within that type of framework.

The scope of the articles has been set with a few other principles in mind. First, for the reasons already stated, although Diaspora Punjabi music is a fascinating area of study, I have chosen to exclude it in order to reinforce the discussion of music of Punjab itself. Second, I acknowledge that music and *dance* are two related areas of performance in Punjab, and that drawing a line between them is not always helpful. However, in this case, too, I have excluded articles focused on dance in order to give attention to music that is not well known. Despite that, I have left the definition of "music" as something rather broad, to include, but not to focus on, dance, drama, and other types of performance. Third, there is no deliberate focus on "folk" music here. However, popular and "classical" music subjects have received less coverage, despite keen interest, because of lack of available writers to cover those subjects in an

original way and with detailed emphasis on the local Punjabi culture. Fourth and most notably, in accordance with my proposed framework of Punjabi music-culture, I have hoped to emphasize not the audience, but rather the musicians or performers. Too often has Punjabi music been discussed as if the performers were anonymous, idealized agents of Punjabi culture, or else from the perspective of a generic audience that receives music which is presumed to be a representation of themselves.

I acknowledge that the last emphasis, on the individual agency of the musicians, may appear to have political undertones, however, I do not intend it as such. The fact is that Punjabi music has been created, by and large, by members of the so-called "service" class of society. From the perspective of those whom they serve, the "patron" class, the actions of these performers are not so important. They, the patrons, are the "important" ones, *for whom* things are done. This class most influences how discussions of music are approached, as they also make up the dominant voice in the global sphere where such discussions take place. Thus the emphasis has been on the music, as it is received, not on the musicians. Yet any performing musician, as myself, can tell you that we show the audience just *what we want to*. The performer knows he must consider what the audience *thinks* they want, and though he may give that, he remains conscious of the gesture, and the potential difference from his own preferences. It is the performer who controls the show, no matter how much the audience may feel satisfied that they have elicited a performance according to their standards. In focusing on the performers then, we bring attention to the personal and practical dimensions of the music that I feel have been missing from the interpretive writings on the subject.

The contributors to this volume are among the leading scholars in their fields. That being said, not all are aware of each other's works or have had the opportunity to read them. There are two major issues of note. The first is that research on the subject of Punjabi music has yet to form a solid base. There is a long incubation period in any new scholarship, and the work done by individuals like Inderjit N. Kaur, Lowell Lybarger, and Neelam Man Singh Chowdry, though it has been many years in the making, has not yet appeared in widely available books. As for the senior scholars, their work is subject to the second issue that their work is not in English and in part because of this it has been relegated to a small circle of readers. In general, one rarely sees references to Punjabi-language authors' work in English texts and vice versa. The International Conference on Punjabi Culture that was held in May 2004 at the University of California, Santa Barbara, was one exceptional event where scholars from different nations were brought together. One result of that was an issue of *Journal of Punjab Studies* (vol. 11:2, 2004) containing introductory articles on the various cultural

topics by both Punjab-based and Western-based scholars. The present volume continues that effort, but with a specific focus on music. In order to introduce the works of the non-English writers to the wider readership, portions of their work—subjects that have not been discussed elsewhere—are presented in translation. My hope is that all the authors herein will receive wider readership and recognition for their contributions to this growing field.

Music in Punjab

While "music" is often discussed in an abstract sense in contemporary Punjab, for the purpose of really understanding its role in Punjabi culture this approach is unproductive. The idea of a generic "Punjabi music" is largely the result of the mediation of traditions in the commercial industry format, by the agents of "culture promotion," and through other such modern channels. In reality, what one might approach from the outside under the rubric of "music" consists of numerous and not necessarily related practices, circumscribed more tightly by prescriptive cultural norms than what qualifies as "music" in the West. "Music" unqualified cannot adequately describe these practices from the Punjabi cultural perspective. Specific labels that parallel music's divisions elsewhere are also confusing. Note for example the use of the inadequate phrase "folk music," which best applies to a notion imported from the West—albeit with locally acquired nuances—that does not make a significant appearance in Punjabi discourse before the 1950s. Such terms, because they are culturally specific and do not translate well across cultures, are best limited to conversational use. The effort here, then, is to encourage concrete discussion, using labels that can accommodate native criteria.

One thing that characterizes music-making in Punjabi society, and which distinguishes it (in degree, but not necessarily in kind) from music-making in modern Western societies, is that it is an especially *marked* activity. To understand what is meant by "marked," one could draw the analogy to a familiar marked activity in most societies, sex, whereby variations in such variables as gender, money, relationship, privacy, and religion all have the potential to drastically affect how the same act is perceived. Likewise the act of performance (read, *music*) in Punjabi society gets construed and compartmentalized by established norms.

In an effort to understand Punjabi music independently from genre labels, I propose we distinguish multiple spheres or "worlds" of *performance*.[1] This structure puts musicians and social contexts at the center of the classification. Labels like "folk," "classical," and "pop" are often based on perceptions of where a piece of music belongs in certain

bodies of repertoire, along with their performance style. The connotations associated with these labels do include ideas about what sort of people perform them and when/where they might be performed. However, those ideas are conflated with other, subjective perceptions. If, for example, we have a women's wedding song, what do we do with it when it is performed by a classically-trained male professional musician in a concert at a folklore museum, or when it is recorded on CD, with a synthesizer accompaniment, and danced to at a party in London? It becomes quite unhelpful to treat the piece as a "folk-song" just because its text and tune may ultimately derive from a traditional amateur composition or the actors in the music video are dressed in old-fashioned costumes. This is why I start with the performers as the basis of classification. Who are the performers? What is their intent? For what purpose do they provide the music? How does the audience relate to them and by what mode do they receive the music from them?

One finds that performance within each world is subject to certain implied social restrictions, as indeed these restrictions are what maintain the boundaries between them. Thus each world operates relatively separately from the others. There is nothing absolute about the boundaries that separate these worlds, nonetheless the sense of boundary can be perceived in the tensions that manifest in their transgressions. One can identify the different worlds of performance in Punjab in terms of the musical act's nature and function. Each is further marked by commonalities in such features as who performs and why they perform, as articulated by such dimensions as gender, professionalism, and ethnicity. In the following sections, I identify each of these worlds of performance.

The Amateur World

Performance in this world is done by people who are not culturally considered to be "performers." What they do is either considered to be a ritual act or else one "of no great consequence," similar to speaking. This is not "music" in the local sense. The vast majority of this activity comes under the rubric of "singing" and goes by the respective names of specific genres. It is first and foremost a recitation of texts.[2] The repertoire of so-called "folk-song" (*lokgīt*), according to *strict* application of the term (as by Nahar Singh; see below), fits most precisely into this world. The playing of instruments here is limited to a few that are coded as domestic implements or as exceedingly amateur in their associations. Women are the main performers in this world. Most of their performances coincide with ritual occasions, and they often mark stages in a ceremony. Most importantly, this type of performance is for oneself and the immediate community in which one resides; no external

"audience" is addressed. It is of a participatory nature and the performers are not formally trained. An important distinction of this world is that performance is not done *for* payment. A seeming exception to that might be when a professional such as a *Mirāsaṇ* intercedes to provide guidance to the amateur performers and is compensated for the service. Although specific ethnic groups may have their particular practices, in the Amateur World, participation is not *limited* by ethnicity.

The Professional World

In this world, performance is exclusionary, that is, it is marked by a sharp division between a discreet audience and the performers. The latter are professionals, which means first and foremost that they do the act for money (on which they depend for a living). Performance is considered to be a service for others, so the performers have the generally low social status of service-providers. Accordingly, they ideally belong to specific families, micro-ethnic communities, by which they gain their hereditary birthright to a monopoly on this type of performance. Individuals outside of this world of performance, according to traditional rules of propriety, are discouraged from performing its repertoire. The repertoire includes, along with more difficult texts, "music" proper—*sangīt*. Along with music go instruments, the tools of the trade of these performing professionals. In order to perform such difficult repertoire and on professional instruments, the performers are highly trained. In contrast to the Amateur World, this world is dominated by men. Some women perform, but under certain conditions of exception or under penalty of social transgression.

The Sacred World

The Amateur World and the Professional World reflect customary distinctions of pre-industrial Punjab. The Sacred World is another, which sometimes shares qualities of each of the foregoing and is, in a way, an alternative to them. It seems that the spiritual nature and *devotional intent* of this type of performance allow for the transgression of otherwise standing norms. Just as rhythm 'n' blues and gospel songs may be nearly the same except for the stated motive of their performance, performances in the Sacred World of Punjabi culture may resemble other types of performance musically while allowing for very different standards of participation, professionalism, and context. While the Amateur performers perform for themselves and their community, and the Professional performers perform for an outside audience, Sacred performers perform, on anyone's behalf, for the Divinity.

Similarly, if the Amateur World corresponds roughly to "song," and performances in the Professional World are "music," then performance in the Sacred World is "devotion." That the latter is not "music," or that it is a sort of "music plus" allows the negation of the usual norms of *who* performs. This is because, as per cultural "policy" on devotion—sentiments common to Sufism, Sikhi, and devotional Hinduism—participation in such performance cannot be limited by gender, class, or ethnicity. For example, in the secular genre of *ḍhāḍī* performance, performance has been limited to men, but in the devotional (Sikh) genre, it is common nowadays to see groups containing all females. Indeed, rarely would you see, in conservative circles, women performing ballads whilst playing instruments on stage, but the religion-based intent of female dhadis "allows" for it. Participants in the Sacred World will have different levels of training, those being formally trained often serving as leaders on behalf of the untrained participants. Historically many of the trained performers in the Sacred World have corresponded to those in the Professional World, however this world of performance has also been open to those would-be performers that are excluded from the latter. A common way in which non-hereditary performers (i.e. those not from ascribed ethnic communities) have gained the "right" to perform is through presenting themselves devotionally. Thus "faqirs" of all sorts, individuals who have practically renounced their caste-based social status, have historically numbered among performers. While performers may earn money, because of the intent of their service, this does not reflect negatively on their social status.

The Mediated World

This is the product of modern life in Punjab, which can be understood to post-date the phenomenon of Punjabi music as characterized by the previously described worlds. Prior to the advent of a music industry in Punjab, the layperson had a rather limited involvement in the production of music and was also limited as to when he or she could *hear* music. This situation changed dramatically with the emergence of the most pervasive world of performance in contemporary Punjab, the Mediated World. It is characterized most significantly by mass mediation and its potential for separating a performance from an immediate context and performers from audience. The fluidity of recordings and broadcasts in crossing cultural boundaries upsets the traditional norms of performance practices. So while *repertoire* deriving from earlier worlds of performance may be performed in the Mediated World, it functions very differently there.

Commercial recordings dissolve or upset certain barriers between the conventional worlds of music-making. On one hand, the venture is

commercial—a trait of the Professional World that was closely linked to its strictures on ethnicity, class, and gender. On the other hand, the faceless, potential anonymity of the sound recording medium allows for subversion of norms of who may perform for entertainment and what one's pedigree must be. Indeed, while in the past each world of music-making had functioned to suit some aspect of Punjabi social life, products of the music industry appear as rather awkward specimens when approached from the traditionalist perspective. They bring with them the notion of experiencing music without any explicit performance context.

Professional Musicians and Performer Communities

One can categorize Punjabi musicians in several ways. One of the obvious ways that people might be inclined to do so is according to the musical genre the musicians play. However, a deficiency in that approach is equally obvious: What does one do when a musician plays more than one genre? Each approach has its shortcomings, however I believe categorization according to ethnic groups to be the most productive (that is, productive in revealing rather than concealing cultural structures) and "neatest" ("neat" with respect to an elegant classification scheme). Nevertheless, no single scheme can cover the whole, and the ethnicity-based categories should be combined with other ways of looking at the subject, depending on context and one's interest. Furthermore, in grouping people the intent is not to remove their individual agency. Rather, it is to emphasize the groups' actions in an environment where they have been going unrecognized. With these disclaimers in place, I introduce the idea of ethnicity-based musician classification, along with the main ethnic communities that make it up.

As explained above, all Punjabi communities make music in the Amateur World of performance, as indeed the music (broadly conceived) is more or less participatory and for one's peers. However, these people are not "musicians" *per se*. The *professional* performance of music—that which is exclusionary, specialized, and/or for profit—has customarily been associated with or confined to particular communities that cohere according to one or another ethnic (caste/tribe/clan) identity. I call these "performer communities." Some of these communities are associated *primarily* with music, while others are those in which music performance *may* occur, but it does not have a strong bearing on the group's identity as such. These communities stand in contrast to those who implicitly or explicitly reject public performance as a viable or socially appropriate behavior for their members.

The vast majority of professional musicians belong to the Scheduled Castes—indeed, they are among the most marginalized of them—or to the bureaucratic category of Backwards Castes. The general principal is

that, regardless of the high degree of respect individual musicians may garner, the communities from which they come are overwhelmingly those to whom society has given the lowest status. The question of the reason for an apparent correlation between being a musician and being of low social status in South Asia (and beyond) is one of general philosophical interest that cannot be answered here.

Although individuals from the three major religious faiths do perform music professionally, relatively very few Sikhs (the majority religious community in the Indian state) perform music as an occupation. This activity largely consists of serving as sacred-musicians (*rāgī*s) in gurdwaras or, more recently, as singers in the popular music industry. According to my theory of worlds of performance, these "exceptions" can be explained by the devotional intent of the first context and the mediated and modern mode of the second. The real explanation of the statistical fact of few Sikh professional musicians is that fewer Sikhs belong to the low-status performer communities from which the musicians historically and customarily come.

In all, one will find the communities to which professional musicians belong to be the least well known, whether in popular imagination or scholarly writing. The following briefly introduces several of these performer communities. The bias is towards groups in the India Punjab, as those are the ones among whom I have done the most ethnographic work.

Ḍūm

Ḍom is a widely distributed ethnic term in South Asia. The Dom are not a caste, rather, their historical presence suggests they once constituted a large scale tribe or what one might conversationally call a "race." Specific reference to the Dom people occurs by the 2nd century BCE (Ghurye 1969:313).[3] Persian scholar al-Biruni (early 11th century) noted that the Dom were among those peoples located outside of and ranked beneath the four main classes of Indian society. Their occupation was to sing and play a lute (1919:101-2). Al-Biruni's contemporary writer, Gardizi, mentioned a class of people called "Dunbi," most likely the Dom.[4] They were described in his writing as "black-skinned" "players on stringed instruments and dancers" who occupied an untouchable class of society (Minorsky 1964:202-3). Throughout South Asia the Dom practice such professions as scavenger, executioner, basket-maker, musician, blacksmith, leatherworker, weaver—in short, occupations considered menial. One might speculate that the bulk of the castes that have been considered untouchable had their origin in some larger Dom base. In any case, the Dom are of nearly universal low social status.

One of the Punjabi branches of the Dom, locally called *Ḍūm*, constitute a fairly distinct group from the larger "race" as known in the rest of South Asia. The people best known as Dum in Punjab are hereditary musicians, bards, or genealogists. In fact, though the phenomenon of Dom people as musicians is widespread, it may have its *origins* in the greater Punjab region (see Schreffler 2010:105). Importantly, the idea of Dom as a large-scale people or tribe engaged in many occupations underscores the fact that the occupation of musician overlaps with other occupations and duties, such as tailor, barber, circumciser, and basket-maker. The Dum of the greater Punjab area were Jacks of several trades. Compare for example the role of the Dum in Pathan society, which extended to many rituals. During wedding rites of the Khaṭṭak Pathans of the 19th century, Dums acted as go-betweens or assistants. Rose recorded that when the bride was taken to her husband's home, a Dum rode along on the pony with her (1911:531), saying that "The ḍúm is throughout an important person and is fed on all occasions" (ibid.:532).

The descendants of the Dum, spread among several subcastes, make up an important community in Punjab. However, people are fairly unaware of them, in part due to the fact that the over-broad (and often regarded as pejorative) term "Dum" is rarely *used*. Musicians that appear to be from the larger Dum stock are currently divided among at least three separate communities: *Jogī*, *Mahāshā*, and *Mirāsī*.

Jogī

The *Jogī* may be the closest "equivalent," in the contemporary Punjab, to the erstwhile Dum. They are a Hindu community with origins in the North-Central Punjab and the surrounding hills; Sialkot and Jammu are centers of diffusion. They have long been known as "gurus," both in musical arts *and* religious life.

The reason for their group name "Jogi" is unclear. One thing certain is that it designates an endogamous ethnic community, not a haphazard conglomeration of ascetics. However, in a time where music performance was more restricted to certain segments of society, faqirs or jogis—in the broad sense—were indeed associated with ballad-singing and playing of the *tūmbā* (gourd lute). Similarly, members from the Jogi community of Punjab tell how their ancestors were once expert at singing ballads (*kathā*). These people were based in the hill regions on the Northern side of Punjab, popularly conceived as the "abode of the Gods." The hills are rich in powerful Hindu sites (e.g. Vaishno Devi temple near Jammu), and the Dum there had been facilitators to rituals at temples and at homes. In this way we might understand the transformation of part of the Dum community into "Jogi" due to the image suggested by their

activities. Moreover, "jogi" would have been a more respectful term than one with the low-status connotations of "Dum."

Fig. 1. Ustad Bal Kishan with dhol outside his office in Jammu Cantonment, 2005. Photo: G. Schreffler.

Bal Kishan of Jammu tells how his people used to sing and play all sorts of instruments. His own skills extend from *ḍhol* (large barrel drum) to *tablā* and *pakhāvaj* (cylindrical) drums, along with the double-reed aerophone *bīn*. Interestingly, in our conversations, he never used the word "Jogi." Instead he referred to his people as *ustād lok* or *gurū lok* ("teacher-people"), reinforcing the inadequacy of both the euphemistic "Jogi" and the vulgar "Dum."

From Jammu, the Jogi have filtered down into Punjab's nearby district of Gurdaspur. One of the largest communities of dhol-players to serve the East Punjab is located in Ludhiana city, and they are largely of Jogi background. Jogis also have a presence in Ambala.

Mahāshā

Another section of the Dum community has become known as *Mahāshā*. They are an urban community that originated in places around Lahore and Sialkot. The late 19th century Arya Samaj movement had provided an

opportunity to change the Dum's low status with their offer to reincorporate outcastes back into the "Hindu" fold. Individuals from the Dum community availed of this opportunity in great numbers, whereby they were dubbed the newly coined term, "Mahasha" (Singh 1998:510). Along with this rebirth many Dum gave up their stigmatizing professions of cane-work and scavenging in further effort to erase the memory of their previous status. Having abandoned service trades, one of the main "clean" occupations that the Mahasha turned to was business. They did not abandon music, however.

Fig. 2. Ustad Tilak Raj, with his wife, at his office in Amritsar, 2005. Photo: G. Schreffler.

One of the largest and oldest-established dhol-playing communities in East Punjab is the Mahasha community in Amritsar. Its shining stars are some of the most celebrated ustads of the 20th century, however, they are also a downtrodden community. Their historic neighborhood is located near Sultanwind Gate, not far from the Darbar Sahib. Inside the gate is a long *galī*, Dholi Muhalla, a huge market for musicians through which one can stroll and find someone for any event. One of the actively playing leaders of the Amritsar Dholi Muhalla is Tilak Raj. His relatives make ends meet in a variety of ways, in which one can still see the old

profession of cane-work. For example, Tilak Raj's father, retired *ḍholī* (dhol-player) Mela Ram, works with his wife splitting bamboo and making hoops, to be used to make drumheads.

After Amritsar the next largest Mahasha musician community is found in Jalandhar, where many of the families had come from Sialkot. Most have brought with them the brass band tradition; twenty bands in Jalandhar city, especially found in the Purani Kot Bazar area, go by the name of "Sialkoti Band."

Mirāsī

Despite the many different ethnic groups that perform in some way, the occupation of professional musician in North India has been, since medieval times, closely associated with people called *Mirāsī* (*Marāsī*, *Mīrāsī*). "Mirasi" is perhaps most accurately characterized as an occupational label. At the same time, however, it has been used with the intent of identifying one or more ethnic groups that, if not having emerged from a common stock, have at least *cohered* through in-group marriage practices. A clearer explanation might be to say that, for the ethnic groups to which the term is most often applied, "Mirasi" is little more than an occupational label. The people who constitute the ethnic communities from which these performers come may accept or reject the Mirasi label if and when it suits them, while maintaining a more accurate, insider's sense of who their people are. For outsiders to the community, the term is both an (overused) occupational label *and* an ethnic label. We may attempt to understand it from both inside and outside perspectives.

The term "Mirasi" probably comes from the Arabic *mīrāth*, "inheritance," but it is not self-evident in what sense "inheritance" should be interpreted. It may refer specifically to the role of Mirasis as personal bards and genealogists. Some Mirasis have been charged with preserving the genealogies and historical events of specific clans, which they may recite on occasions such as the birth of a son, a wedding, or a funeral. In this respect, in medieval and colonial times they served a function analogous to the *griot* in West Africa, or the piper and harpist to Scottish clans. The linguistic root of "inheritance" may have had a more generic interpretation, referring to the *hereditary* nature of their profession. I believe this interpretation to be more accurate since Mirasi occupations are not limited to genealogist. Moreover, in practice the label of Mirasi is used to denote, first and foremost, a *hereditary* professional musician. Indeed, the catch-all term encompasses many types of musicians, and so they are often known by more occupation-specific names that indicate their function or the instrument they play, such as Qawwal (a Sufi devotional singer) or Nagarchi (a player of kettledrum, *nagārah*). The hereditary nature of these occupations is, arguably, what binds them.

Whereas all Mirasi are more or less presumed to be professional musicians, not all professional musicians are Mirasi. So despite the general occupational nature of the term, it also has an ethnic dimension. There is evidence that the Mirasi communities—they are perhaps best thought of in the plural—emerged from within another heterogeneous group, the Dum. Not only were the professions of Dum and Mirasi identical in past accounts, the terms have also been treated as synonymous, even up to the present day where the hyphenated label "Dum-Mirasi" is sometimes still used. Guru Nanak's minstrel, Bhai Mardana, is said to have been a Mirasi according to Bhai Gurdas (early 17th century).[5] Brothers Satta and Rai Balvand, who worked as minstrels in the courts of Guru Nanak's successors, were said to have come from the Dum community (Nabha 1930:561; *Guru Granth Sahib* pg. 966). Contemporary Mirasis connect their lineage to these individuals. Such references, however, do not eliminate the possibility that outsiders, in their usage of the terms, have conflated occupation and ethnicity. Nonetheless, the great amount of such references, and the strong correlation between the social roles of Dum and Mirasi suggest a working consensus that at least part of the community of ethnic Mirasis descended from Dums.

Another factor that distinguishes the Mirasi as a potentially distinct ethnic community is that they are Muslims. A rather likely scenario is that they were converts to Islam from among Hindus like the Dum who, upon conversion, kept their profession, but adopted a new identity and kinship practices on religious grounds. This new identity, replete with a more "noble" name, gave the potential for a better social status than the Dum, with whom the Mirasi subsequently avoided associating. The newly christened Mirasi would now look down on the Dum (an idea put out by Rose 1914:107). Confirming this scenario is complicated because it is difficult to say if, historically speaking, the generic term "Mirasi" was *only* used in the case of a Muslim who performs the same work as his Hindu counterpart, or if it was sometimes used occupationally regardless of the referent's religious background. A few references do raise the possibility of a Hindu Mirasi community. Thind states that one division of the Mirasi in India consists of itinerant ten-dwellers, that these are the descendants of the Dom, and that they call themselves Hindu. He states that by contrast the settled Mirasis who participate in the patron-client system are all Muslim (1996:39-40). K.S. Singh also states that there are both Muslim and Hindu Mirasis (1998:2299). It may be that the so-called Mirasis of Hindu faith are so little known—or known better as "Dum"—such that the *best-known* "Mirasis" have become thought of as exclusively Muslim. Interestingly, some of the older Indian musicians with whom I have spoken were able to avoid a Mirasi/Dum or Hindu/Muslim dichotomy by simply referring to *ustād*

lok—i.e. those people who are traditionally recognized as knowledgeable about music.

So much for an etic attempt to define Mirasi; how do they explain themselves? As might be expected, the generic, lumping term "Mirasi," although handy for outsiders, is less useful for these individuals when labeling themselves. In fact, the name "Mirasi" has acquired some connotations of greater or milder contempt, especially in Pakistan. Some Mirasis in West Punjab call themselves *Kasbī*, Persian for "one who works" (Nayyar 2000:763). Others generally prefer the fancy label *Mīr* ^c*ālam* ("lord of the world"), and to be addressed as *mīr* ("chief").

There may be as many divisions to the Mirasi "community" as there are writers to name them. Lybarger (this volume) has analyzed the major classificatory schemes in print, and developed his own empirically-based model. The exploration of these divisions is enlightening, and makes it clear that there is considerably variation according to time period and geographic region. At this point we have yet to amass enough ethnographic information for a comprehensive study of the Mirasi, and with that in mind, information from various quarters is welcome. To that end, I contribute my own findings on Mirasis in the Malerkotla area, following.

Contemporary Mirasis (i.e. in the Malerkotla area, districts Ludhiana and Sangrur) distinguished three major groups within a larger "Mirasi" community. Marital relations are forbidden between these groups, which suggests that the notion of a larger community is the outsider's abstraction—albeit an abstraction of which the insiders are aware. The first group is the *Mardānā*, who serve the Jatt and other land-owning communities. Their name is an obvious reference to Bhai Mardana (1516-1591), the Muslim minstrel who accompanied Guru Nanak on the *rabāb*, a plucked lute of the northwestern areas. One informant from this community asserted that Bhai Mardana's actual name was actually parsed as "Mīr Dānā," and that the proper name for his community was *Rabābī* (Sher Khan, personal communication, 14 May 2005). In any case, the Mardana Mirasi are proud to be associated with the Sikh tradition, with which they are intimately familiar. The Mardana had historically been singers and players of the rabab and sarangi. Informants spoke of them as if they were the "default" or "real" Mirasi. Indeed, they regard themselves as superior to other Mirasi groups. Their claims to high status, at least in the current environment, are bolstered by their supposed historical connection to Bhai Mardana and their contemporary connection to landed Sikhs.

Another Mirasi group in the area is the *Bhaṇḍ*, who serve the Valmiki (Balmiki) and Mazhbi communities. K.S. Singh calls them "Balmiki Mirasi" (1998:2299). They specialize in a slapstick, Abbot and Costello-like comedy act. The usual performance format consists of a

"straight man" that receives wacky retorts to his questions, which he puts to a "funny man." The performers dress in ridiculous exaggeration of "low-class" or "bumpkin" attire. Whenever the funny man makes a clownish remark, the straight man slaps the other's hand with a piece of rolled-up leather (*chamoṭā*). The sound of this constant slapping—the "slapstick" as it were—gives a sort of rhythm to the routine. In the traditional context, such duos or trios entertain at childbirth and wedding celebrations. In the *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* (late 16th century), the Bhand were noted for playing the *duhul* (a progenitor of the dhol or dholak) and cymbals (Abu l-Fazl 1948:272). One must be clear that although the "Bhand" label corresponds to a certain occupation or performance style, it is indeed being used by contemporary Mirasis to distinguish an ethnic group.

A third group of Mirasis consists of performers known as *Naqqalīā* or *Naqqāl*. Their performances are more elaborate than those of the Bhand. They consist of a family-based troupe of performers, including dramatists, comedians, singers, instrumentalists, and at least one female impersonator. Their art is called *naqal*—"imitation" or "mimicry"— and is in essence a variety show of skits, songs, and dances. The basis of the performance may be the dramatization of one of the traditional tales, but the presentation is far from straightforward. At one moment the show may break for comedy of the Bhand type. At another it may feature dancing by the female impersonators, in a *kathak*-based style, to light classical-type music. Other interludes consist of *qawwālī* songs by a group. Indeed, with decline in popularity of their characteristic entertainment genre, many Naqqalias have shifted focus to qawwali singing (Singh 1998:2587). The terms Bhand and Naqqalia are often said to be synonymous (ibid.; Nayyar 2000:765; Rose 1914:156), probably due to their overlapping professions. However, regardless of their possibly conflated status in the past, contemporary "Mirasis" in East Punjab distinguish these as two groups.

Mirasis can be found as players on just about any instrument and as singers of any entertainment genre of song. Whatever performance skill they practice, they are usually subject to the most rigorous of training. Mirasis have been major players in the development of Hindustani classical music, especially as instrumentalists on the sarangi and tabla Neuman finds that by around the 1870s, the Mirasi had begun to take the place of an earlier historically-mentioned performer community, the *Dhāḍī*, in the capacity of court musicians (Neuman 1980:130) who had been established in that role since at least Akbar's time—or else the names of the musicians changed!

As paid praise-singers, Mirasis were expected to extol the virtues of an individual's family line. As possessors of a family's historical information, they had the power to present that history as less than

favorable if they were not duly compensated. The practice was recorded in colonial times whereby if a Mirasi was not given something for his performance, he would construct a cloth effigy of his non-patron, attach it atop a pole, and parade it through the village (Rose 1914:109). Being strictly professionals, their attitude towards payment verges on one of entitlement.

Women from the Mirasi communities, called *Mirāsaṇ* (sng.), are distinguished as professionals in their own right. They perform as singers at various life-cycle events. So for instance, on the sixth day of a boy child's life or some convenient time within the year thereafter, a ritual called *chhaṭī* is performed. The Mirasan, playing the small barrel drum *ḍholkī*, leads in singing wedding-type songs and dancing (N. Kaur 1999:32). One of the most important functions of the Mirasan is to lead the women's songs (*alāhuṇīāṅ*) of group mourning that follow a person's death. Mirasans have also been alleged to perform "exorcisms" in the past (Rose 1919:203).

Both women and men of the Mirasi, like the Dum of neighboring regions, used to perform the function of intermediary for their patrons. Known as a *lāgī*, after the customary dues (*lāg*) to which he or she is entitled for his services, the traditional intermediary in life-cycle rituals was usually a priest, a barber, or a Mirasi. In a wedding, for instance, the lagi would hand the *shagan* (monetary donations) to the groom. At the time of each of these small services, the lagi received a small amount of cash. Of course, Mirasis were also expected to entertain, and they did so for the male guests of both the bride and groom's houses from the day before a wedding (Eglar 1960:167-8).

Being a Muslim community, most Mirasis left East Punjab at Partition. Some stayed behind and remained attached to their substantial patrons. They are most densely populated in the districts of Ludhiana, Sangrur, and Patiala. These are the areas closest to the princely states that remained autonomous after 1947. More significantly, they are close to the town of Malerkotla, which is best known as one of the only towns in Punjab to have a majority Muslim population (Bigelow 2005:74). During the tumult of Partition, local Muslims were given refuge within the walls of the city. This historical event was important in shaping the modern makeup of musicians in East Punjab.
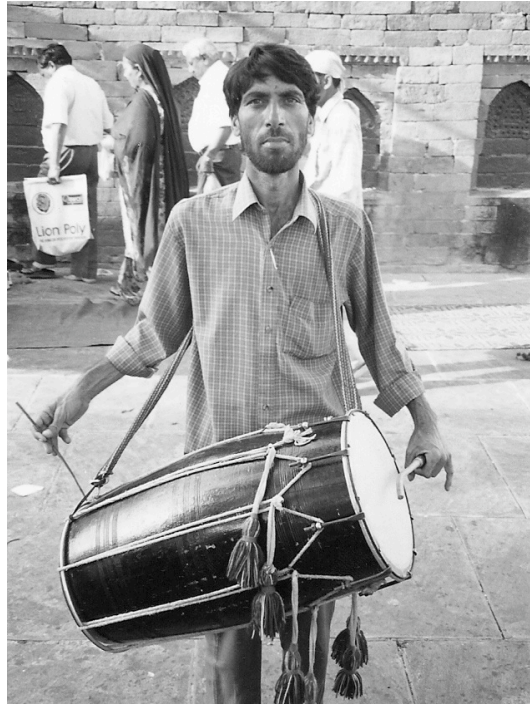
Fig. 3. A Mirasi-Naqqalia dholi, the son of Sadhu Khan of Malerkotla, 2005. Photo: G. Schreffler.

A variety of Mirasi musicians are regulars at the shrine of the saint Hazrat Haider Shaikh in Malerkotla. For instance there is the son of Sadhu Khan, who is leader of a Naqqalia party. His family belongs to the Patiala vocal gharana of Barkat Ali. In the same family are Mirasi dhol-players Zilfaqar Ali and Liaqat Ali, who earn tips playing at the shrine on Thursdays. In addition to also playing tabla and various instruments in a wedding band, they sing qawwali at shrines.

Another, village-based, Mirasi family is represented by Master Sher Khan of Jarg (dist. Ludhiana), who belongs to the Mardana group. One of Sher Khan's "brothers" is the famous singer and recording artist, Mohammed Siddiq. Within the village, the family enjoys a respected status; their house, while very modest, is located among the homes of landowner families. Khan and his sons are also officiants and caretakers in charge of a local shrine to Baba Farid. They have three horses that they keep for wedding rentals and their own personal enjoyment. Professionally, they are experts in many types of music. Sher Khan started a brass band tradition; he plays clarinet and saxophone for the band, now led by his son. All the family members are adept at singing

and playing the harmonium, and all of the men in can play dhol to some degree.

Ḍhāḍī

The term *Ḍhāḍī,* like "Mirasi," is ambiguous as an ethnic category because it also quite plainly refers to a musician that performs the *ḍhāḍī* music genre, irrespective of his background. To what degree *ḍhāḍī* had historically specified a distinct lineage, versus a general term for a musician or, more specifically, a musician type (e.g. bard) similarly lacks clarity. So when in the early 16th century Guru Nanak metaphorically likened himself to a "ḍhāḍhī," we understand that he means a bard, and that such bards belong to a menial class, but we do not know whether this was a singular ethnic community. Akbar's court in the middle of that century employed both males and females of the "Ḍhāḍhí" community. The men were said to recite primarily heroic verse, playing on the hourglass drum *ḍhaḍḍ* and the plucked lute *kingar* (Abu l-Fazl 1948:271). Qawwali singers were ascribed to the Dhadhi community as well (ibid.). As for the women,

> The *Ḍhāḍhí* women chiefly play on the *Daf* and the
> *Duhul*, and sing the *Dhurpad* and the *Sohlá* on
> occasions of nuptial and birthday festivities in a very
> accomplished manner. (Abu l-Fazl 1948[ca.1590]:271-
> 2)

The *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* also includes the names of several musicians who have "Ḍhāṛī" appended to their names (Abu l-Fazl 1927:681-2).

   Since at least the late 19th century, the Dhadi of Punjab have been associated with a specific repertoire that includes martial ballads and often-unique versions of traditional tales. Their performances, executed standing, include the characteristic instruments *sārangī* (a bowed lute with sympathetic strings) and *ḍhaḍḍ* (small, hand-struck hourglass drum). The best-known performers called dhadi nowadays perform ballads about the Sikh tradition, however this perception is largely the result a 20th century phenomenon. As Nijhawan illustrates, Sikh performers from non-hereditary background, exemplified by Sohan Singh Seetal, adopted the dhadi genre as a form of "public participation" in which one could voice political and religious ideas in the early-mid 20th century. In doing so, they were inclined to disassociate with some aspects of the perceived "low" ethnic and cultural sphere of the dhadi performers who provided entertainment (Nijhawan 2006:86). Before that time, however, it appears that dhadi music performers were confined to one or more hereditary performer communities. Dhadis have been called

a type of Mirasi, however, further research is required to understand what sense of "Mirasi" is to be understood in such an assignment. Some contemporary dhadis, for example Shareef Idu, do openly call themselves "Mirasi."

Bharāī

The *Bharāī* are a community who traditionally specialized in playing dhol. They are associated with worship of the 12th century saint, Sakhi Sarvar Sultan. Sakhi Sarvar (also known as "Lakhdata Pir") is believed to be a giver of sons. The saint is also worshipped to protect animals and children from disease (Bhatti 2000:90). His worshippers in Punjab come from all classes and religions.

Sakhi Sarvar's remote shrine at Nigaha (dist. Dera Ghazi Khan) is a site of annual pilgrimage for the saint's ᶜ*urs*. When Punjab had yet to be divided, pilgrims came all the way from the eastern side of the province—an epic journey on which pilgrims slept on the ground and did not wash their heads or clothes until it was complete (Rose 1919:568). Leading the worship of Sakhi Sarvar and serving pilgrims along the way were special devotees: the Bharai.

One legend related to Sakhi Sarvar offers an origin story for the Bharai as musicians. It is said that when Sarvar was being married, the Mirasi *lāgī* showed up late for the wedding. As a further slight, the Mirasi also rejected Sarvar's modest offering of a piece of blue cloth. Thus spurned, Sarvar gave the cloth to a Jatt companion named Shaikh Budda, declaring that they did not need a Mirasi. He instructed Shaikh Budda to tie the cloth around his head as a badge of honor, and to play the dhol (Rose 1911:85). Another legend describes an episode that occurred after Sakhi Sarvar's death. A merchant from Bukhara had visited the Nigaha shrine and Sakhi Sarvar appeared to him. The saint then ordered the merchant to bring from Bukhara a blind man, a leper, and a eunuch, in order to take care of his shrine. All three were "cured" by the saint, and they commemorated their healing by beating a drum. Sarvar is supposed to have appeared and said, "He who is my follower will ever beat the drum and remain *barahi*, 'sound,' nor will he ever lack anything" (ibid.).

It is important to mention that the Bharai are also called "Shaikh." In the census of 1881, Bharais in the Lahore division were subsumed under "Shekh" (Ibbetson 1883:229). And in the 1901 census, the Bharai were *only* counted under the rubric of Shaikh (Baines 1912:91). Contemporary informants (June 2006) at village Dhaunkal (dist. Gujranwala) hardly recognized the word "Bharai," instead referring to the dhol-players who come (from outside) to the village fair as "Shaikh."

The customary duty of the Bharai was to lead the pilgrims on their journey to Nigaha. During the journeys they led the singing of songs and dancing in praise of Sakhi Sarvar. They also led devotees on shorter trips to local shrines or festivals, and begged for offerings on holy days. Whilst playing the dhol, a small troupe of Bharai entered a neighborhood or village. With them they carried a long bamboo pole, on which are tied colorful strips of cloth or veils. The cloths were given by women by way of giving thanks for boons granted, like the birth or marriage of a son (Rose 1911:86; Faruqi et. al. 1989:35).

When not leading pilgrims or the worship of Sakhi Sarvar, the Bharai had other duties. These would include the general role of village drummer, which was to play the dhol at the time of reaping the harvest, for *bhangṛā* dance, and during wrestling matches. In the 19th century, the Bharai were said to "often act as Mírásis" (Ibbetson 1883:229), in other words, they performed *lāgī* functions. They were circumcisers in the West, and it was said that in the South they were even more common as circumcisers than the Nai (barber, the typical circumciser elsewhere) (ibid.). A unique activity of the Bharai is the singing of "lullabies," *lorī*, to children. Once or twice a year the Bharai of a village would go to the homes where a son was recently born to do so (N. Kaur 1999:29).

Valmīkī

The so-called *Chuhṛā* people are found all throughout India where, along with the *Chamār*, they make up the majority of the population of what were historically the "untouchables." Their hereditary and, ultimately, "defiling" occupations were sweeping and scavenging, often including the removal of dead animals and waste.

It is important to acknowledge from the outset the considerable issues surrounding the very naming of this group within the sensitive context of caste politics. At one time the outsider label "Chuhra" was considered appropriate for Hindu members of this caste. Concurrently in the 19th century, converts from among these people to Sikhism and Islam, largely to escape their status in the Hindu caste system, had started to become known as *Mazhbī* and *Musallī* respectively. In more recent years, "Chuhra," although still widely used by outsiders, has become derogatory, such that use of the term *with abusive intent* can be a criminal offense (Judge 2003:2990). The Hindus of this ethnic community in Punjab now largely identify with the term *Balmīkī* or *Valmīkī*, after Valmik, their patron saint and the poet of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* (ca.5th-3rd century BCE). Within narrowly circumscribed, contemporary contexts we can and should call each community by its currently preferred names. However, although each group subscribes to a different label based on its religious affinities, all emerged from one

ethnic community. Indeed, even while maintaining separate religious identities, each Chuhra-based group has more in common with these analogous groups than with other communities; there *is* some binding identity that they share. One needs a label to discuss them collectively and regardless of religion. The politically correct term "Dalit" is practically useless for ethnography because it can refer to a member of any "downtrodden" Scheduled Caste. Therefore, within the present confines of discussing the group historically as an ethnic community I am regrettably compelled to use the expedient term, "Chuhra." To avoid the dilemma altogether and not use the sensitive historical label, I believe, is a worse offense because doing so has the side effect of silencing discourse about these people. Already ignored or "invisible" in society, the people thus also become invisible in discussion when we avoid mentioning them. And, consequently, their role as musicians also goes unrecognized.

Many Chuhras, like members of most Scheduled Castes in Punjab, are employed as agricultural laborers and service workers. They are also, however, involved in a range of music activities, both in devotional and profane contexts. For instance, an account from a Hoshiarpur village in the 1920s tells that it was a Chuhra's job to walk through the streets whilst beating a *daff* (frame drum) to announce coming events (Dhami 1996:55). A recent writer states that, "Practically, all the members of the marriage band parties are Balmikis" (Puri 2004:9), although this sounds suspiciously like a localized phenomenon.

In order to properly contextualize the musical activities of the Chuhra community they must not be thought of as merely a "caste." Rather, the Chuhra constitute a rather distinct society, although probably more so in the past than now. They may have been an erstwhile "race," like the Dom, who when incorporated into the larger society gravitated towards certain professions, but who, nonetheless, retained a distinct lifestyle, rituals, language, and deities. Their status as "outcastes," living on the margins of village life and severely restricted in their interactions with other classes, would have maintained if not intensified the idiosyncrasies of their lifestyle.

One can see the Chuhra's distinct, traditional music most distinctly in the worship of the saint Gugga, who is thought to be the ruler of all things beneath the earth. Gugga's legend follows the pattern of many Indian mythological tales, but the raw presence of its local sites and details give it a powerful immediacy. The saint's shrine lies in the middle of a desert near Rajasthan's village Dadreva (dist. Hanumangarh). From the original grave, dirt has been taken by devotees and brought back to local communities to establish smaller *Guggā māṛī*s (the term for these shrines). These are extremely numerous in East Punjab, and they are typically taken care of by Chuhras. On Thursday evenings especially,

devotees who have paid their respects to Gugga sit with their brethren on the ground outside the inner sanctum. In a happy mood, devotees greet each other with *Jai ho!* ("Hallelujah"). At the start of sunset, one or more dholis begin to play. Devotees continue to arrive for about two hours, when concluding rituals are performed by the Valmiki priests. During the monsoon months, when snakes are most prevalent, the belief is that appeasement of Gugga protects one from them. Gugga also has the power to cure snakebites if one brings the victim to his shrine (Rose 1919:171). Others come to Gugga requesting the boon of a son. Although a diverse cross-section believes in Gugga's powers, the Chuhra are especially linked to his worship and the maintenance of related traditions. Gugga's dedicated devotees are known as *bhagat*. A bhagat may be of any caste, but most are Chuhras.

The bards of Gugga are generally musicians from the Valmiki community. Theirs is a unique repertoire of devotional hymns (*bhajan*) and legends from the life of the saint. The primary instruments used are the sarangi and a drum called *ḍaurū*. The dauru is unique to this sphere of music making in Punjab. It is a small, hourglass-shaped drum with two heads, only one of which is beaten. While it resembles the Punjabi hourglass drum dhadd, the dauru is larger and beaten with a small stick. Its drumheads are larger in diameter than the length of its body, and its construction is less refined looking. Being an hourglass drum, its form generally resembles the famous rattle drum*, ḍamrū*, which is one of the icons of Shiv. The iconic import of this is not lost on the devotees of Gugga. The dauru player cradles the drum in one hand while simultaneously squeezing and releasing a one-inch wide strap wrapped around the ropes that bind the drumheads. Doing this, he is able to achieve a variable tension on the drumhead and thus modulate its pitch when it is struck by the stick in his other hand. These changes in pitch are part and parcel of the identity of the rhythms played on the dauru.

The Chuhra bards are specially engaged to perform on Thursday nights and on the holidays during the festival season. Over the course of many nights they recite episodes from the tale of Gugga. The leader plays a drone-like, rhythmic accompaniment on his sarangi, with frequent, small flourishes. Bells are attached to his bow to create additional, light rhythm. He relates the episode in a patter speech. The spiel is frequently interrupted when a devotee takes his blessings and makes an offering, at which time the bard acknowledges the "maharaj" who made the offering. At regular points, the narrative stops while one or two other musicians, playing dauru, join in on the chorus of a hymn. They are accorded a special respect as well. Some bards are itinerant during the two-month Gugga season, traveling the circuit of fairs held in honor of the saint in Punjab, Rajasthan, and U.P.

Fig. 4. Bhagats from Punjab on pilgrimage to devotional sites of Gugga Pir in Rajasthan, 2004. They appear with a *ḍaurū*-playing bard. Photo: G. Schreffler.

Guggā Naumī, the Saint's birthday and annual festival, is celebrated on the ninth day of the native month Bhadon (Aug.-Sept.). On this day, fairs are held at Gugga *māṛī*s. Preparations for the festivities begin about a month earlier, during which small groups of bhagats begin to periodically take out processions. The bhagats carry with them a long bamboo pole, *chhaṛī*, which is the emblem (*nishān*) of Gugga. As with the Bharai's pole, on Gugga's chhari are tied cloths given by women. It is also topped with a broom of peacock feathers (*mor dī chhaṛ*), and other characteristic decorations adorn its length. The procession of bhagats moves from alley to alley, door to door, seeking offerings. On the way, they sing songs in praise of Gugga, *sohlā* (sng.). Among the group are the players of dauru, beating time and signaling. Whereas dauru was the original instrument for this activity, and is still used, it is now very commonly replaced by the much louder dhol. I believe that with the absence of Muslim Bharais in the East Punjab since Partition, the worship of Gugga is following the pattern of Sakhi Sarvar.[6] Indeed, in the past era it was the duty of the Bharai to lead women to the mela for Gugga at Chappar (Gurdit Singh 1960:205), but nowadays the Chuhra have clearly taken over this function.

Shaikh

In its original Arabic context, *shaykh* referred to a chief or elder. Imported into the Indian context, it retained this meaning, but also gained a use as a respectful title for those of Arab descent. However, by the 19th century the term had, in Rose's words, "degraded to vulgar use" (1914:399). Muslims of high "caste," of supposedly Arab descent, were known in Punjab by names like Sayyad, Qureshi, and Shaikh. At the same time, "native" clans of comfortable status, like the Jatt, were content with their tribal clan names. However, outcastes, especially when converting to Islam in hopes to improve their status, established new names for their communities. Hence, a Hindu Chuhra convert to Islam became known as "Musalli." This effort backfired to some extent as "Musalli" was understood by cynics as little more than a euphemism for "Chuhra"; in recent decades it has taken on its own overtones of derision (e.g. noted by Salim 2004:160). Still other individuals in society had found in Islam a real chance to soften the dividing lines of caste and class. Rose characterized the situation as follows:

> [T]he class which lies between these two extremes [of bluebloods or landlords, and "outcastes"], …neither so proud of their origin to wish, nor so degraded by their occupation as to be compelled, to retain their original caste name, very generally abandon that name on their conversion to Islám and adopt the title of Shaikh. (Rose 1914:399)

In some areas, Shaikh was adopted by a great number of artisan and similarly ranked castes. Even Mirasis (of some sort) identified with the term Shaikh. In 1931, the Mirasi in the United Provinces gave Shaikh to the census collectors as the new name for themselves (Ansari 1960:38). Neuman later recorded that the Mirasi in Delhi rarely called themselves Mirasi, instead they said their caste is Shaikh (1980:124). And more recent data shows that Mirasis in Chandigarh are also called Shaikh (Singh 1998:2300).

We have already seen that *Shaikh* is an alternate, if not the self-preferred, term for referring to a Bharai. However, there is yet another group of musicians that can be referred to as Shaikh. For the purposes of distinguishing a unique community of musicians that calls itself Shaikh, we must eliminate the aforementioned uses of the term that apply to Bharai and Mirasi. Having done that, we are left with the former outcastes, particularly the Musalli. As musicians, and as dholis in particular, members of this group have gone so far as to imbue "Shaikh"

with *one* of its earlier Arabic connotations: a leader in Sufi worship. They serve as facilitators towards reaching union with the Divine. The Shaikhs' image at least, if not their deeds, is of that of a faqir or *malang*, an ascetic who lives at the shrines of saints or wanders according to their "commands" (Ewing 1984:359) whilst living off of charity. Of course, the stereotype of the "wandering faqir" is only partly true. Shaikhs are often householders; their distinguishing traits as faqirs could be considered their unorthodox appearance and manner of devotion. Indeed, traditional Punjabi culture leaves two options for the vernacular musician-performer: Either come from a hereditary performing community, or live *outside* of the rules of society—as a faqir.

Musicians of this group appear to be largely a modern Pakistani phenomenon. Dhol-players of the Shaikh class style themselves *sāīṅ*—a respectful title for a faqir. In appearance they cultivate overgrown locks, don long robes, and adorn every finger with a ring. They perform at shrines as a matter of devotion to the saint. But whereas dholis everywhere in Punjab play at shrines, the "Sain" dholis' performances are motivated not only for offerings', but also for art's sake. Sain-type dholis usually perform in pairs, as one dholi must play the underlying rhythm while the other elaborates. Such an aesthetic show is not seen, say, among the Mirasis who play at Haider Shaikh's shrine in Malerkotla. Indeed, the Sains' playing is meant to be heard and *appreciated*. In the proper context, it is not without important ritual function, namely the inducement of trance, dance, and "ecstasy" (*mastī*). However, I would suggest that for a good percentage of the Sain-type dholis, religious devotion also provides an *excuse* to step outside their expected social role of non-musician service worker.

The most famous of the Sain dholis is Lahore's Zulfikar Ali, known best as "Pappu Sain." Having transferred a tabla-playing style to the dhol, he began playing regularly at the shrines of two of Lahore's saints, Madho Lal Hussain and Shah Jamal. As Wolf relates, in the late 1990s, students from the National College of Arts made it trendy to hang out and listen to Pappu Sain at the shrines (2006:253). Another dholi of the "Sain" model is Saghir Ali Khan of Jhelum. His ustad was a Mirasi from the Islamabad area. Saghir Ali and his brother have been the primary dholis engaged by Pakistan's National Council of Arts for national and international programs.

Fig. 5. Ustad Saghir Ali Khan playing the *chimṭā*, Jhelum, 2006. Photo: G. Schreffler.

Mazhbī

Mazhbī is the name adopted by the Chuhra community that converted to Sikhism. Although they are Sikhs, as a "low caste" group some music may be considered as within their purview to perform. I have noted a small number of them who play dhol, which they make use of to perform at shrines for offerings. Balbir Singh of Ladda village (dist. Sangrur), wanders to various shrines and festivals around Punjab, and as far as Kashmir, as did his teacher before him. His occupation? "*The work of God*" (personal communication, 14 April 2005).

Bāzīgar

The term *Bazīgar* is a layperson's label referring to a few endogamous tribes sharing a similar cultural background and who were historically associated with giving acrobatic and physical stunt shows. Having been largely concentrated in the West Punjab before Partition, they filled the musician's role in many contexts, especially in areas where other communities like Mirasi and Bharai were fewer in number. This Hindu community concentrated in East Punjab after Partition, where they have played a decisive role, in some cases, in maintaining and directing the flow of certain traditional performing arts. They are especially known nowadays as dhol-players and dance-trainers. However, like the Dum

and the Chuhra of the past, their people posses a comprehensive range of music that includes both services for others and amateur performance amongst themselves. The article in this volume on their community will describe their history, lifestyle, and musical activities in more detail.

Other Performer Communities

The preceding communities are those that have had long-standing traditions of professional musical performance. Naturally, this list cannot account for the social background of every musician in Punjab. However, the rule still holds true that not just "anyone" would or could perform professionally. We have seen that musicians usually come from low-status or marginal communities, and this includes a number of communities whose members have recently taken to performance even though they had no tradition previously. We can theorize that, in the case of individuals that do not come from the "main" performer communities (above), they may elect to perform because their social position "permits" it. In the least, they have "nothing to lose" and only to gain, in that music performance, especially on the currently in-demand instrument, dhol, is a viable means of survival. Some of the communities, less established but observed to have gotten involved in music of late, are noted here.

Chamār. The traditional leather-working community, well known as an historical "outcaste," Chamars made great strides in income level and education in the 20th century. The famous Punjabi recorded singer Lal Chand "Yamla Jatt," who ushered in a new style of folk-singing, was of this background. Ludhiana is a center. I have also noted Chamars as dhol-players and performers of the entertaining *nachār* dance.

Sānsī. The *Sānsī* are probably the largest group among the erstwhile itinerant tribes. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 stigmatized them as incorrigible thieves. However, though thievery was indeed practiced, their main means of sustenance was raising livestock, hunting, and selling domestic items (Bedi 1971:13). Interestingly, the Sansi have been the hereditary genealogists and bards (cf. Mirasis) to some Jatt clans of Punjab (Rose 1914:362). Musical activities of the Sansis have been connected with "begging." In McCord's unpublished ethnography of the Sansi, community elder Natha Singh recounted how the women used to sing and busk, especially for wedding parties. Some men formed a small musical band for busking, which consisted of such instruments as flute, cymbals, daff, and dhol. The band played at wedding and death ceremonies and Lohri celebrations, for the lay community (McCord 199x:4). Young Sansi men in the Chandigarh area, trained by Bazigar

artists, have recently taken up playing the dhol professionally. They supply this service along with their most prominent service in the area: providing mares for wedding processions.

Ḍakaunt. The *Ḍakaunt* are a group of Brahmans, designated a Backwards Caste, who migrated from West Punjab (Deep 2001). They are now especially dense in some villages surrounding Patiala and Rajpura. Members of this community are most visible nowadays as the solicitors who take collections that are purported to ward off the malevolent influence of the deity Shani Dev on Saturdays. Like the Sansi, they have begun to play dhol under the training of Bazigars.

Rae Sikh. The *Rae Sikh* are a Scheduled Caste of agriculturalists found along the east bank of the Ravi River. One of their subdivisions, whose members often cut their hair, is one of the dominant communities in the southern parts of Firozpur district and the border areas of Rajasthan. With the paucity of dhol-players in the region, and especially for their *jhummar* dance, many Rae Sikhs in the area have taken up the art.

Discussion: In This Volume

The articles in this volume begin with insight to the Amateur World of music-making with a contribution by Nahar Singh (Head, Dept of Punjabi, Panjab University). He is the scholar who has perhaps done the most systematic work on traditional Punjabi songs, and his ten-volume anthology of the songs of Malwa represents one of the most significant contributions to the study of Punjabi music. Unfortunately, Nahar Singh's work, begun in 1976 and first published in the 1980s, remains practically ignored by writers in English; I cannot recall having seen a single English author who has cited Nahar Singh, even when he or she makes reference to "Punjabi folk-song." This is illustrative of the fact that, in English discussions of Punjabi music, references to "folk-songs" are often vague and undifferentiated. Significantly, what is often called "folk-song" or *lokgīt* in popular discourse does not qualify as what Nahar Singh would include in that category. I was once discussing with Dr. Nahar Singh the texts of some songs popularized by Surinder Kaur, at which time he advised, "These are not *lokgīt*." From his perspective, "folk-song" includes those traditional songs that have been customarily associated with various rituals of the life cycle and those that were sung by amateur performers during the time before mass media. He acknowledges the exchange and stylistic similarity between some of the repertoire he calls *lokgīt* and that which he calls *prachalat gīt* ("popular song") (1985:30), however, the noncommercial and amateur sphere of the former can be appreciably recognized. Thus Nahar Singh makes an

important, historically informed and natively observed, distinction between categories of songs that is frequently missed, due to which, in my opinion, many a discussion that invokes "Punjabi folk-songs" lacks clarity.

The distinctions made by Nahar Singh speak to the placement of "folk-song" in what I have been calling the Amateur World. Still, I concede that the recognition of a category—perhaps even a historical *layer*—of songs such as those with which Nahar Singh deals is a separate issue from genre labels as they exist in the "real" world of discourse. Moreover, *repertoire* that can be identified as "folk-song" has been performed in other worlds of performance. In an effort to be diplomatic and yet to maintain the important emic distinction of Nahar Singh, I suggest the label *ravāitī gīt* or "traditional song" for this category. This emphasizes these songs' assignment to ritual functions and the fact that they are rarely intended as "entertainment" outside of those contexts. (Compare this to, for example, Surinder Kaur's songs, which are meant to entertain, anywhere, any time.)

Nahar Singh's writing on "*Suhāg* and *Ghoṛīāṅ*: Cultural Elucidation in a Female Voice" is representative of his style of discussing ritual songs. In addition to describing their cultural contexts and associated rituals, Nahar Singh analyzes their texts in effort to provide some insight to the structures of Punjabi culture. A similar approach has become common with other authors writing about Punjabi songs, and while this sort of textual reading is not the only approach, it remains an important one. In this case, because the majority of these songs are sung by women—indeed, because they are the main form of musical expression traditionally ascribed to women—one would be remiss to ignore their gender-based dimensions. In combination with his reading of Punjabi agrarian culture as a more or less oppressive system of patriarchal values, Nahar Singh's description of these women's songs has a feminist cast.

In the excerpt in this volume, Nahar Singh makes the point that although *suhāg* songs pertain to the bride's rituals and *ghoṛīāṅ* pertain to the groom's, both are ultimately *voiced* by women. And while both genres would seem to function to reinforce the status quo (i.e. a patriarchal social structure) through the repeated images of ideal human subjects and relationships, because they are voiced by women (the oppressed subject), they also reveal a certain amount of the inner emotional world of these women. Thus he argues that in these songs Punjabi women "speak" on at least two different levels. At one level, they make expressions of blessing and joy towards their relations (particularly the males) while employing a socially sanctioned, "safe" tone. At another level, they express their predicament as relatively helpless subjects whose own desires are practically silenced by social norms. These songs, Nahar Singh suggests, were one of few outlets in

medieval Punjab for women to voice such expressions as the latter, even if they were subject to the discursive clichés of the former.

One of Nahar Singh's central theses is that "[T]he the cultural structures in which these songs rest are those well established by Punjab's agrarian society." While some might protest the strong Leftist bias in his tone of presentation, note that he does not advocate putting an end to the practice of these songs. He is clear that the "cultural suffocation" he talks about is a product of medieval times. He wishes us to consider these textual expressions of women in reference to that socio-historical frame. Indeed, the meaningfulness of these songs to current performers is unclear. Do they continue as a defense mechanism against holdovers of medieval thought in the current age? Or are they, perhaps, perpetuated for the sake of custom and ritual without too much attention paid to their content?

Taken with respect to the established frame of the feudal era, and assuming one accepts the method of textual analysis as productive, Nahar Singh's analysis of these song texts as reflecting the norms imposed by the culture of the agrarian community is reasonable. However, if that is the case, it might follow that these songs, while often discussed as if they were "Punjabi" by default, are not necessarily performed as such by *all* the communities that reside in Punjab. In other words, if Nahar Singh's thesis is correct, one would expect the content of wedding songs performed by non-agrarian communities to reflect *different* values. My firm belief is that Punjab is made up of appreciably different communities with different cultural viewpoints, among which the roughly circumscribed agrarian groups (Jatt, etc.) make up just one. Recognition of multiple Punjabi cultural systems is perhaps clouded by the facts that: 1. The agrarian system is indeed the socially dominant culture, even, some might say, a hegemonic one; and 2. Non-agrarian communities have aspired to the prestige of the agrarian and have been gradually changing their systems in imitation of them. I do not believe that the agrarian system is totally hegemonic—not in all spheres of life. Indeed, music is one cultural sphere where, in my observation, non-agrarian communities may feel little or no oppression from the agrarian communities. Nor does imitation necessarily indicate a hegemonic relationship.

Thus I propose two avenues of future research on Punjabi ritual songs, to engage Nahar Singh's ideas. The first is an investigation of the songs as current practice with an eye towards their present significance. What can qualitative research tell us about what they mean to the women who perform them today that one's own reading of the texts cannot? The second is a comparison with the texts of ritually analogous songs performed by non-agrarian communities. What sort of values do *they* reflect?

Also originating within the Amateur World, but again problematic with regards to the classificatory label of "folk-song," are the short verse forms that are considered within the performance purview of all Punjabis. Preeminent among these forms are *bolīāṅ*, *māhīā*, and *ḍholā*. Being generally unattached to ritual context and not coded as pieces specific to women, these forms are perhaps the most democratic of traditional music. Their performance contexts range from simple quotation to informal dance performance, from polished stage presentations to use in recorded "bhangra music." Being so prevalent and ubiquitous, there are also some issues in distinguishing them formally and in discerning their historical and geographic roots. The article, "Western Punjabi Song Forms: *Māhīā* and *Ḍholā*," addresses this deceptively complicated topic. Through reviewing the extant writings about these genres and critiquing them in relation to examples of their forms, I have intended to provide an exploratory critical presentation.

The *bolīāṅ* genre, I suspect, may be the most familiar to the readership of this journal. This in part speaks to the basis of much of global (and familiar) Punjabi popular music in East Punjab. Along with this, while bolian was not much associated with the historical *bhangṛā* dance, the new, folkloric staged dance presentations that subsequently replaced the definition of "bhangra" had been strongly based in Malwa, the heartland of bolian. Thus bolian, being actually native to *giddhā* dance, went on to be included in a still newer definition of "bhangra"— as popular music—where, ironically, it serves as a stylistic marker of the genre and its perceived relationship to the old dance.

This is not to say that the other short verse forms are not also well known on both sides of Punjab. After Partition, it is difficult to assign any geographical center to *māhīā* and *ḍholā*, however they are generally thought to have originated in western Punjabi areas. In recent years, these forms have been especially well heard in popular songs that evoke the *jhummar* dance. This does not necessarily mean that people can recognize the forms, however. For that reason, I have focused on these arguably less familiar Western Punjabi genres. Along those lines, I have indulged in also presenting quite a different Western Punjabi form called *ḍholā*, which has a different cultural valence from the short verse forms. Indeed, in contrast to the others, it is said to have been the "high" art expression of people in the *bār* regions. Unfortunately, and despite some excellent foundational literature in Punjabi from the 1940s-50s, this dhola of the bars is poorly known today. Such an important form of expression to a segment of the Punjabi population bears the research of scholars of Punjabi music and literature, and I hope this English overview creates awareness that might provoke further investigation.

For the most part, the performers in the Amateur World required no special description, gender being the main operable variable. When

coming to performances in the Professional World, however, other aspects of the performer's social position—his or her trade, class, or ethnic community affiliations—come to the fore. The identity and lifestyle of musicians is an under-referenced and under-studied aspect of Punjabi music.

As seen from the above discussion, when one approaches the question of who are the professional musicians of Punjab, one is confronted with a myriad of irksome labels. Some are generic; others are incidental. Most come from outsiders, and some come from insiders—if we are so lucky to hear them. Due to the generally low social status of musicians, there exist many confusing euphemisms, too. Musicians both accept and reject these labels, depending on incidental needs and discursive context. In some contexts it does not hurt to be mistaken for someone else; musicians are primarily professionals in need of employment. To explain who one is to an outsider can be complicated, and it is often simpler to tell someone what *they* want to hear. In other contexts, musicians may resent the implication that they would be associated with another group. All of this confusion of what refers to whom is then mapped onto the varying dimensions of time and place, leaving us with a confusing picture indeed. Rather than designate labels in terms like insider/outsider, it becomes more helpful to view them as a matter of positioning.

The complicated notions associated with "Mirasi" are the focus of Lowell Lybarger's article "Hereditary Musician Groups of Pakistani Punjab." Dr. Lybarger had to come to terms with this label when conducting his ethnography of Pakistani Punjabi tabla-players and other professional art musicians (Lybarger 2003). As such his contribution is an immensely helpful critical review of prior literature about Mirasis and similar hereditary musician groups. In it Lybarger begins with the observation that, "Non-musicians and the few non-hereditary musicians in Pakistan use the pejorative term *mīrāsī* to refer to all hereditary musicians." However, in critiquing the way the term has been used since the late 19th century, he concludes that, "The common belief that all hereditary musicians are Mirasis indicates considerable ignorance of the subtleties and complexities of musician society as a whole, and suggests the rubric may not be particularly useful from an analytical perspective."

Lybarger takes a dialogical approach, making the sources "talk" to each other and then letting the musicians talk for themselves. Each voice brings a different perspective along such scales as time, geography, and insider/outsider. Thus the colonial ethnographer Rose (1914) brought a broad and abstract (census-derived) picture. Though full of sundry detail, it lacked cultural nuance, especially in accepting "Mirasi" as a widely valid term. Pakistani culture officer Nayyar (2000) brought a more intimate familiarity with the musicians, but his view was also somewhat

constrained by the jumbled landscape of post-Partition West Punjab. Ethnomusicologist Neuman's (1980) study, in Delhi, was similarly limited in geographic perspective, for which reason he was forced to extrapolate. The ethnography of McClintock (1991) was deliberately narrow in approach in order to contribute fine detail, by which Lybarger is able to conclude that the musicians called Mirasis among whom he himself did fieldwork in urban Lahore were a different group. Thus Lybarger negotiates the issue whereby "Mirasi" is used both generically as an occupational term for most hereditary musicians of West Punjab while at the same time it is ascribed to or claimed by one or more specific ethnic communities.

My interpretation differs just slightly from Lybarger's in that whereas he implies that we might identify some group of people native to the label of Mirasi, I believe that as an outsider's label it is something of a moot issue of to whom it applies. I concede, however, that there may have been one community that was dominant in the make-up of individuals first called Mirasi by outsiders, creating a tenuous occupational-ethnic link that subsequently became less meaningful with more liberal uses of the term. The term says more about the intent of the user than about any set of people to whom it is claimed to refer. Lybarger found for the West Punjab area that Mirasi is pejorative term, and illustrates how it could be used to deride others or distinguish oneself negatively. There are some contexts, too, where individuals embrace it for the clout it affords. In my experience, performers in the East Punjab spoke with pride about being "Mirasi," as their numbers are few and this marks them positively as knowledgeable musicians. However, Lybarger's informants were faced with negative stereotypes of what being labeled Mirasi meant. This then is an excellent example of the differences in Punjabi music-culture on each side of the border.

Lybarger's work points to the fact that, with "Mirasi" relating to such a significant group (historically and numerically), we desperately need more research on these performers with which to flesh out the picture. More site-specific ethnographies of Mirasi groups, like Lybarger's and McClintock's, and my brief exposition above, are necessary as we continue to piece things together.

At this point we move on to the study of some specific professional genres of performance. The *ḍhāḍī* and the *ṭūmbā-algozā* performers represent two distinct genres of ballad-singing that entailed major forms of staged performance in the pre-Partion era. Incredibly, little of substance has been written about these—genres very central to the notion of "Punjabi folk music"—before Hardial Thuhi. His local familiarity with the people who both perform and enjoy these genres makes for an invaluable source, and therefore, two of his writings have been included here.

The first contribution by Thuhi deals with "The Folk Dhadi Genre." Dhadi performers have been the subject of some prior writings focused on that contingent of them which presents Sikh historical and devotional material.[7] Thuhi represents the first writer to focus on the performers who present instead the genre of traditional (secular) ballads, *qissā*s. These performers seem to have almost disappeared from the cultural consciousness, remembered only by the eldest generation. Thuhi uses the term "folk dhadis" to distinguish them from the equally sticky term "Sikh dhadis," the latter referring to the singers at gurdwaras who are quite visible in contemporary East Punjab and who arguably now occupy the default position in people's imaginations when one uses the term "dhadi."

Thuhi makes no grandiose claims about the lineage of these performers, and he is careful not to give the idea that the qissa-performers are necessarily connected to the eulogizers of the Sikh Guru era or to any other performers of earlier times called "dhadi." He begins the history of the dhadi art "as we know it" with those performers patronized by Guru Hargobind (early 17th century). However, he notes what would be a decline in patronage of dhadis by the Gurus by the early 18th century. Thuhi conservatively reasons that the dhadi genre was subsequently revitalized with the boom in popularity of qissas in the 18th century, which material the dhadis adapted. It is unclear, however, if there was much continuity between the performers of the earlier dhadi forms and this qissa-based form. It may have been a different sphere of individuals that *adopted* the genre for the purpose of entertaining the common folk. We must be careful not to assume, when reading history, that the term "dhadi" appearing at various points implies any such continuity of performers and genre, even as contemporary performers are happy to connect themselves to a name in the past in order to add the appearance of historical depth to their tradition. With these issues in mind, critical historical research on dhadis prior to the 20th century would be welcome, as from the side of a textualist working especially with Persian manuscripts.

In surveying the performers of the 20th century, Thuhi finds that they have come from a variety of caste and religious backgrounds. If there was a shift, whereby the performers of an earlier era were all Mirasis (or at least, Muslims), and after which other ethnicities entered the fray, Thuhi does not speculate. The only thing relatively certain about the history of the genre is what could be gleaned from recordings and from older artists' stories about their teachers. The center of this tradition, Thuhi explains, was the Malwa region. His description mentions two known long-standing lineages of disciples. The first, based in the Sangrur-Bathinda area, was that of Modan Singh of Loha Khera. The second, based in the Ludhiana-Faridkot area, can be traced back as far as

Parmeshri Ram, whose inheritor was Kaanshi Ram Dohlon—born ca.1866. Neither progenitor appears to have any affiliation with the Mirasis, and yet, if one looks at the entire body of performers, it seems that a slight majority were—especially in Malwa. This is interesting, considering the clout carried by the Malwa region, from which the dhadis' *kalī* verse form is also claimed to have originated. More curiously, Thuhi notes a breakdown in the demographics of which dhadis were recorded on disc when the genre was popular. He says that all of those individuals recorded had been from Doaba, while those not recorded (but nonetheless well known) had been from Malwa. He reasons to explain this that Doabis were more urbane, while the Malwai dhadis remained attached to the customs of their hereditary traditions, even superstitiously. However, when we look in his collection at the roster of dhadis who did and did not record, we can also see that the former are basically all Sikh whereas the latter are largely Muslim.

The second contribution of Thuhi to this volume is about "The Tumba-Algoza Ballad Tradition," which, despite noted similarities in performance contexts and methods, is established as a distinct genre from the balladry sung with *ḍhaḍḍ-sārangī*. For the novice, indeed, the easiest way to recognize these genres is by their instrumentation. (A third genre that inhabits a similar cultural world is *kavishrī*, whose performers can be recognized by their *lack* of any instruments.) Despite the re-contextualized use, in recent decades, of the *tumbā* (or the similar, yet smaller and always one-stringed *tumbī*) and *algozā* as generic "folk instruments" capable of evoking "Punjabi music," in their time they were mainly confined to ballad-singers. Interestingly, one can also recognize these different types of performers more or less by their grooming. Dhadi performers mostly wear beards, often neatly trimmed. The tumba-algoza ballad-singers, by contrast, are most often shaved at the chin, but wear neat mustaches.

This last detail, while fairly trivial, probably correlates with the fact that the great majority of the tumba-algoza singers are Muslim (the high number of Sikhs involved in dhadi music would have influenced the wearing of beards). However, while there was a consistent block of Muslim dhadis who were *Mirasis*, this does not seem to have necessarily been the case with the tumba-algoza singers. The latter performers came from a variety of communities (including a Muslim Jatt example). More ethnographic research is needed to understand just who might have come to adopt this profession, as it is one whose origins appear to be quite undocumented and, as Thuhi points out, there have been no prior writings of substance about the genre. Thuhi is only able to place some performers at the end of the 19th century and to conjecture that there must have been a prior established tradition from which they sprang. Who were these people who adopted this practice—that of going into the

fields at harvest time to sing and be rewarded with a share of the crop? Whoever they were, their tradition seems to have been somewhat more "open" than the practices customarily assigned to those reigning hereditary professionals, the Mirasis.

This last idea speaks to the nature of their repertoire in which, we can observe from the texts, a number of verse-refrain compositions are included. These compositions more closely resemble contemporary "song" than do the multi-episodic, strophic ballads. Such material was better suited to the short, recorded format. In these performers, more so than with dhadis, I think, one sees the potential for the birth of a *popular* music style in Punjab.

Overall, by including the biographical details of specific artists, Thuhi gives these genres a "face" and brings the performers to the fore. We realize that notions like "the dhadi tradition" are abstract constructs and if we treat them too rigidly we will never reconcile the many referential meanings of terms like "dhadi." These "traditions" were not abstract genres of the Punjabi past, but rather have consisted of the specific deeds of a finite set of individuals.

Thuhi's work on the ballad-singers is also important both for telling us what their repertoire specifically is/was and who wrote it. Mention of these ballad-singers elsewhere typically only would include the information that they perform "stories such as…" with examples named of only the best-known qissas. Here by contrast we get a sense of which qissas are most common, including some tales that are rarely mentioned otherwise. And by telling us who wrote these compositions, Thuhi thwarts the vague notion of "folk-songs" that are anonymously attributed to "the Punjabi folk." Remember that this was a professional art, and singing a ballad like these was something very different than singing a simple verse like a *māhīā*. Such ballads require extensive training to perform, in accord with the fact that they are extensive *compositions*. Unlike ballads in the English-language tradition, so many of which were indeed professionally written compositions (e.g. broadsides), but which were adopted by and changed considerably in oral tradition, the Punjabi ballads were less suited to adoption by amateurs.

From the information given by Thuhi we can establish a list of the common compositions and composers of Punjabi balladry. Chief among the composers, their compositions being shared between both the dhadi and tumba-algoza genres, were Karam Singh Tuse and Hazura Singh. The dhadi repertoire included (but was not limited to) the following tales, which I have culled from Thuhi's books:

1. *Hir* - by Bansi Lal of Nauhra, Ganga Singh Bhoondar, Divan Singh of Shahina, Hazura Singh Butahrivala, Ran Singh, Babu Razab Ali, Maaghi Singh Gill, Didar Singh Ratainda, Niranjan Singh, Amar Singh Shaunki, Naazar Singh
2. *Sohni*
3. *Sassi* - by Natha Singh of Nararu, Ude Singh
4. *Mirza* - by Pilu, Dogar of Chhapar, Amar Singh Shaunki
5. *Dulla Bhatti*
6. *Jaimal-Fatta*
7. *Dahood Badshah*
8. *Dhol-Sammi* - by Ali Shah of Ghudani-Ghaloti
9. *Sucha Soorma*
10. *Puran Bhagat* - by Karam Singh Tuse
11. *Gopi Chand*
12. *Kaulan Bhagatni* - by Bishan Chugawan
13. *Raja Rasalu* - by Puran Chand of Bharo
14. *Indar-Bego Nar* - by Dila Ram of Matharu Bhoodan
15. *Kaka-Partapi*
16. *Jaikur Bishan Singh*

The tumba-algoza repertoire included the following tales:

1. *Hir* – by Muhammad Raunt, Hazura Singh Butahrivala, Hashmat Shah Aprewala
2. *Sohni*
3. *Sassi* – by Hashmat Shah
4. *Mirza*
5. *Dulla Bhatti*
6. *Jaimal-Fatta*
7. *Dahood Badshah* – by Mahi
8. *Dhol-Sammi* – by Hashmat Shah
9. *Sucha Soorma*
10. *Puran Bhagat* – by Muhammad Raunt, Karam Singh Tusa
11. *Gopi Chand*
12. *Kaulan Bhagatni* – by Karam Singh Tusa, Bishna of Chugawan
13. *Layla*
14. *Shiri-Farihad*
15. *Saiful Malook*
16. *Malki-Keema* – by Muhammad Raunt
17. *Jiuna Maur* – by Muhammad Raunt
18. *Raja Harish Chandra*
19. *Shah Bahiram* – by Hashmat Shah

From the items arranged at the end of each list one can see the more or less unique tales found in the repertoires of each genre. In addition to these titles, in these two articles we also get details of the compositions' forms, their style and of which particular ones have been popular. Many texts examples appear in Thuhi's books, and I have included a few here, which I have endeavored to translate.

Most originally, Thuhi gives us an idea of the prominence of this music in people's lives, especially in the form of recordings and as the early material for the Punjabi music industry. One can read it as a source for how that industry began to function in Punjab, starting with the first democratizing aspect: the public's shared enjoyment of music via sound reinforcement technology. Though expensive phonograph discs were out of the reach of the average consumer, nonetheless they gained access to this music. In the process, the public created a demand that in turn gave a new sort of economic support for performers. Looked at from another perspective, these commercial products—records—amounted to an inadvertent form of preservation of the traditions. And where schemes of "cultural promotion" are doomed to eventually fail, this tangible preservation can be seen as a true treasure of Punjabi musical documentation.

With the next article by Neelam Man Singh Chowdhry, "The Naqqals of Chandigarh: Transforming Gender on the Musical Stage," we move onto quite another group of traditional performers. It is an intimate picture of performers known as Naqqals. They are less defined by a single genre of music performance; their performance activities are many. This kind of group coheres, first and foremost through their familial relationships. Chowdhry's Naqqals are recent performers in East Punjab. Ethnically speaking, they come from the Bazigar community. We see how they get on as an adaptive community, independent of any prior classifications by others. In fact, the written classifications of Naqqals, such as in Rose's early 20th century work, are quite unhelpful in knowing *these* Naqqals.

The present article has been shaped from Dr. Chowdhry's 2009 dissertation from Panjab University, which reflects upon the making of regional Indian theatre tradition in dialogue with her own experience working with Naqqals in many productions. In this way, the aspect of female impersonation becomes the focus of interest where it probably would not have in a typical survey study of Naqqals. Indeed, this is one of the first discussions of that aspect of Punjabi performance.

The article points the way for future research on transgender related topics in Punjabi music. Some of the comparable, yet to be researched performing genres of Punjabi music are the *nachār* dance performers and the *khusrā*s. *Nachār* is an exhibitional dance featured as entertainment at village weddings. Its striking presentational style includes one or more

female impersonators (*nachār*) and bagpipe (*bīn bājā*) players. Gurdit Singh noted the presence of female impersonator dancers at melas in the early to mid-20th century (1960:201), but this appears to have been merely incidental fun. The current nachar dance genre proper, inclusive of the added spectacle of bagpipes and military side drums, is supposed to date just to the mid-1970s (Kang 2005:40). According to Kang, the bagpipe performance tradition was kept especially by Mirasi families from Sialkot, as well as some from the Julaha and Chand Jhiur communities (ibid.). The performance paradigm consists of the nachars and pipers dancing together while going about rapidly in a circle, or else in a free-form fashion. The nachars tease the audience and perform typically female-gendered dance actions. However, these actions extend beyond the usual reservations of how women should dance in mixed company, suggesting an unlikely fantasy scenario of *uninhibited* women's dance. The success of the genre hinges upon this impossible scenario that it presents, combined with the utter hilarity and spectacle of what the performers might do. At the 2004 Lok Sangit Mela in Patiala, for example, a nachar group included the spectacle of boiling a cup of tea over a live flame created atop the head of one nachar, all whilst dancing. In contrast to most other dances performed for the stage, which so often exhibit stale petrifactions of once vibrant practices, the newer nachar dance is robust and unwilling to be bound by the stage. The controversial nature of the dance means that, unlike other dances such as bhangra, jhummar, and giddha, nachar has yet to be co-opted by universities and culture promoters.

Equally upsetting to the social order—deliberately so—are the khusras, who are members of a community of individuals sharing an identity inclusive of transsexuals, eunuchs, and transvestites. Unlike the nachars, their challenging gender identities adhere beyond the performance stage. The challenge they present is nonetheless "contained" in that they are accepted in assigned roles as providers of a "customary" riotous spectacle that marks joyous occasions. The flip side to this is that, one could argue, their role is prescribed. Musical performance—so often the provenance of the marginal—becomes one of the few viable options for them as a group of "others."

Chowdhry problematizes the dynamics of one performing another gender on stage in Punjab. "The female impersonator is not supposed to be a verisimilitude of women but is supposed to *signify* a woman. The actor neither plays a woman nor copies her but only signifies her as an idea, with all the exaggerations that are imagined about an idealized woman." The act as a cultural gesture is not necessarily "liberating"—a concept that might be associated with transgender acts in the West—but rather a symptom of patriarchy. Still, at the same time, within the constraints of its own world and for individual performers it may yet

have liberating aspects. The individual perspectives of Naqqal performers suggest that the mainstream society's reactions to their performances are quite a separate issue from what they may feel when they transform their gender in this circumscribed context.

The Bazigar offer quite an opposite case from the well-known Mirasi in that their name is not ubiquitous. And yet as musicians today in East Punjab they *are* ubiquitous. They are frequently dismissed—both by laypersons who think Mirasis are the only musicians, and by Mirasis, who view themselves as the proprietary purveyors of music. However, in the post-Partition era—the time that has shaped much of Punjabi music as we now know it—Bazigars have been at the forefront of cultivating and spreading musical practices.

In an effort to get deeply into the ethnographic description of a community represented by Punjabi professional musicians, I present the article, "The Bazigar (Goaar) People and Their Performing Arts." Bazigars perform for others and, as a unique and discreet community, have their own amateur music, too. Thus the musical performers are not merely a "service class" that caters to "mainstream" Punjabis, but rather people with performing traditions, some of which they offer to others as a means of earning. Perhaps most importantly, their lifestyle has not remained static. In the 20th century especially their community underwent some dramatic changes. One cannot rely on the old colonial works or equally outdated popular notions when trying to get to know these Punjabi communities, who are so often "heard but not seen."

Last, but not least, this issue offers an article on a Punjabi performance tradition within the Sacred World. Central to devotional practice within the Sikh faith is the performance of *shabad kīrtan*. The practice is distributed over a range of musical styles and performance contexts, yet these are unified by the purpose of singing the Sikh scripture (i.e. *gurbāṇī*, the body of poetic compositions of the Gurus and other devotional poets included in the sacred texts). From the inception of the faith, Guru Nanak prescribed the repetition of the divine "Name" (*nām*) as a means of spiritual embodiment. *Shabad kīrtan*, roughly translated as "hymn-singing," facilitates that aspect of Sikh practice by causing one to experience the Name through the sonic manifestation of the Word, *shabad*.

The Sikh scriptural text *Guru Granth Sahib* is famously organized according to *rāg*—the local melodic system of mode-complexes. However, as Dr. Inderjit N. Kaur explains in her contribution, "Sikh *Shabad Kīrtan* and *Gurmat Sangīt*: What's in the Name?," the exact reason for this and the basis on which compositions were set within *particular* rāg categories are unclear. Rāgs were part of a larger aesthetic paradigm that encompassed art and poetry, too, as the notion of *rāg* or "color" was tied up with particularly ascribed moods, sentiments, and

semiotic indices. It was common practice in the era of the Sikh Gurus, not unique to them, to sing one's poetry. In the absence of any common system of musical notation, naming the particular mode-complex (*rāg*) would serve to give some indication of how a piece was sung. The Gurus' poetry is also not unique in being organized by rāg. Shah Abdul Latif's (1690-1752) collected work, *Shāh jo Risālo*, for example, was also organized as such (Baloch 1973). One might suspect, therefore, that the rāg categories were mainly a rhetorical organizing convention of poetry, a suggested guideline for singing, or an artifact of the memorization strategies of singers. However, the Guru Granth contains a considerable amount of additional information about how the text should be performed. Kaur includes among this the information available from the titles of compositions and from the compositions themselves. It includes explicit or implicit indications of mode, musical style, melody, meter, and sentimental atmosphere. Kaur is particularly fascinated by one explicit indication, *ghar*, which she interprets as designating versions of particular rāgs.

All of these "musical" features suggest the idea of "Sikh music" or devotional music based on Sikh principles. The translation of such a concept gave birth to the mid-20th century notion of *gurmat sangīt*, a term in use largely in educational contexts and among some scholars. The phrase is problematic because, as Kaur reveals, the term *sangīt* ("music") occurs rarely in Sikh scripture and it clearly does not apply to the main practice of shabad kirtan. In seeking to show what is in a name, Kaur helps us to understand that the notion of music brings with it differing opinions on how and what one should perform. Thus one finds different opinions among performers as to whether music or only the text is important, and how to articulate each according to interpretations of *gurmat*. These ideas bring us full circle to the elemental issue raised at the beginning of the present essay—that of what constitutes "music" in Punjabi culture.

<center>*   *   *</center>

A final note on translations: I wish to thank the authors who kindly permitted me to translate their works from Punjabi. Within the translations I have supplied a few notes to contextualize or otherwise clarify information where possible. However, I have not engaged in "fact checking." The works stand as a record of what was published at the time, and one should be mindful that they do not necessarily represent the most current information or opinions of their authors. Thanks also go to Gurinder Singh Mann for his advice on some inscrutable phrases in the traditional song texts. I bear the full responsibility for any

misunderstandings in translating these works and I offer my apologies in advance for any mistakes I may have made.

Notes

[1] I use the word "performance" here to refer to a broad category that allows for the fact that not everything contained within it is necessarily "music" from the native cultural perspective. However, because my discussion is itself situated within a Western cultural discourse, I also reserve the right to use "music" throughout in a broad sense that includes any kind of sound-based performance.

[2] Much Punjabi verse is recited while singing, as a matter of course. A poet, in presenting his or her work, may sing it. However, a performance of "music" would not necessarily be considered to have taken place.

[3] This reference, by the grammarian Patanjali, was to *svapacha* (Ghurye 1969:311). A later grammarian, Hemachandra (11th century) called Dumba (Dom) the vernacular word for the *svapacha* (ibid.:313).

[4] The difference in nomenclature may be explained by the fact that the textual source that Gardizi uses for this information, Abu 'Abdallah Jayhani, is believed to be in turn partly derivative of a report from circa 800 C.E. (Minorsky 1964:203), which may well have been in Arabic.

[5] The verse reads, *bhalā rabāb vajāindā majlas mardānā mīrāsī* ("The good player of rabab in gatherings, the Mirasi, Mardana") (Bhai Gurdas, Var 11, pg.13).

[6] This idea arose out of a conversation with Dr. Harvinder S. Bhatti (9 Nov. 2004) and I think partial credit goes to him.

[7] Examples of these are Bhaura's *Panjāb de Ḍhāḍī* (1991), which contains biographical sketches of Sikh dhadis, and Nijhawan's *Dhadi Darbar* (2006), which is a case study, following the example of 20th century Sikh dhadis, in the way a performative genre can become related to political and religious agendas.

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Suhāg and *Ghoṛīāṅ*:
Cultural Elucidation in a Female Voice

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Translated by Gibb Schreffler[1]

The traditional song genres *suhāg* and *ghoṛīāṅ* have been sung in some form as part of Punjabi wedding-time rituals since medieval times. Although the texts of suhags concern the bride and those of ghorian concern the groom, both song genres are sung exclusively by women. Indeed, these genres can be viewed as one of women's few outlets for expression in the feudal era, and as such they are read here as texts providing a markedly female perspective on culture and society. Through these songs, women speak on multiple levels. Ghorian tend to contain more public expressions while those of suhag songs are more intimate. Particular attention is paid to the relative position of the human subjects addressed (i.e. in the maternal family, paternal family, or in-law family) and the connotations associated with each. The manner of address is also noted, in which the women's voice betrays the helplessness of several parties within patriarchal agrarian society.

Suhāg and *Ghoṛīāṅ*: Sanctioned Song for Joyous Rituals and Functions

Suhāg and *ghoṛīāṅ*[2] are song forms connected with the bride and groom that are sung by women in the days before a wedding. The tradition is an old one; indeed, the cultural structures in which these songs rest are those well established by Punjab's agrarian society. Yet although the customs found referenced in their texts seem to be ancient, from the perspective of their linguistic forms and cultural details, extant examples do not appear to be, say, more than three centuries old. As such one cannot consider these folkloric texts to have continued on unchanged from some remote date in the past. In these texts, traces of the oligarchic mindset of the pre-colonial era are found in abundance. This suggests that these texts, too, are connected with an older, mainly medieval way of thinking, and with the worldview of the feudal era. No matter where one looks in

these texts, one is pressed to find much that reflects a modern way of thinking.

Suhag and ghorian are ritualistic song forms, and the tradition of singing them during weddings seems very old. In fact, there are numerous references in 15th and 16th century Punjabi literature, especially in *qissā* poetry and *gurmat* poetry, evincing that at that time suhag and ghorian were sung during weddings.[3] The Sikh Gurus used several vernacular poetic meters and tunes, in a spiritual capacity, in the Adi Granth. There we find included the use of two *ghoṛī*s by Guru Ram Das in Rag Vadhans. And the word *suhāgaṇ* or *suhāgvatī* for a married woman is found to have been used since Vedic times.

It is thought that the use of horses on the battlefield in South Asia began with the coming of the Aryans. It must have been as an analogy, then, to the way warriors rode onto the field of war, that the groom in a wedding used a mare (*ghoṛī*) for traveling to marry the bride. Even today, for domestic uses, a rider on a horse may be used when speed is a requirement. Thus the *ghoṛī* (mare) became part of the joyous rituals of a wedding. And with songs sung in praise of the groom being customary, these must have come to be known as *ghoṛīāṅ*. So both song forms, ghori and suhag, must have become accepted as part of ancient rituals and the Aryan culture.

According to custom, from the very day that the letter announcing a matrimonial match is sent out from the daughter's (i.e. bride's) home, women young and old from among the local kin and community begin to gather in the home of the engaged in their free time after supper. Whether it is in the kitchen or the sitting room in the cold weather, or up on the roof in warm, gathering to sing these songs is an obligatory cultural *duty*. Each day the throng of women, with the guidance of a Mirasan [woman of a "Mirasi" community of hereditary performers] or Nain [woman of the barbering community, a traditional go-between in wedding functions], sings suhag, ghorian, "long songs" (*lamme gauṇ*), and assorted other items of verse, with long drawn-out *hek*s.[4] When the song session heats up, they might rap upon a pitcher, pot, *ḍholak* [small barrel drum] or bowl, with a spoon or a ring on the finger, all the while giving out short *hek*s and calls of *hāī shāvā* ["oh, hurrah!"] in choral response. At this point they would be engaged in singing other kinds of folk-songs, *bolī*s, and *ṭappā*s [the latter two being brisk verse forms consisting of one-line units].

Via a matchmaker and with the assent of both parties, the wedding day is set. The "wedding announcement letter"—*sāhe dī chiṭṭhī*—is sent out one and one-quarter month, twenty-one days, or on some other auspicious day before the wedding. In the daughter's home, members of the local community get together in the form of a *panchayat* and, with a supplication of *Wahiguru ji ki fateh* or *ikk onkar*, begin the letter. After

writing it, the panchayat calls *fateh* and the whole process is finished. During the reading back of the letter by some learned person or priest of the village, women of the community, sitting in a corner of the house would also be singing suhag or ghorian in muted voices. The auspicious rites of sending off or reading the *sāhe dī chiṭṭhī* are fulfilled with the melodious singing of sanctioned songs like suhags and ghoris. When the letter is sent off, it is suhags that are sung, and when it arrives at the house of its destination, ghoris are sung. This starts off the whole process, as from that very evening the song sessions begin. The crowds of women gather each night continuously until the wedding.

Singing Context

As mentioned, the singing of suhag and ghorian begins in a methodical way starting a month and a quarter, twenty-one days, eleven days, or seven days before the wedding. Nowadays the practice of these singing sessions has very much declined. The song circle is typically established five days before the daughter's wedding, or from the day of setting out the cooking cauldron or lighting the oven.

In the Majha region, when the song circle is practiced for the boy's (i.e. groom's) wedding in the Majha region, something called *peṭṛā* is sung. *Peṭṛā* is a type of singing in praise of a first-born son. In Majha, the daily singing of ghorian is begun with petra. An example follows:

Solo:	*peṭhā māīu peṭhoṛā, peṭhā nī*
	puttar jamm māvṛīe, jeṭhā nī
Chorus:	*peṭhā māīo peṭhoṛā, peṭhā nī*
	peṭhā māīu peṭhoṛā, peṭhā nī
Solo:	*jeṭhe jamme milaṇ vadhāīāṅ nī*
	sajāde jamme milaṇ vadhāīāṅ nī
Chorus:	*jeṭhe jamme milaṇ vadhāīāṅ nī*
	jeṭhe jamme milaṇ vadhāīāṅ nī
Solo:	*ajj asīṅ āndoṛā guṛ mīṭhā nī*
	ajj asāṅ tere bābe dā ghar ḍīṭhā
Chorus:	*nī ajj asāṅ tere bābe dā ghar ḍīṭhā*
	nī ajj asāṅ tere bābe dā ghar ḍīṭhā
Solo:	*peṭhā māīo peṭhoṛā, peṭhā nī*
Chorus:	*peṭhā māīo peṭhoṛā, peṭhā nī*
Solo:	*ajj asāṅ āndoṛā tel nī*
	ajj asāṅ āndoṛā tel nī
	nī ajj tere sāhe dā mel
Chorus:	*ajj asāṅ āndoṛā tel nī*
	nī ajj tere sāhe dā mel
Solo:	*ajj asāṅ āndoṛīāṅ guṛ roṛīāṅ*

Chorus:	*ajj asāṅ āndoṛīāṅ guṛ roṛīān*
Solo:	*jīvan tere bhāīāṅ dīāṅ joṛīāṅ*
Chorus:	*jīvan tere bhāīāṅ dīāṅ joṛīāṅ*
Solo:	*ajj asāṅ āndoṛīāṅ phull kalīāṅ*
Chorus:	*nī ajj asāṅ āndoṛīāṅ phull kalīān*
Solo:	*sadā salāmat vasaṇ havelīāṅ*
Chorus:	*terīāṅ sadā salāmat vasaṇ havelīān*
Solo:	*ajj asāṅ āndoṛīāṅ phull kalīān*
Chorus:	*ve ajj asāṅ āndoṛīāṅ phull kalīān*
Solo:	*sandal bhinnīāṅ māṇegā ralīāṅ*
Chorus:	*sandal bhinnīāṅ māṇegā ralīān*
	peṭhoṛā māīo peṭhā, peṭhoṛā nī...

Solo:	Be fruitful, young mothers, bear fruit O.
	Bear a son, dear mother, a boy child O.
Chorus:	Be fruitful, young mothers, bear fruit O!
	Be fruitful, young mothers, bear fruit O!
Solo:	Blessed are those who bear boys.
	Blessed are those who bear handsome ones.
Chorus:	Blessed are those who bear boys.
	Blessed are those who bear boys.
Solo:	Today we brought much sweet sugar.
	Today we gave it to your granddad's house.
Chorus:	Oh today we gave it to your granddad's house.
	Oh today we gave it to your granddad's house.
Solo:	Be fruitful, young mothers, bear fruit O.
Chorus:	Be fruitful, young mothers, bear fruit O!
Solo:	Today we gave much oil O.
	Today we gave much oil O.
	Today we've set your wedding date.
Chorus:	Today we gave much oil O!
	Today we've set your wedding date.
Solo:	Today we've given many lumps of jaggery.
Chorus:	Today we've given many lumps of jaggery.
Solo:	Clumps like your brothers' top-knots.
Chorus:	Clumps like your brothers' top-knots.
Solo:	Today we've brought many flower blossoms.
Chorus:	Oh today we've brought many flower blossoms.
Solo:	That you might forever live in mansions.
Chorus:	That you might forever live in mansions.
Solo:	Today we've brought many flower blossoms.
Chorus:	Oh today we've brought many flower blossoms.
Solo:	He will enjoy all sorts of sandalwood and things.
Chorus:	He will enjoy all sorts of sandalwood and things.

Be fruitful, young mothers, bear fruit O!

In Malwa there is no custom of singing a petra as an introductory song. However, at the start of the daily singing in the son's home, five or seven ghoris are sung. In these introductory ghoris one especially finds some sort of praise expressing the greatness of house and family, or thankfulness. These ghoris include blessings for the groom:

> *bāg bagīchā mall ve vīrā*
> *ghar satigur āe*
> *dhann tumārī mātā vīrā*
> *jīhne jagg dakhāe*
> *bāg bagīchā mall ve vīrā*
> *ghar satigur āe*
> *dhann tumārī dādī vīrā*
> *jīhne kangaṇ pāe*

> Occupy your garden, O brother.
> The Lord has come to our house.
> Blessed be your mother, O brother,
> Who has shown you the world.
> Occupy your garden, O brother.
> The Lord has come to our house.
> Blessed be your grandmother, O brother,
> Who put on the bracelets.

Likewise, at the start of daily singing in the daughter's home, five or seven suhags are sung. These suhags are typically connected with mythological heroes like Ram, Krishna, or Shiv; oftentimes they contain a sentiment of thanks or praise. Among the starting five or seven suhags, a ritual-like song is sung.

> *kalīāṅ te bījaṇ maiṅ chalī*
> *āpṇe bābal dīāṅ phulvāṛīāṅ*
> *nīmeṅ tāṅ nīmeṅ āio mere karishan jī*
> *maiṅ vī tāṅ kanniāṅ kumārī āṅ*

> *tūṅ vī tāṅ kanniā kumārī aiṅ*
> *nī rādhā piārīe nī*
> *maiṅ vī karishan murārī āṅ nī*

> I've gone off to sow among the blossoms
> In my father's flower gardens.
> Come down low, my dear Krishna.

I, too, am a virgin maiden.

You, too, are a virgin maiden,
O dear Radha, O.
As I, too, am Lord Krishna O.

*   *   *

bābal dharmī de darbār
hare hare vaṇ ve khaṛhe
shiv jī dā beṭā nādān
āngaṇ bainā tap kare
andaroṅ tāṅ nikalī bībī dī mātā
ki motīāṅ dā thāl bhare
lai jo krishan murār
āngan merā chhoṛ de
nā laindā motīāṅ dā thāl
nā laindāṅ maiṅ kangaṇā
tere ghar kanniā kumārī
uhdā var maiṅ lavāṅ

In the good father's court
Stand green green *van* trees.
The son of Shiv, a young lad
Was sitting in the courtyard, performing austerities.
From inside emerged the girl's mother,
Saying, "She's like a platter of pearls.
Take her away, Lord Krishna.
And leave my courtyard."
"I'll not take the platter of pearls.
I'll not take the bangles.
In your house is a virgin maiden.
I would take only her blessing."

Besides these, in both homes "long songs," *biraharā*s, or other songs sung in sharp timbres whilst rapping upon a pot. In the daughter's home, even ghoris or other ghori-like songs, in which there may be some talk of the greatness of the groom, would not necessarily be unheard of. It may be that the available repertoire of folk-songs concerned with women is shrinking. Field research has also shown that, at various sites, in weddings some "out-of-place" songs are sung. The other issue is that, in Malwa, melodious songs with long, unvarying *hek*s have become more or less extinct. Newer singers do not have an understanding of the traditional tunes and meters, or else these female singers are simply

unable to follow the kind of strict practice that is required of the traditional style of singing folk-songs such as male singers do. The older ladies are justified when they complain that, "Nowadays the girls do not know how to sing songs." The style of music/singing propagated by commercial recordings has arguably spoiled the singing of "long songs," suhag, and ghorian. Indeed, the manner of women singing in pairs has completely died out.

Singing Manner and Occasions

In Malwa, the contexts of singing suhag and ghorian are very flexible, as is the manner of voicing them. With respect to singing manner, suhags and ghoris are songs sung by pairs of women at a time, from verse to verse. Oftentimes, depending on the location of their performance, they are also sung in choral fashion by the whole group. Or, frequently, the group of women repeats the refrain in response to a soloist. When singing like this, the leader's line guides the other women, who respond in chorus. Just as the moon sits in the sky surrounded by a cluster of stars and as, in Punjabi folklore, Hir is surrounded by her 360 friends, here the soloist's sharp, trembling utterances are answered by the responses from a chorus.

In the daughter's home the primary occasions for the singing of suhag songs or other songs of marriage are:

> 1. At the time of writing the *sāhe di chiṭṭhī*;
> 2. During the song sessions each day leading up to the wedding;
> 3. During preparatory chores, like sifting flour, sorting stones from the daal, and rolling roti;
> 4. During all occasions connected with preparation of the bride;
> 5. During the [Hindu] *sānt* ritual, when setting the ritual fire (*bedī*), and while its circumambulations are done;
> 6. Whenever the bride's girlfriends gather around her;
> 7. When the bridal palanquin (*ḍolī*) is seen off.

In the son's home the primary occasions for singing ghoris are:

> 1. At the time of opening the sahe di chitthi;
> 2. During song sessions leading up to the wedding;
> 3. At the time of smearing turmeric-paste on and bathing the groom;
> 4. The day before the wedding procession when the guest and relatives give contributions to the groom;
> 5. During the preparation of the groom and the ritual of putting on the *sihrā* (tasseled face-covering);

6. Before processing, when paying respects at religious places.

During the preparation of the bride, and when she is made to sit during the circumambulation ritual, suhags containing religious sentiments are sung with great reverence. Likewise, during the preparation of the groom, and during breaks in the wedding procession, ghoris and *hearā*s full of auspicious sentiments are sung. On both of these occasions, the suhags and ghoris are usually sung by the crowd in choral fashion; when sung in seated sessions, they are performed by one or two women at a time. When women sing these songs in the daughter's home or the son's home, the sentiments are mainly kept focused on the concepts of the ideal groom and bride. In gatherings at a boy's wedding, *sohalṛā*s [auspicious songs of birth] are sung, or at the time of the birth of a boy, ghori-like songs are sung indiscriminately. In truth, a ghori is essentially a song in praise of a boy and a suhag is the direct poetic-utterance of the female-perspective of the bride. However, because singers on both "sides" are women, and due to there being a similarity in singing context, manner, and style, one cannot draw any strict lines of division between suhag and ghori or similar songs.

The Sonic Universe of Suhag, Ghorian, Lamme Gaun, and Kirna

With respect to compositional form it may be observed that both suhag and ghorian are actually constructed on the pattern of Malvai *gauṇ*s or so-called "long songs" (*lamme gaun*),[5] along with which they may be classified. One finds several patterns of tune and compositional form that are shared between long songs, suhag, and ghorian. In Malwa, suhag, ghorian, and *biraharā* [songs of separation] (which make up the bulk of the long songs category) can be subtly differentiated with regards to their sentimental atmosphere. However, each among these three can be more or less recognized on the basis of theme, characters, and locales in their texts.

These three song forms (suhag, ghorian, and birahara), being all related to woman's psychological state, her domestic life, and similar aspects of family relationships, share some facets of their inner emotional universe, their tonal structure, and their compositional shape. The ultimate connection between these three is their basis in the economic chokehold of the feudal system along with their tragic expression of woman suffering in social slavery. Being as such, the sonic universe of these songs is also shared. One finds in these three song forms both long *hek*s [read, wails] and long silences which, lend the song an air of seriousness and oftentimes depression or lonesomeness.[6]

Though it may appear an exaggeration to say so, if one takes the low and gentle wailing of *kīrnā* [a sort of funeral lament] and compares it to

the cries of these three song forms (suhag, ghorian, and birahara/*jheṛā*) one will not find much difference in their sentimental atmosphere. This is to say that suhags, ghoris and biraharas are also often sung in a tearful tone. Indeed, whenever I recall the delivery of many suhags and of certain ghoris, my head begins to forcibly resound with the sounds of women crying. The direful crying of women at the time of a death, the sweet suhags at wedding times, and the gentle *birahā*s sung by women in the still of night all share long, low-pitched cries that induce melancholic feelings.[7]

Similarities and Differences

Suhag and ghorian are both song forms manifesting the emotion of joy whose substance is that of presenting the image of the happy Punjabi family. Whereas in ghorian one finds sentiments of pure joy and desire, in suhag one finds a mixture of joy and grief. Whereas ghoris are songs expressing the feelings of the "victor" [i.e. the groom and his family], suhags manifest the sorrow of a father's "loss" [i.e. of his daughter and property]. As such ghorian and suhag are manifestations of woman's powerlessness. However, in each form the woman's condition and cultural position are different. In ghoris, the sister participates in the victorious joy of her brother [*vīr*, literally "hero"], while in suhags is a lament—of falling into the possession of a "stranger." In ghorian, the subjugation of the woman, manifested indirectly in these songs, is set among her blood relatives in the home. There are no resentful feelings for this subjugation, but rather a misplaced sense of security born of attachment to and familiarity with blood relations. However, in suhag songs, the woman's existence is insecure, as seen in the narration of her anxiety about the potential severity of a strange man. Nand Lal Noorpuri [poet (1906-1966)] presented woman's condition with nuanced feeling in one of his songs:

> *gaḍḍe ute ā gaiā sandūk muṭiār dā*
> *shīshiāṅ 'ch kahinde uhdā vīr vagg chārdā*

> On the cart arrived the maiden's trunk.
> In the mirror, one sees her hero grazing cattle.

<div align="center">

*   *   *

</div>

> *ik tasvīr vich, ghaṛā ḍohl ghiu dā*
> *hasdī ne hatth phaṛ laiā jā ke piu dā*
> *māṅ dā nā ḍhiḍḍ ik vaṭṭ vī sahārdā*
> *gaḍḍe ute ā gaiā sandūk muṭiār dā*

In one image, we see a spilt pot of butter.
Smiling, the girl went and grabbed her dad's hand.
Her mom's belly did not suffer a single ache from this mishap.
On the cart arrived the maiden's trunk.

*   *   *

ṭuṭṭe hoe shīshe tāī vekhiā je tāṛ ke
ḍolī vich āṇ baiṭhī doveṅ palle jhāṛ ke
dil vich khiāl ḍāḍhā ḍāḍhiāṅ dī mār dā
gaḍḍe ute ā gaiā sandūk muṭiār dā

If you were to look into the broken mirror you'd see her
Sitting in the palanquin as both parents claim helplessness.
In her heart is the fear of beatings from high-handed in-laws.
On the cart arrived the maiden's trunk.

The first image is set in the girl's parents' home, where even the spilling of a pot full of ghee does not upset her father. Here, the mother is the girl's sympathetic confidante. The second image depicts traveling to the in-laws' house, replete with fears in anticipation of chastisement by the "severe husband." Here, the relationship between husband and wife is portrayed as cruel and oppressive—between a severe husband who gives beatings and an innocence wife who bears them. He who once appeared deceptively as a "hero" in the mirror's reflection now in a broken mirror takes the appearance of a severe figure. This is the picture imagined by the woman whilst going to the "stranger's" land—by a woman filled with discomfort due to her uncertain condition and unseen fears.

While both suhag and ghorian bear the influence of the superstitious mentality of medieval times, in suhag songs one also finds some hints of woman's tragic condition. As such, whereas ghorian and suhag present the material splendor of agrarian culture, alongside of that—in suhag— we also find representations of woman's oppressed mental condition.

From the literary view as well, ghoris are mainly focused on objects and on perpetuating normative relationships. In suhags, however, woman's charm shows through in subtle and rich colors. It is clear that although ghorian and suhag both are creations of women, into suhag women put more of themselves.

In ghoris, woman speaks as a sister who bears witness to her brother's happiness, and in suhags she expresses her own homesick state. In this light we can call a ghori a song by women that is centered on men, whereas a suhag is a song by women that is centered on women (or, on the self).

In the ghoris and suhags of marriage time, the hero and heroine's life journeys from childhood to young adulthood are presented, employing anecdotes about relationships and the happiness of family life. The desires, joys, and wishes associated with their coming of age are articulated, while connecting them with various cultural contexts. Yet whereas ghoris are replete with feelings of achievement, fulfillment of ritual, and victorious joy, in suhag songs one ultimately finds the feeling of estrangement. In place of joy, sentiments of loneliness become predominant. So in the narrative of the wedding, ghoris and suhags shift the focus to particular facets, according to the state of the hero and heroine.

Although, in both ghorian and suhag, the theme is presented through definite and prescribed rhemic particulars, in ghorian the rhemic details are formulaic and subject to great repetition. In suhags these details retain very much a compositional character. In other words, when compared with ghorian, the language of suhag songs is more creative. Ghoris stay fixed mainly on aspects of the wealth and achievements of the hero and his family. Conversely, while in suhags the topic of discussion may indeed be the bride's family or material objects, they are set on the emotional scape of the woman's mind. So whereas ghoris are songs of an outward character, the suhag-s are of a more inward character. It is for this reason that many suhags are embedded within the deep structure of Punjabi culture in a profound way.

The hero of ghoris is the groom, who is the princely "vir." The agents of his adornment and blessing are *sisters*. In ghorian, the bride (sister-in-law to-be) is rarely mentioned. Indeed it is notable that, in their songs, women give less importance to woman in the form of bride and more to man in the form of groom. The heroine of suhags is the bride, and she, too, is a "princess." However, her condition is actually like that of a "lady in distress," for whom her pious father, in contributing gold and cows, is "performing a virtuous act." In these suhags, the groom-hero is sung about with a very "open throat" [i.e. in a proud and admirable fashion]. In the course of expounding his greatness, he is elevated to the level of mythological heroes like Ram, Krishna, and Shiv. In suhags, the bride is referentially called Sita, Savittri, Subhaddra or Gauri, however one does not find concrete mention of the *active* heroic qualities of these mythological heroines. Instead, in very many suhag-s there is a pronounced emphasis on the woman's experience of powerlessness and the callousness of her cultural condition:

> *sahīāṅ chhoḍ tur jāmṇā, tur jāmṇā*
> *tainūṅ jarā taras nā āiā*
> *ih kī kītā bābalā ve*
> *phull toṛ bigāne ghar lāiā*

uṭṭhīṅ tāṅ uṭṭhīṅ māe mil lai nī
dhīāṅ ho pardesaṇ challīāṅ ne
ihnāṅ dhīāṅ nūṅ kī milṇā
jo bāg vichānā kar challīāṅ

Leaving your girlfriends, you must go away, go away.
You've received not a shred of compassion.
What have you done, O father?
You plucked the flower and brought it to a strange home.
Get up, now, get up and meet mother.
Daughters have gone off and become estranged.
What can these daughters receive
Who have been removed from the garden?

Eulogization of Social Conventions

Both suhag and ghorian are song forms connected with the presentation of basic conventions and norms of agrarian culture. One primarily finds in them normative manifestations of the idyllic values, relationships, rites, desires, and dreams of agrarian life. From this perspective, both of these song forms are ultimately connected with the presentation of a misconceived reality or the creation of a dream. The main, distinctive cultural contexts of these songs are ones that reinforce social convention. As such, the heroes of suhag and ghorian represent conventional ideals, not iconoclasts. In both homes at some stage of a wedding or at the time of completing some ritual, the following of convention is eulogized. Perhaps at this particular time it is considered unlucky to discuss iconoclasm. From this perspective, the state is that of one kneeling before the family. In these songs, this demure state of ours is proudly illustrated.

Ultimately, suhag and ghorian seem to manifest the ideological baggage of the feudal era's established rules. At the same time, the tragedy of the era's delusion-based ideology is hidden. All of the displays, rituals, and songs of a wedding are driven towards the pretence of the groom as "king" for a day.

In these songs one can see the maintenance of feudal values and established tradition on several levels. It is possible that, at the cerebral level, this gesture of kneeling before social norms—of submitting to enslavement in a system of values that belong to the social class which controls the compositional framework of these songs—is understood as a *good* thing. Yet these songs have a base level composed of a landscape of unadulterated ideas. Folksongs are artistic creations. They contain a wealth of sentiments and emotions below the fog of the cerebral world.

The Clash Between Everyday Reality and Fallacious Ideology

In suhag and ghorian the reality is that, on one hand, one finds empirically observable expressions of human responses to a tragic condition. On the other hand, one finds a layer of ideology and feudal values, full of misconceived notions of the world, that are nonetheless allowed to permeate everyday reality. Thus these songs present a clash between thoughts and concepts on one hand and feelings and natural human responses on the other. A sense of achievement coexists alongside a feeling of unfulfilled dreams and the cruel reality of one's condition. Therefore, it is my view that in reading suhag and ghorian texts, in order to understand them one must pay attention to this clash of worlds. These songs are romantic images sprouted out of an atmosphere of cultural suffocation and an inadequate, even cruel, agrarian lifestyle. Yet in these images, here and there, one finds holes. Beneath this single day of imperial splendor, one finds concrete expression of the true longings and aspirations of common agrarian life. Thus the texts of suhag and ghorian have a two-layered character.

Now the question arises: why create this scenario of "king for a day"? Possible answers are:
1. Perhaps by acting in such a fashion to appear like royalty, morale is boosted and one staves off potential feelings of low self-esteem. Or;
2. Perhaps by imitating the established ruling class—all the while lacking a historical consciousness of the mental slavery imposed by its structures—due to a misplaced sense of class-consciousness, one compensates for the *existence* of feelings of low self-esteem.

No ritual or cultural text can be wholly explained with a single model. A given ritual is multifaceted and at once related to several cultural aims. Furthermore, despite the constancy in form of a particular song, at various stages through its history, too, its meanings transform. The case is the same for all folklore texts. Because the meaning in these songs and texts is constantly transforming, their cultural significance may be of a two-layered, three-layered, or polysemic character. To reiterate: Despite being products of a fallacious ideology, the songs also perform the duty of boosting the morale of the common public. The people engaged in these performances aim for the material comforts that life has to offer.

Here the argument also can be made that from the Mahabharat era this region of North India has been divided into small republics. With the consolidation by minor kings or chieftains, they formed into larger republics. As such, even the village was a small empire of sorts. In villages there has remained a practice of imitating royalty through imperial emblems. This meant displaying the crest and brandishing the sword in the manner a king. By adopting such emblems, the common

village family showed their *loyalty* to the rulers, not their comparison with them.

Woman's Place in the Punjabi Household and Among Her Relatives

The basic substance of all Punjabi folksongs is home and family; they are multicolored images of domestic life. Among the multifarious images of relationships presented in Punjabi folksongs one finds desire, love, tension, conflict, jealousy, animosity, harmony, and disharmony. However, in suhags and ghoris one primarily finds praise for harmonious balance in family relationships, while and expression of tension, conflict, and disharmony is very infrequent. A social relationship, whether by blood or as part of a community, constitutes a definite and defined pattern of cultural behavior. *Who*, in *what relationship*, in *what context*, is to do *what*? The program for this is fixed according to culture's established norms.

In suhag and ghorian there are three main sets of relationships: *dādkā* (the paternal relatives), *nānkā* (the maternal relatives), and *sauhrā* (the in-laws). The interrelationship between all three of these sets is presented through the characters of bride and groom. Indeed, the management of all Punjabi inter-family relationships is built on this three-part scheme. In patriarchal societies, the management of kin relationships is based on the exchange of women [i.e. per Lévi-Strauss]. The essential character of Punjabi relationships lies in the customs of "sending off a daughter" and "bringing home a daughter-in-law." In this structure, the significance of man and woman is certain.

From this perspective it is notable that in suhags and ghoris the pattern of address in relationships is by woman, towards man. In suhags the address is mainly performed by the daughter towards the father, and in ghoris it is by the sister towards the brother. Is this pattern of address a direct manifestation of woman's powerlessness? My opinion is that the address towards a man found in suhag and ghorian is mainly related to the patriarchal structure of Punjabi kinship and, in this case, the significance of men is applied to the customs of the wedding. The father, brother, *māmā* (maternal uncle), and *chāchā* (paternal uncle) all feature as "relations" of the girl. All four of these relations, at the time of the wedding, have the explicit responsibility to provide certain things. In ghoris and suhags, the woman's longings, along with the search for a handsome prospective-husband of her age-group, are associated with the giving of ornaments, clothes, and objects as dowry. The father, brother, and uncles are the contributors of these acquisitions. For this reason, their position in suhags and ghoris is that of the "bestower." And to these bestowers, the manner of address of the recipient—the daughter—is as the cry of a baby bird, full of powerlessness and helplessness. Moreover,

in the daughter's narrative, the "bestower," too, is humbled. The giving of contributions by the bestower might be considered a reflection of his *own* helplessness [i.e. so far as it is an obligation imposed by social norms]:

> *vihaṛe imlī de hare, hare pāt*
> *ki panchhī baiṭhā rudan karo*
> *bābal mainūṅ itnā ku demīṅ dāj*
> *ki jagg vich sobhā hove*
> *ik lakkh demāṅ dhīe demāṅ lakkh chār*
> *gaūāṅ karendā dān*
> *ki sobhā merī chāhe nā hove.*

> The green green leaves of the tamarind tree in the courtyard
> Among which a bird might sit and cry.
> "Father, give me quite a bit of dowry
> So that in the world your glory might be known."
> "One hundred thousand I'd give, daughter, 4 hundred thousand.
> I'll make gifts of cows
> Regardless whether or not my glory might be known."

In the case of these addresses towards the man, it is also notable that they are all done with formality and ritual. Thus it seems like each of these members of the family is also a sort of ruler, before whom requests are continually being made. The reality here is that this request is not presented by the woman because she has the power to make a *request* as such. Rather it is more an *entreaty*, by daughters from fathers and by sisters from brothers. And so it seems from this entreaty that even among family relationships a certain *unfamiliarity* has crept in. This sort of address, full of formality and entreaties, shows that, on one hand, the woman has inner riches and yet a deprived financial condition; on the other hand, her social position is insecure while she is being married. Another cause of this is that suhag and ghorian, from the perspective of cultural norms, are song forms that imitate and conform to mercantile traditions. The three song forms *hearā*, ghorian, and suhag are of a status quo sort (whereas for example [the taunt song form] *siṭṭhaṇī*, due to its character, is of a iconoclastic sort). Therefore, within these patterns of address, along with formality and entreaties, there is also the etiquette, propriety, and urbanity associated with mercantile culture:

> *bībī sohe sohe jhaṭṭ jāg lai*
> *āpṇe bābe koloṅ kuchh māng lai*
> *bābā ik merā kahiṇā kījīe*
> *mainūṅ rām rattan var dījīe*

bībī kāhe ratan var toraṛā
jaise bāgoṅ meṅ khiṛ rihā kevaṛā

Sleeping girl, wake up at once.
Ask of something from your father.
"Father, please do one thing I say—
Bestow me with a jewel of a husband, like Ram."
"Girl, why, I shall pick you a husband
Like a keora flower blooming in the garden!"

> *   *   *

bībī patalīe nī patang jāe
apṇe bābal rāje koloṅ kush mang lāe
bābal ghar ditā sohṇā var ditā
hariāṅ bāgāṅ vichoṅ phull toṛ ditā.

O slender girl, like a kite,
From your kingly father ask for something.
Father gave a house, and a handsome husband.
Out of lush gardens he plucked a flower.

If we look at Punjabi folksongs from the perspective of patterns of address, several interesting points emerge. In boli and tappa, the address in mainly towards a peer or lover. Clearly in both these song forms the driving sentiment is love. In sithani and heara, the address is towards those on the "side" opposite oneself, and the sentiment expressed in those songs reflects that sort of relationship. In suhags and ghoris, when daughters/sisters plan to share their heart's contents, they address the mother, but if it is a question of some object or material need then it is addressed to the father or brother. So in suhags and ghoris the father is the pillar of the household's economy, the able manager, the solid worker. On the idealized level, the father is a "spiritual-king," a giver of bounties, a wise man. Yet if in these song forms we look at the level of economic values then this father of a small household is as the ruler of a tiny state who is supporting his family through all the resources and earnings at his disposal. He is the hardworking ox engaged in hauling the family cart, while the mother is the idol of affections. Yet woman's existence is a materially deprived, purely human existence. She keeps the house bound in the embrace of emotional relationships. Thus in suhags and ghoris woman's emotional self speaks in the addresses that are put to the mother:

suṇ nī mātā merīe
nī mere bābal nūṅ samjhā
dhīāṅ hoīāṅ laṭbāvarīāṅ
kise naukar de laṛ lā

Listen O mother of mine,
Oh explain to my father.
His daughters have become smitten;
Marry them off to some servant.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

shakkar pāmāṅ sukkṇī koī kahiṇ vasār ve
lok bhulle kī jāṇde māvāṅ dhīāṅ dī sār ve
motī tāṅ pāmāṅ sukkṇe koī lok kahiṇ javār ve
lok bhulle kī jāṇde māmāṅ dhīāṅ dī sār ve

If I spread out sugar to dry, some people would take it for
     ground turmeric O.
People are clueless about the things which mothers and
     daughters know.
If I put out pearls to dry, some people would take them for
     millet O.
People are clueless about the things which mothers and
     daughters know.

Dynamics of the Paternal Family: Individual, Family, and Society

In suhags and ghoris, the expression of relationships of the dadka family is preeminent. In both song forms, the joint family is presented through vignettes of honorable living. The head of that extended family is the paternal grandfather. Among this family the paternal aunts and brothers provide much liveliness. Every member in the joint family performs his or her respective cultural duty. We see all the people engaged in work, for there is no room for negligence in duty. All people in the family and society are bound to one another emotionally in warm and loving relationships. Nowhere in these relationships is there the smirch of malice or enmity. All the family is joined in relationships that are transparent, simple, and harmonious.

The clash of familial relationships is embodied in abundant form in Punjabi qissa literature, where individual desires and cultural norms clash on the model of individual-versus-society. In gurmat poetry, qissa poetry, and Sufi poetry, the clash between individual and society is also made the basis of composition in the form of a clash of ideologies. And in

other forms of Punjabi folk-poetry, the individual's inner self clashes with the normative forms of the social routine. The composers of folk-songs have taken a very rebellious tone against the suffocating atmosphere of tradition-based nurturing, but in the ritual-based songs-like suhags, ghoris and, to some extent, hearas, one avoids such clashes as those between the individual and family, the individual and society, or the individual and other institutions. In these songs, clash *can* definitely be detected, but on a subtle level—e.g. where the speaker shares her inner self with her mother or where an entreaty is put before her father/brother in a powerless voice. So we can say that suhag and ghorian are song forms associated with the presentation of cultural norms, in which harsh reality is presented having only first set up romantic images of reality as it is *wished* to be. These songs are based on the reality that adheres in Punjabis' aspirations or dreams, through the imagining of which real life starts to appear more colorful, warm, and livable. They are a way, through singing, of presenting the victory of the individual over her cruel state:

> *sone dī ghoṛī te resham ḍorāṅ*
> *chāndī de painkhaṛ pāe rāmā*
> *bābā viāhmaṇ pote nūṅ challiā*
> *laṭṭhe ne khaṛ, khaṛ lāī rāmā*
> *sone dī ghoṛī te resham ḍorāṅ*
> *chāndī de painkhaṛ pāe rāmā*
> *bābal viāhmaṇ putt nūṅ challiā*
> *dammāṅ ne chhaṇ, chhaṇ lāī rāmā*

> On a golden horse, silken cords
> And silver tethers put, O Ram.
> Grandfather went to get his grandson wed.
> The rafters made a rattling sound, O Ram.
> On a golden horse, silken cords
> And silver tethers put, O Ram.
> Grandfather went to get his grandson wed.
> The coins made a tinkling sound, O Ram.

Dynamics of the Maternal Family: From Mother to Daughter

Among the relationships found in suhag and ghorian, the second main set is that of the maternal relatives. The great significance of the maternal grandparents, aunts, and uncles is told in these songs. Interestingly, what description there is of the maternal relatives may be understood to represent evidence of the remains of the ancient matriarchal family structure. They are often referred to as *nānī de jāe*—grandmother's

offspring; nowhere does one find the phrase "grandfather's offspring." The image presented of the relationship of the groom/bride's mother with her own mother is one especially full of affection. Reference to the institutions of paternal family and maternal family appear alongside of each other in these songs. What is clear is that in these songs relatives of the mother' side are spoken of as the source of sentimental warmth and affection. Their economic wealth is seen apportioned:

> *ghoṛī mere vīr dī vaṇ bindrā baṇāṅ 'choṅ āī*
> *bāharoṅ āiā sulakkhaṇā ohne māmī balāī*
> *māmī kare sir vārne vīrā ve*
> *māme vārīāṅ dammāṅ dīāṅ ve borīāṅ*

My brother's mare emerged from the tree-filled forests.
Coming from abroad, the auspicious-one called his aunt.
Auntie blesses you, O brother.
Uncle bestows bags full of cash.

*   *   *

> *māme mere kāj rachāiā*
> *din rahi gae thohṛe*
> *dhī hove ghar dhan hove*
> *māmā bhāṇju de kardā dān*
> *sālū dā pallā reshamī*
> *merā rondī dā bhijjiā rumāl*

My uncle has arranged the function.
Some days remained.
May there be a daughter, that wealthy may be the house.
Uncle contributes offerings to his nephew.
A bridal robe with silken veil.
My handkerchief has become soaked from crying.

Dynamics of the Spouse's Family: Groom, Bride, and Family

In ghorian, the third set of relatives is the in-laws, which includes the mother-in-law, father-in-law, and sisters-in-law (*sālī/nanāṇ*). Talk of them is done in a bashful way. Minor fears or anxieties are found to surround these relationships as well. A great many of these representations are of a fanciful sort. The good looks of the bride/sister-in-law/"Rukmini" or the groom/brother/beloved "Krishna" are imagined. In suhag songs, there is immeasurable reverence for the groom; one can see this from both personal and economic perspectives. This is the true

"jewel" of Punjabi culture: the groom. However, in ghorian the beautiful, capable, and unsullied bride/sister-in-law is imagined: "Go marry and bring home a new sister-in-law who makes lovely partridge and peacock designs." As such the father-in-law appears as Dashrath, the mother-in-law as Kaushalya, and the brother-in-law as Lakshman.[8] So suhag and ghorian reinforce collective notions that are already established in cultural tradition through model ideals or mythological characters. Thus they are song forms representing status quo ideals that help to keep to Punjabi culture's "cart" moving along the beaten track:

> *main tāṅ bābal de agge hath joṛ rahī*
> *hatth joṛ ke arj gujār rahī āṅ*
> *merī sass hove māt kushalliā*
> *te sahurā rājā dashrath hove*
> *merī naṇad hove subhaddrā*
> *chhoṭā debar lachhmaṇ hove*
> *merā kānh hove sirī rām*
> *te sītā rāṇī āp homāṅ*

> I remain before father with my hands clasped.
> With hands clasped, I make these requests:
> Would that my mother-in-law be Kaushlya,
> And father-in-law be Dashrath.
> Would that my sister-in-law be Subhadra [wife of Arjun],
> My small brother-in-law, Lakshman.
> Would that my beloved be Lord Ram,
> And I be Queen Sita.
> (*A suhag*)

<p align="center">*   *   *</p>

> *ghoṛī chahṛ ke challiā suṇ vīr merā*
> *vekhaṇ challiā sauharaṛā piṇḍ ve*

> *kahe ku dekhe sauharaṛe suṇ vīr mere*
> *kahī ku dekhī vīrā jūh ve*

> *channaṇ chhiṛakdīāṅ gaḷāṅ suṇ bhaiṇ merī*
> *koī sad hariāvalī jūh ve*

> *ghoṛī chahṛ ke challiā suṇ vīr merā*
> *vekhaṇ chaliā sauharaṛā piṇḍ ve*

kahī ku dekhī nār suṇ vīr mere
kahīāṅ ku dekhīāṅ sāḷīāṅ vīrā tūṅ ve

chaunke vich sohe terī bhābo suṇ bhaiṇ merī
koī trinjaṇī kattaṇ sāḷīāṅ bhaiṇe nī

"Listen, O my brother gone off riding the horse,
Gone to see the in-laws' village—

"What sort of in-laws were seen, my brother?
What sort of uncultivated land did you see, O brother?"

"Moonlit lanes, my sister.
Some verdant evergreen land O."

"Listen, O my brother gone off riding the horse,
Gone to see the in-laws' village—

"What sort of wife was seen, my brother?
What sort of sisters-in-law did you see, O brother?"

"Your sister-in-law is well suited to the hearth-place, my sister.
Some sisters-in-law engaged in spinning, O sister."
(*A ghori*)

Individual Desires and Cultural Norms: Clash and Correspondence

Suhag and ghorian are both genteel song types connected with urbane manifestations of culture. In the tradition of Punjabi folk-song, many other genres are abundant with expressions that argue for the innate freedoms of the individual. These songs give voice to disobedience from within. In many, the individual's erotic desire is also manifested unhindered. While suhag and ghorian do not *deny* individual desire, in these songs desires are definitely kept reigned in the yoke of cultural norms. Their character is like that of a prisoner in a golden cage, dressed in the vestment of urbanity. In *these* songs, not only individual desire, but cultural values, too, are reinforced. The individual is made to sense the need for socialization and the fulfillment of cultural obligations. All in all, suhag and ghorian are primarily institution-based, not individual-based song forms. Here the individual is a girl acting within the three institutions of family, extended-family, and society. Her human self, as per society's needs and hopes, is shown in different artistic images as an idealized hero. For example, within ghoris one finds tropes like "The mare is resplendent, O girlfriends," and "Grandfather's grandson has

mounted the mare," and within suhags, images like "Father has arranged the wedding function," etc.

> *utle chubāre tainūṅ bulāmāṅ nī saddo*
> *uṭṭh ke tāṅ sāhā sudhā*
> *rāje dīe nī beṭīe*
>
> *sāhā sudhāmaṇ terīāṅ dādīāṅ chīre vāliā ve*
> *jihnāṅ de man vich chāa*
> *dilāṅ de vich vas rahīe nī*
>
> *uppar tāṅ bāṛe tainūṅ sadd paī*
> *sālū vālīe nī*
> *bhāgāṅ vālīe nī*
> *ā ke tāṅ chakkīāṅ lavā*
> *dilāṅ de vich vas rahīe nī*
>
> *chakkīāṅ lāmaṇ terīāṅ tāīāṅ te chāchīāṅ*
> *ve chīre vāliā ve*
> *jihnāṅ de man vich chāa*
> *dilāṅ de vich vas rahīe nī*

From the upper story I call to you, dearie.
Get up and get your marriage date set,
O daughter of a king.

Your grandmothers shall set the date.
O red-turbaned one,
In whose mind is elation,
Remain in our hearts O.

The call came to you from the nook above.
Bridal robe wearer O,
Fortunate one O,
Come then and grind the millstone,
Remain in our hearts O.

Your aunts shall grind the millstone.
O red turbaned one,
In whose mind is elation,
Remain in our hearts O.

    In suhag and ghorian the greatest proof of institutions being primary and the individual being secondary is that the two individuals whose

heroism is being extolled, the acting bride and groom, are in many contexts "muted" (*chupp*). They are being talked about by female-friends or sisters. Here their condition is like that of a stubborn witness. To some degree in suhags, the bride/daughter does address father, brother, or mother. In this address, the emphasis is propriety, modesty, or humility, so that such talk can also be uttered even "standing under the sandalwood tree" as it were. If while around her mother the girl were to break out of her bashfulness and recite the line, "The daughters have become smitten. Quick! Have them tie the knot with some servant," even then the response she would get would be, "Listen, daughter, don't say such things." In suhags, the bride/daughter attempts to speak from under cultural shelters and artistic veils. Nevertheless it is predominantly her sister or friend who advocates for her. However, in ghorian, the groom/brother is not shown to do *anything* himself—neither in speech nor in deeds. He does not adorn himself; he is adorned. He is seated on the horse; he is given blessings. This "hero" of ours is mute, passive. Sisters/sisters-in-law are doing the talking, praising him and extolling his heroism. In ghorian, the groom is the *deed*—that which is done—not the *doer*. Ghori is *not* an utterance of the self; it is singing that bears witness to another.

> *jad vīr āiā lammī lammī rāhī*
> *ghoṛā tāṅ bahnniā vīr ne jaṇḍī phalāhī*
>
> *bhaiṇāṅ ne vīr shingāriā māeṅ nī*
> *bhābīāṅ debar ghoṛī chāṛhiā māeṅ nī*
>
> *jad vīr āiā nadīāṅ kināre nī*
> *nadīāṅ tāṅ deṇ vīr nūṅ ṭhaṇḍe hulāre nī*
>
> *bhaiṇāṅ ne vīr shingāriā māeṅ nī*
> *bhābīāṅ debar ghoṛī chāhṛiā māeṅ nī*
>
> *jad vīr āiā sahure dīāṅ gaḷīān nī*
> *sass tāṅ chumme vīr de sihare dīāṅ kalīāṅ nī*
>
> *bhaiṇāṅ ne vīr shingāriā māeṅ nī*
> *bhābīāṅ debar ghoṛī chāhṛiā māeṅ nī*

When our 'hero' came along the long long path,
He tied up the horse to the acacia tree.

Sisters adorned brother, O mom.
Sisters-in-law sat him on the horse, O mom.

When our hero came on the banks of the stream,
The streams gave him cool lappings O.

Sisters adorned brother, O mom.
Sisters-in-law sat him on the horse, O mom.

When vir came into father-in-law's lanes O,
Mother-in-law kissed the tassels of his face-covering O.

Sisters adorned brother, O mom.
Sisters-in-law sat him on the horse, O mom.

                    *   *   *

nikkī nikkī kaṇī dā mīṅh vahre
nadī de kināre ghoṛī ghāh ve chare

kauṇ vīrā ve tere shagan kare
dammāṅ dī borī ve kauṇ phaṛe

bāp rājā dammāṅ dī borī phaṛe
mātā sohāgaṇ tere shagan kare

Tiny little drops of rain fall;
On the bank of the stream the mare grazes grass.

Who, O brother, will give you blessed contributions?
Who will hold the sack of cash?

Your kingly father holds the sack of cash;
Your good mother will give you the blessed contributions.

   Through these songs, woman has established the boundaries of her
human self more broadly. These songs are the primary mode of poetic
expression of woman in the medieval context. As such she needs to
utilize these texts as her personal exegesis of her existential predicament.
This is the significance of these songs in contemporary times. They are
poetic-texts that need to be understood in relation to medieval
consciousness. Even despite the limits of that consciousness, medieval
woman used these songs as an artistic weapon to preserve her humanity.
Let us salute these women and their female-voiced exegesis of culture.

Notes

[1] This text originally appeared in Nahar Singh's *Bāgīṅ Chambā Kheṛ Rihā*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1999, pp. 9-30.

[2] Regarding the morphology of these terms: It appears from Nahar Singh's usage that, when referring to genres as a whole, the singular form *suhāg* and the plural form *ghoṛīāṅ* may be used. When referring to items of repertoire (i.e. songs), one uses the singular form for both, in which case we may render them as *suhāg*/*suhāg*s and *ghoṛī*/*ghoṛī*s for singular/plural. —*Ed.*

[3] Other songs, like *siṭṭhaṇīāṅ* and songs of blessing (*shagan*) have also remained important in weddings.

[4] A *hek* is a vocalization (typically of the vowel "O!") of a sustained pitch or melisma, usually lengthy and unmetered, which is often performed at the beginning of a song or verse. —*Ed.*

[5] Although it is unclear where the sense of "long" originates, one may compare such songs to the very short form *ṭappā*, which is in turn the basic building block of *bolī*, neither form of which, indeed, is considered a "song" in the proper sense. The tappa form is the subject of another collection by Nahar Singh, *Mālve de Ṭappe* (Akal Sahit Prakashan, Chandigarh, 1985), while bolis are collected, with some introduction of their performance contexts, in *Kāḷīāṅ Harnāṅ Rohīeṅ Phirnā* and *Laung Burjīāṅ Vāḷā* (Punjabi University, Patiala, 1998). —*Ed.*

[6] In these passages, Nahar Singh has been tenuously implying that songs with similar textual themes would be expected to share musical features. While I find this to be an unreasonable assumption when taken with broad reference to the frames "sonic universe" and "compositional form," this last line clarifies his thesis. He is focused less on pitch or rhythm and more on timbre and broad performative gestures. (This is reinforced by the fact that he does not offer any specifics by way of tune comparison or melodic analysis to support musical similarity.) Nahar Singh is reading certain composition features—namely, long *hek*s and silences—as iconic of the emotional states associated with the texts. In this scheme, heks represent "wails" which indicate sad, suffering, emotional states, and as such all songs with similar emotional themes are supposed to have heks in their performances. —*Ed.*

[7] In illustration of this fact, the third and fourth volumes of my anthology, *Channā ve Terī Chānaṇī* and *Khūnī Naiṇ Jal Bhare* (especially), have been compiled.

[8] The reference is to characters in the *Ramayana*, being the parents and half-brother of Lord Ram. —*Ed.*

Western Punjabi Song Forms:
Māhīā and *Ḍholā*

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This essay hopes to elucidate several songs forms with origins in the Western Punjab area, especially with the goal of differentiating them from each other and from similar forms elsewhere in Punjab. The main issue is that, because the Punjabi short verse forms are similar, they are sometimes difficult to distinguish. This is even more so for the fact of confusion in nomenclature, where terms have been used to identify more than one phenomenon. A critical exploration of documented forms reveals much regional variety waiting to be uncovered by future research. Indeed, in surveying these terms and the forms they identify, one finds a diversity of genres that is belied by the vague label of "folk-song."

Punjabi traditional song includes many genre categories. Some genres are connected near exclusively with designated rituals or events, which their performance both marks and brings auspiciousness to. Examples are *suhāg*, *ghoṛīāṅ*, *siṭṭhaṇīāṅ*, and other such songs of life-cycle ceremonies and usually performed by women. Another area of Punjabi song (or versification) that can be identified includes verse forms that are *not* bound by ritual, and yet, they too remain of a "humble" sort of composition. They are usually of anonymous authorship; nor, one could argue, do they aspire to be great works of poetry. Rather, they are considered to be expressions of the common people in a direct and handy form. Though they are typically "sung" (or intoned)—for lack of a more precise word—that feature is shared with Punjabi verse generally, and Punjabi literary classification schemes do not classify them as "songs" (*gīt*). I am talking about forms like *bolī*, *māhīā*, and *ḍholā*.

Despite the once currency of these forms among the "common folk" of various areas, and their continued popularity today, many are challenged to distinguish them. The simple aim of this article is to describe these forms and, in so doing, to distinguish them from one another. It is not an attempt to ferret out their cultural significance or to interpret their texts (as, for example, Nahar Singh did for suhag and ghorian in the previous article), but rather a descriptive, formal exposition addressed to some difficulties associated with these genres. The first difficulty is that the forms appear quite similar to one another.

The second is the confusion in nomenclature, wherein terms have been used to identify more than one phenomenon. Third, and not unexpectedly, the genres do not necessarily fit into entirely neat categories, as will be seen by exceptional examples.

The emphasis in this article is on forms once native to western parts of Punjab, being that its secondary aim is to cull and propagate information on them. The Eastern Punjabi form, *bolī*, is, in my assessment, a form that will be better known to readers and which has received more discussion in academic literature. I discuss boli mainly in order to distinguish it from the Western Punjabi forms. Note also at the outset that among the referents of *ḍholā* is a genre that is formally quite different from the others and might arguably be better placed in a different discussion. However, because that form is comparatively unfamiliar and so infrequently discussed, it bears inclusion in this article. Because some of the items discussed here are only rarely performed or else only performed in recently conceived contexts, the article must draw mainly upon secondary sources. As such, it should be considered more introductory than conclusive.

Eastern Punjabi Forms: *Ṭappā* and *Bolī*

The Punjabi noun *bol* means "item of speech, utterance." It can also refer to a "lyric" or the "lyrics" that belong to a song. The word *bolī* not only means "language/dialect," but also, as the diminutive form of *bol*, it connotes a minor or short lyric. Such a lyric does not include a long refrain as typically would a "song" (*gīt*). And while a song would generally have multiple verses, a boli stands alone, a single "verse." This is not to say that many bolis cannot be performed in succession—they often are—however, each retains its singular identity as a boli—*a* verse or lyric. Any short piece of verse in a musical or lyrical context might conceivably be called "boli," although this usage is imprecise and casual. For example, one might speak of a "boli" when referring to a lyric that is sung to accompany the *jhummar* dance, although the form of the particular verse being recited is in actuality that of *māhīā*. In its precise usage, *bolī* refers to a specific verse form especially prevalent in Eastern Punjab. The boli form is best known from the context of *giddhā*. Indeed, while giddha is conventionally classified as a dance, it is really, in essence, a group gathering in which bolis are performed, with (historically) less emphasis on dancing. The popularity of boli no doubt lies, in part, in the simplicity of its form and its ability to suggest much with few words. Indeed, bolis are often very short; they may consist of as little as one "line" (*sattar*, *tukk*). Theoretically speaking, however, the length of a boli is unlimited. It is variations in length that allow us to roughly circumscribe three categories of boli.

<u>Ṭappā</u>. The basic gloss of *ṭappā* is "line" or "verse."[1] Because it is just *one* line, it lacks any other line with which to rhyme. The meter is also quite flexible, but it is generally required to fit within eight counts of rhythm. The line contains two phrases. Note with caution, however, that because in print the two phrases are often represented as one below the other, it may appear as though the tappa consists of two "lines." Verses of tappa appear non-musically as proverbs, and in musical contexts they typically appear during performances of women's giddha. An example is as follows:

> *vihṛe chhaṛiāṅ de*
> *kauṛī nimm nūṅ patāse lagde*
> (Nahar Singh 1985:172)

> In the courtyards of bachelors,
> Even bitter neem-leaf tastes like sweet-drops.

<u>Short boli</u>. The tappa, above, makes up the basic unit of a boli. Such units may be linked to other lyrics, including other tappas, to form a verse that is longer than one line—i.e. a boli. The most common practice is to arrange tappas in sets such that the last word of each tappa rhymes with that of all the others. A boli consisting of just a few (2-4) lines can be called a short boli. This form is also characteristic of women's giddha performances. For example:

> *bābal mere bāg lavāiā*
> *vich lavāe būṭe*
> *būṭe būṭe nūṅ phaḷ pai giā*
> *utte koil kūke*
> *māhī mere lām tur giā*
> *karke vāhde jhūṭhe*
> *huṇ gabbhrū ne*
> *honge dilāṅ de khoṭe*
> (Nahar Singh 1998b:98)

> My father planted a garden
> In which he planted saplings.
> Each sapling bore fruit
> And on it a cuckoo caws.
> My beloved's gone off to the battlefront
> Having made false promises.
> Young men nowadays
> Must all be perfidious of heart!

Long boli. A long boli is a boli with a greater number of lines than, say, four. It is characteristic of men's giddha performances. For example:

> *ārī, ārī, ārī*
> *vich jagrāmāṅ de*
> *lagdī roshnī bhārī*
> *muṇshī ḍāgoṅ dā*
> *ḍāng rakhdā gaṇḍāsī vāḷī*
> *kehrā gālabīā*
> *uh tāṅ kardā laṛāī bhārī*
> *gokhā kāunkiāṅ dā*
> *jīhne kuṭṭatī paṇḍorī sārī*
> *dhan kaur dāudhar dī*
> *jehṛī bailaṇ ho gī bhārī*
> *molak kuṭṭ siṭṭiā*
> *kuṭṭ sahi giā mele dī sārī*
> *arjaṇ sūrme ne*
> *pair joṛ ke gaṇḍāsī mārī*
> *parlo ā jāndī*
> *je hundī nā pulas sarkārī*
> (Nahar Singh 1998a:72)

> saw, saw, saw
> In Jagraon town
> The Roshni mela is in full swing.
> Munshi of village Dangon
> Brandishes a pole fitted with an axe head.
> Mr. Kehra of Galib Kalan
> He starts a great row.
> Gokha of village Kaunke
> Who beat up the whole village.
> Dhan Kaur of village Daudhar
> Who became a wicked bad chick.
> Molak beat 'em all;
> All at the fair bore his abuse.
> Arjan the badass
> Struck a stance and swung his axe.
> Doomsday has arrived…
> …If the police do not!

Verses of boli, being generally short (even in the case of "long boli"), are often performed in sets, and the plural grammatical form, *bolīāṅ*, is used to denote this as a genre. Note also that bolis are not "sung" in any elaborate way so much they are as *recited* in an intoned

fashion.[2] There exist a few different intoning patterns of limited melodic range. While some suit the syllabic structure of certain bolis better than others, there is also a degree of interchangeability between verses and these stock tunes.

A number of cliché opening lines can be identified. Although these lines cannot stand alone as tappas, the word with which they end determines the rhyme to which the following tappa(s) must conform in creating the boli. An example of such a formula is:

> *bārīṅ barsīṅ khaṭṭaṇ giā sī, khaṭṭ ke liāndā _____.*

> You went off to work for twelve years; you've earned and brought back _____.

The blank represents the place in which a word (a noun), however absurd in meaning, is inserted purely for the sake of providing a rhyme for the rest of the boli. The actual meaning of this opening phrase has no relationship whatsoever to the remainder of the text. Another common device is the thrice repetition of a rhyme-word, as in the case of *ārī*/"saw" in the long boli example above. Such formulae are numerous, though these two are most common. And while there are more aspects to the structure and performance style of bolis, the present will suffice to distinguish the genre from others with which this article is primarily concerned.

The Western Counterpart?: *Māhīā*

Like boli, *māhīā* is a brief verse form of anonymous authorship. Although nowadays mahia is prevalent in Eastern Punjab, it is believed that historically mahia was the common short-verse form of Western Punjab. Punjabi folklorist S.S. Bedi, for example, claimed that wherever one went in the Dhan-Pothohar area in the early 20th century one would hear verses of mahia "melting in the ears" (1971:164), thus alleging that the form was the product of that area (1968:383). He believed that the poetic form dated from at least the 17th century (ibid.:385). Another opinion is that mahia actually derived, at a later time, from the boli form. G.S. Gill claims that when Punjabis from the eastern areas of Doaba and Malwa came to the canal colonies in Western Punjab in the late 19th century, they brought the boli form with them. He suggests that, having experienced and appreciated boli, the local Jangli people put their own spin on it and thus created mahia (1989:16). Another author states that mahia seems to be a product of Malwa (East Punjab), but that a similar form is found in the Sandal Bar (West) (Sidhu 1973). There probably *is* some historical relationship between boli and mahia, but it is difficult to

say precisely what that is with the available information. Nonetheless, we can state what we can see in mahia forms as documented.

The term *māhīā* suggests that verses in this form are meant to address a beloved. This is because *māhīā* is an epithet for a male beloved, being the vocative form of *māhī*, "buffalo-grazer." The occupation of buffalo-grazer receives this connotation from such tales as *Sohni-Mahival* and *Hir-Ranjha*, where the heroes become buffalo-grazers to be near their lovers. Yet while it is often the case that verses of mahia address a beloved, this is not necessarily so. Mahia poetry has been noted in use for a range of expressions, including not only the amorous but also religious, humorous, satirical, and political (Sher 1965:303). Nevertheless, a majority of mahias do have a romantic tone.

Note further that, while mahia refers to the male beloved, the very same poetic form, in reference to a female beloved, sometimes goes by the name of *bālo*. The concept is believed to derive from a love story taking place in Gujranwala or Gujrat between a Kashmiri Muslim boy, "Mahia," and a Hindu girl, "Balo." Being that their relationship was not accepted by society, they supposedly expressed their feelings in question-answer verses (Bedi 1968:386-7; Sher 1965:303). Thind records a second belief, that a Kanjar woman named "Bigaro" once sang mahia verses very well. For this reason, it is claimed, in the Dera Ghazi Khan and Mianwali areas the verse form is also called *bigaṛo* (1996:156).

A verse in the mahia form consists of three *phrases* (my preferred description) or *one and one-half lines*.[3] The first phrase rhymes with the third. The two rhyming phrases are of equal measure, while the second phrase is generally shorter. Another way to analyze the form is to recognize that the second and third phrases together constitute a tappa. A mahia verse can thus theoretically be formed by adding, to the *start* of a tappa, a phrase with which it rhymes. This analysis rings true especially when one notes that the first phrase usually has nothing to do, semantically, with the rest of the verse. It merely *introduces* a vague and unrelated, yet poignant or beautiful image. See the following examples, (the second of which is of the so-called *bālo* subgenre):

> *tārāṅ ve hallīāṅ nī*
> *rozī pāṇī allā desī*
> *nahirāṅ kiuṅ chā malīāṅ nī.*
> (Harjit Singh 1942:188)

> Telegrams, O plowman.
> Allah will give us food and water;
> Why have you gone to the canals?

> *pāṇī sarāṅ de kose nī,*
> *ā ke tūṅ mil bālo*
> *kihṛī gallāṅ de rosse nī.*
> (Bedi 1968:402)

> The waters of sacred pools are warm.
> Come and see me, Balo;
> What has made you so annoyed?

In actual performance, the first phrase is held out by the singer by performing a melisma at its end. Then it is repeated, as if to dwell upon the romantic image of the text. However, this repetition moves immediately into the second phrase, which is kept short, but which may also be repeated. The third line is recited and repeated as desired, being held out on the last time. This is the general pattern; in reality, however, the reciter might repeat any phrase as many times and in whatever order he or she wants. The following example (Fig.1), with musical notation and showing the form of repetitions, comes from a performance by Garib Dass and Narinder Nindi (July 2004):

Fig. 1. A mahia verse as performed, with tune.

> *ikk gabbhrū madānāṅ dā*
> *ikk chann merā māhī*
> *dūjā chann asamānāṅ dā*

> A strapping lad of the fields.
> One 'moon' is my beloved,
> The other moon is that of the heavens.

Despite the similar—and likely related—structures of tappa and
mahia, in other respects their content differs. While bolis tend to deal
with the everyday matters and relationships in a succinct or witty fashion,
the subject matter of mahias is more romantic. The melodies on which
mahias are recited are exclusive, and draw from regional *rāg*s such as
Mānḍ, Pahāṛī, Sindhī, Bhairavī, and Sindhṛā (Bedi 1973:165). The
slower and drawn-out performance style of mahia lends it a very
different character; it is perhaps more song-like. Indeed, of the two,
verses of mahia are deemed worthy of aesthetic performances within
musical arrangements, while bolis are relegated to presentations coded as
"folk." Mahia is found performed with the gentle steps of the Western
Punjabi *jhummar* and *sammī* dances, while the quick recitation style of
boli matches giddha.

In his study *Māhīā Vīcārī* (1991) Sarbjit Singh Ghumman explains
that besides the common type of mahia already described there are two
other types. The first he calls "Gujrati mahia" (i.e. of Pakistan's Gujrat
province), an example of which he gives as follows. It appears to be a
jumble of rhyming devices and stock phrases:

> *asāṅ ithe te ḍholā khārī.*
> *lāh lai chhallā vajā lai tāṛī,*
> *sāḍī do sajjṇāṅ dī yārī, kismat māṛī*
> *merīe jī jāne bhānḍe vikde, bāzār vekhe*
> *gujrātī bande sohnīeṅ, sadā vafādār vekhe.*
> (Ghumman 1991:23)

> I am here and my beloved's across the water.
> Remove the ring and clap;
> We two are in love—rotten luck!
> O my Life-Love, pots sell in the marketplace.
> Gujrati people are beautiful and ever true.

Of the other type, Ghumman writes that it is more common in areas
towards the West. The following example is unusual (i.e. from the
perspective of the common mahia) in its voicing from a masculine
perspective. The first, dummy line provides a rhyme for the last:

> *hāṛā gorīe nī, kāī tapiā tandūr e.*
> *sānūṅ jang toṅ piārā,*
> *tainḍhī dīd dā nazārā,*
> *terā mukkh nūroṅ nūr e.*
> (Ghumman 1991:23)

> Fair lady, why've you heated the oven?
> To me, from battle, dear,
> Comes the sight of your eye
> Your face is a light among lights.

For the purposes of clear differentiation of these forms and their nomenclature a last note must be made about the term *ṭappā*, *viz.* that some individuals use "tappa" as synonymous with "mahia." Bedi's explanation for this is rather fanciful: tappa comes from /ṭapp-/, the verb root for "jump," because in verses of mahia, "*over-flows or impulses of the mind are made manifest*" (1968:384). Thind explains, more reasonably I think, that at some point, while the older term was tappa, people began to also call the form mahia, such that now there are two names for the same thing (1996:152). Gita Paintal, however, views tappa as a broader category into which can be placed mahia, boli, dhola, and other genres (1988:45). These interpretations do not necessarily contradict. In its general sense as "stanza," or a "line," as the case may be, tappa can be applied to describe the base unit of vernacular short verse. In the East this unit takes the form of one-line boli and in the West it takes the form of mahia.

The Fixed-form *Ḍholā*

As with tappa/boli and mahia, the genre of sung verse referred to as *ḍholā* is complicated by a lack of clear correspondence between terms and the forms they purport to reference. Most notably, mahia forms are often confused with those of dhola. The easiest explanation for this is the frequent use in mahia verses of the epithet *ḍholā*—also meaning a male beloved. For example:

> *mirchāṅ kinn lāīāṅ*
> *ṭur giā chan ḍholā*
> *jihdī khātar maiṅ āīāṅ*
> (Rajpal 1996:80)

> Whither are planted the chilis?
> My beloved dhola has gone off,
> The very one for whose sake I've come.

The form of the above verse is that of mahia, however it uses the term dhola, and its theme—the departed beloved—overlaps with that of many dhola verses. Still, a distinct dhola verse form can be plainly distinguished. This form is of a fixed structure—the import of which will become clear after seeing yet another verse form called dhola. Indeed,

while it is distinct from them, dhola clearly shares a world with tappa and
mahia.

Bedi attributes a "fixed-form" variety of dhola to the area around
Pothohar (1973:165). The structure consists of five "lines" (read, *phrases*
in my nomenclature). Rhyme occurs between the first and second phrases
and between the fourth and fifth phrases. Take the following examples:

> *merā ḍholā te maiṅ hāṇī*
> *ḍholā kadhā toṅ mangiā pāṇī*
> *duddh dā desāṅ, jīveṅ ḍholā*
> *ḍhol ranglā*
> *chiṭṭī terī paggṛī gulābī shamlā*
> (Bedi 1973:165)

> My dhola and I are peers.
> Why did dhola request water?
> I will give him milk—Live on, dhola.
> Colorful dhol,
> White is your turban, pink is its tail.

> *bāzār vikende kil ve*
> *terā kihaṛī kuṛī te dil ve*
> *doveṅ ve kavārīāṅ, jīve ḍholā*
> *ḍhol makkhnā*
> *dil maskīnā dā rāzī rakhnā*
> (Thind 1996:163)

> In the market are sold: <u>nails.</u>
> On which girl is your heart set?
> Both are single—Live on, dhola.
> Dhol, honey,
> Keep happy the heart of your gentle love.

The rhyme scheme, meter, *and* the subject of the phrases—which is not
exactly uniform throughout—suggest the structural division of the verse
into a three-phrase section followed by a two-phrase section. Bedi says
that the last two phrases polish up the meaning of the preceding text, but
that they are also somewhat self-contained (1973:165). Their meter may
be somewhat erratic. As for the first three phrases, taken as a unit they
closely resemble a mahia verse. For this reason, Bedi calls dhola a
modified form of mahia (1968:413). Using the preceding example as a
reference, one can see this modification in the shifting of phrases two and
three from the usual mahia order, along with the addition of the space-
filling "jīveṅ ḍholā." To this are appended two rhyming phrases.

The rhyme scheme and the performance phrasing of dhola are distinct from mahia. Dhola is also clearly distinguished from mahia by its different melody. In terms of musical content, dhola verses are commonly sung in the rags Pahāṛī, Bhairavī, and Tilang (Bedi 1973:166), and accompanied by the rhythmic meters of *kahirvā*, *luḍḍī*, and *jhummar*.

The fixed form of dhola has a few formulae with which it often begins. One of these has already appeared in a preceding example:

> *bāzār vikendā* _____.   In the market is sold _____.

This is the dhola counterpart to boli's *bārīṅ barsīṅ…* (above) in that one fills in the blank with an item that will rhyme with the following text. Another formula, of variable wording, introduces lover and beloved by positioning the female speaker in one location and her beloved someplace far away. It sets out a common theme of the genre, separation, as a matter of course—even if the subsequent phrases do not necessarily address that topic:

> *maiṅ ethe te māhī gujrāte*
> *asāṅ ratṛe palangh sajāte*
> *te chiṭṭe vachhauṇe ḍhā ḍholā*
> *chann khīr khāve*
> *baiṭhī utte būhe terā vekhāṅ paī rāh ve*
> (Thind 1996:163)

> I am here and mahi is in Gujrat.
> I have decorated a colorful bed,
> And, dhola, a white sheet have spread.
> May my darling eat rice pudding;
> I remain sitting at the door, watching the path.

> *maiṅ hissai tai māhīā parbat*
> *tahinḍe khūhe dā pāṇī sarbat,*
> *miṭṭhā piā lagdā, jī ḍholā.*
> (Bedi 1968:424)

> I am here and mahia is in the mountains.
> The water of your well is sherbet;
> It tastes ever sweet—Live on, dhola.

These formulae appear to more or less mark dhola verses, in distinction from mahia (with exception of the "Gujrati mahia").

Are mahia and dhola completely distinct? The existence of "Bazigar mahia" (see "The Bazigar People," this volume)—having the usual dhola

form—is one example of the crossing of terms and forms. It may be that mahia and dhola are or were once variant names for something that exists *in varying forms in different regions* of Punjab; the terms are not permanently fixed. Take as another instance the examples given by Bedi (1968:425), of what he calls "dhola of the Pothohar area," which are all structurally in the common mahia form—the last example above. Those verses all contain the word *ḍholā*. I believe it is unlikely, however, that a scholar with extensive knowledge of Punjabi folklore of the likes of Bedi would have labeled these pieces as "dhola" simply because they mention the word. He also gives dhola verses from the Dhan area. And although that region is considered to be a sister region to Pothohar and culturally very similar, these Dhan dholas are of the five-phrase (dhola) form.

If from such examples we harbor some confusion about the exact form of dhola verse we are in good company. In his short text about Punjabi folk tunes, G.S. Gill (1989:26-7) confuses matters by presenting three "dholas"—perhaps none of which really *are* in any strict sense. Two have an even-metered, couplet-style scheme, though they include the word *ḍholā*, and the other is a typical mahia. Thind has wrestled with the issue, too. He quotes Afzal Pravez (in *Ban Phulvāṛī*, 1973) as saying that dhola does not have a set structure, but rather it is a song that is addressed to the beloved—in other words, mentioning "dhola" is essentially enough. With this Thind disagrees (1996:159), as do I. Or, more to the point, though that emic classification may adhere, there is reason to think a formal classification is also possible.

From the preceding, then, one gets the sense that boli, mahia, and the fixed-form dhola occupy more or less the same world of verse. So far as they can be distinguished based on form and thematic content, they also share many qualities. I suggest grouping them as variations on a particular short-verse paradigm, and I tentatively propose that the variations correspond to regional differences. The lack of neat correspondence between terms and forms can be explained by these regional differences, for example "What we call mahia, our neighbors call dhola…but ours is slightly different, too."

The Jangli *Ḍholā*

Quite different from all the preceding genres is an open form of verse also called *ḍholā*. It may be referred to as the "Jangli dhola," with no disrespect, but rather to credit the people and the culture that have a historical claim to the genre. This culture was once particular to the *bār* areas toward the Southwest regions of Punjab, and the genre was largely confined to those areas; others have called it the "dhola of the bars." Because they are called the same name, observers have suffered some confusion about the difference between this and the previously discussed

dhola genre. In their regional historical context, however, they appear to have been more or less geographically distinct. Recall that the fixed-form dhola dwells upon such northern sites as Pothohar and Gujrat. While the fixed-form dhola has spread its handy form, the loose features of the Jangli dhola make it difficult to adapt as popularly circulated verse. Perhaps for these reasons the genre is almost completely unknown in the East Punjab. At the same time, Jangli dhola's open format appears to have allowed for a boundless expression within its native culture, lending the genre an air of profundity.

We may define the Jangli dhola structurally as an indefinite stream of rhyming couplets of variable length. An early reference to such an "open" form dhola can be found in O'Brien's *Multani Glossary* of 1903, which defines *ḍholā* as "poem in blank verse" (101). In describing the dholas of the Nili and Ravi bars, Shamsher indicated that they were of no fixed form and that their meters were of surprising contrast (1961:5). Dhola verses do keep rhyme, which comes at the end of every other line. And yet the lines (called *kaṛā*) may number from as few as five to as many as seventy or more. Lines with a shorter number of syllables may be filled out, in performance, with vocables (/ā/ or /o/) (Harjit Singh 1942:34). Leaving aside the lack of a rigid structure or meter, the repertoire of Jangli dhola coheres due to the use of cliché opening lines and commonalities in theme.

There exist several anthologies of dhola texts from which these dimensions of the genre can be observed. Important among these is Harjit Singh's *Naiṅ Jhanāṅ*, being an anthology of dholas (and other songs from the Sandal Bar) collected before Partition.[4] Being originally from district Ambala on the extreme eastern side of the Punjab province, the author encountered Jangli culture while attending school in Lahore. In addition, his father, who was born in the western Shekhupura district, was allegedly a fine dhola-singer (Sher 1954:5). Harjit Singh researched the material in the 1930s, and the text was published in 1942. Although Harjit Singh does not make an effort to categorize or analyze the dholas collected, I can identify in the range of thirty different formulaic lines. Later collections by Sher (1954) and Shamsher (1961) also provide ample examples. Following are some of the most common formulae.

kannāṅ nūṅ sohṇe bunde: Being the most common formula in Harjit Singh's anthology, some seventy verses with it are found, a good third of the total number. The phrase is found in such opening lines as the following.

> *kannāṅ nūṅ sohṇe bunde, sir te chhattiāṅ dīāṅ ḍhāṇīāṅ…*
> Beautiful pendants in the ears, on the head, bunches of plaits…

butt vaṇoṭiā: Another oft-repeated cliché, it dwells upon the graceful, even lonely form of a sapling of the *vaṇ* tree.

> *butt vaṇoṭiā, mere sajjaṇāṅ diāṅ lāiā…* (Harjit Singh 1942:75)
> Your form O sapling, my husband planted you…

kanguṇ bhanā ke: Less common, it appears to have been sometimes used, like the *bazār vikendā* formula, to introduce an incidental rhyming word.

> *kanguṇ bhanā ke, paī gharainī āṅ gīte…* (Harjit Singh 1942:93)
> Having broken my bangles, I am making: pebbles [a rhyming word]…

ghaṛ de ghāṛūā:

> *ghaṛ de ghāṛūā, mainūṅ ghaṛ de kaguṇ gagare…* (Harjit Singh 1942:89)
> Craft, O crafter, craft me bangles and brass pitchers…

From the preceding phrases one can gather that many dhola verses are romantic in nature, but that the expressions of romance are couched in everyday images. These images include numerous indices, especially, minor details of appearance or articles of clothing and adornment, as well as things of nature. Such indices would be found endearing for their very familiarity, and in that way they have great potential for generating feelings of nostalgia.

In Jangli dhola one also finds other, non-romantic themes. Recall that the fixed-form dhola largely represents the notion of a type of verse that addresses the beloved. By contrast, we see in the Jangli dhola a wider variety of themes, in keeping with the idea that it was a genre belonging to a cultural group that was capable of a broad range of expression. Indeed, sub-types of Jangli dhola can be identified, based on the specific themes explicated. The following types of Jangli dhola can be observed in the repertoire, and as culled from the categorizations of Sher (1965:286-296) and Sharib (as discussed in Thind 1996:161).

Ḍhol ṭurāū. This type focuses on the ubiquitous pain-of-separation (*vichhoṛā*) sentiment, in the usual context of a woman separated from her beloved.

> *merā vāṇḍhā ḍhol ṭurāū e, malū vatdā e rāh kashmīr dā.*
> *keḍī akaloṅ bhul gaī, namūnā koī nā liā likh tasvīr dā.*
> *hāl mere dā māharam koī nahīṅ, jo koī miliā kaṭṭū āpṇī bhīṛ da.*
> *jehaṛīāṅ bādashāhīāṅ de mar jānīṅ bādshāh, pichhoṅ mandā*

> *hāl vazīr dā.*
> *ot vele pesh koī nahīṅ jāndī, jadoṅ saudā jāhavī bhiṛ takdīr dā.*
> *gae jogī vat nā bahuṛe, hissā gae chhaḍ dunīāṅ de sīr dā.*
> *ik vārī jiundā eṅ te uharāṅ parat <u>kh</u>āṅ, vele giā ī langh akhīr dā.*
> (Sher 1954:40)

> My dhol is a traveler, he has taken the road to Kashmir.
> Oh how I'd foolishly forgotten, to make a print of his picture!
> I have no lover, for whomever I've met was in trouble.
> Like empires with dying emperors, after which the minister
>   suffers.
> At that time no one appears, when fate does not live up to the
>   bargain.
> The jogi went, not to return, leaving behind his share of the
>   world.
> If you yet live, just return once, for I am soon to reach my wit's
>   end.

Chhatte-bunde. This type of dhola is characterized by the abovementioned formula, *kannāṅ nūṅ sohṇe bunde*. It evokes a type of drop-shaped ear ornament, worn by young girls, called *bundā* (see Harjit Singh 1942:27; O'Brien 1903:53), as well as plaits of hair, indicative of a girl's unmarried status, called *chhatte*. In describing a female beloved as she is remembered, these songs touch upon various facets of the experience of love, such as separation, unfaithfulness, surprises, and disappointments.

> *kannāṅ nūṅ sohṇe bunde, sir te bodī jhul paī.*
> *ḍholā merā botal sharāb dā, vich shāhur de khal paī.*
> *ethe maiṅ na bhulī, age lakhūkhāṅ bhul gaī.*
> *jīndā vī vannāṅ tāṅ moṛ muhār nūṅ oharāṅ, vā fazalāṅ dī*
>   *vatanāṅ te ghul paī.*
> (Shamsher 1961:30)

> Beautiful pendants in the ears; on the head, a top-lock blows.
> My dhola is a bottle of liquor, standing there in the city.
> Here now I do not forget, though before there is much I forgot.
> If you're alive and about, then please come back; let the cool
>   wind of grace blow upon the land.

<u>Mystical</u>. In this type, the image of the revolving spinning wheel, *charkhā*, is used metaphorically. A Sufi sentiment, it likens a person's life and deeds to the wheel, which, eventually, will wear out.

ghūk ve charkhā, terā sāz parāiā,
maiṅ sutī paīāṅ, būhā tāk dā kahi kharakiā.
merā ḍhol sarmāū, ṭhihl ke pār darāvāṅ tūṅ āiā,
chummāṅ chā chūṇeṅ nāl—hāṅ—de lāiāṅ.
bodīāṅ dā sajaṇ o, merā dushmaṇ kahi baṇāiā.
(Shamsher 1961:20)

Whirl, O spinning wheel, your whirring sound is alien.
I've gone to sleep; what's that knocking on the door?
My bashful dhol, you've forded rivers and come home.
I kiss you, brushing aside your locks.
Oh my shaggy-haired beloved, why were you made my enemy?

Balladic. This type of dhola makes reference to the traditional tales, such as those told by the balladeers of Punjabi music. It is the tale of *Sassi-Punnun* that gets the most reference in Jangli dholas. Shamsher (1961) reproduces some twenty-seven dholas that make mention of Sassi and these are quite long, most being of twenty to forty lines; Sher (1954) reproduces ten such dholas. Many of the *Sassi* dholas begin with a line that mentions Bhambor, the iconic city from the tale. Others tip their hand in the starting line, *maiṅ gaī sang baloch de*, "I went among the community of the Baloch." Shamsher's collection also contains dholas related to the tale of *Hir*, which present most episodes of the tale. According to Sher, the Sansi used to sing a version of the *Mirza-Sahiban* tale in dhola form that was composed by the poet Mian Ghulam Ali Khuman (1954:292). In one of Sher's texts (1954) we find twenty-three different *Mirza*-related verses.

Historical. Historical dholas mention the specific names of once-living people. Notably, in the case of this type of dhola, the author of the composition is usually known (Sharib 1985:162). Being the proverbial "village newspaper" of the past, such dholas could be quite long; one included by Shamsher is a whopping seventy-three lines long. Some of these dholas concern particular "heroes"—mainly warriors—who met their deaths. The scope of these biographical verses also includes brave personas, *rāṭh*, among whom may be included bandits or raiders (*ḍākū*) (Harjit Singh 1942:34), who were appreciated in late 19th century Western Punjab like Robin Hood figures. For example, one Nizam Luhar from Lahore district was the leader of a gang of twelve bandits, some of which are immortalized in dholas. After the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the deeds of freedom fighter Ahmad Khan Kharal were similarly immortalized (Mirza 2002). Indeed, dholas such as these were not about the distant past, but rather current events of the time when they were being written. The dhola genre remained relevant as social commentary

to some rural Western Punjabis up through Independence. S.T. Mirza (2002) notes that around the time that the question of Pakistan as an independent nation was being decided, poets were creating dholas and influencing public opinion.[5]

One feature many historical dholas have in common is an opening formula including *kāl bulendī*, "Kal is calling…" or *nārd uṭhiā*, "Nard sprung up…" The reference is to two sages of Hindu mythology, Kal and Nard. Kal is a goddess of war who generates feelings of hatred between people, while the god Nard is a troublemaker who divides people through backbiting. This style of dhola is also called *vaḍḍh phaṭ* ("cut and sever") (Sher 1954:52), presumably in reference to this division. Some Punjabi clans have a history of Hatfield-McCoy type feuds, and a number of these well-known clans and their dramas are documented in dholas.

Religious. Religious-themed dholas include those that praise the Divine and Sufi saints. They generally begin by taking the name of Allah. We may also include among the religious dholas those that relate events in the lives of Islamic figures Yusuf and Hussain.

Humorous. These dholas, fewer in number, are witty, sarcastic, or funny.

Animals. The animals included in these are primarily the buffalo (*majjh*) and the horse.

A bit can be gathered about the manner of performing the Jangli dhola. The image of the dhola performer is both dramatic and romantic. His pose involves standing, with a hand placed over one ear in the classic gesture of an Old World epic singer.[6] He begins with a long, sustained tone on a vocable, called *hek*. The singing that follows, in Shamsher's description, seems "*like some dirge is being wailed*," or as if one is hearing "*some lass' suffering longings*" (1961:5). By comparison, the fixed-form dhola of Pothohar and other northern areas carries a genteel air, and one can perform it seated. While the fixed-form dhola is often set to rhythmic and melodic accompaniment, the boundless and passionately irregular Jangli dhola is performed without instruments.

The style of Jangli dhola performance may be roughly described. I'jaz (1978:10) offers a categorization of dhola singing styles. These are:
1. *ravānī* - the most common style, in which the last lines of the verse are sung in an especially high voice;
2. *ragī* - also goes up high, and at the end is an extremely long melisma;
3. *utlā pūr* - the style that is used by dhola-reciters in competition, and which communicates a "special pain."

Unfortunately this is all the descriptive detail there is from an expert. We learn additionally from Sher that the clear, sustained, high tone of dhola recitation is called *maroṛī deṇā* ("twisting," "contorting") (1954:14). Unfortunately, Jangli dhola performers and performances are exceedingly rare in today's East Punjab (where I have done most of my contemporary research), so I am unable to add much to the description. Only one performance example is in my possession—certainly one of very few video recordings of dhola in East Punjab. The dhola-reciters in this performance (Panjab Sangit Natak Akadami 1995), Pathana Ram and Bhana Ram, were both of very advanced age, and their recitation skills had obviously declined. Their style of recitation alternated between spoken segments and flat, intoned sections. The pitch contour began on the tonic, with a move to a half-step above, and then back to the tonic at the end of every line.

In terms of performance context, dhola recitation is considered entertainment and could therefore be performed in the usual customary Punjabi outlets as such. People of the bars invited dhola-reciters to perform at weddings (Sher 1954:14). Reciters also performed in impromptu arenas at fairs (Shamsher 1961:xii; Harkirat Singh 1995:119) and on other special occasions (Harjit Singh 1942:33). In addition, camel-men, called *ḍakkhaṇā* (sng.), sang dholas. As they used to transport goods by night in caravans, they took turns singing dholas to help stay awake. Related to this fact, Harkirat Singh states that in the past dhola was also called *ḍakkhaṇā* (Harkirat Singh 1995:119). Singers of dholas are called *ḍholaī* or simply *sāir*, "folk poet." They are all men and it is to men that they sing—despite the often feminine tone of the message in the poetry (Satyarthi, in Harjit Singh 1942:14).

Summary

I have distinguished several verse forms of relevance. In contrast, yet likely related, to the *bolī* (*ṭappā*) form that is typical of Eastern Punjab, the fixed-structure forms of *māhīā* and *ḍholā* are characteristic of Western Punjab's short verse types. The five-line "fixed-form" dhola may be analyzed as a modified version of the three-line mahia. Both commonly evoke themes of separation from and longing for the beloved, and as such they both often use the epithets *mahīā* and *ḍholā* in their language. These forms have enjoyed widespread popularity in Western Punjab and, being easily adapted as light entertainment songs, are now also quite common in Eastern Punjab. Regional and cultural variety is reflected in such forms as the "Gujrati mahia," the four-line mahia, and even the six-line "Bazigar mahia." So while the information and analysis I have attempted to provide allows us to distinguish these genres at some level, we must also remain loose with them, to allow for local, emic

classifications. This also reminds us that pre-modern Punjab was a land with many regional differences, however jumbled they became by Partition and minimized by prescriptive national programs of late.

In addition to the fixed-structure genres, there is quite a different genre that can be called the "Jangli dhola." A form of variable length and meter, it might be considered to have been the premier form of vernacular verse in the *bār* areas and of the Jangli people. As such, its themes were varied, though one may conjecture that the genre received its name due to the prevalent sentiment of longing that is found in many of its lyrics and in its dramatic presentational style.

This article represents only an analysis of available secondary sources and a few live performances. Its main intent has been to cull those sources, available only in Punjabi, Urdu, and Hindi, in order to provide an English overview. While not claiming to be an expert on any of these genres, nonetheless I have attempted to create a critical introduction to them. My hope is that this introduction may suggest approaches for further research that can do justice to the variety of Punjabi song forms.

Notes

[1] Note also the nomenclature of Satyarthi, who calls these *akahirīāṅ bolīāṅ* ("single bolis") (1936:72).

[2] Indeed, in Punjabi one does not say *bolīāṅ gāuṇā* (lit. "to sing bolis"), but rather *bolīāṅ pāuṇā*—to "put" or "realize a performance of" bolis.

[3] The issue is in the definition of a "line." Nayyar used the latter scheme when he defined mahia as, "a love song comprising stanzas of two rhyming lines, the first shorter than the second" (2000:771). Kohli (1944:36) represents the form as half a line followed by one line.

[4] By Sher's (1954:5) count the text contains a total of 187 dhola verses.

[5] At least through the 1980s, some Pakistani poets continued to compose in the open dhola form. Sharib (1985) and Asad (1989) have edited volumes collecting many of such "modern" dholas. These, however, are mostly religious in theme.

[6] One may compare the mode of expression and presentation of Jangli dhola to that of the *khaṛī birahā,* genre of "field hollers" in Uttar Pradesh (Henry 1988:150-1; 2001:106). The word *birahā* suggests some shared connection in the sentiment of pain-of-separation, and the fact that *khaṛī birahā* is ascribed to herdsmen suggests a parallel to the pastoral Jangli.

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Hereditary Musician Groups
of Pakistani Punjab

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With notable exceptions, professional musicians in Pakistani Punjab have come from exclusive, hereditary groups. The ubiquitous term *mīrāsī* has been used by the cultural elite and scholars to refer to many among these types of musicians. The application of the term has been inconsistent, and it often disregards how the musicians view themselves. However, one must come to terms with it in order to grasp the social configurations of Punjabi professional musicians. With that in mind, this article critiques the literature on Mirasis to demonstrate the diverse and often confusing ways these musicians have been categorized. It will then draw on field data to explore the multiple ways which musicians, non-musicians, and ethnographers define the professional musicians of West Punjab.

A distinctive feature of Pakistani Punjabi musical culture is the almost exclusively hereditary nature of musicianship. Unlike professional musicians of Europe and North America who choose their occupation, the roles of Pakistani Punjabi musicians are ascribed from birth: these people are born into families of occupational specialists whose ancestors have been musicians for centuries. Non-musicians and the few non-hereditary musicians in Pakistan use the pejorative term *mīrāsī* to refer to all hereditary musicians. The widespread use of such a negatively perceived rubric amply demonstrates the low social status of professional musicians in Pakistani Punjab, but more importantly it also indicates a considerable ignorance of the many diverse subgroups of musicians who have a wide range of sociomusical identities and roles.

My aim here is to explore and clarify the polysemy of the term *mīrāsī* to show how hereditary musician groups in Pakistani Punjab differ greatly depending on kinship practices, musical sophistication, and particular sociomusical contexts. Ultimately, I am interested in how the term *mīrāsī* pertains to the social configuration of *tablā*-players and other hereditary musicians that I worked with in Lahore, Islamabad/Rawalpindi, and Peshawar in the years 1994-96, and 1999.

Literature on the Mirasis

Much has been written about the Mirasi "caste" of musicians (Bor 1986-87; Kippen 1988; Neuman 1990), and yet the term does not seem to have been used in ethnographic and musical treatises until the major British Orientalist studies of the Indian caste system of the late 19th century. The following review and comparison of four ethnographic sources will demonstrate the diverse and often confusing ways the term *mīrāsī* has been used in scholarly discourse.

British Orientalist Classification: H. A. Rose

The most comprehensive study of caste in pre-1947 Punjab is H.A. Rose's *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province*. Based on the census reports for the Punjab by D. Ibbetson in 1881 and by E. MacLagan in 1892, Rose's massive three-volume work was published over a ten year period early in the 20th century.[1] From the outset of his section on the Mirasis of Punjab, Rose admits the complexity of the situation in defining this ostensible caste:

> The Mírási form one of those large heterogeneous
> bodies, varying in status, occupation and doubtless in
> origin as well, which are conventionally called castes
> in the Punjab, though they correspond to no definition,
> actual or potential, of the term 'caste.' (Rose 1970:105)

According to Rose, the definition of *mīrāsī* is simply "genealogist." This is related to the etymology of the term, *mīrās*, ("inheritance" in Arabic), which refers to the primary occupational specialization of the Mirasi as low-status hereditary genealogists for higher-ranking castes. Rose cites directly from the Gujrat Settlement Report of 1865 for the essential definition:

> The duties of the Mírásis or village bards are as
> follows: To get by heart, and to be able to repeat from
> memory offhand, the pedigrees of the heads of the
> families within the tribe. They were always appealed to
> in former times in the case of any dispute about
> hereditary property. They have to attend upon the
> guests of their masters. The agricultural classes keep no
> household servants but these, and would consider it
> *infra dig*. to wait upon their own guests. They have to
> accompany their masters on visits of condolence or
> congratulations, they summon relations from far and

> near, they have to accompany the daughter going to her father-in-law's house, or the son's wife to visit her paternal home. (Rose 1970:105)

That 1865 description goes into further detail concerning the social role and rituals of the Mirasi; however, suffice it to say, this portrait shows them to be low status service professionals who kept their patrons' most important oral knowledge. The actual social status of a Mirasi depended largely on the status of the patron caste for which he worked. Rose quotes from Ibbetson in this regard:

> Like all the client or parasite classes the Mírási's position varies with that of his patron, and a Mírási permanently attached to a Rájput clan and beneficed by it, ranks higher than one who is merely a strolling player or casual attendant at a Jáṭ wedding. Even the outcast tribes have their Mírásis who, though they do not eat with their patrons and merely render them professional service, are considered impure by the Mírásis of the higher castes. (Rose 1970:106)

The second defining feature of the Mirasis mentioned by Rose concerns their role as public performers of music. Again, Rose cites Ibbetson extensively because the latter, rather than dealing with music and genealogical recitation as polarized notions, emphasized the combination of music and genealogy in the performances of the Mirasis:

> ...the Mírási is more than a genealogist; he is also a musician and minstrel; and most of the men who play the musical instruments of the Punjab are either Mírásis, Jogís or *faqírs*. The social position of the Mirasi, as of all minstrel castes, is exceedingly low, but he attends at weddings and on similar occasions to recite genealogies. (Rose 1970:106)

The remainder of Rose's discussion of the Mirasi caste is a description of the bewildering array of Mirasi subgroups, forcing one to wonder if the term itself was and still is too broadly applied to be of any worth. Figure 1 outlines the subgroups of Mirasis as mentioned by Rose as they pertain to music in the Punjab and adjacent regions such as Rajasthan.

Before I discuss some of my conclusions based on the extensive list of Mirasi groups in this figure, I should point out some of the inherent limitations in Rose's approach. His discussion of each group was quite

short—usually two sentences to one paragraph—and much of the information is inconsistent and incomplete. The patron groups are frequently absent from the descriptions, and Rose did not definitively identify the sectarian identities and musical functions of each group. One can assume that all the groups discussed in the Mirasi section had some type of musical function combined with a genealogical function in the service of a higher-caste group. Rose obtained much of his ethnographic data from Ibbetson's works on Punjabi castes, but it is not clear how this information was obtained, nor by whom. Furthermore, some of the information appears to be factually incorrect, at least from a contemporary viewpoint: Rose's description of the *rabāb* (i.e. a lute) is confused with a *daf* (i.e. a frame drum) in group 22 (1970:112); and the religious designation of *Sikh* for the Muslim Rababi subgroup 19 appears strange (1970:111). Rose's accuracy in other spheres is thus called into question, but on a general level one can see similarities between his documentation and some contemporary ethnographic sources for the Punjab and its adjacent areas. Despite the traumatic upheaval following Partition, some social continuity appears to have been maintained.

According to a series of ethnographic studies conducted by Indian anthropologists fror the Anthropological Survey of India (ASI) from 1985 to 1992, there are two striking similarities with Rose's classifications. Firstly, the *ḍholī* group of Jaipur (21) is probably the same group, or are closely related to the *ḍholī*s mentioned in the ASI of Rajasthan (Singh 1998:343-346). Natavar also discusses this group as being both *kathak* dancers and performers of the *ḍhol* drum (1997:146-156). Secondly, the Dum of Rohtak (1) are most likely the same group discussed in the ASI of Haryana (Singh, Sharma, and Bhatia 1994:159-161).

One of the obvious conclusions to be drawn from Rose's list of Mirasi subgroups is that the term *mīrāsī* obfuscates the diversity found among musicians and public performers of various types in the Punjab. Although the term denotes a distinction between musicians and non-musicians in Punjabi society at large, it does little to illuminate the various degrees of stratification, hierarchy, and exclusivity that musician groups identify and practice among themselves. As seen in groups 13 and 18, even the Mirasis and Dharis had their own Mirasis.

To reiterate, social status distinctions between Mirasi groups depended largely on the status of their patron groups, their own kinship practices, and the supposed origin and caste background of the Mirasi group in question. Thus, there were higher ranking Mirasi such as the Rai Mirasi (group 4*)* who were literate, whose patrons were Brahmans, and who themselves claimed to have had Brahman ancestors that converted to Islam. In the case of the Dhari community (group 8), endogamy was not practiced, unlike groups 15 and 39, and yet the Dharis refrained from

Fig. 1. H.A. Rose's classification of Mirasi subgroups of Punjab and adjacent areas. (A blank cell is information that was not provided by Rose.)

	Client Group	Area	Patron Groups	Musical Instruments, Sociomusical Context and Additional Information	Religious Commmunity
1	*Ḍúm*	Rohtak	Dhang	*sárangi, tabla*; accompany dancing girls p. 106	Hindu (i.e. not "Muslim")
2	*Langá*	Dera Ghazi Khan	Baloch; used to accompany their masters in war	*saranda*; Muslim epic song p. 107	
3	*Langá* or *Mírási*	Multan	Daudpotra	not mentioned p. 107	
4	*Rai Mírási*	Hoshiarpur, Lahore	Jat of Jind	not mentioned, poets, educated, "teaches boys Hindi accounts like a *pádha*" p. 109	Muslim, but claim Brahman descent.
5	*Mír Mírási*			panegyrists, recite in Punjabi p. 109	
6	*Mír Mírási*	Ludhiana		panegyrists, recite eulogies in Persian and Arabic p. 109	
7	*Dhádhi*	Ludhiana, Jind		*dhádh*, epic song p. 109-10	Muslim, endogamous
8	*Dhádhi*	Mandi		*dhádh (?)*, epic song; "women-folk do not sing and dance before the ladies of their patrons, like other *Mírási* women" p. 110	Muslim, not endogamous; but will not marry with lower castes.
9	*Dhádhi*	Loharu	Sheoran Jat	Also cultivate, and work as laborers during harvest time. p. 110	Muslim
10	*Dúth*	Bikaner	Punia Jat	p. 110	Muslim
11	*Palna*	Shaikhawati of Jaipur	Jat (?)	p. 110	Muslim
12	*Babar*	Shaikhawati of Jaipur	Rajput (?)	p. 110	Muslim
13	*Bhatia*		Dhádhi	p. 110	

Fig. 1 continued.

	Client Group	Area	Patron Groups	Musical Instruments, Sociomusical Context, and Additional Information	Religious Commmunity
14	*Kaláwant*		Rajputs	*tambourine*, "...Mírásis possessed of skill (*kala*)...They especially affect the *dhurpat* mode in music; the famous Tán Sen...was a member of this group" p. 110	Muslim
15	*Karhála* or *Khariála*			*sárangi, tabla*; story-tellers	"Rank below the real Mírásis because their ancestors married women of other castes; Other Mírásis do not marry with them." p. 110-111
16	*Karhái*	Gurgaon		epic singers p. 111	
17	*Kumáchi*		Brahman	p. 111	
18	*Mír Mangs*		Mirasi	p. 111	
19	*Rabábi*			p. 111	Sikhs; Endogamous
20	*Rabábi*	Bikaner		*rabáb* p. 112	
21	*Dholi*	Jaipur		p. 112	
22	*Rabábi*	Rohtak		"They used to play the *rabáb*, also called *daf* or *dáira*, the only instrument permitted to Muhammadans, and then only on condition that it is played without the *jháng*..." p. 112	Muslim
23	*Bhagtia*			"...a mimic who is said to be known in Lucknow as a Kashmíri." p. 112	
24	*Bhanwáyia*			"...perform various feats of juggling on a brass plate. They also sing and dance." p. 112	
25	*Cháran*			"...the foot-man, messenger or envoy of Rájputána." p. 112	
26	*Dafzan*			"...women of the *Dhádhi* class, who sing in a circle" p. 112	

Fig. 1 continued.

	Client Group	Area	Patron Groups	Musical Instruments, Sociomusical Context and Additional Information	Religious Commmunity
27	*Dafáli*			"…play on the *dafri* or small drum and sing songs in praise of holy men." p. 112	
28	*Hurkia*			"…play the *hurak*, while their women, in gay apparel, clap hands." p. 112	
29	*Kalál*		Kumhar	"Sometimes they do potters' work…" p. 112	
30	*Khamru*			"…play the *tabla*, a kind of drum or rather tambourine with a single skin." p. 112	
31	*Kanjri*			p. 112	
32	*Kar Kabit*			"…singers of war-songs, but the term is said to be a modern one." p. 112	
33	*Kateroria*			"…sing songs in praise of Krishna and are said to wear the sacred thread." p. 112	Hindu
34	*Kathak*			"…teach singing and dancing to prostitutes." p. 112	Hindu
35	*Shrota or Sota Hathái*		Jat	p. 112	
36	*Gopa*			*tambourine* p. 112	Muslim, endogamous
37	*Safurda, Sipardai*			"…play *tabla* and *sarangi*… They too teach dancing girls. They rank high, but are classed below the singers. Like the Kaláwant they are Muhammadans." p. 112	Muslim
38	*Tatua*			"…sing and dance, playing on the *pakhawaj* and *rabáb*." p. 112	
39	*Sewak or Qawwál*	Multan	Quraishi	*guitar* p. 117	Muslim, Sufi "They too claim to be descendants of the Prophet, yet they intermarry with the low-caste Cháran."
40	*Qawwál*	Dera Ghazi Khan		"…especially employed as singers at shrines at the *urs* or other occasions, acting as *Mirásis* to the saint of the shrine and being paid by him or his followers…Tan Husain is regarded as their Pir and teacher in the art of singing." p. 119	
41	*Mirási*	Dera Ghazi Khan		*naqára, dhol, sharná*	Shia Muslim

Fig. 1 continued.

	Client Group	Area	Patron Groups	Musical Instruments, Sociomusical Context and Additional Information	Religious Commmunity
42	*Pirain or Piráhin*	Mianwali		"The Piráhin is a Mirási who affects Pír Lálanwála or Sakhi Sarwar and begs in their name. Vows are made to the Pírs for male issue and gifts made to the Pirahin accordingly. He carries a drum to which are fastened wisps of cotton offered by women of all creeds. The Piráhin would appear to be the Bharai of the rest of the Punjab." p. 119	
43	*Mirási or Ḍúm*	Mianwali		"The Mirási or Ḍúm is a drummer too, but he waits upon guests at weddings and funerals, and is also employed as a confidential messenger. His earnings vary with his patrons' prosperity." p. 119	
44	*Kaláwant*	Mianwali		"...a musician, more skilled than the *Mirási.*" p. 119	
45	*Sarodi*	Mianwali		"resembles [the Kaláwant] but he plays on the *rabáb* or *sarod* and performs also as a tumbler" p. 119	
46	*Ḍháḍhi*	Mianwali		"a genealogist or story teller...not attached to any particular family or tribe." p. 119	
47	*Bhánd*	Mianwali			
48	*Naqárchis*	Mianwali		"...are Mirásis who play the *naqára* or big drum at weddings and at the tombs of Muhammadan saints." p. 111	
49	*Mirdaṇgi -ia*			"...a player of the *mirdang.*" p. 119	Not listed in the Mirasi section.
50	*Mutrab or Mutrib*		Sayyid and Shaikh	"...a musician, a class of Mírásis or a synonym for that name. The Mutrib was the principal of the castes which the Thags would not kill. In Saháranpur (United Provinces) the Mutrib is described as the highest class of Mirási-Dums; it can only take alms from Sayyids and Shaikhs. They sing at weddings and other festivities, recounting the deeds of Hasan, Husain and Ali." p. 138.	Not listed in the Mirasi section.

forging affinal ties with members of lower castes in order not to lower their own social status and rank.

As far as the musical information is concerned, much of what Rose documented is sketchy. Nonetheless, it can be assumed, based on Rose's essential definition of the Mirasi caste, that most, if not all the groups, engaged in some type of public performance genre that ultimately lowered their social status in the wider social scheme. Many of the groups also engaged in non-musical or non-performative activity such as harvest cultivation.

Of particular interest are the groups that might have a direct relation to the classical musicians of the contemporary Punjab. Several groups appear to have specialized in playing the *sārangī* (bowed fiddle) and tabla, instruments traditionally associated with the accompaniment of "dancing girls" or "nautch" girls; "nautch" (from the Hindi, *nāch*, meaning "dance") ensembles, or "parties" were pervasive throughout India in the 18th and 19th centuries (Bor 1986-87; Kippen 2000). The main difficulty lies in assessing precisely which groups were the likely sources from which classical musicians of that period were recruited, or indeed from which emerged later generations of classical musicians. Groups 14, 44 (Kalawant), 37 (Safurda/Sipardai), 40 (Qawwal), and 45 (Sarodi) are most likely the musician groups that had at least a partial if not fully-fledged involvement in art music contexts. These groups, with the exception of 40, were singled out by Rose for their musical competence; and from these, it appears that 14 and 44 were probably classical singers who would have been employed in the feudal courts. Strangely, Rose mentions that they played the *tambourine*, which of course, might have been another information blunder, or else is a reference to the use of the *daf* frame drum prevalent in earlier iconographic sources—a practice that has long been discontinued. Rose's direct reference to the apical ancestor of classical singers, Tan Sen, and the genre "dhurpat" (i.e., *dhrupad*) is an indication that the dhrupad genre was prevalent in the Punjab during this time.[2] Unfortunately, there is no mention of the marriage and kinship practices of group 44. However, group 37 (Safurda/Sipardai) are compared to them: the words "They too teach dancing girls. They rank high, but are classed below the singers" seem to suggest that perhaps group 44 also maintained a close association with female professional dancers/entertainers.

A larger and more relevant question for this research concerns possible links between the groups mentioned by Rose and those appearing in contemporary studies of Pakistani Punjabi musicians. A review of ethnographies provided by Adam Nayyar and Wayne McClintock will explore this topic.

Contemporary Ethnography of Punjabi Mirasi Groups: Adam Nayyar

One of the few studies of Pakistani Punjabi musicians to date is by Adam Nayyar, who was an anthropologist and associate director of the Institute for Folk Heritage, Lok Virsa, in Islamabad. Published in the *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music: South Asia* (2000), Nayyar's entry stands as an important source for information on Pakistani Punjabi music and musicians because of his extensive association and research with hereditary musicians of his native land.

Nayyar begins by mentioning the "traumatic" events of Partition. He claims that hundreds of Muslim musicians migrated from East to West (Pakistani) Punjab: indeed, "most of the classical musicians in the eastern half migrated to West Punjab." He asserts that these migrants from the East "had traditionally been performers of Sikh religious music…The family of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, for example, was among them" (Nayyar 2000:762).

While it is widely known that many Muslim musicians were employed in gurdwaras to perform Sikh religious music, and that these musicians comprised a separate, endogamous social group called *rabābī*s (see groups 19, 20, 22) they certainly were not the only Muslim musicians of Eastern Punjab. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan came from a lineage of *qawwāl*s, not *rabābī*s. Furthermore, almost all of the classical musicians of Punjab were Muslim, and most of them were located throughout Eastern Punjab, with the cities of Lahore and Qasur remaining as the main Western Punjabi centers of art music. Notable vocalists of Eastern Punjab who enjoyed feudal patronage included the <u>khay</u>*āl* singers Amanat Ali and Fateh Ali Khan of Patiala, the *dhrupad* singer father of Mohammad Afzal and Mohammad Hafiz Khan, and the internationally renowned Salamat Ali and Nazakar Ali Khan of Sham Chaurasi.

Concerning the general discussion of professional musicians in contemporary Pakistani Punjab, Nayyar observes that "Professional musicians belong to one of several endogamous groups that are ranked hierarchically according to their performance context and sophistication of repertoire" (2000:763). These factors of performance context and repertoire are very important, as was seen to some extent in the H.A. Rose ranking of musicians. I will later explore this issue in greater depth in my own discussion of the informants of my fieldwork in 1994-96.

The most important dimension of Nayyar's article is his distinction between two major groups of hereditary musicians: Mirasi and non-Mirasi. He makes a further breakdown within the Mirasi group between urban classical music specialists such as the Ghazalgoh, Gavvaya, and Sazindah and less sophisticated Mirasi subgroups such as Bhand*,* Ras Dhariya, and Naqqal. Thus, in this instance, Nayyar clears up the main

deficiency of the Rose classification and the general colloquial usage of the term *mīrāsī* that lumps all musicians together as one homogenous group.

In another sense, Nayyar's description of Mirasi appears to be very similar to earlier accounts of this musician group as fulfilling the role of musician-genealogists for higher ranking castes. Nayyar mentions the role of memorizing and reciting the genealogies of patrons who range from "wealthy rural families" to "common peasantry" (2000:764). He also identifies other characteristic features such as Mirasi's quick wit and the special argot they use in the presence of their patrons.[3] Yet, one of the problems with Nayyar's description of Mirasi social traits is that he does not specify which of its sub-groups are genealogists. Later, in his description of the Qawwal sub-group, Nayyar mentions that they "no longer work as genealogists, unlike the main stream Mīrāsī musicians" (2000:765). "Main stream" is never clearly defined. One might assume from this that all categories except for Qawwals perform genealogical services for a patron group. This would seem highly unlikely, for reasons to be discussed next in my review of the ethnography by McClintock.

Listed in figures 2 and 3 are Nayyar's categories of musicians of the West Punjab. Notably, there are few parallels with the H.A. Rose classification of Mirasi and non-Mirasi subgroups. The obvious matches appear to be groups 39, 40 Qawwal (Rose) with 54 Qawwal (Nayyar); and groups 7, 8, 9, 46, Dhadhi (Rose) with 65 Dastangoh (Nayyar). Group 44, Kalawant (Rose) is similar to group 55, Gavvaya (Nayyar) and group 37, Safurda/Sipardai (Rose) might be a match for group 57, Sazindah (Nayyar), although the latter category more readily fits group 62, Chatu/Kanjar (Nayyar), i.e., male musical accompanists of dancers-prostitutes.

Fig. 2. A. Nayyar's Mirasi subgroups of Pakistani Punjab

	Mirasi Group	Patron Group	Musical Instruments and Genres	Sociomusical Context and Additional Information
51	*Mīrāsī*	Wealthy rural families and common peasantry	unclear; general introduction does not specify group, instruments or genres pp. 762-65	Villages.
52	*Bhāṇḍ* (*Nakkāl*)	Villagers/urbanites	"...large tan leather clapper"; "buffoonery, humour" p. 765	Villages and cities.
53	*Rās Dhāria*	Villagers	*cimṭā* (metal tongs); drama to folktales p. 765	Villages.
54	*Qawwāl*	Religious officials at Sufi shrines	harmonium (pump organ), *āṭe-vālā tabla* (*dāyāṅ* and wooden *bāyāṅ* with flour paste); Sufi devotional songs pp. 765-66	Sufi shrines.
55	*Ghazalgoh*	Bourgeoisie and urban cultural /economic elites	semi-classical vocal music; sung poetic genres p. 766	Cities.
56	*Gavayyā*	Bourgeoisie and urban cultural /economic elites	accompanying instruments (i.e. sarangi, harmonium, tabla); classical vocal music (i.e. *khayāl*, *dhrupad*) p. 766	Cities.
57	*Sāzindā*	Bourgeoisie and urban cultural /economic elites	accompanists of classical and semi-classical music p. 766	Cities.

Fig. 3. A. Nayyar's Non-Mirasi musician subgroups of Pakistani Punjab

	Non-Mirasi Group	Patron Group	Musical Instruments and Genres	Sociomusical Context and Additional Information
58	*Bhirāīn*	Villagers	*ḍhol*; marriage, festival harvest music pp. 766-69	Villages. Agricultural labourer
59	*Perna*	Villagers	*gaṛvi* (small brass milk pot) p. 769	Villages. Peripatetic group. Casual prostitution
60	*Qalandar*	Villagers	*baghalbīn* (bagpipe) and *ḍholak* p. 769	Villages. Peripatetic group. Animal trainers.
61	*Putlivālā*	Villagers	reed whistle, *ḍholak*; puppeteers p. 769	Villages. Seminomadic
62	*Chatu / Kanjri*		accompanying instruments: harmonium, *tabla*; professional, "exotic" dancers p. 769	Cities. "...professional, endogamous prostitute-and-pimp groups operating out of brothels." Accompanied by Sapardai.
63	*Sāīn* and *faqīr*		*cimṭā, king/iktār (plucked lute)*; devotional songs pp. 769-70	Villages/cities. Sufi shrines
64	*Naᶜt Khwān* (both Mirasi and non-Mirasi)		Unaccompanied praise songs of the Prophet. pp. 770	Unclear. "They can be from any group, including the Mīrāsī."
65	*Dāstāngoh (Ṭāḍī Dāstāngoh)*		*ṭad (pressure drum), joṛi (double flute), king, choṭī sāraṇgī (simple bowed fiddle)*, "Ballads, romances, and war tales." p. 770	Unclear. "[they] do not suffer the social stigma of the Mīrāsī and may belong to any ethnic group. They may also own land, which is unheard of for a Mīrāsī."
66	*Khusrā*	Urbanites.	Male circumcision ceremonies. pp. 770-71	Male circumcision ceremonies. "Eunuchs, hermaphrodites, and male transsexual entertainers dressing and living as women"

Contemporary Ethnography of Punjabi Mirasi Groups: Wayne McClintock

The distinctive feature of Wayne McClintock's ethnography of Mirasi musicians of Pakistani Punjab is that his informants appear to be a separate group from the so-called Mirasis that I worked with in Lahore who specialized in urban art music. McClintock's study was based on four years' research in the 1980s among Mirasi groups living on the outskirts of Lahore and in neighboring villages. In terms of general lifestyle, kinship practices, and *birādarī* (clan or brotherhood) structure, McClintock's Mirasis were the same as other Punjabi groups from the "urban and rural poor" (McClintock 1991:8).

His informants engaged in "semi-nomadic behavior…Many of them live in tent-like dwellings and squat on vacant pieces of publicly or privately owned land" (ibid.). My informants, on the other hand, probably migrated to urban centers at least two generations ago or prior to Partition or both. The most important difference was that McClintock's informants were indeed musician-genealogists. Yet, McClintock discussed in detail the fact that his informants had been abandoning their traditional genealogist occupations for non-traditional forms of employment over the past fifty years. Figure 4 lists both the traditional and non-traditional occupations that McClintock mentions. While there are still Mirasis who reside in the rural, village context and work for their patrons, many have migrated to cities.

> While in many rural villages of the Punjab the Mirasis continue to practice their traditional role of entertainers and genealogists, there has been a general weakening of their traditional economic and social relationships with their patron castes. During the 1960s technological innovations in farming practices, and changes in the land tenure system, transformed the rural economy. Many peasant farmers lost the small amount of land they had been cultivating and were forced to migrate to the towns and cities. This process accelerated the destruction of the traditional. (McClintock 1991:17)

As McClintock has noted from his study of British census reports of the Punjab for 1911 and 1931, the traditional work of the Mirasi as musician-genealogists had declined considerably:

> While in 1911 eighty-two per cent of the workforce had been engaged in these occupations, by 1931 this

proportion had fallen to sixty eight percent. This shift away from the traditional occupations was accompanied by increasing numbers of Mirasis being employed in agriculture, trade, and the arts and professions…Nonetheless this trend for the Mirasis to seek employment outside their traditional occupations was not a new phenomenon. Seventy years before the 1931 census the author of the Gujrat settlement report noted that: "They [the Mirasis] are now taking to cultivation but, being tenants at will, they make little money out of it, some have educated themselves and obtained service." (McClintock 1991:13)

Fig. 4. McClintock's occupations of Mirasi groups of outer Lahore

	Traditional Occupations		Non-Traditional Occupations
67	*Bhand* (comedian) with instrument: *chmota* (leather clapper)	71	Tenant Farmer and Agricultural Labourer
68	Musicians and Singers with instruments: harmonium, *ḍholak*, tabla and *chimtā*	72	Sevicemen
69	Dancer (young males, rarely girls/women)	73	Policemen
70	Genealogist	74	Construction Labourer
		75	Hawker
		76	Carrier
		77	Fruit seller
		78	*Dunga vechanalla* (Livestock trader)
		79	Scavenger
		80	*Munganalla* (beggar)

Contrary to Nayyar's claim that Mirasis "…would not deign to do any professional work other than music" (2000:768), McClintock states that they were employed as unskilled agricultural laborers and construction workers (1991:35-36). Also in contrast to Nayyar is McClintock's claim that some Mirasis are landowners whereas Nayyar writes that it is "unheard of" (2000:770).

Perhaps the most important feature of McClintock's ethnography is the absence of a connection between Mirasis and urban art music. Other

than the harmonium and tabla, not one of the instruments, musical genres, and sociomusical contexts of urban art music is mentioned as a Mirasi specialization. It is possible that McClintock was unaware of such obvious musical connections. This is striking given that many urban art music Mirasis were employed at the Lahore radio station, and he would have noted too their performances at private *mehfil*s, *baiṭhak*s,[4] and in public concerts as I observed during my fieldwork. With the absence of such a connection one can only assume that McClintock's Mirasi group was very different from the group that I worked with, and quite possibly the groups that Nayyar refers to. Nayyar, curiously, does not clarify this distinction.

Thus, we arrive at the question: Just who are the urban art musicians of the Punjab? To answer this, I must first review Daniel Neuman's canonical work on the Mirasis of Delhi.

Urban Classical Music Mirasi Groups: Daniel Neuman

First published in 1980, *The Life of Music in North India* by Daniel Neuman has defined the field of the ethnomusicology of Hindustani art music. I will review what Neuman has written about the Mirasis of Delhi to provide a comparative source for my later discussion of the Mirasis of Lahore. It should be noted that the social conditions of Hindustani art music have changed considerably since the time of Neuman's research in the late 1960s, especially in light of the exponential rise of non-hereditary musicians in India who have now virtually replaced the Muslim hereditary specialists who once dominated Hindustani music.

The main focus of Neuman's ethnography concerns the observation that Hindustani music involves a specific type of sociomusical hierarchy, involving the presence of two separate groups of hereditary musicians who perform Hindustani classical music: 1) the Kalawant who are soloists (i.e., their main role is the performance of *rāg*) and mainly vocalists; and 2) the Mirasi, who are melodic and rhythmic accompanists specializing in the sarangi, harmonium, and tabla. While both of these groups perform music together on the concert stage and in private musical venues (*mehfil*s), Neuman claims they came from different and mutually exclusive social groups, and therefore had different hereditary backgrounds. The Kalawant group enjoys relatively high social status for being primary tradition bearers and soloists of a sophisticated urban art form. In contrast, the Mirasi endure low social status for being accompanists to these soloists; they carry, too, a social stigma because they are invariably associated with insalubrious musical contexts, namely, the courtesan traditions based in the red-light districts of Northern India. The main factors that maintain the higher social status of the Kalawant group are that they do not perform as musical

accompanists, they are not associated with the courtesan tradition, and they do not intermarry with the Mirasi.

Neuman's use of the term *kalāvant* is, for the most part, an analytical tool for his sociological analysis of classical musicians in Delhi. His choice of this term is in part due to its apparent use in the feudal Muslim courts of the 16th through the mid-19th centuries to denote musicians of high caliber. He cites the important Urdu treatise *Ma'dan ul Mousīqī* written by Hakim Mohammad Karam Imam in the mid-19th century, and its statement that the term *kalāvant* applies specifically to four celebrated Hindustani musicians and their descendants. Neuman notes that Imam also makes a distinction between Kalawant and Qawwal based upon the type of music they sang, the former "Indian" and the latter both "Persian" and "Indian" (Neuman 1990:88).

Although not entirely different from these earlier usages of the term, *kalāvant* is defined by Neuman in the following description of the group:

> …Kalawant is used in at least two distinct ways. In the most general, it is translated as artist, and any musician can call himself a Kalawant by this definition. More precisely, however, the title Kalawant refers to members of certain established families of musicians who are defined by their descent from a well-known ancestor, and in whose pedigree there is no evidence of sarangi or tabla players…Nowadays, Kalawant as a formal identity is largely restricted to families whose major specialty is vocal music… Although *Kalawant* is now used in a categorical sense to refer to hereditary musician families specializing in vocal music, it is not a term by which they typically identify themselves. Their own identity is established by their descent in a particular family. (Neuman 1990:95)

The main difficulty with the above description is assessing the Kalawant claim that their lineages are separate from Mirasi lineages. We are left trusting that the Kalawant have nothing to hide in their genealogies. This seems unlikely due to the general tendency of all social groups—virtually anywhere in human time and space—to seek social mobility by a variety of means.[5] I cannot contest the veracity of Neuman's fieldwork with the musicians he calls Kalawant, yet it is quite possible that these musicians have a vested interest in distancing themselves from low status tabla and sarangi-players to the extent that their pedigrees were affected by "structural amnesia" (See Kippen 1988:84). Moreover, Neuman does not discuss the caste identification of the Kalawant musicians, even though he states they are one group of many vocalists who "…come from a

fairly wide variety of ethnic, caste, regional, and religious backgrounds"
(Neuman 1990:120).

In contrast to the etic category of Kalawant, Neuman's use of the
term Mirasi is based on its actual currency in colloquial discourse,
although he indicates that the term is rarely used by the Mirasi
themselves. Neuman locates the Mirasi decisively in Delhi while a
related group, the Kathak, are located further east:

> In North India there are two communities, one of them
> Muslim (the aforementioned Mirasi) and the other
> Hindu (known as Katthak), who together have
> contributed the vast majority of Hindustani
> accompanists. The Mirasi are found in the North
> around Delhi and the Katthak are in Eastern Uttar
> Pradesh, with a large concentration in Banaras.
> (Neuman 1990:124)

In contrast to his conception of the Kalawant group, the Mirasi fulfill
the two requirements for a caste: occupational specialization and
endogamy. Neuman does not mention other castes such as the Doms as a
possible source of recruitment for Hindustani music, even though Rose
identifies the "Ḍúm" group of Rohtak (a city not far from Delhi, in
Haryana) as sarangi- and tabla-players, and accompanists to dancing
girls. Instead, Neuman mentions briefly that there are Mirasi groups that
are not classical musicians, and the group he cites appears to be from the
same area as the Dom group cited by Rose:

> Rural Mirasis in contemporary Haryana (a state formed
> out of the southern part of Panjab in 1967), who still
> specialize in music, no longer allow their women to
> perform in public… Mirasis who are classical
> musicians are, virtually without exception, urban
> dwellers. Although they often claim village origins,
> places and names have usually been forgotten. Rather,
> these classical musicians have their more immediate
> origins in towns and cities, and in these urban areas
> they are usually concentrated in certain wards
> (*muhallās)*, a practice which for musicians in Delhi can
> be traced back to the fourteenth century. (Neuman
> 1990:131-32)

Brief Comparison of the Sources

Mirasi

There are two main observations that can be drawn from the above review of sources on the term *mīrāsī*. Firstly, the term as a rubric is clearly and strongly associated with all musicians of hereditary background. The ethnographic surveys inherently recognize the popular use of the term as a catch-all for musical occupational specialization. The common belief that all hereditary musicians are Mirasis indicates considerable ignorance of the subtleties and complexities of musician society as a whole, and suggests the rubric may not be particularly useful from an analytical perspective. However, *mīrāsī* is polysemic, as attested to by the dozens of sub-categories.

Secondly, *mīrāsī* is used to denote a specific group of hereditary musicians from among many. This usage is seen most clearly in Neuman's ethnography, and to a lesser extent in Nayyar's and McClintock's works. Importantly, these specific Mirasi groups have different names for themselves, which suggests that they differ considerably in group identity and social organization. Neuman offers several terms that his Mirasi informants used for themselves, and one wonders if they had more terms that Neuman did not know or did not report (Neuman 1990:124). Either Neuman encountered a situation markedly different from that of the Punjab in general and Lahore in particular, or he adopted the rubric without the sub-categorical diversity suggested by Rose and Nayyar.

Kalawant

Kalāvant, as a term of ethnographic description, needs critical assessment because it is rarely used in Hindustani music society. While it may serve Neuman's purpose for describing a pattern of social organization of musicians in Delhi, it should not stand as a normative term for all of Hindustani music culture. The term was mentioned by H.A. Rose as a sub-group of Mirasis who sang dhrupad, but no special mention was made concerning the kinship practice that is central to Neuman's thesis. The term is quite rare in the Punjabi context (*kaḷaunt*), and the closest equivalent can be found in Nayyar's category Gavayya.

Dhari (Dhadhi)

This term is perhaps the most difficult one to understand, historically and ethnographically. Upon reading Neuman's discussion of the Dharis, one would assume that the group comprised classical musicians based on his

hypothetical historical reconstruction of how Mirasis made their entry into the urban art from their lowly background as rural folk musicians:

> Dharis intermarrying with Kalawants became soloists and separated themselves from those Dharis who accompanied tawaifs and who probably intermarried with Mirasis practicing the same occupation. For their part, Mirasis entered the classical tradition from a rural folk musician background through urban migration... Once in the city, the stepping-stone from the folk to the classical tradition was through the medium of the courtesan salons…It is still unclear why Dharis were subsumed socially and terminologically in the Mirasi fold, but I think it was due to the ambiguity of the social tag "Dhari" with a now double social identity split between Kalawant and Mirasi. Substituting "Mirasi" as the general social tag resolved any ambiguity in meaning about who was what, a concern of no small importance in Indian society. (Neuman 1990:133)

If the term has any relation to its current use in the Punjab, then it is still not certain who these musicians were in 19th century India, or even before then.[6] Both the Urdu term *ḍhāṛī* (sometimes *ḍhāḍhī*) and the Punjabi alternate *ḍhāḍī* are general, nonspecific terms that mean "professional musician."[7] Rose also cites the term "Dhádhi," and according to his classification (groups 7, 8, and 46), they are epic singers (groups 7, 8, and 9) who play the *ḍhaḍh* (a small drum) and/or genealogists (group 46), but definitely not classical musicians.

Lastly, Neuman's statement about social and terminological subsumption of the Dharis begs the question: Who did the defining? Moreover, who does it now? If current-day so-called Mirasis do not use the term to describe themselves, as Neuman notes, they may never have used it historically either. Quite simply, we lack information on how the musicians viewed themselves as opposed to how they were defined by the Indian cultural elite or British Orientalists scholars. With that in mind, I will next explore the multiple ways which musicians, non-musicians, and ethnographers define the professional musicians of Lahore.

Ethnography of Urban Art Music Groups of Lahore

My own ethnographic research into groups of urban art musicians in and around Lahore showed that five descriptive terms were commonly

encountered: *mīrāsī, kasbī, rabābī, kanjar,* and *atāī.* This adds yet another interpretation to the mix already encountered above. I will discuss each group below, and then explore some of the discursive contexts in which musicians themselves negotiated their own identities through the use of these labels.

Five Main Groups of Musicians

Mirasi. This first group, Mirasi, is primarily associated with the red-light district generally known as the Shahi Mohalla, and more specifically as Hira Mandi ("the diamond market"), which is one of its neighborhoods. The recent ethnography by Fouzia Saeed (2001) is a rich source of information on the musicians who perform in this environment. According to her, Mirasis are an occupational ethnic group or caste of musicians. Its members comprise both higher-ranking *ustād*s (lit. "teacher" or "master") who teach dancer-singer-prostitutes (*kanjarī*s*)* of the Shahi Mohalla*,* and the lower-ranking instrumentalists who provide kanjaris with accompaniment.[8] Importantly, Saeed observes that the Kanjar and Mirasi communities do not intermarry, and thus constitute exclusive endogamous kin groups (*birādarī*s). The males of the Kanjar biradari do not contribute much to the economic welfare of their families because Kanjar society is essentially matriarchal. Conversely, all male Mirasis (i.e. Safardai) claim that none of their own female kin performs music or dance in public. The importance of this observation of two separate biradaris in the Shahi Mohalla cannot be understated due to its relevance to our understanding the urban art musicians of Pakistani Punjab; furthermore, there is tremendous ignorance of the social complexities of the red-light district in Pakistani society.[9]

We must remember that, unlike the other terms under discussion, *mīrāsī* in its most common, colloquial, and public sense, is used as a catch-all designation of hereditary musical specialization. One sometimes learns more about who the Mirasis are by observing who they are not. Saeed claims that "…most of the master musicians [of Lahore] were, in one way or another, linked to the Shahi Mohalla" (2001:15). Yet, with only a few exceptions, the majority of the great urban classical musicians of Lahore that Saeed refers to have lived outside of the old city of Lahore, and they had or have little or no direct dealings with the red-light district. The case of the Patiala classical vocalists Amanat Ali and Fateh Ali Khan was mentioned by Saeed as proof of such an association of high-ranking musicians with the Shahi Mohalla (2001:15). However, although they may have lived in or near the red-light district when they initially migrated to Lahore after 1947, they subsequently moved out to a more middle-class setting (Karim Park) and earned their livelihood through other means. Indeed, this distancing of urban classical musicians

from the Shahi Mohalla was an adaptive strategy for gaining legitimacy in a new Islamic state uncomfortable with the idea of supporting musicians performing secular music genres. It was also an important strategy because Amanat Ali and Fateh Ali Khan are Kasbi, not Mirasi.

This, in turn, raises the question of repertoire, and which musicians specialized in the more austere classical genres such as dhrupad, khayal and instrumental art music. Again, with few exceptions, the majority of classical musicians who were either soloists or accompanists for public concerts, radio, and television broadcasts had little or no association with the red-light district of Lahore. This was certainly the case for tabla-players such as Talib Hussain (also a pakhavaj-player), Shaukat Hussain, and their respective students. Both were Kasbi. On the other hand, tabla-players such as Altaf Hussain "Tafo" Khan and the late Bashir Hussain "Goga" performed "light music" almost exclusively for the film and cassette industries of Lahore, and not for outstanding classical vocalists such as Amanat Ali and Fateh Ali Khan, Roshanara Begum, and Salamat Ali Khan. These tabla-players are and were Mirasi.

Repertoire is intimately connected with notions of prestige. Saeed's use of the term *ustād* for the musicians who were the proprietors and central teachers of several important *baithak*s where kanjaris would receive training is problematic. Although these accomplished musicians were ustad-s in the context of the Kanjar and Mirasi communities of the red-light district, they are almost certainly not considered ustads among the musicians who specialized exclusively in art music.[10] Notably, whereas outstanding performers such as the ghazal-singer Mehdi Hasan, or the world-renowned master of qawwali, the late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, were and are referred to as "ustad," the use is downright offensive to khayal or dhrupad singers who live in economically marginal conditions because they have refused to stoop to sing the "light music" genres that appeal to the masses. Only the "serious" genres of classical singing or playing have been traditionally considered the true index of musical knowledge among hereditary professional musicians.

Kasbi. The primary musician group I worked with were the Kasbis. The meaning and use of the term *kasbī* ("one who works")[11] is very similar to the Afghan term *kesbī* as found in pre-Soviet Afghanistan. According to Baily, *Kesbi* signified a musician who belonged to a hereditary group of professional musicians as opposed to the Shauqi who were non-hereditary, amateur musicians who either did or did not make music their primary occupation (1988:101). Sakata basically agreed with Baily's assessment, but also "found that the term was often used to refer to a Shauqi musician who had publicly 'gone professional'" (1983:85).

More specifically, Baily described the use of the labels Shauqi and Kesbi as an act of social positioning by musicians who did not want to be associated with the lowest ranked musicians of Herat:

> The importance of *shauqi* and *kesbi* status amongst musicians was symptomatic of a high degree of participation in public music making by amateurs, who wished to dissociate themselves from the traditional, male hereditary musicians of Herat, players of the *sorna* and *dohol*… *Sorna* and *dohol* players embodied a particular stereotype of the musician, with many negative connotations, and occupied a particularly low rank in the social order. (Baily 1988:102)

Among Pakistani Punjabi musicians, *kasbī* was not widely used, but not uncommon. Its use in Pakistani Punjab appears to be similar to its function as a marker of social group distinction in Herat: to differentiate the most basic social division between the non-hereditary musician (Atai) versus the hereditary professional musician (Kasbi/Mirasi/Dhari), and to further divide the hereditary professional musicians between Kasbi (classical musicians) and Mirasi (red-light district musicians).

In some sense, my encounter with the term *kasbī* is similar to Neuman's use of the term *kalāvant*, insofar as it is primarily an analytical tool. Called Mirasis by the society at large, the Kasbis had minimal or no association with the red-light district, even if they had former ties to the courtesan tradition prior to the social forces of modernization following Partition. Most of them came from prestigious student-teacher lineages (*silsilā*s) of the "serious" classical genres of Hindustani music. As mentioned previously, most of them lived outside the old city of Lahore, most likely as an index of engaging in the social project of modernity; they did not remain in the traditional musicians' quarters with the low-status musicians. Many were staff or casual employees of Radio Pakistan or PTV.

A large number of Kasbis have roots in East Punjab and were employed as court musicians—such as Fateh Ali Khan and Amanat Ali Khan at the court of the Maharaja of Patiala—until these petty fiefdoms were dissolved after 1947. With very few exceptions, the vast majority migrated to Lahore and Karachi where they obtained positions at the radio stations and film studios, or where they languished without a new patron class to replace the old. Undoubtedly, some musicians from prestigious musical lineages were forced to find employment in the red-light district, either through lack of opportunity or the inability to compete at the highest level for the few opportunities that did present themselves.

Rababi. The Rababi group of musicians is primarily known for its association with the performance of Sikh religious music. According to legend, the founder of the group was Bhai Mardana, a Muslim companion of Guru Nanak (1453-1537); he played the *rabāb* (plucked lute) and sang devotional music for the founder of the Sikh faith. From that time until 1947, a hereditary, endogamous group of Muslim musicians, known by the term *rabābī* (players of the rabab) specialized in performing Sikh religious music. The majority of them were also highly skilled performers of Hindustani art music, and Hindustani musical structure is prevalent in Sikh devotional music (*kīrtan*).[12] After 1947, the vast majority of Rababi families settled in Lahore where they gained employment in the film and later the television industries, and only secondarily with Radio Pakistan. Numerous outstanding film composers have Rababi backgrounds, including the renowned Master Ghulam Haider.

The one substantial study of the Rababi families of post-1947 Lahore is by Feriyal Aslam (1999). This work is a very important resource on this musician group due to the detailed information she was able to collect, and the anthropological analysis of her data. Aslam presents multiple perspectives on various issues such as group origins, identity, kinship practices, and musical activities.

According to Aslam, there are multiple claims to the origins of the Rababis by the group members themselves: some claim to be descendants of Bhai Mardana, while others say that their ancestors were disciples of Bhai Mardana. Either way, Bhai Mardana is a central figure and apical ancestor of the Rababis (1999:48-51).

In terms of group identity and kinship patterns, the Rababis continue to be an endogamous, hereditary group, a large percentage of whose members specialize in musicianship. A majority of them live in a specific neighborhood of the old city of Lahore called Katri Bawa ki Haveli, located in Channa Mandi, an area quite distinct from the red-light district. As they are endogamous, they are a distinct group from the Mirasis and Kasbis. Aslam has provided extensive genealogical charts of the main Rababi families and their descendants (1999:tables 5-8). An important part of the distinction that Rababis made between themselves and Mirasis is that they do not perform in the red-light district and their women do not perform in public. As further evidence of their separateness, they say that female Mirasis are public performers, which Mirasis themselves deny. Aslam confirmed the absence of women Rababi performers, yet did not find any evidence for or against the claim that Rababi musicians perform in the red-light district (1999:62). Aslam notes that Rababis are often viewed as Mirasis because, as I have already observed, the latter term is used by most Pakistanis to denote all hereditary musicians (1999:52).

I will return to the specific references that Aslam makes about Rababi tabla- and pakhavaj-players in a comparative section below.

Kanjar. As mentioned previously, the most thorough account of the endogamous Kanjar community is to be found in the work of Fouzia Saeed. Two distinctions should be made concerning the Kanjar community: firstly, the women—kanjari-s—are primarily dancers, prostitutes, and to a lesser extent singers, but they are by no means classical vocalists or instrumentalists. They may receive training from Mirasi musicians, but they are not "musicians" per se. In this matriarchal society, Kanjar men are relatively powerless, and only a small handful are performing musicians. Secondly, the kanjaris are different from the *gashtī*s, "ordinary" prostitutes who only work in the sex trade. Undoubtedly, many great female vocalists of the past have come from social groups such as the Kanjar, yet even the most esteemed mother-daughter lineages of Lahore no longer have any connection with prostitution (Saeed 2001:27).

Atai. Musicians who do not come from a hereditary background are called Atai, regardless of the genre of music performed. This category is essentially the same as the non-hereditary musicians of Afghanistan prior to the Soviet invasion of 1979 (See Baily 1988:118-120; Sakata 1983:84-85; Sakata 1986). The term *atāī*, however, appears to be specific to Pakistan as the Persian-Afghan term *shauqī* (*shauqīn* in Urdu) was not as common as the former. And unlike the Shauqi of Afghanistan, the Atai are very few in number in Pakistan.

The Atai are not a social group per se because they are not bounded by consanguinal links or kinship patterns. Nevertheless, they constitute a social category because of their unusual social background. While they do not carry the stigma of being hereditary musicians in Pakistani Punjabi society at large, they do carry a stigma within the community of musicians. The art of the Atai is generally considered inferior to that of the hereditary musicians due to the training they have received (or lack of it) and also quite simply due to the folk-notion that music is not "in their blood." Ironically, this sense of the term *atāī* is quite different from its much earlier meaning as a court musician of the highest rank (See Neuman 1990:86).

Another type of Atai should be mentioned at this point: professional pop bands comprised of young, middle to upperclass non-hereditary musicians. These musicians have little or no knowledge of South Asian art music genres, and have learned Western music theory and performance genres abroad or within Pakistan. Most of the bands, such as the very popular Janoon and Vital Signs, are based in Karachi; however, quite a number can be found in Lahore, performing rock cover

songs at weddings. The success of these musicians largely hinges on several factors that hereditary musicians do not possess, namely: the ability to speak fluent English, access to transnational media and travel, financial resources to afford high-tech musical instruments and recording equipment, and of course, the prestige accorded them for being proficient in Western musical genres. Hereditary musicians generally despise these types of Atais because of their lack of knowledge of and respect for art genres, and for usurping the performance opportunities that were once the purview of the hereditary musicians.

Discursive Contexts

Thus far, I have described the musicians of Lahore from a distanced, analytical perspective. It is therefore worth examining specific instances of how musicians negotiate their own identities by using certain labels for themselves and others. By examining the following examples, I am led to conclude that there is hardly a consensus among the musicians themselves as to the category and terminology for musicians in Pakistani Punjab. Thus, social identity tags are inevitably contested and in a state of flux.

Context 1: The "Real" Mirasis

Early in my residence in Lahore in 1994, I became acquainted with two violinists, Dilshad Hussain and his son, Samar Hussain. These two musicians were qualitatively different from most other hereditary musicians of Lahore in two ways. Firstly, they were of *muhājīr* (migrant) background from Delhi, not the Punjab, and claimed to belong to the Delhi *gharānā* "of vocalists and tabla-players." Interestingly, Dilshad Hussain considered the vocalists *and* the tabla-players of the Delhi as consisting of one group of musicians as opposed to two separate groups (i.e., in Neuman's terms, soloists and accompanists). To prove that he belonged to the Delhi gharana, he recited strings of Delhi *qāidā*s (a genre of tabla composition) along with an explanation of how to improvise on them. Based on my musical instruction from Delhi tabla-players, Dilshad Hussain's qaida recitations were entirely correct. Secondly, Dilshad Hussain and his son were very innovative, socially savvy musicians who had adapted quite successfully to the new sociopolitical environs of Pakistan. Dilshad said that musicians could not be successful by relying on the standard institutions for employment such as Radio Pakistan. Aside from being fluent in the English language, Dilshad Hussain had moved to a suburb of Lahore, taught both Western and "Eastern" classical music at one of the schools for children of foreign diplomats, and gave regular concerts for the expatriate community.

In one of my discussions with Dilshad Hussain, the topic of caste arose, but not by my instigation. Dilshad was quite aware of the ethnographic dimension of my work and began discussing who were the "real" Mirasis of Lahore. In this sense, he specifically referred to a group that was most likely the same that McClintock worked with in the outskirts of the city. Dilshad Hussain offered to take me to meet to these Mirasis, although I never had the opportunity to do so. Nevertheless, what is interesting in this instance is how Dilshad made a qualitative difference between musicians who indeed met the classic definition of the Mirasi as musician-genealogists versus those such as he who were *modern*, urban classical musicians. Thus, he was quite aware of the general usage of the term Mirasi by the general Pakistani public and the much finer social definition among musicians in Lahore.

Context 2: "We are Mir Alam" and "I am a Mirasi"

The next instance is that of musicians calling themselves Mirasi. I have encountered only two examples of this, one directly and one narrated to me.

The first was during an interview with the tabla-player, Ghulam Hasan "Khuk" who was a student of Inayat Ali "Neti" Khan and Khalifa Mian Qader Baksh. His father was Nathu Khan, who played tabla for seventeen years until he became a vocalist and studied with Jarnail Fateh Ali Khan, one of the founders of the Patiala gharana (of vocal khayal). Ghulam Hasan commanded a formidable knowledgeable of tabla compositions from both the Mian Qader Baksh and Qasur lineages of Punjabi tabla-players. During the interview, the issue of musician groups arose. Since Ghulam Hasan had mentioned that he resided in Amritsar prior to 1947, I tried to ask him who the Rababis were, and he responded that he was a "Mir Alam, a Dhadi from Patiala." According to one source I had read prior to my arrival in Pakistan in 1994, *mīr ālam* was "…a more acceptable term designating hereditary professional musicians" (Nayyar and Sakata 1989:35).

A second instance is of Fariad Hussain "Bhulli Khan," an outstanding tabla-player who learned from Ghulam Hussain Jalandhari. Bhulli Khan resided in an area next to Hira Mandi, one of the neighborhoods of the Shahi Mohalla. According to his student, Saqib Razaq, Bhulli Khan had said in direct terms that "I am a Mirasi." Such a usage from a tabla-player who resided in the red-light district seems hardly surprising given that his association with this area is undeniable. In other words, there appears to be no attempt on the part of Bhulli Khan to be socially mobile through changing his musical performance contexts, identity terminology, or actual physical residence. In this

instance, his use of the term fits the model of the Mirasi as described by
Fouzia Saeed.

*Context 3: "Mir Alam: in the language of the Atais, that's what they call
Mirasis"*

Another very important encounter with the terms *mīrāsī, mīr ālam* and
atāī occurred when I visited Peshawar in March 1996 to interview
Khalifa Akhtar Hussain, the most widely recognized authority of Punjabi
tabla-playing. Khalifa Akhtar Hussain used all three terms when he
began narrating a story about the nineteenth-century encounter between
the Sufi mystic Lal Hussain and the tabla-player Mian Qader Baksh (I).[13]
In this story, Khalifa Akhtar Hussain referred to Mian Qader Baksh I as a
Mir Alam. I then asked, "Who is a Mir Alam?" to which he became
indignant and replied: "In the language of the Atais, that's what they call
Mirasis." The possible meanings to be found in this short interchange are
many, although my interpretation of it corresponds to the usage of *mīr
ālam* by Ghulam Hasan "Khuk."

   Why would two musicians, firmly trained and involved in classical
music, choose to use the term *mīr ālam* in my presence if such a term
was a euphemism for the pejorative term *mīrāsī*? My only understanding
thus far is that their use of the term is an assumption that I would not
know any other terms for musicians such as *kasbī* or *gūnī-ādmī* (lit.
"knowledgeable person"). Given the likelihood of my lack of subcultural
knowledge, both Khalifa Akhtar Hussain and Ghulam Hasan "Khuk"
were forced to use terms they felt I would have known. Thus, based on
my own position as a foreigner who probably acquired much of my
perception of musician groups from non-musician Pakistanis, they
probably thought that I viewed all musicians as Mirasis. Of course, the
possibility exists that Khalifa Akhtar Hussain preferred the term *mīrāsī*
over *mīr ālam* in the sense that Bhulli Khan used it. However, this is
unlikely given that Khalifa Akhtar Hussain enjoyed very high status
among the community of musicians, and had no association with the red-
light district in Peshawar or later when he moved to Lahore.

*Context 4: "My mistake was to go into music" and "I am playing with my
office buddy"*

A final example is of interest in the way it demonstrates the most basic
categories of social identity among musicians in Pakistani Punjab:
hereditary and non-hereditary. The *barsī* (death anniversary) of Mian
Qader Baksh is held every year in Lahore in a public venue, although the
majority   of   attendees   are   professional   musicians.   Various
instrumentalists and vocalists perform in addition to several outstanding

performers of tabla solo. In 1995, the barsi was held in one of the auditoriums at the Al Hamra Arts Complex in Lahore. The vast majority of performers were hereditary musicians, although a few non-hereditary musicians also performed. One non-hereditary amateur performer was Zahid Farani, an accomplished tabla-player who is also proficient in *khayāl gāyakī* and *bāṅsūrī* (flute).

Zahid Farani performed twice during the evening: once as a tabla soloist and the other as an accompanist. Before he began his tabla solo, Zahid Farani expressed a small caveat to the audience that "my mistake was to go into music." In this coded language, he recognized that it was an honor for him to perform at the barsi of Mian Qader Baksh in the presence of so many hereditary musicians. It was a way of appeasing any hereditary musicians who might have had objections to his act of performing a tabla solo at an event of such great importance for the musicians of Lahore. Significantly, Farani received applause upon stating his non-hereditary sociomusical status.

Later in the barsi, Zahid Farani performed again in the role of accompanist for a well known ghazal-singer.[14] When the singer first entered the stage, he had no accompanist and one was requested from the audience. Ghulam Haider Khan, a highly respected vocalist and musicologist from the Qasur biradari, suggested that Zahid Farani accompany. This was indeed accepted by ghazal-singer, but not without comment. As Zahid Farani tuned his tabla, Hamid Ali quipped, "I am playing with my office buddy." This obvious reference to Zahid Farani's status as an Atai was in some sense the only way the singer could save face for having a non-hereditary musician accompany him in the presence of an audience of *khās* (lit. "special," "real") hereditary musicians.

Summary

The hereditary musician groups of Pakistani Punjab are many and diverse. This was also the case when the land was united under British rule, as seen in the earliest substantial source, the H.A. Rose compilation. Therefore, broad sweeping generalizations about these hereditary musician groups, especially when all are referred to by the rubric *mīrāsī*, are of minimal value for understanding the complexities of the social relationships and identities of musicians themselves. A close examination of how group identity terminology is used in speech discourse is vital for gaining a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the history and current status of hereditary musician groups in the Punjab.

Even though they are called Mirasis by the wider public, the hereditary musicians involved in classical (i.e. "art"), light-classical and staged folk genres do not fit the classic notion of the Mirasi: musician-

genealogists for a patron group. If they indeed have the genealogical information of or historical ties to patron groups, they do not practice genealogy, as do the Mirasis of McClintock's study. Even McClintock's informants have been abandoning their traditional occupation due to pervasive social changes such as urbanization, and most importantly the sea change wrought by the social upheaval of the Partition of the Punjab in 1947.[15]

The musicians of McClintock's study were definitely not the urban classical musicians of my research, and this is attested to by Dilshad Hussain's reference to them as the "real" Mirasis. My informants were highly specialized, sophisticated musicians of art music genres, based solidly in urban areas; they provided entertainment, and to a lesser extent musical training, to the public at large through concerts and various forms of media. The majority of them preferred alternative terms for their own social identity, such as *kasbī*. Alternatively, they were from a separate, endogamous group, such as the Rababis. Both the Kasbis and the Rababis differentiated and distanced themselves from musicians who performed for the *mujrā*s (dance entertainments) of the Shahi Mohalla, the red-light district of Lahore. Interestingly, some musicians associated with the Shahi Mohalla did call themselves Mirasis, as in the case of Fariad Hussain "Bhulli" Khan. Yet, these musicians were distinct from the kanjaris, the dancer-singer-prostitutes for whom they provided musical accompaniment.

One could argue that the forces of musical modernization, which involved a shift in sociomusical contexts from the feudal courts and red-light districts of urban centers to the concert stage and radio/television broadcasts, involved a finer degree of social identity formation. When the old, feudal patronage system was eliminated after the dissolution of the Princely States after 1947, many musicians were forced to find patronage in new institutions which created new classes of musicians: some lived and played in the red-light districts, and others disassociated themselves with the district by moving to the suburbs and obtaining employment through Radio Pakistan, PTV and the private and public concerts.

In sum, the situation in Pakistani Punjab and more specifically in Lahore, resembles what Daniel Neuman hypothesized in the split between the Kalawants and the Mirasis almost two centuries prior. The former group became soloists, exclusively: they did not intermarry with accompanists (sarangi- and tabla-players) because the latter group accompanied *tawā'if*s (courtesans). In a similar vein, the Kasbis and the Rababis appear to deny similar associations with musician groups that perform for tawa'ifs in the Shahi Mohalla, hence their distaste for the pejorative term *mīrāsī*. In terms of actual kinship patterns, it is well established that the Rababis are a separate, endogamous social group whose members do not intermarry with musicians working in the red-

light district. In the case of the Kasbis, this has yet to be determined. Do members of this new group practice intermarriage with Mirasis of the Shahi Mohalla? In some sense, this is the most important test of social differentiation, as Daniel Neuman has observed in his work with musicians in Delhi.

Notes

[1] The original publication dates of the three volumes by Rose are the following: Vol. I. 1919, Vol. 2. 1911, Vol.3. 1914. The first reprint was in 1970 by the Languages Department Punjab (Patiala), Punjab National Press, Delhi.

[2] Many of the informants of my research in Pakistani Punjab made this claim as well.

[3] See the classic description by Tandon (1961:79-80).

[4] A small room where musicians learn, teach and perform music for each other; also, the occasion of the performance itself.

[5] This continues today, and most observers would be very surprised to learn the true identity of some of India's most celebrated musicians.

[6] See Imam (1959:18) for a 19th century description of the Dhari community of musicians.

[7] This was the usage of these terms as found in contemporary Pakistani Punjab, and as such, differs greatly with Indian Punjab where dhadhis are a specific group who are the sole performers of a well-defined genre of music.

[8] A common term I heard several non-musicians use for the instrumental accompanists was *safardai* (*sapardai*), which appears simply to be another term for a male *mirasi*. Interestingly, Saeed (2001:150) uses a close variant of the term, *sapardai* only once in reference to the famous vocalist, Bare Ghulam Ali Khan, who was known to have come from a group of instrumental accompanists from the city of Qasur.

[9] The same observation was made by Naqvi 1997 in his ethnography on prostitution in the red-light district of Lahore.

[10] See Baily 1987:120-121 for a succinct discussion of the term *ustad* and ranking behavior.

[11] Translation from Nayyar (2000:763).

[12] See for a Mansukhani (1982) for the structural elements of Hindustani art music in Sikh kirtan.

[13] According to Khalifa Akhtar Hussain, Mian Qader Baksh I was a disciple of Lala Bhawani Das, the apical ancestor of Punjab gharana.

[14] The name of the vocalist will not be mentioned due to the sensitivity of this example.

[15] Thompson (2000:403-04) makes the same observations about changes in client-patron links in North India.

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The Folk Dhadi Genre

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Ḍhāḍī refers both to a genre of Punjabi music and the performers who play it: a distinctly composed ensemble of ballad-singers. After briefly sketching the long yet hazy background of the art, this article reconstructs its more certain and recent history so far as it can be gleaned from the oral accounts of living dhadi performers. Taken with evidence of recordings—some of the Punjabi industry's earliest—and the memories of older audience members, a picture is presented of the dhadi genre in its heyday of the early 20th century. The focus is on the dhadis who performed popular ballads; their prominent personalities, geographical distribution, compositional forms, narrative themes, performance manner, and other aspects of the genre are described. The article concludes with biographical sketches of two contemporary dhadis and a selection of texts of dhadi compositions.

In the world of Punjabi balladry, *ḍhāḍī*s—singers with *ḍhaḍḍ* [small, hand-beaten hourglass drum] and *sārangī* [bowed lute]—have occupied a special place. Indeed, comparable to other types of Punjabi balladry, this genre has come down to us as a true representative of Punjabi culture and heritage. The *ḍhaḍī* genre has remained capable of expressing Punjabis' overflowing character, their way of life, rites and rituals, and so forth. And though its ambit continues to shrink under the influence of Western culture and the march of modernity, the dhadi art represents a great history of which Punjabis can be proud.

Background to Dhadis and Their Art

When one looks at the background of the dhadi genre it appears to be quite old. Evidence of this comes with the word *ḍhāḍhī*, which appears several times in gurbani. Sikh Gurus [Nanak, Amardas, Angad Dev, Arjan] referred to themselves as *ḍhāḍhī*, in reference to their role as someone who praises the Divine or who sings God's glory.

- *ha'u ḍhāḍhī hari prabhu khasam kā, nitt gāvai hari guṇ chhantā.*
  I am the dhadi of the Lord my Master; daily, I sing the songs of praise to the Lord.

- *ḍhāḍhī tisno ākhīe je khasame dharai piār, dar khaṛ sevā karai gur sabadī vīchār.*
  He is called 'dhadi' who has love for his Master; who stands by the door waiting to serve while thinking on the Word.

- *ḍhāḍhī dar prabhu mangṇā dar kade nā chhoṛe.*
  The dhadi begs at God's door—the door he shall never leave.

- *ha'u ḍhāḍhī kā nīch jāti, hor utam jāti sadāide.*
  I am of the low caste of a dhadi; others call themselves high-caste.

In everyday language the basic meaning of "dhadi" is one who sings someone's praises whilst playing dhadd. According to the *Mahankosh*,[2] it is, "From *ḍhāḍhī*: one who sings the ballads of warriors while playing *ḍhaḍḍ* (*ḍhaḍḍh*); praise singer." It used to be common practice in the courts of Rajput kings and nobles for Bhatts [a type of bard] or Dhadis to sing ballads [*vār*] about the feats of bravery of the nobles' ancestors. Because this singing style was beloved of the common people, the Gurus also adopted its poetic form. They composed very many *spiritual vār*s in praise of the Divine, the full tally of which numbers twenty-two. The Fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, at the time of the Adi Granth's compilation after he collated all the *bāṇī* [1604], set nine of these to be sung to the airs of previously composed vars of old warriors. Some examples of this type are:

> *Asā kī Vār* – based on the var of Ṭundā Asrājai
> *Kānṛe kī Vār* – based on the var of Mūsā
> *Vaḍhans kī Vār* – based on the var of Lalā Bahilīmā
> *Rāmkalī kī Vār* – based on the var of Jodhai Vīrai Pūrbāṇī
> *Sārang kī Vār* – based on the var of Rāi Mahimā Hasanā
> *Gāuṛī kī Vār* – based on the var of Rāi Kamāldīn Maujdīn

One must remember, however, that the relationship of these spiritual vars to the aforementioned warriors' vars is limited to their melodies. As such, one can surmise that this singing style was known for rendering poetic forms of both spiritual and secular content. In order for Bhatts and

Dhadis to sing these vars, dhadd and sarangi would have been used because it is these instruments that are most associated with the form.

Though the background of the dhadi tradition is quite old, this art as we know it began under the patronage of the Sixth Guru, Hargobind [1606-1644]. The Fifth Guru, Arjan Dev's martyrdom had been a turning point in Sikh history. Guru Hargobind then had to challenge the imperial administration a number of times. In order to instill enthusiasm and zeal in the warriors of his armies, Hargobind began to have dhadis in his court to sing inspiring vars. Natha and Abdul [*sic*] were the famous dhadis of his court. Mushki and Chhabeela continued on the tradition of singing of vars in Guru Gobind Singh's court [1675-1708]. Thus, when Guru Gobind Singh came to the Malwa area and the local artistes Sukkhu and Buddhu of village Malooka performed Malvai music with sarangi for him, these minstrels easily found their way into the Guru's good graces and enjoyed a close relationship with the Guru's court. After the martyrdom of Banda Singh Bahadur [1716], when Sikh rule became divided [i.e. in the form of *misls*], patronage of these dhadis ceased.

Around about this time, narrative verse in the form of *qissā*s had caught hold. After Damodar's qissa *Hīr* [ca.1600-1615], those of poets Ahmad Gujjar, Muqbal, Varis, Pilu, Fazal Shah, Hasham Shah, Qadar Yar, etc. also became popular in the villages. So it was natural that some singers performing with dhadd-sarangi would take a shine to these love ballads. During the era of Maharaja Ranjit Singh [1799-1839] and up through the first half of the 19th century, being a time of peace and prosperity, folk tales began to be commonly sung with dhadd-sarangi. Poets, minstrels and other artists achieved royal status. A shared culture had developed, and political turmoil had ended. It was during this time that the poet Qadar Yar's qissa of *Pūran Bhagat* came out, at the end of which he writes:

> This qissa of Puran Bhagat was composed by Qadar
>   Yar.
> Some may read its *baint*s; others may sing it, with
>   dhadd and sarangi.

It is from here that the phenomenon of the *folk* dhadi genre was carried forward and gradually arrived in the village performance arenas.

Thus we see how things went on in the world of dhadi music. On one side of things was the phenomenon that used to be called *guru kā ḍhāḍī* and which became confined purely to the preaching of Sikh religion. Dhadis connected with this camp are faithfully engaged in keeping alive and spreading the dhadi's art in conscious and systematized form. The other camp was that which, being connected with Punjab's vast folk culture, made its balladry their customary repertoire. People

began to call these folks "minstrel" (*gamantrī*) and to call the ballad form that they perform *gauṇ*. They would sing whilst strolling about circular performance arenas. I shall call the latter performers "folk dhadis." Herein I will only discuss the folk dhadi genre; discussion of the religious dhadi's art can be found elsewhere.

The art of balladry principally relates to sound, though it may be executed by instrument or singer. Therefore, if we focus on sound, we can formulate some ideas about the art. Although the technology to make sound "immortal," i.e. recording, had emerged some time previously, the first recordings of Punjabi folk balladry were made around 1929-30. One of these was of the folk dhadi genre. Although we cannot say anything positively about the dhadi genre before the time of recordings, we might surely make some guesses. The basis for these conjectures is the testimonies of the disciples of older singers and of elderly aficionados. The latter retain a passion for this music that, as in the manner of Jawala Mukhi, bursts upon their inner being knowing no limits. "The artistes of the past gave long, continuous performances. If singers nowadays, like singers of our time, were to ramble about the arena all night entertaining the people, some might actually be so bold as to *complain*. People nowadays can't sit still." According to information gotten from these individuals, in the "olden days" there were many minstrels who sang with dhadd-sarangi in this region whose contribution cannot be denied, and because of whom, the following generations (i.e. their disciples) were able to establish their own particular place in the world of balladry.

With regards to the spread of the genre after the middle of the 19th century, one more aspect to be noted is the phenomenon of royal patronage. The rulers of various states began to play host to these dhadis in their courts, and by means of them the court's reputation was raised. The performers began to receive tips, gifts, and pensions from the courts in turn. The Maharaja of Nabha, the Maharaja of Patiala, and the Maharaja of Faridkot used to support them well. Loha Khera's Modan Singh, who used to be called "The Tansen of Malwa," was the state of Nabha's court dhadi during the time of the Maharaja of Malwa Hira Singh. Nageena Mirasi of Bathinda was the ranking dhadi of his time. In 1925 he received a great sum for his art from the Maharaja of Patiala. Vadhaava Mirasi of Dhadde was the Maharaja of Patiala's royal minstrel. The Dhadis of Gurm won a large award from the Maharaja of Patiala and received a monthly pension up until 1947. Ruliya Mirasi of Rauala was a sarangi master whom was patronized by the Maharaja of Faridkot, Harinder Singh.

Partap Singh Hasanpuria, Khiddu Mochi of Gumti Kalan, Munshi of Shero, Panj Garaianvala Dhadi, Magghar Shekh of Barnala, and Puran Jhiur of Dhanaula became the renowned dhadis of their time. The pillar of the dhadi genre, Ustad Dhadi Giani Sohan Singh Seetal Huran said

that his ustad, Chiragdin Bhariai of Laliani, was the renowned sarangi master of his time. It was under his patronage that Sohan Singh acquired training in dhadi music and earned the subtleties of this art.

The famed folk dhadi Didar Singh Ratainda's ustad, Bhagatu Ramgarhia, was the famous minstrel of his time, as was Koreana's Jaimal Singh, the well-known sarangi master; the latter was in fact Didar Singh's sarangi ustad. Dhadi Narain Singh Chandan's father, Karam Singh of Tuse, and grandfather were also their era's top-ranking dhadis. Pandit Kaanshi Ram Dohlon's ustad, Parmeshri Ram, was his time's renowned dhadi. Keeping the dhadi genre alive at the present time, the folk dhadi Vilayat Khan of Goslan's grandfather, Khairdin, and great-grandfather, Husain Bakhsh, were the original generation's top two dhadis.

Thematic Content

When we analyze the folk dhadi genre we find that some themes emerge. We can classify and sort traditional folk tales sung by dhadis according to these themes, e.g. in which the stories of *Hir*, *Sohni*, *Sassi*, *Mirza*, etc. are love stories of an erotic nature, *Puran*, *Gopi Chand*, *Kaulan* etc. are devotional, and *Dulla Bhatti*, *Jaimal-Fatta*, etc. are heroic.

Love stories. Folk dhadis continue to sing traditional, classical types of folk tales like *Hir*, *Sohni*, *Sassi*, *Mirza*, etc., along with the local love stories of *Indar-Bego*, *Kaka-Partapi*, *Jaikur Bishan Singh*, and so on.

Puranic episodes. A number of preceptive and instructive stories out of the *Ramayan*, *Mahabharat*, and *Purans* have continued to be sung, in widespread adaptations. These adaptations often times will be totally different from the forms contained within the ancient texts.

Tales of heroism. Various poets' writings about the valiant deeds of brave warriors also have continued to be sung by folk dhadis, among which *Dulla Bhatti*, *Jaimal-Fatta*, *Dahood Badshah*, *Sucha Soorma*, and more are notable.

Parables. Folk dhadis have maintained the custom of singing tales that illustrate moral and life lessons. These include such tales as *Puran Bhagat*, *Gopi Chand*, and *Shahni Kaulan*, along with which one also finds ballads of scholar-poets constructed on philosophical themes, like *Zindagi Bilas*, *Fanah da Makan*, or *Nasihat Bilas* [by Daya Singh, 1910s].

Although, in the main, the topic of "ishq"—intense love—has remained preeminent, this is not purely mundane love but rather a blend of *ishq haqiqi* (divine love) and *ishq majazi* (earthly love). It is as Varis Shah declared in the end of his *Hir*: *hīr rūh te chāk qalbūt jāṇoṅ*— "Know Hir as both spirit and body." This very tradition has been carried on. Bansi Lal of Nauhra also stated, in his *Hir*,

> Bansi Lal has orchestrated a clash of soul and body,
> Placing as pawn the figure of Ranjha.

This folk concept is the product of traditional custom in which it was characteristic of the discussion of divine matters to do so through wordly images. Indeed, devotees of "ishq" would take the name of archetypal lovers as they would take the name of God; "Hir Mai" is even a sort of goddess for them. In Sikh religious texts, too, comes mention of these lovers. Guru Gobind Singh, in his writings in the Dasam Granth, and Bhai Gurdas, in other writings, here and there articulated concepts of the Divine through symbolic reference to these figures. These folk tales were sung by folk dhadis in village religious-camps, near ponds, in spinning bees, and at the shrines and memorials of saints and holymen. People believed that illness, ill fortune, and troubled times would be warded off from places where such lovers might be mentioned, and happiness, peace, and brotherhood would flourish in their stead. Indeed, in villages, if somewhere sickness should befall the livestock, the gaun of *Hir* used to be specially performed.

Malwa, the Main Site of the Genre

Although the dhadi genre was popular throughout Punjab, its main area was Malwa. Even audiences for the dhadis of Doaba were mostly Malwai. This fact explains the saying,

> The dhadd-sarangi plays in Malwa;
> The jori [double flute] plays in Amritsar.

In Malwa, most dhadis are from Mirasi or Mir families; however, many dhadis connected with other castes have made a name. When we look back towards the genre's roots it appears that the stylistic legacies of a few originally named dhadis have indeed been perpetuated. In the areas around Sangrur and Bathinda, Modan Singh Loha Khera's disciples carried on his legacy, which evolved into a "gharana" [artistic stylistic lineage] of sorts. They often sang the version of *Hir* composed by Malwa's well-known kavishar, Ganga Singh Bhoondar. Besides this, some among them also used to sing the *Hir* of Divan Singh of Shahina.

In the areas around Ludhiana and Faridkot, students of Kaanshi Ram Dohlon (the student of Parmeshri Ram of Bhaini Baringan) developed their gharana. They all sang and continue to sing the *Hir* of Hazura Singh Butahrivala. This version, surely a masterpiece, is set in the poetic meter of couplets called *kalī*; it contains 996 kalis in all. Hazura Singh never had his *Hir* published, but of the ballad compositions recorded on disc, many are of this composition of his. In addition to this one, the abovementioned *Hir* of Bansi Ram is also common among the dhadis of this gharana. Finally, some dhadis also sing the *Hir* compositions of Ran Singh, Babu Razab Ali, and Maaghi Singh Gill.

Typical dhadi performers have sung the *Puran* of Karam Singh of Tuse. This composition, too, is a masterpiece, and after *Hir* it was the greatest of the gauns that used to be sung. The orally transmitted version of *Mirza* by Pilu was usually common, however, several dhadis also used to sing the *Mirza* by Dogar of Chhapar. The *Sassi* sung was by Natha Singh of Nararu. This, too, is a masterpiece in kali form. Among contemporary dhadis, *Bego Nar* in kalis, by Dila Ram of Matharu Bhoodan, is common, along with *Kaulan* by Bishan Chugawan, *Dhol-Sammi* by Ali Shah of Ghudani-Ghaloti, and *Raja Rasalu* by Puran Chand of Bharo.

Form

The folk dhadi genre is subject to three main poetic forms: 1. *baint*; 2. *sadd*; and 3. *kalī*. *Puran*, *Kaulan*, and *Gopi Chand* are sung in baints. *Mirza* is sung in sadds. *Hir* and *Sassi* have been generally sung in kalis. Though these three ballad meters became universally popular among Punjabis, an honor is accorded to kali that is not accorded to the other forms. This is easily seen from the fact that regular folks refer to *every* form of folk balladry sung with dhadd-sarangi as "kali." They would typically say, "Brother, give us the kali of *Mirza*" or, "Brother, give us the kali of *Puran*." Thus the notion of "kali" has remained close to the heart of the common man.

Compared with the other forms of folk balladry (baint and sadd), kali is the most modern. It is purely Malwai and has its basis in folk-songs.[3] This ballad form was originated by *kavishar*s of Malwa, who sang in their performances without instruments.[4] Among the old kavishars who polished this form we may include: Chand Singh Maharaj, Sher Singh Sandal, Ganga Singh Bhoondar, Babu Razab Ali, Maaghi Singh Gill, Hazura Singh Butahri, Ran Singh, Natha Singh Nararu, and more. Later on, dhadis singing with dhadd-sarangi adopted this kali form and gave it a respected place in folk balladry. Dr. Ajmer Singh, speaking to the development and spread of kali, says this about the form:

> Due to geographic, social, and political factors, kali
> was born in Malwa. Minstrels of Doaba domesticated
> it, and throughout Punjab it gained renown.

The kali form was bred in the wilderness of the bush country. Kavishars raised it, and to dhadis it was wed. While kavishars sing kali without instruments, the minstrels playing dhadd-sarangi made it more popular. Thus kali is a wonderous and powerful combination of kavishari and dhadi traditions.

Aspects of the Genre

Th folk dhadi genre has four main aspects: 1. discourse; 2. poetry; 3. singing; and 4. music. "Discourse" refers to the tale or story, and it is its main aspect. Upon this basis the poetry is created, to which music is sung along with dhadd-sarangi.

We find that recordings of the dhadi genre consist of isolated, main episodes taken from some tale. This was due to some fundamental limitations of the recording medium. On the old discs, one side could accomodate a composition (kali, sadd, or baint) of just two and a half or three minutes in length. Thus on one disc (of two sides) there would be two compositions. However, in typical concerts, dhadis sang complete tales. In order to advance the story, the leader would realize the narration of the tale in such vivid sonic images that it was presented before the audience "in living color," as it were. Even before the start of the singing, the audience members would become engaged with the minstrels. The dhadis delivered a sort of oration that was not prose, but rather was poetic and matched the character of the theme. Some examples follow:

> *pūran bhagat nūṅ kaṛāhe de kol khaṛhā liā, aur tel*
> *taṛā-taṛ rijhdai te pūran bhagat pramātmā nūṅ yād*
> *kardai ki ajj lajjiā rakkh. bhāī natthe khāṅ vajā sārangī*
> *bhalā kaise kahindai baī…*

> The king had Puran stand by the cauldron and at once
> heated up the oil. And Puran invoked God, saying,
> "Protect my honour on this day." Brother Nathe Khan,
> play the sarangi—Now, how does he go on…?
> (Didar Singh Ratainda)

jis vele khān mirzā māriā jaṇḍ heṭhāṅ, bakkī dharke mukkh vaiṇ pāundī ai o… tāṅ kī javāb kardī ai…

At which time Mirza was slain beneath the jand tree, [his horse] Bakki lied down and let out a sorrowful wail, oh!… And what response did Sahiban give…?
(Didar Singh Ratainda)

mornī vargī bharjāī te mornī vargī naṇad ne pahin pachar ke rānjhe panchhī de darshan karan laī āpṇe ghar toṅ tiārī he… e… e… iuṅ kītī baī

The sisters-in-law got gussied up like peahens and, in order to have a glimpse of Ranjha, to leave home, they… hey… hey… prepared thusly:
(Niranjan Singh)

jadoṅ mirza sāhibāṅ nūṅ siālāṅ toṅ laī jāndai tāṅ aggoṅ ḍogar pharoz puchchhdai. dassī khāṅ nāzar siāṅ duābe vāliāṅ kis tahrāṅ puchchhdā hai dostā…

As Mirza brings Sahiban from the Sials, up speaks Firoz the Dogar [Sahiban's uncle] and inquires. Tell us, Nazar of Doaba, friend, what it is he asks…
(Nazar Singh)

āshakāṅ dī rāṇī hīr jaṭṭī ate lohaṛiāṅ mārī sahitī rānjhe panchhī nāl javāb savāl kar rahī hai. malkīt singh pandher ate pāl singh panchhī talvaṇḍī mahllīā vālā he… e… e… iūṅ dasdai

The Jatti Hir, Queen of Lovers, and the grief-stricken Sahiti are having an exchange with Ranjha. Malkit Singh Pandher and Pal Singh Panchhi of Talwandi Mallian shall… hey… hey… hey… tell us thusly:
(Pal Singh Panchhi and Malkit Singh Pandher)

rājā rasālū husan dā bhikhārī baṇke satī kaulāṅ de būhe ute jāke uhdā sat bhang karnā chāhundā hai. sangat nūṅ suṇā de chain siāṅ kiveṅ karnā chāhundā hai…

> Raja Rasalu becomes a slave to Beauty and goes to the
> good Miss Kaulan's door wanting to slake his passion.
> Tell the people, Chain, how he acts on his desire…
> (Chain Singh and Satnam Singh)

And with this the backing vocalists would start up the *mukhṛā* [lead-in phrase to the refrain]. There would be a special style of mukhra, too. The first half of the composition's first line would be started on a low tone and taken up to a high tone, and they would deliver the lines of the mukhra at a fast or slow pace according to the meaning of the theme. Every dhadi would present it in a different way, as in the following examples:

> *hār toṛke makar baṇā liā hīr ne,*
> *lai makar baṇā liā hīr ne,*
> *kite mel oe hoṇ sababbāṅ de,*
> *rugg bharke o kaḍḍh liā kāljā…*

> Breaking the necklace, she made pretend, did Hir,
> Lo, made pretend [to call Ranjha to help her], did Hir,
> Saying, "I wish I knew why,
> My heart had to be grabbed and torn out so"…

> *chakiā jhammaṇ hīr ḍolī bahi gaī kheṛiāṅ dī…*
> *chhāl mār ke gaḍḍī de vich bahi gī nī,*
> *merā kaḍḍ ke kāljā lai gī nī,*
> *tūṅ rāh kheṛiāṅ de pai gī nī,*
> *gall mathī mathāī rahi gī nī,*
> *aṇ hakkīāṅ majjhīāṅ chārīāṅ,*
> *jaṭṭ luṭṭ liā takht hazāre dā…*

> Hir lifted the flap and sat in the palanquin of the Kheras…
> She leap up and sat in the carriage O,
> Ranjha: "You've stolen my heart and gone away O.
> You have fallen upon the path of the Kheras O,
> And your commitment to me left unfulfilled O.
> The buffaloes are left to wander ungrazed,
> And this Jatt from Takht Hazara is left looted"…

> *mere mūṅhoṅ sipht nā sajdī hīr siāl dī…*
> *kadd lammāṅ te rang dī gorī baī,*
> *kite dhauṇ ganne dī porī baī,*
> *kite rām lachhmaṇ dī joṛī baī,*
> *gall suṇ oe ṭalle diā bāviā…*

Words cannot praise lovely Hir of the Sials.
She is tall and her color is fair, brother,
Her neck like a slender segment of bamboo, brother,
You're as fitting a pair as Ram and Lachhman, brother,
Listen O rag doll…

phūlāṅ saṇe kuṛīāṅ deṇ sunehā hīr nūṅ…
jogī indarpurī tasvīr kuṛe,
koī ohde nāloṅ sohṇī nā hīr kuṛe,
jiveṅ rām lachhmaṇ dā vīr kuṛe,
chall darshan karlai jogī de…

Bringing flowers, the girls give a message to Hir…
"There's a jogi, to which even an Inderpuri painting,
Could not compare in beauty, Hir girl,
As fitting as was Ram to Lachhman, girl.
C'mon, let's go see the jogi"…

kheṛe ho sharmindā muṛ gae koloṅ ḍolī dioṅ…
dam dam dā kī bharvāsā hai,
jiveṅ pāṇī de vich patāsā hai,
lajiā rām nām dī pherī ai,
ute charnāṅ de manshā terī ai,
kite mel o hoṇ sababbāṅ de…

The Kheras turned in shame from the palanquin…
What confidence of strength they had,
Is dissolved like a sweet dropped in water,
By God, may I keep my honor,
And place my head at your feet,
Hoping somewhere there might be a reason for it all…
(Didar Singh Ratainda)

chaṛhiāṅ mirzā nizām dīn o…
merīā lāḍliā,
tainūṅ kī kahāṅ,
koī din kheḍ lai,
maut uḍīkdī, sir te kūkdī,
kūkāṅ mārdī, jānāṅ nūṅ khārdī,
kachchīāṅ lagarāṅ nūṅ toṛdī,
o bhaur nimāṇiāṅ…

O mounted Mirza Nizam Din…
O my precious one,
What shall I say to you?
Have your fun while you can;
Death awaits, circling overhead,
Screeching, as life wastes away,
Breaking tender branches,
O humble bumble-bee…
(Bhoora Singh)

lāl chiharā satī dā ho giā…
koī din kheḍ lai, maujāṅ māṇ lai,
taiṅ bhajj jāvṇā, o kangṇā kachch diā…

The lady became flush and said…
"Have some fun, enjoy yourself,
Run along, O little glass bangle"…
(Chain Singh and Satnam Singh)

kaṭṭhīāṅ ho ke kuṛīāṅ deṇ sunehā hīr nūṅ…
nāle sone dī tasvīr nūṅ,
rugg bharke kaḍḍh liā kāljā…

The girls gather together and give the message to Hir…
"Compared to a figure of gold, can he be,
Our heart has been captured and stolen away"…
(Niranjan Singh)

Oftentimes, before the mukhra some couplet resembling the theme was recited; a number of these couplets became extremely popular among the general public and they have entered everyday discourse:

uchchā burj barābar morī, dīvā kis vidh dharīe.
nār bagānī ādar thoṛā, gal lagg ke nā marīe.

In a small cubby up on a high tower, how shall one set a lamp?
A foreign woman [wife of another] carries little respect;
    don't get caught with her.
(Niranjan Singh)

uchche chubāre maiṅ chaṛhī, khaṛhī sukāvāṅ kes.
yār dikhāī de giā, karke bhagvāṅ bhes.

I climbed up to the top floor, and stood drying my hair.
There I caught sight of my lover, dressed, as it were, by God.
(Didar Singh Ratainda)

suphaniāṅ tainūṅ katal karāvāṅ, baiṭh giā mere chitt
rātī sutte do jaṇe din chaṛhde nūṅ ikk.

In dreams I see you killed; my spirits sink with sorrow.
At night two people lie asleep; at daybreak there is just one.
(Didar Singh Ratainda)

alaph es jahān te kauṇ āshak,
    pāpī ishq jīhdā jhuggā paṭṭiā nā.
pāpī ishq jīhde magar lagg jāndā,
    zindā vekh ke kadī vī haṭṭiā nā.
nāzar siāṅ es ishq de vaṇaj vichoṅ,
    naphā kise insān ne khaṭṭiā nā.

What lover was there ever in this world
    Whose sinful love did not cost him his home?
Behind which sinful love he follows
    Like a zombie unaware of the world around him?
Naazar says, out of this business of love,
    Nobody has gained any profit.
(Naazar Singh)

After the mukhra and before the *toṛā* [the closing phrase], within the presentation of the five or seven lines of the intervening (main) composition of verse, there would also come several back and forths. Among it all, at various places one's fellow performers would be encouraged with such comments as, "Bravo, Didar!" "Live long, Mahinga!" or "You're the best, Niranjan!" Didar Singh, after every line or two, used to utter, *haṭṭ-haṭṭ!* ("get along!").

    At the end, in order to hasten the flow of singing and to impress the audience, a tora was executed consisting of one, two, or more lines. Typically this tora summarized the entire composition and laid out the pertinant facts of the text. The tora was an important aspect of this singing style. Some examples are as follows:

    vanjhalī vāliā maiṅ arjāṅ kardī terīāṅ,
    mann lai darvesh dī
    merī hū ve shukīnā
    hai dam dā vasāh kī…

O flute-player, I entreat you:
Believe in the holy mendicant;
My own breathing, O dandy boy,
Cannot be trusted so…
(Didar Singh Ratainda)

terī hatth bahnn kardāṅ bentī,
ākhe laggjā, merīāṅ mann lai,
ho mālak merīā,
devāṅ maiṅ sachch suṇā…

I beg of you with hands clasped,
Heed my words, believe what I say—
O Lord of mine,
I tell you the truth…
(Didar Singh Ratainda)

ākhe laggjā, laggjā merīāṅ mann lai,
oe ḍuhlliāṅ berāṅ dā kuchh nī bigaṛiā,
o chāke jholī vich pā lai
ho pāgal rājiā…

Heed my words, believe what I say—
If the berries should spill, no damage is done.
Just pick them up and gather them in your shirt,
Oh you crazy Raja…
(Niranjan Singh)

tūṅ nā ro nā ro nā ro nī.
tere rondī de kappṛe bhijjge nī.
muṇḍe kājīāṅ de dārū pīṇ gijjh-ge nī.
ghar paṇḍatāṅ de murge rijjhge nī.
tag ṭuṭṭ giā sārī dunīāṅ dā…

Don't cry, don't cry, don't cry O!
You've cried so much your clothes have become soaked O.
The sons of judges are now binge-drinking liquor O.
At the homes of priests, now chickens are being boiled O.
All the world seems to have gone out of order…
(Didar Singh Ratainda)

Some kali-reciters have toras of several lines, which become quite long. One finds such toras written like this in the kalis of Natha Singh Nararu and Hazura Singh:

jagg darshan dā melā hai.
aithe kauṇ gurū kauṇ chelā hai.
kade ladd jū bhaur akelā hai.
jehṛā ajj karne dā velā hai.
satiā ve tārjū.

The world is a festival of encounters.
Here, who is teacher and who is student?
Sometimes a soul must find its fulfillment alone,
And today is such a time.
O universal powers, deliver me.
(Nattha Singh Nararu)

natthā singh de bachan amol kuṛe.
jāīṅ nā thalāṅ vich ḍol kuṛe.
mūṅhoṅ punnūṅ nī punnūṅ bol kuṛe.
sohṇe yār nūṅ lavengī ṭol kuṛe.
mil jāengī yār nūṅ.

Natha Singh's words are priceless, girl.
Don't go stumbling into the desert, girl.
Calling out, "Punnun, O Punnun!", girl.
You'll search for your handsome lover, girl.
You shall be reunited with him.
(Nattha Singh Nararu)

bheḍe jāṇdī kī atar kapūrāṅ nūṅ.
aimeṅ gangā kī nahlāuṇā sūrāṅ nūṅ.
tatte tā kī deṇe magrūrāṅ nūṅ.
akal dassṇī kī beshahūrāṅ nūṅ.
khākhī bande dā mel kī hūrāṅ nūṅ.
pāṇī jhol kī haṭauṇā būrāṅ nūṅ.
kiuṅ rabb te chhapauṇā nūrāṅ nūṅ.

Sheep have little use for perfumes,
Just as the Ganges is wasted on washing pigs.
What use is it to hold a fire to the arrogant?
Or to offer wisdom to the uncultured?
What use have beautiful women for an uncouth man?
What use is water to remove mold?
Why hide light from God?
(Hazura Singh)

jann chūchak vidā karāī ai.
kuṛī sabh siālāṅ dī āī ai.
dhumm chūchak vehaṛe machāī ai.
gauṇ ṭoḍī rāg atāī ai.
āsā nāl bhairmī lāī ai.
sūhī pūrvī pīlo gāī ai.
dīp mālā megh suṇāī ai.
hīr tulī ne āṇ barāī ai.
māme ne chukk ḍolī vich pāī ai.

Chuchak saw off the procession.
The prized girl of all the Sials has come.
Chuchak shouted her praises from the courtyard.
He performed a song in rag Todi,
Mixing Asa and Bhairavi as he sang.
Rags Suhi, Purvi, and Pilu were also sung,
And rag Deep, strung along with Megh, he sang.
Hir had to go, so came the bearers.
Her uncle picked her up and put her in the palanquin.
(Hazura Singh)

The Concert-arena Tradition

Another notable aspect of the folk dhadi genre is its performance-arena tradition. This sort of "arena"—called *akhāṛā* in Punjabi[5]—was not like the stage arenas of singers these days. These concerts were held outside of villages on the banks of a pond or in some other open space under the dense shade of a few large tree, or else at the religious-camps of the village. In those days there were no "loud speakers," nor was any need for them felt. The minstrels' voices themselves were so loud that they could reach all members of the audience. Indeed, the very "arena" style itself was different. Audience members would sit in a circular formation, and according to their number the circle shrank or grew. The artists would be in the middle of the circle, and by strolling about they would continually reach all the audience members. After reciting two stanzas to the audience members on the right side, they would move and recite the same stanzas to the people on the left. With this method they would have to repeat to each individual stanza four or five times; they would have to satisfy the entire audience. This is the arena style that today, too, their followers have adopted and which can be seen at melas like those at Jarg and Chhapar.

We can distinguish two main types of concerts:

> a. Concerts at melas;
> b. Booked or village-wide concerts.

These concerts went on for some time at the melas of Jarg, Chhapar, Jargraon di Raushni, Dussehra of Sangrur, and the Mandi of Sunam, and at some melas today, too, this tradition is still in place. To stage a concert at a mela would be pretty difficult, and as such it could be considered the moment of truth for artistes. A place would be reserved off to one side of the mela's crowds, in a secluded place below spacious trees. Audiences for these concerts would have been strolling about the mela until afternoon, at which point they would begin to gather in the arena. With cloths on their shoulders, they would lay down sheets, remove their fancy embroidered *juttī*s, and lay their canes and staves on the ground before them. With an air of satisfaction and looking their best, they would at last sit down. The minstrels would enter the middle of the arena and enjoin the audience in a supplication of *fateh*, and the gaun would begin. All the while, people would also be enjoying shots of liquor. Some audience members would call the minstrels near and give them a shot, and the minstrels would clear away their mustaches with a hand and gulp it down. After some time, a state of intoxicated delight would prevail in the arena. Rupees would start to float about as cash donations. At this point there would begin a string of requests. The veteran minstrels would shrewdly negotiate these requests, consoling individuals where necessary as they kept strolling the arena, but inevitably several crazies here and there would complain. As such, the setting would also engender a clash of the various temperaments of audience members. Oftentimes old grudges between audience members of different villages would reemerge and the situation came to blows. Sometimes this fight even took a dangerous form as it transformed into the expression of a long-standing rivalry. Due to these sorts of clashes at melas, many villagers began to invite minstrels to stage concerts in their own villages. For example there is the concert held in one of Jarg's nearby villages, Jabbo Majra, which begins on the second day of the Jarg mela. Older informants claim that in the arena held at the Jarg mela there once was an altercation between Jabbo Majra people and Jarg people, such that the very next day, Jabbo Majra residents invited the minstrels to stage a concert in their own village. This custom continues today.

The second type of concert is the booked or invited type. These concerts are again of two types: one is village-wide while the other is private. The planning of village-wide concerts was done by the entire village on the festival day of some saint or holyman or on some other important ocassion. The village panchayat would approach the area's

eminent artistes and, with due respect, invite them to put on a concert in the village. In these events the whole village would listen to the gaun with absolute reverence and respect, and the minstrels would be waited upon with great hospitality. Minstrels found no difficulty in this type of performance because all arrangements and decisions would be made prior. If individuals from a nearby village also came to hear the gaun, then they would abstain from any sort of unruliness. In some villages this tradition is carried on at the camps of holymen and shrines of saints. Such concerts are arranged every year or every second year at the wrestling matches in Salana, at the camps of saints in Heron/Jharon, and in villages Kurali, Gharachon, Ajnauda, and others.

From time to time, in order to present a tale in full, these minstrels would do it over the course of several days. The gaun of *Hir* was the longest; *Puran*, too, would go on for three days. When time was short, in place of the full tale the performers might also excerpt the main episodes. All this was according to the requests of the audience members and the span of time available. The time of the concert was usually also set according to the convenience of audience members. After the preliminary supplication, and having presented one or two other compositions, the audience members were asked what they would like to hear. In spite of divergent preferences, after some time they would arrive at a general consensus and the gaun would begin. Link by link the gaun was paid out for two and a half to three hours until, after arriving at some important point, the performance was adjourned until the next day, at which time the audience would again gather to hear the tale continued.

Of the invited concerts the second type were personally booked stagings. Affluent individuals in the village or special fans of gaun would arrange these to occur for their private, happy occasions. A son's *chhaṭī*,[6] an engagement, or a wedding became the reason to stage concerts. The happy family would invite the artists at their own expense, however, the concert was held in the shared space of the village and all were invited. In those days there was no custom of having an enclosed festival-tent like today. Any audience member was free to encourage the minstrels with tips of a rupee or half-rupee. The scene of this sort of concert used to be very different. Rather than to the general audience, the minstrels paid special attention to the contentment of the patron family. The family served them in turn with ample liquor. Accordingly, minstrels would often stick to the gauns preferred by the family for most of the time.

Practice Regimen

A distinctive feature of the folk dhadi's art has been a continuous and strict practice regimen. Usually these dhadis were completely illiterate or practically so. They would have to learn the whole gaun by heart just by

hearing others, so their powers of memory would have to be very great. The greater someone's memory for repertoire was, the more popular he was. Therefore, they would have to practice strict discipline; continuous upkeep was necessary to keep their art polished. For this reason, many would leave hearth and home to live in the company of their masters for some 10-12 years. They would serve their masters well, considering it their paramount duty to take care of all kinds of work. The master's favourite disciples could, in turn, achieve more in less time. In performances they would invoke their master's name with pride, saying, "I am the disciple of such and such ustad." As such, the ancient master-disciple tradition has retained a special place in the dhadi genre.

Performance Attire

The dress of folk dhadis also bears noting. Dazzling white, starched turbans with fan (*furlā*). Jasmine-white tunics and blindingly white sheets. Pointed *juttī*s on the feet, which were splendidly embroidered and creaking [i.e. from newness]. Angular, trimmed beards and twirled mustaches. Kohl in the eyes. A silken handkerchief tied to the little finger of the left hand. In these ways their appearance was distinguished from regular folks'. The white color was a symbol of their learning, wisdom, and cleanliness. Like wrestlers were given training in good conduct and upright moral qualities by their masters, in the same way these minstrels were also given lessons in living a morally upright and "clean" life. Their intent was to communicate their "cleanliness in living" through the cleanliness of their attire, and in fact these appearances made a deep impression on audiences. Moving about the arena step by step, forward and back, they affected such postures as extending the right foot, lifting the arm up high, and tilting the torso forward while singing out, and as such they would charm their audiences. All these matters of dress and posture are in fact a part of this singing style.

Religion-neutral Character

One great peculiarity of the folk dhadi genre is its religion-neutral character. Being connected with various religions and castes, the performers have not fenced themselves into any one religious sphere, rather they have impartially presented all of Punjab's cultural and religious heritage. Muslim dhadis also reverently sang Hindu Puranic tales and episodes connected with Sikh history. Likewise, Sikh dhadis sang, from the heart, compositions connected with Hindu mythology as did Hindu dhadis sing episodes from Sikh history. Many dhadis in fact got their initial training in the camps of holymen, temples, and gurdwaras. The training in dhadi music was acquired at these religious-

camps along with education in folk culture and religious and prescriptive texts. One can consider the great achievement of Punjabi balladic art to be its blend of *ishq majazi* and *ishq haqiqi*—the worldly and the spiritual.

Historical Development

When we examine this art's history it becomes necessary to make some divisions, be they according to era, character, or some other dimension. So in order to expound the history of the folk dhadi genre I have divided it in the following three parts:

1. Dhadis who were recorded on phonograph disc;
2. Dhadis who were not recorded, but who were generally known among the public;
3. Dhadis who are presently/recently active.

Recorded dhadis

What we know of the sound of older folk dhadis today is that which has been preserved on commercial recordings. There is a bit we can say based on the evidence they provide. Although the work of preserving ideas in written form had begun long previously, the effort to preserve sound came much later. The first recording of Punjab's folk balladry was released in ca.1929-30. The voice was dhadi Didar Singh Ratainda's,[7] which was recorded by the world famous recording company HMV (His Master's Voice). This record was of the kali of *Puran*, and included the episodes "Ichchharāṅ dhārāṅ mārdī" and "Sāmbh lai nagarī āpṇī." It was released under the recording number HMVN 4527.

Another individual to have earned this honor for the genre is dhadi Niranjan Singh,[8] whose performance of Ranjha and Sahiti's exchange [from *Hir*] was recorded on the Regal label (as number RL5). The individual who represented the apex of this phenomenon was the favorite dhadi of Punjabis, Amar Singh Shaunki.[9] He issued scores of records and raised the level of respect for the art. During this era one finds recordings of Giani Ude Singh, Dalip Singh, Mohan Singh, Naazar Singh Doabewala, Bhoora Singh, Mehar Singh, Bakhtavar Singh, Ganga Singh, Dilavar Singh, Chain Singh and Satnam Singh, Massa Singh, Pal Singh Panchhi, Malkit Singh Pandher, and other folk dhadis, which continued up to the 1970s. After that, the recent generations, under the influence of Western culture, turned away from this art and the recording of it also ceased.

The compositions that were to be recorded were written or arranged according to the limitation of records, *viz.* that a disc needed to fit a complete composition (kali or var) of two and a half or three minutes. In

these kalis or songs (*gīt*), the most prominent episodes of folk ballads were presented. For example, out of *Hir*, there would be Hir and Ranjha's meeting, Hir's wedding, Ranjha's becoming a jogi, the description of Hir tormented by pangs of separation, Ranjha's going to Kheri, Ranjha and Sahiti's exchange, Hir and Sahiti's exchange, etc. Out of *Puran*, examples would be Puran's living twelve years in the underground cell, Lunan and Puran's exchange, Mansa Ram Wazir and Raja Salvan's exchange, Puran's meeting with Gorakh Nath, Puran's becoming a jogi, his going to beg alms in the palaces of Rani Sundran, his meeting with Ichharan [his mother], etc. Out of the var of *Jaimal-Fatta*, there is the episode of the reaction of Jaimal when Emperor Akbar requested his daughter be sent to him in a bridal carriage. Out of *Dulla Bhatti*, there is Dulla's mother's disclosure, Dulla's meeting with his fate, Dulla's battle with the Mughals, and the dialogue with Mehru Posti [his brother]. Out of *Dhol-Sammi*, there is the warning to Dhol by his parrot after he had gone to his father-in-law's. [Out of *Sohni*,] there is Sohni's words with the pot, [and out of *Sassi*,] there is Punnun's feelings of separation from sleeping Sassi, and Sassi's getting lost in the desert. One also finds recordings of compositions on assorted episodes from the tales of *Raja Rasalu*, *Kaulan*, and *Mirza*.

As for *Hir*, one mostly finds recorded the composition by Hazura Singh Butahri. However, some dhadis have recorded kalis of *Hir* that they have composed themselves. These include Didar Singh Ratainda, Niranjan Singh, Amar Singh Shaunki, Naazar Singh, and others. The *Puran* one usually finds on recordings is the version by Karam Singh Tuse. Much of what Amar Singh Shaunki recorded he actually wrote himself. The version of *Mirza* sung by Shaunki has become the most popular in Punjab. None can compare to the version of *Sassi* written and recorded by Ude Singh; it is still sung today in folk ballad competitions in college youth festivals.

In addition to HMV, other labels recorded the dhadi genre, including Regal, Young India, Columbia, The Twin, Nishat [Nishan?] Records, Hindustan Records, and Kohinoor Records. These companies improved the financial condition of dhadis through the royalties they paid. A few companies also helped dhadis in times of need due to illness.

The phenomenon of "loud speakers" [i.e. public address system] allowed these folk dhadis to easily reach the general public. Though recording playback equipment—gramophones—had been in use for a long time, their ambit had been small. Moreover, they were confined to personal use. Conversely, with the coming of loud speakers, recorded music was taken from the private to the public sphere. Each large village soon acquired a PA system, and without its use any joyous event was considered incomplete. On the roof, two cots were stood up tilted, making a sort of joint on top, in which the horn was hung. The

gramophone machine was wound with a key every time a new record was played. Records of regular folk-songs and duets played throughout the daytime. After around 9-10 o'clock at night, the kalis (i.e. records of folk dhadis) would begin. On still summer nights, both young lads and seniors, workers in the fields watering, and watchmen about their duties would listen with bated breath. Until after midnight, nothing but dhadi kalis would continue to play. Due to this custom, folks acquired a great love for the music of dhadis. People who previously had difficulty reaching performances [e.g. at melas] could now satiate their hunger for the music whilst seated at home listening to the records. On the other hand, recording companies and the dhadis alike benefited from the situation. The companies' records began to sell rapidly. Due to these sales the dhadis' esteem also began to increase, which translated into financial gain. Didar Singh Ratainda, Amar Singh Shaunki, Niranjan Singh, Naazar Singh, Mohan Singh, Pal Singh Panchhi, and others became beloved of the people through their recordings. And with this, their reputation grew and they made money.

From the above analysis it seems that we have in the folk dhadi genre a great and admirable recorded heritage. Alas, unfortunately it has not been preserved, even partially, by any sort of institution or cultural affairs department. Instead, it has been allowed to diffuse and languish here and there. Yes, a few enterprising individuals, in service of their own interest, have made an effort to preserve some recordings. These collectors include Prof. Baldev Singh Buttar of Ahmadgarh, Mr. Balkit Singh Pesi of Barvala, and a couple others. Cultural institutions or the Punjab Government's Cultural Affairs Department need to give some attention to this matter and preserve this scattered heritage. Otherwise, we will become bereft of this great heritage. Though so-called cultural institutions may spend hundreds of thousands of rupees on cultural programs, these achieve nothing; they are a misuse of people's money. We need to preserve our great cultural heritage and introduce it to the coming generations.

Unrecorded yet commonly known dhadis

There have been plenty of dhadis who, for whatever reason, could not have their voices recorded, and yet they enjoyed full glory and respect among the general public. There are a few reasons for their not being recorded. First, many were actually so old that the recording industry had yet to begin during their time of prime activity. A second reason was that, according to the telling of their descendants, the old generation had somehow gotten the notion that one's voice becomes bad after making records because the recording machines pull your voice and the vocal chords cave in. A third reason, claimed by the disciples of many old

dhadis, is that their masters did not make recordings so as to avoid jeapordizing their livlihood. Their concern was that, "Once people start to get our recordings, what use will *we* be? Who will book our services? Who will have us entertain them?" It is possible that to some extent they had a point, however, the situation they described cannot be considered wholly accurate. This is because the dhadis who have been recorded actually experienced an *increase* in fame and in respect among the public. From a monetary perspective, too, they have gained. Indeed, Amar Singh Shaunki, Didar Singh Ratainda, Niranjan Singh, Dalip Singh, Mohan Singh, and other dhadis became more loved due to recordings and their voices live on today. A fourth reason is that, perhaps despite wanting to record, due to lack of access they would not have been able to.

Upon close examination one thing becomes clear that the recorded dhadis were all Doabis and that those not recorded were all Malwais. Each displayed characteristic qualities of their respective areas. Doabis were sharp, informed, and progressive in thought and opinion. Conversely, Malwais were relatively simple, illiterate, superstitious, and backward-looking in thought. Moreover, they could not think about abandoning their hereditary customs.

These unrecorded, but nevertheless well-known, dhadis form a sizeable list. The consummate artist known as "Malwa's Tansen," Modan Singh of Loha Khera, was the erstwhile court dhadi of Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha. Nageena Mirasi of Bathinda, Vadhaava Mirasi of Dhadde, Ruliya Mirasi of Rauala, the dhadis of Gurm, and Partap Singh Hasanpuria all received royal patronage. Others who became famous minstrels of their era include: Kaanshi Ram Dohlon; Khandu of Dohlon; Munshi of Jakhal; Dogar Teli of Chhapar; Husain Bakhsh, Khairdin, and Raj Muhammad of Gosal; the dhadis of Dayagarh; Khiddu Mochi of Gumti; Panj Garaianvala Dhadi; Munshi of Shero; Santa Singh of Shero; Magghar Shekh of Barnala; Puran Jhiur of Dhanaula; Daya Ram Pandit; Dalip Singh Deewal; Bali Singh of Bassi; Jeet Singh of Dhudike; Harnam Singh and Gindar Singh of Faridkot; Rahiman Khan of Gajjumajra; Jangir Singh Mungo; Rodu of Malooka; and Hari Singh of Takht Mal.

Contemporary dhadis

The dhadi genre remained pretty popular up to the 1960s. After that, like other aspects of culture, modernity and Western culture also greatly influenced this art. Its audience gradually dwindled, until the young generation completely set it aside. Only individuals from the old generation remained attached to the genre. Yet however dominate though modernity may be, it cannot completely erase old customs. Therefore,

despite all these circumstances, even today there are some individuals who remain connected with and maintain their heritage, though they number only a handful. Those that move about in dhadi circles in the current "era" include: Vilayat Khan of Gosal; Vidia Sagar of Dohlon; Raj Khan of Dayagarh; Gurmel Khan of Ajnauda; Sharif Idu of Lalaudha; Des Raj of Lachkani; Ujagar Singh of Bhamaddi-Chakohi; Pritam Singh of Utal; Niranjan Singh of Ghanaur; Arjan Singh of Guara; Bhagvan Singh of Payal; Sudagar Singh of Galab; Ram Singh of Salana; and Surjit Singh of Gurm.

When we examine the historical development of this genre one thing we notice is that it has actually diverged little from where it began. Compositions from 75-100 years ago have continued to be sung in the same form. The *Hir* by Hazura Singh Butahri, *Puran* by Karam Singh of Tuse, *Kaulan* by Bishna of Chugawan, *Dhol-Sammi* by Ali Shah of Ghudani-Ghaloti, the orally-transmitted *Mirza*, and others, which the original dhadis used to sing, have remained foremost. True, a few from time to time have broken the mold and left the beaten path to do original work. Among them, Amar Singh Shaunki is preeminent. In the place of widely known compositions he presented his original pieces, and for this he became a milestone figure in the history of the dhadi genre. Without him, Giani Ude Singh, Dalip Singh, and Naazar Singh Doabevala could not have left their creative stamp on this genre. Among contemporary folk dhadis, Gurmel Khan of Ajnauda is one such dhadi who, alongside the widely known compositions, also sings his original compositions.

A major force in the spread of this art before Partition was royal patronage. In royal courts, artists were especially revered. They were given tips and on special occasions they were bestowed with prizes and pensions. The Maharajas of Patiala, Nabha, Sangrur, and Faridkot fully patronized the artists of their states. However, after the patronage of these princely states came to an end [i.e. by the 1950s], these dhadis became destitute. Because of this, the genre also began to erode. Patronage of these dhadis has not been continued by the government nowadays. However, there certainly are a few such camps in Punjab, the holymen at which are their patrons. Among these are Sant Amar Nath Hiron of Jharon, Sant Amar Das of Bheeti (near Abohar), and Sant Baldev Muni on Jarg Road (near Khanna). As such, several concerts take place during the wrestling tournament in Salana that is held in memory of Sant Puran Gir. In fact, on that ocassion the three-day long *Puran* is sung.

Thus we can easily perceive the pitiable current state of the folk dhadi genre. Though audiences of the latest generation have come to neglect it, some individuals of the older generation wish to keep the flame burning. Moreover, among the dhadis themselves there are some for whom this is their ancestral profession, which they cannot abandon. One cannot put a price on passion, as they say, and there are also some

who connect with this art to fulfill their avid personal interest. These are a few of the causes why, despite unfavorable circumstances and though it is taking its last breaths, the folk dhadi genre is yet alive.

Two Dhadi Profiles

Much of Thuhi's original book consists of short life-sketches of dhadi artistes from each of the preceding categories. The profiles of two presently-active dhadis are presented here, the rationale being that they are among the best known currently and, as such, have contributed to how many now perceive the secular dhadi genre. —G.S.

Des Raj Lachkani

In discussing the folk dhadi art we may make special mention of the name of Des Raj Lachkani. His may be counted among the names of the founders of contemporary folk dhadis who are commited to this art.

Des Raj was born at the time of Partition in village Lachkani (dist. Patiala) to father Madho and mother Bachni. Regarding his background, he says that they come from the [Muslim] Mardānā community.[10] "My first name used to be Taj Muhammad. Our older folk, instead of leaving their homeland and for self-preservation, changed their religious affiliation here and so gave me the name Des Raj." Des Raj was weened on music. His father used to play dholak to accompany the kirtan of Mahant Dharam Singh Kharaudh and Chhota Singh Kharaudh at the gurdwara in nearby village Lang. Des Raj actually recieved his initial education in the village primary school. He was accepted into 6th grade in Patiala, but he quit school before starting. Under the influence of the songs of Yamla Jatt and the kalis of Amar Singh Shaunki, he gravitated towards balladry, for which he satisfied his interest by singing with *tūmbī*.

Des Raj's uncle (*māsaṛ*), Gheechar Khan, who used to sing with sarangi, was once by chance giving a performance in village Lachkani. Des Raj was able to obtain training in his uncle's musical art from 1959-1963. However, the cruelty of fate was such that his voice completely went bad after that. For his own edification he continued to practice playing sarangi at home. In those days, at the compound of Sant Gulabpuri of Lasoi the holymen were supporting the dhadi art because at one time they, too, used to sing these ballads. Des Raj would provide services to the holymen while he continued to practice music at the compound. Thanks to the holymen's blessing and God's benvolence, his voice eventually got better. In 1982, after the holymen passed on and after a break of some twenty years, he once again embraced his old practice, along with his sons Urjit Khan and Albel playing dhadd. They

began to give performances at various melas. The first performance was held at the camp of the holymen of village Dakala (Patiala). After appearing at the ᶜurs held for saint Bhikam Shah in village Gharam (Patiala), and at the mela of Mirs in Kasiana (Patiala), and after moving on to the Dussehra celebrations of Raimal Majri and Kallar Bhaini (Patiala), and the melas of Chhapar and Jarg, he eventually made it to the cultural mela held annually in honor of Prof. Mohan Singh at the Punjabi Bhawan in Ludhiana.

Des Raj has also taken part in dhadi competitions. He won first place in the competition held by the Red Cross Society of Patiala in 1991. He has taken part in "dhadi darbars" in Ludhiana, Firozpur, Bathinda, and elsewhere. Since 1991 he has been the established folk dhadi associated with the Doordarshan center in Jalandhar.

Des Raj is a total master of the sarangi. His fingers float upon the fingerboard like ripples upon water, and he compels even the most finicky audiences to listen. He can play just about anything on the instrument. In addition to dhadi music, he also plays modern tunes and algoza-style pieces on sarangi with great finesse.

Since 1988 he has also been accompanied by his cousin (son of *māmā*), Banarsi Khan Urf Varis of Gopalpur. As is traditional, Des Raj sings the compositions of the old poets. That is to say, he sings the widespread folk tales in the ballad forms of kali and var, such as *Hir* by Hazura Singh Buthahri, *Puran* by Karam Singh Tuse, and the old, orally-transmitted *Mirza*. As such he has a fine grasp of the dhadi musical genre.

Hazura Singh's *Hir*, composed of countless kalis, has remained the favorite of dhadis of Malwa and very popular amongst the people. When rendered in Des Raj's voice, hearing his drawn-out melodies and his high-pitched *hek*, audience members are rendered breathless:

> *jadoṅ rānjhā muṛke ā giā raṅgpur kheṛiāṅ toṅ,*
> *humm hummā ke kuṛīāṅ siālāṅ dīāṅ āīāṅ.*
> *miṭṭhī naiṇ pahunchā phaṛke mūhare bahigī ai,*
> *gallāṅ dass chobarā jo ḍāḍhe varatāīāṅ.*

> When Ranjha returned from Rangpur and the Kheras',
> Sial girls came out in throngs.
> "Your sweet eyed beloved, dragged off, has been delivered to
>   them.
> Tell us, boy, of your hardships."

kaṭṭhīāṅ ho ke kuṛīāṅ deṇ sunehā hīr nūṅ,
nāle jogī vālīāṅ dassdīāṅ hai vaḍiāīāṅ.
joṛ disiā bhābo tere, sāḍe hāṇ dā,
rabb dī sūrat siphtāṅ jāṇ nā suṇāīāṅ.

The girls get together and send a message to Hir,
Full of compliments about the jogi (Ranjha).
We've sighted your mate, sis, that boy of our age group.
Like the face of God, words are insufficient to praise him.

jadoṅ rānjhā panchhī vaṛ giā vich trinjhaṇāṅ de,
charkhe chhaḍḍ ke kuṛīāṅ kol nāth de āīāṅ.
neṛe ho ho bahindīāṅ sūrat dekh faqīr dī,
ikk toṅ ikk chahṛendī karāṅ kī vaḍiāīāṅ.

When Ranjha (as jogi) entered the spinning-bee,
The girls abandoned their wheels and came over by the jogi.
Sitting nearby and gazing upon the face of this faqir,
From one to another what complements they exchanged!

At a program related to the old folk balladry of Punjab created by the Language Department Punjab, at the time when scholars in folklore read their papers, Des Raj's group presented various examples of balladry and received praise. And at Punjabi University's Folk Music Mela of January 2000, he was awarded with a gold medal.

Sharif Idu Lalaudha

Among the contemporary generation of folk dhadis, Sharif Idu needs no introduction. He represents folk dhadis for the North Zone Cultural Centre. By means of the Centre he has made a respectful showing for this folk art of Punjab in various states of India.

Sharif was born around the time of Partition in village Lalaudha (tehsil Nabha, dist. Patiala) to father Idu Khan and mother Jeevi. His very first cries were heard mixed with the tones of sarangi and the rhythms of dhadd. His father, Idu Khan, was an eminent folk singer of the area. As the saying goes: "If the child of a Mir (Mirasi) cries, even that he does in tune." Such was the case of Sharif, whose lullabies were even accompanied by music. Thus Sharif became part of the ballad-singing world.

Though Sharif was brought up in the world of his ancestral profession, his coming of age as a singer did not occur until he sang at a wedding at the home of film actor and bhangra pioneer Manohar Deepak. All who heard his performance praised him. From that point, Sharif's

journey in ballad-singing began and, joining his name with his father's, he became "Sharif Idu." Sharif himself played sarangi. He put his nephew, Murli Khan, and eldest son, Nusrat Ali, on dhadd, and created his dhadi group.

In 1986, when the "Cultural Revolution" was going on in India, Sharif was noticed by the management of the North Zone Cultural Centre. At the time he was supporting his family by pushing around a hand-cart in the town of Mani Majra (near Chandigarh). Under the auspices of the Cultural Centre he has demonstrated his folk art in various states of the country, in the course of which he went to a festival in the nation's capital, Delhi [Apna Utsav]. In this program he first performed an *alāp* [melismatic, unmetered improvisatory section] followed by a *hek* that was so long that the audience got up and cheered. The prime minister of that time, Rajiv Gandhi, had special praise for this Punjabi dhadi.

Sharif sings *Hir* with great feeling. His voice, strident and and full of ardour, fills one's soul with the theme. Besides *Hir*, he sings kalis and vars of the widespread and well-known ballads like *Sassi*, *Mirza*, *Puran Bhagat*, *Kaulan Bhagatni*, and *Dulla Bhatti*. While all those are written by older poets, he, too, actually sings the *Hir* of Hazura Singh Buthahri. Some stanzas are as follows:

> *ghaṛe chhaḍḍke āṇ udāle hoīāṅ jogī de.*
> *kuṛīāṅ jāṇ ke hamāṇī karan ṭhaṭholīāṅ.*
> *mukhat nazārā lai ve ik te ik chahṛendī dā,*
> *kuṛīāṅ kheṛiāṅ dīāṅ ve parīāṅ subak mamolīāṅ.*

> Leaving their pots, they came around the jogi.
> Treating him as an equal, the girls teased him.
> One by one they take a free peep.
> The girls of the Kheras are prim and trim fairies.

> *chhaḍḍo khiāl merā tusīṅ jāvo āpṇe gharāṅ nūṅ,*
> *tusīṅ laiṇā kī nī santāṅ nūṅ santā ke.*
> *rangpūr munḍe bathere maithoṅ sohṇe hassṇe nūṅ,*
> *asāṅ tāṅ rūp āpṇā kho liā kann paṛvāke.*

> Leave me be; I think you should go to your homes,
> What do you hope to gain, harassing an ascetic?
> There're plenty of lads in Rangpur better looking than me.
> Indeed I have ruined my good looks by getting my ears bored.

Sharif's entire family is connected with the musical profession. His brother, Sadiq Muhammad Allah of Darza, is a classical singer. His

nephew, Nile Khan, is a renowned qawwali at present. As for his own son and nephews, most all are connected with this art in some way or another.

Among the old dhadis, he considers Sharif Gurmanvala to have been the top dhadi of his time.

Fig. 1. The dhadi group of Sharif Idu and sons, Sukhi Khan, Vicky, and Dildar, 2006. Photo: G. Schreffler.

The Preeminent Composers of Folk Dhadi Compositions

In discussing folk dhadi performers I have also made frequent reference to the composers whose compositions have been sung by them. One great distinction of these composers (*kavīshar*s) is that all of them (save one or two) were renowned kavishars or dhadis of their time. The fact is that these composers had begun as singers and only afterwards, due to necessity, started writing. Their compositions became so widely popular that, for their students and for dhadis and kavishars who came afterwards, they became like sacred texts.

From their lifestyles and from their compositions it is evident that these composers, along with their training in poetics, would have also deeply analyzed ancient and contemporary texts. Through the training of

their poetry masters, community involvement, and hard work, their creations became established as milestones in folk literature. They replaced the traditional Arabic- and Persian-based principles of qissa-poetry with the methods of Indian prosody to adopt new principles. About the significance of prosody, the famous kavishar Ganga Singh Bhoondar writes:

> *vidvān soī jihṛā mān ko tiāg deve,*
> *dhanvān soī jihṛā dān meṅ parvīn hai.*
> *gītā bināṅ giān ate pingal bagair chhand,*
> *bhog kok bināṅ, pūchh pashū parādhīn hai.*

> A scholar is he who renounces arrogance;
> Wealthy is he who is adept at giving.
> There is no scripture without wisdom nor meter without prosody
> Nor intercourse without method; the *animal* must wag the tail.

Besides prosody these poets have also kept the poetic-meters (*chhand*) close to Indian structures. In the place of qissa-poetry's famous meter, *baint*, they have employed *kabitt*, *doharā*, *koraṛā*, *kuṇḍalīā*, *bhavānī*, *kalī*, etc. The "kali" especially is a significant contribution by these poets to Punjabi poetic-literature, and which is a form belonging purely to the kavishars of Malwa. Ganga Singh Bhoondar used this meter in several compositions. The entirety of Hazura Singh's *Hir* is in this meter. Ran Singh also wrote *Hir* in kalis, as did Bansi Ram Nauhra. Natha Singh Nararu set his *Sassi* and Dila Ram Bhoodan set his *Bego Nar* in kali meter. Indeed, this is the favorite meter of folk dhadis, and as such the foregoing compositions continue to be sung by them.

Another distinction of these poets is the way they have contibuted a Puranic basis to widely known tales. When narrating the traditional love stories they have adopted Indian mythic tales. In Ran Singh's *Hir*, Ranjha was Dev Raj Indar's son, Jain, in an earlier birth and Hir was Karam Pari's daughter, Bhag Pari. Both used to love one another [in their previous lives]. Due to Inder's curse, they were born as mortals. In Ganga Singh Bhoondar's *Hir*, Ranjha is described meeting not Guru Gorakh Nath or Khwaja Pir, but rather Guru Nanak Dev. In Hazura Singh's *Hir*, the anecdote about the *paṭkā* (length of cloth) is also an example of this. These elements have become naturalized within the tales. The reason for this is the traditional way that these poets acquired their training. They all got it at the village compounds of holymen, where, side by side with gaining literacy and poetic-knowledge, they studied religious texts. The imprint of this textual analysis upon their unconscious minds subsequently came to the fore here and there in their compositions.

These composers (kavishars) have given the poetic literature of Punjab compositions that are great in every respect. Their imagery, metrical contributions, and plain and direct language are some of the qualities on the basis of which we might call these masterpieces in form. Unfortunately, many among them are unpublished. This orally-composed literature has been maintained solely by dhadis and kavishars, and much has been lost along the way. We need to research and collect these, and to preserve them in the form of a book.

Selected Compositions

Thuhi includes 67 excerpts from ballad compositions in his book, Panjābī Lok Ḍhāḍī Kalā. *The following pages contain examples selected from among them.*

From *Hīr*, by Didar Singh Ratainda

chakk ke jhamma ̣n dā la ̣r hīr bahigī ḍolī 'ch,
rānjhe khah ̣re ne duhattha ̣r pa ̣ttī ̇n mārī.
ho akelā bahi giā jhunga ̣rmā ̣tā mārke,
hubkī ̇n hubkī ̇n rondā hai jāro o jārī.
labbhiā lāl lakkhā ̇n dā khoh liā siālā ̇n ballīe nī,
kauḍī ghā ̣te vālī jāve nā sahārī.
biraho ̇n kasāī andar va ̣r giā rānjhe chāk de,
katle kar kar dhardā sīne dhar laī ārī.
shor mashorī sabh mu ̣tiārā ̇n hoīā ̇n pi ̣nḍ dīā ̇n,
ku ̣rī maseriā ̇n dī ne bāt oe vichārī.
kāmā rakkhīe tā ̇n mazdūrī deīe usnū ̇n,
khālī toran de vich vaḍḍī nī de ̣ne dārī.
rabb hasāb mangū lekhā laū akhīr nū ̇n,
tho ̣rī gall te ho gaī narkā ̇n dī adhkārī.
mi ̣tthī nai ̇n sabbhe ku ̣rīā ̇n ākha ̣n hīr nū ̇n,
kī phal kha ̣t ̣tiā rānjhe lā tere nāl yārī.
sabar sabūrī karke takht hazāre nū ̇n u ̣thjū nī,
kauḍī ghā ̣te vālī jāve nā sahārī.

Hir lifted the corner of the curtain and sat in the palanquin.
Ranjha stood there beating himself in frustration.
Then he sat down alone, covering himself,
Sobbing and sighing he weeps bitterly.
He'd been cheated as out of a fortune by the Sials, huzza—
Such a bitter loss as may not be endured.
Heartbreak the Butcher entered the cowherd Ranjha,
Slaughtering and laying into him with its hacksaw.
All the maidens of the village were in a tumult.
One of the cousins expressed a thought:
If you engage a worker, then give him work to do;
He should not go away empty-handed.
God must determine in his final reckoning,
If a trifling matter is deserving of Hell's flames.
"Sweet eyed-one," all the girls say to Hir,
"What was gained by Ranjha in his friendship with you?"
Keep patient, off you go to Takht Hazara O!
Such a bitter loss as may not be endured.

*   *   *

From *Pūran*, by Niranjan Singh

santāṅ nūṅ matthā ṭek ke,
      achchharāṅ dindī arj guzār.
bhalī hoī siddh utare,
      bāgāṅ de vichkār.
ih bāg sī mere puttar dā,
      jithe sabz dī sī bahār.
vich būṭe sī rang rang de,
      mālī baiṭhe khidamatgār
uhnūṅ hoṇī ne chahṛke māriā,
      lai giā oe parvardagār.
pichhoṅ pattak baṇā te bāg de,
      būṭe sukk ke ho gae chār.
jidhare uṭh gae bāṇīeṅ,
      udhare gae bajār.
maiṅ udoṅ dī ahnnī ho gaī,
      hoiā akkhīāṅ meṅ nehr gavār.
netar hoṇ siāṇ lāṅ,
      terī vekhāṅ ve shakal nihār.
rūh merī phirdī bhaṭakdī,
      mūṅhoṅ bol ikk vār.

Paying respects to the saints,
      Rani Ichharan makes a supplication:
"Blessed saint, may you come down,
      Among the gardens.
This garden was my son's,
      Where spring sprang green.
In which there were saplings of many colors,
      And gardeners sat attendant.
Fate came upon and killed him,
      Took him away, did the Sustainer.
After which there was a curse upon the garden,
      The sprouts dried and became few.
Wherever you find merchants,
      You're sure to find markets.
From then on I became blind;
      Darkness overcame my eyes.
Though my eyes are such I might yet recognize you,
      I might still see your face O!
My soul roams and wanders,
      Hoping to hear you speak one time.
                          *   *   *

From *Mirzā*, by Amar Singh Shaunki

do āshak desh panjāb de,
  ik gabbhrū te mūtiār.
ik sāhibāṅ jhang siāl dī,
  jo parīāṅ dī sardār.
jaṭṭ mirjā dānābād dā,
  jo bakkī dā asavār.
doveṅ bībo de ghar baiṭhke,
  lagge karan vichār.
sāhibāṅ ākhe mirjiā,
  ve suṇ lai merī gall.
huṇ kī soch vichārdā,
  ve tur chhetī uṭh chall.
chhaḍḍ deīe jhang siāl ve,
  gharī nā lāīe pal.
us sohṇe dānābād dā,
  ve rastā laīe mall.
mirjā ākhe sāhibāṅ,
  kuchh kar lai soch vichār.
vich maidānāṅ jang nī,
  kite khā jāvīṅ nā hār.
raste vich māṅ bāp dā,
  tainūṅ ā nā jāe khiāl.
tūṅ muṛ siālāṅ dī ho jāeṅ,
  te mainūṅ kareṅ khuār.
tere bājhoṅ sohṇiāṅ,
  koī hor piārā nā.
nā bhaiṇāṅ nā vīr ve,
  nā bābal nā māṅ.
mainūṅ sohṇā des panjāb choṅ,
  ve dānābād garāṅ.
maiṅ bhaiṛe jhang siāl vich,
  ve muṛ nā pher pāṅ.
ik vārī ghar bāp de,
  tūṅ sāhibāṅ muṛ ke jāh.
tūṅ jāke vich parvār de,
  pher dil nāl karīṅ salāh.
tūṅ sāre pāse sochke,
  dil pakkī laīṅ pakā.
tāṅ pher phaṛīṅ yakīn nāl,
  laṛ shaunkī jaṭṭ dā ā.

There were two lovers of the land of Punjab,
    A lad and a lass.
One was Sahiban of the Sials of Jhang
    Who was Queen of the Fairies.
The Jatt, Mirza, was of Danabad,
    Who rode a steed called Bakki.
Both, sitting in their mom's house,
    Began to form an idea.
Sahiban said, "Hey Mirza,
    Listen to my idea."
Now, what do you think?—
    Let us quickly get up and go.
And leave Jhang-Sial,
    Without a moment's delay.
The beautiful road to Danabad,
    Is the one we shall take."
Mirza said, "Sahiban,
    Think it over a bit.
On the fields of battle,
    Nowhere should one suffer defeat.
On the road, of your mother and father,
    Would you not think?
You might return to the Sials,
    And forsake me."
"Besides you, handsome one,
    I've no other love.
No sisters nor brothers O,
    No father nor mother.
Out of all the land of Punjab,
    I find village Danabad best.
To rotten Jhang-Sial,
    I ne'er would return."
"One time, to your father's house,
    Sahiban, go back.
Go back among your family
    And with your heart take counsel.
Think on all the ramifications
    And set your heart when sure.
And then grasp with surety
    This Jatt's hand in marriage," says Shaunki.

*   *   *

From *Sassī*, by Ude Singh and Dalip Singh

sassī thal vich labbhdī yār nūṅ,
    rondī nā dhardī dhāh.
uhdīāṅ gal vich julphāṅ khuhllīāṅ,
    bhajjī jāndī vāho dāh.
bālū ret sī tapiā thalāṅ dā,
    chhāle ubhre pairāṅ 'te ā.
mainūṅ chāhṛke beṛe ishq de
    kite deīṅ nā ḍob dariā.
merī chahṛdī javānī sohṇiāṅ,
    vich deīṅ nā ḍob dariā
ve tūṅ suttī chhaḍḍ ke tur giā,
    dassīṅ maiṅ vich kī gunāh.
dil vich machchde hai bhāmbaṛ ishq de,
    pāṇī piār dā pāke bujhā.
sassī lae haṭkore ude siāṅ,
    rahī kūnj vāng kurlā.

Sassi, in the desert, searches for her lover,
    Weeping and wailing,
Her open locks in her face,
    Scurrying around in an agitated state.
The sand of the desert was well and hot.
    Blisters swelled up upon her feet.
"I being ferried by the Ship of Love,
    Nowhere shall you let me drown in the river.
My blossoming adulthood, O handsome-one,
    Don't let it drown in the river.
Oh you left me and went off while I was asleep.
    Tell me, what was my error?
In my heart burn the flames of Passion.
    Extinguish them with the water of Love."
Oh how Sassi sobbed, Ude brother,
    Shreiking like a crane!

Notes

[1] This article has been compiled and translated from text that originally appeared in Thuhi's *Panjābī Lok Ḍhāḍī Kalā*, Tarkash Publications, Malerkotla, 2001, pp. 12-37, 67-68, 112-114, 145-147, 148-149, 162-164, 181, 207-210, 227-228.

[2] Nabha, Kahn Singh. 1998[1930]. *Gurushabad Ratnākar Mahān Kosh*. Delhi: National Book Shop.

[3] It is unclear exactly what "folk-songs" Thuhi means here. —*Ed.*

[4] A *kavishar* is a performer of *kavishrī*, a Punjabi genre of unaccompanied poetic recitation in a group. —*Ed.*

[5] In Punjabi discourse on popular music, a live performance before an audience is called *akhāṛā* (compare with *mahifil*, which has connotations of a more "classical" sort). The word applies to both the performance-locale ("arena" or "stage") and the performance-event ("concert" or "show"). Whereas in the past concerts were given with the performers on the same level as and near the audience, contemporary performances on elevated stages are still refered to as *akhāṛā*. —*Ed.*

[6] A ceremony held on the sixth day after a child's birth. —*Ed.*

[7] As per elsewhere in Thuhi's text: Didar Singh Ratainda was born circa 1893 in village Ratainda in district Jalandhar. He died some time after 1947.

[8] As per elsewhere in Thuhi's text: Niranjan Singh (ca.1908-1986) came from village Jamsher in district Jalandhar. His recordings of Hir came out around 1930-31.

[9] As per elsewhere in Thuhi's text: Amar Singh Shaunki was born in 1916 in village Bhajjal of district Hoshiarpur. His first recordings date from 1938.

[10] "Mardana" is an ethnic community that falls within the larger category that outsiders would call "Mirasi." —*Ed.*

The Tumba-Algoza Ballad Tradition

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The singing of ballads to the accompaniment of the instruments *tūmbā* and *algozā* forms a distinct genre of Punjabi music which was once a primary form of entertainment for rural Punjabis. However, its role in the history of the region's music has yet to be documented. This article aims to rectify that, breaking ground with sundry details of who is known to have participated and what exactly they sang. The genre appears to have at least two different regional styles, based in Majha and Malwa. Information has been gathered from living exponents, especially from the Malerkotla area, and from the recordings made by prior generations of artistes. The latter constitute a significant part of the early popular music in Punjab. A selection of texts from tumba-algoza ballad compositions compliment the cultural description of the art.

Among the various branches of older Punjabi folk music, the tumba-algoza balladry *(tūmbe algoze dī gāikī)* has occupied an important position. Like the no-nonsense character of Punjabis, the folk instruments, too, are plain and simple; they are steeped in the fragrance of the soil of the region. At melas, in courts, and in live performance arenas the singers of this genre cut a distinctive figure with their art, which is totally distinct from that of *kavishar*s and *ḍhāḍī*s. Although kavishars and dhadis also employ the themes sung by these singers, the singing style and instruments of the latter give them a distinctive cast. This indeed is a unique mode of folk singing, not some stepchild of another, but rather a complete art in its own right with its own historical antecedents. Nonetheless, like other folk arts nowadays, with the march of modernity and under Western influence, this art's swift course cannot remain still. In fact, this art was once well known within the sphere of Punjabi folk music, however most of its singers were Muslims who left for Pakistan at Partition. Only a handful remained in East Punjab, who have made great efforts to keep the flame burning.

Background

This balladry developed amongst gatherings of people in the fields, threshing-areas, and freshly-cut crop; later, it was immortalized on commercial recordings. If one looks into its background then it appears to be quite old. Its origins lie with those *sāī̃*s [Sufi mendicants], faqirs and *mīr* [Mirasi] people who, at the time when the summer harvest was being reaped, would go into the freshly-cut fields to play *tūmbā* [one- or two-stringed plucked lute] and sing. After enjoying their singing, the Jatts and landowners would reward them with an "armful" of cut wheat. This custom was widespread. Gradually, this sort of singing emerged from the fields and reached more formal performance arenas. In those times, the one and only medium of entertainment for rural Punjabis was *melā*s [country fairs]. In every village there would be some or other saint's shrine or some other religious place where, on some special occasion, all the village would gather and a mela would be held. At these melas, a concert would be staged by musicians of that village or a nearby area. Throngs of spectators would gather around the performers, and they would reward their favorite singers with cash donations. Eventually, it became common for well-to-do families to book renowned singers for their wedding festivities, and open concerts would be held in village greens.

Historical Development

In such a discussions as this it is important to give a cohesive presentation of what we know of the historical development of the art at hand. And yet the tumba-algoza ballad tradition is one such genre about which one does not generally find any articles or descriptive works. In fact there are some old forms of Punjabi folk singing such as this whose practice has been going on from generation to generation, but to which scholars have not paid attention. Indeed, in literature and cultural histories one would not find even a modicum of references to them. This is precisely the state of the tumba-algoza balladry. Nevertheless, I am obligated to draw some conclusions about this tradition—one that has been with us for generations—even though these conclusions may be based on hearsay.

However, from the seminal years of the recording of Punjabi folk music we do begin to have evidence (i.e. in the form of these very recordings) of this straightforward style of singing. By recording singers connected with this genre, several record companies gave the genre special significance [in the historical trajectory of Punjabi music]. From these recordings one can easily surmise that it held an esteemed place in

the Punjabi community, and we can reasonably establish a minimum age for this ballad tradition.

Having considered it in its totality, we can divide this balladry into two types. First is the singing of the Malwa area, represented by Sadiq Muhammad and Fazal Muhammad. Second is the singing of the Majha area, which was represented by Nawab Ghumar and Alam Lohar. The main difference between the two is their singing style, which is quite distinct, even though the instruments may be the same between them. The Majha singers sing solo; their background players only give accompaniment on instruments. Conversely, the Malwa singers sing in call and response fashion. The frontman (*āgū*) speaks first and the backup[2] (*pāchhū*) speaks after. In addition, the pronunciation and singing manner of Majha singers are of one sort and those of Malwa singers are of another. The following presents information on both types of singers.

The Malwa Style

Among this style's representatives, the oldest is Muhammad Raunt of Nakodar. The top artist of his time, in the beginning he sang only to the accompaniment of *joṛī* (i.e. *algozā* [a pair of fipple flutes]). He readied some compositions to sing for himself. Among these, *Jiuna Maur* and *Malki* became very famous and have been passed from generation to generation, being still sung today by his successors. He had many disciples, among whom two have made his name shine through their artistry.

Muhammad Raunt's first disciple was Natthu Raunt of village Karyam (near Jalandhar). Natthu Raunt was also a top-level artist who was renowned throughout his area. He, too, had many disciples, among which three played an important role in advancing the ballad art: Kaka Field Ganj of Ludhiana, Bhulla of Sallan, and Shera Ghumiar of Karyam.

Muhammad Raunt's other disciple was Kaka Raamaan of Khelan, who came from the Jatt community. At first, he also sang only with jori. He memorized very many "*gauṇ*s" by heart, including both the compositions of his master and others that he collected. His *Puran*, *Hir*, *Malki*, and *Jiuna Maur*, for example, were compositions of his master that he sang, whereas he brought *Kaulan* into his repertoire from a writer on the side. His backup was Fazala Gujjar of Heeran. Although Kaka Raamaan also had many students, two of note made a good name for themselves. One was his own son, Darshan, and the other was Nooru Sekhewalia.

Among Natthu Raunt's disciples the most famous is Kaka Field Ganj. In fact, the honor of bringing together the tumba and jori goes to Kaka Field Ganj. Before him, some folks sang just with tumba and some just with jori. But Kaka blended the two and established the vogue that

became the standard for successive generations. Among his disciples, Sadeeq Muhammad Auria, having audio recorded the balladry of this school, established a place of honor for its artistic qualities. Natthu Raunt's second disciple is Bhulla Gujjar, hailing from the roads near village Sallan. He, too, reached the upper echelon in his time. Among his disciples, Imamgarh's Jaani Gujjar became a renowned artist who, at the time of Partition, went to Pakistan. Natthu's third disciple was Shera Ghumiar of his own village. Although he became Natthu's backup, he was unable to establish his own professional identity.

In some respects, the legacy of Khelan's Kaka Raamaan is no less than others'. His son, Darshan, was a top artist who sang along with him. This Jatt reached full fame; at one time everywhere one heard nothing but the name of "Darshan Raamaan Khelanwala." However, he got caught up in intoxications and vices, such that his reputation increasingly sank. Eventually, Kaka Raamaan, being put to shame, barred him from playing with him in concerts because, he said, he must sing with honor and would not be disgraced on account of his son.

Another student of Kaka Raamaan was Nooru Sekhewalia, from village Sekhewal (near Ludhiana). While at first he picked up a certain amount of repertoire from here and there, the real core repertoire he learned after become the disciple of Kaka. Nooru's backups were Inayit Nangal and Atta of village Paharuwal (near Koom Kalan). Sharif Bola played jori with him. Sometimes Nooru also acted as backup for Malerkotla's Ghuddu, though he was fifteen years older than Ghuddu. Indeed, out of respect, Ghuddu called him "ustad." Among the students of Noordin [Nooru], Noora of village Tamkaudi (near Doraha) also achieved fame. His backup was a Mazhbi of Haibowal who had got religion. Sharif Bola's brother, Suraj, played jori with this particular group. At the time of Partition, Noora and Suraj went to Pakistan.

The one to carry on Kaka Field Ganj's tradition was his favorite disciple, Sadiq Muhammad Auria [ca.1892/3-1992]. His biggest claim to fame is having recorded this balladry on disc and, as such, causing it to reach every household. He, along with his disciples Fazal Muhammad Tunda, Sheru, Shafi Arain Bagianwala, Sadiq Pakheer Askalipurwala, Boota Gujjar of Ludhiana, and Nikka of Rania, recorded scores of discs on the world famous Regal label [in the late 1930s]. His disciple Fazal Muhammad Tunda [b. before 1910] recorded many discs in addition to these. Sadiq's student Sharif Muhammad, whom he actually nurtured from childhood, went to Pakistan with Sadiq at Partition. After moving there he earned a great name and today he yet remains absolutely famous. One more disciple of Sadeeq, Hadayat, belonged to his very own village of Aur and also became a renowned singer. Hadayat became the master of Ghuddu of Malerkotla [b.1910]. Continuing on from Ghuddu there are numerous students, grand-students, and great-grand-students

who, when telling their "family tree," state with great honor that they are among the "family" of Sadeeq Muhammad of Aur.

Fig. 1. The Malwa-type tumba-algoza group of the late Chiragdin Tibba (left), including Bashir Muhammad (right), performing at Punjabi University's folk music mela, Patiala, November 2004. Photo: G. Schreffler.

Bhulla of Sallan's renowned disciple is Jaani of village Imamgarh (near Malerkotla). In his group were Kartara Harijan of Imamgarh and Gulam Nabi of Dhano; Dulla Ghumiar of Sohian was on jori. Jaani's younger brother, Sohna, was a disciple of Sadeeq Muhammad of Aur. After Jaani went to Pakistan at Partition, Sohna himself led the group. Jaani's disciple Gulam Nabi later created a group and sang for a long while. Among his backups were included Raheema and his brother Hasan of Naro Majra. Raheema's group even today continues to make this art flourish through his efforts. Gulam Nabi's own student is Chiragdin of Tibba, who is an established independent artist in his own right. Possessed of a melodious voice, he keeps a good name among contemporary singers. Beside these, among those who reside in the annals of this art we have: Fatta Jamalpuria, who was Ghuddu's disciple; Succha Sahnsi of Malaud; Dogar Uche of village Sanet; and Naseerdin Seel Sotalwala, who used to live in village Bora Karhan.

In the current generation, in Ghuddu's group, his own sons Zamil and Khalil are the backups and Khushi Muhammad accompanies on jori.

In the group of his nephew, Noordin, Habib is backup and Sucha Sher of
Majra plays jori. In the group of Raheemdin of Naro Majra, Kaka
Sadhoheriwala is backup and Phaman of Malerkotla plays jori. In the
group of Chiragdin (Bari) of Tibba, his younger brother, Basheer
Muhammad acts as backup and Chooharh Khan accompanies on algoza.
In the group of Fazal Muhammad of Lohatbaddi, Udha Singh Sarabha is
the backup and Ajaib Singh Pakkhowal plays jori.

*Editor's note: A summary of the Malwa-style lineage and associated
groups, as described by Thuhi above, can be charted as follows.*

1. Muhammadi Raunt
   2. Natthu Raunt (backup: Shera Ghumiar)
      3. Kaka Field Ganj
         4. Sadeeq Mohd. Auria (b: Fazal Mohd. Tunda; jori: Sheru)
            5. Fazal Mohd. Tunda (b: Boota, Safi, Nooru, A. Shah)
            5. Shafi Arain Bagianwala
            5. Sadiq Pakheer Askalipurwala
            5. Boota Gujjar
            5. Nikka
            5. Sharif Muhammad
            5. Hadayat
                  6. Ibrahim Ghuddu (b: Zamil, Khalil; j: Khushi)
                     7. Fatta Jamalpuria
                           8. Fazaldin Malerkotlewala
                                 9. Ramzan Uche Pind Sangholwala
                           8. Phaman Malerkotla
                     7. Noordin Malerkotle (b: Habib; j: S. Sher)
                     7. Sadeeq Mohammad Malerkotla
            5. Sohna
      3. Bhulla Gujjar
         4. Jaani Gujjar (b: Kartara, Gulab Nabi; j: D. Ghumiar)
            5. Gulab Nabi (b: Raheemdin, Hasan)
               6. Chiragdin Tibba (b: Basheer; j: Chooharh Khan)
                  7. Chooharh Khan
               6. Raheemdin (b: Kaka Sadhoheriwala; j: Phaman)
      3. Shera Ghumiar
   2. Kaka Raamaan Khelanwala (b: Fazala Gujjar, Darshan)
      3. Darshan Raamaan Khelanwala
      3. Nooru Sekhewalia (b: Inayit Nangal, Atta; j: Sharif Bola)
         4. Noora (b: a Mazhbi of Haibowal; j: Suraj)
      3. Ali Muhammad Phalaundwala
         4. Fazal Mohd. Lohatbaddi (b: Udha Singh; j: Ajaib Singh)

The Majha Style

Although not much information is found about the singers of this style, one has only to look at their recorded output to realize there is no doubt about the greatness of their lineage. Indeed, from the recordings one finds of Anaitkot's Nawab Ghumar there can remain no doubt about the depth of the roots of this art. Nawab *must* have gotten instruction from someone or other, being that he so immediately reached the heights of the art and left such a deep impression on the hearts of Punjabis. Similarly, the recorded output that one finds of Alam Lohar with jori is also an example of well-formed ballad art. The import of this is that he, too, would have trained under some accomplished master. So with regards to the balladry of the Majha area, in lieu of laying our hands on the roots, we shall begin the discussion from this point of these artists.

For the eldest generation and the following, Nawab Ghumar needs no introduction.[3] True, the young generation may be unacquainted with his name. Yet his catch phrase, *halā puttar būṭiā ghumiār anāit koṭīā, kī āṅhdī e lakkaṛī?* has held sway over the consciousness of every Punjabi of the old generation. Because before Partition he was living on the *other* [Pakistani] side of Punjab, so afterwards, too, there he remained. A handful of his disciples also crossed over here [to the Indian side] as were a few already over here previously.

Nawab Ghumar's favorite disciple was Baba Nazak Shah, from village Dhotian of subdistrict Tarn Taran (dist. Amritsar). Before Partition, he became the disciple of Nawab and remained so for four or five years. Afterwards he remained connected with this singing art for a long time. He died just two or so years ago [ca.1999-2000]. Among Nawab's other disciples is Boota Ram Shair who nowadays lives in village Mohanpur Kalsa (subdist. Panipat, Haryana). He too made every effort to spread this art through the style of his ustad. Being now of advanced age, he is presently instructing his own disciples in the art. Among these is Jagat Ram Lalka, a great artist who is carrying on Nawab Ghumar's singing style. (Although it was Baba Sudagar Ram who first attracted Jagat Ram to this balladry, his subsequent training came from Boota Ram.)

Baba Sudagar Ram, too, became attached to the Majha style, and remains an enduring artist. Before Partition he lived in village Nain Ranjhe (dist. Gujrat). Nowadays he lives in village Jainpur (subdist. Shahabad, dist. Kurukshetra). His first master was Fauju Sahnsi. Later, he was also trained by Nawab Ghumar. In his group, Bhagat Ram and Amarjit give support on instruments.

Among those connected with the Majha style, Muhammad Alam Lohar's is another name that will not be new for Punjabis. At first, like

Nawab Ghumar, he, too, sang just with jori. Likewise, one can find many of his recordings on discs put out by various record companies.

Editor's Note: As Thuhi notes, we are not equipped here to supply a detailed picture of Majha-style singers. He begins with the earlier recording artists and mentions some of their successors that ended up in East Punjab. Perhaps site-specific research in Pakistan, where this style's forefathers were based, could complete the picture.

1. Nawab Ghumar Anaitkotia
    2. Baba Nazak Shah
    2. Boota Ram Shair
       3. Jagat Ram Lalka
    2. Sudagar Ram

1. Alam Lohar

Singing Manner

The tumba-algoza ballad singers have cultivated a distinct singing manner within Punjabi music. A group consists of three or four members. Besides tumba and algoza, *ḍhaḍḍ* and *chimṭā* [iron percussion tongs] are also in use as supporting instruments. The lead singer is called *āgū* and the back-up singers are called *pāchhū*. Often the group's agu himself plays tumba as well as sings, but usually the tumba is played by the pachhu. The tumba may be one-stringed or two-stringed, though most often it has two strings.[4] The old singers actually used to make the instrument themselves. Later, some specialists began to make and sell it. Tumbas are decorated *with kokā*s [ornamental rivets], ivory fish, and ivory flowers. Frets, of bright wire and one-half inch wide, are attached to the neck of the instrument at two-inch intervals. A shiny silk handkerchief is tied to the distal end of the neck.

    Players also used to prepare algoza flutes themselves. Due to there being a set of two of them, in East Punjab they are called *joṛī* ("pair"), whereas in West Punjab they are called *maṭṭīāṅ* ("segments of cane"). The famous Nawab Ghumar used to call them *lakkṛī* ("the wood"). These were absolutely ordinary yet, to people's imaginations, captivating instruments. Colorful pom-poms and pearls adorn them.

    The tumba and algozas are this genre's chief instruments. However, dhadd is also used by some artists to provide percussion. If the agu plays the tumba himself, then the dhadd will be played by the pachhu, but if the tumba is played by the pachhu, the agu might play the dhadd.

    The singing manner of tumba-algoza balladeers is different from that of kavishars and dhadis. Whereas in the dhadi genre and in *kavishrī* both

agu and pachhu repeat each line in full, tumba-algoza singers divide each line into two parts in order to sing them.[5] The agu sings the line's first half and the pachhu completes the latter half. The agu emphasizes the final word of his half-line before leaving off, and the pachhu completes the line with a special elongation of the tune. Such coordinated call-and-response by the agu and pachhu has a great effect on audiences.

The second main difference to this genre compared with dhadis and kavishars is noticeable in the singing at the beginning of a composition. In a dhadi's or kavishar's composition, they would begin the *mukhṛā* with a high and long, *alāp*-like *hek*, which cuts out at its climax. By contrast, tumba-algoza singers do not sing very high, rather they go on singing the whole composition in an *easy* manner from beginning to end. Dhadis, at the end of the composition, effectively "cast off" the piece with a sharp *toṛā* ["break," an abrupt prosodic and rhythmic figure]. However, the tunes of tumba-algoza singers are clear and melodious ones in which not contrast, but rather *uniformity* is emphasized.

Along with the aforementioned differences from dhadis and kavishars, the singing manner of tumba-algoza singers also shares similarities in some aspects. The biggest similarity is the presentation of prose discourse. Like dhadis, these singers use prose to support the tale and to connect it to the sung composition. This prose, spoken by the agu, is not any ordinary prose, but rather is brisk and poetic. Its brief, clipped utterances make a definite impression on audiences, before whom it is as if a complete picture has been "snapped." They begin to clearly understand the tale in full detail as it is painted before them. Some examples of such prose excerpts are the following.

> *karke zor dhingāṇā, hīr kheṛiāṅ dī ḍolī 'ch pā tī. ikk rānjhā darvesh āṇke hīr nūṅ tāane mārdai, baī bārāṅ sāl majjhāṅ cārīāṅ, bhaiṇ bhāī chhaḍḍe, vatan chhaḍḍiā, takht hazārā chaḍḍiā, jāt pāt nūṅ dāg lā liā. dass! pardesī nūṅ kihṛe khāre khūh 'c chhāl māre? bhalā baī sherū kihṛe javāb karke suṇāundai?*

> Hir was forcibly put in the Kheras' palanquin. An ascetic by the name of Ranjha came and complained to Hir that, "A dozen years I grazed your family's buffaloes, forsaking my kin, leaving my homeland, leaving Takht Hazara, and bringing shame upon my community. Tell me! Tell this wanderer: Which well should he jump into?" Verily, Sheru, tell us what was the response from Hir?
>
> —Fazal Shah Jagravan

meharbān, rāje harīchandar dā puttar rohtās bāg vichoṅ phull laiṇ vāste giā. us vele phull vichoṅ vishvāmittar sapp baṇke laṛke de laṛ giā, laṛkā mar giā. usdī mātā tārā bahi ke bachche dī lāsh 'te bhalā baī sharīf joṛī vāliā kaise virlāp kar rahī ai…?

The good King Harichandra's son, Rohitas, went in the garden to gather flowers. It was then that the sage Vishvamitra, manifesting as a flower, became a serpent and bit the boy, and the boy died. His mother, Tara, sat down by her son's corpse and verily, Sharif, player of jori, what is her wailing like…?

—Sadiq Muhammad Auria

pūran jatī, jī ho ke gurū gorakh nāth toṅ vidiā, kithe challiai? ikk rāṇī sundarāṅ diāṅ rang mahallāṅ vichoṅ bhichchhiā laiṇ vāste. hallā! anāit koṭīā ghumiārā gurū ne kihṛe rang dī pushāk dittī e…?

And good Puran, restored and instructed by Guru Gorakh Nath, where has he gone?: To take alms from the pleasure palaces of one Queen Sundaran. Gosh! O Ghumar of Inayat Kot, what color dress has the Guru given him to wear?

—Nawab Ghumar Anaitkotia

Thus this speech goes straight to the heart of audience members, who drift along with the tale, utterly spellbound.

Thematic Content

The compositions sung by these singers are connected with various themes, which may be expounded according to the occasion and the audience's requests. On analyzing the themes, some subject areas emerge. Although there are themes connected with every sentiment (*ras*), in the main, the sentiments of romance, devotion, heroism, and sorrow predominate. *Hir*, *Sohni*, *Sassi*, *Mirza*, etc. are love stories of a romantic nature, *Puran*, *Gopi Chand*, *Kaulan* etc. are devotional, and *Dulla Bhatti*, *Jaimal Fatta*, etc. are heroic. The themes can be classified as follows:

Puranic and Islamic tales. Widespread versions of numerous instructive texts are sung, related to the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas*, and Islam.

Love stories. Like kavishars and dhadis, these singers, too, continue to mainly sing traditional folk ballads like *Hir*, *Sohni*, *Sassi*, *Malki*, *Layla*, *Shiri-Farihad*, *Saiful Malook*, *Mirza*, etc.

Episodes of bhagats. There exist many tales in our folk literature designed to emphasize morality and virtuous conduct in life. Such tales of bhagats (religious persons) have continued to be sung with great passion. Among these *Puran Bhagat*, *Gopi Chand*, *Kaulan Bhagatṇi, Raja Harish Chandra* etc. are included. These all offer advice and present examples of good behavior.

Harrowing accounts. Lots of stories of a hair-raising type are told by these singers in a very interesting and delicious manner. Among these the most common has been *Dahood Badshah*. Besides that, *Dhol Badshah*, *Shah Variam* (*Bahiram*), etc. are also this type of tale.

Tales of heroism. Tumba-algoza balladeers also sing of the valorous acts of heroes as well. Among the stories of these heroes and warriors are included *Jaimal-Fatta*, *Dulla Bhatti*, *Jiuna Maur*, *Sucha Soorma*, etc.

Miscellaneous items (*rang*). Singers consider ballads (*kathā*) to be stories made up of numerous "links" In contrast to those, partial and stand-alone compositions [i.e. those not belonging to the presentation of a longer tale] are referred to as *rang*. A *rang* is a five to six stanza composition that is complete in and of itself. It may be connected with any topic. It may also be moralistic or comedic.

Although, as with folk dhadis, the topic of "ishq" has remained preeminent among these singers, again this is not purely worldly love, but rather a blend of *ishq haqiqi* (divine love) and *ishq majazi* (earthly love). As in the composition of Sadardin of Jagaraon, "O plumed peacock, I could not be yours," we are shown, through mundane images, the clash between spirit and body.

Religion-neutral Character

One great peculiarity of the folk dhadi genre is its religion-neutral character. The singers of this balladry gave no token to any kind of religious fundamentalism. Being connected with various religions and castes, the performers have not fenced themselves into any one religious position, rather they have impartially presented all of Punjab's cultural and religious heritage. Most singers connected with this balladry are indeed still Muslim, but they reverently sing Hindu Puranic tales and episodes connected with Sikh history. Likewise, however many Hindu or

Sikh singers there have been, they too have not subscribed to any sort of fundamentalism.

All singers maintain a reverent attitude towards both the Prophet Muhammad and the paraphernalia of gods and goddesses. For them, Puran Bhagat, Kaulan Bhagatni, Raja Harishchandra, Shah Dahood, and Shah Bahiram are all equal. In fact, they are adherents of catholicity. Many among them got their initial training at the shrines of saints and the camps of holymen, alongside of education in folk culture and religious and prescriptive texts. One main reason for this is their devotion to art. They consider the *art* to be their deity. For them the humanistic pursuit of art is the highest ideal.

Composers

It would not be inappropriate to briefly mention the composers (poets) whose compositions these singers have been performing since olden times. This entire body of *gauṇ* is unpublished and in oral tradition alone through the generations has come down. All the repertoire resides in the breasts alone of these singers, to pass on to their successors, to take care of in turn. The essential reason for this is that the singers are unlettered. Due to the "folk process" of transmission, these old poets' compositions have come to contain some differences from their original texts. Later, the singers adapted two or three poets' compositions here and there as well. Many singers have also made some personal adjustments. Nevertheless, the names of the poets whose compositions have left a deep impression on people's hearts do not soon fade.

Usually two versions of *Hir* are sung among these balladeers. One is the *Hir* set in *kalī*s of Hazura Singh Butahrivala [see the previous article] and the other is that of Hashmat Shah Aprewala. As for *Puran*, by these singers, too, as by dhadis, the version of Karam Singh Tusa is sung. Muhammand Raunt's very own *Malki* and *Jiuna Maur* are popular. Other compositions of Hashmat Shah besides *Hir* have been sung, like *Sassi*, *Dhol Badshah* and *Shah Bahiram*. Among the original singers, the version of *Dhol Badshah* that was common was that of Farsi of the Kamboj community of Amritsar. *Dahood Badshah*, which is still sung by older and younger singers alike, was composed by the poet Mahi of Amritsar, also of the Kamboj community. *Kaulan* is the favorite *gauṇ* of these singers, and several poets' versions of the composition are found. Those that continue to be sung by various groups are the *Kaulan* compositions by Karam Singh Tusa, by Bishna of Chugawan, and by the poet of village Ghanda Banna (near Bathinda).

Sadeeq Muhammad and Fazal Muhammad Tunda often sang the works of Sadardin of Jagaraon. The recordings by both those singers that one finds were all of works by Sadardin. He was a resident of Jagaraon

who used to work shoeing horses. They used to call him "the man in the blue *dhoti*." Many songs written by him are really related to *ishq haqiqi*, while, at a casual glance they can be mistaken for *ishq majazi*. "O plumed peacock, I could not be yours" "Serve up knowledge to guests," "I must now depart from this joyous spinning circle," etc. are all songs about the conflict between spirit and body. Songs of his on other topics besides this, too, have been recorded in the voices of tumba-algoza singers, like: "Dulla O come and heave the basket"; "Swinging on swings, giddy young maidens"; "Don't give your heart to a traveler; you'll be in tears daily"; "I must float upon the unbaked pot; what fear have I of dying?"; "Pick up my palanquin, O bearers, and let the crying ones cry"; "O Hir, spread the turmeric paste"; and "Sohni's float has been destroyed." The name of Sadardin is joined with the name of the singers in the last stanzas of these songs. For example:

> *sadīk, kahe suṇ samajh nadāne, nā kar aiḍā jhorā nī.*
> *fazal, ih ḍang chalā ke tur jū, muṛ nī pāuṇā moṛā nī.*
> *sherū, tainūṅ bhulṇā nā hī, dilbar dā nihorā nī.*
> *sadar kahe tūṅ yād karengī, tur jū pā vichhoṛā nī.*
> *dil de ke uh dilbar tāīṅ, tainūṅ kamlī hoṇā paijūgā.*
> *nāl pardesī nahīṅ nibhṇī tainūṅ nitt dā roṇā paijūgā.*

> Sadeeq says: Listen and understand you naïve: grieve not so O.
> Fazal—Say your peace and move on, not to return again O.
> Sheru—You will *not* forget the beloved's entreaty O
> Sadar—You'll remember; yet move on, affect a separation O.
> You'd have to be a fool to give your heart to that beloved.
> Don't fall in love with a traveler; you'll be in tears daily.

Among the fans of this balladry, one senior citizen, Inder Singh of Malaut, who has seen these singers perform, enthusiastically relates their impact: "When the songs sung by Sadar, Fazal, and party are played on the gramophone, the people of the village instantly gather and listen with adoration." These songs were known by heart by one and all, and though with time some have been forgotten, others are yet remembered today. The conflict between spirit and body, as articulated by Sadar, appears in the last two lines here:

> *pāk muhammad sarvar jehā, hoiā nahīṅ sultān koī.*
> *uhnāṅ nāl nibhāī nā maiṅ, jihnāṅ dī aisī shān hoī.*
> *sadar bhalā maiṅ tere varge kad giṇtī vich laindī.*
> *kalaihrīā morā ve maiṅ nā tere rahindī.*

> Like the virtuous Muhammad could never become a sultan,
> I could not feel fulfilled being with someone so glamorous.
> Sadar—Verily, I would appear insignificant next to you.
> O plumed peacock, I could not be yours.

At Partition time, Sadardin had to leave Jagraon and go to Pakistan. I cannot say whether he arrived truly safe and sound or not. Ibrahim Ghuddu of Malerkotla stated that, some months before Partition, he had requested Sadar to compose a version of *Dhol Badshah*. He had actually prepared it, too, but just then the commotion started and everything remained stuck in-between.

Concert-arena Style

The performance-arenas of tumba-algoza balladry are also worth mentioning. These "arenas" (*akhāṛā*), as with the kavishars and folk dhadis, were not the stage arenas of singers these days. Concerts were held at the village green or a ways outside the village on the banks of a pond, below some grove of trees, or else at the confluence of three rivers. Sound reinforcement equipment of any type was non-existent. The minstrels' voices themselves were so loud that they could reach all the audience members. Indeed the arena *style* itself was different than today's. Audience members would sit in a circular formation, leaving an open space in the middle, and, according to their number, the circle shrank or grew. The artists would be in the middle of the circle, and by strolling about they would continually reach all the audience members. This is the arena style that even today their followers have adopted and which can be seen at melas like those at Jarg, Chhapar, Ahmadgarh, Jabomajra, Jagraon, etc.

The concerts of traditional balladry have remained an integral part of Punjab's folk melas. A place would be reserved off to one side of the mela's crowds, in a secluded place under the shade of a large tree. Audiences for these concerts would have been strolling about the mela until afternoon, at which point they would begin to gather in the arena. With cloths on their shoulders, they would lay down sheets, remove their fancy embroidered *juttī*s, and lay their canes and staves on the ground before them. With an air of satisfaction and looking their best, they at last would sit down. The minstrels would enter the middle of the arena, enjoin the audience in a supplication of *fateh*, and begin to make tone on the instruments. The instrumentalists would continue to strike a sweet tone to create a sort of atmosphere in the arena, as the agu perused each side of the circle to acknowledge distinguished guests. Every year [i.e. at certain melas] there are so many audience members that one can recognize at least a few such eminent personalities among them. On

seeing the audience become "in tune" with the tones of the instruments, the agu, according to custom, would make a supplication to his deity or patron saint, along with taking the names gods and goddesses, pirs and faqirs of all religions, and paying respect to [the goddess of music and arts] "Sarusti" (Saraswati). He would then address the audience members and ask, "Right then, brothers, you gracious audiences members, kind sirs—Tell me: What shall we recite? Shall we tell of bhagats or warriors? Or, otherwise, how might ye be pleased?" The distinguished persons might request to hear the tale of some bhagat or warrior, or oftentimes the decision is made to recite some love story. In this way, the main *gauṇ* would begin.

The agu would advance the story, bit by bit. Along with the singing, he brings clarity to the text through periodic prose commentary and uses short, quick poetic utterances, in the form of couplets (*shear* or *doharā*), to move the story along in an interesting fashion. In such a way it would take two hours or more until the climax was reached. At the conclusion of the concert the hope was stated that all might come to hear the performers again in the future.

Performance Attire

As with folk dhadis, the attire of tumba-algoza balladeers was indicative of their distinct identity. Gussied up from top to bottom, when they come into the arena their sharp looks win over the audience. Dazzling white, starched turbans with a fan (*furlā*), and embroidered on the tail ends with dark colored or golden thread. Jasmine-white tunics and blindingly white sheets. Pointed juttis of black patent leather on the feet, splendidly embroidered and creaking (i.e. from newness). Clean-shaven beards, but having mustaches which are given narrow, sharp-pointed twists. Kohl in the eyes; on the forehead, several inlaid silver stars. In all these ways their appearance was distinguished from regular folks'.

The white color is a symbol of their learning, wisdom, and cleanliness. Like wrestlers were given training in good conduct and upright moral qualities by their masters, in the same way these minstrels were also given lessons in living a morally upright and clean life. Their intent was to communicate their "cleanliness in living" through the cleanliness of their attire, and these appearances actually made a deep impression on their audiences. Similarly, they keep their instruments well adorned. The tumba is mounted with brass kokas and ivory fish. At the distal end of the neck, shiny silver handkerchiefs are tied. The pair of algozas is adorned with colorful cotton pom-poms.

Moving about the arena step by step, forward and back, the singers project their voices, often with the agu and pachu at eight to ten feet's distance from each other, or else standing face to face. Sometimes the

agu affected such postures as extending his right foot, lifting his arm up high, and tilting his torso forward while singing out. In this way he would charm the audience. All these matters of appearance are in fact a part of this singing style.

The Master-Disciple Tradition

One distinctive aspect of this ballad art has been its master-disciple tradition. A common saying goes, "Without a guru one finds no *gat* (achievement) as without an emperor one finds no *pat* (honor)." This tradition is nothing new, as indeed one finds evidence of it from Vedic times. At that time, learners used to get all sorts of instruction from sages. This type of master-disciple relationship has very much remained sacrosanct. Students used to live in the ashrams of their gurus while receiving training. The custom of this sort of arrangement has also remained common with respect to the ballad singer's art.

Typically, those being trained would be completely or practically illiterate. They would have to memorize an entire piece just by hearing it from others. The greater someone's memory for repertoire was, the more popular he would be. Therefore, they would have to practice strict discipline; continuous upkeep was necessary to keep their art polished. For this reason, many would leave hearth and home to live in the company of their masters for some 10-12 years. They would serve their masters well, considering it their paramount duty to take care of all kinds of work. The master's favorite disciples could achieve more in less time. Many disciples actually became more or less like their masters' own sons. In performances they would invoke their master's name with pride, saying, "I am the disciple of such and such ustad." As such, the master-disciple tradition has held a special place in this art.

The Contribution of Malerkotla

Along with other losses connected with the Partition of Punjab, balladry suffered a great loss because most of the singers connected with the art were Muslims who had to go to Pakistan. While many arrived safely at their destination, some lost their lives on the way. Only those from Malerkotla were protected.[6] Seeing that bad times were coming, neighbors of the Muslims in the city's nearby villages advised them to go to Malerkotla for some time. Among these individuals, some went back to their villages when things settled down and others took up residence in Malerkotla for good.

So it is that at the present time most singers connected with this balladry are based in Malerkotla city or its surrounding villages. It is they who have kept the art alive. The senior figure of this tradition, 92-year

old Ibrahim Ghuddu, lives in that very city. His students, grand-students, and great-grand-students are making their own efforts to spread the genre under his watchful care. These include: Noordin, Fazaldin, Sadeeq Muhammad, Habib, Shaadi, Phuman, Suleman, Khushi Muhammad, and Zamil. The singers of this balladry from Malerkotla's nearby villages include: Rahimdin Naromajra, Fazal Muhammad Lohatbaddi, Chiragdin and Bashir Muhammad of Tibba, Dhanna Baroondiwala, and Kaka Sadhoheriwala.

The Impact of Loudspeakers

Although this balladry is thought of as the plain and rustic product of the common people, it also has the honor of having been recorded. These voices, immortalized on disc, are a cultural treasure of ours. Having long been blasted from the roofs of homes in villages, they have made a deep impression on people's hearts. Among those who had the honor of getting their voices recorded some notable names are: Nawab Ghumar Anaitkotia, Muhammad Alam Lohar, Sadeeq Muhammad, and Fazal Muhammad Tunda. The recordings made of these artists' voices by various recording companies were of both great quantity and quality. Of these record labels, foremost is HMV (His Master's Voice). Other companies to preserve these singers were Regal, Young India, Columbia, Hindustan Records, and Odion. These companies improved the financial condition of these singers through the royalties they paid.

The compositions that were to be recorded were written or arranged according to the limitations of records, *viz.* that a disc needed to fit a complete composition within two and a half to three minutes. Thus only the main episodes in the folk ballads form the content of these records. For example, out of *Hir*, there would be the exchange between Hir and her mother, the conversation between Hir and Ranjha when the palanquin was leaving, and Hir's remarks with Sahiti. Out of *Sohni*, there is Sohni's words to the pot. Out of *Sassi*, there is Punnun's feelings of separation from sleeping Sassi, and Sassi getting lost in the desert. Out of *Malki*, there is Malki's swinging with her friends. Out of *Dulla Bhatti*, there is the mother's warning to Dulla, Dulla's meeting with fate, Dulla's battle with the Mughals, and the dialogue with Mehru Posti. Out of *Raja Harish Chandra*, there is the death of Rohitas and the lament of Tara and Harishchandra. Out of *Puran*, there is the exchange between Puran and Lunan. From *Mirza*, there is the conversation between Mirza and Sahiban at the end. In addition to these, some recordings are found of compositions related to the *ishq haqiqi* theme. Of the compositions on record, most were by Sadardin of Jagaraon. Later on, Sadeeq Muhammad also recorded many compositions that he had written himself.

The phenomenon of "loudspeakers" [i.e. public address systems] allowed these singers to easily reach the general public. Although recording playback equipment—gramophones—had been in use for a while, their ambit was small. Moreover, they had been confined to personal use. Conversely, with the advent of loudspeakers, recorded music was taken from the private to the public sphere. Each large village soon acquired a PA system, and without its use any joyous event was considered "incomplete." On the roof, two cots were stood up tilted, making a sort of joint on top, in which the horn was hung. The gramophone machine was wound with a key every time a new record was played. With the changing of each record the needle would also have to be replaced. Records of regular folk-songs and duets played throughout the daytime. After sunset, however, would begin the strains of [Nawab Ghumar's catchphrase] "halā puttar būṭiā ghumiārā" or "dulliā ve ṭokrā chukāīṅ" [a popular composition; see below], to which people would listen with great fervor.

So it was that the loudspeaker phenomenon increased the widespread popularity of these singers, as it allowed their music to easily reach the common people. People who previously had difficulty reaching performances could now satiate their hunger for the music whilst seated at home listening to the records. One can infer the popularity of this balladry among the people by the fact that in the 1970s some songwriters took the songs recorded by these singers, altered them a bit, and, under their own names, had them recorded by new singers.

Thus from the above analysis it seems that we have in this balladry a great and formidable recorded heritage. Alas, unfortunately, it has not been preserved, even in part, by any kind of institution or cultural affairs department. This treasure has been left to diffuse here and there. Yes, a few enterprising individuals, in service of their own hobby, have made an effort to preserve some recordings. These collectors include Prof. Baldev Singh Buttar of Ahmadgarh, Mr. Balkit Singh Pesi of Barvala, and a couple others. Yet cultural institutions or the Punjab Government's Cultural Affairs Department needs to give some attention to this matter and preserve this scattered tradition. Otherwise, we will become bereft of this great heritage of ours.[7]

Selected Compositions

Thuhi includes 24 compositions in his book, Tūmbe nāl Joṛī Vajjdī. *The following pages contain examples selected from among them.*

Dulliā Ve Ṭokrā

āundā dullā dekh hoṇī rāh malliā.
dullā ghoṛī chheṛ koloṅ langh challiā.
auratāṅ dā baiṭhī rūp jo vaṭā ke.
dulliā ve ṭokrā chukāĩṅ ā ke.

dulle aḍḍī mār ke ghoṛī nūṅ chheṛiā.
hoṇī aggoṅ ho ke dulle nūṅ gheriā.
dass mainūṅ kithe challiā tūṅ dhāh ke.
dulliā ve ṭokrā chukāĩṅ ā ke.

changī ghoṛī vāliā kithe nūṅ challiā
gall merī suṇke tūṅ jāvīṅ balliā.
bahutā bhār ṭokre 'ch bahi gī pā ke.
dulliā ve ṭokrā chukāĩṅ ā ke.

ik gall suṇ jā tūṅ ghoṛī vāliā.
bahutā bhār ṭokre de vich pā liā.
addhā bhār vichoṅ tūṅ jāīṅ vanḍā ke.
dulliā ve ṭokrā chukāĩṅ ā ke.

suṇke sī bhāṇjā dulle ne ghalliā.
zor sī lavāiā ṭokrā nā halliā.
hoṇī vājāṅ mārdī mūṅhoṅ suṇā ke.
dulliā ve ṭokrā chukāĩṅ ā ke.

Taithoṅ kahindī chakkiā nī jāṇā ṭokrā.
tūṅ tāṅ mainūṅ disdā nikā jā chhokrā.
ghall de tūṅ māme āpṇe nūṅ jā ke.
dulliā ve ṭokrā chukāĩṅ ā ke.

dullā gusse nāl bhāṇje nūṅ boliā.
zor nāl ṭokrā tūṅ kiuṅ nī toliā.
muṛiā pichhe nūṅ jhaṭṭ gussā khā ke.
dulliā ve ṭokrā chukāĩṅ ā ke.

dullā kahindā chhetī kar chakk māīe.
vāṭ bahutī hundī asīṅ agge jāīe.
tinn vārī dulle de mūṅhoṅ kahā ke.
dulliā ve ṭokrā chukāĩṅ ā ke.

Dulla, Come Heave the Basket (*Dulla Bhatti*)

Dulla comes along and sees Honi (his wife) stalled upon the path,
Dulla and horse intending to pass by this annoyance,
By this seated form of a woman calling out:
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

Dulla dug his heels into the horse, to avoid the situation,
But Honi came up from ahead and blocked his way.
"Tell me, where are you off to, with such whooping?"
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

"Just where is the good horseman off to?
You may go *after* listening to me.
I sit here stuck, having overloaded my basket."
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

"Listen to just one thing, my horseman.
I've put quite a load in the basket.
If only you could share in half the weight?"
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

Hearing this, Dulla sent his nephew.
He tried with force, but the basket would not budge.
Honi cried out, vocally:
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

"By you, I say, the basket cannot be lifted.
You appear to me a smallish youngster.
Go along and send for your uncle."
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

Dulla spoke to his nephew in anger—
"With force why can't you heft the basket?"
He turned back immediately in irritation.
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

Dulla says, "Hurry, pick it up.
Enough talk, we must forge ahead."
Three times Dulla had to say it.
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

donoṅ hatth pā ke ṭokre nūṅ chakkdā.
goḍiāṅ tāīṅ chakk ke jimīṅ te rakkhdā.
hoṇī kahindī chakk huṇ zor lā ke.
dulliā ve ṭokrā chukāīṅ ā ke.

sadīk dullā mann giā hoṇhār nūṅ.
rahimiāṅ chakā de ṭokre de bhār nūṅ.
addhā bhār maithoṅ jāīṅ ve vaṇḍā ke.
dulliā ve ṭokrā chukāīṅ ā ke.

Laying on both hands he hefts the basket.
Lifting it knee high, he puts it back on the ground.
Honi says, "Pick it up, now then, put your back in it!"
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

Sadeeq—Dulla believed his wife.
Rahima—Make them lift the basket's weight.
Half the weight shall be born by me.
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

* * *

Pīnghāṅ Jhūṭdīāṅ

jhūṭdīāṅ, mast allaṛh muṭiārāṅ pīnghāṅ jhūtdīāṅ.
jhūṭdīāṅ, gaṛh mugalāṇe dīāṅ nārāṅ pīnghāṅ jhūtdīāṅ.

chaṛhiā sāvaṇ mīṅh varsāvaṇ.
kaṭṭhīāṅ ho ke kuṛīāṅ āvaṇ.
ikk dūjā nūṅ sadd liāvaṇ.
hassaṇ kheḍaṇ shor machāvaṇ.
juṛīāṅ bahnn katārāṅ, pīnghāṅ jhūṭdīāṅ…

gorā gorā rang hatthīṅ mahindaṛ lāiā.
akkhīāṅ de vich surmā pāiā.
kuṛīāṅ ne āpṇā āp sajāiā.
dhardīāṅ chakk ke kadam savāiā.
sī kūnjāṅ dīāṅ ḍārāṅ, pīnghāṅ jhūṭdīāṅ…

uchche je pippalīṅ pīnghāṅ pāīāṅ.
baddalāṅ ne ral mil ghorāṅ lāīāṅ.
shām ghaṭā jad chahṛ ke āīāṅ.
kuṛīāṅ ne pīnghāṅ khūb chahṛāīāṅ.
mihnnīāṅ paiṇ phuhārāṅ, pīnghāṅ jhūṭdīāṅ…

chahṛīāṅ pīnghāṅ azab nazāre.
ral mil gāundīāṅ gīt piāre.
ikk dūjī nūṅ karan ishāre.
vāro vārī laiṇ hulāre.
kardīāṅ aish bahārāṅ, pīnghāṅ jhūtdīāṅ…

malkī pīngh dā lae hulārā.
ghoṛī vāle dā piā chamkārā.
sohṇā dilbar dekh piārā.
malkī pīngh dā lae sahārā.
khichchīāṅ ishq muhārāṅ, pīnghāṅ jhūtdīāṅ…

bhajj laī malkī humm humā ke.
khaṛh gaī vich chursate ā ke.
kīmā langh giā nīvīṅ pā ke.
jaṭṭ nā dekhe nazar uṭhā ke.
sīne phir gīāṅ tārāṅ, pīnghāṅ jhūṭdīāṅ…

Swinging Swings (*Malki-Keema*)

Swinging, giddy young maidens, swinging swings.
Swinging, like Mughal ladies of the castle, swinging swings.

The month of Savan has arrived, bringing its rains.
Girls get together and come,
Calling to one another,
Laughing and playing and raising a rumpus,
All in line for a turn, swinging swings…

Fair in color, their hands decked with henna,
Eye-shadow in their eyes,
The girls have adorned themselves.
Bit by bit they've come along,
Like flocks of cranes, swinging swings…

The swings were set in the tall pipal trees.
The tempestuous clouds swirled around.
Evening fell as they arrived.
The girls swung high on the swings.
Rains falling in fountains, swinging swings…

The swings soared, wondrous sights,
Mingling with their singing of sweet songs.
Gesturing to one another,
Turn by turn, they lean back,
Enjoying the joyous atmosphere, swinging swings…

Malki leans back on the swing.
The horseman Keema's radiance shone.
Seeing the handsome beloved, dear love,
Malki propels the swing.
Tugging on heart strings, swinging swings…

She ran along joyfully,
Came and stood in the village square.
Keema passed by with eyes downcast,
The Jatt not lifting his glance.
Still, arrows pierced his heart, swinging swings…

sadīk malkī ishq ne gherī.
fazal gall nahīṅ suṇdā merī.
sherū nāl sababbāṅ pherī.
sadar pesh nā jāndī merī.
maiṅ khahṛī avāzāṅ mārāṅ, pīnghāṅ jhūtdīāṅ…
jhūṭdīāṅ, mast allaḥ muṭiārāṅ pīnghāṅ jhūtdīāṅ.

Sadeeq—Malki was surrounded by love.
Fazal—"He hears not my talk."
Sheru—"He has come along by chance…"
Sadar—"…and my show has no effect."
"I remain, calling out"…swinging swings…
Swinging, giddy young maidens, swinging swings

*   *   *

Rānjhe dā Ulāmbhā

aggioṅ rānjhā boliā,
        sachchī maiṅ gall suṇāvāṅ
tūṅ tāṅ kheṛiāṅ nūṅ tur challī,
        maiṅ dukhīā kidhar nūṅ jāvāṅ.
mainūṅ manoṅ visār ke nī,
        laīāṅ nāl saide de lāvāṅ.
piār tere dīāṅ dhummāṅ pai gīāṅ,
        shahirāṅ te vich garāvāṅ.
tūṅ jhūṭh boldī sangdī nā,
        maiṅ sachch kahindā sharmāvāṅ.
rangale ḍole baiṭhīe tainūṅ,
        hatthīṅ nī hundīāṅ chhāvāṅ.
mainūṅ har koī dhakke mārdā,
        kithe bahi ke vakt langhāvāṅ.
ajj tere dil dīāṅ ho gīāṅ,
        maiṅ us vele nūṅ pachhtāvāṅ.
je jāṇā taiṅ aidāṅ karnī,
        maiṅ kade piār nā pāvāṅ.
je maiṅ takht hazāre nūṅ jānā,
        nahīṅ deṇā varan bharāvāṅ.
tāhane māran bhābīāṅ,
        das khahiṛā kiveṅ chhuḍāvāṅ.
dil dīāṅ dil vich rahi gīāṅ,
        maiṅ kīhde kol hāl suṇāvāṅ.
mainūṅ vī nāle lai chall,
        nahīṅ maiṅ zahir mangā ke khāvāṅ.

The Complaint of Ranjha (*Hir-Ranjha*)

Ranjha spoke forth—
   "I shall be frank with you.
So, you went off with the Kheras,
   While I have ached wherever I go.
You put me out of your mind,
   And got wed to Saida.
News of your love spread,
   Through the cities and villages.
You are not ashamed of telling lies,
   While I am shy even when speaking the truth.
Go ahead and seat yourself in the colorful palanquin,
   For hands alone make poor shade.
I am jerked around every which way;
   Where shall I sit and pass the time?
Today you've got what you've always wanted,
   I while I am filled with regret.
If you're going to carry this out,
   I shall never love again.
If I should go back to Takht Hazara,
   My brothers would not let me back inside.
Their wives would taunt me to no end.
   Tell me, how should I break free?
My heart's wishes remain unfulfilled.
   Who do I have, with whom to share my feelings?
Bring me along, too,
   Otherwise I shall procure poison and swallow it down.

* * *

Sohṇī dā Beṛā

sohṇī dā ruhṛ giā beṛā.
mahīṅvāl nūṅ dassūgā kihṛā.

chakk ke ghaṛe nūṅ naiṅ vich vaṛgī.
lahir jhanāṅ dī dūṇī chahṛgī.
ethe vas nī chaldā merā.
mahīṅvāl nūṅ dassūgā kihṛā.

vairan baṇ gaī naṇad jo merī.
pakke nāl vaṭā gaī jihṛī.
vīrā mar je naṇāne terā.
mahīṅvāl nūṅ dassūgā kihṛā.

kālī kāṅg pahāṛoṅ āī.
sohṇī ro ro deve duhāī.
pāiā pāṇī ne ghummaṇ gherā.
mahīṅvāl nūṅ dassūgā kihṛā.

kachchiā ve tūṅ chall agere.
maiṅ balihāre jāvāṅ tere.
mainūṅ ho giā bahut averā.
mahīṅvāl nūṅ dassūgā kihṛā.

vich dariā de paindīāṅ lāphāṅ.
chār chupheriuṅ māre ṭhāṭhāṅ.
pāṇī muṛ muṛ deve geṛā.
mahīṅvāl nūṅ dassūgā kihṛā.

kachchiā ve taiṅ kachch kamāiā.
kāhnūṅ tainūṅ gale lagāiā.
mainūṅ bhet nā lagiā terā.
mahīṅvāl nūṅ dassūgā kihṛā.

vich dariā de rovāṅ kallī.
tere bājh kauṇ deve tasallī.
bāhoṅ phaṛ lai allā diā sherā.
mahīṅvāl nūṅ dassūgā kihṛā.

hoṇī hār miṭāve kauṇ.
maut lagī huṇ ghere pauṇ.
tainūṅ deve kauṇ sunehaṛā.
mahīṅvāl nūṅ dassūgā kihṛā.

Sohni's Float (*Sohni-Mahiwal*)

Sohni's float has been destroyed.
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"I picked up the pot and entered the river.
The waters of the Chenab had risen twofold.
All was out of my control."
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"My husband's sister became a vindictive witch,
Who switched out my [buoyant] baked pot.
I hope your brother dies, O sister-in-law!"
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

An ominous black crow came down from the hills.
Sohni was whimpering and wailing,
As the whirling eddies encircled her.
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"O unbaked pot, take me onward.
I shall be indebted to you.
I am running very late."
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

In the river the waves crash.
Lashing her from all sides.
The water again and again returns.
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"O unbaked pot, you've been left unfinished.
Why have you started to dissolve?
I did not know this secret of yours."
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"I shall weep alone in the river
Without you, who could give me consolation?
Take hold of my arms, O Lion of God."
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"Who could erase destiny?
Death now hovers 'round.
Who will now give you the message?"
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

lai sajjṇā huṇ vas nā mere.
maiṅ huṇ kīte yatan bathere.
huṇ kūch bandī dā ḍerā
mahīṅvāl nūṅ dassūgā kihṛā.

sadīk kahe huṇ bhul nā jāvīṅ
rahimiāṅ soch samajh ke lāvīṅ.
ehne kar liā yatan batherā.
mahīṅvāl nūṅ dassūgā kihṛā.

"Lo beloved, I've now lost control.
I've now made much effort.
I'm now passing on to the land of the hereafter."
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

Sadeeq says, now don't forget.
O Raheema—Understand and think on this.
She made much effort indeed.
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

Notes

¹ This article has been compiled and translated from text that originally appeared in Thuhi's *Tūmbe nāl Jōṛī Vajjdī*, Punjab Sangeet Natak Akademi, Chandigarh, 2002, pp. 13-37, 143-144, 146-147, 155, 159-160.

² Although Thuhi does not state so explicitly, one can deduce from his usage that the term "backup" is generally applied to just the tumba-player, whose mouth is free and who therefore may act as a backup *singer*.

³ Born in village Anait Kot of district Gujranwala in the last decade of the 19th century, Nawab Ghumar has the honor of being the first to record this genre of music, circa 1932-33. His first recording was an episode from *Puran*, on the Regal label. On this recording, he sang solo to the accompaniment of his three sons on algoza, chimta, and dholak. After Partition, Nawab Ghumar seems to have faded into obscurity (Thuhi 2002:48-51). —*Ed.*

⁴ Such an instrument, having at least two strings, also goes by the name of *king*. If there is any fine distinction between *tūmbā* and *king*, it is not currently known to me. —*Ed.*

⁵ Thuhi must be referring to the "Malwa style" with this remark.

⁶ For the historical context leading up to this situation, see Bigelow, "Punjab's Muslims: The History and Significance of Malerkotla," *Journal of Punjab Studies* 12(1) (2005). —*Ed.*

⁷ In republishing this very book, and in organizing a program to recognize some of the living artists discussed, the Punjab Sangeet Natak Akademi appears to have since responded to Thuhi's call to action. —*Ed.*

The Naqqals of Chandigarh:
Transforming Gender
On the Musical Stage

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In the Chandigarh area, a group of traditional dramatic performers called *Naqqāl*s have been entertaining audiences for decades. Using a theatrical style that breaks all the rules of realism, they present traditional tales in an idiosyncratic way, within a variety show framework that includes music and dance. A distinctive feature of their shows is female impersonators. This article explores what it means for these male entertainers to transform their gender on the stage. The expectations of the audience, set within patriarchal ideas of "feminine" behavior, are contrasted with the practical needs and artistic agency of the performers. The article is based on the author's decades long experience collaborating with Naqqals, as well as observations of *naqal* performances and interviews with the performers.[1]

The *Naqqāls* are musicians and traveling bards who sing songs, dance, and improvise while telling a story. In their performances, they lampoon a situation in effort to subvert existing attitudes. Along with their repertoire of story-telling techniques, raucous humor, and wild singing, the mainstay of their tradition is dancing which is performed by female impersonators.

This last aspect of the Naqqals' art, the phenomenon of female impersonation, is the focus of this article. It raises questions about the relationship that sexuality and imitation of sexuality have with performance. The Naqqals challenge the myth that it is necessary to be homosexual in orientation in order for a man to dress up as a woman or to perform his sexuality. My observations are based on over 20 years of experience working in collaboration with the Naqqals whilst directing my Chandigarh-based theatre group, The Company.

Background to the Naqqals of Chandigarh

*Naqqāl*s (from the Persian word, "to imitate"), also known as *Bhaṇḍ*s ("clowns"), are rural itinerant actors in Punjab. Those with whom I have

worked come from the Bazigar caste (see the next article in this volume) and are now based in the Chandigarh area.

In the past these artists were patronized by the local landlords, to whom they ritually apologized before starting their performances. They were led by a member known as *ustād*, who was actor, director, and musician all rolled into one. Members of a Naqqal group were trained in music, singing, and dance, according to the traditional *guru-shishya* fashion. Their performance style, called *naqal*, is a form without any firm or continuous tradition, and as such the Naqqals became master adapters, changing the script, movement, songs, and innuendoes as they went along. They included in their repertoire urban issues, along with stories of gods and goddesses, legendary heroes, and tales of *bhakti* and miracles. These were enacted with an idiomatic speech, in a patois that had its provenance in colloquial discourse. Their performance was rendered with a rhetorical flourish, interspersed with a comic vulgarity that always stopped short of the crass.

Most of the traditional actors belong to one extended family. Members of the Chandigarh group with whom I have worked are all related: brothers, uncles, cousins, brothers-in-law, and so on (only men perform). In the beginning, most of them also married within the clan, but slowly that is changing due to the fact that many of them chose to opt out of this profession. This is due in turn to the uncertainty of the profession or the social stigma of being a performer, especially a female impersonator, in the present day context. Up until recent decades, most of the Naqqals had no permanent address or home and moved from village to village with their cattle and sheep in search of pasture and work. Like all nomads, they were a trifle aloof and suspicious. Their background is mysterious, as all claim separate genealogies even though they belong to the same family. Prem Chand, the self-styled ustad, said his family came from Rajasthan to Patiala on the invitation of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh. By contrast, another member of the group, Mundri, claimed no such grand history for himself.

As performers, the Naqqals would sing at village melas and weddings. The female impersonators among them would have no problem posing as hermaphrodites, dancing and singing with gusto at the birth of the village headman's son or at traffic crossings.[2] It was all a question of survival and no role was big or small, good or bad in their dictionary. Naqqals were also hired occasionally by the 'Song and Drama' division to sell products, pass on social messages, and damage the reputation of a rival political opponent when necessary. It is sometimes weird to see issues of dowry, birth control, and female infanticide being rendered with such a declamatory flamboyance that makes these issues get a dash of the mythological.

The main source of income for these individuals was when they assumed the role of shaman for buffalos and cows during the monsoon season when animals were more prone to disease. During this period they would sit in a cowshed chanting incantations to dispel evil spirits. Before the start of this ritual the ustad would purify all the musical instruments by lighting incense and sprinkling rice over them.

In recent times the Naqqals' considerable popularity has been challenged by cinema and television and they have had to survive by doing "disco" dancing at weddings and other community festivities. Furthermore, the Naqqals of late have lost the impulses that created this art form and the values that supported it due to changing taste patterns and the choices posed by a new globalized economy. The younger generation has not viewed their traditional legacy as offering them a viable profession and has sought alternatives, from selling helmets and fruit or anything that brings a semblance of a livelihood, rather than sing, dance, or play the drums. Most of them have dreamed about getting an office job as a peon or a clerk—if they were lucky or educated. The *naqal* performances I describe thus represent somewhat rare sightings of a fading art.

The *Naqal* Performance

The *naqal* performance follows a structure that begins with two actors who, through a series of jokes and improvisations, make satirical comments on politics and society.[3] This aspect of the performance is constantly interrupted by four to five female impersonators who first enter dancing with their backs towards the audience and who show their faces only after straining the viewers' curiosity and suspense to the limit. This is then followed by a humorous and dramatic encounter between the two male actors and the female impersonators, with most of the dialogues hinging on double meanings that border on being seriously risqué. This constant repartee is usually followed by a great amount of ribaldry and raucous humor that at times can descend into obscenity. Next comes an erotic dance with many a thrust and a wriggle, to the accompaniment of musical instruments that include *ḍhol*, harmonium (reed organ), *chimṭā*, *tūmbī, gubgubī*[4] (a small drum, open from one side, with a string that is strummed), and *maṭkā* (a metal pot idiophone). The style of dance resembles the pirouette movements from the classical *kathak*. After this comes an erotic song sung usually in *rāg* Malkauns or Darbari. This is then followed by the enactment of the story, which is usually taken from popular Punjabi folk tales, e.g. *Hir-Ranjha, Sohni-Mahiwal*, or *Puran Bhagat*. The dancing and the narrative are interspersed with comic interludes handled by a comic actor who represents the common man. In this way the performers function as both social critics and popular

psychiatrists through their verbal gymnastics on varying subjects such as dowry, corruption, and people's aspirations that are made visible through the performances.

The text of the narrative that evolves in performance has a freewheeling mix of tragedy and comedy that swings from the esoteric to the banal. The Naqqals would spin any narrative on its head by breaking all the rules of realism. For example, when the protagonist in the play *Keema-Malki* pats his horse while singing a dirge to his beloved, the charger starts singing along with the lover. This contrast helps in breaking the maudlin mood and shifting it to another emotional plane, by breaking the continuity of a single emotion. In another example, in an episode from the famous love legend *Sohni-Mahiwal*, the earthen pot, upon which *Sohni* is crossing the river Chenab*,* suddenly animates itself and starts to narrate the story to the audience. This is a theatrical device that does not fit with any known grammar of performance, but is nonetheless completely acceptable to the audience. Indeed, the energy of the naqal form comes from the fact that, although it upholds traditional values, it has the capacity to question and subvert these values. The various conventions of chorus, music, and unrelated comic interludes, as well as the mixing of the human and mythological characters, allow for alternative viewpoints to be presented simultaneously.

A description of two village-based performances follows, in order to give a picture of the traditional context and methods of the Naqqal artists. The first of these represents my first encounter with the Naqqals. So it was that in 1985, while driving from Chandigarh to Amritsar, my party stopped at Jandiala Guru (dist. Amritsar), from where I could hear sounds of singing and shrieks of laughter. There seemed to be a show in the village square. Through a narrow mud tract in the dusty golden light I could see a scattering of thatch huts with tin doors. Intrigued by the sound, we walked towards a large gathering of men and children pressed against each other, squatting around a dimly lit stage. A *naqal* performance was in progress.

The stage on which they performed was made of temporary planks of wood laid on a trestle creating a platform stage, and lit by oil lamps, creating giant shadows on a patchy and soiled white sheet strung up haphazardly as a backdrop. An actor entered the improvised stage and blew on an antelope horn arbitrarily. Another sound that seemed suspiciously like a car hooter was going on simultaneously to the beat of an insistent drum. Immediately after that, a decrepit old man appeared, blowing fire from his mouth. A procession of actors followed him, moving with a shambolic monotony. After an exchange of risqué repartee, a group of garishly dressed female impersonators entered, making the villagers sit up in anticipation. There was laughter all around and the actors on the stage were encouraging the audience to dance with

them. The stories that they enacted were pan-Indian myths conjoining local myths, transformed and renewed for local meaning. The gods they evoked rode bicycles, aspired to a Maruti 800, and sweated profusely. The musical rhythms were inspired by the common stock of Hindi film songs and folk tunes.

Another naqal performance I witnessed took place in 1987 at Barooti village near Pinjore (on the outskirts of Chandigarh), a regular venue for their performance. They were performing during the Ram Lila[5] festival. The performance ground was packed to capacity, the air thick with the smell of liquor and sweaty bodies. With the entry of the female impersonators, Puran Chand, Sohan Chand, and Bahadur Chand, the crowd went wild. Encased in bright yellow, blood red and cobalt blue *lehnga*s, the gold dust on their face and hair was dazzling. That night they were gyrating wildly to the Hindi song *jhumkā girā re, rāvaṇ ke darbār meṅ* ("I have lost my earring in the court of the demon, Ravan"), displaying a mock show of coyness. They laced their provocative gestures with a roll of their eyes, while consciously thrusting their fulsome "falsies" at an all male audience.[6] The audience participated with a roar of appreciation and threw coins and crumpled five rupee notes towards the performers. The female impersonators puckered their red lips that were painted on to the chalky white canvas of their face. "Look at me, I am so beautiful and saucy," they stated with an insolent insouciance. The unassailable arrogance of the performer mocked the audience without modesty. The dance did not in any way convey the mood of the song, but contradicted its pathos with its unfettered sexiness. The main musician, Mehar Chand, a checked blanket draped over his shoulders, was singing songs about Ram suffering over Sita's abduction. His grainy hoarse voice, layered with a patina of nicotine, suggested a cracked surface of notes that roamed freely, assuming new rhythms and individual cadence. Group member Mundri,[7] with his heavily kohled eyes, strummed his tumbi with wild abandon, becoming a *mast qalandar* in the process.

Female Impersonators and Their Transformation

It is a well-known fact that most patriarchal and feudal societies did not allow the entry of women in the performing arts. This situation of course slowly changed, by including prostitutes and dancing girls in the performing arts. Although female impersonation was an established convention in most pre-modern traditions of theatre and dance in South Asia, it entered a new phase in the urban entertainment economy that emerged in mid-19th century Bombay. This was particularly the case in the Parsi theatre,[8] as also in the closely related Gujarati and Marathi theatres, as well as in the early films, where boys and men played the

female roles. The Naqqal tradition, in which only men perform, constitutes yet another regional example of this patriarchal policy in effect.

Unlike in the classical traditions, where the transformation of gender has almost a mystical hue, the Naqqals' process is quick and devoid of fuss. They swiftly transform themselves from beefy, jowly men into provocative and seductive female impersonators, without ritual or fanfare. It includes the shaving of the arms and the chest, the stuffing of the bra with whatever material was available (e.g. rolled up hankies, cotton wool), the smearing of face powder, the painting of their moustache-lined lips into bleeding red smudges, and lining their eyes with antimony. Their costumes are glitzy with lots of spangles, including golden earrings studded with huge stones, and silken wigs.

The make-up is done in front of a large mirror. The female impersonator's face is covered with a chalky white powder. This is not done to make the complexion unnatural, as say in the clown tradition of the West, but to erase the features and paint on it a face afresh. This practices treats the face like a blank canvas on which the character will be written, etched and decorated. Elongated eyebrows, a vermillion painted mouth, and eyes like deep inkwells create a hyper-femininity. I have noticed that the female impersonators that I worked with did not have the transformative skills of Japanese kabuki's *onnagatha* performer or even of the *kutiyattam* or *kathakali* actor of Kerala. The female impersonator is not supposed to be a verisimilitude of women, but is supposed to *signify* a woman. The actor neither plays a woman nor copies her but only signifies her as an idea, with all the exaggerations that are imagined about an idealized woman.

As the make-up is being applied, the process of internalizing the illusion of being feminine is also set into motion. That is, once the Naqqals get into their female garb, the attributes of being a woman transform them not only physically but also internally. I see them falling into the conventions of representation. A narcissistic and voyeuristic duality of the "doer" and "doing" come into play. If I accidentally enter the room in which they are changing, they immediately react to my "gaze" and hurriedly cover their flat hairy chest with a towel or spread their hands on the chest. At this moment they have dropped their maleness and are slowly transforming themselves as women. The act of covering is not just an affectation, but also a necessary code for arriving at that transformation. At that time they also talk to me as a woman, discussing their health and family problems in a manner that is usually associated with a woman.

It is very interesting to note that most of the training of a traditional Naqqal performer starts from being a female impersonator. The implicit assumption behind this practice is that, besides learning musical skills,

the actor also needs to learn the skill of transformation. The skill required to change your gender is fairly complex and the inner code required is almost given like a secret mantra from the guru to the *chelā* (student). The talent of an actor for transformation and being able to re-constitute his gender is what determines his success as a student. The performer then makes a choice later in life, whether he wishes to be a female impersonator, a singer, or a musician.

Satnam, son of female impersonator Bahadur, was being trained as a female impersonator by his father. One day, while accompanying his father for a dance program at a village fair near Malout, Satnam stepped on the improvised stage. He wore a shining red salwar kameez, with his head covered by a green *chunnī*, lurid make-up, and flowers pinned on a wig; all the tools of seduction were in place. Dancing along with his father, his youth more than made up for his lack of expertise because his young age gave him the ability to look non-male. Yet despite his lack of virtuosity (in comparison with the older female impersonators), he knew exactly how to strategize the performance and had worked out the terms of address between the spectator and the performer.

Satnam's surface femininity made me recognize, as a spectator, the absence of the female rather than its presence. The choreography of the dance was punctuated by a series of slanting looks and teasing gestures. At some point the dancer looks straight at the spectator and smiles, locking his gaze with the spectator in an unflinching manner. The directness had a hypnotic appeal almost as if a bird had pulverized its victim through the "gaze." It seemed to illustrate the way in which the dancer addressed the male spectator. An atmosphere of intense intimacy is created through the locked gaze, almost as if he were "making love in public." The coquettishness of the stance that is assumed is highly provocative, but it is in the sheer power of its *directness* that the viewer is disarmed. Paradoxically it is in this directness that we see the way the dance is being addressed to the male members of the audience.

No one for a moment forgets that the dancer is a male; the suggestion of the feminine is cocooned in the safety of the male body. The purpose is to simulate the "feminine," which is done through costume, hair, and make-up. It is to feed the male gaze through stereotypical aspects of what makes a "sexy" woman. The image of the woman is created by the male imagination only by displacing the conventional woman. It is in the absence of a "real woman" that the illusionary woman comes alive. Furthermore, the female impersonator appears to reinforce the primacy of desire of men for men or boys. The young boy flatters the male spectators' visual and physical prowess, by appealing to his maleness. In short the "fetishized" female image reinforces rather than subverts the structure of the dominant codes that

are ascribed to women within patriarchy, and the behaviors, attitudes, and tasks they have to follow.

Underlining all this is the fact that it is a performance for the male, by the male and about the male. A man playing the role of a woman helps an audience subvert assumptions of cultural propriety. The male audience can take those liberties with the female impersonator that would not be possible if she were a "real" woman. By the same token, the female impersonator can have "hot" talks with the audience, which would not have been possible if she were a real woman. This is to say that the female impersonators are free to act as women, because they are, in reality, *not* women. Traditional conventions are still strong enough to make it improper for a woman, either in real life or on the stage, to act as openly and freely with men as a female impersonator can, initiating contact with them, inviting verbal and gestural exchange, provoking them to get actively involved. I have seen, for example, at a village performance in Solan, female impersonator Bahadur Chand sit on the lap of the patron and twirl his moustache in an attempt to extract money from him.

Naqal shows that are performed in the night by a group of female impersonators, musicians, and singers have a carnivalesque quality as they affirm and mock, celebrate and critique prevailing definitions of what titillates and stimulates a predominantly male audience. The actors flaunt their bodies in exaggerated costumes drawn from and elaborated upon through cultural stereotypes: the seductress, the Goddess, the idealized wife and daughter. Often their names suggest an exaggerated sexuality: Miss Sweety, Miss Rosy, Miss Hurricane, Miss Bulbulah-Hind, Miss Chasme-Badur. I have also seen during the course of their performance a crowd becoming violent, abusive, and aggressive. In their desire to be titillated the atmosphere becomes extremely sexual and restless, as the crowd is waiting impatiently to be collectively seduced. Nevertheless, the spectators always present a version of masculinity that has the sanction of the dominant culture and as such raucous and coarse behavior is the norm at such performances. Moreover, in the middle of a show the female impersonator can lash out "as a male" to discipline an unruly spectator and without much effort again slip into the female role.

Gender Identity and Sexuality

How does one shift through the boundaries of sexuality, especially in the concept of the female impersonator? Is the man who dresses periodically as a woman, who sees himself as a woman, and who is not entirely a woman, "a man minus a man" or is he "a man plus a woman"? What happens on the stage? The "man" in the man and the "woman" in the man become hybridized.

The error happens when we think that that there exist two separate and "opposite" genders, masculine and feminine. Both these genders exist in their own orbit and when they are presented on the stage they come with their own specific baggage. Just as one begins a creative work from a blank canvas, in the same way an actor has to free himself/herself from categorization of representing a gender and carrying notions of how gender should be represented. A female impersonator is also in the business of displaying a woman's body, but through his masculinity.

The Naqqal female impersonator appears more as an idea of a male beneath a woman's costume. At times, even obvious male characteristic such as hairy arms and stubble, would not take away from the exaggerated suggestiveness of the "feminine" in a way that is seductive but not unsettling of gender norms. Indeed, the real problem I have with the entire question of female impersonator is that when a man dresses up flamboyantly like a woman, then somewhere his masculinity is even more in evidence. This makes explicit and implicit visible cultural and counter cultural ideas of masculinity and sexuality.

It has been assumed that female impersonators are homosexual. This is again a stereotypical reading of the female impersonator: If it is not a man, and not a woman, then it is either the third sex or he is gay. This sort of linear deduction is only a half-truth. Some of the female impersonators definitely are homosexual but then, so are some of the male actors. Choosing to be a female impersonator in no way seems to suggest a sexual proclivity, but rather depends more on family tradition, artistic training, physical endowment, and artistic choice. As most of the female impersonators I have worked with have families, children and land, the wife feels no embarrassment or social stigma about their husbands' world as a female impersonator. In fact the female impersonator is aided by his wife before a show, with the wife helping him in arranging his costume and his wig, as well as loaning him her make-up.[9]

The complex issues of gender identity and sexuality are exemplified in my exchanges with Puran Chand (stage name Chasme-Badur, sometimes Pammi or Miss Rosy). He is a star performer at most village fairs; his name sells. Despite his muscles, hairiness, and avoirdupois—as indeed despite his extravagant display of a star-spangled costume complete with a luxuriant wig, oversized breasts, and cleavage that defies nature—encoded within his persona is an ethos and aesthetic that is hyper-feminine. I have noticed, sometimes with panic, that while he is rehearsing for one of the plays that I am directing, he stares at me with a fixed smile and acts as if an invisible mirror is following him. He looks at me coyly, with a smile trembling on his red "bow" lips, almost as if I am the male client that he needs to seduce. This leaves me completely confused: Is the male in him trying to seduce the woman in me, or is it

the "female" in Puran that imagines me to be a male (as being a director is a fairly androgynous role to play!)? It is this ambiguity that creates a magical hold over me as a director and as a spectator.

Dialoguing with Naqqals

It is a cold wintry night in Balachaur, a small town near Ropar, in 2007. The Naqqals are about to give a performance, and the female impersonators are putting on their make-up. In a lurid tent lit up by kerosene lamps, a mirror propped precariously against a chair, I asked them certain question to gain an insight into their craft. Their responses provide some empirical data to ground my readings.

I asked Bahadur Chand, "Does the female impersonator only play the role of the seductress?"

> We also play the role of Durga and Kali (Goddess). When we play the role of Durga, Kali, or Surupanakha (the sister of the demon king Ravana), we sing their *shabad*s (religious hymns) and our expression comes from the feelings behind the words.

"What kind of woman do you try to imitate? Do you use your mothers, sisters, or wives as reference?" Sohan Lal, a female impersonator with a high-pitched singing voice, answered,

> I use the gestures and body language of Hema Malini, Sridevi, Kareena Kapoor or Preity Zinta (all famous Bollywood actresses). I want to look as beautiful as them.

Puran Chand, an attractive female impersonator and a huge star in the villages in which he performs, mentioned that he would like to become a woman:

> I like the *adā* (mannerism) of women. When I perform the role of a woman on stage, I should be familiar with her *adā*. I enjoy becoming a woman and performing the complete *adā* of a girl (the coyness, the wiles, the slow gait, the grace, the sacrifice), and during the performance I must forget that I am a man. My *ustādjī* used to always tell me: You must become a woman "completely" while performing.

I saw the female impersonators patting a thick coat of powder on their faces and, after the powder had settled into the pores of the skin, outlining their eyebrows, tracing their lips, and exaggerating their eyes with a thick kohl pencil, almost as if they were writing on their faces the character they were going to portray. Very hesitantly I asked them, "Why are you applying so much white make-up on your face? Will this help you to become a woman?" Puran Chand had a quick answer:

> When we apply make-up, we remember Mohini (the celestial beauty, who specialized in seducing learned sages in Hindi mythology) and try to become like her, the ultimate seductress. Make-up enhances the quality of attractiveness required to seduce sages and saints. When we play the role of women for the stage, we remember Mohini and try to emulate her through make-up and dress.

"When you become Mohini, what happens? Who is Mohini? What is Mohini for you? What are her special qualities? Is she strong; is she beautiful? What aspects and attributes of her do you try to present?" Bahadur quickly replied,

> *Shringār* (the romantic essence) is what Mohini represents, and it is this particular quality that we try to remember.

"What are her other qualities?" I asked. "Is she fragile? Gentle? Does she have *karuna rasa*? *Bhakti rasa*?" Puran was quick to reply,

> She has everything: delicacy, style, coyness, grace…
> She has everything.

The question that has always intrigued me is: What do their wives make of their profession? How do their daughters react when they see their father transforming into a woman? Does it confuse them, lead to a sense of blurred identity? Is it an embarrassment in their community? Very tentatively I broached this question. "Does your wife think, 'I am a woman; my husband is also a woman'?" This question had all of them laughing at its absurdity.

> They know this is our tradition. The wives' domain is clothes and food; what we do is a man's work and only men do it. Our women don't do this work. They know this is our profession and we have to do it.

A few months later (December 2007) I went to their village, Majri. Sitting on a rope bed we talked over hot cups of tea with the cows mooing at the back, while the women of the household busied themselves in making cow-dung cakes to be used as fuel. I talked to Prem Chand, the ustad of the Naqqals and a famous impersonator during his times, about the changing taste of audiences and the changing times. Prem Chand, a compulsive talker with a propensity towards exaggeration, claims that he is one hundred years old and still virile. (His passport puts his age as 72.) Tall and fair, with orange henna-dyed hair with gold loops in his ears, he looked more like a buccaneer than a musician.

> When I used to dance and sing in village fairs, people liked to watch a Naqqal performance. They also enjoyed listening to ghazals, qawwali, and religious songs. In those days there were no loudspeakers, nor electricity. People had simple tastes and used to concentrate on words, their meaning and the art itself. No speakers, no roads, no buses. We used to walk with our baggage on our heads, even if it was a distance of fifty miles. There was one bus which was bound to break down on the way and we would be left behind. So, we used to walk. We have learnt this art the hard way.

"What is the difference between performing in the city and the villages?" was a question that I posed before them. Puran Chand, the female impersonator, chirps up,

> In the village we perform according to the taste and sensibility of the audience. In the villages our performances are more *badmāsh* (salacious), as the prime motive, besides entertaining, is also to extract the maximum money out of the audience. And the only way that can be achieved is through titillation, seduction and by being risqué. If they don't give us money, we tell them to go away and say we won't perform. In this way we embarrass them publicly for their pusillanimity. We employ *nazākat* (wiles) and *nakhrā* (coyness) until we get the money. Sexist behaviour is used, dialogues expressing love and passion are expressed—"I have become yours and you have become mine"—which is greeted by hoots of laughter and the victim immediately opens his purse to save himself from further embarrassment. This can

> only be done if I imagine myself as a woman.
> Otherwise I cannot perform.

I guess this is one of the main reasons for female impersonation to have survived as a village tradition in Punjab, as it is based on the whole process of seduction—of extracting money.

Conclusion

In their musical theatrical art, the Naqqals often poke fun at the high-minded ideals of the rich and powerful, through their earthy humor and capacity to ad-lib. Indeed, through humor they demystify those symbols that have become sanctified by tradition and hence reduce the tensions and anxieties of that segment of society that supports their art. The Naqqals' ironic commentary on contemporary issues has a similar therapeutic impact. The Naqqal tradition not only represents a people's rebellion against the establishment but also shows the way to adjust to and humanize it.

The Naqqals' act represents a special challenge, to conventional ideas of gender, in the form of female impersonators. The men who transform themselves as women have been trained to be erotic, wanton, and lascivious; the audiences that supported and patronized them were boisterous and male. This relationship between audience and performer is beyond the imagined limits of decency. It is sexist, nocturnal, and misogynist. It happens deep in the night, far away from their homes and wives—removed from the precincts of their everyday life. The intentions are single-mindedly erotic. Indeed, one of the more popular self-projections of female impersonators in the oral tradition of rural North India is the image of a lustful woman. This directly contradicts the dominant and ideal image of the chaste woman and offers an alternative moral perspective on kinship, gender, sexuality, and norms of behavior.

The female impersonator dressed in flattering feminine dress is both fascinating and illusionary. Thus the male members of the audience, knowing that it is not a "real woman," exercise those liberties that would be unthinkable if it was a real woman on the stage. This interaction satiates certain voyeuristic needs in a feudal and male dominated society.

While watching the Naqqals perform I have understood the true meaning of the words "spontaneity" and "openness." To see a large number of people sitting out on a starlit night, responding to the mood of the performance, is an enriching experience. To observe how the audience pumps energy and excitement into the performers is in some way to recognize that something real and precious is being exchanged. The Naqqals have helped me to understand that tradition does not mean

something *back there, lost,* but something constantly "alive," "living," and "expanding."

Notes

[1] The present is an abbreviated version of a chapter from Dr. Chowdhry's dissertation, "Situating Contemporary Punjabi Theatrical Practice in the Context of the Trends in Modern Indian Drama 1970-2007" (Panjab University, 2009). Those who wish the full theoretical context of the discussion are directed to that work. Thanks go to Dr. Chowdhry for the permission to edit the article according to the needs of JPS. —*Ed.*

[2] The reference here is to *khusrā*s, individuals sharing a group identity inclusive of transsexuals, eunuchs, hermaphrodites, and transvestites, who earn a living by singing songs to mark joyous occasions. The female impersonators among the Naqqals, often referred to in Punjabi as *nachār*, should be distinguished from them. —*Ed.*

[3] This portion of the routine is typical of the traditional comedians of Punjab, who are elsewhere known more particularly as *bhaṇḍ*. —*Ed.*

[4] The instrument is also known as *bughdū* in Punjab. —*Ed.*

[5] The annual dramatic enactment of Rama's story, during the Dussehra festival in September-October, which celebrates the defeat of Ravana (the demon king).

[6] Whenever a photographer comes to the edge of the stage to take a photograph, the female impersonator becomes very still, composing his expression, to face the camera. After the photograph is clicked he resumes his dancing.

[7] Mundri Lal is an eccentric character. Wrapped in a huge overcoat, even in mid-summer, with thick military shoes bought from the flea market, his favorite activity is sleeping and a stubborn resistance to bathing.

[8] A highly influential theatre movement between 1850-1930, an aggregate of European techniques, pageantry, and local forms, which may be seen as India's first commercial theatre.

[9] I remember the female impersonator Bahadur Chand once asking me to arrange for a brassier as he had forgotten to borrow it from his wife.

The Bazigar (Goaar) People and Their Performing Arts

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The Bazigar (Goaar) are a Punjab-based people possessed of unique lifestyle, linguistic, and cultural characteristics that are scarcely familiar to their neighbors in the region. However, few Punjabis have not witnessed one of their *performances* of *some* sort. From their ubiquitous dhol-playing and bhangra dance presentations to their maintenance of older Western Punjabi genres, members of the community have had their hands in Punjab's musical traditions. Bazigar artistes have influenced the development of performance forms to such a degree that they must be recognized as special contributors to modern Punjabi cultural life. This article introduces the unfamiliar Bazigar people while connecting them to their familiar arts.

Many Punjabis and scholars of Punjabi culture may be surprised to learn that the people known as Bazigar have had a very significant influence on Punjabi music and dance as it is experienced in the current era. From their base in West Punjab in the pre-Partition era, Bazigar performers carried both traditions that were unique to their community and those that were typical of the local residents of that area. Since Partition, Bazigar musicians in East Punjab have both maintained fading performance genres and participated on the front lines in creating the new forms that Punjabis the world over have come to consider as part of their heritage. In these respects, the present exposition of the Bazigar and their performing arts reveals aspects of Punjab's music that one will rarely find discussed elsewhere, as well as the Bazigar involvement in practices that are near and dear to many.

The Bazigar are a Punjabi community that is poorly known by outsiders. Who exactly *are* the Bazigar people? Mainstream Punjabi society tends to class them—sometimes dismissively so— as "acrobats" and little more. Likewise, writing about the community is scanty, and Bazigars themselves have had neither inclination nor opportunity (their literacy and education rates have historically been low, and their priorities elsewhere) to remedy that situation.[1] While the focus here is on the Bazigar's performing arts, one finds again that, in Punjabi society, it is difficult to separate the arts from their performers. Therefore, without

intending to present a comprehensive ethnography of the community, I include here a fair amount of ethnographic information with the belief that it is both necessary and appropriate. The fieldwork for this study, since 2000, occurred among individuals from various segments of the Bazigar community all over East Punjab. The most work, however, was with what is called the "Khari" subsection of the Bazigar people and as such this bias may be allowed to compliment the work of Deb (1987) (which I believe to be biased towards the "Panjab" subsection).

In addressing "performing arts" I again seek to negotiate the difficulty in isolating "music" as a topic within Punjabi culture. The Bazigar are performers in a range of forms, and to isolate only those that fulfill a particular definition of "music" is to see only a partial picture of their community and how their arts fit together as markers of their distinctive group identity.

Ethnological Position

"Bazigar" (*bāzīgar*, *bājīgar*, fem. *bāzīgarnī*) refers to a member of a category conceived by and large by outsiders to that category. One will find that the people so described have a different sense of who they are and for which "Bazigar" is not fully adequate. Indeed, when speaking amongst themselves, they refer to their people as "Goaar." However, the Goaar themselves also make use of the "Bazigar" label and the classificatory notions that come with it when situating themselves among the wider spectrum of Punjabi society (by whom "Goaar" is virtually unknown).

The legacy of colonial literature and its derivatives, coupled with general public unfamiliarity with this minority community, has fostered some misconceptions that require the Bazigar/Goaar be clearly established as an *ethnic* community (i.e. *qaum*, tribe, caste) among other Punjabi communities. In the same respect, they must particularly be distinguished from the Natt (*naṭṭ*). Both the Bazigar and the Natt are popularly associated with performing acrobatics or similar feats, which their names reflect. The term /bāzī-gar/ is a word of Persian derivation meaning "one who performs *bāzī*." *Bāzī*, which connotes "play," refers in this context to a kind of entertaining performance based on physical acts. The term *naṭṭ* likely derives from a Sanskrit root that connotes "drama" or "performance" (Rose 1914:163). In what would become an influential classification by Ibbetson, the Bazigar and the Natt together constituted the so-called "Gipsy Tribes" of Punjab, a subgroup within the category of his "Vagrant Tribes" (i.e. itinerant groups), and one that denotes those tribes that perform in any way as their main means of income (1883:285). Following, Rose assumed that the terms "Bazigar" and "Natt" were used synonymously "in general parlance" (1914:163). The

argument put forth to support the belief that the terms were synonymous rests on the assumption that Bazigar and Natt are purely *occupational* labels, that is, the individuals labeled as such do not necessarily belong consistently and exclusively to distinct ethnic groups. The variability in usage was thought to be dictated by religious-cultural preference. Thus Rose concluded that the Bazigar were usually Muslim while the Natt were usually Hindu (1911:79).[2] Furthermore, in underscoring his belief that the Bazigar were only an occupational group, Rose claimed to have heard that Bazigars were "recruited" from various castes—even Brahmans and Jats (ibid.).

An attempt to differentiate the Bazigar and Natt groups of the past may also be based on the details of their traditional profession. The accounts from Akbar's court (16th century) mention both groups. The Natt are described as tightrope-walkers and also players of *duhul* (probably the erstwhile equivalent to the small cylindrical drum *ḍholak*), while the Bazigar were said to perform feats and do magic (Abu l-Fazl ca.1590:272-3). However, in the later colonial literature, the distinction between the two groups' professions was considerably confounded.

> Some say that the Bázigar is a tumbler and the Nat a rope-dancer; others that the Bázigar is a juggler as well as an acrobat, while the Nat is only the latter,…others again say that among the Nats the males only, but among the Bázigars both sexes perform… (Ibbetson 1883:285)

Recent ethnography presents a different picture. While it does not eliminate the possibility that people now called Bazigar people were, at one time, related to the people now called Natt (as well as to other communities), the contemporary Bazigars in this study identify *only* as Bazigar. Accordingly, "Bazigar" and "Natt" appear as separately listed communities in the government's current schedule for reservations. Moreover, according to Singh's data, the Natt may number as few as 500 in total for the Indian state of Punjab and Chandigarh (1998:2596, 2598). This suggests that it is the Bazigar who predominate while the Natt presence (albeit far greater in Rajasthan) is insignificant in Punjab. The idea that Bazigar and Natt refer to groups based on differing religious affiliations also does not hold. As a simple point in fact, the Bazigar in India call themselves Hindus. In terms of specifics of performance, Thind's more recent writing (1996:32-3) states that the distinctive feature of Bazigar's routine is jumps on *paṛull* (a raised take-off point) and *paṭrī* (a type of wooden plank), in contradistinction to the rope-walking of the "Karnāṭī Naṭṭ." Whatever the ultimate origin of the terms and what they may have been meant to label a century and more ago, it is clear that at

the present, "Bazigar" and "Natt" are distinct terms that correspond in some fashion to at least two exclusive, endogamous ethnic groups.

Historical Position

The history-based origin stories for the Bazigar are much like those of other erstwhile peripatetic tribes of Northwest India. Bazigars commonly claim to have once belonged to a community of Rajputs from Rajasthan; they have called themselves Rathor Rajputs (according to Thind 1996:31) and Chauhan Rajputs (according to Singh 1999:196). The specific region of origin has been stated as the Marvar area of Western Rajasthan (Ibbetson 1883:288), although according to some tales they may have only occupied that desert area after being unseated from elsewhere, e.g. due to conflicts with Mughal forces (see Deb 1987:17, 22; Singh 1998:340). Bazigar Garib Dass of this study ascribes his people's origins to the Bajwa clan of Rajputs, not of Rajasthan but of Punjab itself (personal communication, 30 March 2005). He notes, however, that some others of his people believe they came from Brahmans (personal communication, 9 Dec. 2007).

In contrast to many Indian communities that place their origins in antiquity, Bazigars openly state that today's Bazigar young people represent only the seventh generation of their people. In the documented genealogy of the Vartia clan of Garib Dass, a fifth-generation Bazigar (1939-2010) there were indeed only four generations before him. This would suggest that his clan's patriarch was born around the 1770s, at my earliest rough estimate, or the 1810s, at the latest. Deb's report that Bazigars, according to their own telling, had spread through Northwest India in the last two centuries (1987:10), corroborates the idea that the Bazigar as a people likely originated in the 18th century.

By way of literary evidence, there are several uses of "bājīgar" by the Sikh Gurus and other poets in the *Guru Granth*, and by Bhai Gurdas in his Vaars.[3] In most of these pre-18th century writings, "bājīgar" is rarely used as a proper name or to refer to a specific group of people. Rather, it refers generically to such ideas as "clown," "juggler," "jester," "actor," "player," and so forth, often with connotations of deceit or idleness. It is not until the time of Bhai Gurdas (early 17th century) that the term seems to have acquired a more definite usage for a member of an occupational *group*. In one of his verses (Vaar 8), "bājīgar" is distinguished from other performers *bahrūpīā* (mime) and *bhaṇd* (jester). A more nuanced use of "bāzīgar" is also found in the *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī* from a few decades earlier, in which these performers are distinguished from *Bhánḍ*, *Bhagatiya*, and (as above) *Naṭ* (Abu l-Fazl ca.1590:272-3). Much later, Varis Shah used the term for a Bazigar woman, *bāzīgarnī*, in his *Hīr*, composed in the 1760s. What is impossible to tell for sure from

these references is if the erstwhile bazigars had yet by the mid-18th century constituted a distinct *ethnic* community. Based on my reading and on the Bazigar's genealogy and stories, I believe the present-day Bazigar community must have emerged somewhat later, most likely as an *ethnic* group first and foremost, to whom was later applied the occupational label *due to* their adopted profession.

That the Bazigar were recognized as an ethnic community of some sort in the late 19th century is underscored by Ibbetson's classification of them as an itinerant group living an autonomous, tribal lifestyle. By the early 20th century, however, some of the itinerant, West Punjab-based Bazigar people started to settle down, especially in the districts Shekhupura and Sialkot (Deb 1987:10). This would have been due to a number of causes, including the restructuring of Western Punjab for the canal colonies project (i.e. from the 1880s) and the government's restrictions on the mobility of "vagrant" communities. At the time of Partition, the Bazigar, being primarily "Hindu," migrated en masse to the Republic of India. Like many other refugees, Bazigars who came to India were first situated in camps. Then in the 1950s and 1960s, they were given colonies or common village land on which to settle (Deb 1987:11). Remarkably, this once-itinerant people based mostly in Western Punjab underwent a wholesale transformation into a stationary people of East Punjab.

Social Position

At the present time, the Bazigar are becoming more and more integrated into mainstream society, while yet maintaining a distinct identity. They may live in huts outside the main settlement—as many still did up through the end of the 20th century—or in government housing colonies. However, this security of a place to stay is still at times threatened, and the Bazigar risk again being ejected, as one periodically hears.[4]

Because of their past and their status as relative newcomers to (settled) village life, the Bazigar's position in Indian society has remained rather ambiguous. The Criminal Tribes Act, in effect 1871-1952, did not in fact include the Bazigar (Thind 1996:54). It was reported in 1960, after the Act was ended and the new designation "ex-criminal" had been created, that the Bazigar, "do not like to be called ex-criminals and have now obtained a writ from the court declaring that they cannot be categorized among the ex-criminal tribes" (Biswas 1960:2). The Bazigar *are* included among the Scheduled Castes in Punjab. However, a survey in two villages in 1970 indicated that in the caste hierarchy people ranked Bazigars above potters, oil-pressers, Ramdasias, and Mazhbis (Harjinder Singh 1977:86). Perhaps not understanding that the caste schedule is ideally intended for bureaucratic purposes, Garib Dass said

that the Bazigar "are not *really* a Scheduled Caste"; the government put them in the schedule, he alleged, because they are a poor community that does manual labor (30 March 2005). The issue of course is that being a Scheduled Caste, while ostensibly defined merely as being eligible for affirmative action benefits, may carry with it the stigma of untouchability. Indeed, in the 1980s, the usual government initiatives designed to assist Scheduled Castes were found to have little effect for the Bazigar due to such assumptions by them that they were not a Scheduled Caste. As Deb explains, the misconception stemmed from the fact that, compared with some other Scheduled Castes, they are not as separated socially from upper castes (1987:11). Furthermore, Bazigars are reported to perceive themselves as of a high social rank, such that they themselves do not accept food from the Chamar/Ramdasia and the Chuhra/Mazhbi (Singh 1998:340). Since at least 2002, Bazigars have lobbied to be dis-included from the list of Scheduled Castes and to be included instead among the Scheduled Tribes. This campaign has made progress. The Punjab government sent a list of a dozen such potential "tribes" to the Anthropology Department of Punjabi University, Patiala, to assess whether that label had any merit in application to them. Dr. Birender Pal Singh, on behalf of the University, concluded in September 2007 that, based on ethnographic details, the Bazigar meet the criteria (chiefly the community's "nomadic" or "semi-nomadic" nature) to be called a "tribe" (Mohan 2007).

Census data of the 1980s put the numbers of the "Bazigar" at 120,250 in Punjab, 1,389 in Chandigarh, and 57,991 in contiguous states, for a total of 179,630 individuals (Singh 1998:340). Surveys tend to under-represent the numbers in such communities, and around the same time, spokespersons from the Bazigar estimated their numbers at around half a million (Deb 1987:27). In India the Bazigar are found primarily in the states and union territories of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Chandigarh, and Delhi. Within Punjab state, Bazigars were found to be most heavily concentrated in the districts of Patiala, Firozpur, Sangrur, Bathinda, Gurdaspur, and Faridkot (Deb 1987:13; Singh 1998:341).

The literacy rate for the community in 1981 was found to be 11.30% (18.26% males, 3.99% females) (Singh 1999:196). Less than 1% of those surveyed around that time were found to have graduated from secondary school (Deb 1987:59). This is changing with each subsequent generation. Now it appears, by casual observation, that most people under thirty are literate. Indeed, in some cases, education for the youngest generation, including decent schooling and additional tutoring, is being made a priority. The Bazigar's attitude towards education is very positive, and the absence of it in the past is explained by lack of opportunity, not lack of interest.

Group Organization

Few outsiders are aware that the people ascribed the label "Bazigar" are not in fact a singular ethnic community. That label, along with the self-referential "Goaar," encompasses several endogamous groups. Three subsections of the Goaar, similar to but not quite corresponding to "tribes," were based in Western Punjab before Partition. These are known as the Panjāb (or Panjābīā), the Kharī, and the Rāvī. Another subsection, already living on the eastern side before Partition and whom the Western Punjabi Goaar refer to as "Desī Bazigar," is alleged to have drastically dwindled in number (son of Makkhan Ram, personal communication, 27 Feb. 2005). The Panjab Bazigar had once been situated around districts Lyallpur (Faislabad) and Shekhupura. They now are generally settled in the center of East Punjab, radiating from Ludhiana and its refugee camp in which many first landed. The Khari Bazigar's territory had been Gujrat, Sialkot, and other such north-central areas of Punjab. After landing in the refugee camp in Kurukshetra, these people ended up in areas along a strip running along the northeastern side of the Indian state. As for the Ravi Bazigar's territory, I cannot say much; one supposes they were settled along the southern banks of the Ravi River. They appear to be found nowadays in the more isolated, southwestern areas of Punjab state. The Desi Bazigar are of too insignificant number to generalize; I have met them in district Hoshiarpur.

It must be emphasized that, although I refer to these different groups as "subsections of the Bazigar," it is the generally etic notion of "the Bazigar community" that is being sectioned as such. From the perspective of the Goaar themselves, these are different groups that have come together under an umbrella classification. In other words, the sense is not that a larger or "original" group necessarily split at some time; these groups of Goaar were distinct "*from the beginning*" (Garib Dass, personal communication, 19 May 2005). Members of a given subsection do not necessarily feel any affinity for other Goaar subsections beyond, perhaps, the bond that the shared experience of marginalization engenders. Indeed, in my conversations with Goaars of different subsections, they showed as much disinterest for individuals of other subsections as they did for people of other caste-communities. Nonetheless, when viewing them from the outside perspective, one *does* find significant shared characteristics—not to mention shared clan names—that make it unreasonable to completely reject the idea of a larger set of related Goaar.

If taken as a whole, there are upwards of 30-40 clans of the Goaar community. Some of the prominent clans are: Vartiā, Jamsherā,

Machhāl, Nāmshot, Dharamshot, Ghanot, Valjot, Lālkā, Dākhīekā, Khīvākā, and Maggharkā. Goaar clans are significant mainly in matters of marriage. Goaars practice strict endogamy within not only the overarching "Goaar community," but also in most cases within their subsection. And while the latter fact underscores the autonomy of each subsection, instances of exception, where marriage happens between members of different subsections, again shows the relevance of the idea of Goaar community at-large.

Religious Beliefs

The religious beliefs of Goaars do not fit into any neat, established category. In India[5] they identify themselves as "Hindus," despite varied and unorthodox practices. In the past, the Goaar's independent lifestyle meant that they remained only marginally in touch with the mainstream practice of *any* religion. Garib Dass recalled that there were things that, though Hindus, "we did not know we were to do" back in Western Punjab, for instance to consult a pandit when fixing the date of a wedding or naming a newborn child. In that social environment, Bazigars simply decided on a marriage and performed it when convenient, and they named babies as they wanted. However, after settling in India they became a part of the so-called "Hindu community." This change is reflected in the fact that the names of older ancestors of Bazigars reveal no religious affiliation, while the young generations generally have proper names that follow religion-based conventions.

　　One can only describe the various beliefs cited by Goaars and their interlocutors. Deb's study recorded the importance of Kali, for whom there was usually a temple in the center of the settlement, as well as Sati, a memorial to whom is created on the outskirts of villages out of pieces of stone (1987:21-2). In the 2000s, my informants said they worshipped Ram, Bharat, Shiv, the various forms of the Devi, Bābā Bālak Nāth, Yārmī-vālā Pīr,[6] and the "Panj Pīr." Owing to their past residence in Muslim majority areas, the Goaar appear to have been influenced by Islam-based cultural practices of their social environment, some of which could be interpreted as religious. Before Partition, Goaars were said to camp on Sakhi Sarvars's shrine at Dhaunkal (Thind 1996:36). While some sources attribute to them the worship of Gugga Pir, my mentions of that saint among contemporary Bazigars received mixed responses, ranging from interest, to disapproval, to laughter. More recently, there has been a growing interest in the spiritual movement of Radha Soami Satsang Bias. Devotion to Sathya Sai Baba has also made an appearance. The Goaar practice recitation from the Sikh *Guru Granth* on certain occasions. However, when K.S. Singh states that the Bazigar "have now become Sikh" (1998:342), he must be mistaken. Although one finds a

significant number of Sikh-sounding names in the contemporary population, this reflects incidental preference rather than marking strict adherence to the Sikh faith. Likewise, a number of Goaar men have the normative appearance of Sikh males, but this reflects their local social cohort and personal preferences more than the faith of the community. The Goaar's public names and appearances must be seen as a negotiation with mainstream life, in which their native culture does not quite fit any prescribed category. It would be more accurate to say that many Goaars revere the Sikh Gurus in addition to their other beliefs. That they also admire and elect to adopt Sikh cultural practices is reflected by the trend to solemnize marriages by the Sikh rite of *anand kāraj*—a ceremony that has been cited as simpler and "cleaner" than the fire-based Hindu rite (Garib Dass, personal communication, 4 June 2005).

The Goaar have some religious figures particular to their people. We read of a shrine built in honor of an old Goaar woman in village Sadhaiwala (dist. Firozpur) (Rose 1911:79). Another spiritual site is a temple in village Uddoke (dist. Gurdaspur) that was built in honor of a saint called Bāvā Lāl Jī. Although Bava Lal was a Brahman by caste, the Lalka clan of the Goaar consider him to be their ancestor (Thind 1996:31). Bava Lal is also reputed to have a shrine dedicated to him in Malerkotla (Jaimal of Khanna, personal communication, 15 May 2005). Interviews suggest that this particular saint is only important to the Panjab subsection of Goaar. Another figure revered by some in the community is a Goaar woman born to the Lalka clan in Lyallpur, in the early 19th century. Known as Dādī Desāṅ Devī, her temple in Kurukshetra is the site of a fair to which pilgrims flock each June (Macchal 2009).

Language

The Goaar have a unique language, which they speak amongst themselves. It most likely emerged out of the circumstance of being an independent and relatively insular, tribal community. While not bound to a single geographic area, the language reflects regional features of the Goaar's recent homeland in Western Punjab as well as of Western Rajasthan, from which the community may first have sprung. Most Goaars over the age of forty appear to prefer speaking this language with one another. Those under thirty, while understanding the language, are more likely to converse in the local common languages except when addressing older individuals. The Goaar language is entirely unwritten and had not been significantly documented (in print) at the time of my research.

Goaar language, which speakers call *goāroṅ ri bolī*, compares well with Punjabi, although it is not mutually intelligible with that language.

It also compares well with Western Rajasthani dialects, having such earmarks as the genitive marker /ro/ and the dative marker /ne/. The phonology of Goaar language is more or less equivalent to Punjabi, including the presence of the retroflex lateral phoneme /ḷ/. There is at least one additional phoneme, a sort of unvoiced palatal fricative (like the "ch" in German *nicht*), found in such Goaar words as /sīç/ ("learn"). The language's system of lexical tones is also like Punjabi, with one important exception. The phoneme /h/, articulated when in the initial position in Punjabi, appears to be non-existent in Goaar language. In cognate words with Punjabi that have /h/, Goaar language substitutes a tone. The paradigm of vowel-based gender markers is different from standard Punjabi and particularly notable in that feminine nouns and adjectives (direct singular) lack any vowel, e.g. /būḍh/ ("old woman"). In all, Goaar language differs from Punjabi dialects most markedly in morphological features and numerous different lexical items. In many cases, Hindi- or Rajasthani-like forms are preferred.

In addition to this unique, everyday language, and like some other tribal communities, the Goaar also have a "secret" language that they use when they do not want others to know what they are talking about. They call it "Pārsī" or "Pashto." It is a contrived manner of speaking whereby, for instance, some phonemes are swapped with others. However, there are no consistent rules of substitution, nor is it a comprehensive language.

Lifestyle

The Goaar exhibit some lifestyle features that, as a whole, contribute to their being perceived as a distinct people. With the passage of time and change of circumstances (i.e. settlement), aspects of their lifestyle come more and more in line with mainstream society. Nonetheless, in certain details one can still notice a sort of "character" of Goaar lifestyle that is in contrast to their neighbors'.

Before Partition, the itinerant lifestyle of Goaar families consisted of their stopping to camp for one or more months (sometimes up to a year) in an open space on the outskirts of a village or town, before moving on again some ten miles away. In the case of the Khari Bazigar that one meets around Chandigarh, for example, prior to Partition they roamed in a band of some forty households. Garib Dass recalled that they had no fixed migration, though they surely might come back to the same spot if it was a good one. Each family traveled with its own livestock, from which they derived milk and meat, and which hauled their belongings. This stock included, per each household, a couple of camels, up to a dozen goats, and a few donkeys. When packing up to move, the family's *manjā*s (frame-cots) were first overturned and loaded on the camels, one

on each side of the animal. Goaar dwellings were of a type called *sirkī dī jhuggī*, a temporary hut made of reed grass and tree branches. Some individuals still live in this type of dwelling, although they do not roam any longer. Settlements of Goaars in permanent housing nowadays tend to be in small colonies or wards (*bastī*) of 50-150 families, sometimes located within the village, but usually outside the main settlement center.

The Goaar bands of Western Punjab had a set protocol for traveling and earning. On arriving at a new camp, some men from the tribe went to notify the nearby landowners—in whose fields they may have been camping—of their presence. In speaking with the landowners they requested that they be hired to do agricultural labor for them. This point highlights the fact that most such itinerant communities, whatever professions they were uniquely associated with, by the late 19th century relied upon agricultural work for landowners as a staple of their income. During the Goaars' stay at a particular camp, the local villagers also came to know of their presence, and they invited them to engage in sports at which they excelled, like *kabaḍḍī*, *vīṇī phaṛnā* (a "wrist-grabbing" game of two players), and wrestling. Goaar performers found opportunities to earn through their performances in music, dance, and on *ḍhol*. The activity in which they most specialized, however, was bazi, and the Goaars' presence in a particular village meant the opportunity to organize a performance of captivating feats.

In addition to their earnings from their seasonal agricultural labour, their bazis, and other performing arts, the Goaar subsisted in various ways. Women fashioned objects out of grass, straw, and reed (e.g. bread-baskets, *changer*) for sale door to door. Goaars hunted game, including jackal, hedgehog, deer, and rabbit, in the forests and with the help of dogs (Garib Dass, 19 May 2005). They also raised goats and camels for sale.

In days past, when Goaars were able to focus on bazi as a main occupation, they spent considerable time training. Yet despite the emphasis on it in descriptions of the community, one must be clear that today bazi makes up only the tiniest fraction of the occupations they practice. Just as with Rom musicians in Europe, the developing modern world could not support the Goaars by bazi alone. And as Goaars were compelled to settle down permanently, the idea of a traveling performer was effectively nullified. Thus, after Partition, Goaars shifted to whatever unskilled labor was available, which was mainly agricultural work. In India nowadays, both males and females find employment in constant work such as irrigating the fields, while others only work at reaping during the harvest seasons. Some raise milch cattle, and sell fruits and vegetables on the roadside. Others have small businesses or perform other sorts of manual labor. The Goaar's greatest boon has been the massive popularity of bhangra and other folkloric dances, which has

provided many with better-paying employment as instructors and accompanists.

In the days of itinerancy, Goaar women could be recognized by their long, wide skirts (*ghaggrī*) and heavy anklets. Men's turbans were tied rather distinctively, and they often wore a long sash across the body. These days, most Goaar women wear the standard *salvār-qamīz* pajama-suit; to wear anything else is considered immodest. Men may wear any of the affordable clothing current in Punjab; their older fashion is sported by only some of the eldest citizens.

The Goaar are generally not vegetarians, however most do not eat beef or pork. Just as for other landless communities, who could not grow it for themselves, grain was generally the payment for their labor. Their traditional bread, *ghaṛe dī roṭī*, is baked by placing the rolled-out loaf, not on the typical *tavā* (iron griddle), but rather on the underside of an earthen pot that has been set over the flame (Fig. 1).
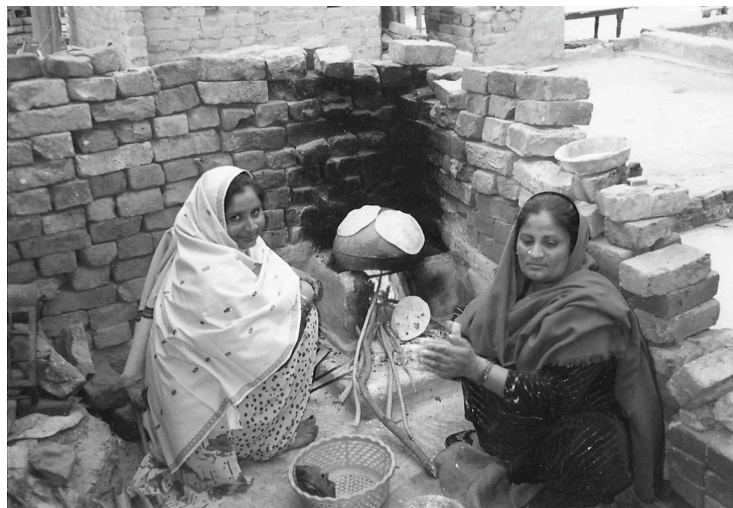

Fig. 1. Goaar women preparing bread in the traditional manner, atop an upturned clay pot, Dadu Majra Colony, 2005. Photo: G. Schreffler.

Bazi

The Goaar's bazi performances consisted of the display of a variety of physical feats—of strength, balance, agility, and courage. In their hey-day, performances of bazi were usually by invitation, especially at annual fairs and festivals. In some cases at least, groups of specific villages were mapped out and assigned to specific clans (Kumar 2002; Singh 1999:200). One account relates that the status of these clans within the

larger community was affected by the number of villages in which a clan could claim performance rights. Such performance rights were viewed as wealth, and in marriage arrangements, the rights to perform in given villages was even given away as part of the dowry (Sumbly 2007). Thus we should not imagine the Goaar were roaming "street artistes" who performed at impromptu moments. For these events the villagers pooled their resources to present the Goaars with gifts of cash, food, and clothing after the performance, in addition to tips given to artistes who performed well. Goaars are also said to have performed bazi for tips at homes where an engagement or wedding was taking place (Thind 1996:32).

A bazi performance began with the beating of dhols, both to enhance the excitement and to call attention to the event. The starting conventions resembled those of Punjabi wrestlers. The bazigars would enter the arena, wearing loincloths and with their bodies massaged with oil. They slapped their thighs and biceps to call attention to their strength. After remembering God and paying respect to the earthen arena, they proceeded to warm up (Sarvan Singh 1996:15). The performance was then ready to begin.

The bazi performance was exhibited exclusively by men, and included feats such as the following.

1. Acrobatics (*kalābāzī*):
    - Back flips, handsprings, and handstands.
    - *Chaunkī vālī chhāl*. A flip performed on a small platform (*chaunkī*) placed high atop bamboo poles.
    - Scrambling up a tall pole that is mounted atop another man's head (Fig. 2).

2. Jumps (*chhāl*):
    - Long jump (*chhaṛappā*).
    - High jump (*paṭrī dī chhāl*). A springy wooden plank (*paṭrī*) is set into the ground on a raised mound (*paṛull*). The performer runs and vaults off of the springboard into the air. There may be further conditions, such as clearing a wall of stacked cots.

3. Feats of strength:
    - Weight lifting. Various heavy objects were lifted. If necessary, a bamboo pole was attached to the object to facilitate holding it.
    - Lifting heavy objects grasped with the teeth.
    - Karate-like feats, such as breaking bricks with the hands (Sarvan Singh 1996:17).

- Pressing a narrow iron rod against the body until it bends. The rod may be propped between the neck of one man and the belly of another. In another reported case, the rod may be pressed and bent against an individual's eye (covered by a cloth) (Sarvan Singh 1996:15).

4. Feats of danger:
- Blindfolded swordplay.
- Leaping through a ring laced with sharp daggers and/or wrapped with flaming rags.
- Pipe ride (*nālī dā jahāz*, *tār dī bāzī*). A greased rope is tied up high to a tree and down, taut at an angle, to the ground. The performer straps a wooden plank (*phaṭṭī*) on his stomach. In a lengthwise groove in the underside of the plank is fitted a metal pipe (*nālī*), through which the rope is threaded. The performer slides quickly down the rope on his stomach, head first without using hands or feet, by means of this conveyance.
- Dangerous variations on flips, such as blindfolded, with a sword in the teeth, or with a weight tied to the feet. *Sūlī dī chhāl* ("the leap of doom") was one such fantastic feat, where the performer was said to perform a back flip on a small platform atop a bamboo pole, some thirty feet up. The performer grasped a flaming sword in his teeth. Sarvan Singh writes that this was the crowning stunt, but that it was so dangerous that some sponsors requested it not be performed lest some tragedy happen in the village (1996:17).

5. Contortions:
- Two pieces of bamboo placed parallel are tied tightly together at their ends. A man squeezes his body through the gap between them.
- Two or three men squeeze their bodies simultaneously through the same metal hoop.
- Flexibility displays, such as bending one's leg up and behind one's neck.
- Several men, climbing upon one another, lock their arms and legs to form a dome with their bodies (Sarvan Singh 1996:16).

Fig. 2. A Goaar bazigar performs a *bāzī* high above the crowd, Jalandhar, 2004. Photo: G. Schreffler.

The Goaar rarely perform bazi today, except for a few groups for special exhibition purposes. A journalist in 2002 was told that only six families in Punjab currently perform bazi (Kumar 2002). When I saw a group of bazigars perform in a parade in Jalandhar in November 2004, it seemed many spectators did not to know who they were. This group, of the Lalka clan, was from a village near Phagwara. The group had been picked up by the North Zone Cultural Centre (Patiala) in 1985, under whose patronage they have also performed in Delhi and abroad in Dubai and Thailand. Given the infrequency of bazi performances, it is usually in other contexts that Goaars are seen performing. The following sections present some of their other performance activities, past and present.

Dhol-playing

Playing the barrel drum, *ḍhol*, has had a place in the Goaar lifestyle for as long as anyone can remember. They used the dhol to accompany their bazis, as well as in other village contexts like sporting events and dancing. Despite this, before Partition, the Goaar were not known first and foremost as dhol-players. Since Partition, however, they have become one of the main and, in many respects, most influential dhol-playing communities of East Punjab. Moreover, dhol-playing has become one of their staple bread-winning activities, and each generation brings more professionals. Goaars have a strong local presence as dhol-players

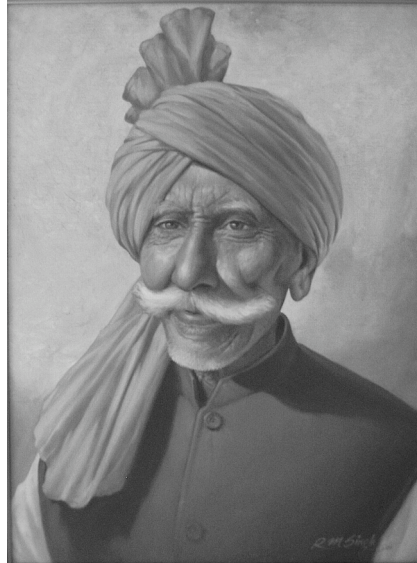in such areas as Chandigarh, Patiala, Ropar, Fatehgarh Sahib, Hoshiarpur, Firozpur, Ambala, and Jammu.

Fig. 3. Portrait of Ustad Bhana Ram, by R.M. Singh.

The Goaar started to become a very significant dhol-playing community in East Punjab after the success of Bhana Ram Sunami (ca.1906-1999) (Fig. 3). He belonged to the Valjot clan of the Panjab subsection of the Bazigar people, who came from the erstwhile tehsil of Nankana Sahib. Before Partition, he had been the dhol disciple of a Mirasi, Muhammad Ali, as well as learning bazi from Baba Bura Ram (Pammi Bai 2008). After Partition, Bhana Ram was eventually settled in the town of Sunam (dist. Sangrur). He there emerged as the dhol-player attached to the "first" modern bhangra dance team (see below), and as such he took part in national functions, international delegations, and several films through the mid-1960s. Because he was in place during the formative moments of modern bhangra, he contributed both to its general conceptualization and the specific material (movements and rhythms) that would be used thereafter. Thus being a sort of "godfather of the modern dhol," he was inducted into the Punjab Sangeet Natak Akademi's Hall of Fame in 2000.

Other dhol-players in Bhana Ram's family include his older brother, Mahi Ram, and his son (and student of Mahi Ram), Bahadur Singh (ca.1942-). Though they did not rise to the level of fame of Bhana Ram, it is not the achievements of individuals, but rather the uplift of the whole

Goaar community that is important to observe. Bhana Ram showed the potential of Goaars to operate as dhol-players during an era of very specific needs. Folkloric dance was being mobilized as part of the nation-building project, and Goaar dhol-players possessed the knowledge and professionalism to act as co-pilots in its presentations.

Biru Ram (ca.1931-) (Fig. 4), also belonging to the Panjab subsection, but from the Vartia clan (he is brother-in-law to Bahadur Singh), came next in the progression of renowned Goaar dhol-players. His family migrated from district Lyallpur (Faislabad) in 1947, ending up in the Bazigar ward outside Sanaur (near Patiala). His ustad was a Goaar who had lived near him in West Punjab, Piare Lal. In the late 50s and 60s, Biru Ram was a regular feature as an accompanist at many local colleges. In 1960 he accompanied Master Harbhajan Singh's first bhangra team effort at Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi, an event

Fig. 4. Ustad Biru Ram and son, Manak Raj, Sanaur, 2005. Photo: G. Schreffler.

at which he made his last appearances in the early 1970s. However, Biru Ram continued to play for and advise college dance teams, contributing much unique knowledge he had received from the older generations of his community. In this way, he helped establish what has become a Goaar niche of working with students. He has been succeeded in his duties by his son, Manak Raj (student of Bahadur Singh). Following the activities of the likes of Bhana Ram and Biru Ram, Goaars became the players of choice for college and bhangra presentations in the Patiala area. Today, the colleges in Patiala typically employ Goaars from the

surrounding *villages* for their functions, rather than, for example, the Mahasha community dhol-players in the city.

Another major Goaar bloc of dhol-players to shape the Punjabi musical landscape comes from the Vartia clan of the Khari subsection, and had been based in district Gujrat before migrating in 1947. On one side of this dhol-family, now settled around Chandigarh, are the descendants of Ganda Ram, all of whose sons became dhol-players of note. Eldest was Mangat Ram (ca.1917-2007), whose belonging to the older generation was underscored by his vast knowledge of rhythms that these days have mostly gone forgotten from disuse. His time actually came before that of the modern dhol scene, and almost until the final years of his life he was still living in jhuggis. His son Dev Raj, however, based in village Bad Majra (Mohali), is now one of the area's most active professionals. Ganda Ram's next son, Prem Chand (ca.1933-) has a reputation as an aggressive businessman, and in this manner he has secured the position of accompanist in many influential positions. His own three sons, Naseeb Singh, Ramesh Kumar, and Seva Ram, are all very active dhol-players, which one is bound to have seen in college youth festivals. All live in homes in Chandigarh city proper, which gives some indication of their financial accomplishments. The third son of Ganda Ram, Mali Ram (1945-) of Badheri village (Chandigarh), belongs practically to the next generation, having begun playing dhol in 1968 and initially learning from his older cousin, Garib Dass. His own son, Jarnail Singh Mohani, has the distinction of having emigrated to the New York metro area, where as yet few Goaars have become established.[7]

Another branch of the family (Ganda Ram's nephew) is headed by Garib Dass (1939-2010), who follows Biru Ram in my narrative as one the of Goaar dhol-players who made particular contributions to the development of Punjabi musical conventions. Garib Dass, whose father was not a dhol-player, only landed himself in that career after much struggle and after practicing many types of labor. Initially learning dhol from cousin Mangat Ram in the 1950s, he later became the disciple of "Punjab Champion" Ghuggi Dholi of Amritsar's Mahasha community. Through the 1970s and 1980s especially, he made a great contribution to the developing art of bhangra, having been one of the chosen dhol-players to regularly serve at Republic Day celebrations and other such national events. In recent years, Garib Dass had also perfected the specialized skill of organizing large groups into performances. So for example, in 2001, at the 31st National Games in Ludhiana, Garib Dass led a group of seventy dhol-players. And in 2002, he led a group of 150 students in the Bhag Singh composition, "Vanjara Dance." In the early 1980s, Garib Dass began an international career, going on to play in a dozen countries. This sort of activity is significant for the model it provides other Goaar dhol-players who previously had not much entered

the international sphere. Garib Dass' son Des Raj is also an internationally renowned dhol-player, who tours abroad regularly and for months at a time, for example to accompany popular singers like Hans

Fig. 5. Bicchu playing his father Des Raj's dhol, Dadu Majra village, 2001. Photo: G. Schreffler.

Raj Hans and Babbu Mann. In Des Raj one can see an example of the ensuing generations of modern Goaar dhol-players who have been able to *choose* dhol as a career. Thus, Garib Dass' grandsons are all budding dhol-players, too. By the age of five, little "Bicchu" could already play several rhythms quite well (Fig. 5).

Indeed, young Goaar boys are typically encouraged to try their hand at dhol at an early age. The opportunities that have come with developments in modern Punjab, in which the dhol has become emblematic of Punjabi culture, have made it one of the most comfortable and lucrative professions they could reasonably hope for after generations of marginalization and insecurity. There is the tendency, within the Goaar community, towards informal teaching by one's own relatives, creating a zigzagged line of transmission down from uncles and older cousins. This can be understood as a community's effort to promote the learning and *earning* potential of everyone involved.

In terms of their business strategies, unlike the other major dhol-playing communities the Jogi and the Mahasha, the Goaar do not form markets of offices for their services. Their hiring happens, first and foremost, through word of mouth and long-standing relationships with

college personnel and government officers. Others advertise by setting their dhols out to hang near the roadside, with or without signs announcing their services. Goaar dhol-players of Mohali once had a unique method of advertising their services to the middle-class residents of that town. They would arrange themselves in a row along the steel

Fig. 6. Goaar dhol-players waiting for roadside clients at the Barrier in Mohali, 2004. Photo: G. Schreffler.

"barrier" on the main road that separates Mohali's Phase I area from Chandigarh. On the waist-high barrier and nearby stones they had painted their names and phone numbers, and they would stand behind the barrier with their dhols propped up on tables (Fig. 6). With this arrangement, it was possible for motorists to drive up alongside and book dhol services for weddings directly from the windows of their cars.[8] These were among the enterprising young dholis who, armed with a nice shirt, a mobile phone, and a dhol, are determined to make dhol into their sole career. The characteristic playing style of dhol-players from the Goaar community, in some respects, also serves their professional success. They tend to shun flashiness in favor of appropriateness. Theirs is a functional approach, where one's role as an accompanist or service-provider takes priority over appearing as an "artiste" at the center of attention.

Dance

While many today assume that so-called "folk dances" of pre-Partition times were of a wholly participatory nature, they were also performed by professionals for discreet audiences (see for example the statement of Rose 1919:920). Goaars danced in this capacity, for which they were once called upon by the landed classes to perform at their weddings. Whether as professionals on display or at their own community functions, Goaar artistes are experts at dance. Their skills in this regard have continued to be in demand in the post-Partition era.

Bhangṛā

The modern history of *bhangṛā* begins with Goaars. By the early 1950s, a group from Sunam was staging performances of men's dance in a new variety routine that would later be dubbed "bhangra." This is the group that would be go on to be patronized by the administration of PEPSU state to represent that state and later, the state of Punjab, in such national events as Republic Day in New Delhi (see Schreffler 2010:588ff.). The group consisted of young laymen from the Malwa area and Goaar artistes whom Partition had forced to immigrate from Western Punjab. Manohar Singh Deepak (1931-2008), then a student at Mohindra College in Patiala, and his older brothers, Gurbachan Singh (1923-1968) and Avtar Singh (1929-2009), were among those that formed the lay component. Equally important as the Deepaks, however, was the Goaar component of the group. The Deepak family patriarch, the brothers' grandfather, Captain Ram Singh, had begun to patronize this clan of Goaars, who brought their essential expertise in dance and music to the group. Indeed, being from Western Punjab, it was largely the Goaar artistes who taught the Western Punjabi dance forms (bhangra, jhummar, etc.) to the Malwa-based dancers (Bahadur Singh, personal communication, 25 April 2005).

Though modern bhangra has undergone much development, the core paradigm was thus shaped by the Goaar artistes. The PEPSU group's initial performance routine represented "Men's Punjabi Dance," with no pretext to representing any one dance wholly and authentically. Instead, it combined elements of various dances. By the time of their milestone Republic Day performance in January 1954, their dance style had been dubbed "bhangra," to evoke the regional Vaisakhi-time dance of North-central Punjab (Dhillon 1992:20; 1998:116). This was the phenomenon that, once seen by the Indian nation at large, went on to become one of Punjab's most famous institutions. One sees the influence of Goaars most prominently in the bazi-like stunts that were included by the PEPSU group. The group's cameo appearance in the film *Naya Daur* (1957) is full of tumbling, along with their oft-pictured signature stunt of one man

standing upon a pot that is balanced atop another man's head. Further development of bhangra, including the creation or addition of yet newer rhythms and actions, occurred especially through the hands of Goaar dhol-players who, alone or in collaboration with "coaches," have readied bhangra performances in colleges and at events.

Jhummar

The dance *jhummar*, once found in different varieties in Western Punjab (see Schreffler 2010, chapter 11), has been recreated in modern East Punjab from several influences, in each of which Goaars have had a hand. One of these was actually modern bhangra presentations which, from early on, included (and subsequently canonized) a glimpse of jhummar. Dhol-player Bhana Ram and his cohort would have been among the first to create that in the PEPSU team, and their brand of jhummar rhythm and action is the basis of a "standard" jhummar one sees today. Another important influence on today's jhummar was the routine of Pokhar Singh's group from Fazilka (dist. Firozpur). Immigrants from Montgomery (Sahiwal) district, after crossing the Satluj River at Partition, Rae Sikh Pokhar Singh (1916-2002) and his people continued practicing their regional jhummar. In a process similar to that of modern bhangra's staging, they developed a presentation that included glimpses of various regional styles of jhummar dance before it was presented on a large-scale at Republic Day in 1961. The dhol accompanist for Pokhar Singh's cohort in the early days was a Goaar, Lakkhu Ram, who had migrated along with them (Kulwant Singh, personal communication, 1 May 2005), and the dhol-player for the group for several decades afterward was another Goaar, Jattu Ram. From the late 1980s, Goaar artistes, particularly from the Chandigarh area, took the reins in preparing jhummars. This resulted in a number of milestone performances by Garib Dass and Prem Chand. Of note, in 2000, when Punjabi University, Patiala, was initiating projects to revive and promote jhummar, the artiste put in charge of preparing the student group was Prem Chand. The performance event was produced by the University's Theatre and Television Department, who recorded and broadcast it on television. Then in 2001, the University published a follow-up book (Gurnam Singh 2001) that was a transcription of the earlier performance. The book—in essence a sort of codification of Prem Chand's routine—has gone on to be used by student groups in subsequent performances.
Aside from the jhummar styles they present to others, the Goaar (Khari subsection) also have a style that they consider specific to their own (Fig. 7). It is difficult to assess whether this is something truly unique to the Goaar (and, perhaps, allied communities), or if this was a way for my Khari Bazigar informants to distinguish their naturalistic style, based in

the local style of Gujrat, from the more artificial style of the stage. However, the dance style of older community members does indeed appear distinctive. In the dancing I have seen, the senior Goaars rarely traveled on a course; they locomoted all over the dance area. As a matter of style, most striking in the Goaar dancing is the graceful twirling of the wrists and the overall lightness of gestures.

Fig. 7. Goaar-style *jhummar* dancing at a family wedding in Balachaur, 2005. The dhol-players are Ustad Garib Dass (left) and Ustad Prem Chand. The dancers are Sardari Lal (ca.1925-2007), (left) and Jagat Ram. Photo: G. Schreffler.

Sammī

In the Sandal Bar area, the dance called *sammī* had existed alongside jhummar, where it was danced by women. Among its participants in that area were the Goaar. However, practice of sammi was greatly disturbed by the Partition of the Punjab. Its Goaar maintainers were estranged from their audience and their lifestyle substantially changed. Biru Ram, of the tribe of Goaars best associated with sammi, attests that while before Partition, sammi was going on at weddings, afterwards it was rare (personal communication, 29 May 2005). It so happens that, in the late 1960s, a rare performance of sammi by Goaarnis was staged on the outskirts of Chandigarh. In charge of directing the performance and

covering the dhol-playing duties were Bhana Ram, Mangal Singh, and Mahi Ram (Garib Dass, 12 Dec. 2004). Biru Ram, according to his own account, also helped to prepare the presentation with women from his locality and from elsewhere in the Patiala area (personal communication, 29 May 2005). Reportedly, Indira Gandhi, being in attendance, was delighted by this dance, which she had not known existed (Biru Ram, personal communication, 25 Nov. 2004). After this, however, Goaar women were never to publicly perform sammi again. As Bahadur Singh explained, it was because the tribe does not feel comfortable with their women performing (25 April 2005).

Although a folkloric dance presentation called sammi has since been developed, its performances rarely resemble the sammi remembered by Goaar women. However, some of the arguably most authoritative performances—indeed, most performances one might see—are directed by a handful of Goaar *men* dhol-players of Chandigarh and Patiala areas, who have cultivated sammi as one of their specialties. Some of the familiar names in this regard are Garib Dass, Prem Chand, Mali Ram, and Biru Ram. Garib Dass represented one style of presentation that, if not historically authentic, then was relatively realistic in the way most of the performance remained on one rhythm and to one song. After witnessing the historic staging mentioned above, Garib Dass consulted his knowledgeable uncle, Ganda Ram, and from there developed his presentation. In 1976 he prepared his first sammi for girls at a senior secondary school in Chandigarh (personal communication, 12 July, 2006). Prem Chand's sammi is notable for the similarities it bears to the staged paradigm of bhangra in that the rhythms, songs, and actions quickly shift back and forth. He showcased sammi in England as early as 1987 (personal communication, 3 June 2005). The year 1988 brought both Prem Chand and Garib Dass together under the auspices of the Punjab Cultural Affairs Department. The Department presented a performance of sammi that resulted in an informational brochure and televised performance. Prem's sammi later also became a part of Punjabi University's 2001 text. Following, he was co-charged with preparing the Republic Day presentation of sammi that Patiala sent to New Delhi in 2005. Meanwhile, Biru Ram had been working locally in Patiala, where from 1985 he served as advisor and accompanist to (non-Bazigar) Daisy Walia's presentations of sammi at the Government College for Girls and Punjabi University. Walia also developed her sammi through interviews with Goaar women of Sanaur and Samara (personal communication, 7 March 2005). So it is that any sammi one sees presented in East Punjab, no matter who the creator is, ultimately finds its base in the work and knowledge of Goaar artistes.

Bazigar Giddhā

A familiar type of song and dance circle in Punjab is the *giddhā*. However, few are aware that Goaar women practice a unique form of it. Its verses (*bolīāṅ*) are sung in the Goaar language, and the melodies used to intone them are entirely different from the mainstream giddha's. Moreover, rather than a solo followed by the cyclic repetition of the final line of verse, the manner of presentation here is a direct, verbatim call and response, back and forth. The dancing of Bazigar giddha is generally different than the giddha of lay communities, too. While the lay giddha consists of constant locomotion with a particular footwork, the Goaarnis' giddha contains much graceful whirling of the hands and twisting of the hips. The movements appear even perhaps sexually provocative.[9] In one movement, for example, a woman wraps her legs around another's waist, leans backwards, and continues writhing as both whirl around. Despite the surprise this open style of dancing might give to laypersons used to the usual giddha, the Goaarnis' giddha was not intended to be provocative. It was performed, like other women's giddha in traditional context, only in the company of women. The added flamboyance can be understood in that Goaar women were performing a professional, non-participatory variety of dance that required added entertainment value.

Fig. 8. Goaar women performing their unique *giddhā* at a family wedding, Dadu Majra Colony, 2005. Photo: G. Schreffler.

Goaarnis gave a rare public performance of giddha in 1985, when Prof. Rajpal Singh invited a group to the inaugural function of the North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala. I believe this was the last such performance; Goaar men with whom I spoke indicated the discomfort that was caused by this public performance of women from the community.

However, Goaarnis still perform giddha in a non-presentational form at community weddings, two of which I witnessed in 2005 near Chandigarh and Balachaur. Each performance occurred at a specified point in the proceedings. After the arrival of the *barāt*, male relations of both families had gone through their formal meeting (*milṇī*), of garlanding, gift-giving, and embracing. While the men then went for refreshments, female relations had their own meeting out of doors. A shared giddha followed this (Fig. 8). On each occasion, a particular Goaarni, who seemed to be a specialist in such matters, took charge of leading the giddha.

Ṭippṛī

Yet another poorly known dance that can be associated with the Goaar is a stick-dance called *ṭippṛī*, from the southeastern side of the Punjab region. Men dance in a circle, clicking their sticks together as they go. In addition—and this is what makes it especially a dance to be watched by others—they might plait long ribbons hanging from above and perform acrobatic movements (Bedi 1992). Video footage, from the personal collection of Paramjit Siddhu, documents the expositional nature of some performances, in which dancers somersault across sheets of broken glass in the middle of the dance-circle. And photos from the Sangeet Natak Akademi Archive (New Delhi) document a staging of tippri that included fire-blowing.

Traditional Songs

Traditional songs of the Goaar consist of both those mainstream dialect songs they have brought with them from Western Punjab and unique songs in the Goaar language. These are more or less endangered genres, being that they are memories of the eldest citizens. However, Goaars in East Punjab, being engaged in music generally, also do sing the more common songs. And in some spheres, new music (below) in Goaar language is being sung.

Like women of other communities in Punjab, Goaar women sing unaccompanied songs to mark ritual events, especially at different stages in a wedding, e.g. *suhāg*, *ghoṛīāṅ*, and *siṭṭhaṇīāṅ* (see Nahar Singh, this volume). However, these were sung in Goaar language, and to distinctly

different melodies. Unfortunately, few Goaarnis still remember these songs well enough to perform them. On an occasion where a knowledgeable song-leader was present, I heard them sing songs during the ritual games-playing between bride and groom after a wedding. The "songs" were formally much like the *bolīāṅ* of their giddha. Frankly speaking, women's songs were not the focus of my research, and I was unable to assess how these might be distinguished as *Goaar* songs from perhaps other localized songs of Western Punjab. Indeed, Goaar women (like Mirasi women) were said to perform some traditional songs—specifically *ghoṛīāṅ*—in a professional capacity for the weddings and childbirths of the lay community.

Older Goaars have memory of Western Punjabi verses forms in the common tongue. In his *Naiṅ Jhanāṅ*, based on research in the Sandal Bar in the 1930s, Harjit Singh stated that the Bazigar specialized in, and indeed had a hand in developing, the song forms called *mundrī* and *chhallā* (1942:39). Contemporary informants indicated that mundri is not sung much now. As for chhalla, Jagat Ram (b. 1920s) of Dadu Majra Colony (Khari Bazigar) was the only individual that I heard perform any. He is one of the rare old Goaars who still remembers many of the old songs and dances. Among the songs better remembered, however, are in the three-line *māhīā* form. Garib Dass suddenly "remembered" a number of these verses in 2007—women's songs he had not heard for forty years. They are said to be in the melodic style of Southwestern Punjab, *lambe dā tarj*. The following samples can be heard on the UCSB Center for Sikh and Punjab Studies website.[10]

> *ghaṛe rakhnī āṅ ghaṛvanjīāṅ te*
> *tur giā māhīā ve*
> *maiṅ hatth paī mārāṅ manjīāṅ te*
>
> I place the pots on the pot-racks.
> Since my beloved has gone away O,
> I find myself constantly touching his bed.
>
> *koī chādar lasaṇe dī*
> *be chhaḍḍ giā māhīā*
> *sāḍī nīat nahīṅ vasṇe dī*
>
> A sheet of fine fabric.
> Oh my beloved left me,
> And I've no will to stay.

In addition to the common Western Punjabi genre of mahia, there is another type of mahia that the Goaar ascribe to their community

specifically. To assess the veracity of this ascription is complicated because, besides the fact that its form seems to correspond to another common verse form, *ḍholā*, available examples are sung in the common language. Nonetheless, its distinctive melodic styles appear unique and, as far as I can determine, this genre has not previously been mentioned in print. Exponents of the genre in East Punjab are Jagat Ram Lalka and Raushan Lal Lalka. The following examples come from a performance by Jagat Ram Lalka in 1997. He begins his performances with a free meter, intoned recitation. He then sings an ever-changing assortment of verses, over the kahirva rhythm, as for example:

> *maiṅ aithe te ḍhol merā parbat*
> *sāḍī khuī dā pāṇī sharbat*
> *muṛ ke pī māhīā*
> *koī kallī khalogī āṅ*
> *o gam sānūṅ māhīe dā*
> *sukk tīlā maiṅ ho gaī āṅ*

> I am here and my dhol is in the hills;
> The water of our well is sherbert.
> Come back and drink it, mahia.
> You'll find someone standing alone.
> Oh, feeling the sorrow of mahia,
> I have become like dried up straw.

The same sort of verses may also be presented in a different musical style, with the following tune.

> *bajār vikendī āṅ gandalāṅ*
> *bajār vikendī āṅ gandalāṅ*
> *ikrār kītā din pandrāṅ*
> *muddtāṅ lāīāṅ ne*
> *koī kallī khalogī āṅ*
> *o gam sānūṅ māhīe dā*
> *sukk tīlā maiṅ ho gaī āṅ*
> *o gam sānūṅ māhīe dā*
> *sukk tīlā maiṅ ho gaī āṅ*

> In the market are sold: mustard stalks.
> In the market are sold: mustard stalks.
> We made a pledge 15 days ago;
> It's been so long apart.
> You'll find someone standing alone.
> Oh, feeling the sorrow of mahia,
> I have become like dried up straw.
> Oh, feeling the sorrow of mahia,
> I have become like dried up straw.

Other Professional Performance Arts

Goaars are distinguished as performers in still other musical and dramatic arts. Note in particular how, whereas before Partition these genres may have been associated with other communities, in post-Partition East Punjab the Goaar have filled those roles.

Some Goaars carry on the tradition of professional ballad-singing in the *dastāngo* style or what Thuhi (in this volume) calls *tūmbe-algoze dī gāikī*. While not exclusive to any ethnic community, such ballad-singing was largely the purview of Muslim professionals. Certain Goaars, however, studied with masters of the tradition, and nowadays some of the best-known exponents of the genre in the East Punjab are Goaars. Goaar Sudagar Ram (1923-) originally from district Gujrat, was a disciple of the famous (non-Goaar) Nawab Ghumar. He adopted the Majha-based style of his ustad, accompanying himself on *king* (Thuhi 2002:55). After Partition, Sudagar Ram settled in district Kurukshetra, and from 1987 he was a radio artiste (ibid.:56). In East Punjab, the tradition continued with Sudagar Ram's student, a Goaar named Jagat Ram Lalka (1952-) born near Sirhind and now of district Ambala (Thuhi 2002:57). By age sixteen

he had become a student of Sudagar Ram, and after exposure in 1982 he was first called to perform on the radio (ibid.:58). Jagat Ram Lalka uses the small, one-stringed relative to the *tūmbā*, the *tūmbī*. He was one of the most prominent exponents of the dastango tradition in recent years, along with the younger performer Raushan Lal Lalka.

Another performing art that some Bazigars adopted is *naqal*, the theatrical art previously associated with a community of Mirasis. As Neelam Man Singh Chowdhry notes (in this volume), the *naqqāl*s operating in the Chandigarh area in recent decades have come from the tribe of Khari Bazigar. This type of rural stage-entertainment was popular until around the 1970s, when television entered the picture. The ubiquitous Prem Chand is the leader of the latest aggregation of the naqqal party. He was a student of Chajju, one of seven naqqals in the court of the Maharaja of Patiala, Bhupinder Singh (Prem Chand and Party 1992). Prem's group, which includes several other members of the Vartia clan, has performed the "long style" of naqqal variety show, in which the players act out dramas like *Hir-Ranjha* and *Keema-Malki*. Pathani Ram, now the *pradhān* of the tribe's highest-level panchayat, used to dance as a *nachār* (female impersonator) in the clan's naqqal group. Also associated with the group is Mundri Lal, brother-in-law of Prem. His routine has included a feminine style of dance in which, donning *ghungrū* (bells) on his ankles and twirling a veil coquettishly, he performs steps from *kathak* dance and card tricks. Another versatile artiste is Mehar Chand, a fine singer of the old style who also plays harmonium and other instruments.

Among other Goaar instrumentalists, there have been numerous players of the double-flutes, *joṛīāṅ* (algoza). Most famous among them was perhaps Mangal Singh Sunami (1931-2002) of the Panjab subsection, who played for the first bhangra "team" from PEPSU. Ganda Ram of the Khari, a legendary figure reputed to have lived some 130 years (1868-1998), is known to have played the *sārangī* to accompany women dancers of the Kanjar community. And Mangat Ram used to play the *desī* ("local") form of tabla drums, of which the left-hand bass drum lacks a permanent *siāhī* spot and instead the player must apply a flour-paste afresh each time.

The well-known Sufi singing duo of the Wadali Brothers of Amritsar, Puranchand and Pyarelal Wadali, are claimed by the Vartia clan. The pair were involved in such pursuits as wrestling and drama before they became one of East Punjab's most hailed singing groups (Tandon 2003). Puranchand's son, Lakhwinder, is one of the rising pop singers of recent years. Other pop singers of Goaar background include Dalwinder Dayalpuri and Davinder Kohinoor. It is fair to say that none of these performers, however, appears to his audience with a "Bazigar" identity. One that has, only recently, is Lakhbir Lakha (Valjot) from

Mohalla Dharamkot (Phagwara). He rose to fame as part of a duo with a non-Goaar woman Gurinder Naaz, having won a TV duet-singing competition in 2007.[11] Lakha's real accomplishment in that year was a milestone for the Goaar community. This was the release of a commercial album in the Goaar language, *Main Kaain Kahano Aan* (*maiṅ kāīṅ kahiṇoṅ āṅ*): "What shall I say to you?"

Conclusion

Over their history, the Bazigar or Goaar people have maintained numerous performing traditions, including genres of physical feats, music, dance, and drama. The variety of performance activities speaks to their status as an itinerant people, who constantly had to adapt for survival and, therefore, to learn the arts for patrons of each region.

In this history, the effect of Partition on the Goaar cannot be overstated. It resulted in a dramatic change in their geography and lifestyle. Yet what affected the Goaar also affected Punjabi culture at large. Since Partition and with their displacement, Goaar artistes in East Punjab have played a key role in transmitting Western Punjabi forms. In fact, a great many of the performance forms that are important to Punjabis today are of Western Punjabi origin, including most of the folk dances. Citing a familiar example, one could say that there would be no bhangra as we know it today without the Goaar.

The recent story of the Goaar people shows the drastic changes modernity has brought to one Punjabi community. The Goaar of the 19th century were nomads living at the margins of society. They lacked fixed homes or guaranteed income. While their profession of bazi has been romanticized, in reality they had to rely largely upon sporadic migrant labor for major income. Partition changed the nature of patronage. While bazi became obsolete, new opportunities for performance in state-sponsored forms—especially folkloric dances—presented a lucky break for the Goaar. They were able to establish themselves under government and university patronage by emphasizing their skills in dhol-playing and dance training. With each subsequent generation, playing the dhol has gradually become an escape from the drudgery and backbreaking labor of agricultural work.

One may take the example of the late Ustad Garib Dass and his family. Garib Dass began his life as a boy roaming in Western Punjab on camels, before migrating to East Punjab and starting his working life as a manual laborer. However, with his clan's cultivation of dhol-playing and the training in dance and music he received from his relatives, he was able to become a dhol accompanist during the formative years of bhangra and other staged Punjabi dances. From the 1970s he traveled nationally, and from the 1980s internationally, playing an essential role in the

development of modern Punjabi music. As his prestige and financial status increased, he went from living in straw huts to moving into *pakkā* housing in a colony near Chandigarh. Garib Dass' nurturing of the dhol-playing profession meant his son and now grandsons could more easily adopt it. Together, the family has used these talents to increase their social position and, especially in the case of the youngest, to seek good education. They have even bought a plot of land for the future, something that Garib Dass' nomad parents probably would never have dreamed of. This article is dedicated to this recently deceased master, who was keen that I, as mediator, introduce outsiders to the distinctive cultural riches of his people, and without whose nurturing and friendship I would not have been able.

Despite their strides, the Goaar remain in a relatively marginalized social position; they are isolated even among the Scheduled Castes. Theirs is a dilemma faced by other "tribal" people. As their quality of life improves through integration in society, they "lose" some of the practices that have made them distinct. Pride in their still-unique life-ways sustains them, however. Their identity is clear, even if, as this article has hoped to remedy, it is unclear to outsiders.

Notes

[1] Deb (1987), aided by two Bazigar assistants, conducted a socio-economic survey of the community, beginning in 1981. Aside from this, we read very brief mention of the Bazigar in colonial ethnographies, but the authors of these works seem to have been dismissive of the community; even much of that which was accurate in those accounts at that time has likely changed by the present. At Punjabi University, Patiala, an intriguing project to document a Bazigar community, led by professors Surjit Singh Lee and Dharminder Spolia, had received government funding. At the time of fieldwork, however, it had not yet bore any materials. In my own dissertation (Schreffler 2010), chapter 4 attempted to present a modest exposition of the culture of the Bazigar.

[2] The implied assumption is that, in Muslim cultural circles, Persian-based words are preferred or more prevalent, and that the same is true for Sanskrit-based words in Hindu circles.

[3] These are by: Ravi Das (ca.1398–ca.1448) (Asa, 487); Kabir (1440-1518) (Asa, 482; Sorath, 655; Maru, 1105); Guru Nanak (1469-1539) (Vadhans, 581; Prabhati, 1343; Maru, 1023); Guru Amar Das (guru from 1552-1574) (Maru, 1061); Guru Arjan (guru from 1581-1606) (Gauri, 206; Suhi, 736); Bhai Gurdas (1551-1637) (Vaar 8, 15, 27, 33).

[4] See for example Bhardwaj 2004; Bumbroo 2008; No author given 2001, 2006.

[5] I cannot say positively the religious affiliations of any Goaars that remained in Pakistan after Partition, although Indian Bazigars speak of relations who got "stuck" in West Punjab and who converted to Islam.

[6] This refers to a Sufi saint whose shrine is located in the Srinigar district, Jammu & Kashmir.

[7] Also note that one of the longest established dholi-emigrants to North America, Piare Lal of Vancouver, is said to be a Desi Bazigar (according to Garib Dass, personal communication, 10 Dec. 2007).

[8] This area was later disrupted by development.

[9] Nahar Singh has observed, "*In the Bāzīgarnī's dance, the movements of sex are clearly evident*" (Nahar Singh 1988:53).

[10] [http://www.global.ucsb.edu/punjab/gharib/2.htm]

[11] The program, airing on the MH1 music channel, was "Coca Cola Jodi No. 1."

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Sikh *Shabad Kīrtan* and *Gurmat Sangīt*: What's in the Name?

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This article presents an overview of *shabad kīrtan*, the devotional singing of sacred songs from Sikh scriptures. The discussion addresses both its historical development and a description of it as it is practiced today. Special attention is given to features of Sikh musicology. These are described beginning with the musical information in the Guru Granth, including the musical designations in the *shabad* titles and the musical information in the text. After critiquing the meaning of the term *gurmat sangīt*, which has relatively recently come to describe *kīrtan* that uses *rāg* music, the article proposes "rāg-ādhārit shabad kīrtan" as the more fitting term to refer to that genre, and "gurmat sangīt shāstar/vigyān" to refer to Sikh musicology.

Sikh *shabad kīrtan* is the devotional singing of sacred songs from Sikh scriptures. It is central to the spiritual lives of Sikhs, and forms an integral and prominent part of worship at the *gurdwārā* (place of worship), of life ceremonies, and of their daily listening to recorded music. For many Sikhs, *shabad kīrtan* is indeed their favorite part of the gurdwara service.

Shabad kīrtan is a five hundred year-old tradition, having started with the songs of the founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak. Its journey over these five centuries has included many new developments—new melodic modes, musical forms, styles, musicians and performance contexts—but also loss and recovery of tradition.

However, relative to its significance in Sikh lives, and its fascinating journey, shabad kirtan has been an understudied subject. Writings in English have been few and far between.[1] In Punjabi, too, most prominent books have been collections of musical notations of the musician's repertoire.[2] Of course, these are important sources of compositions used by Sikh musicians, and their critical review as Sikh musicological material would be an excellent area of research. In the last decade or so, several works in Punjabi on Sikh musicology have been published in Punjab.[3]

Sikh shabad kirtan has received scant scholarly attention in the Western academe,[4] and papers on the subject are rare in Western peer-reviewed academic journals. On the musicological aspect, in particular, I have not been able to find any article, and the present article, together with two companion pieces (Inderjit N. Kaur 2011a; 2011b) represent initial attempts in this line of research. As such many topics touched upon in this paper remain significant unexplored areas for in-depth research.

   This article presents an overview of shabad kirtan, with an emphasis on its musicological dimensions. It begins with a summary of its historical development, going on to a brief description of shabad kirtan as it is practiced today, with its many genres and performance contexts. This is followed by a more detailed discussion of Sikh musicology, beginning with the musical information in the Guru Granth. This is essential to an understanding of Sikh sacred music, since the Guru Granth is the foundation of this music and also a scholar-authenticated source of information. This section includes a discussion of: the musical designations in the *shabad* titles—*rāg*, *ghar*, musical forms (*pade*, *chhant*, *paṛtāl*, *birahaṛe,* etc.), and *dhunī* names; the musical information in the *shabad* text—verse meter, chorus marking, verse sequencing, and very importantly, *ras* (aesthetics); and its implications for use of musical material such as *pad* (text), *rāg, tāl,* and *lai,* as well as for structuring shabad kirtan sessions. The article then turns to a discussion of the meaning of *gurmat sangīt*, and, underscoring the importance of terminology, proposes "rāg-ādhārit shabad kīrtan" as the more fitting term to refer to *kīrtan* that uses *rāg* music, and "gūrmat sangīt shāstar" or "vigyān*"* to refer to Sikh musicology. The article concludes by addressing the question posed in its title, and with emphasis on the essence and core aesthetic of *shabad kīrtan*.

Historical Development of *Shabad Kīrtan*

Sikh *shabad kīrtan* began with the songs of Guru Nanak (1469-1539), as the sonic expression of his Divine inspirations. He sang the revealed Word—the *shabad*—to the accompaniment of the minstrel Bhai Mardana's *rabāb* (a plucked lute) in his journeys, and when he settled a community in Kartarpur. And he recorded the *shabad* texts in *pothī*s (manuscripts), of which the *Har Sahāi Pothī* is believed to be extant.[5]

   Evidence of Guru Nanak as a musician, and of his *pothī*s, is found in the *janam sākhī*s (life stories), in the *vār*s (verses) of Bhai Gurdas (ca.1558-1633), and in 18th and 19th century paintings. The *janam sākhī*s tell of Guru Nanak's moments of revelation—"Mardana, play the *rabāb*, *bāṇī* has come," he would say. In Bhai Gurdas's *vār* 1:32 he is described with *kitāb* (book) tucked under his arm, and in *vār* 1:33 the *mullah*s

(Muslim priests) ask him to refer to his *kitāb*. Older paintings typically depict him singing, with Mardana on the rabab, and often there is a pothi by his side. Bhai Gurdas mentions the use of rabab in var 14:15. The musical influence of Guru Nanak is noted in Bhai Gurdas' var 1:27 (*ghar ghar hove dharamsāl, hove kīrtan sadā visoā*—"Every house was a place of worship with constant *kīrtan* as on Baisakhi"). The prevalence of shabad kirtan in Kartarpur is recorded in var 1:38 (*sodaru ārtī gāvīai amrit vele jāpu uchārā*—"Sodar and Ārtī were sung, and in the early morning Jāp was recited).

The tradition of shabad kirtan started by Guru Nanak was continued by the following gurus. Guru Angad, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, and Guru Arjan vastly expanded the *gurbāṇī* (guru's word) for shabad kirtan, singing in new musical forms and modes. Guru Angad institutionalized the singing of *Āsā kī Vār* (Ballad of Hope) in early morning (Macauliffe 1996[1909], vol. 6:15). Guru Amardas' composition, *Ānand* (Bliss), has become the standard concluding piece of kirtan sittings. Guru Ramdas' *Lāvāṅ* verses form the core part of the Sikh wedding ceremony. Tradition has it that Guru Arjan played the *sarandā* (waisted bowed lute), and developed the upright *joṛī* (drum pair) from the double-headed drum, *mridang*.

Guru Arjan had the works of the first five Sikh gurus scribed in *Ādi Granth* (1604), which became the first authoritative compilation of gurbani. He also included in it songs of fifteen *bhagat*s (saints) from different faiths. The second and final compilation, with the addition of the *shabad*s of the ninth guru, Teg Bahadar, was the Guru Granth, which, since 1708, has been the primary Sikh scripture and the primary source of Sikh shabad kirtan.

Shabad kirtan may use sacred songs only, defined as songs from the Guru Granth (the primary Sikh scripture), the Dasam Granth (works associated with the tenth Sikh guru, Gobind Singh, compiled in the early 18th century), and the works of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal (1633-1715). Other texts may not be used for shabad kirtan.[6]

Institutionalizing of liturgical kirtan sessions began with Guru Nanak and continued with the following Sikh gurus, as mentioned above. Guru Arjan is said to have initiated the daily tradition of five kirtan *chaukī*s (sittings) at the Harmandir Sahib Gurdwara (The Golden Temple) in Amritsar: the early morning chauki of Asa ki Var, the mid-morning chauki of Anand, the midday chauki of Charan Kanwal, the evening chauki of Sodar, and the nighttime chauki of Kalyan. The Sikh gurus encouraged the development of professional kirtan performers.

Tradition has it that the descendants of Bhai Mardana became professional musicians in the gurus' courts—Sajada in Guru Angad's center at Khadur Sahib, Sadu and Badu in Guru Amardas' center at Goindval and Guru Ramdas' center at Chak Ram Das Pura, Balvand and

Satta in Guru Ramdas' and Guru Arjan's court, Babak during Guru Hargobind's time, and Chatra later. Thus ensued the *rabābī* tradition of Muslim hereditary professional musicians who sang kirtan to the accompaniment of the rabab. It is said that the rabab-players in the house of the gurus were recognized as *Bābe ke* (i.e. those of Baba Nanak) as compared to those in the royal courts *Bābur ke* (of Babur). The *rabābī kīrtan* style and tradition continued through the Sikh guru period becoming an important part of the kirtan tradition at the holiest Sikh gurdwara, Harmandir Sahib. Bhai Sain Ditta is said to be a well-known rababi who performed at Harmandir Sahib during the early 19th century. At this time the rababi tradition also received patronage from the Sikh states of Nabha, Patiala, and Kapurthala. Bhai Chand, Bhai Taba, and Bhai Lal performed at Harmandir Sahib during the early 20th century.

Parallel to the rababi tradition there developed a tradition of professional Sikh *kīrtan* singers, *kīrtankār*s, starting with amateur singers from the Sikh guru period. Tradition speaks of several famous *kīrtankār*s of that time: Bhai Dipa and Bula during Guru Angad's time; Narain Das, Padha, and Ugrsain in Guru Amardas' time; Bhai Ramu, Jhaju, and Mukand during Guru Arjan's time; Banvali and Parsram during Guru Hargobind's time; and Gulab Rai, Bhel, Mansud, and Gurbaksh during Guru Teg Bahadar's time. This tradition of Sikh musicians developed into the professional *rāgī* tradition. Bhai Mansa Singh is reputed as a fine kirtankar at Harmandir Sahib during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. During the 19th century the *rāgī* tradition received the patronage of Sikh maharajas and leaders. The states of Patiala, Nabha, and Kapurthala are particularly notable, supporting *rāgī*s such as Baba Pushkara Singh. Bhai Sham Singh is said to have performed kirtan for some seventy years at Harmandir Sahib during the latter half of the 19th century. Some stalwarts of the early 20th century include Hira Singh, Santa Singh, Sunder Singh, Sammund Singh, Surjan Singh, and Gopal Singh. Bhai Jwala Singh was a tenth generation kirtankar who was followed by his illustrious sons Avtar Singh and Gurcharan Singh. Other eminent ragis of *rāg*-based kirtan during the latter part of the last century include Balbir Singh and Dyal Singh.

The *ḍhāḍī* singers (see Thuhi, this volume) are said to have developed under Guru Hargobind, who encouraged the singing of songs of valor. Bhai Abdallah and Nath are reputed to have been zealous dhadis during his time, the former playing the stringed instrument, *sārangī*, and the latter playing the small handheld drum, *ḍhaḍḍ*. The dhadi tradition gained quick and continuing popularity. The performance, typically by an ensemble of three, consists of the singing of heroic ballads interspersed with chanted narratives. The tone is highly charged with emotions of heroism. Since the songs are typically not sacred Sikh songs from the sets of works mentioned above, dhadi singing is not classified

as Sikh shabad kirtan. Another distinction is that the ensemble stands while performing, while shabad kirtan is performed sitting on the floor.

Thus three categories of professional Sikh musicians emerged in the Sikh guru period: *rabābī*, *rāgī* and *ḍhāḍī*. However following the tumultuous history of the Sikhs, these traditions suffered a rocky road, too. After the passing of the tenth and last Sikh guru, Gobind Singh, in 1708, and a brave but unsuccessful effort by Banda Bahadar to resist oppression, the attempted genocide of Sikhs in the early 18th century led to their hiding. Sikh institutions, music included, suffered great setbacks. During the 18th century there were repeated interruptions to the singing of kirtan at Harmandir Sahib. In the late 18th century, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, a prominent *sardar* (leader), also known to be a good kirtankar, contributed significantly to the re-establishment of Sikh institutions. Patronage of Sikh kirtan resumed in the 19th century in the princely states of Patiala, Nabha, and Kapurthala. A wave of renewal and revival occurred at the turn of the 20th century with eminent Sikh scholars such as Dr. Charan Singh, Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, and Bhai Vir Singh taking up the cause of heritage kirtan traditions in the larger context of Sikh identity, culture, and society. Yet another blow was dealt by the partition of Punjab in 1947, leading to mass cross border migration of Sikhs out of West Punjab (which was allotted to Pakistan) and Muslims out of East Punjab (which was allotted to India). The rababi tradition suffered in particular since the Muslim musicians migrated to Pakistan where there was scant patronage for Sikh kirtan. Efforts of revival are now underway in Punjab (India), giving recognition to the surviving rababis. However, by the 20th century rababis were singing with the more modern harmonium (see below) rather than the traditional *rabāb*.

The recurrent upheavals for Sikhs led to significant loss of musical heritage in a number of ways. The practice of the musical modes, melodies and forms that are designated in the Guru Granth declined sharply. The use of traditional instruments also declined. These included stringed instruments such as the rabab, saranda and *tāūs* (bowed fretted lute), and drums such as the mridang and jori. By the early-mid-20th century the relatively modern harmonium (reed organ with a Western-style keyboard) had replaced the stringed melodic instruments, and the relatively modern *tablā* had replaced the traditional mridang and jori. The size of the professional kirtan ensemble also reduced from a quartet (*chaukī*, literally, "four") to a trio. The quartet included the main vocalist, a support vocalist, a stringed melodic instrument player, and a drummer. In the modern trio, the stringed instrumentalist was eliminated, and the two vocalists doubled up on the relatively easy-to-play harmonium.

***Shabad Kīrtan* Today**

Sikh shabad kirtan today is practiced in many genres, by a diverse set of musicians and in a variety of contexts. All these aspects require further research. In this section I provide a brief overview of performance contexts, types of musicians, and performing styles.

Professional kīrtan sittings, musicians and genres

The predominant performance context is the Sikh gurdwara, which is open to all people irrespective of faith, social status, and gender. In a gurdwara the center stage is always occupied by the primary sacred scripture, the Guru Granth, which is kept on an elevated *palkī* (platform), surrounded by ornate *rumālā*s (scarves). The *rāgī jathā* (ensemble) typically sits on an elevated stage to a side of the Guru Granth, facing the congregation, which is seated on the floor. There is no special seating for anyone, but in some gurdwaras men and women sit on opposite sides of the aisle. This enables tighter seating during rush times, such as special celebrations.

Visitors to a gurdwara during regular service hours and during celebrations can expect to hear kirtan as an essential part of the service. Major gurdwaras and those with substantial attendees have a number of sittings on Sunday, and evening sittings on other days.

The first early morning *chaukī* (sitting) comprises of the singing of the composition *Āsā kī Vār*. This sitting has one of the most well-defined and distinct formats of Sikh kirtan chaukis. The verses of this composition are chanted and sung to standardized melodies believed to be historical from the Sikh guru period. This is the only chauki where the drum-player is required to chant certain verses solo. The verses of Asa ki Var are sung interspersed with other *shabad*s chosen by the performers. However no discourse may be used within this chauki. It usually lasts for two to three hours, but can be longer depending on the number of other shabads sung. The ability to perform this chauki well is the hallmark of accomplished professional kirtan performers. Due to the combination of the early morning time, the uninterrupted singing and substantial length, this is the favorite chauki for those looking for a deeper meditative experience. Other chaukis in most gurdwaras have a looser format with respect to the presentation. Typically though, it consists of the singing of a few shabads, ending with singing of six stanzas from the composition, *Ānand*. Another distinctive composition is the *Āratī,* sung during the evening chaukis. *Raiṇ sabāī* (all night) sessions are usually annual events with a number of musicians participating, and often ending with the early morning Asa ki Var session. At Harmandir Sahib, kirtan chaukis run

continuously from dawn past midnight, systemized around the time of day and seasons.

Kirtan programs that take place for life ceremonies, milestones, and achievements include shabads with appropriate themes: birth and death, celebration and purpose of life, gratitude, and supplication. This is also the case for the choice of interspersed shabads within the sitting of Asa ki Var. Family members often request a shabad or two that would be specially meaningful to them for the occasion.

The Sikh wedding ceremony, *Ānand Kāraj* (Work of Bliss) has a distinctive kirtan section with a defined format. The bride and groom sit at the head of the center aisle of the gurdwara, facing the Guru Granth. After a set of shabads with appropriate themes, the shabad*, palai taiḍai lāgī* ("connected to You") is sung during which the bride's father hands each end of a *chunnī* (long scarf) to the bride and groom. The core part of the wedding consists of the chanting and singing of the four *Lāvāṅ* verses, which describe successive stages of the soul's journey to Divine Union. As each verse is sung, the couple-to-be processes around the Guru Granth. The completion of the fourth round is the declaration that they are married, and is immediately followed by the joyous singing of the shabad, *viāh hoā mere bāblā* ("the wedding has occurred, O Father").

A typical kirtan sitting at the gurdwara is performed by a professional ensemble known as a *rāgī jathā*. The contemporary standard *jathā* is composed of three musicians: lead and support vocalists, who also double up on harmoniums, and a tabla-player. The jatha members are professional, and in addition to singing shabad kirtan, they are required to be able to perform all liturgical services.[7] Thus they have the title of a priest—*Bhāī* (literally, "brother"). As with all gurdwara priests, all are male. This is an indication, not of gender discrimination, but of practical dictates of traditional societies. In recent years a few female jathas have emerged. Female ragis have the title of *Bībī* (literally, "lady"). Mixed gender jathas are rarely seen. Apart from the traditional mold, the monophonic feature of music makes it difficult for the male and female voices to cover the same scale range in a sweet and soothing manner.[8]

In keeping with Sikh theology that prohibits casteism, it is not acceptable for ragis to use a last name that indicates a caste. Almost all names are the generic Sikh last names—"Singh" for males and "Kaur" for females, and some add "Khalsa" at the end. Identity is given by locational associations, such as "Dilli Vale" (from Delhi), or employment associations with a gurdwara, such as "Hazuri Ragi Harmandir Sahib" (i.e. ragi in service at the Harmandir Sahib gurdwara). The jatha attire is geared to simplicity and sobriety, consisting of uniform clothing of white or off-white long shirts and pants, with white, navy, saffron or black turbans for males, and scarves for females. More recently a wider array

of colors is being seen. Professional jathas are paid standard fees at the gurdwaras. They may also perform kirtan at private events for an honorarium. However, performing at ticketed venues has not been considered appropriate.[9]

The most prevalent genre sung in the gurdwara by far, now described as "traditional," uses fairly simple melodies set to simpler varieties of *tāl*—mostly the 8-beat *kahirvā* and also the 6-beat *dādrā*. The simpler melodies and *tāl*s enable the congregation to sing along, and also keep the focus on the shabad rather than on the music. Singing is interspersed with complementary melodic material played on the harmonium. The tabla accompanies with variations in tempo and rhythmic variety. The overall affect sought is calm and spiritual. The orientation of the performance is a combination of presentation and participation. Most lines are repeated to enable the congregation to join in. This "traditional" genre encompasses many styles including *gīt*, *ghazal*, and *bhajan*. The most popular ragi by far of this "traditional" genre has been Bhai Harjinder Singh Srinagar Vale.

The historically traditional genre used more *rāg* music and included traditional stringed melodic instruments along with, or instead of, the relatively modern harmonium, which was introduced to Indian music in the early 19th century. The relative ease of playing and transporting led to the quick adoption of the harmonium in shabad kirtan, however its rigidly fixed and modern, equal temperament-based tuning makes it inadequate for fully realizing the microtonal inflections and ornaments of traditional rag music. There is now an increasing wave of effort to revive the playing of historical stringed instruments such as the rabab, saranda and taus. This is particularly evident in the *rāg*-based shabad kirtan genre called *gurmat sangīt*, which largely uses the contemporary *khyāl* style of Hindustani classical music.

Shabad kirtan is also distinguished as Parmāṇ-style kirtan where the ragi intersperses lines from related shabads to elaborate on the main theme, and Viākhiā-style kirtan where the ragi pauses the singing to explain the shabad being sung and present a short discourse.

There are now many Sikh music educational institutions. Traditionally kirtan education occurred within the larger learning centers, *ṭaksāl*, such as Jawaddi Kalan (in Ludhiana) and Damdami Taksal (near Amritsar). These centers have religious codes of conduct that students must adopt, but they seem to be open to all. Students of kirtan often start young and are trained in music, scripture and pronunciation. It would be pertinent to say here that fine kirtan requires much more than musical ability and training. Fine expression of the aesthetic of shabad kirtan requires deep understanding of the shabad text (a point elaborated upon in a later section below), as well as Sikh culture and history. It is noteworthy that in an interview, the eminent ragi, late Bhai Avtar Singh,

in his answer to my question of the requirements to become a good Sikh kirtankar, listed first a spiritual life that follows the path of the Guru Granth, and then listed training in *rāg* music. It was clear in his mind that a good kirtankar had a different lifestyle compared to a musician in general.

Amateur kīrtan sittings, musicians and genres

In addition to the genres used by professional kirtan ensembles, there are several genres used by amateur singers[10] as well. These have a greater participatory orientation, include a number of handheld idiophonic percussion instruments (e.g. *chhaiṇā*, *chimṭā*, and *khaṛtāl*), and display contrasting aesthetics to professional kirtan. A particularly distinctive style, with *qawwālī*-like features, is the *Akhaṇḍ Kīrtanī* style, started in the early 20th century by a devout Sikh, Bhai Randhir Singh. In keeping with its name, *akhaṇḍ* (literally, "unbroken"), there is no pause between the shabads in a performance, even though performers (men and women) may take turns leading.[11] This kirtan aims to generate ecstatic fervor. The music is simple but generates fervor through changes in rhythm, tempo and volume, especially during repetitions of the chant *Vāhegurū* (Praise to The Guru). The kirtan proceeds in cycles of increasing intensity.

Istrī satsang refers to women's kirtan groups that meet in gurdwaras when the regular sessions are not on, typically in the afternoon. Various members take turns leading in a call and response manner. The drum accompaniment here is the *ḍholkī* (small, double-headed barrel), which is also played with folksongs.

Outside the *darbār* (court) setting (i.e. in the presence of the Guru Granth either in gurdwaras or private homes), shabad kirtan is also sung in what is called *nagar kīrtan*, by large groups processing around the gurdwara complex or neighborhood streets on foot. This kirtan is very participatory, with a leader leading in the call and response style, and many handheld percussion instruments. The drum used is the dholki hung over the shoulder. Melodic instruments are not used, as they would be heavy and cumbersome to carry on foot. Modern versions of *nagar kīrtan* have floats carrying the Guru Granth, and shabad kirtan that is recorded or performed live by a jatha seated with instruments on the float.

Kīrtan recordings

Apart from live shabad kirtan, Sikhs listen to recorded shabad kirtan for a substantial part of the day. It is often the main music that plays in a traditional Sikh household, to provide a calm and spiritual atmosphere in the home. For the same reason it is often the choice of music while

commuting to and from work. Recorded shabad kirtan is a very large industry. Its economic force has had a strong influence on performers and listeners alike, mutually reinforcing a style more and more distant from the historical style of shabad kirtan. This has included the adoption of popular tunes and styles, and elaborate instrumental accompaniment, the latter not seen even in contemporary gurdwara performances. Interestingly, video recordings show only the ragi jatha trio with two harmoniums and tabla, as performers, while many (invisible) instruments and musicians play along.

Sikh Musicology

While shabad kirtan is vibrant in its diverse practice, it is currently not based on a detailed musicological foundation. The natural source for such a foundation is the Guru Granth, which provides considerably more musical detail than is commonly recognized. In fact, the operative meaning of significant aspects of the musical terminology from the Guru Granth has been forgotten. This section introduces an analytical approach to recovering this information, and drawing out implications for the practice of shabad kirtan.

Musical information in the Guru Granth

The Guru Granth consists of about 6000 shabads, with the vast majority arranged by musical designations (in addition to authorship), specified in shabad titles, *sirlekh*. In addition to the *sirlekh*, the shabads themselves contain significant musical information—on the structure of chorus and verse (given by *rahāu* and *ank*), the structure of meter (given by the text), and very importantly, on the Sikh musical aesthetic (given by the *rāg-dhyān* shabad in particular). This section proceeds to discuss this musical information in the Guru Granth, shabads from which constitute the core of Sikh kirtan practice.

A. Musical designations in *sirlekh* (*shabad* titles)

The first and major musical designation is *rāg*, the Indian melodic system.[12] The second is musical form, such as *pade*, *chhant*, *vār*, *ghōṛīāṅ*, etc. With the exception of a few, the musical features of these forms are forgotten. The third musical designation in the sirlekh is *ghar* (literally, "house"), specified with numbers, the meaning of which has also been considered forgotten by musicians and scholars alike.

I. *Rāg*

Rāg is the major organizing principle in the Guru Granth. Apart from short initial and final sections, shabads are presented in thirty-one *rāg* sections that include a large number of *rāg* variants. Many of these variants have names, but most are designated with sequential *ghar* numbers (see discussion of *ghar*, below). Gauṛī is the key exception here, with names for all variants and no *ghar* number designations. These *rāg* sections and versions are, in order,

1. Srīrāg, in seven versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-7;
2. Mājh, in four versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-4;
3. Gauṛī Guāreṛī, in eleven versions, designated with names (without any *ghar* number designations): Gauṛī Guāreṛī, Gauṛī Dakhaṇī, Gauṛī Chetī, Gauṛī Bairāgaṇ, Gauṛī Pūrbī-Dīpkī, Gauṛī Pūrbī, Gauṛī Mājh, Gauṛī Mālvā, Gauṛī Mālā, and Gauṛī Soraṭh;
4. Āsā, in seventeen versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-17, three of which have names: Āsā Kāfī (*ghar* 8), Āsāvarī Sudhang (*ghar* 16), and Āsā Āsāvarī (*ghar* 17);
5. Gūjrī, in four versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-4;
6. Devgandhārī, in seven versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-7;
7. Bihāgṛā, in two versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-2;
8. Vaḍhans, in five versions: Vaḍhans Dakhaṇī, and others designated with *ghar* numbers 1, 2, 4,[13] and 5;
9. Soraṭh, in four versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-4;
10. Dhanāsrī, in ten versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-9 and 12[14];
11. Jaitsrī, in four versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-4;
12. Ṭōḍī, in five versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-5;
13. Bairāṛī, in one version, designated with *ghar* number 1;
14. Tilang, in four versions: Tilang Kāfī, and others designated with *ghar* numbers 1-3;
15. Sūhī, in ten versions: Sūhī Lalit, and others designated with *ghar* numbers 1-7 and 9[15], and 10 named as Sūhi Kāfī;
16. Bilāval, in fifteen versions: Bilāval Dakhaṇī, Bilāval Mangal, and others designated with *ghar* numbers 1-13;
17. Goṇḍ, in three versions: Bilāval Goṇḍ, and others designated with *ghar* numbers 1-2;
18. Rāmkalī, in four versions: Rāmkalī Dakhaṇī, and others designated with *ghar* numbers 1-3;
19. Naṭ Nārāin, in one version without a *ghar* number designation;
20. Mālī Gauṛā, in one version without a *ghar* number designation;
21. Mārū, in nine versions: Mārū Dakhaṇī, and others designated

with *ghar* numbers 1-8 with *ghar* 2 named as Māru Kāfī;
22. Tukhārī, in one version without a *ghar* number designation;
23. Kedārā, in five versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-5;
24. Bhairau, in three versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-3;
25. Basant, in two versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-2, with *ghar* 2 named as Basant Hindol;
26. Sārang, in six versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-6;
27. Malār, in three versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-3;
28. Kānaṛā, in eleven versions, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-11;
29. Kaliān, in three versions: Kaliān Bhopālī, and others designated with *ghar* numbers 1-2;
30. Prabhātī Bibhās, in four versions: two versions of Prabhātī Bibhās, designated with *ghar* numbers 1-2, and Prabhātī Dakhaṇī and Bibhās Prabhātī;
31. Jaijāvantī, in one version without a *ghar* number designation.

The Sikh Gurus thus sang in rags that were from both the Hindu liturgical (e.g. Bhairav and Srirag) and Sufi traditions (e.g. Suhi and the Kafi styles), as well as from folk-based traditions (e.g. Asa and Majh). The rag-variants indicate diverse regional forms, illustrated well, for example, by the Gauri names.

One musicological aspect that has received some attention from Sikh musicians and musicologists is the identification of particular rag version(s) as the authentic one(s) from the original Sikh tradition. In 1979, Punjabi University, Patiala undertook a project to archive heritage music compositions of the eleventh generation ragi brothers, Gurcharan Singh-Avtar Singh. About 500 of their shabad renditions were recorded[16] and their notations published in a two-volume book, *Gūrbāni Sangīt: Prāchīn Rīt Ratnāvalī*. In 1991, the Ludhiana Jawaddi Kalan (Sikh school of music) undertook a similar audio-recording project under the guidance of Sant Succha Singh. The rag forms were chosen by a committee (the Rag Nirnayak Committee) with a view to the distinct Sikh tradition. Gurnam Singh (2000) gives brief outlines of various rag versions in use by Sikh musicians, identifying the committee's choice. In an expanded version (yet to be published) of *Gūrbāni Sangīt: Prāchīn Rīt Ratnāvalī*, late Bhai Avtar Singh Ragi has expressed his views on heritage rag versions.[17] Further research is needed to review the diverse rag-form and notation material in depth, and perhaps identify different rag versions with different *taksāl*s (schools of music). My research on *ghar* (summarized below; see also I. N. Kaur 2008), with the interpretation of ghar numbers as rag-variants, suggests that many rag versions were used by the Sikh gurus and could, therefore, be accepted now.

The rag organization of the Guru Granth is another topic that has received some attention, by textual scholars, in the context of textual analysis of the scripture. Mann (2001) explores the possibility that the choice and sequencing of *rāg* in the Guru Granth are determined by an attempt to achieve a balance with respect to gender and time association. However, he concludes,

> [T]he *rāg* arrangement in the Adi Granth, unlike that in the Goindval Pothis,[18] defies an entirely satisfactory explanation… My suggestions toward interpreting the structure of the Adi Granth may yet yield no perfect answers, but I hope they are sufficient to challenge any argument that the rag combinations of the Adi Granth are insignificant. (Mann 2001:94)

For Pashaura Singh,

> [T]he *raga* organization of the Adi Granth presents an excellent combination of lyrical and rational elements. It is far more complex than any simple explanation would describe it. It may be added here that understanding the *ragas* of the Adi Granth and their organization solely in terms of the modern Indian musical tradition is inadequate. (Pashaura Singh 2000:149)

The common thread, however, between both these analyses is that rag is seen as an *ex post* "choice" rather than as an organic part of the sonic expression of Divine inspiration. As argued above, given the tradition of singing saints of that period, and their usage of rag music, it would follow that the rag designations in the Guru Granth correspond to those in which the shabad was sung by the gurus. Rag designations remain mostly invariant over time in the different *pothī*s (manuscripts). One must bear in mind that the period during which the first five gurus lived was one of many changes in the prevalent musical system, with the constant development of new rags and rag forms. The few changes in designation that did occur across pothis could be attributed to such changes. Why certain rags were in the gurus' repertoire (apart from being prevalent in the devotional singing tradition), and, in particular, why they were placed in the given sequence in the Guru Granth, remain areas for further research.

But one point is clear: as with other devotional singing in India, rag music was the medium of expression for the Sikh gurus as well. For rag music had been discovered as Divine inspiration, too, and was based on

combinations of notes that were consonant—pleasing and harmonious—generating peace and tranquility, and resonance with the inner essential self, creating *ras* and bliss of the Infinite.

ਧੰਨੁ ਸੁ ਰਾਗ ਸੁਰੰਗੜੇ ਆਲਾਪਤ ਸਭ ਤਿਖ ਜਾਇ ॥

dhan su rāg surangaṛe ālāpat sabh tikh jāi (Guru Granth, 958)

Blessed are those beautiful *rāg*s which, when chanted, eliminate all desire.

The same, as will be discussed below, was the intent of shabad itself, making the content and medium of the Guru Granth congruent.

II. Musical forms

The Sikh gurus sang in a variety of musical forms. Shabad titles in the Guru Granth specify these musical forms, which include:

1. *Pade* (songs with chorus and verse)
2. *Vār* (ballad)
3. *Chhand* (metered verse)
4. *Paṛtāl* (verse with metrical variation)
5. *Bārahmāh* (song of the twelve months)
6. *Thitī* (song of lunar dates)
7. *Pahre* (songs of the times of the day)
8. *Birahaṛe* (songs of separation)
9. *Paṭī* and *Bāvaṇ Akharī* (acrostic song using letters of the Gurmukhi alphabet)
10. *Ghoṛīāṅ* (wedding songs)
11. *Alāhṇīāṅ* (songs of death)
12. *Āratī* (song honoring Divinity)
13. *Rutī* (song of seasons)
14. *Salok* (couplets)
15. *Sadu* (invocation)
16. *Sohilā* (song of praise)

The study of musical features of the forms specified in the Guru Granth remains a significant area of study. The poetic aspects, and some musical aspects, of these forms are discussed in Jagir Singh (2004).

    The majority of shabads in the Guru Granth are designated as *pade*, a form in use for devotional music in India during the 16th-17th centuries. For liturgical music the prevalent forms were *dhrupad* in North Indian

temples and *kritī* in the South. Interestingly, neither of these terms appears in the Guru Granth shabad titles or text.[19]

III. *Ghar*

Within each *rāg* and musical form section, shabads are organized by *ghar* number designations. These vary by rag, and for most range up to seven. The meaning of ghar designations has been considered lost by musicians and scholars.[20] Contemporary musicians do not make any use of this designation in their performance.

In previous work (Inderjit N. Kaur 2008) I have proposed that ghar numbers designate rag versions, giving a number of supporting arguments. This thesis is based on the significant new observation that the shabad titles in the Gauri rag section in the Guru Granth do not contain any ghar number designations. Instead, rag variant names are specified, which occur in sequence, just as ghar numbers do in other rag sections.[21]

While there is no other published scholarly research on the meaning of ghar, other interpretations that have been put forth are *tāl* (meter) and *shrutī* (microtone). I have previously argued why these are unlikely. Here it may suffice to add that the term *tāl* was very much prevalent when the Adi Granth was scribed, and the word occurs in shabad text. Yet, it was not used in any shabad title, except in the form of *paṛtāl*. As for *shrutī*, sequential shrutis cannot exist in rags that are not heptatonic.

IV. *Dhunī* specification

There are several instances where a particular *dhunī* (melody) is prescribed for a shabad. Typically these are for the *vār*s (ballads) and as such the dhunis prescribed are then-prevalent, well-known melodies. This is an indication that melodic details were important to the Sikh gurus. It further lends support to my thesis that ghar numbers refer to melodic variants of rag, that ghar is an intermediate level of melodic classification, between rag and dhuni. In my view, ghar designations, together with rag and dhuni, serve to systemize the diversity of melodic material used by the Sikh gurus as they addressed diverse communities.

B. Musical information in *shabad* text

In addition to the musical designations in the shabad titles, the shabad text itself contains significant musical information. These are summarized below.

I. Verse meter

This is an important indicator of the appropriate *tāl* for a particular shabad. Both the length of its meter and the lyrical subdivisions would indicate the tal which would best suit a particular shabad so that words are not overly elongated or crowded. Indeed, since the optimal tal for a shabad would be defined by the meter itself, the need for tal designation in the shabad title could be considered redundant. And as stated above, the Guru Granth shabad titles do not specify the tal. Whereas most of the shabad are in regular meter, the *paṛtāl* shabads are a distinct genre with variation in meter and internal rhythmic patterns.

II. Chorus and verse marking and sequencing

The choruses in the shabads are marked as *rahāu*—literally, "pause"—similar to the *ṭek* (literally, "support") used in other traditions. These lines contain the central theme of the shabad. Most shabads are *rahāu*-subsequent, i.e., the *rahāu* lines are written after the first verse. There are instance of shabads that are *rahāō*-antecedent and also *rahāō*-absent. Some shabads have two *rahāu* lines, typically the first in the form of a question, and the second in the form of its answer.

The verses in a shabad are also clearly marked. Numbers indicate the sequence in which they are to be sung.

III. *Ras* (aesthetic experience)

An important piece of musical information contained in the shabad text is its associated *ras*—the mental state that the shabad text evokes in the listener. Within an overall feeling of *bhaktī ras* (devotion), shabad texts speak of love, longing, union, wonder, and virtue. These are guides for the music chosen to sing a particular shabad.

Overarching these emotions is the dominant aesthetic of the Guru Granth encapsulated in the concepts of *shabad surat*, *sahaj dhyān*, and *Har ras*.

1. *Shabad surat* (*shabad*-attuned consciousness)

Contemplation of the Divine through the shabad is the central enterprise of kirtan. The music is a vehicle for tuning the consciousness to the shabad. Emphasized in many shabads in the Guru Granth, the focus on shabad by using music is repeated in the verses of Bhai Gurdas, too.

ਪਵਣ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੁ ਹੈ ਰਾਗ ਨਾਦ ਵੀਚਾਰਾ ॥
pavaṇ gurū, gur sabad hai rāg nād vīchārā. (Gurdas, Var 2:19)

> The breath-Guru is the Gur-*Shabad* (Word through the gurus),
> contemplated on through musical sound.

2. Sahaj dhyān (serene contemplation)

This *shabad surat* is marked by *sahaj* (intuitive ease, peace, calmness, and equipoise)—the ultimate aesthetic prescribed for shabad kirtan. It is emphasized in many shabads, such as,

ਰਾਗ ਨਾਦ ਸਬਦਿ ਸੋਹਣੇ ਜਾ ਲਾਗੈ ਸਹਜਿ ਧਿਆਨੁ ॥
rāg nād sabad sohṇe jā lāgai sahaj dhiān. (Guru Granth, 849)

> Melodies, sound, and *shabad* are beautiful, when they bring serene
> contemplation.

3. Har ras

The *ras*-s (aesthetic experiences) mentioned are those of *ānand (*bliss*) ras, amrit (*nectar*) ras, Har (*Divine*) ras*, and *Nām* (Name) *ras.*

ਸੂਖ ਸਹਜ ਆਨੰਦ ਰਸ ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਉ ॥
sūkh sahaj ānand ras jan nānak har gūṇ gāu. (Guru Granth, 48)

> Bliss and peace are obtained, O servant Nanak, by singing the
> Glories of the Divine.

The mind submersed in *Har ras* is beyond other *ras*, beyond other aesthetic delights.

ਅਨ ਰਸੁ ਚੁਕੈ ਹਰਿ ਰਸੁ ਮੰਨਿ ਵਸਾਏ ॥
Un ras chūkai har ras mann vasāe. (Guru Granth, 115)

> Other aesthetic experiences are forgotten, when the Divine aesthetic
> experience comes to dwell in the mind.

There are a number of shabads that explicitly describe the aesthetic that should be generated by particular rags.

ਗਉੜੀ ਰਾਗਿ ਸੁਲਖਣੀ ਜੇ ਖਸਮੈ ਚਿਤਿ ਕਰੇਇ ॥
ਭਾਣੈ ਚਲੈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਕੈ ਐਸਾ ਸੀਗਾਰੁ ਕਰੇਇ ॥

gaurī rāg sūlakhaṇī je khasamai chit kare.
bhāṇai chalai satgurū kai aisā sīgār kare. (Guru Granth, 311)

Gauri rag is auspicious, if, through it, one comes to think of the
     Beloved.
Walking in harmony with Divine Will, this should be its
     beautification.

These rag-descriptive shabad texts may be termed *rāg dhyān shabad,*
after the rag-descriptive poems found in many period Indian music texts
and referred to as *rāg dhyān*. These describe the thought that the rag is to
create.

ਬਿਲਾਵਲੁ ਤਬ ਹੀ ਕੀਜੀਐ ਜਬ ਮੁਖਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਨਾਮੁ ॥
ਰਾਗ ਨਾਦ ਸਬਦਿ ਸੋਹਣੇ ਜਾ ਲਾਗੈ ਸਹਜਿ ਧਿਆਨੁ ॥

bilāval tab hī kījīai jab mukh hovai nām.
rāg nād sabad sohṇe jā lāgai sahaj dhiān. (Guru Granth, 849)

Sing Bilaval, when the Divine Name is on your tongue.
The melody, sound, and shabad are beautiful when they bring
     peaceful contemplation.

The importance of *Nām* (Name) is central to Sikh philosophy and
musical practice. The purpose of shabad kirtan is to experience Nām, the
Divine presence that resides in each person. *Shabad* (revealed Word)
itself is the manifestation of *anhad shabad* (unuttered Word) that exists
within each person. The purpose of shabad kirtan is to connect with the
anhad shabad, to enable it to resonate in and permeate the being.

ਖਟੁ ਮਟੁ ਦੇਹੀ ਮਨੁ ਬੈਰਾਗੀ ॥
ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸਬਦੁ ਧੁਨਿ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਜਾਗੀ ॥

khuṭ muṭ dehī man bairāgī.
surat sabad dhun antar jāgī. (Guru Granth, 903)

Above the six energy centers of the body dwells the detached mind.
Awareness of the vibration of the Word has been awakened deep
     within.

ਵਾਜੈ ਅਨਹਦੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਮਨੁ ਲੀਣਾ ॥
ਗੁਰ ਬਚਨੀ ਸਚਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਪਤੀਣਾ ॥

vājai anhad merā man līṇā.
gur bachnī sach nām patīṇā. (Guru Granth, 903)

The cosmic vibration resonates within; my mind is attuned to it.
Through the Guru's Teachings, my faith is confirmed in the True
Name.

It is in this state that the transcendental experience of *Nām ras* and *Har ras*, and of *sahaj* and *ānand*, are obtained.

C. Implications of the Guru Granth's musical aesthetic for detailed musical material and structuring of *shabad kīrtan* sessions

I. Usage of musical material such as *svar* and *tāl*

The aesthetics of *shabad surat*, *sahaj dhyān*, and *Har ras* prescribed in the Guru Granth requires, in my view, that musical material be used in a manner that portrays this aesthetic. *Svar* expression—its volume, tone, and microtonal treatment—would need to be suitable for this aesthetic. Many types of musical expression are in use in various genres of Indian music. Their consistency with the prescribed Sikh aesthetic requires careful analysis. For example, the *mīṇḍ* (slow glide), *kaṇ* (grace note) and *āndolan* (slow oscillation) are more suitable for *sahaj dhyān*, whereas *khaṭkā* (quick, forceful repetition of a note) and *murkī* (rapidly executed cluster of notes) would need to be used with care. The *alāp* (improvised, slow musical phrases) would be particularly conducive to the development of a meditative aesthetic, and *shabad-alāp* (rather than *ākār* ["ah" vowel] or *sargam* [solfege] *alāp*) would deepen *shabad surat*. In contrast, *tān* (rapid sequence of notes) would create a more exciting affect, with the ability to completely break serene contemplation, especially when it is in *sargam*. Thus even *shabad-tān* would need to be used with extreme care. *Shabad-banāv* (shabad phrases rendered with rhythmic variation, in medium speed), on the other hand, could be discerningly used to advantage. But *shabad-bānt* (using text to achieve rhythmic variation) is more music-focused and playful in nature.

Similarly, the choice of *tāl* and *lai* (tempo), are also significant. As discussed above, the shabad verse-meter is an important determinant of the best fit for a tal that neither crowds nor stretches the text. The choice of tempo is crucial too, for the proper enunciation of the text, and its affect. The *vilambit* (very slow) *lai* could make the overly stretched words incomprehensible, while the *drut* (fast) *lai* could destroy *sahaj*. Thus the *madhyā lai* (medium tempo), in my view, would be most

suitable for the *shabad surat* and *sahaj dhyān* aesthetic of the Guru Granth.

Detailed attention to the usage of such musical material is as important as the designations in the shabad titles of *rāg*, *ghar*, *dhunī* and musical form, and the chorus and verse markings in the shabad text.

II. Structure of a *shabad kīrtan* session

In addition to the use of musical material in a shabad rendition, equally important, in my view, is the structure of presentation of a complete session of shabad kirtan. There is currently no standardized format with the notable exception of the Asa ki Var session, and in other sessions, the conclusion with six verses from the composition Anand.

There is a trend though of the use of some form of *manglācharan*— an invocational prelude to the shabads to be sung. Some performers use a *tāl*-free *shabad-alāp*, while others use a *tāl*-bound format. Some use the *mul-mantar* (core verse) or a *salok* (couplet) from the Guru Granth. The *manglācharan* is usually in slow *lai*. Some shabad kirtan performers preface the *manglācharan* with *shān*—an instrumental prelude that creates the mood for the coming session and is the instrumentalists' salutation to the Divine. The history of *shān* and *manglācharan* in shabad kirtan performance needs to be researched in depth.

The place of *shān* in shabad kirtan brings us also to the very important question of the size and composition of the ensemble. In contrast to the contemporary trio described earlier, the tradition of *kīrtan chaukī* (literally, "foursome") indicates that the typical ensemble consisted of four musicians: two vocalists, a drummer, and a stringed melodic instrumentalist. However, whereas the use of *rabāb* by Bhai Mardana as he accompanied Guru Nanak is well documented, more in-depth research needs to be done on the history and usage of stringed melodic instruments such as the saranda, taus, *dilrubā* (a bowed fretted lute), and of drums such as the mridang and jori (i.e. as distinct from the more familiar tabla).

Yet another significant question is the time association of *rāg*s. Should shabad in a particular rag be sung at particular times? Here, too, the practitioners of *gurmat sangīt* have followed Hindustani music traditions. Rag time association has its roots in Hindu liturgical practice. Melodies sung in the morning, for example, became formalized as rags such as Bhairav. Traditional song texts provide supportive illustration. For instance, *jāgo mohan pyāre* ("Wake up, Charming, Beloved") is an old song sung in rag Bhairav. Gender association for rags is similarly related to the expression of personification of Hindu deities in music and visual art. These associations provided a context for associating

particular moods and feelings with particular rags. All this practice was prevalent in the Sikh gurus' time.

What indication do we have of its adoption by Sikh gurus? Their philosophical stance of *nirgūṇ* (Divinity without physical attributes) and of freedom from ritual would point to the adoption of music that is free of time and gender associations. As pointed out above, Mann's (2001) attempt to explain the choice and sequencing of rag in the Guru Granth through these attributes was inconclusive. Furthermore, the Guru Granth uses many Dakhani (South Indian) forms of rags, and Karnatak music does not use time-association of rag.

While Bhai Gurdas, in Var 6:3, speaks of the singing of Sodar in the evening and Sohila and Arti at night, which would indicate time-associated liturgical musical practice in Kartarpur at the time of Guru Nanak himself, rags themselves were not necessarily bound to time associations. For example, Rag Asa is common to both Asa ki Var and Sodar, one sung in the morning and the other in the evening. Another example is that of Ramkali, sung at any time of the day in the Anand. Arti, sung at night, is in the "night" rag Dhanasri, as are most shabads which refer to *ārtī*, but there is a notable exception in the "morning" rag Prabhati:

ਕਬੀਰ ਦਾਸ ਤੇਰੀ ਆਰਤੀ ਕੀਨੀ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਨਿਰਬਾਨੀ ॥
kabīr dās teri āratī kīnī nirankār nīrbāni. (Guru Granth, 1350)

> Kabir, Your servant, performs this Āratī, this lamp-lit worship
> service for You, O Formless Lord of Nirvana.

Another question relating to the structure of a kirtan session pertains to the practice of Viākhiā-style kirtan, in which the ragi pauses the singing to explain the shabad being sung and to present a short discourse. In an article in 1908, Bhai Vir Singh criticizes this practice, lamenting the loss of *akhaṇḍ* (unbroken) *kīrtan*, which has the power to take the consciousness beyond the thinking mode. In other words, in his view, discourse breaks *shabad surat* and *sahaj dhyān*.

All these aspects pertaining to the structuring of shabad kirtan sessions need further research.

Gurmat Saṅgīt: What Does It Mean?

In my discussion above, I mentioned *gurmat sangīt* as a contemporary rag-based genre of shabad kirtan. Since this is a fast growing genre that honors the basic rag arrangement of the Guru Granth it deserves special attention from musicological and historical perspectives, as well as, it will be argued, from the viewpoint of creating meaningful terminology

for Sikh music and musicology. The term literally means, "music as per the guru's viewpoint." In this section I question the use of this term for a genre of shabad kirtan, and propose that it is more appropriate to reserve it to refer to Sikh musicology. There, too, a more complete term such as *gurmat sangīt shāstar* or *vigyān* (music theory) would be more informative.

The Guru Granth does not use the phrase *gurmat sangīt*. The word *sangīt* itself occurs only twice, where it is used to imply music in general and not specifically singing. More notably, there is no prescriptive indication, as there is in the case of the word *kīrtan*, which occurs 109 times. Many shabads speak of the benefits of kirtan—it cleanses the mind, brings peace and contentment, truth and liberation, and illuminates the soul, enabling one to realize the Divine. No such virtues of *sangīt* are extolled.

The concept of *gurmat* (guru's wisdom), however, is central in the Guru Granth. It is with the aid of *gurmat* that *anhad shabad* is perceived, that Nām is realized.

ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਨ ਸਖਾਈ
gurmat nām merā prān sakhāī (Guru Granth, 10)

Through the Guru's Teachings, Nām becomes my breath of life.

It goes without saying then, that, as with all Sikh enterprise, shabad kirtan must be guided by gurmat. Indeed, shabad itself embodies gurmat, and was expressed by the Sikh gurus in song.

The Guru Granth clearly specifies the *gurmat* (guru's views) regarding *sangīt* (music) in the text of many shabads, particularly the *rāg-dhyān shabad*, as discussed above. These shabads state that the thought, which the rag is to create, is that of Nām. This indication was especially important, since, during the period of the first five Sikh gurus—late 15th through the end of the 16th century—*sangīt* in India was undergoing significant changes. It was a period of the development of art music in the Mughal courts. Music that had hitherto largely been associated with prayer, devotion and spirituality—whether in liturgical, paraliturgical or secular (and even royal court) contexts—was moving to a context where it was appreciated for its own sake and for the artistic finesse achieved by the artist. Text was losing its centrality and serving as mere lyrics for musical material. Melodic and rhythmic articulation was taking center stage. Hence it was important for the Sikh gurus to lay down their views about music and its use.

It is interesting to trace the usage of the term *gurmat sangīt*, which, as noted above, does not appear in the Guru Granth. It is notable that there is no entry for the term in the *Mahān Kosh*, the authoritative

encyclopedia of Sikh literature, authored in 1930 by the learned Sikh, Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha. Based on my research so far, the first significant published mention of the term *gurmat sangīt* appears to be in Dr. Charan Singh's booklet, *Srī Gurū Granth Bāṇī Biurā*, published in 1902. The term is mentioned in reference to his essay "Gurmat Sangīt Nirne." This essay was later published in Bhai Vir Singh's important booklet, *Gurmat sangīt par hūṇ tak milī khōj* ("Research up until now on *gurmat sangīt*") (1958). It is important to note that the usage of the term by Dr. Charan Singh and his son, Bhai Vir Singh, was in the context of musicology and education. The article emphasized the need for starting, at universities, departments of Sikh music study that would follow the musical guidelines in the Guru Granth, and to use melodies consonant with the import of the shabad text. Even though shabad kirtan originated as rag-based music, over time the use of rag had diminished, and many other musical designations in the Guru Granth had fallen into disuse. The original music of the Sikh gurus was gradually forgotten as emerging prevalent genres such as *khyāl*, *ghazal*, and *filmī* came into practice. Sikh scholars also felt the need to distinguish Sikh music from Hindustani music. They argued that *Gur-mat* sangit was different from other *mat* (schools) of music, such as Shiv Mat and Hanūmān Mat. Sikh intellectual leaders realized the importance of Sikh musicology education for the survival of the original tradition. The same motivation inspired the book, *Navīn Gurmat Sangīt*, by Sant Charan Singh (1962).

The early significant books on notations (e.g. Gian Singh Aibtabad 1961; Avtar Singh and Gurcharan Singh 1979) do not use the term *gurmat sangīt*, either. Typically, *gurbāṇī sangīt* is used, i.e "music for the guru's word." Of the later significant works on notations, the term is used by Dyal Singh (1984, 1988), who studied at, and later headed, the Gurmat Vidyalay (school) in the Rakab Ganj Gurdwara, and by Gurnam Singh (2000) at Punjabi University, Patiala.

Thus, the term *gurmat sangīt* was traditionally used in the context of musicology and education of Sikh music. The educational context of *gurmat sangit* is further supported by the establishment of Sikh music educational institutions such as Gurmat Sangit Vidyalai. With time, however, "gurmat sangit*"* emerged as a phrase to connote a particular *genre* of shabad kirtan—one that is rag-based. In recent decades there has been a revival of interest in, and support for, rag-based shabad kirtan and the use of heritage stringed instruments. There is now a substantial and expanding repertoire of "gurmat sangit."

Whereas the appellation of *gurmat* for *sangīt* makes sense, particularly in the educational sense of Sikh musicology, one must be careful about the assertion that a particular musical genre of shabad kirtan has the distinctive quality of *gurmat*. Is the *sangīt* (music) of shabad kirtan in other genres lacking in *gurmat*?

The core defining feature of the contemporary "gurmat sangit" label is that it is rag-based. Beyond that, it does not necessarily follow any other musical designation in shabad titles. And not all of it necessarily uses the designated rag, but just *some* rag. In many instances the shabad text is maneuvered or extraneous vocatives (such as *jī*, *hā*, *piāre*) added to fit the selected *tāl*. Indeed, a review of prominent performances, discography, and notations of "gurmat sangit" reveals that it does not represent a standardized genre in terms of the usage and presentation of musical material—rag-version, melodic forms, melodic and rhythmic articulation, number and type of instruments, ensemble composition, or performance structure. Most of it follows the contemporary *khyāl* style of Hindustani music that emerged well after the Adi Granth was compiled. Given our discussion above of the path that Hindustani music took under the patronage of Mughal courts, gurmat sangit then would be a departure from those emerging genres. The Sikh guru's rejection of the emerging musical path was parallel to their rejection of the path to divinity that had lost touch with the internal *shabad* and *nād*. It is ironical then that the vast majority of shabad kirtan that is labeled "gurmat sangit" adopts the genre developed in that period.

Most importantly, much of current "gurmat sangit" practice is particularly lacking in the most significant *gurmat* attribute, that of shabad-attuned consciousness or *shabad surat*. Often, the text is not discernable. Instead the singing is music-focused. It tends to become *sangīt-pradhān* (music-dominant) instead of *shabad-pradhān* (shabad-dominant). Much of this results from the use of unsuitable musical material, as was discussed above. Hence, it is not surprising that the Sikh community at large has not embraced gurmat sangit, for they do not find in it the aesthetic quality of shabad kirtan defined in the Guru Granth, of which the Sikh congregation has a keen intuitive sense.

If only one feature of being rag-based is sufficient to endow the stature of "gurmat sangit," then other musical genres, with any subset of *gurmat* features, are equally qualified for this appellation. The nomenclature could well be adopted by all genres, claiming one *gurmat* attribute or another. It is possible to have *gurmat lok* (folk) *sangīt*, *gurmat ghazal sangīt* and even *gurmat* soft-rock *sangīt*! And rag-based genres could well be further detailed as *gurmat dhrupad sangīt*, *gurmat khyāl sangīt*, and *gurmat ṭhumrī sangīt*.

Conclusion: What's In the Name?

Sikh *shabad kīrtan* is the music of the Sikh gurus—Divine manifestation in the united form of shabad and music, revealed to them. Many musical features of their shabad kirtan practice are provided in the Guru Granth. These are *rāg*, *ghar*, musical forms (*pade*, *vār*, *alāhṇīāṅ*, etc.) given in

sirlekh (shabad titles), and the structure of chorus and verse (*rahāu* and *ank*), the structure of meter, and most importantly, the Sikh musical aesthetics of *shabad surat*, *sahaj dhyān* and *Har ras*, given in the shabad text. Many shabads in the Guru Granth speak of the importance of kirtan, of singing Divine praise. Today, Sikhs enjoy shabad kirtan in many genres.

Gurmat sangīt is a term that was traditionally used in the context of Sikh musicology and education, but has in recent years come to be used to denote a rag-based genre of shabad kirtan. As far as shabad kirtan is concerned, the *gurmat* appellation is meaningless, since shabad itself is *gurmat*. There is no un-*gurmat* shabad kirtan. Furthermore, the very basis of the term, *sangīt,* draws attention away from the essential enterprise, which is shabad kirtan—devotional singing of the Revealed Word, and its accompanying aesthetic, the transcendence to *shabad surat* (Word attunement). The Guru Granth does not prescribe *sangīt*; it prescribes *kīrtan.*

A recent trend to replace "shabad kīrtan darbār*"* with "gurmat sangīt darbār" runs the risk of losing connection with the essential aesthetic, with the essence. It is no surprise then that the main shortcoming of much of "gurmat sangit*"* as it practiced today is the lack of *sahaj* and *shabad surat*, and why the intuitively and aesthetically sophisticated *sangat* (congregation) at large has not embraced it whole-heartedly.

In this paper, I have suggested that the phrase *gurmat sangīt shāstar* would be suitable to denote Sikh musicology, as given and implied by the shabad titles and text of the Guru Granth. It would be instructive to keep in mind that *gurmat sangīt shāstar* is important input into shabad kirtan. Shabad kirtan requires mastery over *gurmat sangīt shāstar*. It would be appropriate to hold *gurmat sangīt shāstar* workshops and conferences that present and discuss the musical material for use in shabad kirtan. But these would be distinct from a *shabad kīrtan darbār*. The performance context and the focus would be distinct. A *gurmat sangīt shāstar* session would focus on the musical aspects. A *shabad kīrtan darbār* would focus on *shabad surat* and *sahaj dhyān*. One would hope that, over time, a successively larger proportion of shabad kirtan would use Sikh musicology—*gurmat sangīt shāstar*. But it would be unfortunate if the term *shabad kīrtan* were replaced by the term *gurmat sangīt*. It is interesting to note that other genres of shabad kirtan that have used genre-specific terminology have retained the word *kīrtan* or *shabad*: *akhaṇḍ kīrtan*, *nagar kīrtan*, *joṭīāṅ de shabad*, etc. From this perspective, *rāg-adhārit shabad kīrtan* would be a more appropriate term for rag-based genres of shabad kirtan.

Shabad is the key, the core, the purpose, and therefore it is important that it remain in the terminology. *Kīrtan* is also critical. It is not any *sangīt*, but *devotional singing*. The term *shabad kīrtan* reinforces the

musical aesthetic defined in the Guru Granth. *Shabad* is the sonic expression of *anhad shabad*, of Nām. *Kīrtan* is singing that imbues the body with the color of Divine love. Together the phrase expresses the essential purpose: using *shabad* to become immersed in Divine love. *Gurmat* is expressed through *shabad*; *gurmat* itself adds no further information than *shabad*. *Sangīt* misses the key aspects of *kīrtan*—the journey to *sahaj* (intuitive ease and equipoise), to *anhad shabad* (unuttered Word) and to Nām (Divine Name/Presence).

Thus, what is in the name is the Name—*Nām*. *Shabad* is the manifestation of Nām. Because the Name (Nām) is important, the name is important. It is not *sangīt*—it is *shabad kīrtan*.

Notes

[1] Sikh Sacred Music Society (1967) and Mansukhani (1982) stand out in the writings in English that provide detailed overviews.

[2] Prominent writings of this type include Aibtabad (1961), Avtar Singh and Gurcharan Singh (1979), and Dyal Singh (1988).

[3] Most prominent among these is Gurnam Singh (2001), which provides an overview and notational material.

[4] Baldeep Singh's lecture (2001) presents an overview of the Sikh kirtan tradition. Pashaura Singh (in Beck, ed. 2006) discusses Sikhism and music.

[5] For details on *pothī*s see Mann (2001) and Pashaura Singh (2000).

[6] Sikh Rehat Maryada (Sikh Code of Conduct) [www.sgpc.net].

[7] In a standard liturgical session this consists of chanting the *hukam vāk* (reading) from the Guru Granth and the *Ardās* (Supplication). Other liturgical tasks include recitation from memory of the *nitnem* (five key compositions for daily practice), *prakāsh* (opening the Guru Granth for the day) and *sukhāsan* (closing the Guru Granth for the night).

[8] This is true of most other Indian music, with Bollywood music being the main exception where the female soprano sings at twice the scale of the male singer in duets.

[9] Recently, in the West, some professional kirtan performers have broken this traditional mold, as also of musical genres, using global music genres encompassing soft rock and rap in ticketed concerts. While appealing to non-denominational and younger Sikh audiences, these singers have not been patronized by gurdwaras and the Sikh community at large.

[10] Amateur singers perform without payment, typically in private settings, but sometimes in the gurdwara, too.

[11] Interestingly, since the *Akhaṇḍ Kīrtanī* style is relatively new, men and women performers sit together in a large ensemble of 10 to 15 members. In perhaps another assertion of gender equality through participation in

the Sikh visible identity, women also wear the *dastār* (turban) that is generally worn by Sikh males.

[12] For an excellent explanation of *rāg*, see Wade (1979).

[13] The designation "*ghar* 3" does not occur. My interpretation is that the third version of Vaḍhans occurs named as Vaḍhans Dakhaṇī.

[14] My interpretation is that the number 12 was likely scribed in error in place of the number 10. It occurs in only one place in the Dhanāsrī section.

[15] The designation "*ghar* 8" does not occur. My interpretation is that the "8" version of Sūhī occurs named as Sūhī Lalit.

[16] Unfortunately, these recording were not preserved well.

[17] Upon his request in 2005, I translated the text of this four-volume book, *Heritage of Sikh Sacred Music* (forthcoming, Shriromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee).

[18] However, Pashaura Singh (2000:131) disagrees with Mann's hypothesis that the rag arrangement in the Goindval Pothis exhibits a clear pattern of gender and time association of rag.

[19] My paper in progress, "*Dhrupad* and Sikh *Shabad Kīrtan*," addresses the likelihood that shabad kirtan began in the *dhrupad* genre.

[20] In an interview in 2005 with the author, eleventh generation ragi Bhai Avtar Singh acknowledged this loss and expressed regret that it never occurred to him to ask his father, the renowned ragi Bhai Jwala Singh.

[21] A future project I hope to work on is the determination of variant names and forms for all rag sections.

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Book Reviews

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Lubna Saif, *Authoritarianism and Underdevelopment in Pakistan 1947-1958: The Role of the Punjab* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010). Pp. 262. ISBN 978-0-19-547703-0 (hb). RS 595.

In this book Lubna Saif has focused on the challenges that faced the newly born state of Pakistan. The author has employed the 'dependency paradigm' in her analysis of the events that unfolded in Pakistan during the first decade of its existence. Dependency theory is 'a set of theories' which asserts that the inability of the third world countries to achieve sustainable levels of development was due to their structural 'dependence on the advanced capitalist world' (*A Dictionary of Sociology* [Oxford: OUP, 1998], 150-51). These theories were advanced in opposition to modernization theory which anticipated that less developed countries would ultimately catch up with the developed world if they followed a pattern of development similar to that of the developed world. Among myriad accounts of the relationship between the advanced and under-developed economies encompassed by the broad framework of dependency theory, Lubna Saif, while analyzing Pakistan's initial phase of political history, opts to toe the line of André Gunder Frank, German economist of development and his contemporary from Pakistan, Hamza Alvi. Both of them complement each other in more than one way. Alvi was a social scientist, with a staunch adherence to structural Marxism.

Frank predicted not so erroneously that the less developed countries could not attain a significant level of industrialization unless they severed ties with capitalism and pursued auto-centric socialist development strategies. He devised the phrase 'the development of underdevelopment', alluding to the 'deformed and dependent economies of the peripheral states—in his terminology the 'satellites' of the more advanced metropolises.' The author of the book under review advances a similar argument with reference to India which, after the British conquest, acquired the status of a satellite to the metropolitan world.

According to the author 'authoritarianism' and 'under-development' are the product of colonial capitalism. It was in the colonial dispensation that capitalism in agriculture was introduced with 'the recognition of the institution of private property, and initiation of commercial farming'. Three institutions including the one already mentioned, namely the institution of private property in land, the growth of merchant capital in Punjab and the 'establishment of a cash nexus as the primary form of surplus extraction by the state characterized the colonial rule. These initiatives altered quite radically the agrarian complexion of Indian political economy. Corroborating her argument by citing Alvi, the author underscores the colonial impact resulting in the outbreak of bourgeois revolution in the colonies, thus 'establishing a structure of specifically colonial capitalism' *New Left Review* 74 [July-August 1972], 59-81).

That structure led to various internal developments that gave rise to the creation of a colonial economy. With minor modifications the preceding structure remained unaltered in the post-colonial period.

The land owning gentry or aristocracy too was, according to the author, a colonial creation. The British had created aristocrats by changing 'the rights to rule' the land to 'rights to own' the land, thus they 'legalized the private right to absolute land ownership (p. 3).' The principal motive for creating a land owning gentry was to provide leadership who were pliable to the wish of the rulers. To ensure the institution of private land ownership was firmly entrenched and that the newly created class of land owners could be protected, the British established another institution of civil bureaucracy. They also put in place the legal system for the same purpose. Hence extra-ordinary powers were vested in revenue officers, who were the members of civil bureaucracy and in the case of Punjab they were called the officers of Punjab Commission. The Deputy Commissioner of the district was beyond any doubt a tiny autocrat.

Saif also factors in the role of army which, in collusion with civil bureaucracy, not only impeded the process of constitution making but also prevented democratic institutions from taking root in Pakistan. While portraying the overdeveloped nature of the institution the author reflects back to the last quarter of the 19th century and traces the origins of the army to the martial race theory. That theory provided the rationale for the British to focus on the Punjab as the major recruitment region for the army. Thus Punjab came to be known as the sword arm of India. Later on, in the colony districts, the tracts of canal irrigated land were set aside for the army personnel. Even after the British period, the army held that privileged position. When Ayub Khan was elevated to the top rank in the army in 1951, it began to play a role that it was not supposed to. Thus civil bureaucracy-army oligarchy was well entrenched in Pakistani power politics. Ayub Khan became quite an active member of the ruling clique; Ghulam Muhammad, Chaudhry Muhammad Ali and Sikander Mirza being the other three. That clique, the author pleads, not only decided the fate of the politics and economy but also the direction that the country foreign policy took in 1950. The argument is almost the same argument that Hamza Alvi had already propounded in his studies about Pakistan. Just as Alvi has done, Saif also absolves Liaquat Ali Khan from any blame regarding the pro-American stance that Pakistan took in the early fifties. The coterie comprising three bureaucrats and a general torpedoed the democratic process and pushed Pakistan into the American camp. It was because of their conspiracy that Liaquat Ali Khan had to visit USA instead of Soviet Union against his wish. Pakistan suffered because it was again tied up with the metropolitan capital although it had

attained independence. That view appears to be, if not absolutely redundant, at least too simplistic.

Ironically, despite the fact that Punjab figures in the title of the book, it is discussed with extreme parsimony except in the very first chapter. The internal politics of the Punjab during the 1950s have been barely touched upon. The author has not benefited from the works of Syed Nur Ahmed, Yunas Samad, Azim Hussain and Feroze Khan Noon or from the Munir Report, which seems to be an omission of considerable proportions.

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Arvind-pal S. Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). Pp. xviii, 516. ISBN 978-0-231-14724-8.

Religion and the Specter of the West is a bold attempt by Arvind-pal Singh Mandair to reconcile the theoretical tensions between continental philosophy of religion, history of religions, and secular postcolonial theory. Offering an examination of the category 'religion' *vis-à-vis* its colonial encounter with Sikh tradition, Mandair promulgates a Derridian theory of translation that privileges the *process* (rather than the results) of encounter between 'India' and Europe. In doing so, Mandair attempts to discern and to reconceptualize a range of essentialized oppositions (e.g. religion / politics, religion / secularism) that conceptually underpin the modern, 'western' university setting, and that have implications for thinking about modern immigration policy, multiculturalism, and the secular, democratic nation-state. At its most ambitious, *Religion and the Specter* of the West is a table-clearing exercise wherein the trajectory of scholarship concerning 'religion' and 'identity' is re-charted.

The volume is divided into three parts of two chapters each. *Part I: Indian Religions and Western Thought* examines the religious and linguistic encounter between the sub-continent and Europe, the transformation of religion and the production of social 'reform', and highlights the intellectual concerns of Europe that are inextricable from this encounter. Mandair argues that mimicry and power transformed both Western and Indic thinking and culture. But this very transformation is forgotten, if not overtly denied, when it comes to translating notion of 'religion' and its assumed universality. Indeed, Mandair sees such disavowal effectively removing "India and everything associated with it from the realms of theory and the political."

In Chapter 1, "Mono-theo-lingualism: Religion, Language, and Subjectivity in Colonial North India", Mandair challenges the view that colonial interaction and exchange could be based on dialogue or inter-'religious' communication. Mandair provocatively suggests that such a model forgets that dialogue and communicative exchange involves the process of translation, a process through which something of what is being translated becomes lost. In this case, a loss of indigenous self-understanding is subsumed under the rubric of 'religion'. Here, Mandair offers an insightful analysis of the transformation of precolonial bhakti *sampraday*s to postcolonial devotional religion.

For Mandair there exists an inviolable link between, indeed a consonance of, 'religion' and language that has been too often obscured. Drawing from the linguistic and cultural theorizing of Noaki Sakai, Mandair attempts to show the process by which indigenous precolonial language forms in north India were transformed from a hetrolingual mode of expression that was organic and fluid to a standardized homolingual mode of 'communication' and 'exchange' predicated on English. This process of translation highlights not only the complexity of the colonial idiom, but its iatrogenic legacy in contemporary (i.e. 'western') discourse, an effect Mandair refers to as the 'specter of the West'.

In the second half of Part I, *Hegel and the Comparative Imaginary of the West*, Mandair situates this colonial interaction within the broader contemporaneous intellectual environments in continental Europe. Arguing that postcolonial critical theory cannot simply disavow religion in favour of historicism, Mandair sees a construction of identity for and by Indian elites that is both modern and religious.

Part II: Theology as Cultural Translation examines the penetration of a universal notion of religion and the process of religion-making by native South Asians in the decades leading up to and immediately following the turn of the 20th century. Here, Mandair uses Sikhism as a 'case study' to demonstrate the political consequences and limits of this process. While Sikh tradition is the focus of the volume, one might ask whether the process of religion-making affected affect different Indic traditions / *sampraday*s in different ways. While recognizing Sikh tradition shares similarities with other Indic traditions, it also possesses distinctive features particularly in terms of the *gurmat* and the consonance of the 'religious', the political, and the linguistic that may have more susceptible to the problems of translation.

The first chapter of Part II is "Sikhism and the Politics of Religion-Making". This chapter predictably focuses on the integration of 'religion' into the various projects (cultural, ideological, political) and identities of Sikh elites of the Singh Sabhas. However, the intellectual turning point for Mandair is an Hegelian ontotheological reframing he sees in the

translation projects of Trumpp and Macauliffe that effectively produced an ontological separation between God and the world. Such a reframing has concomitantly produced, among other things, a different logic by which Sikh identity is articulated, a system of ethics tied to 'belief' in one immutable, static God, and the ennobling of topologies of suffering and death.

The Hegelian shift and attendant God / world dualism painted above is the ground on which Mandair examines in the second chapter of Part II – "Violence, Mysticism, and the Capture of Subjectivity" – the (western) theological framework responsible for containing Sikh 'religiosity', and how that very framework has been transferred to both discourses surrounding 'religious violence' and to managing religious pluralism in the secular state. In this context, Mandair focuses on the (often latent) theological assumptions at play in the work of W.H. McLeod. Key to Mandair's argument here is his analysis of the precolonial Sikh usages of *guru*, *sabda*, and *nam*, and their subsequent manifestations in the colonial past and postcolonial present.

For Mandair, McLeod's rendering of Sikh theology and the intersection of *guru*, *sabda*, and *nam*, while systematic, lends itself to the deontologization of language. In other words, language becomes nothing more than a vehicle for the communication of ideas between human beings, rather than social, political, and immanent. Drawing from Heidegger, Mandair seeks to re-ontologize language, to regard language as 'radically immanent', and relates this to a discussion of orality and writing in the broader South Asian context.

Part III: Postcolonial Exits is comprised of two chapters: *Ideologies of Sound* and *Decolonizing Postsecular Theory*. In these final chapters, Mandair employs the radical deconstructism of Derrida and Heidegger to interrupt the ongoing sikhizing of the Sikhs. Such an approach is Mandair's attempt to initiate a meaningful and conceptually decolonized postcolonialism. By focusing on the concept of *sabda-guru*, Mandair seeks to 're-ontologize' the question of language in such a way that is both subjective and objective. In doing so, Mandair is able to call into question and to contest a thick catalogue established dichotomies, while at the same time rendering the notion of *gurmat* in terms of temporality and contingency. Finally, Mandair concludes by speculating on Derrida's question: What if *religio* remained untranslatable?

Religion and the Specter of the West is conceptually dense, its prose thick, and assumes that the reader is more than a little conversant in Sikh historiography, postcolonial theory, and the works of several key European philosophers. Those familiar with Jacques Derrida on the act of translation, G.W.F. Hegel's philosophy of history, and Martin Heidegger's philosophy of language will have an advantage here. Moreover, Mandair's prose can be uneven. In places, his discussion is

lucid, cogent, and readily accessible; in others, arcane and abstruse. Between the author's text and the subject matter, it is at times difficult to follow the conceptual connections and correspondences that Mandair attempts to draw. Indeed, as Mandair himself recognizes, "this book pursues an oblique and often impossible engagement between several discourses not usually thought to be connected."

Religion and the Specter of the West is a book that needs to be taken seriously, to be interrogated, explored, and critiqued. It is broad in its theoretical scope, yet goes beyond and applies in new and provocative ways the work of a host of postcolonial theorists and continental philosophers. Similarly, the volume offers a critical examination of a range of scholarship within 'Sikh Studies'. Remaining true to the Derridian methodology he employs throughout the book, Mandair is candid and reflective of his own 'disorder of identity', subjectivity, and motives for writing. This book will be of interest to graduate students and scholars those working in Sikh tradition, continental philosophy of religion, history of religions, or secular postcolonial theory.

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Edited by Doris. R. Jakobsh, *Sikhism and Women: History, Texts, and Experience* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010). Pp. 383. ISBN 13: 978-0-19-806002-4. Price: £31

The edited book *Sikhism and Women* brings a valuable and much needed addition to the field of Sikh Studies, which will appeal to both scholars of Sikhism/Punjab Studies as well as those interested in gender and religion more generally. With fourteen contributors representing both historical, textual and ethnographic approaches, *Sikhism and Women* covers a wide range of issues pertaining to Sikh women, in both India and the diaspora.

It begins by contextualizing well the broader field of Sikh and women's studies, highlighting how the labels 'Sikh' and 'woman' are contested terms that need to be problematized. Just as who is considered a 'true Sikh' receives various definitions, there is "no seamless category of Sikh womanhood". Diversity among Sikh women is stressed and this is reflected in the various chapters, which discuss the experiences of Sikh women of all ages and backgrounds. Jakobsh and Nesbitt highlight how the Internet is playing a key role as a new cultural authority on Sikhism and 'correct' behavior for Sikh women, with mixed results. While providing a forum for diaspora women to push for greater equality, it has also been instrumental in promoting a normative form of Sikhism in which women are consistently portrayed as wearing turbans, which does

not correspond to actual practice for the vast majority of Sikh women. This new form of Sikhism is called "identity Sikhism". In the introduction, Jakobsh draws on her classroom experiences teaching introductory Sikhism to largely diaspora Sikh students, which reveal a common theme throughout the book: the continuing importance of the concept of *izzat* or honor in defining what it means to be a Sikh woman. Jakobsh's second generation female students identified *izzat* as the one word which most characterized the concept of "Sikh woman".

Sikhism and Women is divided into three parts. The first part is devoted to textual studies, with chapters focusing on the highly disputed Sikh text the *Dasam Granth* and its view of women, as well as actual gender practices during the early Khalsa period. A welcome addition to this section is Christine Fair's chapter on the novels of legendary Punjabi author Bhai Vir Singh, bringing attention to non-theological texts in understanding historical constructions of gender. Fair's chapter shows how Singh used his female heroines of Sundri, Sheel Kaur and Satwant Kaur to promote complete devotion to the Sikh panth, and clearly distinguish the brave Sikhs from both the rapacious Muslims and pusillanimous Hindus.

The second part deals broadly with Sikh women in India. Jagbir Jhutti-Johal, in her study of Sikh women's perception of their role in religious institutions, found that Indian Sikh women, regardless of age, did not feel discriminated against by their gurudwaras, but that some younger university-educated women had started to question tradition in areas such as the ban on women carrying out certain forms of *seva* (service) at the Golden Temple. Despite some change observed in the younger generation, Jhutti-Johal concluded that young women continued to uphold the importance of maintaining *izzat* under community/family pressure, and generally felt powerless to change male dominated religious institutions.

The third part of *Sikhism and Women* discusses the issues and challenges faced by Sikh women living in the Western diaspora. Kamal Elizabeth Nayar for example, explores how three generations of Punjabi Sikh women negotiate gender roles in Vancouver, finding that grandmothers maintain a traditional mindset and suffer from 'out group' stress; mothers suffer from both in and out group stress, experiencing the clash between tradition and modernity in terms of gender expectations most intensely; and daughters, born and raised in Canada, experience primarily 'in group' stress, due to the yawning divide they perceive between the Sikh religion and Punjabi culture—the former no longer seen to be a seamless whole incorporating the latter. Another contributor, Elsberg, highlights the experiences of white American women converts to Sikhism via the "Healthy, Happy, Holy Organisation" (3HO) founded by Yogi Bhajan. She maintains that despite Bhajan's conservative gender

ideology, which advocated modesty and "gracefulness" for women, many of his female followers found both spiritual and gender empowerment through his movement. Although she touches upon former female members who feel that they have lost years of his life to the organisation and of suits brought against him, a more thorough discussion of the charges of psychological abuse against Bhajan would have been helpful in enabling readers to learn more about the history of this movement and the charismatic figure behind it (two of Bhajan's female secretaries charged him with sexual misconduct, cases which were settled out of court).

To conclude, *Sikhism and Women* is a strong volume of articles that I would highly recommend to all those who incorporate a gendered/feminist perspective in their work. Its contributors show how the intersection of religion and gender are crucial issues for both society and academia in the 21st Century.

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Gurinder Singh Mann, Gurdit Singh, Ami P. Shah, Gibb Schreffler with Anne Murphy, *An Introduction to Punjabi: Grammar, Conversation and Literature* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2011). Pp. xxiv, 354. ISBN 81-302-0296-4.

The book by Professor Gurinder Singh Mann and his colleagues at the University of California at Santa Barbara is a comprehensive manual of teaching Punjabi language and literature. Beginning with introductory notes on phonetics, phonology and Gurmukhi orthography, it gradually introduces the nominal and verbal constructs with complementary exercises. Most of its students are supposed to be the children of those Punjabis who are settled abroad, or those who have no background in the language whatsoever. In foreign environments the native Punjabi speaking atmosphere is fast disappearing but the roots are there and the parents have not lost touch with their culture. This is why this manual is not at all the type of the old Teach Yourself handbooks which were meant as very introductory guides for visiting civil servants. As such this manual is comprehensive. It goes straight to the problematic of language teaching with immediate introduction of Punjabi writing system in Gurmukhi script.

In a way the UCSB project of teaching Punjabi language along with Punjabi culture and literature is an academic continuation of the Hartford project of presenting a critical analysis of Punjabi grammar. *A Reference Grammar of Punjabi* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1962) was a revised

version of my doctoral thesis, "A Descriptive Grammar of Punjabi" completed under the supervision of the eminent linguist, Professor Henry Allan Gleason, Jr. Having completed this research, I moved to France and as Attaché de Recherche at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris, and did extensive fieldwork in the French Alps under the guidance of Professor André Martinet. This experience was useful when in 1968 I was appointed Professor of Linguistics at Punjabi University, Patiala. The Patiala project led to the publication of the *Linguistic Atlas of the Punjab* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1973). After a fifteen years stint at Jawaharlal Nehru University I am back at Patiala; at present I am working on a conceptual dictionary of Punjabi where we are analyzing the words of Punjabi language from fifteenth century onwards in their conceptual contexts. Along with this dictionary, there is also an associate project of transcribing the entire Adi Granth in phonetic script.

The purpose of mentioning these studies is that the UCSB manual takes due notice of them, represents a considerable expansion of the beginnings made with my work on Punjabi grammar in the sixties, and covers a long academic distance from the Teach Yourself manuals in circulation. The pedagogic strategy that the manual employs is excellent. Whenever a certain grammatical construct, nominal or a verbal form, is introduced, it is invariably followed by its use in natural quotidian conversation. It recognizes the natural discursive formations of Punjabi language. There are no artificial conversations. Every example is culled from the natural flow, to the extant that more often than not, the texts, short or long, represent modern or older forms of expressions. The other features of this manual include the introduction of Punjabi culture and literature with beautiful sketches. As these texts were never meant for language teaching, the grammatical register is invariably highly complex. You learn to swim by jumping in and this plunge straight into the literature of the five rivers is an excellent idea. As this teaching program covers two years of intensive training, it should achieve what my *Reference Grammar* did not in the 1960s. It has taken almost fifty years to arrive at this level of advancement. *An Introduction to Punjabi* is a very important contribution to the pedagogy of foreign language teaching. My salutations to Professor Mann and his colleagues who have worked over the years to arrive at this level of perfection!

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Gurinder Singh Mann, Gurdit Singh, Ami P. Shah, Gibb Schreffler with Anne Murphy, *An Introduction to Punjabi: Grammar, Conversation and Literature* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2011). Pp. xxiv, 354. ISBN 81-302-0296-4.

Quite a lot of Punjabi teaching material, though often privately produced and of very variable quality, has been enthusiastically generated over the years in response to the strong support in the Sikh diaspora in North America and Britain for the idea of the importance of keeping alive a knowledge of Punjabi in members of the younger generations for whom it may no longer be a natural mother tongue. A few mainstream publishers of language textbooks have also included rather more ambitiously designed books on Punjabi in their series of instructional volumes. But in obedience to the usual laws of minimizing financial risk in what must be recognized to be a strictly limited market, one title has had to be sufficient for all types and levels of learners. So compact textbooks of the "teach yourself" type, whose primary function is to meet the needs of adults learning by themselves, have also to be pressed into service as class books for all sorts of group instruction, ranging from regular school classes attended by children entered for British GCSE examinations or their equivalent to adults enrolled in evening classes.

So while growing numbers of higher education institutions in North America are now offering Punjabi courses, students looking to take such courses as regular part of their degree program have mostly had to make do either with such all-purpose books or else with ad hoc instructional materials locally produced by their course teachers. The need for a dedicated college-level Punjabi course was at one time met by the *Panjabi Reader* by Ved Prakash Vatuk, which was published in 1964 by Colorado State University in the now amateurish-looking typescript of those distant days and has long since become unavailable. Nearly half a century later we now at last have an attractively produced and (at Rs.700) economically affordable Punjabi course book which has been thoughtfully and imaginatively designed for the college market by Professor Gurinder Singh Mann and the shifting panel of his associates at UCSB who are named on the title page.

The introduction explains the successive involvement of these members of Mann's team over several years as the course was trialed at UCSB and on the annual Summer Program in Punjab Studies at Chandigarh. As a result of this long period of gestation the book now has the reassuring feel of a course which has already been thoroughly tested in advance of publication to meet the needs of its now likely wider audiences. Given the place of Punjabi in the western academy, the great majority of users will be heritage students looking to develop literacy skills from some level of prior spoken competence, along with an

increased familiarity with the matrix of cultural and historical factors associated with Punjabi. The requirements of these students can of course be adapted by course teachers to address the overlapping demands of ab initio learners from non-Punjabi backgrounds.

The book is particularly well designed in its generous overage of cultural topics in its reading passages, which range from specially composed elementary pieces in the earlier lessons to the literary texts around which the later lessons are based. Collectively these offer a broad view of Punjabi society across religious boundaries, since it is a welcome feature of the course that it is not narrowly focused on the Sikhs alone but regularly looks across the border to Pakistan, where the majority of Punjabis of course live (even if few of them are literate in the language). The attractive line drawings which accompany the reading passages should help stimulate class discussion in Punjabi as well as generally enhancing the interest of the course to all its users, including those with a new interest in Punjabi language and culture besides the predominant mix of heritage learners of Indian Pakistani descent from a variety of religious backgrounds.

The course is designed in two parts, each suitable for one year of study. Part One is headed "Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening," but the emphasis is very much on the development of the first two of these skills, given the absence of accompanying audio materials (although the *expectation* is of course that the course teacher will make appropriate use of the book to develop speaking and listening skills in class). The first three lessons introduce the Gurmukhi script (a Shahmukhi edition is envisaged for some future date), which is used throughout the book in the special Gurmukhi-UCSB font whose distinctive design with its loops in shapes of letters like *aira, sassa, mamma* at first appears innovative but is in fact based on the typical script of early Gurmukhi manuscripts.

Lessons 4 through 20 then take the learner progressively through the basic grammatical structures, starting with the simplest sentences of the type *uh Panjabi hai*, and eventually reaching the level of complexity represented by e.g. *pani pindian pindian, us ne mainun ishare nal dassia* "All the while drinking water, she told me with a gesture." The ordering of the linguistic elements and the pace with which they are introduced is generally well conceived. But as most people who have ever taught (or indeed learnt) a modern language of the Indo-Aryan family will know, there always comes a point when the level of difficulty suddenly seems to increase. This is typically felt to occur when the structures least familiar from English are introduced, as with the subjunctive tense (formally similar to the future which itself probably not long have been introduced, but semantically not always easy at first to distinguish from the indicative present, i.e. *kare* besides *karegi*, versus *karda hai*), and more acutely with the past tenses with their distinction of agreement with

the subject in the case only of intransitive verbs, but with the object in the ergative construction used with transitive verbs (i.e. *uh gia* versus *us ne filam vekhi*). In the present course all these tricky points are introduced more or less at once, in Lessons 12 and 13. Since these should occur just after the half-way point perhaps students will have sufficiently invigorated by mid-course breaks to take everything in, but teachers will probably have their work cut out to steer them through these choppy waters to the calmer seas of auxiliary verbs and time expressions which lie beyond.

At all events, by the time that the whole of Part One has been thoroughly worked through with the aid of the grammatical explanations and the drills and exercises which accompany the dialogues and reading passages around which each lesson is based, students should be well prepared to tackle Part Two "Language Through Literature" in their second year. This is a university of a very traditional type (and of course none the worse for that) whose lessons each introduce a selected literary text, which is accompanied by minimal exercises and full alphabetically arranged glossaries to extend the well designed corpus of more elementary vocabulary built up in the lessons of Part One and alphabetically listed in the Glossary at the end of the book. Lessons 21-32 introduce classic poems from the twentieth-century by such well known Sikh authors as Bhai Vir Singh, Mohan Singh and Amrita Pritam, but also others from across the border like Ahmad Rahi and Faiz Ahmad Faiz (speaking in his Punjabi voice for once). Collectively these make up a well selected small poetic anthology. Since the Punjabi prose canon is less well established, the longer prose passages which follow in Lessons 33 through 40 represent a more individual choice, but as with topics selected for the composed readings in Part One, there is good overall variety. Lesson 41 is a sort of fun appendage consisting of a range of songs of traditional and modern types, somewhat reminiscent of the folk materials collected in the language manuals produced by enthusiastic local officials in British India—and they would certainly have relished some of the obscurer appendices which are thrown in as a bonus at the end of the book. Particularly recommended is Appendix X listing animals and their sounds (*huankna* for a jackal, *kalakna* for a partridge but *patakna* for a quail!).

Students might be misled by the statement on the first page of the Introduction that the five rivers of the Punjab are "Satluj, Ravi, Chenab, Jehlam, and Sindh/Indus", a statement which is repeated in the Punjabi reading passage on p. 90, while the river Beas which is usually reckoned as the fifth river is even omitted from the map which follows the table of contents. But the level of accuracy in this complex bilingual text is commendably so high overall that it would be churlish to make too much of any small errors here and there. However valuable they may be,

textbooks are not very highly valued in the academy, so Professor Mann and his team are to be warmly congratulated on the self-sacrifice which went into the making of this excellent Punjabi course, which deserves to be widely used for many years to come.

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In the editorial preface of the previous issue of the Journal of Punjab Studies, dedicated to assessing the scholarship of the late W.H. McLeod, we invited individuals to submit thoughtful critiques and considerations of the scholarly arguments presented therein. In an attempt to broaden the discussion presented in that issue of the Journal by Louis E. Fenech regarding the presentations of martyrdom in the Sikh tradition, especially as it has related to Guru Arjan, Pashaura Singh has submitted a scholarly rejoinder on the same topic. While the debates regarding the martyrdom of Guru Arjan are complex, we hope that this article, read alongside the work of scholars such as McLeod and Fenech, will advance our understanding of critical issues in the field of Sikh Studies.

Ami P. Shah

Reconsidering the Sacrifice of Guru Arjan

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Guru Arjan's martyrdom (1606) marks a critical development in the crystallization of the Sikh tradition. For centuries Sikhs have been commemorating the Guru's phenomenal sacrifice with the drink of milk and water: its coolness not only counteracts the blazing sands with which Guru Arjan was tortured, but is also a reminder of the Guru's supreme serenity and calm. In 2006 I published my Oxford monograph, *Life and Work of Guru Arjan: History, Memory and Biography in the Sikh Tradition*[1] in honor of its 400th anniversary. Over the years scholarly misunderstandings and misrepresentations have generated a belligerence that clouds the historic event of Guru Arjan's martyrdom. This article engages with the work of prominent scholars such as W.H. McLeod and Louis E. Fenech.

The special issue of the *Journal of Punjab Studies* (Spring-Fall 2010: Vol. 17, Nos. 1 & 2) was dedicated to an appraisal of scholarly contributions of the late W.H. McLeod. Building on his brief remark that "Gurū Arjan, the fifth Gurū and father of Guru Hargobind, had in some manner incurred the displeasure of the Mughal authorities and in 1606 had died while in custody,"[2] Louis E. Fenech examined the notion of 'martyrdom' in the Sikh tradition and engaged with the arguments presented in my book on the life and teachings of Guru Arjan. I appreciate his effort to revisit the discussion on the issue of how early Sikh community understood Guru Arjan's death at the hands of Mughal authorities. Here, I do not want to repeat my comprehensive treatment of the available sources on Guru Arjan's martyrdom, presented in the eighth chapter of my book, which is the focus of Fenech's arguments in his essay "Martyrdom: W.H. McLeod and his Students" (JPS 17: 1&2, pp. 75-93). Instead, I offer my response to his usage and interpretation of the available data, by following a genealogical mode of reading that employs multiple voices to relativize all the voices so that no single voice becomes dominant.

In his analysis of my arguments Fenech begins as follows: "Perhaps the most important, sustained, and serious assessment of my and McLeod's analysis of contemporary sources is that of Pashaura Singh (another of McLeod's students) which appears in his very important book

on Guru Arjan" (pp. 78-9). He ends his analysis with his view: "Important as Pashaura's claims may be therefore *these do not really go beyond McLeod's brief sentence* and thus his analysis fails to critically advance our understanding of the event of the Guru's death. It rounds out the narrative innovatively to be sure, but forwards it little" (p. 81, emphasis added). Elsewhere, Fenech claims: "What one can say definitively about Guru Arjan's death is very little. The only conclusion the evidence will support is that Guru Arjan earned the enmity of the Mughal state by appearing to support the rival claim of Khusrau, was imprisoned (and perhaps beaten) by the emperor's minions, and subsequently died in Mughal custody in Lahore. *McLeod's caution in accepting the claims of tradition is firmly based*" (emphasis added).[3] True to his apologetic stance, Fenech resists going beyond McLeod's dated opinion and cannot accept any advance on the subject no matter how innovatively the competing voices may try. This is his scholarly prerogative, and one must appreciate his position even though one may not agree with his reductionist approach. It is, however, instructive to note that after reading my arguments McLeod had changed his earlier stance on Guru Arjan's martyrdom and accepted that the Guru "was cruelly executed while being held by the Mughal authorities in Lahore."[4] This remark reflected his open attitude towards any alternative reading of an historical event.

Let us closely look at how Fenech uses some contemporary and near-contemporary sources in his analysis. To take issue with the argument that Jahangir applied Mongol tribal law of Yasa to put Guru Arjan to death by torture, Fenech questions my interpretation "as it hinges in large part upon the speculation that Jahangir would have understood Guru Arjan to be either royal, honored or spiritual" (p. 80). Fenech exaggerates certain Persian phrases from the *Jahangirnama* to argue that Guru Arjan was not an acknowledged 'spiritual' leader: "…Guru Arjan, according to Jahangir, was not a genuine spiritual guide, but rather a pretender to the status who merely dressed the part*, dar libās-i pīrī o shaikhī* 'in the garments of spirituality and holiness'. Guru Arjan's teachings were, Jahangir continues, the 'false trade' *(dokān-i bātil)* of an 'inconsequential little fellow' *(mardak-i majhūl)* whose falseness Jahangir himself had realised when the Guru applied the *qashqah* to the seditious Khusrau's forehead" (p. 80). In the process of over-interpretation Fenech fails to recognize that Jahangir used these phrases due to his despicable temperament. Anyone who has read his memoirs carefully would know that this was Jahangir's trademark to castigate popular spiritual leaders. For instance, Jahangir himself writes in his memoirs: "Shaykh Nizam Thanesari, one of the imposters of the age, [23a] met Khusraw, encouraged him with good news, and escorted him a while along the way. He came to see me. When I heard the news, I

gave him his expenses for the road and ordered him to make a pilgrimage to Mecca."[5] This statement exposes the double standards of justice applied by the autocratic ruler for an alleged similar crime. The Sikh Guru was given capital punishment according to the Mongol tribal law (Yasa), while a Muslim Shaikh was exiled and sent to Mecca apparently on the basis of the *Sharia* law. Fenech deliberately ignores this example because it contradicts the thrust of exaggeration in his arguments.

Moreover, Jahangir's predisposition against another spiritual leader of his times may be seen in the following entry in his memoirs: "I received the news that an Afghan named Shaykh Ibrahim had started peddling his wares as a spiritual guide in a pargana in the vicinity of Lahore. As is the custom of hoi polloi and the vile, a multitude of Afghans and others had gathered around him. I ordered him summoned and entrusted to Parvez to be held in the Chunar fortress until the affair died down."[6] The most troublesome issue for Jahangir was the conversion of "some ignorant, stupid Muslims" to Sikh fold. This was the trend that Naqshbandi revivalists and Islamic clerics attributed to Emperor Akbar's heterodoxy and demanded from the new emperor a stop on it in lieu of their pledge of support to him at the time of his accession to the Mughal throne. Jahangir's intentions were quite explicit when he wrote that the alternative for death penalty was to bring him [Guru Arjan] "into the embrace of Islam." This statement itself signaled a change in the religious policy of Jahangir who presented himself as the 'defender of Islam'. Therefore, the religious dimension cannot be overlooked completely in any serious analysis since it plays a crucial role in power relationships. Even a cursory understanding of current affairs can reveal how the variable of 'religion' functions in contemporary 'politics' in various countries throughout the world. Again, Fenech does not even mention that Jahangir had offered to Guru Arjan an alternative for death penalty to embrace Islam. Why would he make that offer if he did not consider him a spiritual leader (even in a pretended sense)? Guru Arjan's refusal to embrace Islam certainly made his death a 'sacrifice' for the defense of his faith. This is what his contemporary Bhai Gurdas described in his *Var* (24:23).[7]

Fenech brings in discussion the issue of 'respectful manner' of Guru Arjan's death in contrast to the way in which "some of Khusrau's sympathizers were treated in a very harsh manner, paraded around in the skin of an ass before the captured prince's very eyes, torture which Jahangir cheerfully describes (something he does not do in Guru Arjan's execution)": "Would the emperor therefore advise his subordinates in Lahore to take such care in carrying out Guru Arjan's death sentence, *the guru of a group which was to say the least an exceedingly marginal presence in Mughal sources*, to ensure that he was killed in what we can only assume to be a relatively respectful manner (torturous, yes, but

respectful nevertheless)?" (p. 80, emphasis added). Rather than decoding the historical context behind this whole episode, Fenech simplistically says: "In the light of emperor's memoirs I think this unlikely despite the use of the specific terms *siyasat o yasa*" (p. 80). He pointlessly questions the translation of these terms (*siyasat o yasa*, 'put to death with tortures') offered by Ganda Singh who was duly trained in Persian language. Here, I follow Shireen Moosavi's translation of the Persian phrase. Literally, *yasa* is the Mongol term for 'law' and *siyasat* means 'punishment', signifying the phrase as 'punishment under law'. In Mughal times both words were used for capital punishment. Under the Yasa of Mongol warlord Genghis Khan (/Chingiz Khan), the blood of princes and honored persons was not spilled. Only those means of killing were employed for them that would prevent this happening.[8] Thus, the punishment of extreme tortures was inflicted without shedding the blood of Guru Arjan who was a religious leader even in Jahangir's eyes.

In his influential work, *Discipline and Punish*, Michael Foucault provides us with a model of punishment as public-ritual in seventeenth-century France, explaining the dynamics of power in pre-modern societies. The punishment had its logic or rationale. Power belonged to the king, and when one of the king's subjects acted against him, the infamy of his crime had to be 'written', so to speak, on his body through torture. Punishment, in this way, was a way of signaling to—or, actually, performing for—the people both the nature of power of the king and the consequences of opposing it.[9] However, Foucault's model of punishment has already come under criticism that it "does not address the kind of *agon* [struggle; contest] one finds in the accounts of religious suffering."[10] In the case of Guru Arjan's tortures, Foucault's model cannot be applied completely because his execution was not a public spectacle. In fact, the Mughal authorities themselves felt 'powerless' in 'fearing' public backlash because of his high spiritual reputation. Even Jahangir left Lahore after passing the order for capital punishment. In actual practice, it was Shaykh Farid Bukhari (Murtaza Khan) who carried out Jahangir's orders. It should, however, be kept in mind that no one dies a natural death in state custody. The Guru was tortured according to the Mongol law (*yasa siyasat*) while he was in Mughal custody for about a week (May 24-30, 1606).[11] During this period, what happened to the Guru can be reconstructed only by an analysis of the Mongol tribal practices followed by the Mughal authorities. I will have more on 'respectful manner' of death in a future study.

Using some literal translations of Persian terms and phrases of *Jahangirnama*, Fenech suggests that Thackston's translation is more accurate than the one provided by Ganda Singh and embraced by many Sikhs. Although I myself have followed Thackston's translation in my analysis (because his English is more accessible at this point in time), I

want to provide one typical example to show that sometimes translation fails to capture the original sense of the Persian language used in early seventeenth century. For instance, Thackston has translated the Persian phrase *gaul-parastan* as 'fools' whereas Shireen Moosvi translates it as 'dervish-garbed worshippers', referring to Sufis in general ("…They called him guru. Many fools [/dervish-garbed worshippers] from all around had recourse to him and believed in him implicitly"[12]). This meaning has significant implications in the present context of Guru Arjan's reputation among the Sufis. Not surprisingly, Prince Khusrau went to Guru Arjan for his blessings because he knew that the Guru enjoyed a high spiritual reputation among the Sufis and Muslim dervishes who supported his liberal ideas. He also knew how his grandfather, Emperor Akbar, held the Guru in high esteem.

In his arguments Fenech passionately follows the imperial perspective and fails to see the reality from the perspective of subaltern or marginal groups. For instance, he writes: "The son of Akbar, it seems, has been much vilified in Sikh hagiography, for contemporary Persian accounts note (with some exaggeration perhaps) that Jahangir was an emperor known particularly for his just dealings with all the members of his vast empire."[13] This is highly misleading statement. If one examines early Sikh sources, particularly the *Mahima Prakash*, one is startled to find a positive image of Jahangir in these chronicles. By contrast, a close look at the *Jahangirnama* reveals an account of important events, particularly of the early years of Jahangir's reign, and a candid view of his personal life, replete with his vices and virtues. Bonnie Wade, for instance, remarks that from his memoirs we gain a personal sense of Jahangir and his times: "He was a complex character, full of contradictions, a mixture of bad temper and genial temperament, one who had disregard for human misery yet acutely sensitive to art and nature, a lover of sport as well as entertainment. He was callous and cruel, yet garrulous and erudite."[14] Thus any representation of Jahangir in essentialist terms such as 'his just dealings with all the members of his vast empire' is completely off the mark. One can question his sense of justice for not giving capital punishment to his rebellious son Khusrau who was the main culprit in the whole saga.

Adopting a dismissive approach towards contemporary traces of historical evidence Fenech comments on 'the infamous letter' of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), using Indu Banga's recent take on the passage in question dealing with Guru Arjan as "a digression (a somewhat more lengthy aside than she gives credit, mind you) in an advocation of the glory of Sirhindi's particular variety of Islam" (p. 81). He continues:

> Indeed, the simple fact that Sirhindi phrases the
> event in the passive voice in Persian (*khushtan-i kāfir-i
> lain-i goindwāl bisyār khūb wāqi shud*, 'the execution
> of the accursed kafir of Goindwal very fortunately
> happened') and thus not in the jubilant tone which
> either Ganda Singh or Pashaura Singh note, supports
> this claim. Yet even Indu Banga fails to note that the
> emphasis on Sirhindi falls into the same precarious trap
> into which scholars have been falling since the late
> nineteenth century, namely the failure to recognise that
> both the Naqshbandi order's and Sirhindi's
> significance is a product of later Indian historiography,
> in particular that of the Naqshbandiyya silsilah itself,
> something to which Pashaura Singh himself points. (p.
> 81)

In my early study I have addressed Fenech's 'technical arguments' in detail. I would like to reiterate my position by citing the complete passage of Sirhindi's letter specifically relating to Guru Arjan and its analysis in the wider historical context of what was happening in Mughal India at that crucial period. I am reproducing the relevant discussion below from my book on Guru Arjan:

There is a contemporary reference to Guru Arjan's execution in 1606 in the *Maktubat-i Rabbani* of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, leader of the Naqshbandi movement in the Punjab in the early seventeenth century.[15] He rejoiced at the news of this execution, providing the hard evidence about the historical situation in which Muslim revivalists celebrated the Guru's death in Mughal custody. In a personal letter to Shaykh Farid Bukhari (Murtaza Khan), the most influential Mughal official of Jahangir and the persecutor of Guru Arjan, he wrote:

> These days the accursed infidel of Gobindwal was
> very fortunately killed. It is a cause of great defeat for
> the reprobate Hindus. With whatever intention and
> purpose they are killed – the humiliation of infidels is
> for Muslims life itself.[16]

In a jubilant tone Sirhindi refers to Guru Arjan as the 'accursed infidel of Gobindwal' (*kafir-i la`in gobind wal*) whose 'execution…very fortunately happened' (*kushtan …bisyar khub waqi` shud*). This direct reference has convinced Sikh scholars that Sirhindi's hand was evident in Jahangir's decision to imprison and subsequently execute Guru Arjan. Recently, Louis Fenech has questioned this conclusion on two grounds: first, the Shaikh's infamous letter was not sent to Jahangir himself, but to

the Governor of Punjab, Shaykh Farid Bukhari (Murtaza Khan); and second, Sirhindi wrote this letter well after the fact. On the basis of these two arguments Fenech concludes that the Shaikh's role in the Guru's execution is conjectural.[17] These technical arguments aside, no one can deny Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's intimate relationship with Shaykh Farid Bukhari, the principal actor in Guru Arjan's execution and the main supporter of the Islamic revivalist movement.

Most instructively, there is a crucial entry in the *Jahangirnama* (folio 27b) before the order of Guru Arjan's execution, describing Jahangir's monetary grant to a group of Naqshbandi dervishes: "Since Shaykh Husayn Jami had dreams about me that came true shortly afterward. I awarded him twenty lacs of dams, which would be thirty-five to forty thousand rupees, for his own expenses and for the khanqah and the dervishes who were with him."[18] No scholar has thus far tried to unmask the mystery behind the actual context of this entry. Shaykh Husayn Jami, a peerless member of the Naqshbandi order, used to write encouraging letters to the then Prince Salim (Jahangir): "I have seen His Holiness Khawaja Baha'uddin in a dream, and he said, 'Soon Sultan Salim will mount the throne, causing the world to flourish in justice and equity and giving the grief-stricken cause for rejoicing with his generosity and liberality'."[19] The original name of Khawaja Baha'uddin was Baha'uddin Naqshband (1317-1389), the eponymous founder of the Naqshbandi Sufi order, which was highly influential in Timurid Iran and Central Asia. I have discussed the historical significance of this entry in my examination of the religious dimension of Guru Arjan's execution in my book. Here, it is crucial to note that Shaykh Husayn Jami was accompanied, according to Jahangir, by a number of "dervishes who were with him" when he was honored by the emperor in Lahore. It is highly likely that Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was one of them. Most probably, this was the occasion when complaints against Guru Arjan were made to the emperor about his alleged blessings to Prince Khusrau. Otherwise, why would Sirhindi express his jubilation at the Guru's execution later on? He was self-reflexively expressing his ecstasy at the mission accomplished. There is an urgent need to have a deeper understanding of the strategy of using the motif of a dream in the Naqshbandi letters addressed to Mughal authorities, including Emperor Jahangir.

In his major study Yohanan Friedmann has pointed out Jahangir's ambivalent relationship with Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi from the fact that the emperor imprisoned Sirhindi in the fort of Gwalior in 1619 so that his "disturbed disposition and confused mind would calm down a little."[20] This happened only when Sirhindi incurred the displeasure of Jahangir for his unbending opposition to the Shi'a who were powerful at court. Later on Sirhindi was restored to favor before his death in 1624. Friedmann compellingly argues that much of the material surrounding

Sirhindi and his popularity exists because of his devout followers, those directly under his mastership, rather than the Mughal courtiers to whom he occasionally wrote. He further claims that Jahangir's personal religious predilections did not determine his state policies. In any serious analysis, however, one must keep the historical context in mind because human behavior is indeed contextual and contingent. At the beginning of his reign Jahangir's political situation was quite unstable. His own son provided him the greatest challenge. At that time he was bound to listen to radical voices of Muslim revivalists that offered him unflinching support. Once he established himself firmly on the Mughal throne he could be magnanimous even with his opponents and project himself as a liberal emperor like his father. People's attitudes change with the change in historical circumstances. Our main concern here is related to the circumstances that led to Guru Arjan's execution in Mughal custody at Jahangir's orders.

Notably, a significant number of Sirhindi's letters were addressed to a Mughal grandee, Shaykh Farid Bukhari, who had earlier distinguished himself in warfare against the Afghans in Orissa when he was promoted to the command of 1500 horses during the reign of Emperor Akbar. Akbar had also conferred upon him the grand title of the "master of the pen and the sword" (*sahib-us-saif-w-al-qalm*).[21] When Jahangir was ascending to the imperial throne after Akbar's death in 1605, it was Shaykh Farid Bukhari who was responsible for extracting a solemn oath from the new Emperor to defend Islam. In this context, the testimony of Father Pierre Du Jarric in his book *Akbar and the Jesuits* is quite revealing:

> Accordingly, the leading noble, Sheikh Farid Bukhari, having been sent by the others as their representative came to the Prince (Salim, entitled Jahangir), and promised in their names to place the Kingdom (of India) in his hands provided that he would swear to defend the law of Mohammad.[22]

In fact, Shaykh Farid Bukhari rendered conspicuous services in the capture and liquidation of Prince Khusrau and thus earned the title of *Murtaza Khan* ("lord agreeable"), eventually increasing his rank to the command of 6, 000 horses.[23] It was this Murtaza Khan to whom Jahangir handed over Guru Arjan to be capitally punished according to Mongol tribal law.

Immediately after Guru Arjan's execution, Sirhindi expressed his exultancy in a letter that he wrote to Shaykh Farid Bukhari for the mission accomplished. The first lines of this letter have already been identified. The remaining part reads as follows:

> Before this *Kafir* ["infidel"] was killed, I had seen
> in a dream that the Emperor of the day had destroyed
> the crown of the head of *Shirk* or infidelity. It is true
> that this infidel was the chief of the infidels and a
> leader of the Kafirs…The object of levying *Jeziya*
> ["capitation tax on non-Muslims"] on them is to
> humiliate and insult the *Kafirs*, and *jehad* ["religious
> war"] against them and hostility towards them are the
> necessities of the Mohammedan faith.[24]

The common motif of a 'dream' in the letters of the two Naqshbandi stalwarts, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shaykh Husayn Jami, is quite striking. This was part of their strategy to convince the Mughal authorities receiving their letters about the urgency of their agenda. Here, Sirhindi made no secret of his hatred against Guru Arjan when he declared him as the 'chief of the people of heinous sin' (*reis-ahl-i-shirk*) and 'an infidel-leader of the people of infidelity' (*kafir-imam-i-ahl-i-kufr*). From these intensely spiteful phrases one can easily capture the sense of venom in Sirhindi's raving and ranting. He considered the growing influence of the Guru as the main obstacle in the success of his own revivalist agenda in the Punjab. His strong prejudice against non-Muslim Indians is quite evident from this letter in which he advocated their 'humiliation and destruction' as the 'necessities of the Mohammedan faith' (*jehad bil-kuffar wa ghilzat bar ishan az zaruriyat-i-din ast*). In view of this overwhelming evidence no serious scholar can afford to ignore the interaction of parallel religious movements at that particular stage in Indian history.[25]

Some Indian historians intentionally play down the contents of the relevant passage from Sirhindi's letter as an 'aside' to promote their hidden agenda. In her critique of my arguments, for instance, Indu Banga argues that four lines related to Guru Arjan's death do not constitute the 'first lines' but occur in the middle of a long letter, in which "Sirhindi is referring to this news in passing (*darin hal*) and expressing his satisfaction over the happening 'in whichever way it might have been brought about'!"[26] She further argues that "there is no indication in the letter that Sirhindi had been instrumental in bringing about the death of Guru Arjan."[27] Two comments are in order here. First, we should always keep in mind that within a text no part is less privileged than the other parts. All must receive the same quality and manner of attention. Conventionally, much of a text can be processed into coherence, though some, if after careful interpretive effort it resists this treatment, may be left alone, or dealt with in a different way. In order to seek a balanced perspective, however, we must take cognizance of those texts which do

not fall into coherence. For instance, the reference to Guru Arjan's death in Sirhindi's letter resists the 'meaning' that Indu Banga is trying to convey in her strained arguments. Second, we must use caution that in establishing coherence we reduce the text to codes implanted in our minds by the arbitrary fiat of a culture or an institution. In this way the texts become the unconscious victims of ideological oppression. Indeed, most of the time scholars feed their new theoretical and methodological positions into the text to produce the desired meaning as it appears in their interpretation. It happens much the same way as, in psychoanalysis, the analyst's beliefs and procedures modify the narrative of the person who is being analyzed.[28] In the context of present discussion, the most significant trace of evidence regarding Guru Arjan's death has become the victim of a nationalist /imperialist agenda through which it is treated just as an 'aside' in the context of the overall thrust of Sirhindi's long letter.

It is naïve to seek from the public statements of religious or political leaders about their involvement in particular conspiracies. They simply do not disclose these private details. It is for the historians to unmask their hidden motives by reconstructing the complex historical context from the bits and pieces of available evidence. Rather than carefully examining the entire contemporary and near-contemporary evidence to arrive at a meaningful framework, both Fenech and Indu Banga fall into the precarious trap of pedestrian technicalities of Sirhindi's letter (such as 'passive voice in Persian' or 'in passing' [*darin hal*]!). While Fenech uses Persian phrases from the *Jahangirnama* to claim that Jahangir did not consider Guru Arjan as a spiritual leader, Indu Banga, by contrast, interprets that Sirhindi's 'intensely spiteful phrases' for Guru Arjan "may actually suggest that his death had eliminated the most pre-eminent among the non-Muslim religious leaders."[29] She continues: "Thus, despite himself, Sirhindi gives the impression that the fifth Guru [w]as important as much for his general popularity and widespread influence as for an independent stance."[30] Are there two different cultural modes of reading the similar Persian phrases by Western and Indian scholars? Who is right and who is wrong? Or, are both using their readings to serve their own particular interests?

Indu Banga's approach may appear to be amusing to some readers but it does not offer any alternative historical perspective on Guru Arjan's martyrdom.[31] She quotes half part of my sentence to make the following observation with sarcasm: "Interestingly, by the time Pashaura Singh concludes this discussion, even he cannot make up his mind, and he ends by saying: 'it is not quite clear how instrumental Sheikh (*sic.*) Ahmad Sirhindi may have been in Guru Arjan's execution'!"[32] This is certainly not what I am claiming here as my position on this issue. The readers can look at the complete sentence and make up their own mind

about what I am actually saying: "It is not quite clear how instrumental Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi may have been in Guru Arjan's execution; but less one credits him with direct involvement, the more one is left regarding him as formulating theologically the direction in which his society and Mughal officials were moving fast anyway."[33] The misrepresentation of my position can hardly be expected of a senior historian. Nevertheless, I am grateful to her for taking time to do the critique of my work and providing some useful feedback for my consideration on agrarian resistance. Although I do not agree with most of her criticisms (because my approach to look at a cross-cultural model of peasantry is quite different from her strictly narrow regional focus), I will certainly revisit my arguments in some fashion in a future study.

My academic position on Guru Arjan's martyrdom remains the same that I stated in the conclusion of my book. The comprehensive examination of the contemporary and near-contemporary sources clearly indicates that Guru Arjan was put to death with tortures according to the Mongol tribal law of Yasa by the orders of Emperor Jahangir. Although the crowning cause of capital punishment has been presented as Guru Arjan's alleged blessings to the rebel Prince Khusrau, there were other urgent religious, socio-cultural, and economic factors that contributed in the final judgment of the absolute monarch. These major factors were as follows: Naqshbandi reaction against Akbar's policy of religious pluralism and formulating new theological direction for the new emperor and the Mughal officials, the conversion of Muslims to Sikh faith, an extensive Jat allegiance to the Panth, the growing strength of the Sikh movement, and the emergence of Ramdaspur as an autonomous 'power center'. Guru Arjan enjoyed high spiritual reputation among the Sufis and Muslim dervishes, a reputation that encouraged Prince Khusrau to seek his blessings. He had also visited Shaikh Nizam Thanesari for blessings before he came to Guru Arjan. Why did the emperor not give him capital punishment? Surely, there were other pressing concerns than the simple act of 'blessing' that has been blown out of proportion by the scholars. The Mughal administrators of Lahore who had been carefully monitoring the Sikh movement for a number of years found their opportunity to finally act against the Guru. They moved swiftly to eliminate Guru Arjan and cripple the rapidly-growing Sikh movement. Through their machinations they purposefully kept the Guru's execution from public view in an attempt to absolve the state by subverting the understanding of the Sikh community.

The contemporary Sikh account of Bhai Gurdas was principally focused on the last will of the Guru, rather than on the circumstances that were responsible for his arrest by the Mughal authorities. His stony silence about the main causes of Guru Arjan's death was not due to the loss of memory but a conscious attempt to bring the Panth out of its

traumatized-state with the help of the Guru's final spirited message. He was fully cognizant of Mughal machinations and chose to say little against them in order to ensure that the Sikh Panth would continue to thrive in the light of this most horrific execution. The process of "forgetting" became, in a sense, the enlarged and refocused alternative. In fact, historians have now acknowledged that "forgetting" is not simply a process of disappearance, but that it is enhanced and nuanced by new conditions that have the power to harm, even kill.[34] In Bhai Gurdas's estimation what he presented was more important for the survival of Sikhism than what he consciously omitted. He placed a reconstruction on the death of Guru Arjan in the ideal of supreme 'sacrifice'. By doing so he presented his life and death as that of a 'hero', which changed the subsequent history of the Sikh Panth. It is for the historians to decode Bhai Gurdas's 'silence' (or 'cowardice'?[35]). The Sikhs who perform and listen to Bhai Gurdas's stanza in devotional singing (*kirtan*) experience the deeper layers of its meaning in congregational worship.

The later Sikh narratives about Guru Arjan's execution were shaped on the basis of collective memory of different groups within the Sikh Panth. Motivated by shared interest in the past, groups derive roughly consensual group memories from individual memories. Groups shape and reshape these memories inter-subjectively through discourse and may communicate versions to successive generations.[36] As group interests change, so can the narratives that reflect them. In other words, group memories vary according to specific strategies of authorization, verification, and transmission that are deliberately adopted to express particular interests.[37] Obviously, written documents emerge from the 'struggle of memory against forgetting'. Most instructively, even though the authors of various Sikh narratives were single individuals, they represented the particular interest of their groups within the Sikh Panth. It is important that we keep this point in mind in our analysis. For instance, Sarup Das Bhalla, the author of *Mahima Prakash* (1776), represented the interests of all the descendants of the Gurus because of their distinguished origins. He was prompted by the urgency of the new situation in which the discourse of power politics was at work. Sikhs were rapidly gaining political ascendency in the context of late 18th century Punjab. For him it was the need of the time to start a process of renegotiation in power relationships within the Panth.[38] His narrative therefore reflected the combined strategies of different groups of the Gurus' descendants, deliberately adopted to express their particular interests. According to his narrative on Guru Arjan's execution, Emperor Jahangir did not want to do any harm to a saintly figure (*fakar*), but due to the wicked Khatri Chandu Sahi's intrigues he took 200,000 rupees from him and handed the Guru over to him. It was Chandu who was ultimately responsible for torturing the Guru to death. The emperor is

completely exonerated in this narrative. The seductive power of this narrative was so great that it became the standard narrative in the later Sikh chronicles.

Kesar Singh Chhibbar of *Bansavali-nama* (1769) was writing from the perspective of Chhibbar Brahmins, whose ancestors were closely associated with the Gurus. He believed that only Brahmin Sikhs were entitled to receive state charity, and that was the main reason why he felt unhappy about the prevailing situation in which their claims were being ignored by the Sikh rulers. He never missed an opportunity to traduce the Khatris and Muslims who were associated with the Sikh administration. In his view, power and piety did not go together. The major theme of Kesar Singh's narrative is focused upon the rivalry of Guru Arjan's elder brother Prithi Chand, who had coveted the office of the Guru. In his view, the ongoing family feud was the main reason behind Guru Arjan's execution at the hands of Mughal authorities. He states that the combined machinations of Prithi Chand and the vicious Sahi Khatris resulted in the fifth Guru's death. He draws heavily from *Puranic* mythology to interpret Guru Arjan's death by reference to the laws of karma. Accordingly, Guru Arjan was previously the famous Arjuna of the Pandva dynasty of the *Mahabharata* and Prithi Chand the reincarnation of a rabbit (*sassa*) that Arjuna had inadvertently killed. The execution of the fifth Guru is, therefore, understood as the rabbit's karmic retribution for his earlier, accidental death.[39] However, the author's tone becomes rather spiteful when he says that "there was no Sikh who could exact vengeance from the Muslims (*turks*) [for the heinous deed of killing Guru Arjan],"[40] underlining the fact that ultimately the Mughal authorities were to be held responsible for the Guru's death.

In contrast to the powerful standard Sikh narrative, Rattan Singh Bhangu's *Panth Prakash* (1841) offers a radical new 'voice' about the fifth Guru's execution. He exposed the secrecy of Emperor Jahangir as follows: "The fourth Mughal emperor was Jahangir who became the 'prisoner' of Muslim clerks and jurists (*chauthe shah bhaio jahangir//mullan qazi mil bhaio asir//*). He committed a heinous deceitful act against Guru Arjan [but absolved himself] by shifting the blame on the head [/shoulders] of a Khatri [Chandu Shah]" (*un guru arjan siun khot kamai//sou burai sir khatri lai//*).[41] Rattan Singh Bhangu belonged to the reputed Khalsa families of eighteenth-century Punjab. He was the son of Rai Singh, grandson of Mahtab Singh Mirankot (who was one of the assassins of Massa Ranghar) and maternal grandson of Shyam Singh Karoria. In 1809 he was invited to tell the story of the rise of the Sikhs to the Englishman Captain Murray in Ludhiana. His account in Braj/Punjabi was subsequently issued in 1841 under the title of *Panth Prakash*, a work which is strongly focused on the theme of the creation of the Khalsa and its destiny to rule. He was writing in the historical context of early

decades of nineteenth century when the British designs of incursion into the Punjab were becoming apparent. Accordingly, all who acknowledge the Khalsa discipline (*rahit*) must maintain the unity of the Panth and be prepared to assert their fundamental right to rule in their homeland. Most instructively, Bhangu's narrative on Guru Arjan's execution represented a relatively muted 'voice' of the rural population of the Sikh Panth. It exposed the deceptive framework of Mughal authorities who shifted the blame for the Guru's execution from Emperor Jahangir to the Guru's own traditional enemy Chandu Shah.

In sum, different groups within the Sikh Panth shaped and reshaped group memories through inter-subjective discourse on Guru Arjan's execution and communicated their versions to successive generations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A major shift in scholarly works came only when the Sikhs became aware of the actual contents of Jahangir's memoirs in the early decades of twentieth century. In particular, the knowledge of Shaikh Ahamad Sirhindi's letters in Persian (*maktubat*) prompted the process of re-interpretation of Guru Arjan's execution in the works of Ganda Singh (*Guru Arjan's Martyrdom: Re-interpreted*, 1969) and Kapur Singh,[42] both of them offering diametrically opposed views on the reasons behind the Guru's execution.[43] In a more recent work in Punjabi language, *Sach di Siasat: Guru Arjan Dev di Shahidi bare ikk Samvad* ("Politics of Truth: A Dialogue on the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev"), the martyrdom of Guru Arjan has become a non-zero-sum game of multiple players, a subject of dramatic construction.[44] Not surprisingly, there are multiple voices contributing to the discourse on collective memory and 'critical histories' of Guru Arjan's execution in Mughal custody.

In this final section, I would like to turn my attention to the usage of terminology and other related issues. The Punjabi term *kurbani* (via Arabic *qurbani*, 'sacrifice') is normally understood as an act of 'a giving up, or giving of' the gift of one's life to and for protecting righteousness (*dharam*) or nation.[45] In the early Sikh tradition the phrase *sis laggana* or *sis dena* ('offering of a head') was used for an act of 'sacrifice' in defense of faith. The most popular scriptural passage in this regard is Guru Nanak's *salok* ('verse'): "If you want to play the game of love, step into my lane with your head on the palm of your hand. Place your feet on this path and give your head without any fear or grumbling."[46] Clearly, to place one's 'head on the palm' symbolizes an act of self-sacrifice on the path of love. Thus loving devotion in the Sikh tradition is a matter of life and death where to love ultimately means to sacrifice one's life. Guru Tegh Bahadur's supreme sacrifice was thus described in the Dasam Granth that 'he gave his head but not his resolve' (*sis dia par sirar na dia*) to defend the freedom of faith. In the narrative of Kesar Singh Chhibbar's *Bansavali-nama* (1769) Guru Arjan is said to have explicitly

stated in the verse (V: 131): "Our head will be given in sacrifice, and this moment has come as certainty" (*asada laggega sisu ihu nischa hai aia*). The same phrase *sis dena* for sacrifice was adopted in the standard Sikh Prayer (*Ardas*): "Think of the sacrifices of those Singhs and Singhanis who gave their heads for righteousness…" (*jinhan singhan singhanian ne dharam het sis ditte…*). Throughout history the Sikh tradition has consistently understood the meaning of 'giving one's head' to be a supreme act of self-sacrifice.

Again, in Guru Nanak's view the notion of honor and self-respect (*pati*) is highly prized in life and at the time of death. For him, a heroic death must be based upon the true 'honor' obtained before the divine court of Akal Purakh ('Timeless One', God): "Blessed is the death of heroic men if their dying is approved of [by the immortal Lord]. Only those men may be called heroes who obtain true honor before the divine Court."[47] They who had practiced the discipline of meditation on the divine Name (*nam simaran*) during their lifetime receive true honor at the final moment of death. In fact, there are two levels of death, one false and one true. Forgetting the divine Name is the only death from the perspective of the Guru's teachings: "If I repeat the Name I live; if I forget it, I die. Repeating the Name of the True One is hard, but if one hungers for it and partakes of it all sadness goes."[48] Forgetting the divine Name produces spiritual death, only those who 'remember' the divine Name are truly alive. There is no violence apart from the separation from Akal Purakh, and those who forget the divine Name have to suffer the pain of physical death repeatedly.

For Guru Arjan, true life is found only in the divine Name: "Finding the blessed Name, Nanak, I am truly alive and my body and mind bloom in joyous bliss."[49] The most frequent self-reference in his works is not as a Guru, but as a servant (*sevak*) of God or even as a slave to God's slaves (*dasani das*). Note the following striking autobiographical hymn in the *Maru* raga:

> [The servant] has not brought anything other than the Lord to mind, such things as pride, attachment, avarice or evil propensities. Trading in the jewels of the divine Name and other virtues, he has carried such merchandize with him in life. (1) The love of God's servant has remained constant till the last. While living, he has served the divine Sovereign (*Sahib*); at the time of departure he has kept him in mind. (1) *Refrain*. The servant has not turned away his face from the command that came from the Lord. Maintaining 'blissful equanimity' (*sahaj anand*) in the heart, he has always rushed to carry out the divine command. (2) In

> obeying the Lord's command, the servant has felt joy
> even in hunger, rising above the discrimination of
> sorrow and joy. He has obeyed with great reverence
> each and every command of the Lord. (3) As the Lord
> showered his merciful grace on the servant, his life in
> this world and the next was exalted. Blessed and
> fruitful is the coming into the world of such a servant,
> Nanak, who has recognized the divine Sovereign. (4)
> (M5, *Maru 5*, AG, 1000).

This portrayal of an 'ideal servant' fits very well in the life of Guru Arjan himself. In fact, this *Maru* hymn provides us with the conceptual framework in which his life and death may be seen. Having brought his life into complete harmony with the divine will, order and command (*hukam*), the 'ideal servant' simultaneously achieves identification with the love of humanity and Akal Purakh. In other words, it is a creative quest of the self for realizing one's authentic nature on its journey from finite to infinite. This is the mystical dimension of Sikh experience in which one transcends the duality of joys and sorrows, and transmutes all suffering into 'blissful equanimity' (*sahaj anand*). This is the ultimate goal of all spiritual quest based on the discipline of meditation on the divine Name.

When Sikhs celebrate the anniversary of Guru Arjan's execution they recite his *Maru* hymn in devotional singing and distribute a cool drink of milk and water to everyone. The soothing drink honors the agony the fifth Guru endured for the sake of their faith. How, why and when did this formal ritual begin? Fenech has not paid any attention to uncover the meaning of this most significant practice based upon the collective memory of the Sikh Panth. It is instructive to note that religious communities create memory through the practice of rituals and symbols. In particular, rituals and recitals could bridge the gap between the past and the present where recitals of the past events are not just matters of intellectual exercises but of an invocation and an evocation in which historical remembrances produce subjectivities and create mentalities.[50] In the context of present discussion, ritual performance of a cool drink creates re-actualization of the past drawing the Sikhs closer to the event of Guru Arjan's execution being commemorated.

Moreover, Fenech's work is problematic since he has superimposed Semitic categories on the Sikh tradition to understand the notion of 'martyrdom' purely from Protestant and Islamic frameworks. In postmodern critique scholars have realized the futility of this exercise, in particular the usage of the word 'martyrdom' for the selfless actions of the Sikh Gurus who practically demonstrated the power of love and the acceptance of the will of God.[51] Even if the Arabic word *shahid* has

entered into Sikh lexicon (like many other key words of Persian origin) it has a distinctively different meaning in each new context of its usage. To limit the phenomenon of 'martyrdom' solely to the history of its usage does great violence to the proper understanding of the Sikh tradition, having its own terminology actually employed for expressing an act of self-sacrifice for the defense of faith.

In sum, Fenech does accept that "McLeod interprets ideas of martyrdom through ostensibly Semitic lens, achieving a definition which is quite similar to those we find in Judaic, Christian, and Muslim sources: 'a conceptual system of posthumous recognition and anticipated reward' a phrase I used in an earlier article underscoring in part the Sikh martyrological debt to Arabic and Islam" (p. 82). Although Fenech himself has been employing the same framework, he is beginning to take into account the Indic definition of self-sacrifice from recent researches. One day he might understand that Sikhs are not concerned about 'a conceptual system of posthumous recognition and anticipated reward'. For them, a single verse of Guru Nanak can provide justification to lay down their lives for the sake of truth and justice. Therefore, an act of self-sacrifice is performed with the divine Name on the lips in accordance with the divine will. This is what Guru Arjan did to put his 'seal'[52] on the establishment of the 'rule of justice and humility' (*halemi raj*) with the gift of his life.

Notes

I am grateful to the useful feedback provided by Professor Gurinder Singh Mann and Professor Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh on an earlier draft of this paper.

[1] Pashaura Singh, *Life and Work of Guru Arjan: History, Memory, and Biography in the Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[2] W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 3.
[3] Louis E. Fenech, "Martyrdom and the Sikh Tradition," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 117, no. 4 (1997): 629.
[4] See his Foreword to my *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, p. x. In her review of my book, Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh observes: "I find it significant that Professor Hew McLeod (who doubted the martyrdom in his *Evolution of the Sikh Community*, Oxford, 1975, p. 3) now agrees with Pashaura Singh. In his forward to his book, McLeod acknowledges and honors the Guru "who was cruelly executed while being held by the

Mughal authorities in Lahore." See *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture and Theory*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (December 2007).

[5] Wheeler M. Thackston, trans. and ed., *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 53. Jahangir's predisposition against popularly venerated religious figures has been noted by J.F. Richards in his *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), p. 97. For Jahangir's hostility towards the Jains, see Ellison B. Findly, "Jahangir's Vow of Non-Violence," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 117 (1987): 245-56.

[6] *The Jahangirnama*, p. 61.

[7] For detailed analysis of Bhai Gurdas's *Var* 24:23, see my *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, pp. 39-41.

[8] Shireen Moosvi has translated the original Persian text of *Jahangirnama* about Guru Arjan in J.S. Grewal & Irfan Habib, eds., *Sikh History from Persian Sources* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2001), p. 57. See her explanation of punishment according to Mongol Law, p. 57, n. 4.

[9] Geoff Danaher, Tony Schirato, and Jen Webb, eds., *Understanding Foucault* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), pp. 68-9.

[10] J.R. Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1563-1694* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), p. 9.

[11] Ganda Singh, *Guru Arjan's Martyrdom: Re-interpreted* (Patiala: Guru Nanak's Mission, 1969), p. 27.

[12] See my *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, p. 206.

[13] Louis E. Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition: 'Playing the Game of Love'* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 120.

[14] Bonnie C. Wade, *Imaging Sound: An Ethnomusicological Study of Music, Art, and Culture in Mughal India* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 162.

[15] Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat-i Imam-i Rabbani* (Lucknow, 1889), letter 193.

[16] Yohanan Friedman, *Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi: An Outline of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 1966), p. 111.

[17] Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition*, p. 119.

[18] Thackston, trans., *The Jahangirnama*, p. 59.

[19] Ibid., p. 15. This is mentioned in the preface to *Jahangirnama* by Muhammad-Hadi.

[20] Friedmann, *Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi*, pp. 83-5. For Jahangir's description of "The Charlatan Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi" see *The Jahangirnama*, p. 304. Also see, p. 341: "On this date I summoned to my presence Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, who had spent a while in prison on

account of his pretentiousness and presumptuousness, and set him free. I also awarded him a robe of honor and a thousand rupees and gave him the choice of whether to leave or stay. "This chastisement has been a sufficient retribution for my soul," he replied. "I will remain in your retinue."

[21] Madanjit Kaur and Piar Singh, *Sikhism for Modern Man by Sirdar Kapur Singh* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1992), p. 45. Jahangir reconfirmed Shaykh Farid Bukhari's title when he presented to him a jewel-studded sword and a jewel-studded ink pot and said: "We consider you the lord of the sword and the pen." See *The Jahangirnama*, p. 28.

[22] Father Pierre Du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits* (trans. by C. H. Payne), p. 204. Cited in ibid., 45.

[23] Thackston, trans., *The Jahangirnama*, p. 144.

[24] Sirhindi, *Maktubat-i Imam-i Rabbani*, I-iii, letter No. 193, pp. 95-6. Ganda Singh has produced the original and its translation in *Guru Arjun's Martyrdom*, pp. 36-7.

[25] For details, see my *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, pp. 218-224. Also see Wilfred Cantwell Smith's insightful analysis of the "Crystallization of Religious Communities in Mughal India" in *On Understanding Islam: Selected Studies* (The Hague, Paris and New York: Mouton Publishers, 1981), pp. 177-196. Smith argues that the Sikh and Islamic processes of crystallization were parallel movements, which decisively intertwined at certain points. One such conspicuous moment was the execution of Guru Arjan in Lahore in 1606 by Jahangir. This happened shortly after a major step in Muslim process of consolidation took place, specifically Shaykh Farid Bukhari's (i.e. Mir Murtaza Khan's) success in diverting and then suppressing Khusrau's bid for a more Akbar-like reign.

[26] Indu Banga, "Recent Studies on the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan: A Critique," in Prithipal Singh Kapur and Mohinder Singh, eds., *Guru Arjan's Contribution, Martyrdom and Legacy* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2009), p. 174.

[27] Ibid.

[28] These two points have been adapted from Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 53-54.

[29] Banga, "Recent Studies," p. 174.

[30] Ibid.

[31] For instance, read Indu Banga's general remark: "In fact, there may not be any contradiction between the emperor's orders and the role of Prithi Chand, Chandu Shah and perhaps others. It was the convergence of different factors and forces at a particular historical juncture that resulted in the martyrdom of Guru Arjan." Ibid., 179. One can agree with her

comment to a certain extent, but one wonders why does she consciously omit Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi from her list of human actors?

[32] Ibid., p. 174.

[33] See my *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, pp. 223-4.

[34] Cf. David William Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. xxiv.

[35] Last summer (July 2010) Amarjit Singh Grewal narrated to me his conversation with Professor J.S. Grewal about Bhai Gurdas's 'silence' about the causes of Guru Arjan's execution. In responding to the question why Bhai Gurdas did not write any thing explicitly about it, J.S. Grewal replied in a typical Punjabi style: *oh dar gia hou* ('He might be frightened'). Amarjit Singh Grewal then asked him why he (J.S. Grewal) did not write about Bhai Gurdas's 'cowardice' in his writings. J.S. Grewal's response was again in the same humorous style: *mai bhi dar gia houn* ("I myself might have become afraid"). This is a simple way of putting it lightheartedly. There are, however, complex issues behind that historical situation that have escaped scholarly analysis. For instance, in 2006 Sikhs celebrated the major event of Guru Arjan's martyrdom in Lahore where they had invited the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shaukat Aziz, to participate in a special function. Dr. Darshan Singh of Chandigarh was one of the main speakers. He did not utter a single word against Jahangir or the Mughal authorities in his Punjabi speech. Why? Was he also afraid? Or, were the Sikhs more concerned with building good relationships with the Pakistani authorities keeping the current needs of the community in mind? Why are we then interpreting Bhai Gurdas's 'silence' as 'cowardice'?

[36] For details, see Peter Gottschalk, *Beyond Hindu and Muslim: Multiple Identity in Narratives in Village India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 5-6.

[37] Ibid., p. 7.

[38] It is instructive to note that the author of *Mahima Prakash* does not mention the name of Prithi Chand as responsible for Guru Arjan's death in any way. Although Jiwan Mal (sixth in line from Prithi Chand) reestablished the lineage at the village of Guru Har Sahai (named after his son) in 1752, his grandson, Ajit Singh (d. 1813) worked out a close relationship with the Khalsa. Similarly, the exclusion of the Sodhi family of Kartarpur (Dhirmalias) from the Panth was lifted in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was Vadbhag Singh who was able to win this reprieve with the help of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Indeed, Sarup Das Bhalla was fully aware of these renegotiations with the Khalsa during his time.

[39] Piara Singh Padam, ed., *Bansavalinama Dasan Patishahian Ka* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1997), Verses 103-131, pp. 82-4. Also see Louis E. Fenech, "Martyrdom and the Execution of Guru Arjan in Early Sikh Sources," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 121, No. 1 (January-March, 2001): 26, and J.S. Grewal, *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1996), p. 143.

[40] Padam, *Bansavalinama*, 5: 139, p. 85

[41] Jit Singh Seetal, ed., *Sri Guru Panth Parkash: Krit (Authored by) Bhai Ratan Singh Bhangu, Shahid* (Amritsar: Sikh Itihas Research Board, S.G.P.C., 1984), p. 366.

[42] See Madanjit Kaur & Piar Singh, eds., *Selected Works of Sirdar Kapur Singh: Guru Arjan and His Sukhmani* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1992).

[43] For the discussion of their views, see my *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, pp. 208-11.

[44] Amarjit Singh Grewal, *Sach di Saiast: Guru Arjan Dev di Shahidi bare ikk Samvad* (Ludhiana, Punjabi Bhavan: Chetna Prakashan, 2009). This work is a compilation of a conversation among the leftist scholars, Punjabi literary critics, dramatists, and poets. Two years before this publication Amarjit Singh Grewal wrote to me as follows: "Dear Dr. Pashaura Singh: After going through your book *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, especially the chapter on martyrdom, I am excited to congratulate you for doing such a work. With the involvement of more than two players, the martyrdom of Guru Arjan does not remain a matter of historical (dialectical) construction, but becomes a non-zero-sum game of multiple players, a subject of dramatic construction. You have done it. I will be writing about it." (Personal communication, February 23, 2007).

[45] See C. Shackle, *A Guru Nanak Glossary* (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1995 [SOAS 1981]), p. 85: "*kurabanu* (-i, -o)*, sacrifice, offering." Also see Ivan Strenski's discussion of the term 'sacrifice' in his "Sacrifice, Gift and the Social Logic of Muslim Human Bombers" in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 15:3 (2003): 8.

[46] M1, *Salok Varan Te Vadhik* 20, AG, p. 1412.

[47] M1, *Vadahansu Alahanian* 2, AG, pp. 579-80.

[48] M1, *Asa 3*, AG, p. 9.

[49] M5, *Salok*, AG, p. 1429.

[50] Cf. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996 [1982]), p. 44.

[51] Pal Ahluwalia, "The politics of intimacy: (re)thinking 1984," *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory*, Volume 6, No. 2 (December 2010): 115: "The actions the Sikh Gurus took were not a form of resignation. Their conundrum was akin likely to Abraham's test of faith. They demonstrated the importance of accepting the will of God and the

power of love. Above all, their actions, albeit in response to a hostile state that refused to allow its citizens to freely practice their religion, were not merely about politics. Their actions were not about recognition or granting of a certain status of martyr. Rather, they paved a path that practically demonstrated the power of love and the acceptance of the will of God."

[52] The term comes from J.S. Grewal's article, "Guru Arjan Dev's Life, Martyrdom and Legacy," in Kapur and Singh, eds., *Guru Arjan's Contribution, Martyrdom and Legacy*, p. 34: "Like Ramdaspur, the Harimandar and Ramdas Sarovar, the Granth is the expression of God's grace and the means of advancing the dispensation of Guru Nanak for the redemption of humankind. This is the *halemi raj* that was established through Divine Ordinance. Guru Arjan put his seal on it with his life."

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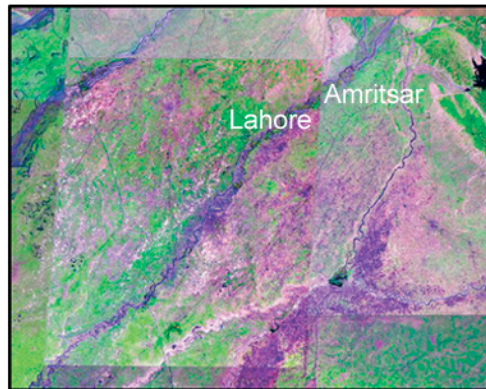
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