



Dr. Manzur Ejaz

Books:

- Waris Nama (5 volumes)
- Ranjha Yar (Play)
- Nazman
- Inq̄lab Jo Chuka Hey
- Waris Shah di Mudhli Wichaar Dhara te Punjabi Reet
- Wichaar Dharan
- My People my Thoughts
- Epistemic of Development Economics
- Lectures on YouTube via Wichaar Webcast

ISBN: 978-969-7905-03-4



Sulaikh
bookmakers

printing • publishing • editing
67 2nd Floor Madina Tower 224 Ferozpur Road, Lahore.
+ 92 300 44 30 626 sulaikh@gmail.com



Dr. Manzur Ejaz

Waris Shah: The Ideologue

Waris Shah: The Ideologue

Dr. Manzur Ejaz

Waris Shah: The Ideologue

Dr. Manzur Ejaz

Sulaikh / Wichaar

Waris Shah The Ideologue

by

Dr. Manzur Ejaz

Copyright c 2019 – 1st Edition: 1000

Except in Pakistan this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out or circulated without the consent of the author or the publisher in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published.

Cover designed by:

Sulaikh

Price:

In Pakistan: Rs. 200.00

Abroad: US\$. 15.00

Printed by:

Maktaba-e-Jadeed Press

Lahore, Pakistan

ISBN:

978-969-7905-03-4

Published by

Sulaikh / Wichaar

10726 Zion Drive, Fairfax Virginia 20032

Tel: 703-863-3451

Empty

Contents

1. Waris Shah: The Realist	5
2. Waris Shah's basic changes in the story	20
3. Spiritual or Worldly Love	29
4. The Women World	41
5. Social conditions and History of Punjab	52
6. Language and Style of Waris Shah	60
7. Waris Shah's Epistemology	69

Waris Shah: The Realist

Before beginning the tale, Waris Shah tells readers that he is writing this story mainly at a friends' request: "Yaran asan noon sawal keeta, qissa Heer da nawan banaiye ji" (Friends requested me to create a new love [story] of Heer). And towards the end of his unique rendition of the tale he explains:

ختم رب دے حکم دے نال ہوئی فرمائش پیارے یار دی سی
ایسا شعر کیتا پر مغز موزوں جیہا موتیاں لڑی شہوار دی سی

(It was completed with Allah's blessing on beloved friend's asking.

I composed the thought-provoking poetry like a royal peal string)

When Waris Shah described his poetry as 'thought provoking' he did not mean that his use of the language was superb or better than others. He makes that point when he says, "Fiqra joR ke khoob drusat keeta nawan phul gulab da toRia ey" (I composed the lines and corrected them meticulously as one picks a new rose flower). When he says "thought-provoking" he is indicating that he is creating a story into which he is meticulously weaving in an ideology. He also emphasizes this in an earlier stanza when he says, "Buhat jeo de vich tadbeer kar ke, Farhad pahaR noon phoRia ey" (With deep thinking and planning, Farhad has dug the hill). With full consciousness, he constructed the story and at the end, half-laughingly, pronounced that "Waris Shah mian lokan kamlian noon, qissa joR hushiar sunaya ey" (Waris Shah, a cleverly constructed story has been narrated to simpletons). The

essence of aforesaid is that there is a complex thought process behind the story construction which may not be grasped by common folks who enjoy it in a leisurely manner. Mian Muhammad Bakhsh resents the withering away of people who were capable of 'ramzan punnan' (deciphering the cues). Waris Shah, wittingly called the people unable to decipher the deeper meaning, as simpletons.

To untangle Waris Shah's ideology, one must start at the beginning of the story. No other poet started their version of Heer Ranjha with dispute over land before Waris Shah. By starting the story with the land dispute, Waris Shah identifies economic needs as the basis of change in the status quo. He demonstrates how Ranjha faces injustice because of the prevailing religious bigotry and redundant social/administrative system.

حضرت قاضی تے پیچ سدا سارے بھائیاں زمیں نوں کچھ پوایا اے
وڈھی دے کے بھونیں دے بنے وارث، بنجر زمیں رنجھٹے نوں آیا اے

After bringing the so-called Qazi and headmen together, the brother got the land measured. They became the owners of fertile land and barren land was given to Ranjha)

To further reiterate his basic point, he says "Waris Shah eeh gharz he buhat piari, hor sak na sain na ang de ni" (Waris Shah self-interest is dearest, and all the relation, of near and far, are meaningless). This means that blood relations are also an illusion and are rather linked based on common economic interests. Mallah (the boatman) said the same thing "Aseen rab keeh jande bhain paRa baiRa thailde lab de waste te" (We don't care about God, you sister fucker, we float the boat for self-interest). Going further into the story, to show, ruling class's economic interest, Heer's father is shown to ditch his honor for having Ranjha graze his buffalos by saying "Sadi dheer da kujh na lah lainda, char din tan majheen chara laiye" (He cannot take

away much of our daughter, let's have him graze the buffalos for some time)

When Heer is being wedded, Waris Shah brings out the same point in these verses:

ساک ماڑیاں دے کھوہ لین ڈاہڈے ان بچ دے اوہ نہ بولدے نی
گن ماڑیاں دے سبھے رہن وچے ماڑے ماڑیاں تے دکھ پھولدے نی
شاندار نوں کرے نہ کوئی جھوٹھا کنگال جھوٹھا کر ٹوردے نی
وارث شاہ لٹائیندے گھریں ماڑے مارے خوف دے مومنوں نہ بولدے نی

(The powerful ones rip away the relations of the weaker ones and they helplessly remain reticent. The talent of the weaker ones remains hidden, the weaker ones share their pain with each other. No one exposes the splendid one's lies, the penniless is always declared a liar. Waris Shah the weaker ones are plundered and yet they don't speak due to fear).

Waris Shah is making the point that it is the class-based structure of society that contributes to its materialism and unfairness. Qazi subscribes to this class-based society and tells Heer to stay away from low level labors/servants in saying "Chak chobran nal na gal keje, eeh mihnati kehRe thaon de ni" (Never talk to the servants who are lowest of the lowest, these labors are no-bodies in the society). Due to the class divisions, Waris Shah makes the shepherd an ally for Ranjha in saying that "ja la le da jo lagda ey" (Go and use any tact you can) and "KhairRa saak na sadRa lagda ye" (Khaira is none of our relative).

To show an undeniable basic truth, a physical relationship between man and a woman, Ranjha tells Jogi "Rannan kolon je warjde chalian noon eeh guru na banh ke chowane nain" (If you ask your disciples to stay away from women, these gurus are not going to be milked). Ranjha goes further by saying that he has become a Jogi for the love of a woman and if he could take every woman as his sister or

mother, he would not suffer such hardships. He wrote about 24 stanzas on the consummation of love and described love-making from various angles. However, to maintain the innocence and purity of the relationship he wrote "Pahle pair pakRe aitqad kar ke phair nal kaleje de lag gai" (First, she touched his (Ranjha's) feet, strengthening her devotion [in him] and then clung to his chest).

To further strengthen the point that society is based on material conditions, Waris Shah argues in dialogue between Ranjha and Sehti (Heer's sister-in-law):

کار ساز ہے رب تے پھیر دولت سبھو محنتاں پیٹ دے کارنے نی
پیٹ واسطے پھرن امیر در در سید زادیاں نے گدھے چارنے نی
پیٹ واسطے پری تے حور زاداں جاوَن جن تے بھوت دے وارنے نی
پیٹ واسطے سب خرابیاں نیں پیٹ واسطے خون گذارنے نی

(First God and then wealth are facilitators, the entire labor is for livelihood (stomach). For the livelihood faqirs go from door to door and the offspring of Syeds serve as shepherd for the donkeys. For the livelihood, the fairies and hours' daughters, honor the jinni. All the ills are due to livelihood, and murders are committed for that).

Waris Shah describes the dynamics of feudal order and the land revenue in the same stanza:

ایس زمیں نوں واہندا ملک تھکاتے ہو چلے وڈے کارنے نی
کانوں ہورتے راہک ہو راس دے، خاوند ہو ردم ہو رناں مارنے نی

(The generations have been consumed tilling this land and great incidents have taken place [because of this]. The state appointed revenue collectors are different from the sharecroppers, the owners are separate, and someone has a claim [over them])

In these two verses, Waris Shah simply describes the complexity of the feudal system and layers of owners and officials plundering the tillers. Such a system has been in

existence for a very long time (about two thousand years before Waris Shah was born) and in that time many dreadful events relating to the struggle between classes, have taken place. The system is complex in that officials collecting revenues are different from the sharecroppers, and on top of which there is a class of owners and yet another power overrides them all.

To demonstrate the existence of economic bindings, Waris Shah shows another aspect of this system through Khairas claiming that they have more rights over Heer because they have wedded her, spending a lot of money in the process. Ranjha also complains to Jogi about the unjust world “Lain dain te dagha anyion karna, lut ghut te chorian yarian ne” (There is treachery and injustice in dealings of the world and [all around] there is looting, usurping and illegitimate relations).

Not only did Waris Shah show that society’s basis is materialistic and economic, he also inverted the meaning of different spiritual symbols. Heer’s story written by all the poets before Waris Shah had shown the Panj Peer (five saints) and Jogi as supreme spiritual entities who facilitated Ranjha to get Heer. However, Waris Shah describes the Panj Peer as symbols for the five human senses and interprets the Jogi, as the symbol of women. He drastically changed the meaning of symbols by interpreting them as part of the material world:

پنج پیر حواس ایہہ پنج تیرے جنساں تھاپنا تھ نوں لایا ای
جوگ ہے عورت کن پاڑ جس نے سبھ انگ بھوت رمایا ای

(Panj Peer are your five senses that have patted your back (encouraged, strengthened). The Jog is [symbol of) woman who pierced the ears and had you wrapped up in ashes).

Poets before Waris Shah showed the Panj Peer and Jogi as superbly spiritual and indomitable powers, and yet at the same time incapable of effectively resolving issues faced by Heer and Ranjha. According to these writers, as it is also

believed in the common feudal ideology, society’s discourse can be interrupted by supernatural powers, therefore, they had to deploy a technique to have Heer and Ranjha disappear into thin air. However, because Waris Shah interpreted these entities as symbols and representatives of the material world, he could end the story with a tragedy. According to his worldview, humans can rejuvenate their internal powers to wage a struggle against injustice in society, but that does not mean those humans will attain inevitable success. They could fail to overturn the existing societal order at a particular historical stage for reasons outside of their control. Waris Shah had to make Heer and Ranjha die because society had not reached the stage where free relationships between men and women could be accepted.

Waris Shah showed the evolution of Ranjha’s consciousness and the awakening of his internal powers as the start of a process which takes a person through various stages. To start with, he explains that flute-playing was the initial stage of becoming conscious about society: “JehRa bolda natqa wnjahli hey, jais hoosh da rag sunaia ey” (The internal power of speech is flute, a song, that awakens the consciousness). Panj Peers and Jogi are inducted to take this consciousness further. Hence, Waris Shah is positing that strengthening an individual’s internal powers and consciousness takes him or her forward. This is not to say that Waris Shah was the Karl Marx of Punjab or even a Marxist: yet, as a poet, Waris Shah’s worldview was materialistic, and he rewrote or changed the story, making economic factors the basic movers of events in the story.

Waris Shah based his philosophy of history, on a materialist basis as well. The irreversible course of history is a recurrent theme in his story: “Gaey umar te waqat phir nahin muRde, gaey karam te bhag na awande ni” (The passing of age and time never return, the fortune and destiny [never] come back). Ranjha’s sisters-in-law twice

beg him to come back to Takhat Hazara (Ranjha's birth place) but he refuses and keeps moving forward. Through Ranjha, Waris Shah establishes the notion that history never repeats itself and if efforts are made to revert history, it leads to death. Heer and Ranjha remain alive as long as they move forward, however, when they try to return to the old societal form, where they would become chieftains, they die.

Waris Shah shows that movement in history occurs due to internal social conflicts. Najm Hussain Syed describes Waris Shah's technique as showing the grandeur of institutions and places from a distance and then exposing their disastrous state when examined up close. However, one can interpret Waris Shah's technique as showing the ideal versus the reality. Through this technique, he shows the contradiction between the ideal claimed by the society with the repulsive actual conditions. First, he depicts Takhat Hazara as an ideal place by saying "Ik Takhat Hazarion gal kejay jithe Ranjhian rang macaia ey" (Let us talk about Takhat Hazara where Ranjhas are living a colorful life) then he takes the reader inside and shows how brothers are cutting each other's throats and where the system is rigged by briberies and dishonesty. Similarly, he shows the mosque as an ideal place of learning "Masjid Bait ul Atiq missal Aahi khana Kaabion dool utario nain" (The mosque was like Bait ul Atiq constructed on the model of Khana Kaaba) and then he makes us confront a very narrow-minded Mullah. He depicts Heer as the most beautiful woman on the earth and then exposes her internal shortcomings by having her say "Sujay pareh han trinjaneen chain nahin" (My gatherings feel like deserted and I am not at peace in my female friends' getting together). Showing the institution of Jog, he starts by ridiculing it "Zara kan paRwa ke sawa malni guru sare hi jag da howana je" (It is merely piercing the ear and getting ashes all over the body [and just by doing that one becomes

the Guru of the entire world] and then he brings out the pain and dishonor of doing so through Heer "Jis da jawan puttara swah la baitha, ditta rab da maan she gai je ni" (The mother whose son has wrapped himself in ashes, has taken it as God's will).

Waris Shah shows economic interest behind every contradiction. First of all, Ranjha leaves Takhat Hazara due to a land dispute which means that the impetus of the story is an economic factor. The Mullah's contradiction is that he cannot take a straight path because of the demands of maintaining his livelihood. The boatman is very upfront about his economic motivation while the Qazi is accepting bribes and sells his faith for his greed of money. Heer's father consciously ignores his daughter's love affair because of the potential for material gain. Waris Shah does not spare even the Jogi by portraying him as a parasite who has created drama for the demands of his livelihood. By having Khairas say over and over, that they got Heer for money, Waris Shah gives the priority to the economic aspect of the story. Therefore, it would not be wrong to conclude that Waris Shah looks at every contradiction through economic and material conditions.

Waris Shah does not give much importance to religion or faith. In his view the ritual practices of followers of different religions has no bearing on the basic structure of society. In the beginning of the story one gets the impression that Ranjha is a Muslim and that is why he is bound by Qazi's decision. Ranjha's venture to go to a mosque for spending the night strengthen the impression of him being a Muslim. All the Panj Peers are also known Muslim saints. Heer's encounters with Qazi at different occasions also indicate that they are Muslims. However, after becoming a Jogi, Ranjha's whole outlook seems to change to that of a Hindu. When Ranjha, gets badly beaten by Sethi and ends up highly disheartened in Kala Bagh, he

is reminded of his strength when he had Panj Peer and Jogi on his side:

جنماں پیراں دا زور ہے تہہ نوں وے کر رات دینہ اوہناں دا چا پ میاں

You should be saying the prayers for the peers who are your strength)

زور اپنا فقر نوں یاد آئیہا بالنا تھ میرا گورو باپ میاں

The saint remembered his strength by realizing that Blalnath [Jogi] was his guru and father)

When Saida Khaira goes back, after beaten by Jogi, he wonders aloud that he “Nalay paRhe Quran te de bangan chonke panwda sankh wjawanda ey”

(He recites Quran, loudly calls for prayers and prepares the square purity along with blowing conch [like Hindus])

This simply means that Ranjha is Hindu and Muslim at the same time. Bulleh Shah described this in the following verses.

کتے رام داس کتے فتح محمد ایہو قدیمی شور

مٹ گیا دوہاں دا جھگڑا نکل پیا کجھ ہور

(Since eternity, somewhere [he is] called Fateh Muhammad and on others Ramdas. When the dispute [of names] was resolved ‘something else emerged [from that])

Waris Shah’s use of Quranic verses at several places and frequent use of Hindu mythology shows that major difficulty faced by the human beings has nothing to do with religion: it’s the economic structure that has troubled the individuals. According to Waris Shah one can find a path to liberation through either Hinduism and Islam. Waris Shah has shown that Panj Peer and Jogi have the identical ideology. Bulleh Shah discerned that in following verses:

مکہ لٹکا سہدیو کے بھیت دوپو کو ایک بتاؤے

جب جوگی تم وصل کرو گے بانگ کہے بھانویں ناد و جاوے

(Mecca and Lanka’s secrets are said to be one and the same. O Jogi when you will attain the union [it does not matter] if you call out loud for prayers or blow a conch).

Waris Shah showed that before union (or love making) with Heer, Ranjha calls out for prayers and blowing conch. Discussing the doctrine of pantheism, Waris Shah sees a similar path in both Islam and Hinduism. He describes pantheism in Islamic terms as follows:

جیسرے اک دے ناں تے محو ہوئے منظور خدا دے راہ دے نی

جنہاں صدق یقین تحقیق کیتا مقبول درگاہ اللہ دے نی

(The ones who got absorbed in one are accepted on God’s path. Those who have truth and clear belief (after scrutiny) [in one] have approval of God’s abode).

He describes pantheism through Hindu Jogi:

مالا منکیاں وچ جیوں اک دھاگاتویں سرب کے بچ سما رہیا

سبھناں جیوندیاں وچ ہے جان واگوں نشہ بھنگ افیم وچ آرہیا

جیوں پترے مہندیوں رنگ رچیا توں جان جہان وچ آرہیا

جیوں رکت سریر وچ ساس اندر توں جوت میں جوت سما رہیا

(Like a string in a necklace of beads, he has entered in everyone (the entire universe). He is alive within everyone like the intoxication of hemp and opium. Like color of henna [hidden] in its leaves, He has been absorbed in the universe. He is like blood in the body and breath, light in unison with light).

Talking about Khairas, Waris Shah, describes that Hindu and Muslims witnessed and participated in Heer’s wedding.

In a very subtle manner Waris Shah portrays different modes of production. In Ranjha’s birth place, Takhat Hazara, the dominant mode of production is agriculture while in Heer’s Jhang, it is herd breeding. In Ranjha’s Takhat Hazara his brothers want to take control of the

fertile land but in Jhang, Chuchak Sial's entire wealth is his herd of buffalos that are taken care of by buffalo-boys (i.e. cowboys). According to the historical stages of development, agricultural mode of production is more advanced than animal breeding, therefore, the leader of emancipation comes from the agrarian society. The individual from an agrarian mode has a little better understanding of class-based feudal society and, hence, more capable of formulating a new ideology. Waris Shah creates some confusion at the occasion of Heer's wedding, where jewelry, different dishes of food and fireworks are indicative of urban society of that time not available to a herd breeding society. The only explanation is that Waris Shah is idealizing the wedding ceremony like he did in case of a mosque. But, with several buffalos given in dowry, he reverts to the depiction of an animal breeding society.

Waris Shah shows the links and differentiations between the mode of production and prevalent ideologies of the society. According to him, Punjab's society was comprised of agrarians, herd breeders and the commercial sector. In Ranjha's birth place, Takhat Hazara, the society is agrarian, and decision-making is in the hands of headmen (elders or arbitrators) and state appointed Qazi. However, in Heer's Jhang, with a herd breeding society, the decisions are made by the entire tribe including settling disputes and arranging marriages (i.e. Heer's marriage). It means that state intervention is nonexistent in that society. Khoje, Khatri run the business in cities which Waris Shah mentioned in appraising Heer's beauty as "Khoje Khatri qatal bazar wichoon" (Khoje Khatri die viewing Heer). Waris Shah has not given details about the business classes except for the boatman who controls the means of transportation and whose sole motive is economic gain. Showing intricacies of the feudal order, Waris Shah projects a secular materialist view. For example, the plunderers of peasantry are identified with a generic term 'Jats' about whom the Raja

(king) says that "prosperous Jats do not care about anyone." The Jats can and belong to any religions. Hence, Waris Shah conclusively argues that religion or geography does not make any difference when it comes to mode of production.

Waris Shah brings out various aspects of the links between economic order and the ideology that emanates from it. First, the link comes through bribery-addicted Qazi who gives barren land to Ranjha and then tells Heer not to mingle with the down-trodden, forces her into a nikah (Muslim contract of marriage) and hands her over to Khairas in the end. He is shown to be so powerful that he overturns the Raja's (ruler's) decision. It shows that ruling order is maintained through religious ideology. Mullah does the same on a lower level by imposing religious addictions which contribute towards the maintaining of the status quo.

Going on a deeper level, Waris Shah maintains that despite varying ritualistic practices there is a common underlying ideology of the people that we discussed earlier as well. However, to show the contours of such an ideology one should identify the invisible entities (jinni, witches, gods goddesses etc.) and magical powers controlling the main discourse of life. Such imaginary powers are believed to be behind natural events (rain, windstorms, earthquakes etc.), changes in human body (diseases), social relations, economic conditions and everything else in this universe. Magicians and people with exceptional spiritual powers are said to be capable of controlling the forces of nature. Faith in such ideas is the core of ideology among people of all religions (Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others). Similarly, the common ideology of resistance is shown, symbolically, assisted by Muslim peers and Hindu Jogis.

Waris Shah observes a simultaneous change in economic order and its ideological structure. In the following stanza

he depicts the changes in basic structure of Punjab in his times:

جدوں دلیں تے جٹ سردار ہوئے گھرو گھری جاں نوں سرکار ہوئی
اشراف خراب کمین تازہ زمیندار نوں وڈھی بہار ہوئی
چور چودھری یارنی پاک دامن بھوت منڈلی اک تھوں چار ہوئی

(When the Jats became the rulers of the land, every place had its own ruler. The elite is in ruins, lowly ones are rejuvenated, and it is [like] spring [season] for the landed people. Thieves have become leaders, women, having illegitimate relations, are declared puritans (innocents) and devil groupings have increased manifold).

In this stanza, the first line describes the political change, the second shows the change of economic fortunes of various classes and the last one illuminates the emerging social order (or chaos). To Waris Shah's dislike, the Jats, replacing the Mughal political order, and division of Punjab in different localities (Punjab was divided into ten misals ruled by different Sikh Jats) has led to a new economic order. In the new economic system, the old elite is destroyed, the kameen (lowly classes of farmers and artisans) have gained a new life and landed people have prospered (due to lower taxes). Waris Shah depicted the previous socio-economic order in which the downtrodden were trampled upon and the rule of corrupt Qazis and Mullahs as being susceptible to drastic change. Nevertheless, Waris Shah abhors the incoming changes. This is likely because either Waris Shah identifies himself with the old elite or in his view the changed system was worse than the previous one.

If one looks closely, the overall economic structure had not changed during that period: it was the same old system that had existed for more than two thousand years. As far as the ideology was concerned, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh reverted to worshipping different goddesses and seven women burnt

themselves alive (tradition of sati) on his pyre. Therefore, Waris Shah was not very much mistaken that the changes occurring in his time were worse than the status quo.

In Waris Shah's ideology, the gender contradiction, in particular, stands out. In the beginning of the story, through Ranjha's dialogue with his sisters-in-law, Waris Shah portrayed women as unjust as men. However, one of the possible explanations is that for his sisters-in-law Ranjha was another male belonging to the oppressor gender. However, when he abandoned property, crossed the river and became a lowly servant, he developed a new relationship with the female gender. For Waris Shah, this transformation was necessary for making Ranjha a partner of women in their struggle against the patriarchal system.

In Jhang, Heer's female friends become a pro-Ranjha squad to fend off his enemies. They, even challenge Heer when they suspect that she has deserted him to get married. Waris Shah intensifies his stress on the 'women world' when he takes Ranjha to Rangpur, Kharian, Heer's in-law's town. First, all the women of Rangpur, adore Ranjha as a symbol of freedom. Then in a very lengthy dialogue between Ranjha and Sehti, Waris Shah portrays her (Sehti) as a worthy social scholar. Waris Shah could have created such a dialogue between two males but he chooses a woman to indicate that men are not known to be sensitive enough to grasp the possibility of change. In the end, when Ranjha ends up in Kala Bagh, Waris Shah not only used the occasion to portray women, living in an entirely different orbit, but also shows the secrete organization building under Sehti's leadership to overturn the patriarchal system. Waris Shah has written nine stanzas over the inner unity of the women world: Women of all ages, classes, casts, religions and occupations (including prostitutes and dancing girls) join hands with Sehti to help Heer and Ranjha.

In conclusion, Waris Shah' ideology centers on a materialistic society in which the class struggle plays a key role in the movement of history. For him, the gender differentiation is equally important, and society cannot change without the participation of women.

Waris Shah's basic changes in the story

To fit his ideology, Waris Shah made many changes to the story including the sequence of events impacting the beginning and end of the story and also altered existing characters and added new ones. Against the backdrop of the well-known folk tale of Heer Ranjha written by Demodar Das and by Hafiz Shah Jahan Muqbil in 16th and 18th century respectively, Waris Shah's story and thought process is fundamentally different. As opposed to these others he passes over big events in half a verse and writes dozens of stanzas shown to be minor or non-existent in others. He arranges the events and manages the dialogues to further his philosophical worldview. The following are the major changes made by him:

- (1) First, he declared that he is creating a different story than the existing ones: he does not claim to be an eye witness like Demodar Das did. For him, there was no real or unreal story and it all depends on the creator's perspective, that is to say the same story can be written in different ways.
- (2) Waris Shah took Takhat Hazara as Ranjha's birth place like Demodar Das and Shah Jahan Muqbil but he never showed Ranjha returning to the place except at the end when he returned and died. For Waris Shah, Ranjha's turning back was a death wish. Waris Shah uses Takhat Hazara as a symbol of a place where an individual gains primary consciousness and

then moves on to deepen it. Unlike others' in Waris Shah's version Ranjha's brothers and sisters-in-law write him letters asking him to return which he refuses to do. In Demodar Das and Muqbil's story Ranjha returns to Takhat Hazara after Heer's wedding but Waris Shah makes him say "Bhabhi ishq thon nas ke o jande, puttār hon je kise kangal de ni" (O sister-in-law, those who back away from love are offspring of a bankrupt [father]). For him like 'the time passed away' or 'the years that have been spent,' there is no return from treading the path of love. Therefore, when he returns to live like his brothers, death swallows him.

- (3) Waris Shah was the first poet of Heer Ranjha's story who began the entire affair with society's material and economic conflict. The treachery done by his brothers with the assistance of Qazi and headmen over the division of land became the basis of the story. Demodar Das also showed the intense enmity among Ranjha's brothers, but it was merely due to their father's unbalanced love for him. In general, Demodar Das's depiction of the society is tribal where, probably, property was common and there could be no dispute over land. According to Demodar Das's narration, Ranjha's father, apprehensive of his brothers' hostility, gets him engaged into another powerful chieftain family. Ranjha escapes from Takhat Hazara after discovering a conspiracy of his brothers to kill him after his father's death. Similarly, Ranjha has no conflict with his brothers and sisters-in-law according to Muqbil's account. In fact when Ranjha falls in love with Heer in a dream and when he decides to head to Jhang, his sisters-in-law beg him to change his mind. It was Waris Shah that declares through Ranjha that "Waris Shah eeh gharz he buhat piari, hor sak na sain na ang de ni" (Waris

Shah, economic interest is dearest to everyone and there is no relative near or far).

- (4) Waris Shah takes Ranjha to the mosque to expose the negative role played by that institution. Waris Shah describes the entire highest-level curriculum being taught in mosque to ensure the reader knows that he is debating the entire institution of organized religion and not just a petty village Mullah. Demodar Das also takes Ranjha to mosque but creates another unrelated story in which he is attached to another girl etc. Muqbil's Mullah is very kind and caring who feeds him very well and wishes him good luck. However, Waris creates the lengthy argument between Ranjha and Mullah to negate the bigoted ideology of Mullahism. Probably, while writing this dialogue, Baba Farid was also on his mind. Baba Farid was also accused by Qazi and the local ruler for dancing and singing in the mosque. To follow Baba Farid's tradition, Waris Shah's Ranjha plays his flute in the mosque. Waris Shah, and the Chishtia School of thought of that time considered mosque a place which can accommodate music and travelers. Waris Shah also shows that common people of the village favor Ranjha over Mullah because when he plays his flute "Ran marad na pind wich reha koi, sabha gird maset de awnda hey" (There was no man or woman who did not come around the mosque). In this setting, Waris Shah introduces Mullah as "Waris Shah mian pand jhagRian di pichoon Mullah maset da awnda hey" (Waris Shah, then [after the people] the Mullah, a bundle of squabbles entered). Waris Shah's main interest is to show the contradiction between people and ritualistic religion.
- (5) To present the mind-set of the business class, Waris Shah creates a clash between Mullah (the boatman) and Ranjha. In Demodar Das, an entirely different

story is told about the boatman who is at odds with his master, a chieftain, and Heer saves him as a warrior woman. Muqbil's boatman, like Mullah, is very kind hearted and invites Ranjha in his boat to take him to the other side of the river. But, it is Waris Shah's boatman who upon Ranjha's request, to give him ride in the boat, yells that "Aseen rab keeh janiay bhain paRa, beRa thaihilde lab de waste te" (We don't care about God, we push the boat for [economic] interest). By showing that the boatman's greed, Waris Shah puts them in the category of Ranjha's brothers and Mullah. Waris Shah's Mullah and the boatman are one and the same person even though one earns livelihood in the name of God and the other curses Him: both hate the downtrodden and needy and exploit them.

- (6) Waris Shah portrayal of Heer is also different. He has shown Heer as an extremely beautiful and aggressive but not a warrior woman as in Demodar Das' version. This difference is likely due to the two different types of societies: in Demodar Das's tribal society women were not as oppressed by patriarchal system as in Waris Shah's feudal order of 18th century. Another reason can be that Demodar Das belonged from a Jatka (indigenous) area where the women's role was somewhat different from central and East Punjab. Furthermore, Waris Shah, idealizing Heer's beauty had her wear jewelry from around the globe. It seems that, in doing so, Waris Shah was transforming Heer into a universal character. Waris Shah describes Heer as an extremely arrogant girl who needs a 'chak' (lowest class servant) for her awakening of consciousness. In dialogue between Heer and Ranjha, Waris Shah elucidates difference of views and many other hurdles she faces while Muqbil makes her perform prayers at difficult stages.

- (7) Waris Shah changed the character of Chuchak, Heer's father. Waris Shah portrays him as a hypocritical tribal chief. He pretends to be a person who will do everything to save his honor and dismisses Ranjha upon discovering the love affair with his daughter. However, when no one else can manage the buffalo herd he tells his wife to bring him back. In this way, Waris Shah shows that economic interest takes priority over honor even for a tribal chief. Both Demodar Das and Muqbil do not go into that dimension.
- (8) There is no mention of Heer's female friends in Muqbil's version, however, Demodar Das gave an expansive detail about them. Demodar Das uses Heer's closest friend, Hassi, to present some aspects of interaction between Heer and Ranjha that is absent from Waris Shah's narration. In Demodar Das's depiction, Heer's female friends are spiritual disciples of Ranjha. Waris Shah portrays Heer's female friends as an indigent minded squad of women fighting against the male oppression: they stand for justice and turn against Heer when they perceive that she has abandoned Ranjha.
- (9) The role of Panj Peer (five saints) is mentioned by almost every poet narrating the story, but Waris Shah gives it a new twist. Not only does he identify the names of the Panj Peers but declares them as symbols of five human senses. On their first appearance, the Panj Peer bless Ranjha with five gifts, ranging from handkerchief to a dagger. It means that one must awaken the delicate senses and power to defend for the completion of one's personality. Waris Shah suggests that listening and singing of Ragas (classical music) is a necessary part of fulfillment of the human personality. However, if Pan Peers are five senses then they should be taken as the representation of the

material world: the individual must awaken the inner potential to struggle against all odds. Like other poets, Waris Shah shows the appearance of Panj Peers when Ranjha faces most difficult situations, however, by ending the story as tragedy, it is shown that societal forces prevail over the spiritual ones.

- (10) Demodar Das characterizes Kaido as a lower-class kami (artisan) who accepts expulsion from the village when challenged by Heer for his betrayal in outing her affair with Ranjha. Muqbil also depicts Kaido as an underprivileged person amenable to Chuchak's consoling words after he is battered, and his hut is burnt by Heer. Waris Shah portrays Kaido as a handicapped and marginalized person who has the courage to stand up to the most powerful people of the village. He is shown to be a protector of societal honor who can expose the hypocrisy of the upper echelons of the society. To prove himself to be more pious than others, he does not care about Chuchak's economic interests. Waris Shah exposes another contradiction of such a pretentious pious person by declaring him a sexual degenerate. Through the character of Kaido Waris Shah articulates social piety as the result of inner degeneration. Waris Shah gets Kaido's hut burnt by the collective action of female folks.
- (11) According to Demodar Das's version, Heer's so-called husband is named Ali Khan who is a very aggressive village chieftain. In his narration, Khairas, Heer's in-laws, get drunk and try to beat Ranjha to death. Similarly, attempts on Heer's life are made in his story. Muqbil's take is superstitious; according to him Heer goes for prayer when Khaira tries to approach her bed and flees after being thrashed by invisible powers. Waris Shah does not care much about Saida Khaira and mentions him occasionally.

Saida Khaira is a symbol of Azrael, the angel of death, according to Waris Shah.

- (12) Waris Shah assigns the role of messenger to a woman instead of a man like Demodar Das who uses Ramoo Bahman to deliver Heer's message to Ranjha. By doing so, Waris Shah further strengthens the unity among women against the opposite gender.
- (13) Waris Shah brings out new dimensions about the institution of Jog (ascetism). Both, Demodar Das and Muqbil describe the difficulties in following the path of Jog through Jogi and let Ranjha go swiftly to the village of Heer's in-laws. But, Waris Shah ridicules the institution of Jog to start with, calling it an easy way out and a facade to become the spiritual leader and have a nice livelihood. After the initial ridiculing, Waris Shah explains the essence of Jog and the way Bhagwan (God) is conceived. He challenges the Jogi on his moral prerogative of taking every female as a sister or a mother. Ranjha confronts Jogi on such advice by telling him that he has become a Jogi for the love of a woman so how can he consider every female as a sister or a mother. Ranjha asserts that if he could call every female, a sister or mother, he would not be in the predicament he is in. To highlight his point, Ranjha derides the Jogi by asserting that "If disciples are forbidden from women, then the Gurus are not to be milked." Waris Shah's main point is what is the use of knowledge and devotion if it is not helpful in social life. The Jogi acknowledges Ranjha's point of view and prays for his success to get Heer. Then, in conclusion of the discussion with Jogi, Ranjha redefines Jog by saying that "He had a great desire for Jog since he fell in love with Heer." Waris Shah maintains that Jog can take different forms and it should not be limited to having ear piercings and wrapping the body in ashes.

- (14) Waris Shah inducted the character of Shepperd in the story for the first time. Although Waris Shah takes the Shepperd to be symbol of Munkar-Nakeer (two angles keeping the score of human sins), but it seems that he represents the history's score-keeper. Furthermore, it is shown, that in class struggle the individuals go with the people of their own economic status. Shepperd's taking Ranjha's side is the ultimate outcome.
- (15) Waris Shah, fundamentally, changed Sehti's (Heer's sister-in-law) character. In Demodar Das and Muqbil, Sehti becomes Heer's collaborator in a short time while Waris Shah brings them on the same page after a very lengthy dialogue spanning over more than a hundred stanzas. In this dialogue, Sehti represents the beholder of accumulated knowledge of society and Ranjha stands for a new direction in general while at the same time is a mouthpiece of male chauvinism. The dialogue between them is very involved: being on the opposite sides, they end up repeating each other. For example, Ranjha portends that earning livelihood is the basis of all ills. Sehti repeats the same concept by saying that it was eating of grain (hunger) that got Adam thrown out from paradise. In general, Sehti stands for the objective and scientific evidences versus spiritual and superstitious powers but she seems to be representative of what we call the 'empiricist' in modern philosophy. Sehti believes that there is no possibility of miracles and the persons claiming to have the power of such acts are simply fraudulent. Apparently, Ranjha is unable to persuade Sehti till he performs a miracle. In fact, the concept of miracle must be redefined in this context. The birth of Ranjha like character, in the given socio-economic order, is a miracle. In addition, it seems that Waris Shah is trying to discover the role played by objective

and scientific knowledge and an individual's inner strength to change the course of society. Furthermore, Waris Shah is trying to find out the reality of contradictions among the opposite genders. On one hand, Waris Shah shows that it is only the females who help Ranjha at every step but on the other hand clichés are repeatedly voiced from Ranjha's mouth. This means that Waris Shah believes that, even, a progressive male cannot get rid of chauvinism against females. Waris Shah has tried to cover whole range of issues, social formulas and clichés, in this dialogue.

- (16) Most of all, Waris Shah was the first creator of a version of Heer Ranjha that concluded in a tragedy. It was not easy to make such a fundamental change because by doing so one has to admit that neither the Muslim Peers nor the Hindu Jogi can overturn the socio-economic discourse. It was against such a backdrop that Demodar Das had Heer and Ranjha disappear into an invisible world assisted by supra-human entities. Muqbil remained reticent about the whereabouts of Heer and Ranjha towards the end. Waris Shah's tragic conclusion of the story shows that in 18th century Punjabi articulation of concepts had reached a point where objective and scientific knowledge was becoming an emerging trend.

Spiritual or Worldly Love

Towards the end of the story, after Heer and Ranjha's death, Waris Shah denotes that both stood firm on the path of 'majaz'. An online search of the word 'majaz' and its derivative 'majazi,' one finds the translation as 'mundane love.' However, for Waris Shah 'majaz' did not mean mundane: For him the path of 'majaz' was thrilling, exciting and a thought-provoking process. Although he starts his story with defining love as a Godly act in saying that "First of all God fell in love where the beloved was the prophet," Adding to that he propounds that "a person in pain of love" is a better human being because this is a saintly act. However, he does not create his story like Muqbil who begins his story with Ranjha fascinated by Heer in a dream. Muqbil gave the origin of love between Heer and Ranjha in the following verses:

روح بھیجیا ہیر دے شہر رانجھے آپ بھائیاں دینال پنڈ آیا
پنڈوں وڑدیاں رانجھے نوں چاٹ لگی پاڑ کپڑے انگ بھوت لایا
اثر رانجھے نوں مقبلا عشق دا ہے جن بھوت نہ پری نہ دیو دایا

(Ranjha sent his soul to Heer's city and returned to the village accompanied by his brothers.

As soon as he entered the village his heart got obsessed, he tore up his cloths and rubbed ashes upon his body.

Love influenced Ranjha and it was not that he was under the influence of fairies, jinni and demons).

Waris Shah, on the other hand, does not take Ranjha to be a born lover: He simply describes him as a flute player who is not into agricultural work. Waris Shah symbolizes the

flute playing as the awakening of the consciousness in saying "The flute is the voice from within and it is a song of consciousness." However, in the given socio-economic structure, there is no place for mere flute playing, and it is considered as an expression of rebellion. In Waris Shah, Ranjha hears Heer's name from his sisters-in-law and his journey of love starts after he faces economic woes. He tells his brothers and sisters-in-law:

رانجھے آکھیا اٹھیا رزق میرا میتھوں بھائیو تسیں کیہ منگدے ہو

(Ranjha asked his brothers that while his livelihood has vanished, what do you want from me)

بھابی رزق اداس جاں ہو ٹریا ہن کاہ نوں گھیر کے ٹھگدیاں ہو

(Ranjha [told] his sister-in-law that my means of livelihood have withered away so why you are encircling to deceive me?)

Although Ranjha leaves Takhat Hazara because of lack of livelihood, he appears to be a person of higher consciousness in his dialogue with Mullah. His flute is soul lifting for that is why "None of the man and woman remained back [in the village] and everyone came around the mosque [after listening of the flute]. Ranjha describes Mullah's sharia as a hollow construct being used for economic gains by saying that "[You Mullahs] keep yourself busy smelling halwa, eager to listen to the news of the dead [persons] and saying prayers for birth and death). Being a believer of collectivity and sharing he asks everyone to come to Heer's bedstead upon climbing it by "playing the flute [in Heer's] boat he opened the bed to common people." One can deduce that at his first stage of love his consciousness expands to be one with the common people i.e. collectivity. One should also keep in mind that Ranjha is the first man who has dared to climb Heer's bedstead.

When we look at the evolution of Heer's love, we see that it is a yet-to-be realized possibility for her. Waris Shah

calls her 'laila-tul-qadar' (a special night for Muslims) while adoring her beauty in the verse, "let us perform a pilgrimage to view [Heer] because it is an act to earn the requital." In further describing Heer's personality he hints that "love emanates from every pore of young woman's body as Raga [is created] from a string Zeel." The hidden potential of Heer's love is realized on meeting Ranjha: "upon seeing the beauty of Jat [Ranjha], awakening was realized and Heer pledge to sacrifice herself [over Ranjha]."

Upon the first encounter between Heer and Ranjha it comes out that love is a human need that results from alienation from society that leads to a craving for someone. For Waris Shah, inner yearning is essential for love because "if there is no thirst inside one should not mess up with glasses of sherbets". Heer also acknowledges such need in saying. "gathering of friends felt like deserted and there was no inside peace. You God's man has taken me across [emptiness]." Ranjha, taking the lead, lays down the pre-conditions for love. He tells Heer that the attributes upon which she has built her high place in society such as her beauty, must be abandoned.

ایڈا حسن دانہ گمان کیجے ایہہ پنگ تے سنے نہا لئیے نی
مان تے روپ گمان بھریئے اٹھکلیئے رنگ رنگلیئے نی

(One should not be arrogant of one's beauty, and here goes your bedstead and the blanket.

You are full of arrogance because of your beauty, jumpy and colorful)

Ranjha stresses upon forsaking being habitually arrogant and suggests mingling with the common people saying "for lovely persons like you, it is essential that you should take care of wayfarers." He also makes sure that Heer knows the hurdles to be faced on the path of love and warns "never try to bind lovers, beetles, saints and snakes without knowing [mastering] mantras."

One should not forget that woman and man, as a unit, are responsible of procreation. The love between a woman and a man is the merging of two bodies, as well. Commonly, the love is taken to be a spiritual experience only but Waris takes it as a struggle for physical oneness as well. When Heer and Ranjha meet at the barbers' house it is hinted that "when the commotion around [their house] dies down, the comforters come out." In Ranjha's dialogue with Jogi, this point is cleared further when he tells Jogi that "If you forbid your followers from [pursuing] women, then the Gurus are not the ones to be milked." Ranjha tells the shepherd that "A man without woman, the soil without water and lovers without seeing [the beloved] are never content." Towards the end, writing so many stanzas about Heer and Ranjha's love making, Waris Shah has argued conclusively that the love between a woman and man is both spiritual and physical.

The question is the how the love is different from the tradition of marriage. The love must be a freely sought-after relationship and it is not bounded by social structures. It is argued earlier the fundamental problem arises when a woman and a man, choosing freely, thwart the social bindings. These social bindings take the form of cast, tribe, fraternity and geographical location etc. In every folk love story the man and the woman cannot freely be one due to these bindings. Heer and Ranjha face the same hurdles because their cast, tribe, class and geographical origin is different from each other: Ranjha comes from a different cast and he is lowest class servant. In this backdrop, Ranjha pronounces that "The one who cares about homeland, and cast is a worldly commoner and not a fakir.) Therefore, the basic condition of being a lover is to forego the social considerations. By breaking the social boundaries, a person is reborn whose consciousness departs the ongoing ideology. The oneness achieved without breaking the social boundaries is to be at the feeding trough of impotent. The

concept of ‘feeding trough of the impotent’ is introduced by Najm Hosain Syed in his poem ‘Bar di Var.’ He describes it in the following verses:

اندر بوٹی نہ پھلے تے پت جماون کس کاری
جا کھڑے بھال کوئی مالی جھولنا
تے چھڈ کھیاں دی کھری
کیہ جوٹھیاں گٹکاں نپ نپ ڈھڈ ترکاؤنی ایس پئی
اوہ کیسرا اے نوشوہ ساہن مہریئے
جیسرا نظریں چھٹا مار کے سکیاں کر جائے ہریاں

(If no new sprouts blossom from within then what is the use of giving birth to a son.

Go, find a powerful stallion from stable, and leave the feeding trough of the impotent.

Why are you showing of your [pregnant] stomach, an outcome of leftover seeds?

Who is that beloved stallion who can turn the dried up into greenery with shedding his view).

The stallion that makes greenery dry up by his looks is born by negating the social bindings and going through various stages. Ranjha had to leave his homeland, cross the river, become a lowly servant and a Jogi to be able to unify with Heer. But when unification was attained, it was worshiping and a physical interaction, as expressed in these verses;

اول پیر پکڑے اعتقاد کر کے پھیر نال کلیجے دے لگ گئی
لگا مست ہو کملیاں کرن گلاں دعاء کسے فقیر دی وگ گئی

(First [she] bowed and touched his feet in devotion and then clung to his chest.

[He] started murmuring like weirdos as if he was cursed by a saint,)

On the love making, one can see how Waris Shah showed Heer as saying prayer and Ranjha behaving like a common

person on his first sexual experience. In this description Waris Shah made this act to be devotional as well as physical. To affirm it as real-life physical interaction, Waris Shah wrote several stanzas like the following one, describing the love making from different angles:

کسے کیسے نیپڑ نیپڑیں توں تیرا رنگ ہے توری دے پھل دانی
ڈھاکاں تیریاں کسے مروڑیاں نیں ایہہ تاں کم ہو یا بلبل دانی
تیرا انگ کسے پانمال کیتا ڈھگا جوتے جیویں ہے گھلدانی

(How like [an oil presser] you been squeezed, your color looks like a gourd flower.

Someone has twisted your waist and it looks like up and down activity.

Someone has trodden your body parts as an ox is wrestling in ploughing session).

Waris Shah maintaining that love and unification is a matter of soul and body considers it a struggle waged within the society, When Heer comes to know about her being wedded, she suggests to Ranjha to elope together in the following way:

ہیر آکھدی رانجھیا قہر ہو یا یتھوں اٹھ کے چل جو چلنا ای
دوویں اٹھ کے لمڑے راہ پویئے کوئی اسان نے دلیں نہ ملنا ای
اسیں عشق دے آن میدان رُدھے، بُراسورے نول رنوں ہلنا ای

(Heer says that O Ranjha, disaster is underway, let us leave this place and go somewhere, if you choose so.

Both of us should go on the way towards the west (Western Punjab), we are not into occupying a homeland.

We are in the amidst the war on a battle ground and it is bad for a brave person to quit).

Heer’s saying that “we are not into occupying a homeland” and “it is bad for a brave person to quit”, shows that she has got riddance of possession and property and is eager to stand up. On such a turn of the story some mock Ranjha for

being a coward and timid who could not elope with Heer. For Ranjha, it is a struggle to be waged within the society and tells Heer “O Heer, that love is no gratifying which is based on stealth and elopement.” If Ranjha had taken Heer somewhere, they could have lived as husband and wife but Ranjha’s intent is to make society accept the right of free choice of a man and a woman. In contemporary film making, Raj Kapur has stressed this point in his film ‘Prem Roog’ in which a love affair between a young man and a widow is shown. The widow belongs to a high cast in which she cannot be remarried. When the matters reach a critical point, the girl’s uncle tells the young man that he can arrange their running away and they take up this choice. But, the young man maintains that he wants society to accept his and widow’s right to live together.

In comparison to Heer, Sehti’s love affair is based on stealth. She is enjoying the privileges of her class but has a yearning for Murad Baluch. She does not make any demands of society and runs away with him on Ranjha’s performing of a miracle. She does not face any hardship because the Baluch beat the Khairas and force them to flee. Apparently, she would become a wife in the prevailing social set-up. However, Heer and Ranjha’s issue is different because they demand of society that it change its discourse, Obviously, society is unwilling to do so, and instead, punishes them with the death penalty.

In Punjabi classical tradition love is always meant to stand for the creation of a new society by breaking the status quo boundaries and the class-based system. Baba Farid says that “Farida, transform your heart like a leveled field by removing the diches and mounds.” Shah Husain defines love as “The path of love is like head of needle through which you can thread.” For Sultan Bahu it is “Blossoming of the bud inside” and propounds the role of ‘negative’ and ‘positive,’ that is it has to be negated to be embraced. Bulleh Shah explains in easier terms by calling love as the

recurrence of new spring. Bulleh Shah narrates the budding of love in this way:

جاں میں سبق عشق دا پڑھیا
 مسجد کولوں چیوڑا ڈریا
 ڈیرے جاٹھا کر دے وڑیا
 جتھے وجدے نادہزار
 پھوک مصلیٰ بھن سٹ لوٹا
 نہ پھڑتینج عا صا سوٹا
 عاشق کہندے دے دے ہوکا
 ترک حلالوں کھامردار

(When I learned the lesson of love, my heart got scared of mosque. I barged into Thakar’s square (Hindu temple) where thousands of conches are blown. Burn the prayer mat, break the cane, don’t hold the rosary and break the holy cane. The lovers are announcing aloud that abandon the kosher and eat dead).

Waris Shah is advancing forward the classical Punjabi tradition and his whole story is structured around it. Waris Shah differs from other classical poets by converting the philosophy into a social drama. He not only describes the characteristics of a lover, he also personifies that into a real-life person. This person comes into being after having been deceived (on land distribution); facing economic hardships; fighting the societal institutions (religion etc.); giving up family honor by accepting the lowest level job; and having his ears pierced to become a Jogi. He thwarts inter-religion boundaries by calling for prayers and blowing the conch at the same time. Waris Shah creates such a person who is leaving the mosque, entering the Hindu temple and, who is willing to eat dead (non-kosher) instead of kosher. This is what Waris Shah called new creation of

Heer's love and constructing a 'thoughtful story. Therefore, his story is substantially different from Demodar Das and Muqbil's versions.

In the versions of these other Punjabi poets' love was an ever-present longing: a struggle to mold oneself to attain progressive consciousness in the ongoing ideological war. For them it was true yesterday and will be true tomorrow as says Baba Guru Nanak, "there was truth and there will be truth." Waris Shah has shown this everlasting truth in a specific period of history in which Mullah, Qazi, Mallah (the boatman), headmen, play a concrete role. He has also propounded the way such a lover is born and the way he comes to an end. He has highlighted the spiritual role of Panj Peers and Jogi to incorporate the concept of classical poets but he has also shown the petty trickeries Heer and Ranjha indulge in: their arrangement to meet in Barber house; Ranjha's coming to Heer with her friends hidden in a blanket and his deception with Jogi; his starting of a dispute visiting Khairas house; and Heer's drama of having been stung by a snake to bring Ranjha into the house. This means that Waris Shah created a story within a concrete social structure.

While talking about history, one must see which possibility exists in which era. Waris Shah was living during an upheaval in Punjab. Bulleh Shah has portrayed this period in his Kafi, "Topsy-Turvy Times" in these verses:

الٹے ہو زمانے آئے
تاں میں بھیت تبن دے پائے
کاں گھڑنوں مارن لگے چڑیاں جڑے ڈھائے
بھوریاں والے راجے کیتے
راجیاں بھیک منگائے

(When the times have gone upside down 'then' I have discovered the secrets of the dear one. The crows are

killing the preying bird and sparrows have wrestle down the eagle. The ones with blankets are made rulers and [ex] rulers are forced to beg)

The secrets that Bulleh Shah found in the 'upside-down era' were exhibiting themselves in "There is no unity between a father and a son" and "The daughter robbed the mother." This meant that, even, blood relations are a function of a historical period and wither away in changed times. Waris Shah reiterated it by saying "Waris Shah, the self-interest is dearest and far and near relations are nothing." Waris Shah described the foreign invasions of Nadir Shah, the battles between local rulers and the emergence of new ruling class as "When Jats became the ruler of the country and every place has its own ruler." We have talked about Waris Shah's denunciation of new emerging rulers but the question for Waris Shah's detractors on this issue is: Could the likes of Heer and Ranjha live in the era of new rulers? Obviously not, as how could seven women be burned on Ranjeet Singh's pyre in the ancient tradition of Sati.

Waris Shah by declaring Ranjha as a body structure, had him die and be reborn, many times over. Therefore, Ranjha refuses to return to Takhat Hazara when his sisters-law beg him to do so. Instead he says:

بھابی خزاں دی رت جد آن بچنی بھور آسرے تے پے جال دے نی
سیون بلبلاں بوٹیاں سکیاں نوں نوں پھیر بھٹل گن نال ڈال دے نی
اساں جدوں کدوں انھاں پاس جانا جیسڑے محرم اساڈڑے حال دے نی
جنماں سولیاں تے جالے جھوٹے ، منصور ہوویریں ساڈے نال دے نی

(O sister-in-law, upon descending of the autumn season, the beetles live through it by hoping.

The nightingales water the dried-up plants with their tears and then the flowers blossom on the stems.

Sooner or later I must go to [the person] who is confidant of my conditions.

Mansoor is one of us who took the pleasure in swinging on hanging).

Waris Shah defined love as an unending struggle, symbolically, expressed as “in autumn nightingales watering the plants with their tears to have the flowers blossom on stems.” By mentioning Mansoor’s hanging, it is said that he (Ranjha) may never succeed, his end may be a death but, even then, the path of love cannot be abandoned. He reaffirms his determination by saying “O sister-in-law, those who run away from love, are fathered by bankrupts.” The question is: Could Heer and Ranjha live in Waris Shah’s time or the history known to him? For Waris Shah, this was a fundamental question because wars occurring during that specific historical time influenced the story. He had to be mindful of spiritual entities like Panj Peers and Jogi who had assured Ranjha of his success. The other narrators of this story had dealt with this in a superstitious manner. Demodar Das, after the fire in the city due to Ranjha’s curse and miracle had said that:

سبھا آ پیراں نوں گئی ، عظمت چاک دکھائی
حاکم ، قاضی تے کل عالم ، سبھا زیارت آئی

(Everyone bowed to his feet when he showed his greatness.

The ruler, Qazi and the entire world for a pilgrimage).

It is evident that Qazi also bowed to his feet and the entire world recognized his greatness. In this backdrop, Demodar Das had Heer and Ranjha disappear, assisted by invisible forces.

آکھ دمودر میں اکھیں ڈٹھا ، جو لمی طرف سدھائے
جے کوہ ترے گئے اگیرے ، تاں اسیں بھی نالے آہے
بیچ اسوار ، جوڑے سبھ کالے ، چڑھ از غیبوں آئے
ہتھ پھریندے سردوہاں دے ، سر چمن تے سدھرائے
آکھ دمودر چھپے کتھائیں ، گئے سو پھیر نہ آئے

(Tell Demodar that I am eye witness to their going to south. When they had gone 3 koh (koh is a little longer than a mile) I was with them.

Five riders, in black attire, appeared from nowhere. They patted their head and were desirous of kissing their heads.

They disappeared not to come back ever).

Demodar Das had them disappeared and Muqbil said nothing about their end. Ahmad Gujjar had ended the story with natural death of Heer and Ranjha. Waris Shah neither showed Qazi bowing nor their death because of natural causes. He showed what happens in the society as Sials poison Heer through a collective tribal decision. By ending the story this way Waris Shah made it clear that Panj Peers or Jogi may symbolize the human being’s struggle, but they cannot change the course of history. It means that love may be a struggle to change the society, but it does not guarantee social change.

The Women World

Irrespective of Mirza Sahiban, in every other folklore name of the female protagonist comes first like Heer Ranjha, Sohni Mahinwal, Sassi Punnon.

Reason being that the lead woman in these tales becomes the basic source of inspiration for the male character's transformation into a progressive person. Which also means that women, being most oppressed, have the better potential to lead. The freedom of a woman will lead to emancipation of the entire mankind. This is the main reason that Punjabi's leading poets have addressed the world in female voice.

Even though in many mythological and historical epic tales including the story of Adam and Ever, woman is said to be the source of all evil and major cause of man's downfall. In Hindu mythology, Dhrupadi, is made responsible for the destruction of Kairos and Pandoos. The ruler of Lanka is said to be annihilated because of Seta. Similarly, in Pooran Bhagat's story Loonan is portrayed as the main villain. However, during the 1960s, new consciousness started emerging in Punjabi literature and Shiv Kumar Batalvi reshaped the whole story from Loonan's perspective. According to Shiv Kumar Batalvi, Raja Salwan, Pooran Bhagat's father, was responsible for the entire debacle because he forced the helpless young Loonan into marriage. Najm Hosain Syed also presented 'Joti' in 'Multan Shahar di Var' as the leader of an emerging revolution. In his poem, 'Bar di Var', he re-characterized Loonan as the potential mother of a long-awaited revolution.

آج لوناں ہس نال اساڈے نت کوا ریئے مائے
لوناں آج سر سورج آیا جوڑے لاه سلوانے سلھے
آ لوناں چھڑ چور چبارے بُور پوے وت دا کھیں
آ لوناں چن چول فقر دے تے وت جم کائی نیلیاں والے

(Come Loonan share a laughter, you the ever-unmarried mother.

Loonan, the sun has descended over our head.

You should let go Salwan's [provided] wet clothes.

Come Loonan, abandon the upper stories of stealth, so the new the flowers of grapes blossom.

Come Loonan and sort out the rice of sainthood and give birth to [mythical] blue horses).

Waris Shah dwelled over varying aspects of women's role but concluded to show them as leaders of emancipation. In the beginning of the story women, in the form of Ranjha's sisters-in-law, are shown to be tools in men's hands. Ranjha was given baron land because of a conspiracy in which the Qazi and headmen took bribes, but sisters-in-law's taunts were erroneously shown to be the main cause of him leaving Takhat Hazara. The reality is that Ranjha was unable to plough the barren land and he had no means of livelihood to live in Takhat Hazara. He himself told his sister-in-law that, "He has blisters on his hands, his feet are roughed-up and he does not like the ploughing work). Then his pronouncement that, "His livelihood has become impossible" shows that his departure from Takhat Hazara is due to economic reasons. Although, Waris Shah puts the whole blame on sisters-in-law through Ranjha but it was men who deprived Ranjha of the means of livelihood.

Waris Shah's dialogue between Ranjha and sisters-in-law is very interesting. It creates the impression that sisters-in-law are jealous of other women who are after Ranjha. In saying, "You don't take us as beautiful" shows that they like him

deep down in their hearts, but they resent they cannot compete with other women due to the existent family structure.

In their letter to Heer, they assert that:

جے توں سوہنی ہوئی کے پویں سوکن اسیں اک تھیں اک چڑھندیاں ہاں
رب جاندا ہے سبھا عمر ساری اسیں ایسے محبوب دیاں بندیاں ہاں
اسیں ایسے دے مگر دیوانیاں ہاں بھانویں چنگیاں تے بھانویں مندیاں ہاں
اوہ ماردا گالیاں دے سانوں اسیں پھیر مڑ چوکھنی ہندیاں ہاں

(If you consider yourself to be beautiful and compete with us as the other wife, all of us are on a high pedestal.

God knows that, for entire life, we are slaves to this dearly loved [one]

Whether we are good or bad, we are crazy for him.

He beats and curses us, and, despite that, we love him intensely)

After Heer's wedding they beg him to return and vow that, "We will be offering a golden ornament on the holy grave the day you return to our yard." It becomes clear that, being women, they are very close to Ranjha inwardly.

After Ranjha leaves Takhat Hazara, crossing across the river is the most difficult task for him. Luddan Mallah (the boatman) curses and refuses to give him ride in the boat. No other male is out there to help him except Luddan's two wives, who sympathize with Ranjha and put him on a very high pedestal:

رناں لڈن دیاں وکھ کے رحم کیتا جو کجھ نبی نے نال مہمان کیتا
ایہو جیسے جے آدمی ہتھ آون جان مال پروان قربان کیتا

(Luddan's women took a pity on him and did what prophet did to the guest.

If such persons come by one should sacrifice one's beholding and life).

When Ranjha gets extremely frustrated ready to jump in the river instead, Luddan's wives say:

چاہڑ موڈھیاں تے تینوں اسیں ٹھلاں کوئی جان توں ڈھل نہ سجنا وو
ساڈیاں اکھیاں دے وچ وانگ دھیری ڈیرا گھت بہو ہل نہ سجنا وو

(We will swim carrying you over our shoulders.

You sit in our eyes like pupil and do not move dear friend)

You tend to note how these married women, in rivalry among themselves, yet both submit to Ranjha. These women have no vested interest in Ranjha and still they are ready to sacrifice their lives for him. Waris Shah included the characters of Luddan Mallah's wives just to show women's adoration for Ranjha because for these women he becomes a symbol of freedom. It should be considered here that other poets who have also written Heer did not mention the characters of Luddan Mallah's wives in their respective versions.

After crossing river, Ranjha and Heer develop love. At the same time Ranjha is adored deeply by Heer's friends too for which they're willing to help him on every step of the way. They share this secret bond within themselves and do not disclose to anyone. Similarly, Mithi, the wife of the barber, arranges their meetings without her husband's knowledge. Waris Shah has written a lengthy stanza on Heer's friends playing water games with Ranjha hinting their personal affection for him. No one else has written such a stanza that makes us to believe that Waris Shah misses no opportunity to show women solidarity with Ranjha.

When Kaido backbites against Heer and Ranjha in the men's court, Heer's friends beat Kaido up and burn his hut. Then, again, in the men's gathering, they prove Kaido a liar and a sexual degenerate. On Heer's wedding, her friends stand with Ranjha confronting Heer in these verses:

جے توں انت اوہنوں بچھا دیونا سی اُس دا کالجا کاسنوں سلیا ے
 بے صدق ہوئیں صدق ہارپوئی تیرا صدق ایمان ہُن ہلیا ے
 اوہدا وکھ کے حال احوال سارا ساڈا روندیاں نیر نہ ٹھلیا ے

(If you were going to back away from him, then why you pierced his heart.

You have become untruthful and abandon the truth, your belief [in love] is shaken.

Looking at his condition we cannot stop crying).

Heer's friends take Ranjha to Heer in female outfit. When Heer decides to write a letter to Ranjha she chooses a woman messenger. Demodar Das uses Ramoo Bahman to take the message. Waris Shah replacing a male with a female messenger further strengthens the view that only women come out to help Ranjha. When the messenger girl cannot find Ranjha, his dreadful condition is conveyed through women. Heer's friends say:

کڑیاں آکھیا چھیل ہے مس بھناں چھڈ بیٹھا ہے جگ دے سب جھیڑے
 سٹ و کجھلی اہل فقیر ہو یا جس روز دے ہیر لے گئے کھیڑے
 وچ بیلیاں کوکدا پھرے کلا جتھے باگھ بگھیلے تے شینہ پیرے

(Girls said that young man (whose moustaches are just budding) have abandoned all the worldly affairs.

He has thrown away his flute and became a fakir, the day Heer was taken away by Khairas.

He wails aloud in that jungle where there are, panthers, cubs and tiger gangs)

After Ranjha becomes a Jogi, the rest of the story is either sharing or conflicting with women. In Waris Shah's 252 stanzas there is no mention of a male character. First, the girls of Rangpoor Khairan, village of Heer's in-laws, recognize and adore him. In the following verses they describe him as if a beloved is being praised:

پریم متیاں اکھیاں رنگ بھریاں سدا گوہڑیاں لال سوائیاں نی
 خونی بانکیاں نشے دے نال بھریاں نیناں کھیویاں سان چڑھایاں نی

(His eyes are full of love, deep, colorful and exceedingly reddish.

[His eyes] are blood-shot, awry, full of intoxication, eyes intoxicated and sharpened.

It is Heer's sister-in-law who informs her of Ranjha's arrival and adds that, "O Heer, he appears to be son of a raja and his beauty is far more than yours). When the girls go to get Ranjha Jogi on Heer's calling, they say, "That handsome [man] is like a rose flower, beloved sturdy, raja's son, accomplished and knowledgeable" In a dialogue between Ranjha and the girls, Waris Shah gives the essence of being a fakir (saint) and Jogi along with his claim to be a poet for entire humanity. It is noteworthy that Waris Shah uses females to convey that his poetry is universal and not specific to a region. This means that he believes that it is only females who can apprehend this universality.

He says:

رانجھا آکھدا خیال نہ پو میرے شینہ سپ فقیر دا دیس کیہا
 وطن دماں دے نال تے ذات جوگی سانوں ساک قبیلڑا خویش کیہا
 جیسرہ وطن تے ذات ول دھیان رکھے دنیا دار ہے اوہ درویش کیہا

(Ranjha says that don't get concerned about me because tiger, snake and fakir have no homeland.

Homeland is where I breath, my cast is Jogi and I don't have any relatives or a tribe.

The one who is concerned and mindful of homeland and cast is a worldly commoner and not a Darwish)

Waris Shah takes Ranjha to Tarinjin (where girls get together for weaving) to show that Ranjha is endeared by women of every cast, creed and profession, as he did in a

lengthy stanza of 36 verses. As Ranjha has no specific homeland, the women he is interacting with are symbols of a universal female gender. It means that in Waris Shah's philosophical perspective, all women constitute a single faction yearning for their emancipation. Every one of them adore Ranjha with the same zeal:

کائی آ رنجیٹھے دے نین ویکھے کائی مکھڑا ویکھ صلاحندی ہے
 کوئی اوڈنی لاه کے مگر پونجے دھو دھا بھبھوت چا لاهندی ہے
 کائی مکھ رنجیٹھے دے نال جوڑے تیری طبع کیہ جو گیا چاہندی ہے

(Some come to see Ranjha's eyes and some adulate his face.

Someone takes her head cover, rubs his back and cleans off ashes from his body.

Someone puts her face to Ranjha (face) and asks what is his heart's desire).

In a lengthy dialogue stretched over 136 stanzas, Waris Shah has gone deep into discussing socio-economic issues unlike Demodar Das or Muqbil who skip over it quickly in their respective versions. If one does not read the dialogue carefully, the impression would be that Waris Shah has created a mole out of hill.

Generally, Waris Shah is master of brevity but whenever he broadens a discussion there is always a reason behind it. It appears that in Ranjha's dialogue with Sehti, Waris Shah has used her to go over the common level of knowledge in the society, beliefs, biases and clichés. To debate differences between Jog and social sciences, Waris Shah has chosen a woman as a discussant. Looking from another angle, this debate is taking place between two individuals of the same grouping. As mentioned in the first chapter, both say almost the same thing about the earnings of livelihood at different occasions.

Their debate is summed up in the following main points:

- To start with, Sehti refuses to recognize him as a Jogi and accuses him of "belonging to a lowly singers' cast, a shoemaker, a hardened pimp or a sweeper of a motel." In turn Ranjha characterizes her as a misled arrogant woman.
- Both try to impress each other with their knowledge of the Punjabi society.
- Sehti asks him of different things needed for Jog and Ranjha answers them all along with spiritual peers of different casts.
- To downgrade, both point out negative characteristics of each other.
- Ranjha points out the deficiencies of women and so does Sehti about men.
- Sehti does not believe in magic or spiritual powers of the Jogis. Waris Shah portrays Sehti as a believer in material evidences. Sehti maintains that the things that can be done with scientific knowledge are impossible through spiritual powers. Waris Shah projects her as, what we call in the modern-day philosophy, an empiricist.

In the Ranjha-Sehti dialogue it is evident that both were well versed in their respective spheres of knowledge, but the problem with Sehti is that she draws conclusions from appearances and does not go for reality behind (appearances) and the inherent contradiction of a phenomenon. Therefore, her outlook does not lead to changing of the societal course: she cannot do enough even to get her lover, Murad Baluch. In addition, such an outlook has led to a pampered ego that does not allow her to think straight. Ranjha is anti-empiricism and rightly so because if he accepts the ways of society as it appears, he cannot think of changing it (breaking social boundaries to be with Heer) and in this backdrop he calls Sehti as 'ignorant.'

This is the main conflict between them which is not resolved through logical arguments and Ranjha must perform miracle to get Sehti on his side. Ranjha's miracle can be interpreted as Sehti's inability to comprehend as to why two individuals (Heer and Ranjha) would face all the odds to get together and don't just give up. As said earlier, conflict between Ranjha and Sehti was an in-house dispute and as their mutual differences are resolved their outlook becomes one.

Ranjha had an affinity with women throughout his struggle. For example, when Ranjha grabs a girl in Kala Bagh, she says, "My aunt is your close friend and we are not oblivious of your conditions." Ranjha's friendship with the aunt means that even older women are in harmony with him, and as informed by the girl, the whole women world knows about the painful situation. Then the girl visits Heer, proves her wrong and begs her to meet Ranjha. The basic problem with Heer and Ranjha is that they need a helper who has worldly skills and knows trickeries to get around the logistical difficulties. Sehti is such a leader who is knowledgeable, skillful in worldly matters and can accomplish such a task.

According to Waris Shah, Sehti's planning is new and unique because she is said to be cleverer than devil. The devil also astray the people from religious path, however, he does not suggest the way to change society. Sehti is such a leader who creates the female world into one fighting squad to destroy the patriarchal system. She uses the weapon of stealth, but stealing is defined as an immoral and illegal act by the class based patriarchal society. Stealing is an act of have-nots against the propertied classes as deception is for women to get around the patriarchy. Waris Shah has described women's rebellion in several stanzas. That is why we can conclude that if Waris Shah was narrating a simple story he would not have gone very deep into matters relating to women subjugation.

First Sehti invite her friends, married and unmarried, for consultation. They take Sehti as their Guru, although they themselves are very wise and clever. Sehti tells them to come early, on their own, and should not let their parents know anything. The women go home and contemplate all night. These women are naughty, ugly - because of their long noses, innocent, straightforward, tongue-tied, dancing girls and prostitutes. By including dancing girls and prostitutes, Waris Shah further makes it clear that he is talking about the entire woman world.

In the next stanza Waris Shah has portrayed that all the women come prepared from every angle to destroy the social boundaries through their skills and acts. Dance is an act of defiance to put an end to societal boundaries drawn by patriarchs. In these stanzas, Waris Shah has tried to concentrate on women's 'being,' their varying appearances, structures and forms (prostitutes are also included) and their different tactics to battle the patriarchy. When Ranjha is all prepared to take Heer out of her in-laws' house, the girls come to congratulate he in these verses:

کڑیاں آکھیا آن کے ہیر تائیں انی دوہٹیے اج ودھائیں نیں
جوڑی رب نے میل کے تارنیں توں موتی لعل دے نال پرائیں نیں

(Girls said to Heer that we congratulate you, the bride. God has brought your couple together, you have overcome all the difficulties and it is like a pearl and diamond being sewn in the same string)

Toward the end, to further universalize the women world, Waris Shah has inducted women from mountains. These are not merely oppressed because of their gender but they are also economically poor. These women recognize Heer and Ranjha right away and express that they were from the 'love world.' The women from hilly areas are aware of the injustice done to the couple and are apprehensive of their future.

Half the book written by Waris Shah is about unanimity between Ranjha and the women. Hence, it can be inferred that for Waris Shah the gender difference is as important as economic class. By showing that none of the male helps him and he gets assistance from women at every step Waris Shah is arguing that emancipation is impossible without participation of the women. Whether this is true or not, but this is what Waris Shah appears to believe in.

Social conditions and History of Punjab

In his version of “Heer, Ranjha,” Waris Shah describes in detail the social conditions and history of Punjab. The word “Punjab” is said to have come into use at the time of Akbar’s reign. But Shah Hussain does not use it in his poetry. Bulleh Shah uses it in the verse, “Bura Haal Hoya Punjab Da” (Punjab is in terrible shape). Waris Shah uses this term in many instances. He uses it for the first time in describing the beauty of Heer- “Charia Hind Te Katak Punjab Da Ji” (The forces of Punjab have invaded Hindustan). It appears that in his time, Punjab was a separate entity from India. It is not clear when Punjabi forces attacked Hindustan. Waris Shah never wrote specifically about geography but he mentions many places such as Takht Hazara, Jhang Sial, Rangpur Khera, Malika Haans, Pakpatan and Kabola. There was no separation in his mind between north and south Punjab. By using the words spoken in Central Punjab, Jataki and Saraiki, it seems that for him Punjab was the same as that of Ranjeet Singh’s time. By talking about women of hills, he includes some parts of Kashmir in Punjab.

The cities and villages mentioned by him do not have the same status in Punjab now. For example, he talks about Dipalpur as a major city, which was an insignificant tehsil by the time of the British. But we know that Firoz Shah Tughlaq had raised the walls of the fort and made gardens and a canal to water them. For a period of time, he made it his capitol as well. During Akbar’s time Abdul Rahim

Khan-E-Khana repaired the fort. It seems that during the time of Waris Shah, it was considered a major city.

Waris Shah mentions a battle in Chunniyan, indicating that it must have been an important town. He also mentions Pakpattan, which gained fame because of Baba Farid. He talks about Tilla of the Jogis, which is known as Tilla Jogian and is around 25 kilometers from the city of Jhelum. It is a big shrine, which used to be a center for all the Jogis of Punjab. Balnath, as mentioned by Waris Shah led a major school of Jogi thought in India. Baba Nanak also first came to the Tilla of the Jogis and had his discussions with Jogis. Waris Shah is following the tradition of Baba Nanak in the dialogue he writes between Ranjha with Balnath.

Waris Shah gives a detailed description of living in a caste-based society in Punjab. He calls the owners of cattle and agriculturists Jats but does not mention their many different sub castes. Rajputs and Bhattis are mentioned separately. Additionally, he gives a long list of other castes, among which are Khatri, Brahmin, Turk, Syed, Khoje and Lubana. He also describes many professions, and thereby providing a detailed picture of life in Punjab at that time. For example, he discusses black smith, cobbler, carpenter, barber, potter, spinners, tailors, tanners, bazigars, nats, atishbaz, drummers, sansis, dooms, bow and arrow makers, fishermen, butchers, masons, paper cutters, elephant trainers, soldiers, clowns, jokers, shieldmakers, watercarriers. Many of these have disappeared from villages. In the cities, very few of these professions remain or their form has changed.

In old Punjab the caste system was so strong that people of different professions did not intermarry. For example, a blacksmith would not marry his child to that of a barber. Jats did not intermarry with Rajputs. Each caste had its own Peer or Guru: Sheikh Tahir of cobblers, Shams of goldsmiths, Namdev of watermen, Lukman of blacksmiths, Khwaja Khizr of sailors, Lal Beg of sweepers, Raja Nal of

gamblers, Sheikh Walad of spinners, Haji Galgo of potters, Ali of cloth dyers, Hasain of oilpressers. Notably, Waris Shah makes no mention of Arains; either they must have been known by some other name or they were also counted amongst the Jats.

Waris Shah talks about the wildlife in Punjab. Quite often he mentions deer and types of deer. He describes Heer and her friends as a herd of deer running in the wild. He mentions birds such as eagle, heron, partridge, crow, sparrow, golden sparrow. He also talks about lions, wolfs, leopards in the jungles of Punjab. Among the domestic animals, he describes buffaloes most often, but he also mentions oxen and cows. He describes dozens of kinds of snakes.

There were very few modes of transport at that time. Most of the people travelled on foot and spent nights in mosques. Well-off people used horses and camels to travel. Kings used elephants to travel. Rivers were crossed by boat and there were professional boatmen, who charged money for taking people across the river, like Luddan in the Heer Ranjha story. While the bullock cart is mentioned, the horse cart is not. There is no mention of mail, messengers took messages, as can be seen when Heer sends a message through a girl and Sials sends a message of Heer's death through a messenger. Waris Shah describes the wedding customs of that time. First, the whole clan or brotherhood decide what marriage should take place. Heer's father Chuchak, gathers all his brothers for her marriage:

چوچک سد بھائی پر ہے لا بیٹھا کتے ہیر نوں چا پر نائیے جی
آکھو رانجھے دے نال وواہ دیواں اکے بنڑے چا منگائیے جی

چوچک دے بھائیاں صلاح دیندیاں کہیا:

نال رانجھیاں کدی نہ ساک کیتا نہیں دتیاں اسیں کڑمائیاں وو
 کتھوں رلدیاں گولیاں آئیاں نوں دجن ایہہ سیالا دیاں جائیاں وو
 نال کھیردیاں دے ایہہ ساک کیجے دتی مصلحت سبھناں بھائیاں وو

(Chuchak invited his brothers to his court and asked to marry Heer somewhere.

If you like I can marry her with Ranjha or ask the match-makers)

His brothers advised:

(We have never had marriage relationship with Ranjhas and not given daughters [to them].

We cannot give Sial girls to the wretched, slave-like unknown ones.

Marry her off to Khairas, all brother gave this counsel)

Barbers were sent to make the matches. This custom has almost disappeared. One custom to note is that even Muslims asked Brahmins for an auspicious day and hour for marriage: “Khairas asked Brahmins to find auspicious day for marriage.”

Waris Shah has mentioned many marriage customs like the way bridegroom’s wedding party used to take off, measuring the bridegroom with thread, sisters-in-law demanding rings, asking for things and citing riddles, and singing Sichuanese (derogatory songs against bridegroom). Waris Shah’s description of sumptuous and variety of foods creates the impression as if it is upper-class urban wedding. But Mohinder Singh Bedi in his work, “Yadon Ka Jashan,” mentions that on such occasions the big landlords in the villages also ordered such foods from cities. Probably, Waris Shah has tried to portray the upper-class weddings in general.

Waris Shah’s Heer Ranjha also provides a look into the the revenue system of that time. He describes how land is measured and distributed amongst brothers, showing that land was not held as common property as claimed by Karl

Marx and some other scholars. Ranjha’s cousins make fun of him because he got barren land showing that his uncles and their sons had no share in his father’s land. This shows that the land was privately owned.

According to Waris Shah, herd breeding was also practiced in parts of Punjab at that time. We also heard from our elders that before the canals were dug up in Baar, Jats were cattle herders and were not engaged in agriculture. He shows Sials as cattle herders. The forests and pastures were common lands where cattle grazed. Heer taking choori (food prepared by mixing bread, sugar and butter) for Ranjha shows that grain was grown or brought from outside. The servants of the lower strata were not given grain but only some milk. When Ranjha starts working as a caretaker of cattle in Chuchak’s household, other servants taunt him, “Ranjha, you have to live on a bowl of milk.”

Waris Shah does not directly address the revenue system of the Moghuls. Faujdar (army chief) was appointed as in charge of an area. Irfan Habib and others have called them Jaghirdars feudal). They were not hereditary and kept changing. The hereditary system was brought by the British though it is a separate debate. But we do not detect any hereditary feudalism from Waris Shah. Some verses mention the revenue system:

ایس زمین نوں واہندا ملک مٹگا، اُتے ہو چکے بڈے کارنے نی
 کانو ہور تے راہک نیں ہور اس دے خاوند ہور دم ہورناں مارنے نی

(The tillers of this land have been here for long time and big changes have taken place.

Tax collectors are different, sharecroppers, owners are different from each other and there are others who sway over them.)

The first verse indicates that such a system has been in place for centuries and major up heels have took place in that period. The second verse points out that in this [static] system the tax collector remains unchanged. The owners of

the land are different from the sharecroppers and, on top is the king who has the supreme power. The king gives the land to different people, who in turn, give land to sharecroppers and Faujdar collects taxes through his officers. Irfan Habib and others claim that the Mughals took fifty percent of produce in tax revenues. One can imagine how the sharecroppers must have lived. When this system started breaking, major changes occurred in class relations. Bulleh Shah in his Kafi has described this as, “Upside down, is taking place.” Waris Shah has described this change in the following manner:

جدوں دیس تے جٹ سردار ہوئے گھرو گھری جاں نویں سرکار ہوئی
اشراف خراب مکین تازہ زمیندار نوں وڈی بہار ہوئی

(When Jats became the rulers, different areas had their own chiefs.

The Ashraf (aristocracy) were ruined, landowners and lower classes became prosperous)

Jat Sardars started collecting Raakhee Tax (protection tax). Land owners did not have to pay close to half of their produce to the central authority and it benefitted them a lot. The upper crust, those who were writing history, the Ashrafs (elite), called these changes cataclysmic but people were happy at the breaking of the revenue system of the Moghuls.

Waris Shah also tells us about the judicial system of the time. At the top were state appointed Qazis who dispensed justice. The Qazi decides on land for Ranjha in the beginning of the story and in the end, the Qazi is the one who decides that Heer must go to Khairas. It seems that Qazi could adjudicate against the decision of the ruler as well. The Qazi even overrules Raja Adali’s ruling. Kaido after being beaten by Heer’s friends, talks about going to the Qazi and the king. There seems to be another unknown tier as Ranjha threatens Jogi that he will go to the authorities.

Waris Shah also depicts local authorities through the role of the Panchayat. First, we see the Panchs (headmen) during the process of land distribution of Ranjhas. This shows that they had a role in official decisions. We also see Ranjha’s father, Mauju Chaudhry, a headman who also decides conflicts. After Heer’s marriage to Khaira , Ranjha says, “The Panchs (headmen) of the village have abandoned truth and Qazis are blinded by briberies.” Heer praises Ranjha for his acumen to dispense justice in complicated disputes:

لائی ہوئی کے معاملے دس دیندا منصف ہو وڈے پھائی پھیڑیاں دے

(As an arbiter he digs out the matters and, as a judge, he resolves the major disputes)

We had published an interview with an old professional thief, who described this old judicial system.¹

Waris Shah did not write much about means of entertainment and sports of Punjab, however, he writes about women’s sports and games. Sometimes it seems that he is writing Heer’s fight against patriarchy and for women’s rights. He writes a long stanza on water sports that women are shown playing in the river. Some of these games were still being played in recent history. Sehti takes women to the fields where they perform dances like sammi, phabbi, girdha and panbhi.

Waris Shah talks about music when the five Peers ask Ranjha to sing close to a dozen of Ragas. It shows that not only Waris Shah was familiar with Ragas but considered them to carry a power without which a person is not whole. Waris Shah also makes various historical references pertinent to that time. On the one hand invasions of Nadir Shah were taking place and on the other Jats were creating Misls and ruling them. Writing about Nadir Shah he says: “India and Punjab were threatened by Nadir Shah, the

¹ For further description of this system, see <http://www.wichaar.com/item.php?c=15&id=714&s=73>
<http://www.wichaar.com/item.php?c=15&id=714&s=73>

armies of Nadir Shah after defeating Mathura have come back to Lahore.” He also talks about local battles such as defeat of Deena Beg and fight of Hussain Khan.

It is also worth mentioning that Waris Shah knew about the foreign countries. He was also aware of the Europeans arrival in India. At one point he says that “by entering the garden of the Firangi, the well machine has been moved.” He also mentions medicine of the Europeans for treating Heer for snake bite. It is not clear by Firangi he means the British or all Europeans. In praising Heer he has mentions, China, Kashmir, Rome, Balkh, Kabul. Nevertheless, Waris Shah was very disheartened and sad about the chaotic conditions in Punjab:

سارے ملک خراب پنجاب وچوں سانوں وڈا افسوس تصور دا اے

(All Punjab is in bad shape, but I am very sad for Kasur)

Language and Style of Waris Shah

An analysis of style, diction and language of Waris Shah is necessary so that one can understand how a poetic work remains alive for centuries. Ordinarily without any investigation, beauty of language is appreciated because it appeals to everyone. But in this case, it is a bit more complicated. Waris Shah has hinted about his poetry but like Mian Muhammad Baksh has not commented about it in detail. To open the riddle of his diction and poetry, we must look at his first stanza:

عشق پیر فقیر دا مرتبہ ہے مرد عشق دا بھلا رنجول میاں

کھلے تہاں دے باغ قلوب اندر جنماں کیتا ہے عشق قبول میاں

(Love is the state of Peer and Faqir, a person pained by love is better [than others].

Those who accept Love, their being radiates with fragrance)

In the first line it is declared that love is Faqiri and a good man is that who is deeply in love. In the end of his story he says that, “Waris Shah has a deep longing to see [dear one] just like Heer had the burning desire.” So Waris Shah fulfills the first condition of man and Faqir. Mian Muhammad Baksh also says:

“In the story of other one’s own pain is hidden.” So, a poet must have the experience of love. We have already said that this is an experience of rising above the existing social relations and conditions. It is not necessary this love to be a love of a man or woman.

The second line of the stanza states that those who accept love radiate like a garden full of fragrance. For any creative work it is necessary that the creator have a broad mind and open heart. Puny minds and hearts cannot create a great work but can only give rise to formulas for commercial gain. Mian Muhammad Baksh describes it in the following manner:

بال چراغ عشق دا میرا روشن کردے سینہ
دل دے دیوے دی رُشنائی جاوے وچ زمیناں
لاہ ہنیرا جہل بُرے دا چانن لا عقل دا
بخش ولایت شعر سخن دی یمن رہے وچ رلدا

(Light the lamp of love and brighten my heart
The light of my heart spread to many lands
Remove the darkness of ignorance and give light of wisdom

Bless me with the art of poetry)

Here Mian Muhammad Baksh describes the light of love in one's heart dispelling darkness and giving birth to wisdom. When this lamp is lit, it does not remain hidden. It brightens the whole world. Waris Shah calls it, "We have no caste, dress or place." A truly creative person has no bond with the existing status quo:

"What do we have to do with present status quo, it is like joining a stone with wood glue."

All creative persons are united on this point.

Waris Shah was familiar with the story of Heer and Ranjha. It was a popular amongst the people. Demodar Das had written the story earlier and Shah Hussain and Bulleh Shah repeatedly cited the story But Waris Shah wanted to write a new story of Heer Ranjha. In this new work he was going to keep the popular story but mold it to express the deep ideology of Baba Farid and Shah Hussain. Waris Shah's version of the story was woven for this purpose with great skill.

Waris Shah had set himself to the task of creating this new story with a beautiful style, which required a new diction, not of the old hackneyed style. He said that his diction should be "Ajab" (of another and unfamiliar kind) but must be completely new and magical. Creative poetry is always magical and sometimes it is so out of the familiar that even the poet seems surprised. Asadullah Ghalib, perhaps described this condition as if they come from the other world. It is obvious such creation is result of a great learning and practice. Mian Muhammad Baksh says:

قصے اندر کسر نہ ہووے نالے رمز فقر دی
صنعت بھی وچ تھوڑی بہتی چلے لذت کر دی

(Story should not lack anything and should have mystery of Faqr.

Skill should be employed too to enhance the enjoyment.)

For the verse to be technically sound and maintain spontaneity Sachal Sarmast reflects that "keep a firm foot on the swing and let it be spontaneous."

Waris Shah calls his creation as 'constructing' a story. The term may seem to convey that the story has been rewritten with clever twists and turns but, for Waris Shah it has entirely a different meaning. He has not followed Damodar's path of being an eye witness but affirmed that the composer of the story has a fundamental view or ideology on which he builds his story line and characters. For instance, Shah Jehan Muqbil also wrote the same story and using the same diction and meter, but his characters are opposite of those depicted by Waris Shah.

By creating a new the story, Waris Shah makes the new ideology the basis of the story's structure from beginning to end. People ask whether the story of Heer is historically true or imaginary. The answer is that it is both. It is a folk tale, around which many plays and films have been made. But Warrish Shah's structure is special. I had written a play based on this structure Ranjhan Yaar, which was staged in

Washington DC, but it could not make space amongst cultural circles. Obviously, I must be lacking in something. When Waris Shah finished this story, he said that it was a new and unique take of the tale. This is clearly true, reflected by the meticulous and purposeful selection of each word and line resulting in verses that are unique and comparable to the fragrance of a rose garden.. This is a hard task, but it is what sets apart great writers who make history. Waris Shah calls this hard work like Farhad digging a canal from a mountain, both requiring great skill, thought and planning. The idea that somehow the poet receives beautiful stanzas spontaneously from ether is not correct. Creative poetry requires deep thought and careful planning. In Waris Shah's case it is especially true as he has framed his story around his ideology. He says:

ایسا شعر کیتا پُر مغز موزوں جیہا موتیاں لڑی شہوار دی سی
 طول کھول کے ذکر میان کیتا رنگ رنگ دی خوب بہار دی سی
 تمثیل دے نال بیان کیتا جیہی زینت لعل دے ہار دی سی

(I have created thought provoking verse like the royal enlance of pearls.

The narration was detailed and yet made appropriate, it was [like] multi-colored spring.

It was narrated through allegory and came out like an elegant ruby necklace.)

Mian Muhammad Baksh says:

حرفاں وچ سفیدی روشن جیوں بھل اندر پتاں

(The whiteness shines through words like a flower [wrapped around] in the leaves.)

After doing all this Waris Shah says that the creative process requires attention to detail and is like pressing the essence out of a rose. This essence is separate from the flower and has different impact.

Through this creative process, the creator also thinks about his audience: who is it for whom he is writing? Is he writing for the upper class or for the people at large? If Waris Shah wanted to write for the high and mighty, he would have written in Persian because that was the language of the court and the elite. So, for a talented mind like Waris Shah to write in Punjabi, instead of Persian, shows that he wanted to write for the common people. In the beginning he says that one will enjoy this story amongst friends in gatherings: it is a love story that will give pleasure and bring people together. He says:

پرکھ شعر دی آپ کر لین شاعر گھوڑا پھیریا وچ نخاس دے میں
 پڑھن گھبرو دل وچ خوشیں ہوکے بھل بیچیا واسطے باس دے میں

(Other poets may evaluate my work, I have brought a fine horse in the market.

The young, with happy heart, can read it, I have planted flower for fragrance)

He presents his work like a well-bred horse in the market and mentions that he has written this work not for self-glorification but so that it may please people and the fragrance of this work may spread to all. He knew that his readers and listeners are at many levels, so he has mentioned that he has written this work for 'simpletons' as well.

He has not only prayed for his readers, copy-makers but also listeners. As he knew that there are many who carried on the oral tradition. He trusted in the wisdom of his listeners and only such confidence can give rise to a great work. If one thinks that the commoners are fools, which many Punjabis did by writing in Persian/Urdu, then only a petty work for the elite or upper crust can be created.

Following are the main points of Waris Shah's style, diction and use of idioms:

1. A creative writer must rise above the prevalent relations in society. Such poets have qualities of lovers.

2. Every creative work has embedded in it an implicit ideology of the writer. Waris Shah has woven a popular story around his ideology.
3. For poetry or prose, a great poetic skill is needed. It cannot be done just by feelings and emotions: one needs cultivation and training.
4. Every couplet and word used are carefully chosen and edited and corrected many times over.
5. Every couplet has many layers and multiple meanings and fits properly in the whole work like a diamond. They should not be artificially crafted as sometimes they are done in Mushairas. They should also not be repetitive.
6. In editing, the spontaneous character (i.e. fragrance) of the creation should not vanish.
7. Couplets should be magical so that they appear innovative to prevalent thinkers, with such structure that they cannot imagine.
8. The poet must be familiar with the taste and choices of his readers and listeners. He must know his audience.

Language of Waris Shah

No one before or after, has employed the language that Waris Shah has used. Many great poets before Waris used the old vocabulary with new meanings and symbols but they did not come near attaining the structure captured in Waris Shah's Heer Ranjha. Waris Shah crafted the words, molded and decorated them according to his needs. In a way he has created his language in that one has to stop and think about his use of words and how they have morphed language.

Changing ideology also reflects in the use of language. Generally new ideas reveal different use and aspects of words: new diction, structure and style emerges with change of basic thought process. Sometimes, ideas seem dense and seem strange, but this is due to unfamiliarity

with new ideas and thoughts. For example, in Western thought, new philosophers created new words: Jean Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger not only brought new ideas and thoughts, but their language is also new. Therefore, the fact that Waris Shah created his own new language is not something exceptional.

Along with pure Punjabi words, he has also used common Persian words. He did not pay attention to the "purity" of language. For example, at many places he uses the word "zindagi" in place of "hayati." He uses words that have become common parlance. He did not look into the dictionary and infuse artificial words which are not commonly used, as is done in some contemporary writings. There is a current trend of infusing Hindi and Sanskrit words in East Punjab and, in West Punjab, Persian, Arabic and Urdu words are taken just for convenience. One can see that, usually, creative works (poetry, short stories etc.) do not have many words from other languages. For example. the poetry of Shiv Kumar Batalvi and Paash can be understood without difficulty, but the material written for literary criticism is very alien to the Punjabi readers.

Waris Shah's language was in sync with his times. He used popular words from non-Punjabi languages, that had become part of common use. This is not a criticism of writers such as Najm Hosain Syed, who are alleged to be using unfamiliar and difficult words and phrases. Najm Hosain Syed is facing a situation where Punjabi vocabulary is dwindling very fast, an issue that did not exist during Waris Shah's time. Additionally, writers like Najm Hosain Syed usually presume that the reader is familiar with old classical Punjabi literature. For example, take these lines from Bar Di Var:

مڑ آئیاں ایں کن پڑوانیا!
تینوں رنگپوریاں سترنگلیا نہیں

میتھوں کیسہ ہن منگن آئیاں ایں
جے سگواں ایں تے گھت ساہ لوہنا
پھوک دے کوڑا سارے

(You come back, [you] the ears pierced!
Have you not been turned into seven coloreds by people of
Rangpoor.

What do you want from me now?
If you are identical, then breath out fire.
Brun the fallacious structures).

Obviously, the reference is being made to Ranjha getting his ears pierced, becoming a Jogi and going to Heer's in-laws the Khairas. But many readers get stuck at words like "ghat," "saah" and "luhna." These are common Punjabi words and are in common use. But "luhna saah" is a new conjugation. It hints towards Ranjha's curse to the city to be burnt by fire. It is also being suggested that truth by its very being destroys falsehood. It shows that whenever new creative work is joined with old tradition, people unfamiliar with that (old tradition) find it difficult to understand.

Waris Shah has transformed traditional techniques of Kaafi and Dohas for his ideology. To explicate his thought process, Waris Shah has used different characters in a dramatic way that he calls "Tamseel" (drama or play). He employed "Tamseel" to convey his underlying ideology. His declaration that "Waris Shah's verses are meanings of Quran" indicate that he is using story-telling for a greater purpose. Therefore, wherever, he felt that existing words were not enough, he morphed new words for his purpose. For example, he turned jati into jatitdi. He also turned Sanskrit and Persian words into Punjabi such as Jot to Jotna and Zar to Zaran. By the time of the 19th century, Muhammad Baksh and Ghulam Rasool, used Persian words extensively. It is interesting that by that time Persian had vanished and Urdu had been brought to Punjab. However,

while using Persian words, Waris Shah remained within the Punjabi tradition. But Mian Muhammad Baksh and Maulvi Ghulam Rasool wrote in the tradition of Farsi Masnavi (Persian story-telling) and they chose their stories from the Middle Eastern tradition. With this background, Waris Shah used words from other languages differently, remaining steeped in the Punjabi tradition.

Waris Shah has shown that nothing is wrong with using words from languages which have become part of common parlance, but one should try to remain in the Punjabi tradition. Of course, use of language is important, but the main focus is creation of new ideas and ideology. The emphasis should be on reflecting history through signs and symbols rising out of traditions of the land.

Waris Shah's Epistemology

One of the fundamental issues in philosophy has been to determine how knowledge is gained. Do we gain knowledge from the material world around us or the source must be metaphysical? Does our knowledge reflect our concrete existence, our style of life and our day-to-day interaction with the outer world or is it given to us by the society and it has nothing to do with our conscious decision making? The second aspect of this question is that is our knowledge based on verifiable empirical evidences or it is based on our beliefs and superstitions, going around in a cycle that is in repetition from time immemorial? This has also been a core question for Punjabi intellectuals and, hence, a necessary topic to discuss here.

Bulleh Shah has linked the 'understanding' or 'unveiling of secrets' with the historical transformations.

الٹے ہوو زمانے آئے
تاں میں بھیت سجن دے پائے
کاں لکڑ نوں مارن لگے
چڑیاں جرے دھائے
بھوریاں والے راجے کیتے
راجیاں بھیک منگائے

(The times have gone topsy-turvy and that is how I found out the secrets of the dear one. The crows are killing the preying birds and sparrows have pushed under the eagles.

The one with blankets have become the rajas and the [previous] rulers are forced to beg)

“TaaN” (then) is the key word in this Kafi. This means that I have found the truth 'when' the era has gone topsy-turvy. The opposite of this is also true that if the times had not been inverted, I could not have found the secret (the truth). The era's inversion mean that politico-economic system has gone upside-down. The new thought process has been the outcome of such historical upheavals. This all means that the real knowledge comes from change in material conditions.

Waris Shah's Ranjha starts his journey to discover the world at the death of his father and division of land. Prior to this, the flute playing was initial stage of Ranjha's awareness according to Waris Shah. In his encounter with the real world, Ranjha discovers that the system around him is rigged through briberies, and earning livelihood is not an easy undertaking. His main discovery is that all relations are based on self-interests: Bulleh Shah untangles this reality in these verses:

جد آپو اپنی پے گئی
دھی ماں نوں ٹٹ کے لے گئی
مونہہ بارھویں صدی پساریا

(When everyone became on-their-own, the daughter robbed the mother. The 12th century has opened its [dreadful] mouth)

When Ranjha discovers the essence of human relation, he has two choices to make. One, he can become part of the rigged society, pass time as others do and die fighting his brothers over land. The second is that he quit the rotten system and find a new way that can lead to a just society. Two dimensions emerge at this point: first to negate the existing system and second to find a new direction. In fact,

every individual has both tendencies and the question is what must be negated and what new stance to follow. Sachar Sarmast has a very clear view about this basic contradiction:

میں آہیاں، میں آہیاں
آہیاں وچوں ناہیاں تھیندیاں
ناہیاں وچوں آہیاں

(I exist, I exist. Negative comes out of positive and positive from negation)

This means that from the ‘positive’ emerges the ‘negative’ and vice versa. Sultan Bahu has further elaborated this principle of unity of the opposites.

نئی اثبات دا پانی ملیا ہر رگے ہر جائی ہو
اندر بوٹی مشک مچایا جان پھلن پر آئی ہو

(Every vein and part of body was watered by positivity and negation. The bud spread its fragrance inside and the being is to [blossom] flowers).

Bulleh Shah described it as leaving the mosque, going to a Hindu temple where thousands of conches are being blown and eating dead instead of kosher. From all these verses it is evident that first one must ‘negate’ which means completely unlearning the habitual thinking and then embrace a new path. In simple terms it means that without getting rid of the socially given process of thinking no new thinking discourse can be found. Shah Hussain describes this process in the following verses:

میاں گل سنی نہ جاندى سچى
سچى گل سنیوے کیونکر، گچی ہڈاں وچ رچی
سچى گل سنی تناہاں چنگ جنماں تن مچی

(Oh, the good man, the words of truth cannot be heard. How can be true words are listened to when raw (half-truths) have seeped into bones. Only those can hear the true words whose body is [awakened] by fire flickers).

By leaving Takhat Hazara, Ranjha negates his old existence and a new fire is born within him. Waris Shah shows what is ‘raw’ and ‘untrue’ in Ranjha’s dialogue with the Mullah. To negate all the institutions of an organized religion, Waris Shah names a long list of books written by great religious scholars that are being taught in Madrassas.

Waris Shah goes over the lengthy list to indicate that he is going to negate everything established in those books. For that, he makes us confront a narrow-minded Mullah. Waris Shah’s intent is to show that every scholar or practitioner of an organized religion hides a petty Mullah inside, which Waris Shah described as a ‘bundle of disputes,’ and ‘witches’ clinging to mosques. Waris Shah exposes the entire class of Mullahs by showing that they have economic interests that’s why they adopted such profession.

First, Waris Shah establishes that Mullahism is like any other profession in the society and then he exposes the real person hiding behind his appearance:

انھے کوڑھیاں لولیاں وانگ بیٹھے قرعہ مرن جہان دا مار دے ہو
شرع چاء سرپوش بنایا ہے روادار وڈھے گنہگار دے ہو

(You sit like blind, leper and lame guessing the birth and death of people.

You have turned Sharia into a cover and you are committing high sins)

Waris Shah describes Mullah as a blind, a leper and a lame who is not part of the production process and instead is a dependent like a vulture. Mullah is likened to a termite and a parasite who lacks any positive role in the society.

Waris Shah states it unambiguously that Mullah's profession has led to sexual degeneration as they (indulge in homosexuality in their back rooms and this the ploughing they do). It means that Ranjha's consciousness has reached a level where he can link the economic profession with sexual degeneration.

Waris Shah gave a concrete social form to what had been said in similes and metaphors in classical Punjabi tradition. Waris Shah in dialogues with Mullah and Qazi negates the knowledge which has no relevance to common people and describes it as a 'cloth cover' to hide the rotten material. Waris Shah portends that the whole class of protectors of organized religion are looking after the economic interest of the ruling classes, a system in which, according to Baba Farid "Some have too much of flour and others have not even [a pinch of] salt"

The ideology required by ruling class is being taught at different levels in madrassas or mosques. Waris Shah gives the full curriculum while adoring the mosque and Bulleh Shah also mentioned many Sharia books in his verses. The construction of an ideology for the rulers was responsibility of Mullahs, Qazis, court historians and hired scholars. Therefore, it was necessary for the progressive intellectuals to prove that such an ideology was false and enemy of the people.

This contradiction between status-quo ideology and its opponents does not come out in Baba Farid of 12th century and Shah Hussain of 16th century. Baba Farid had to bear the cruelties of city Qazi and the ruler, but we don't see any mention of that in his poetry. In the 15th century, Baba Guru Nanak exposed the entire class of organized religion of Muslims and Hindus, but it did not penetrate the Muslim consciousness. Shah Hussain merely hinted to Mullahs and Qazis in verses like, "Your white covering cloth let go to oven, fakirs' blanket is better for us." However, you can note that Mullahs and Qazis are not directly condemned as

ruling class pets. The direct confrontation began in 17th century through Sultan Bahu whose attacks on Mullahism can be summarized as follows:

- Mullahs and other royal scholars learn and use knowledge to endear the rulers.

پڑھ پڑھ علم ٹلوک ریجھاون کیا ہو یا اس پڑھیاں ہو

(Gaining knowledge through repeated readings are directed to please the rulers. What is the use of such readings)

(2) Mullah's knowledge does not bring any enlightenment and it is only for the greed of money.

اللہ پڑھیوں حافظ ہو یوں نہ گیا حجابوں پردہ ہو

پڑھ پڑھ عالم فاضل ہو یوں بی طالب ہو یوں زر دا ہو

(With God's blessing [you] have memorized Quran but no secret was revealed [to you].

After a lot of study, you became a scholar and yet you are greedy for money)

(3) Knowledge of Mullahs and status-quo intellectuals is merely cause of arrogance.

پڑھ پڑھ عالم کرن تکبر ملاں کرن وڈیائی ہو

گلیاں دے وچ پھرن نمانے بغل کتاباں چائی ہو

پڑھیا علم ودھی مغروری عقل بھی گیا تلوہاں ہو

(After hard studies the scholars are exhibiting arrogance and Mullahs are showing pride.

The poor [guys] are wandering in the streets with books under their armpits.

With studies and gain of knowledge arrogance has enlarged and reasoning has vanished)

(4) The Mullahs' knowledge is a market commodity that has a price.

جتھے ویکھن چنگا چوکھا پڑھن کلام سوائی ہو
دوہیں جہانیں مٹھے باہو کھادی ویچ کمائی ہو

(They read more [of hymns] where they see plenty of food.
They are deceived in the both worlds who have made
livelihood out of [knowledge])

(5) To practice a false knowledge does not make any
difference because the real knowledge is meant to change
the inner being.

تسبی پھری تے دل نہ پھریا لینا تسبی پھڑ کے ہو؟
علم پڑھیا تے ادب نہ سکھیا لینا علم نوں پڑھ کے ہو؟

(Rosary kept on turning but the heart did not turn, then
what is use of holding rosary?
Studied to gain knowledge but did not learn obedience
then what one has to be gained from knowledge)

Sultan Bahu highlighting the negative and positive
relationship of knowledge, making it clear beyond any
doubt that as protectors of the ruling class, Mullahs and
other royal scholars' know-how is for economic gains and
it has nothing to do with real life. Sulatn Bahu started
stressing the concept of 'Ahad' (oneness), merging with
one and negating all others. Bulleh Shah took this notion to
a new high. Negating the ongoing social concept of
knowledge in his Kafi "Ilmon bus karen o yar" (Put a stop
to knowledge) Bulleh Shah propounded:

پڑھ پڑھ شیخ مشائخ ہویا
بھر بھر پیٹ نیندر بھر سویا
جانندی وار نین بھر رویا
ڈبا ویچ ارار نہ پار

پڑھ پڑھ ملاں ہوئے قاضی
اللہ علماں باہجھوں راضی
ہوئے حرص دنو دن تازی
نفع نیت ویچ گزار

(After reading over and over, [you] became a religious
guide. You slept with full stomach. Cried with flooded
eyes. Drowned, being neither on this side or other side [of
the river]. After continuous studies, Mullahs have become
Qazis. God is happier without knowledges. The greed is
recurrent every day. With intentions of profit, the time is
being spent)

علموں پے قضیئے ہو
اکھیں والے انھیں کور
پھڑدے سادھ تے چھڈدے چور
دوہیں جہانیں ہویا خوار

(The knowledge has led to more complications. The eyed
have become blind. They grab the innocent and let go of
the thief. Debunked in both worlds)

Bulleh Shah maintains that scholar's entire knowledge in
meant to earn a comfortable living. He adds that a well-
versed Mullah becomes a state-appointed Qazi which,
according to Waris Shah, is addicted to briberies. Shedding
light on this issue Bulleh Shah articulates that status-quo
knowledge leads to more unwarranted hurdles by blinding
simpletons who end up letting go of thieves and punish
innocents.

In this system thieves are the ones who do injustices and
rob innocent people. The knowledge being gained by so-
called scholars, blinds them and they start protecting
thieves and dacoits. In his Kafi "ik nuqte wich gal mukdi

ey” (ends in one dot) he sees such scholars entering the hell. According to Bulleh Shah there are other kinds of worshippers:

اک جنگل بحریں جانے نی
 اک دانہ روزے کھانے نی
 بے سمجھ وجود تھانے نی
 اینویں چلیاں وچ جنم مکدی اے

(There are ones who go to jungle or sea. They eat one seed of grain. The unwise get exhausted. They get their life consumed by worshiping in seclusion)

For Bulleh Shah the real knowledge takes one to the ocean of unity which means merging with the entire universe and everything in it. The first condition to attain such knowledge is to negate the existing social boundaries and moral principle. “Abandoning the kosher and eating dead” or “entering the Hindu temple” just means that. Once the act of negation is accomplished, the doors to oneness start to open.

As opposed to the knowledge leading to ‘oneness’ the existing social knowledge leads to alienation, disunity and ‘otherness.’ Seeker of such knowledge has no relationship with it. For them the knowledge is like any other commodity that can be bought and sold in the market. Sultan Bahu likens them to street vendors who “roaming the streets with books on their head.” Knowledge that turns one blind, should be burned.

Unfortunately, such a theory of knowledge was ignored after the eighteenth century. Mian Muhammad Bakhsh and Maulvi Ghulam Rasool hardly talk about this, however, Khawaja Ghulam Farid takes up this issue but does not seem to add much to classical tradition. It has been revived since 1960s where Najm Hosain Syed has contributed a lot to it.

Waris Shah adding to the classical tradition has presented this in a dramatic form where Ranjha is shown to advance his knowledge through economic contradictions. We have described it in his dialogue with Mullah and Mallah (the boatman). Heer’s meeting Ranjha and being absorbed in one and jumping in the river of ‘one’ is expanding the boundaries of knowledge. This is the reason that Ranjha tells Heer to overcome the arrogance of beauty and wealth to experience the unity. Ranjha becoming a lowly servant is a life experience on the lowest economic ladder. Many who according to Mian Muhammad Bakhsh don’t look on a deeper level are prone to say that Ranjha was useless person who could not plough and ran away. However, they ignore to note that he ended up doing the most difficult job of grazing the buffalo herd. It means he could do the most arduous task if it could lead to a creative living: In his new life, he is in unison with Heer, her friends and the buffalos. This advances his knowledge.

His journey to the next level starts after Heer’s marriage. The awareness that started with playing the flute has taken him to gain enough experience and knowledge about the social structure. Now, the awareness that was attached with playing flute cannot take him further and that is why he throws it away. The flute symbolizes a stage of life that came to an end: “He threw away flute and became a fakir the day Khairas took away Heer.”

It should be noted that one cannot or should not revert after achieving a higher level of consciousness. This is why Ranjha refuses to go back when his brothers and sisters-in-law ask him to return to Takhat Hazara. He knows that his brothers feel dishonored because of his working as a menial laborer. He interprets his brothers’ calling as another trick to have him as a guard to protect the fields:

ہُن چٹھیاں لکھ کے گھلیاں جے راکھا کھیترے نوں جدوں چاہیو جے
 (You have written me letters when you need a farmhand)

After Heer's marriage when his sisters-in-law write him that "None of your thing has gone bad, come back home in style" he rebuts:

اساں جدوں کدوں انھاں پاس جانا جیسڑے محرم اساڈے حال دی نی
(I must go to the one who is confidant of my heart)

Up until Heer's marriage Ranjha had not negated the social boundaries because he was still hoping to get Heer in return for his very long service. However, after Heer's marriage his hopes are dashed and now he must negate entirely. This is done by going to Jogi's place, having his ears pierced and wrapping himself in ashes. Waris Shah has given a detailed account of destroying one's social persona in Ranjha's dialogue with Jogi. This stage is beyond what was symbolized with blessings of Panj Peer. By having Ranjha refuse Jogi's advice to consider every young woman a sister or an older a mother, Waris Shah lays down another condition of real knowledge: The real knowledge must be tested within the social order based on material evidences. In other words, Waris Shah is refuting such a metaphysical knowledge which is beyond this world and its truthfulness cannot be affirmed.

In a very long dialogue, Ranjha and Sehti, debate the sources of knowledge from various angles. Sehti believes in empirical world and rejects the possibility of spiritual interventions by spirituality. Sehti's empiricism has a shortcoming that it cannot explain variations in history. On the other hand, Ranjha's take on knowledge seems to be unscientific but since it has born out of material conditions and shows the moving history forward, it is more authentic. At the last stage, Ranjha, after completing the process of negation, has embraced the unity. Sehti has not gone through this process and remains on the margins, that is why Ranjha calls her 'ignorant' even after she has helped him. Ranjha has reached a stage where 'calling out for

prayers' or 'blowing conch' does not make any difference. By ending the story in tragedy, Waris Shah made him 'perishing' part of a historical process.

کئی بول گئے عمر شاخ دی تے ایتھے آہلنا کسے نہ پایائی
وارث شاہ میاں لوکاں کملیاں نوں قصہ جوڑ ہوشیار سنایائی

(Many have chirped on the branch of life and none could build a nest on it. Waris Shah! I have narrated the intelligently woven story to simpletons)