Snapshots of Punjabi Village Life

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The photographs here are a visual testimony to the rhythms of life in the Majha region of Punjab during the 1960s. As a predominantly rural area blessed with fertile land and bountiful waters, its history has been defined by the fortunes of its twin cities, Lahore and Amritsar. After the Partition in 1947, however, the Majha marked the border between East and West Punjab, and with the shifting of the political capital of the eastern side to Chandigarh, this region, once a dominant center in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the Punjab has been increasingly marginalized. Given the changes that have drastically altered village life, growing literacy, new economic opportunities, changes in family organization, outmigration, industrialization, globalization, etc., these pictures freeze a moment in time that is slowly fading from view.

I begin to sow the Name, taking faith
That the Lord will grace us with a bountiful harvest
The entire earth is lush
Grain sprouted into a bountiful harvest
Fetch water, fan, grind grain for the good people
In your house, the cows and buffalos
Yield rivers of milk and butter
Outside, the yolked oxen
Extinguish humankind’s hunger
O! We are birds and this is our tree
Father, we will fly off
O! Ours is a long flight
Father, where will we land?
The sands are piping in the roaster
Put your hand on my pulse
What need have I for medicine?