

The Tumba-Algoza Ballad Tradition

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

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

Background

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

Historical Development

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

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

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

Having considered it in its totality, we can divide this balladry into two types. First is the singing of the Malwa area, represented by Sadiq Muhammad and Fazal Muhammad. Second is the singing of the Majha area, which was represented by Nawab Ghumar and Alam Lohar. The main difference between the two is their singing style, which is quite distinct, even though the instruments may be the same between them. The Majha singers sing solo; their background players only give accompaniment on instruments. Conversely, the Malwa singers sing in call and response fashion. The frontman (*āgū*) speaks first and the backup² (*pāchhū*) speaks after. In addition, the pronunciation and singing manner of Majha singers are of one sort and those of Malwa singers are of another. The following presents information on both types of singers.

The Malwa Style

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

The Majha Style

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Alam Lohar

Singing Manner

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*karke zor dhingānā, hīr kheriān dī ḍolī 'ch pā tī. ikk
rānjhā darvesh āṅke hīr nūn tāane mārdaī, bāī bārānī
sāl majjhānī cārānī, bhain bhāī chhadde, vatan
chhadḍiā, takht hazārā chhadḍiā, jāt pāt nūn dāg lā liā.
dass! padesī nūn kihre khāre khūh 'c chhāl māre?
bhalā bāī sherū kihre javāb karke suṅāundai?*

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

—Fazal Shah Jagravan

*meharbān, rāje harīchandar dā puttār rohtās bāg
vichoiñ phull laiñ vāste giā. us vele phull vichoiñ
vishvāmittar sapp bañke laṛke de laṛ giā, laṛkā mar
giā. usdī mātā tārā bahi ke bachche dī lāsh ‘te bhalā
bāi sharīf jorī vāliā kaise virlāp kar rahī ai... ?*

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

—Sadiq Muhammad Auria

*pūran jatī, jī ho ke gurū gorakh nāth toñ vidiā, kithe
challiai? ikk rāñī sundarāñ diāñ rang mahallāñ vichoiñ
bhichchhiā laiñ vāste. hallā! anāit koṛiā ghumiārā gurū
ne kihre rang dī pushāk ditti e... ?*

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

—Nawab Ghumar Anaitkotia

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

Thematic Content

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Religion-neutral Character

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

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

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

Composers

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

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

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

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

*sadik, kahe sun samajh nadāne, nā kar aiḍā jhorā nī.
fazal, ih dang chalā ke tur jū, muṛ nī pāuṇā morā nī.
sherū, tainūn bhulnā nā hī, dilbar dā nihorā nī.
sadar kahe tūn yād karengī, tur jū pā vichhorā nī.
dil de ke uh dilbar tānī, tainūn kamli honā pajūgā.
nāl pardesī nahīn nibhī tainūn nitt dā roṇā pajūgā.*

Sadeeq says: Listen and understand you naïve: grieve not so O.
Fazal—Say your peace and move on, not to return again O.
Sheru—You will *not* forget the beloved’s entreaty O
Sadar—You’ll remember; yet move on, affect a separation O.
You’d have to be a fool to give your heart to that beloved.
Don’t fall in love with a traveler; you’ll be in tears daily.

Among the fans of this balladry, one senior citizen, Inder Singh of Malaut, who has seen these singers perform, enthusiastically relates their impact: “When the songs sung by Sadar, Fazal, and party are played on the gramophone, the people of the village instantly gather and listen with adoration.” These songs were known by heart by one and all, and though with time some have been forgotten, others are yet remembered today. The conflict between spirit and body, as articulated by Sadar, appears in the last two lines here:

*pāk muhammad sarvar jehā, hoiā nahīn sultān kōī.
uhnān nāl nibhāī nā mainī, jihnān dī aisī shān hoi.
sadar bhalā mainī tere varge kad giṇtī vich laīndī.
kalaihrīā morā ve mainī nā tere rahīndī.*

Like the virtuous Muhammad could never become a sultan,
 I could not feel fulfilled being with someone so glamorous.
 Sadar—Verily, I would appear insignificant next to you.
 O plumed peacock, I could not be yours.

At Partition time, Sadardin had to leave Jagraon and go to Pakistan. I cannot say whether he arrived truly safe and sound or not. Ibrahim Ghuddu of Malerkotla stated that, some months before Partition, he had requested Sadar to compose a version of *Dhol Badshah*. He had actually prepared it, too, but just then the commotion started and everything remained stuck in-between.

Concert-arena Style

The performance-arenas of tumba-algoza balladry are also worth mentioning. These “arenas” (*akhārā*), as with the kavishars and folk dhadis, were not the stage arenas of singers these days. Concerts were held at the village green or a ways outside the village on the banks of a pond, below some grove of trees, or else at the confluence of three rivers. Sound reinforcement equipment of any type was non-existent. The minstrels’ voices themselves were so loud that they could reach all the audience members. Indeed the arena *style* itself was different than today’s. Audience members would sit in a circular formation, leaving an open space in the middle, and, according to their number, the circle shrank or grew. The artists would be in the middle of the circle, and by strolling about they would continually reach all the audience members. This is the arena style that even today their followers have adopted and which can be seen at melas like those at Jarg, Chhapar, Ahmadgarh, Jabomajra, Jagraon, etc.

The concerts of traditional balladry have remained an integral part of Punjab’s folk melas. A place would be reserved off to one side of the mela’s crowds, in a secluded place under the shade of a large tree. Audiences for these concerts would have been strolling about the mela until afternoon, at which point they would begin to gather in the arena. With cloths on their shoulders, they would lay down sheets, remove their fancy embroidered *juttīs*, and lay their canes and staves on the ground before them. With an air of satisfaction and looking their best, they at last would sit down. The minstrels would enter the middle of the arena, enjoin the audience in a supplication of *fateh*, and begin to make tone on the instruments. The instrumentalists would continue to strike a sweet tone to create a sort of atmosphere in the arena, as the *agu* perused each side of the circle to acknowledge distinguished guests. Every year [i.e. at certain melas] there are so many audience members that one can recognize at least a few such eminent personalities among them. On

seeing the audience become “in tune” with the tones of the instruments, the agu, according to custom, would make a supplication to his deity or patron saint, along with taking the names gods and goddesses, pirs and faqirs of all religions, and paying respect to [the goddess of music and arts] “Sarusti” (Saraswati). He would then address the audience members and ask, “Right then, brothers, you gracious audiences members, kind sirs—Tell me: What shall we recite? Shall we tell of bhagats or warriors? Or, otherwise, how might ye be pleased?” The distinguished persons might request to hear the tale of some bhagat or warrior, or oftentimes the decision is made to recite some love story. In this way, the main *gaun* would begin.

The agu would advance the story, bit by bit. Along with the singing, he brings clarity to the text through periodic prose commentary and uses short, quick poetic utterances, in the form of couplets (*shear* or *doharā*), to move the story along in an interesting fashion. In such a way it would take two hours or more until the climax was reached. At the conclusion of the concert the hope was stated that all might come to hear the performers again in the future.

Performance Attire

As with folk dhadis, the attire of tumba-algoza balladeers was indicative of their distinct identity. Gussied up from top to bottom, when they come into the arena their sharp looks win over the audience. Dazzling white, starched turbans with a fan (*furlā*), and embroidered on the tail ends with dark colored or golden thread. Jasmine-white tunics and blindingly white sheets. Pointed juttis of black patent leather on the feet, splendidly embroidered and creaking (i.e. from newness). Clean-shaven beards, but having mustaches which are given narrow, sharp-pointed twists. Kohl in the eyes; on the forehead, several inlaid silver stars. In all these ways their appearance was distinguished from regular folks’.

The white color is a symbol of their learning, wisdom, and cleanliness. Like wrestlers were given training in good conduct and upright moral qualities by their masters, in the same way these minstrels were also given lessons in living a morally upright and clean life. Their intent was to communicate their “cleanliness in living” through the cleanliness of their attire, and these appearances actually made a deep impression on their audiences. Similarly, they keep their instruments well adorned. The tumba is mounted with brass kokas and ivory fish. At the distal end of the neck, shiny silver handkerchiefs are tied. The pair of algozas is adorned with colorful cotton pom-poms.

Moving about the arena step by step, forward and back, the singers project their voices, often with the agu and pachu at eight to ten feet’s distance from each other, or else standing face to face. Sometimes the

agu affected such postures as extending his right foot, lifting his arm up high, and tilting his torso forward while singing out. In this way he would charm the audience. All these matters of appearance are in fact a part of this singing style.

The Master-Disciple Tradition

One distinctive aspect of this ballad art has been its master-disciple tradition. A common saying goes, “Without a guru one finds no *gat* (achievement) as without an emperor one finds no *pat* (honor).” This tradition is nothing new, as indeed one finds evidence of it from Vedic times. At that time, learners used to get all sorts of instruction from sages. This type of master-disciple relationship has very much remained sacrosanct. Students used to live in the ashrams of their gurus while receiving training. The custom of this sort of arrangement has also remained common with respect to the ballad singer’s art.

Typically, those being trained would be completely or practically illiterate. They would have to memorize an entire piece just by hearing it from others. The greater someone’s memory for repertoire was, the more popular he would be. Therefore, they would have to practice strict discipline; continuous upkeep was necessary to keep their art polished. For this reason, many would leave hearth and home to live in the company of their masters for some 10-12 years. They would serve their masters well, considering it their paramount duty to take care of all kinds of work. The master’s favorite disciples could achieve more in less time. Many disciples actually became more or less like their masters’ own sons. In performances they would invoke their master’s name with pride, saying, “I am the disciple of such and such *ustad*.” As such, the master-disciple tradition has held a special place in this art.

The Contribution of Malerkotla

Along with other losses connected with the Partition of Punjab, balladry suffered a great loss because most of the singers connected with the art were Muslims who had to go to Pakistan. While many arrived safely at their destination, some lost their lives on the way. Only those from Malerkotla were protected.⁶ Seeing that bad times were coming, neighbors of the Muslims in the city’s nearby villages advised them to go to Malerkotla for some time. Among these individuals, some went back to their villages when things settled down and others took up residence in Malerkotla for good.

So it is that at the present time most singers connected with this balladry are based in Malerkotla city or its surrounding villages. It is they who have kept the art alive. The senior figure of this tradition, 92-year

old Ibrahim Ghuddu, lives in that very city. His students, grand-students, and great-grand-students are making their own efforts to spread the genre under his watchful care. These include: Noordin, Fazaldin, Sadeeq Muhammad, Habib, Shaadi, Phuman, Suleman, Khushi Muhammad, and Zamil. The singers of this balladry from Malerkotla's nearby villages include: Rahimdin Naromajra, Fazal Muhammad Lohatbaddi, Chiragdin and Bashir Muhammad of Tibba, Dhanna Baroondiwala, and Kaka Sadhoheriwala.

The Impact of Loudspeakers

Although this balladry is thought of as the plain and rustic product of the common people, it also has the honor of having been recorded. These voices, immortalized on disc, are a cultural treasure of ours. Having long been blasted from the roofs of homes in villages, they have made a deep impression on people's hearts. Among those who had the honor of getting their voices recorded some notable names are: Nawab Ghumar Anaitkotia, Muhammad Alam Lohar, Sadeeq Muhammad, and Fazal Muhammad Tunda. The recordings made of these artists' voices by various recording companies were of both great quantity and quality. Of these record labels, foremost is HMV (His Master's Voice). Other companies to preserve these singers were Regal, Young India, Columbia, Hindustan Records, and Odion. These companies improved the financial condition of these singers through the royalties they paid.

The compositions that were to be recorded were written or arranged according to the limitations of records, *viz.* that a disc needed to fit a complete composition within two and a half to three minutes. Thus only the main episodes in the folk ballads form the content of these records. For example, out of *Hir*, there would be the exchange between Hir and her mother, the conversation between Hir and Ranjha when the palanquin was leaving, and Hir's remarks with Sahiti. Out of *Sohni*, there is Sohni's words to the pot. Out of *Sassi*, there is Punnun's feelings of separation from sleeping Sassi, and Sassi getting lost in the desert. Out of *Malki*, there is Malki's swinging with her friends. Out of *Dulla Bhatti*, there is the mother's warning to Dulla, Dulla's meeting with fate, Dulla's battle with the Mughals, and the dialogue with Mehru Posti. Out of *Raja Harish Chandra*, there is the death of Rohitas and the lament of Tara and Harishchandra. Out of *Puran*, there is the exchange between Puran and Lunan. From *Mirza*, there is the conversation between Mirza and Sahiban at the end. In addition to these, some recordings are found of compositions related to the *ishq haqiqi* theme. Of the compositions on record, most were by Sadardin of Jagaraon. Later on, Sadeeq Muhammad also recorded many compositions that he had written himself.

The phenomenon of “loudspeakers” [i.e. public address systems] allowed these singers to easily reach the general public. Although recording playback equipment—gramophones—had been in use for a while, their ambit was small. Moreover, they had been confined to personal use. Conversely, with the advent of loudspeakers, recorded music was taken from the private to the public sphere. Each large village soon acquired a PA system, and without its use any joyous event was considered “incomplete.” On the roof, two cots were stood up tilted, making a sort of joint on top, in which the horn was hung. The gramophone machine was wound with a key every time a new record was played. With the changing of each record the needle would also have to be replaced. Records of regular folk-songs and duets played throughout the daytime. After sunset, however, would begin the strains of [Nawab Ghumar’s catchphrase] “halā puttār būṭiā ghumiārā” or “dullīā ve ṭokrā chukān” [a popular composition; see below], to which people would listen with great fervor.

So it was that the loudspeaker phenomenon increased the widespread popularity of these singers, as it allowed their music to easily reach the common people. People who previously had difficulty reaching performances could now satiate their hunger for the music whilst seated at home listening to the records. One can infer the popularity of this balladry among the people by the fact that in the 1970s some songwriters took the songs recorded by these singers, altered them a bit, and, under their own names, had them recorded by new singers.

Thus from the above analysis it seems that we have in this balladry a great and formidable recorded heritage. Alas, unfortunately, it has not been preserved, even in part, by any kind of institution or cultural affairs department. This treasure has been left to diffuse here and there. Yes, a few enterprising individuals, in service of their own hobby, have made an effort to preserve some recordings. These collectors include Prof. Baldev Singh Buttar of Ahmadgarh, Mr. Balkit Singh Pesi of Barvala, and a couple others. Yet cultural institutions or the Punjab Government’s Cultural Affairs Department needs to give some attention to this matter and preserve this scattered tradition. Otherwise, we will become bereft of this great heritage of ours.⁷

Selected Compositions

Thuhi includes 24 compositions in his book, Tūmbe nāl Joṛī Vajjdi. The following pages contain examples selected from among them.

Dullia Ve Tokra

āundā dullā dekh hoṇī rāh malliā.
 dullā ghoṛī chheṛ kolon langh chilliā.
 auratān dā baiṭhī rūp jo vaṭā ke.
 dulliā ve ṭokrā chukān ā ke.

dulle addī mār ke ghoṛī nūn chheriā.
 hoṇī aggoṇ ho ke dulle nūn gheriā.
 dass mainūn kithe chilliā tūn dhāh ke.
 dulliā ve ṭokrā chukān ā ke.

changī ghoṛī vāliā kithe nūn chilliā
 gall merī suṅke tūn jāvīn balliā.
 bahutā bhār ṭokre 'ch bahi gī pā ke.
 dulliā ve ṭokrā chukān ā ke.

ik gall suṅ jā tūn ghoṛī vāliā.
 bahutā bhār ṭokre de vich pā liā.
 addhā bhār vichon tūn jān vandā ke.
 dulliā ve ṭokrā chukān ā ke.

suṅke sī bhānjā dulle ne ghalliā.
 zor sī lavāiā ṭokrā nā halliā.
 hoṇī vājān mār dī mūnhoṇi suṅā ke.
 dulliā ve ṭokrā chukān ā ke.

Taithon kahindī chakkiā nī jānā ṭokrā.
 tūn tān mainūn disdā nikā jā chhokrā.
 ghall de tūn māme āpṅe nūn jā ke.
 dulliā ve ṭokrā chukān ā ke.

dullā gusse nāl bhānje nūn boliā.
 zor nāl ṭokrā tūn kiun nī toliā.
 muṛiā pichhe nūn jhaṭṭ gussā khā ke.
 dulliā ve ṭokrā chukān ā ke.

dullā kahindā chhetī kar chakk māē.
 vāṭ bahutī hundī asīn agge jāē.
 tinn vārī dulle de mūnhoṇi kahā ke.
 dulliā ve ṭokrā chukān ā ke.

Dulla, Come Heave the Basket (*Dulla Bhatti*)

Dulla comes along and sees Honi (his wife) stalled upon the path,
Dulla and horse intending to pass by this annoyance,
By this seated form of a woman calling out:
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

Dulla dug his heels into the horse, to avoid the situation,
But Honi came up from ahead and blocked his way.
“Tell me, where are you off to, with such whooping?”
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

“Just where is the good horseman off to?
You may go *after* listening to me.
I sit here stuck, having overloaded my basket.”
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

“Listen to just one thing, my horseman.
I’ve put quite a load in the basket.
If only you could share in half the weight?”
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

Hearing this, Dulla sent his nephew.
He tried with force, but the basket would not budge.
Honi cried out, vocally:
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

“By you, I say, the basket cannot be lifted.
You appear to me a smallish youngster.
Go along and send for your uncle.”
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

Dulla spoke to his nephew in anger—
“With force why can’t you heft the basket?”
He turned back immediately in irritation.
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

Dulla says, “Hurry, pick it up.
Enough talk, we must forge ahead.”
Three times Dulla had to say it.
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

*donoñ hatth pā ke ʔokre nūñ chakkdā.
goḍiāñ tāññ chakk ke jimīñ te rakkhdā.
hoñī kahindī chakk huñ zor lā ke.
dulliā ve ʔokrā chukāññ ā ke.*

*sadik dullā mann giā hoñhār nūñ.
rahimiāñ chakā de ʔokre de bhār nūñ.
addhā bhār maithoñ jāññ ve vandā ke.
dulliā ve ʔokrā chukāññ ā ke.*

Laying on both hands he hefts the basket.
Lifting it knee high, he puts it back on the ground.
Honi says, "Pick it up, now then, put your back in it!"
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

Sadeeq—Dulla believed his wife.
Rahima—Make them lift the basket's weight.
Half the weight shall be born by me.
O Dulla, come heave the basket!

* * *

Pīnghān Jhūtdiān

*jhūtdiān, mast allarh muṭiārān pīnghān jhūtdiān.
jhūtdiān, garh mugalāne diān nārān pīnghān jhūtdiān.*

*charhiā sāvaṇ mīnh varsāvaṇ.
kaṭṭhiān ho ke kuṛiān āvaṇ.
ikk dūjā nūn sadd liāvaṇ.
hassaṇ khedaṇ shor machāvaṇ.
jurīān bahnn katārān, pīnghān jhūtdiān...*

*gorā gorā rang hatthūn mahindaṛ lāiā.
akkhīān de vich surmā pāiā.
kuṛiān ne āṇṇā āp sajiāiā.
dhardiān chakk ke kadam savāiā.
sī kūnjān diān dārān, pīnghān jhūtdiān...*

*uchche je pippalīn pīnghān pāiān.
baddalān ne ral mil ghorān lāiān.
shām ghaṭā jad chaḥṛ ke āiān.
kuṛiān ne pīnghān khūb chaḥṛāiān.
mihnniān pain phuhārān, pīnghān jhūtdiān...*

*chaḥṛiān pīnghān azab nazāre.
ral mil gāundiān gīt piāre.
ikk dūjī nūn karan ishāre.
vāro vārī laiṇ hulāre.
kardiān aish bahārān, pīnghān jhūtdiān...*

*malkī pīngh dā lae hulārā.
ghoṛī vāle dā piā chamkārā.
sohṇā dilbar dekh piārā.
malkī pīngh dā lae sahārā.
khichchiān ishq muhārān, pīnghān jhūtdiān...*

*bhāj lāi malkī humm humā ke.
kharh gāi vich chursate ā ke.
kīmā langh giā nīvīn pā ke.
jaṭṭ nā dekhe nazar uṭhā ke.
sīne phir giān tārān, pīnghān jhūtdiān...*

Swinging Swings (*Malki-Keema*)

Swinging, giddy young maidens, swinging swings.
Swinging, like Mughal ladies of the castle, swinging swings.

The month of Savan has arrived, bringing its rains.
Girls get together and come,
Calling to one another,
Laughing and playing and raising a rumpus,
All in line for a turn, swinging swings...

Fair in color, their hands decked with henna,
Eye-shadow in their eyes,
The girls have adorned themselves.
Bit by bit they've come along,
Like flocks of cranes, swinging swings...

The swings were set in the tall pipal trees.
The tempestuous clouds swirled around.
Evening fell as they arrived.
The girls swung high on the swings.
Rains falling in fountains, swinging swings...

The swings soared, wondrous sights,
Mingling with their singing of sweet songs.
Gesturing to one another,
Turn by turn, they lean back,
Enjoying the joyous atmosphere, swinging swings...

Malki leans back on the swing.
The horseman Keema's radiance shone.
Seeing the handsome beloved, dear love,
Malki propels the swing.
Tugging on heart strings, swinging swings...

She ran along joyfully,
Came and stood in the village square.
Keema passed by with eyes downcast,
The Jatt not lifting his glance.
Still, arrows pierced his heart, swinging swings...

*sadik malki ishq ne gheri.
fazal gall nahūi suḡdā meri.
sherū nāl sababbāni pheri.
sadar pesh nā jāndī meri.
main khahri avāzāni mārāni, pīnghāni jhūtdiāni...
jhūtdiāni, mast allahṛ muṭiārāni pīnghāni jhūtdiāni.*

Sadeeq—Malki was surrounded by love.

Fazal—“He hears not my talk.”

Sheru—“He has come along by chance...”

Sadar—“...and my show has no effect.”

“I remain, calling out”...swinging swings...

Swinging, giddy young maidens, swinging swings

* * *

Rānjhe dā Ulāmbhā

aggion rānjhā boliā,
 sachchī mainī gall suṇāvānī
 tūn tān kheriān nūn tur challī,
 mainī dukhīā kidhar nūn jāvānī.
 mainūnī manonī visār ke nī,
 lāiān nāl saide de lāvānī.
 piār tere dīān dhummanī pai gīānī,
 shahirān te vich garāvānī.
 tūn jhūṭh boldī sangdī nā,
 mainī sachch kahindā sharmāvānī.
 rangale ḍole baiṭhīe tainūnī,
 hatthīn nī hundīān chhāvānī.
 mainūnī har koī dhakke mārḍā,
 kithē bahī ke vakt langhāvānī.
 aji tere dil dīān ho gīānī,
 mainī us vele nūn pachhtāvānī.
 je jānā tainī aidānī karnī,
 mainī kade piār nā pāvānī.
 je mainī takht hazāre nūn jānā,
 nahīn deṇā varānī bharāvānī.
 tāhane māran bhābīānī,
 das khahīrā kiveṇī chhuḍāvānī.
 dil dīānī dil vich rahi gīānī,
 mainī kīhde kol hāl suṇāvānī.
 mainūnī vī nāle lai challī,
 nahīnī mainī zahīr mangā ke khāvānī.

The Complaint of Ranjha (*Hir-Ranjha*)

Ranjha spoke forth—
 “I shall be frank with you.
So, you went off with the Kheras,
 While I have ached wherever I go.
You put me out of your mind,
 And got wed to Saida.
News of your love spread,
 Through the cities and villages.
You are not ashamed of telling lies,
 While I am shy even when speaking the truth.
Go ahead and seat yourself in the colorful palanquin,
 For hands alone make poor shade.
I am jerked around every which way;
 Where shall I sit and pass the time?
Today you’ve got what you’ve always wanted,
 I while I am filled with regret.
If you’re going to carry this out,
 I shall never love again.
If I should go back to Takht Hazara,
 My brothers would not let me back inside.
Their wives would taunt me to no end.
 Tell me, how should I break free?
My heart’s wishes remain unfulfilled.
 Who do I have, with whom to share my feelings?
Bring me along, too,
 Otherwise I shall procure poison and swallow it down.

* * *

Sohñī dā Beṛā

sohñī dā ruhr giā beṛā.
mahñivāl nūñ dassūgā kihṛā.

chakk ke ghare nūñ naiñ vich vargī.
lahir jhanāñ dī dūñī chahrgī.
ethe vas nī chaldā merā.
mahñivāl nūñ dassūgā kihṛā.

vairan baṇ gaī naṇad jo merī.
pakke nāl vaṭā gaī jīhrī.
vīrā mar je naṇāne terā.
mahñivāl nūñ dassūgā kihṛā.

kālī kāng pahāroñ āī.
sohñī ro ro deve duhāī.
pāīā pāñī ne ghummañ gherā.
mahñivāl nūñ dassūgā kihṛā.

kachchiā ve tūñ chall agere.
maiñ balihāre jāvāñ tere.
mainūñ ho giā bahut averā.
mahñivāl nūñ dassūgā kihṛā.

vich dariā de paindīāñ lāphāñ.
chār chupheriun māre thāthāñ.
pāñī mur mur deve gerā.
mahñivāl nūñ dassūgā kihṛā.

kachchiā ve taiñ kachch kamāīā.
kāhnūñ tainūñ gale lagāīā.
mainūñ bhet nā lagiā terā.
mahñivāl nūñ dassūgā kihṛā.

vich dariā de rovāñ kallī.
tere bājh kauñ deve tasallī.
bāhoñ phaṛ lai allā diā sherā.
mahñivāl nūñ dassūgā kihṛā.

hoñī hār miṭāve kauñ.
maut lagī huñ ghere paun.
tainūñ deve kauñ suneharā.
mahñivāl nūñ dassūgā kihṛā.

Sohni's Float (*Sohni-Mahiwal*)

Sohni's float has been destroyed.
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"I picked up the pot and entered the river.
The waters of the Chenab had risen twofold.
All was out of my control."
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"My husband's sister became a vindictive witch,
Who switched out my [buoyant] baked pot.
I hope your brother dies, O sister-in-law!"
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

An ominous black crow came down from the hills.
Sohni was whimpering and wailing,
As the whirling eddies encircled her.
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"O unbaked pot, take me onward.
I shall be indebted to you.
I am running very late."
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

In the river the waves crash.
Lashing her from all sides.
The water again and again returns.
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"O unbaked pot, you've been left unfinished.
Why have you started to dissolve?
I did not know this secret of yours."
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"I shall weep alone in the river
Without you, who could give me consolation?
Take hold of my arms, O Lion of God."
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

"Who could erase destiny?
Death now hovers 'round.
Who will now give you the message?"
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

*lai sajjñā huṇ vas nā mere.
maiñ huṇ kīte yatan bathere.
huṇ kūch bandī dā ḍerā
mahīñvāl nūñ dassūgā kihṛā.*

*sadīk kahe huṇ bhul nā jāvīñ
rahimiāñ soch samajh ke lāvīñ.
ehne kar liā yatan batherā.
mahīñvāl nūñ dassūgā kihṛā.*

“Lo beloved, I’ve now lost control.
I’ve now made much effort.
I’m now passing on to the land of the hereafter.”
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

Sadeeq says, now don’t forget.
O Raheema—Understand and think on this.
She made much effort indeed.
What shall one tell Mahiwal?

Notes

¹ This article has been compiled and translated from text that originally appeared in Thuhi's *Tūmbe nāl Jorī Vajjdi*, Punjab Sangeet Natak Akademi, Chandigarh, 2002, pp. 13-37, 143-144, 146-147, 155, 159-160.

² Although Thuhi does not state so explicitly, one can deduce from his usage that the term "backup" is generally applied to just the tumba-player, whose mouth is free and who therefore may act as a backup singer.

³ Born in village Anait Kot of district Gujranwala in the last decade of the 19th century, Nawab Ghumar has the honor of being the first to record this genre of music, circa 1932-33. His first recording was an episode from *Puran*, on the Regal label. On this recording, he sang solo to the accompaniment of his three sons on algoza, chimta, and dholak. After Partition, Nawab Ghumar seems to have faded into obscurity (Thuhi 2002:48-51). —*Ed.*

⁴ Such an instrument, having at least two strings, also goes by the name of *king*. If there is any fine distinction between *tūmbā* and *king*, it is not currently known to me. —*Ed.*

⁵ Thuhi must be referring to the "Malwa style" with this remark.

⁶ For the historical context leading up to this situation, see Bigelow, "Punjab's Muslims: The History and Significance of Malerkotla," *Journal of Punjab Studies* 12(1) (2005). —*Ed.*

⁷ In republishing this very book, and in organizing a program to recognize some of the living artists discussed, the Punjab Sangeet Natak Akademi appears to have since responded to Thuhi's call to action. —*Ed.*