CHAPTER TWO

Lahore Darbar, Punjabi Maharaja and the Sikh Identity
And if Ranjit set himself to "destroy all distinctions, be was following in the footsteps of those monarchs who, in alliance with their peoples, broke the power of feudalism under the shadow of an absolute Throne before which all men must bow. Democracy has perhaps seldom, in the East risen above this level, and seldom fallen so low as at times in Europe.

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All the administration institutions/procedures that were adopted by Maharaja Ranjit Singh had a Mughal descent. The rationale of this political, economic and socio-religious policies lay in the critical situation in which the Sikh ruling class was placed. Maharaja Ranjit Singh adopted a 'secular' and 'liberal' policy for the reasons of the state and religious endowments to all religions were generously granted. The Sikh ruling class was a new phenomenon in the social history of Punjab. Majority of the Sikh nobility belonged to the Jats. They were 30% of the total nobility and were more then the Hindu nobility. The superior owners were discovered during Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s rule... the position of tenants improved and they were enjoying the same rights as peasant proprietors. As a result of the state incentives, vast stretches of land were brought under cultivation. Colonization underpinned the spatial and vertical mobility. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, even the non-agricultural castes – trading, artisan and menial – entered the agriculture hierarchy. Change of occupation often led to improvement in economic condition. In fact, "the doors to upward mobility were open straight" during the Sikh rule under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. During Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s times, the number of new Sikh villages ran into hundreds. As the language of Lahore Darbar, Persian was very popular both with the Muslim and the Hindus. Among the Hindus, Khatris had a special interest in learning Persian in order to secure employment in revenue administration.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself led rather a Spartan life not enamoured by the elite trappings of the Darbar etiquette. His comparatively egalitarian approach went a long way in the people identifying themselves with the Lahore Darbar. It was the ascendency of the Dogras especially Dhyan Singh which brought the hierarchised notions about the way mobility. This was also reflected in the now hereditary nature of Kingship. ¹Maharaja Ranjit Singh was modeling himself as a Punjabi Mughal however

with a Punjabi customary touch, for instance Persian was the state language, *phirmans* and records were kept in Persian but the conversation, discussions and appeals were carried out in Punjabi. Ranjit Singh patronized traditional personages and local religious establishments to win over their loyalty and by extension their social constituency. Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not undertake any fundamental alteration in traditional institutions rather he further elevated their status. 405-6 - The composite character of the nobility and administration was not altogether a new thing but the difference of degree was becoming a different almost of kind, with a fair representation of various races, religious and regions. Upward mobility was not confined to any particular caste or group.

While the Christian missionaries were trying to open up the Sikh masses to the influence of Christian faith and the S chiefs were promoting the S writings of classical orientation, the literature develops in the S kingdom were taking an altogether different direction.³ Ranjit Singh retained the state language of the Mughal Empire, i.e. Persian. Although the language more commonly used for conversation in the Sikh court was Punjabi, it is quite remarkable that the Sikh orthodoxy did not have any dominant role in the language policy or literary predilections of the state.

Ranjit Singh is considered earnest in his quest of information regarding affairs of the state. This period witnessed an increasing trend of luxury amongst the Singh.⁴ Ranjit Singh had acquired the ‘state in person’ phenomenon and his rule lacked any developed notion of institution building. It is surprising that Ranjit Singh never commissioned any work valorizing his territorial conquests or his biography either through his own inspiration or by the direct patronage of the Lahore Darbar in Braj or Punjabi. Punjabi poets and assorted versifiers wrote out of their own conviction.⁵ Lahore Darbar got Munshi Sohan Lal to compose ‘Umdatul Tawarikh’ and Maulvi Ahmedyar was commissioned to write ‘Shahnama’ in Persian. Ranjit Singh’s courtier Diwan Dina Nath’s son Diwan Amar Nath wrote ‘Zafarnama Ranjit Singh’ in Persian. Sikhs had the tradition of narrating their history in verse in Maharaja Ranjit Singh period. Rattan Singh Bhangu in 1841 wrote his ‘Prachin Panth Prakash’. Another surprising fact is that

² ibid., p.405-0623 and Grewal, J. S.: *Historical Geography of Punjab*, Journal of Regional History, Vol.-1, 1980,p.11 "...the emergence of triumph of Punjabi as a literary language was the result of the recognition with which the creative writers of the Punjab gave to the people of the Punjab".
³ ibid., p.540
⁴ ibid.,p.26
⁵ ibid.,p.33. The phenomenon of state-in-person carries the contradiction of the Sikh society and the Punjabi culture. Some aspects of Maharaja Ranjit Singh approach towards the languages or texts.
Ranjit Singh never patronized any hagiographic work about the Sikh gurus despite his own beliefs.

Var genre is specifically a Punjabi creation, there is no evidence whatever in any other language. Three parts: Shanka-Pakh, Sanghursh- Pakh, Samadhan-pakh. The vars of Sikh gurus and Bhai Gurdas portray a battle of ideas whereas the formal battle of these earlier authors is actually transformed into a real battle between opposing parties, albeit having a moral content. Var is usually written in Pauri metre. Pauri can be of two kinds: Sirkhandi and nishani chhand. Sirkhandi is used to depict the intensity of the battle. Since var genre is more concerned with the outwardly portrayal and of a narrative kind, it is pertinent for a var to be written in a simple language, keeping in view its audience. A resonating quality in the use of words is a absolute necessity. All these ingredients place this genre exclusively in the popular domain. Punjabi var had come into place during the time of Baba Farid. Although Guru Gobind Singh used Durga as the hero of his Chandi_di Var' however, there is no reference of any women being Khalsa even his wives, who continued to keep earlier names like Sahib Devi, Sundari, etc. Also notable is the fact that especially in Sau Sakhi the popular domain considers women, even Guru's wives and mother, as representing the archetypal womanly full of self-centredness, vice and begetter of ill-fame.

Hakam Singh Darwesh is a partisan of the Khalsa army e.g. before the conquest of Multan, the Nawab and his daughter are discussing the spiritual superiority of Guru Gobind Singh over the Pirs of Multan. It predetermines the Khalsa victory through the transcendental route. This is an extension of the janam-sakhi method brought into secular domain. Since Guru Gobind Singh is the hero of both the genres of Sakhi and var, to the extent that some vars depict actual battle scenes, and the sakhis also discuss about Guru Gobind Singh's martial process – this tendency conjoins these two genres in our discussion. Secondly, the popular character of both these genres further supplies some relevant clues about the everydayness of the eighteenth century 'Sikh' community. Apart from a certain plebaeanisation of the doctrine, institutions and persons it brings the popular saying into the realm of the sacred and thus we are presented a scenario in which the sacred and the profane are directed towards a purely

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7 Ibid., p.301
8 Ibid., p.302
9 Ibid., p.309
temporal concern i.e. the establishment of Sikh rule under the leadership of Jat Sikh chiefs. However, on the other hand, in the Rahit nama genre, the authority of the genre is invoked in order to push forward process of othering based on physical, communitarian injunctions rather than on a dialogic plane. Thus, this contradiction between the classificatory tendencies of rahitnamas with the assimilatory tendency of the popular narratives emerges in this period questioning the status of the rahitnama genre itself. Paradoxically, the number of written points towards its social purpose also. This social basis is still not clear. This can well be a new arena for further research in this field.

Also the father-daughter dialogue is now crystallizing as a narrative strategy fashioned on Aurangzeb-Zebunnisa's dialogue written in the eighteenth century Jungnama. Nawab's daughter praises Guru Gobind Singh in Zebunnisa's Vir. 10

Darwesh does not praise the bravery of the opponents. The Akalis have been praised sky-high but the Pathans are neglected. (Here, one remembers the 'Chathian Di Var' by Pir Muhammad where he praises the opponent Sikhs). 11By the time of Darwesh the Sikh secular ascendancy is complete to warrant the title of 'baaz' for the Sikhs and 'chiri' for the Pathans. 12Darwesh's skill is ennobled while praising Maharaja Ranjit Singh in a rural-folk idiom. 13

Although Ganesh Das is a Hindu, but the militant fervour in his Fatehnama is of a Punjabi temperament, well immersed in Khalsa sensibility. 14He terms the military conquests of the Maharaja as the Fatehnama of 'Guru Khalsa Ji Ka'. Being a non-Punjabi poet the tendency for personal praise is in good measure. In the opening manglacharan, Ganesh Das remembers both the Devi as well as Guru Gobind Singh. During the battle of Multan, Guru Gobind Singh is portrayed as engaged in a spiritual dialogue with the renowned sufi saint Shams Tabrez. 15Turk is equated with the Begh but not with the generic category of 'Muslim'.

The protagonists are treated in a Puranic manner with the Nawab, Muzaffar Khan as Harnakshyap and Ranjit Singh as an avatar of Krishna. The battle takes the

10 ibid, p.39
11 Ibid., p.39-40
12 ibid., p.40
13 ibid., p.40
14 ibid., p.42
15 ibid., p.43
form of a *Dharam Yudh.*\(^{16}\) All the pirs of Multan choose Shams Tabrez as their representative to have a dialogue with the *Uch Da Pir* Guru Gobind Singh. Ganesh Das terms this battle as of *Din-Mazhab.* This is a shared strategy between Ganesh Das and Hakam Singh Darwesh.\(^{17}\) Some consider these sectarian traces as a reaction against the earlier Muslim rule.\(^{18}\)

Ganesh Das considers the Khalsa ascendancy as the vehicle of Hindu welfare i.e. why for him Guru Gobind Singh is the ‘Pir of the Hindus’ and by extension Ranjit Singh is ‘the King of Hindus’. The same religions consciousness calls ‘Muslims as ‘Musle’, ‘Gilje’, etc.

Unlike Darwesh, Ganesh Das praises the opponents.\(^{19}\)

The divergences between these two writers tell us the emerging contours of religious sensibilities and their tension with the shared tradition, which is signified by the genre of Jangnarna. One had to stick to some of the formal characteristics of this genre to be considered a worthy poet and simultaneously articulate one’s beliefs and convictions. Hakam Singh Darwesh and Ganesh Das are thus representing an interesting transition. Writers have called Maharaja Ranjit Singh's victories as that of the Khalsa and their portrayal is done with deep-set admiration and vigour.

It is equally important that Muslims carried on the Punjabi literature tradition and made an overwhelming contribution to pub literature of the times. An appraisal of the literature product of this period reveals a strong tendency in the Muslim writings towards secular concerns which may partly be explained by the decline of the Mughals. But this tendency reflects both a process of Punjabiisation of their literature impulse and emergence of a new type of literature written for enjoyment and entertainment.\(^{20}\)

Qissa genre is about a feudal society.\(^{21}\) Although the protagonists of a qissa are generally from the nobility or the rural chaudhary’s children but their activities in the qissas were of like other simple folk. This is one reason for its across-class

\(^{16}\) ibid., p.44  
\(^{17}\) ibid., p.44  
\(^{18}\) ibid., p.45  
\(^{19}\) ibid., p.46  
\(^{20}\) ibid., p.540-41  
\(^{21}\) ibid., p.49 Ajmer Singh considers that long-standing waging of battles and other military affairs prevented the Lahore Darbar from commissioning any work on military conquests in either Braji or Punjabi.
popularity.\textsuperscript{22} It was widely read in groups, sung at fairs and widely performed. Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s period saw the cessation of attacks from the North-West. A prosperous peaceful and sovereign state of the Punjabis was a harbinger of ‘Punjab Consciousness’ reflected politically through the Khalsa Raj/Lahore Darbar. The artistic imagination created a past of splendour and new qissas brimming with the spirit of adventure were in vogue.\textsuperscript{23}

In an expanding empire, adventure was in the air. The M poets of the period participated whole-heartedly in the spirit of adventure. They were helpful in shifting emphasis from the mystical, metaphysical, speculative and idealistic concerns to romantic, imaginative and hedonistic impulses. The form which came handy to meet the new demands was the scalled new heights. With the singular exception of Waris, Ww contributed the most towards a re-orientation of the form to take in the new challenges only a few decades before, the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century may well be heralded as the Golden Age of Punjabi qissa.\textsuperscript{24} The most prolific were; Hashim, Ahmad Yar, Qadir Yar (literature excellence and aesthetic quality) Fazal Shah, Ghulam Rasul and Imam Bakhsh (More prolific)\textsuperscript{25}

The drift of Sikh literature away from Punjabi language which had started with some of the compositions of Bhai Gurdas and Guru Arjan, the compiler of Adi Granth, and which was consolidated in the works of Gurus Tegh Bahadur and Gobind Singh, ultimately transformed itself into the mainstream of Sikh literature and intellectual traditions.

The gigantic proportions of this rare repository of Hindi writing in Gurumukhi script remained till recently locked up in the singular uniqueness. Inaccessible both for its archaic style and pervasive Hindu ambience and ignored by Hindi scholars because of its script and its projection of the Sikhs as the noblest expression of the Hindu ideal of glory and heroism, this body of writing is expressive of the latent drive of the Sikh culture towards its source. In all the Sikh historiography in Braj Bhasha during the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the strangest in the case of Ratan Singh Bhangu’s literature of the Sikhs

\textsuperscript{22} ibid., p.50
\textsuperscript{23} ibid., p.
\textsuperscript{24} ibid., p.541.
\textsuperscript{25} ibid., p.51
which was written for the official of the East India Company but to demonstrate the creedal autonomy of the Sikhs.26

Feudal society was the bedrock of the qissa genre with feudal lords the dominant group. That is why we see that the heroes/heroines are attached with these e.g. even if Sohni was the daughter of kumhars but his father is depicted as a well to do moneylender. If Izzat Beg's (Mahiwal) slave is intoxicated by the beauty of Sohni even then he asks his master to get close with Sohni. No qissakar has bothered to express his own feelings about Sohni.27 This era saw an expansion in the range of qissas with many new subjects coming up both from Indian and Arabic backgrounds.28 Their concerted effort was to search for new story cycles and motifs from all sorts of sources. Before the onset of this period, the poetry had revolved around the cycle with an occasional composition relating to thrown in. Apart from adopting the old cycles, new story motifs were introduced now.29 The local sources were explored for this purpose; the romances of non-Punjabi Indic origin were mined; and lastly non-Indian romances, especially of Muslim origin were also composed.

Finally the literary communication of this period was through an oral tradition. The literary activity was confined to composing, signing and reciting, in short performing and not printing, publishing or reading.30 This might explain that for some critics Punjabi qissa is believed to have originated as a popular counterpart to the predominance of religious literature. For instance Peelu's Mirza Sahiban belonging to the earliest phase of of qissas, is a folk narrative without any pronounced religious undertones.31 However, we do come across the religious element associated with secular lovers in a referential manner. This assumes a narrative form in Damodar's Heer.32 Later on the religious element took roots in qissa when it becomes a regular literary genre in the hands of poets who were also scholars of Islamic theology and Sufi mysticism.

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26 ibid., p.540
27 ibid., p.50 The socio-political context for later Qissa period. Can we compare it with the establishment of Mughal rule in Punjab, when during the reign of Akbar, Damodar Gulati wrote his Heer. CAN, Tejwant Gill on Damodar’s Heer. How are these two conjunctures similar to each other and where do they differ?
28 ibid., p.51
29 Singh, Attar: Political Change and Punjabi Literature in the 19TH Century. ibid., p.542
30 ibid., p.542
31 Rahi, J.S.: Historical Dynamics of the Qissa, pp.522-534, p.525
32 ibid., p.525

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Hafiz Barkkurdar, is supposed to be the earliest known proponent of the synthesis of secular love and sufi mysticism in qissa.\textsuperscript{33}

A settled Punjabi outlook seems to be developing e.g. a Muslim qissakar Qadiriyar wrote ‘Puran Bhagat’ and ‘Raja Rasalu’ whereas Ahmedyar wrote ‘Kissa Kam-Rup’ based on Indian mythology. The legendary Punjabi heroes were resurrected. Ranjit Singh was much loved as a popular hero and Punjabi qissakars adored him without any hint of patronage in most cases. Salwan, the king of Sialkot, was treated as a forefather of the Maharaja. We can discern a genealogy in these attempts where instead of inventing the customary descent from either Chandravamshi or Suryavamshi clans a distinctly Punjabi treatment is imparted through Salwan to Puran/Rasalu and finally Maharaja Ranjit Singh.\textsuperscript{35} That an ecumenical space existed allowing for such connections to be made also tells us about the relative identification of the masses with the Lahore Darbar. This is vital evidence regarding the popular image of Lahore Darbar in which legitimacy for Maharaja Ranjit Singh is not sought from any mythical authority or text but from the Punjabi legends of Puran/Rasalu.

Many poets took to qissa genre with tremendous vigour and employed it to give expression to the Sikh thought and Guru - bhakti. This choice, incidentally seems to have blended the hitherto separate streams — one consisting the Sikh lore and the other abolding with love romances, jangnamas, and so on. Punjabi qissa genre is a blend of the Persian Masnavi and the Indian Akhyan traditions. Muslim qissakars followed the Masnavi style by naming their qissas in Persian. The invocation of titles such as “Hafiz’, ‘Maulvi’, ‘Shah’ ‘Pandit’, ‘Aarif’, etc. shows their scholarship and respectable status.\textsuperscript{36} Qissa being a traditional genre, it required profuse talent to make any

\textsuperscript{33} ibid., p.526. Also see p.527“This makes the death both a moment and a metaphor signifying physical union and spiritual transcendence as simultaneous experiences. The very ambivalence makes it mystical. Spirituality conceals which the physicality reveals”.
\textsuperscript{34} ibid., p.51
\textsuperscript{35} ibid., p.51-52. See Singh, Attar: Political Change and Punjabi Literature in the 19th Century, p.542-3 “As a measure of new secularizing impulse in Muslim Punjabi writers of this period was the search for heroes other than the traditional lover. These heroes were drawn both from mythology and contemporary literature of the Punjab. What is interesting from the broader culture perspective is the fact that the new hero was either of pre-Islamic origin, such as Puran or Raja Rasalu, the legendary sons of Raja Salwahan of Sialkot, or the ones thrown up by literature like”.
\textsuperscript{36} ibid., p.52 Although such a cross-channeling was happening in the eighteenth century, albeit in minor texts, in the nineteenth it became a part of the mainstream literary tradition. This added a new dimension to the qissa genre.
impression in the pantheon of earlier qissakars. Heer-Hamid is the biggest in size, composed in a long metre.\(^{37}\)

Hamid is considered better than Muqbil, even excelling Waris Shah in terms of range and treatment but Waris was much more popular due to his usage of rural Islamicate vocabulary and a reluctance to employ Hindu vocabulary and terms. (Mohan Singh Diwana, 98). Rather than giving headings in Persian or Punjabi he wrote four liners for this purpose for the first time. Another first is his blending of the Indian and Islamic tradition in his narrative, plot and language used which has Persian and Hindvi in good unison. In this sense his language becomes loaded with historical significance.\(^{38}\) He was dead against the 'Heer' for a considerably long period of 22 years but later on got converted to the cause.

Litigation over Hasham Shah's love affair with a Brahmin woman is one reason given for his proximity to Maharaja Ranjit Singh.\(^{39}\) Hasham criticizes the ruling lords of his time in qissa Shirin- Farhad. He remains the only qissakar to openly indulge in such criticism during the Sikh-rule.\(^{40}\) No evidence of patronage.\(^{41}\) A disciple of Ghaus-ul-Azam Abdul Qadir Jeelani of Qadiriayya sect of the sufis.\(^{42}\)

He has written in Hindi.\(^{43}\) While Waris mastered the \textit{Baint} metre, whereas Hasham excelled in \textit{Dawa.Y.Ya}.\(^{44}\) Hasham is deep stand of Sufi-poetry and qissa-genre. Ajmer Singh thinks that Hasham reminds us of the famous Persian poet Abu-Ali Khair. For Hasham, \textit{Ishq} is the choice of martyrs; perhaps this is one reason that he etches the social contradictions very minutely. His Farhad is a skilled artisan in love with the princess, Shirin. Also, ishq exalts one above the mundane reality. Even difficult than ishq haqiqi, in the practice of \textit{ishq majazi} death or martyrdom is inevitable, yet it inspires.\(^{45}\)

Hasham's concept of ishq is not meant for the weak-kneed rather it has a very active principle of valor, initiative and strength, which brooks no interference and

\(^{37}\) ibid., p.54  
\(^{38}\) ibid., p.55 Ajmer attributes this to the religious harmony experienced in Ranjit Singh period  
\(^{39}\) ibid. p.57  
\(^{40}\) ibid., p.57-58  
\(^{41}\) ibid., p.58  
\(^{42}\) ibid., p.60  
\(^{43}\) ibid., p.61  
\(^{44}\) ibid., p.61  
\(^{45}\) ibid., p.61-62
struggles incessantly for consummation with ma'ashuq or voluntary death. This conception leads him to admire Mirza more than the poor soul Ranjha.46

Aashiq and Shahid are not just highly regarded by Hasham but effectively treated as one.47

Can we also suggest that Hasham is proposing an internal critique of the received tradition through the categories of Aashiq and Shahid. Also his rejection of any orthodoxy and sectarianism seems to herald a very Punjabi notion of modernity. Similarly, the category of 'Khalsa' was also an elective category which was above the sectarian boundaries. The complexus of Aashiq--Shahid--Khalsa denotes a Punjabi modernity.

Bhambour city, is modeled on Lahore and the ruler of Istanbul is Ranjit Singh.48

Hasham's attitude towards the rulers is dichotomous, consciously he is critical of their conduct, sub/unconsciously he is full of praise for them (perhaps the dual treatment is reminiscent of his times).49

'Sassi' is his masterpiece, with an artisan, Farhad, as its protagonist. This was a major departure from the Shahanama Firdausi and Nizami Ganjavi's masnavi 'Shiri Va Khusro', where instead of Farhad, prince Khusro is the hero. This departure was so significant that succeeding poets Ahmedyar and Mohammad Bakhsh Jehlami castigate Hasham for his daring embarkation.50

We must pause for a while to deliberate on this significant discursive departure. Where does this fit in with Hasham's overall viewpoint. Although even in his other qissas he praises the artisans e.g. Sohni's father, etc.; even the usual practice of women-bashing is missing in Hasham, rather, he says that even a woman can be a shahid. Where does it take us in delineating the contours of popular ideological vision about Punjabi cultural formation?

Maulvi Ahmedyar was asked to write an epic on Ranjit Singh's life and victories by the Lahore Darbar, on the pattern of Shahnama. Qazi Mohkam Din suggested his

46 ibid., p.61-63
47 ibid., p.63
48 ibid., p.64
49 ibid., p.65
50 ibid., p.65
Ahmedyar is also said to be in love with a non-Muslim girl. A disciple of Abdul Qadir Gilani, his Qissa Kam-Rup is very famous. 

With the demand for new story motifs because of the proliferation of local Punjabi chiefs patronizing the composers, the poets of the period cast their nets wide enough to bring in source other can Punjabi.

Ahmedyar made a rich contribution by drawing upon the Quran to compose his Ahsan – al – Kasis that revolved around the tale of Yusuf and Zulaikha. This tour-de-force had been extended by him far beyond the Sura-i-yusuf of the Holy Quran and becomes in the process a compendium of Muslim theology, mysticism and ethics. The narrative structure is rather fragile to carry the burden of all this scholastic exercise. The major significance of this work lies in symbolizing the fundamentalist Muslim reaction to the liberal secularizing tendencies initiated by the trends towards consolidation of a liberal Punjabi identity.

Ahmedyar expanded the range of Punjabi qissa genre by creating new aashiqs and narratives. ‘Kima-Malki’ and ‘Roda Jalali’ were composed in Punjabi for the first time. He was the first Muslim qissakar to write a qissa based upon Hindu mythology (Kam Rup). His ‘Nal-Damyanti’ is also the first in Punjabi. This harmonious spirit also point towards the amicable religious atmosphere during Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s time.

The narrative of Kam-Rup revolves around a Hindu prince Ram Rup who confronts the ghosts, witches and such like creatures, in pursuit of his lover ‘Kam Lata’. This adventures spirit courting victory in the qissa is a celebration of the ethos of the Sikh rule.

This feeling was quite widespread in other qissakars, albeit the Muslim qissakar wrote about the Semitic/Arabic protagonists. Although Ahmedyar was a renowned scholar of Persian, he aspires for a higher status for Punjabi language, which he terms as ‘Hind Zubaan’. This is evidence enough that for all practical purposes Punjabi was
hegemonic language to convey the quotidian concerns of masses coupled with an awareness of its status.

‘Heer’ became the veritable standard to assess the worth of any poet and Ahmedyar was the only poet of Maharaja Ranjit Singh period who wrote a Heer in the manner of Waris but was nowhere near the virtuoso - a fact he himself admits. Hamid Shah Abbasi purposefully ignores Waris, Hasham is all brevity and pathos, Jog Singh wrote his Heer in Kabitt metre and Vir Singh Bal’s Heer is drenched in Gurmat. They all had carved their own niches, small innovations, differential discourses, whereas Ahmedyar in trying to match Waris step by step is left a worthy loser.

Ahmedyar sought royal patronage and composed various ‘Namahs’ and was amply rewarded with jagirs, titles and fame. Ranjit Singh-period’s pervasive influence is most visible on this qissakar.

Vir Singh is the first baptized Singh qissakar of Heer. He is the first in the line of many succeeding Sikh qissakars. This is the first qissa in which Guru Gobind Singh is eulogized in the Manglacharan. Vir Singh has sourced his qissa from the Charitropakhyan text in Dasam Granth by the Guru Gobind Singh. Plausibly, this is the first qissa in which a mythic background is given to Heer. Vir Singh has fused Heer’s desperate urge for consummation with Ranjha with his own feelings towards Guru Gobind Singh. In his unconscious Ranjha stands for Guru Gobind Singh. He himself is Heer and Guru Gobind Singh is Ranjha. It is the loving devotion of Pir-Murid relationship. Vir Singh calls Ranjha a ‘Gurumukh’.

It is pertinent to mention in this context that Vir Singh's effort at fusing the Punjabi romantic lore with his conception of the Sikh-lore is significant for three reasons:

- The qissa was written at the asking of Maharaja Karam Singh of Patiala, which signifies a certain acceptance of this fusion by the elites.

- Even if Vir Singh is interested only in the propagation of Sikhism, the medium of Heer-Ranjha seems absolutely vital to him for a wider audience.

58 ibid., p.71
59 ibid., p.72
60 ibid., p.72
61 ibid., p.73
62 ibid., p.74 Ajmer Singh attributes the feeling of Guru devotion of the establishment of Sikh-rule.
A certain legitimacy from the Sikh audience is guaranteed for this fusion by linking it with the Charitropaphyan of Guru Gobind Singh.

Seen in this manner we can assume that parallel to exegetical polemics; ostensibly Sikh textual culture; sectarian agenda the popular domain assimilated these discourses while simultaneously sticking to its strengths of being alive to their audience. This effort requires that Guru Gobind Singh already a pir of Punjabis should acknowledge the dominance of Heer in Punjab countryside in order to access the Punjabi audience.

Associated with the Patiala darbar, Vir Singh was an accomplished Braj poet who wrote ‘Singh Sagar’, the life-sketch of Guru Gobind Singh and ‘Gur Kirat Prakash’, the life sketches of the preceding nine Gurus for the Maharaja of Patiala. This is an interesting paradox that the cis-Sutlej states gave ample patronage to writers for composing such texts in contrast to the Lahore Darbar which rarely opted for such an exercise. The signing of 1809 treaty divided Lahore kingdom and the territories under the direct control or political protection of the East India Company consisting of Sikh states of Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Faridkot and the Sikh principalities of Kaithal and Kalsia in South-east Punjab. This divide was instrumental in cutting off major centers of learning, theology and literature in the rest of the country from the dominions of Ranjit Singh.

Vir Singh wrote Heer in 285 cantos in baint metre. Although the qissa starts under the influence of the Dasam Granth but in the treatment of the narrative it is in close proximity to Muqbil. He has created a new character ‘Jamman Jati’. Another aspect of his Heer is the positive portrayal of woman in contrast to their general depiction in contemporary qissas. Guru Nanak’s impact in this regard is evident and the qissa espouses these concerns in a spirited fashion.

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63 ibid., p.74-75
64 Singh, Attar: “Political Change and Punjabi Literature in the Nineteenth Century”, pp.535-536 in *Five Punjabi Centuries*, Manohar, Delhi,(ed), Banga, Indu. While much has been said about division in the literary scene of Punjab in which Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi literature flourished as expressions of different religious affiliations, the significance of the division between the two parts of the Punjabi, one coming under the Sikh kingdom and the other under British tutelage, has been treated cursorily so far.
65 ibid., p.75
66 ibid., p.75-76
Vir Singh classifies women into two categories: *kaladhar* and *kalakar*. It is safe to assume that Dasam Granth’s ascribed characteristics of a Kalakar woman inform Vir Singh’s description.

Vir Singh’s ‘Heer’ is saturated with the Gurbani worldview. The total lack of sensuousness can also be explained through his connection.\(^6^7\)

Heer Jog Singh is the first Punjabi qissa composed in *Kabitts*. The qissa genre was enriched by this chhand derived from Braj by a Sikh qissakar. Earlier sporadic kabitts on Heer-Ranjha were attempted e.g. Gang Bhat’s.\(^6^8\) Heer-Jog Singh is included in the best of Heers. Bhagwan Singh is much influenced by Heer Jog Singh, especially praising the end in Jog Singh’s qissa. Jog Singh also mentions the mythic origins of Heer like Vir Singh with one crucial difference. Where the latter makes Guru Gobind Singh as Ranjha and himself as Heer, Jog Singh makes Krishan the Ranjha and Heer as Radha. Ranjha of Waris has ‘vanjhal’ whereas Jog Singh’s has ‘Murli’. The two romances are seamlessly interwoven. That the Vaishnava cult of Krishna was gaining ground in the 18\(^{th}\) century Punjab is evident from the compositions like the Kahn Bhagwan Di Var, Prem Di Var and Jhagra Kahn Gujri Ka. A similar influence of the cult of Rama is evident from the Luv Kush Di Var written by a devotee.\(^6^9\)

Jog Singh’s poetic craft is mounted on his proximity to the *Reeti* tradition of Braj with some obvious influences. Although both Heer and Ranjha are Muslims they are conceived in the overarching tradition of Krishna-devotion.\(^7^0\)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s period saw the efflorescence of the Siharfi form.\(^7^1\)

Salwan – Rasalu/Puran - Maharaja Ranjit Singh was Qadiryar’s creation. He resurrected the ancient Punjabi tradition and its heroes. A Muslim poet did bring alive Hindu heroes and especially Puran Bhagat was immortalized by appending with Qadiryar’s genius.\(^7^2\)

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\(^6^7\) ibid., p.76. Dr. Nahar Singh: Somewhere we have to map this process. It will be interesting to locate the three levels where differential discourses and pitched up and their mutual osmosis. My hunch is that Gurbani is linked up with Punjabi folksongs through the mediation of Qissas, Kaveeshari, etc.

\(^6^8\) ibid., p.77

\(^6^9\) Johal Daljinder Singh : *Evidence on Religion in Punjabi Literature: Late 18\(^{th}\) and Early 19\(^{th}\) Century*, Journal of Regional History; GNDU, Amritsar, Vol.-V, 1984, p.33

\(^7^0\) ibid., p.78

\(^7^1\) ibid., p.79

\(^7^2\) ibid., p.80 Why did he write this qissa having a deep impression on Punjabi populace? Opinions differ, ranging from legends about his own experience with his sister-in-law in recording the moral downfall of
The settled conditions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh period went a long way to
discover new subjects, traditions and eulogizing their heroes and Qadiryar is the
epitome of this tendency. Not only did he composed ‘Puran Bhagat’, ‘Raja Rasalu’,
‘Rani Kokilan Di Var’, he was also the first one to write an ode to Hari Singh Nalva and
the ‘Meraj Nama’ Qadiryar’s real name was Qadir Bakhsh. He has praised ‘Sarkar
Khalsa’ intentionally or otherwise. Following Hasham’s Heer, Qadiryar wrote his
Puran in Siharfi form. ‘Puran Bhagat’ avoids the usual convention of hamd and the
cajoling by friends.

It seems that Qadiryar virtually sings the praises of Ranjit Singh’s forefathers;
resurrected legendary Punjabi heroes to such an extent that they became hegemonic
streams and the succeeding Hindu, Muslim and Sikh qissakars took to these subjects
with ‘Puran’ alone counting for nearly 50 different qissas.

A scholar of Persian, Imam Bakhsh translated the Persian masnavi ‘Gul
Sanobar’ into Punjabi. His murshid was Hazrat Mahi-Uddin Shah Jilani.

Imam Bakhsh’s status is caught up between two paradoxical tendencies
witnessed during Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his own predilection towards Persian
literature and Islamic mythology and history.

Imam Bakhsh departs from the usual love-romance of Punjab and writes qissas
overflowing with adventure and magical elements, supernatural, sorcery and wizardry.
The predicament responsible for conceptualizing love as faqiri dimmed with the
passage of eighteenth century and the Lahore kingdom threw up new chiefs who
relished Shah Behram by Imam Bakhsh, a qissa poet of early-nineteenth century. Shah
Behram is a high-pitched romance of the luxuries of love, youth beauty, music, wine
and the supernatural for the new rulers.


The jatts and hence the need to create a contemporary hero in the jogis. [Dr. Mohan Singh Diwana] Ajmer Singh differs with this suggestion.

73 ibid., p.81-82
74 ibid., p.82
75 ibid., p.83
76 ibid., p.83
77 ibid., p.84
78 ibid., p.85
79 ibid., p.85-86
Bakhsh did not follow Hasham in portraying Farhad as hero in his ‘Shirin’; rather he followed Nizami Ganjavi’s ‘Shiri-va-Khushro’ in his qissa. Imam Bakhsh and Maharaja Ranjit Singh relation is two-sided.

Firstly, distant lands are conquered in pursuit of love. However, the issue is whether Maharaja Ranjit Singh rule is the inspiration or the anchoring of these pursuits in Islamic paradigm, a reaction against Ranjit Singh’s rule and the ascendancy of the non-Muslim. The next question is how to go about retrieving the lost splendor of Muslims or Islam in Punjab? Imam Bakhsh’s dependence upon the supernatural also shows a lack of a viable carrier of such a feeling in the Muslim populace. He typically assures the Muslims that Fazl-i-ilahi [God’s grace] will take care of their sovereignty:

Imam Bakhsh’s protagonists are also different from that of Mohammad Bakhsh Jehlami’s qissa ‘Saiful Maluk’ and other adventurous qissas because they do not suffer any hardship. At his command are millions of Farishtas, etc. Islamic philosophy is a major ingredient in Imam Bakhsh’s oeuvre e.g. his Badi-ul-Jamal is loaded with Arabic ayats. He is propagating Din through the qissa genre.

While comparing Hasham with Imam Bakhsh the former’s ishq is meant for strong-mettled persons, whereas the latter is dependent on supernatural forces. Also Hasham’s Farhad, an artisan stands in contrast to Imam Bakhsh’s Khusro, a prince. This internal transformation of mentalite in Punjabi Muslims acts as necessary check on two tendencies prevalent in scholarship on nineteenth century Punjab namely to treat the popular sphere as devoid of contestations even amongst co-religionists. Therefore a generic hostility to Muslim as the other gets redundant. Furthermore such phenomena point towards the verity of distinguishing between plural nodes from the exclusivist or communitarian closures in the popular cultural production.

Lakh Shah is the first Muslim qissakar to employ an Indian metre ‘deodh’ as given in Pingal. His main assets are an encyclopedic knowledge and minute observation of daily life inviting comparisons with Waris Shah. Bambore city is modeled upon Lahore [also in Hasham] and Ranjit Singh is virtually the ruler of

81 ibid., p.86
82 ibid., p.86-87
83 ibid., p.87
84 ibid., p.87
85 ibid., p.88
Bhambore. Qissa is replete with references to the Sikh culture. Adam Jam’s religious policy mirrors that of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Sassi for the first time has been portrayed as a ‘jogan’ and ‘Sari’ by a Muslim qissakar. Lakh Shah calls her a disciple of Gorakh Nath. For the same reason, Sassi in the desert is not a jilted lovesick person but an exalted sati out to perform a ritual in all grace.

Ganga Ram was a disciple of Manohar Dass Udasi of Patiala. Although Punjabi qissa stream originated with Damodar Gulati, a Hindu, but their number was small until Ranjit Singh’s rule. Chandra Bhan, Sundar Das Aram, Gurdas Guni etc. are some of Damodar’s successors. Ganga Ram takes this chain further. In fact, 1850s - 1950s is a golden period for Hindu qissakars who propagated Hindu ethical norms and values, through the medium of qissa. Kalidas Gujranwalia and Daulat Ram are the best in this connection. The earlier Hindu qissakars were not concerned with religious moral propaganda.

Now we can state with enough confidence the fact that qissa writing was the supreme achievement for any writer. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs took to his genre with an untrammeled vigor and mounted their ethics, morals, norms, reforms, propaganda through this genre. Thus, the hitherto separate streams of religious-sectarian works and Punjabi folk-romances were seamlessly woven in the nineteenth century. Thus, the boundaries between sacred and profane were sought to be resolved and the Punjabi shared cultured paradigm forced the sectarian boundaries to renegotiate the terms of co-existence in nineteenth-century Punjab. It is not surprising that the onset of colonial modernity through the social reform movements was formally arraigned against each other although substantively they were united against this popular Punjabi consensus on what constituted their religious tradition or dharma. Singh Sabha movement’s attacks on pattals, women’s songs, etc. is an example to highlight this tendency.

Qissa – genre in the nineteenth-century is charting a new social journey by mediating between the high tradition of scholarship, knowledge and religious virtue and the little tradition of everyday life, its customs, desires, contradictions. The eighteenth
century qissa was itself a part of high tradition on account of its exacting standards and claims to virtue.

He was a *tablighi* for whole of his life in Multan. He resisted the British forces during their campaign to annex Punjab.

Maulvi Ghulam Rasul Awan represents the transition from a Sufi stance to the *Shariat* orthodoxy amongst the Punjabi Muslim qissakars.

His ‘Sassi’ is still steeped in Sufi colours because of his peculiar condition, which says that when he was asked to halt his pilgrimage to the Pir Sahib of Kotha Sharif he thought of himself as Sassi and Punnu as Pir. This qissa is said to represent his desire, ishq, *tassawuf*, etc. However, later on, he grew rather repentant of his ‘indiscretion’ because he was an orthodox sura Muslim. As a penance, he wrote *Hulia Sharif*.

This is also representative of the process of increasing orthodoxy in Punjabi Islam from its earlier liberal, rural, Sufi ways. Hamid Shah Abbasi at the start of eighteenth century wrote his ‘Heer’ after opposing it for 22 years. However by 1850, Maulvi Ghulam Rasul Awaan repented for writing ‘Sassi’ in a fit of Sufic indiscretion by reverting to orthodoxy. Along with the earlier Hasham to Imam Bakhsh transition this case also points to the same direction of hardening sectarian boundaries and its attended communitarian concerns.

Known to have performed several miracles, he went to Mecca on a Haj. He was arrested by the British during 1857 for conspiring with the Frontier Pathans, but had to be released on the request by Diwan Jwala Sahai of Jammu and Kashmir. Ghulam Rasul’s ‘Sassi’ is rated quite high without a slightest trace of pedantry, bordering on the plane and rugged and rather modern in its treatment.

Fazal Shah wrote the best qissa in Sohni tradition when Sikh rule was on its last legs in baint metre. Although many preceding greats like Hasham, Ahmedyar and Qadiryar had written this qissa still Fazal Shah’s stands on its own and was extremely
popular. Fazal Shah’s basic plot is taken from Hasham and Qadiryar; however, his treatment is influenced by Waris. Dr. M. S. Diwana calls him the best Punjabi. Fazal Shah is also in the league of Maulvi Ghulam Rasul Awaan in tilting towards the classical Islamic tradition. Fazal wrote other four qissas besides Sohni, but those could not become popular due to his scholastic Persianised Punjabi and his similes/metaphors were not from the daily life rather from Islamic texts and Persian classics. His ‘Sohni’ avoids this scholasticism and remains true to the soil of Punjab. A comparative look at nakh-shikh tells the whole story.

His Persianate treatment smothers the Punjabi sensibility in his later qissas, Heer included. The impending doom of the Sikh state is also stirring the society into divergent directions, which impacts even the structure of feeling of a qissakar. This accounts for differential notions of beauty of Heer and Sohni.

In the post- Maharaja Ranjit Singh period the Muslim qissakars veered increasingly towards Persian. Whereas, the earlier ones Hamid Shah Abbasi and Lakh Shah had a tuneful fusing of both Persian and Braj with Punjabi. Fazal Shah is also said to be romantically linked with a Hindu girl. Fazal Shah was extremely proud of Lahore.

Gurbax Singh is the first Sikh qissakar to contribute towards Sassi-stream and the third in line after Vir Singh and Jog Singh. Besides his classic jangnama, Shah Mohammasd wrote a Sassi in Siharfi form.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh period is considered the golden period of qissa genre due to the conditions of regional freedom, prosperity and local despotism uniquely helped the qissa to flourish. Its depth and range were enriched due to these conditions. Secondly, in the pre- Ranjit Singh period the range of the qissas was limited to six narratives: Heer, Mirza, Sassi, Yousuf, Sorath Bija and Saiful Maluk. However, the Sikh

99 ibid., p.94
100 ibid., p.94-95
101 ibid., p.94-95
102 ibid., p.94-95
103 ibid., p.95
104 ibid., p.95-96
105 ibid., p.95-96 Can we assume that praise for the city of Lahore was turned into a kind of convention to be followed by qissakars?
106 ibid., p.96
107 ibid., p.96-97
108 ibid., p.97-100
period saw this range magnificently expanded to include Sohni, Raj-Bibi, Kima-Malki, Puran, Rasalu, Shirin-Farhad, Shah-Bahram, Ibrahim Adam Balkhi, Gul Sanobar, Gulbadan, Kamrup, Hatimatai, etc. This diversity was a highlight of this period. 109 Thirdly, this era was witness to a poetic genius of the stature of Hasham Shah and his awesome ‘Sassi.’ In addition many a classic/paradigmatic qissas were composed in their various streams in this period, e.g. 110 Puran Bhagat- Qadiryar; Kamrup -Ahmedyar; Shah Behram-Imam Bakhsh; Sohni -Fazal Shah. Fourthly, this era is also witness to diversity in poetic form and metres. Kabitts, Deodh and Siharfi were attempted successfully. Siharfi proved to be very popular with numerous writers e.g. Hasham, Qadiryar, Shah Mohammad, Ganga Ram, Sultan Ahmed, etc. 111 Fifthly, Guru Gobind Singh was eulogized in a Manglacharan of a qissa for the first time in this period. This was conjoined with an attempt to disseminate the Sikh-worldview. Vir Singh’s ‘Heer’ in 1812 articulated his devotion to Guru Gobind Singh besides arriving at the Gurmat. Sikh Qissakars’ acceptance of qissa-genre also opened new avenues for the eventual development of the genre and his trend continued till the early twentieth century. 112

The spirit of audacity, of conquering distant lands was articulated in the qissas. The protagonists excelled in different fields. 113 The archetypal qissas are free from sectarian orthodoxy, whereas in the early- twentieth century qissas this tendency is widespread. Hamid and Lakh Shah’s atmosphere is missing in pre- and post- Ranjit Singh period qissas. In the Sikh-period, the ordinary qissakar was addressing the populace which later on got scholasticised e.g. Fazal Shah, Maulvi Ghulam Rasul, etc. In fact, the qissas of this period epitomise this tendency of growing sectarianism, from an earlier condition of Sufic tasawuf and the intensity of ishq. 114 Punjabi qissakars cast a reflective eye on the annals of Punjabi-lore and re-created ancient folk-legends, mythology and historical narratives. Qadiryar is a pioneer in this respect. His ‘Puran Bhagat’ celebrates the predecessors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, namely, Raja Salwan of Sailkot. ‘Raja Rasalu’ is another such example. One is a renouncer par excellence whereas, the other is a righteous king. Qadiryar, a Muslim qissakar, eulogizes Hindu characters, modeled on a Sikh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh thus standing testimony to an

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109 ibid., p.97
110 ibid., p.98
111 ibid., p.98
112 ibid., p.98
113 ibid., p.98-99
114 ibid., p.99

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evolving Punjabi identity, having its unique strand of values, universality and worldview.\textsuperscript{115}

Although, Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not appoint anyone as his court poet, still patronage was not altogether lacking and was available in diffused forms e.g. Ahmedyar. Lahore Darbar provided him jagir and in'am. A certain ‘Sarkar’ patronizing Hasham and ‘Sardar’ doing the same for Qadiryar is fairly plausible. Abdul Hakim Oochvi presented his ‘Yousuf-Zuleikhan’ to Nawab Bahawalpur. Hamid Shah Abbasi was a courtier/noble of Raja Nurpur. Vir Singh was a direct beneficiary of Maharaja Patiala, Karam Singh.\textsuperscript{116}

The Khalsa Army was the principal bulwark of state always matching itself against the British from day one and they lived up to their creed of sovereignty in the battlefield. Although the courtiers were instrumental in corrupting the army but still it retained loyalty towards Khalsa Raj. In contrast to the courtiers, it was the army panchayats that quelled the rampant anarchy in the ranks and reorganized the troops.\textsuperscript{117} The contrasting roles of Sikh soldiers and the commanders in the post-Ranjit Singh period were quite to the fore. Shah Mohammad is also aware of these contradictions as expressed in his Jangnamah. Also, the later rebellions led by Bhai Maharaj Singh, Baba Bir Singh Naurangabadi, Baba Ram Singh Namdhari, etc. point towards a certain political sentiment prevalent in the lower ranks of the Khalsa Army. Exactly what kind of institution was the Khalsa Army? What was its popular perception? What happened to its commanders, both the respected ones and the traitors?

The Khalsa Army surrendered on 11 March 1849 at Rawalpindi. ‘Ranjit Singh is dead today!’, said a surrendering veteran.\textsuperscript{118} Literature about the decline of Ranjit Singh’s rule has three categories: about the fratricidal war of Lahore Darbar; about the first Anglo-Sikh War and; about the second Anglo-Sikh War.

Almost, the whole of this literature was composed in poetry, with three kinds of poets contributing: those indirectly related to the Lahore Darbar e.g. Gwal Bhat; those at the prompting of the British officers e.g. Kahn Singh Banga and; those who wrote out of their own conviction e.g. Shah Mohammad, Matak, etc.

\textsuperscript{115} ibid., p.99
\textsuperscript{116} ibid., p.99-100
\textsuperscript{117} ibid., p.106
\textsuperscript{118} ibid., p.108
\textsuperscript{119} ibid., p.109
This Var is composed in the classical style. However, rather than having classical scholasticism it is nearer to the folk-universe. The poet describes Maharaja Kharak Singh as consummate renouncer. The Rajas of Jammu consider it infra dig to obey Maharani Chand Kaur:

Wrote at the behest of Raja Hira Singh, Vazir Khalsa Raj.120-This text praises Maharaja Ranjit Singh however it is full of venom for his relatives, the Sandhanwalia Sardars. Vijay-Vinod’s protagonists are the Dogra clan especially Raja Dhyan Singh and Raja Hira Singh. It is mostly factual and compares favourably with the records of the Lahore Darbar.

The varkar, Hira, is a devotee of the Sakhi Sarvar.121 According to the var, Baba Sahib Singh Bedi’s son Baba Bikram Singh Bedi was instrumental in forging a relationship between Maharaja Sher Singh and the Sandhanwalia Sardars. Sandhanwalias were from Raja Sansi, Amritsar. In this var, the description concerning the mutual distrust, conspiracies, envy as well as affection is admirably handled and presented in adherence to the conventions of the genre.122

A masterpiece of Punjabi literature Shah Mohammad’s poem is a typical example of how the genres of qissa, var and jangnama were intermixed within the period of half a century.123

Shah Mohd’s relatives were in direct contact with the Lahore Darbar, occupying high posts in the Khalsa army.124 His jangnama is very popular. Written at the behest of his friends Hira and Nocr Khan. Narrative is in close proximity to the events.125 His description of Rani Jindan is historically inaccurate but nonetheless conveys the popular perception.

Anti-Dogra vitriol is at its scalding caustic best. Hasham’s brevity in qissas is ably transposed in the jangnama genre by Shah Mohd. 126 As a convention of this genre, Shah Mohd praises the bravery of the opponent.127 His anti-British discourse is

120 ibid., p.112-4
121 ibid., p.114-6
122 ibid., p.116
123 Rahi, J.S.: Historical Dynamics of the Qissa, pp.522-534 p.525.
124 ibid., p.117
125 ibid., p.118
126 ibid., p.121
127 ibid., p.122 Ajmer Singh views Shah Mohd as a popular personification of the religious policy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

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culturally rooted. The British are not just unwelcome outsiders; they are also a threat to the fraternal living of Hindus and Muslims [Sikhs included]. This 'third caste' (the English) will contaminate the Punjabi life.\(^{128}\)

Shah Mohammad's Jangnama places at the center the particularly enriched Punjabi religious universe-with Ranjit Singh, Lahore Darbar, Khalsa Army and the brave commanders as its custodians—against the traitors and their British masters. It is not just a narrow clash of civilizations but a clash of universal values celebrated by the Punjabis and the rabid mercantilism of the British. Viewed in this manner the resultant focus on the battlefield treats the Sikh soldiers not just fighting to save the honour of Lahore Darbar but of the entire Punjabi world-view. This gives those soldiers an elemental sheen of righteousness.

Also, the sense of commoners' belonging in the institution of state is made apparent by the treatment and discourse of the jangnama. This process should be seen in continuity from the earlier texts of Hakam Singh Darvesh and Ganesh Das. Both of these are jangnamas composed in 1830s. Coupled with these we have seen that the underlying complexus of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Lahore Darbar, people's perception, religious policy is visible in the structure of feeling in qissas, Siharfis, vars, etc. This underlying unity is made the focal point by Shah Mohammad. Although small in size, it is an outstanding document of the universal cultural paradigm of the Punjabis in the nineteenth century.

Shah Mohammad categories British as the sons of a sahukar—a Gumasta. This is a surprisingly forthright class description which has been embellished by the additional demerits of being 'and '. Shah Mohammad's text thus subscribes to the peasant values and norms as well as universal-historical categories. [Theodor Shanin, Russian Peasants; 1905]\(^{129}\)

Khalsa Raj for Shah Mohammad is the epitome of Punjabi achievement. It thus comes to acquire a centrality in the web of mediations, which has that elusive capacity to haunt the coming generations. Shah Mohammad is extremely conscious of this fact and his jangnama is especially a homage to the destruction of this Punjabi

\(^{128}\) ibid., p.123
\(^{129}\) ibid., p.123
dream. Baint is the metre employed by Shah Mohammad with ample dexterity, to compare favorably with Waris Shah.

A patriot, Matak's Jangnama has additional information to complement Shah Mohammad. Metre used is deodh. Matak is more severe in his criticism of the traitors than Shah Mohammad. Sham Singh Attariwala is the hero of Sabhraon. Matak praises the British battle exploits.

Kahan Singh wrote his jangnama at the behest of the Deputy Commissioner of Jalandhar, Mr. Wenstart. It is plausible that Kahan Singh be a British employee and his praise for the British stems from this fact. He has praised Maharaja Ranjit Singh a lot but the Sikh army has been denounced. The Sikh-lore is sought to be employed against the Sikh army. Masnavi form is put to use. It has two merits: loaded with information regarding battles and second, its language is a good standard to compare the contemporaries. Kahan Singh has written this jangnama from the British viewpoint still he has let out the other version. Thus limits to the pro-British attitude are made visible.

This text is replete with the panegyrics to Multan pirs. This is interesting when compared with the earlier vars written about Multan. There the Pirs of Multan are defeated by Guru Gobind Singh in a spiritual polemic but here these very Pirs are the protectors of the Singhs. Obviously, the altered external condition as well as the transformation in internal worlds is going on from Hakam Singh Darwesh; Ganesh Das and Sobha Baloch. Sobha's var establishes the connection between communal attitude and pro-imperialist leanings. In a way, he reverses the discursive thrust of Ganesh Das and portrays the patriotic Diwan Mul Raj of Multan as a crippled figure.

Punjabi poets strongly identified with the newly established Punjabi state and that's why their resentment is so well expressed. The 'teesri jat' Britishers have usurped the freedom of Punjabis. The demise of Ranjit Singh and the subsequent loss of

\[\text{\textsuperscript{130}}\text{ibid., p.1234-4} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{131}}\text{ibid., p.124} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{132}}\text{ibid., p.124-25} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{133}}\text{ibid., p.126} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{134}}\text{ibid., p.126-27} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{135}}\text{ibid., p.124} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{136}}\text{ibid., p.127-8} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{137}}\text{ibid., p.129} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{138}}\text{ibid., p.130} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{139}}\text{ibid., p.130} \]
sovereignty accentuate the causal sequence and this is one reason besides many others to regard Ranjit Singh as an idol and a visionary of Punjab. Somehow, the category ‘Singh’ is collectively made to represent everything positive about Maharaja Ranjit Singh – “Singhs embody the spirit of Ranjit Singh rule, which could not have been lost to the British, but for the treacherous role of the Dogras”, etc. The enduring mystique of Lahore Darbar, Ranjit Singh, annexation can be explained through this template.

Interestingly, the patriotic sentiment is dominant in the literature about ASW-I whereas, literature about ASW-II is veering towards British praise.

One distinguishing feature of the literary production eulogizing Maharaja Ranjit Singh is the creative inspiration provided by the Maharaja himself without any notions of court patronage. This is one fact that differentiates the Punjabi texts from their contemporary Reeti-poets in North India, whereas, their creative expression is in close proximity to the popular feeling.

Sadhu Gulab Das is the only poet to criticize Maharaja Ranjit Singh.43

Ranjit Singh as ‘avatar in Kalyug’: Ganesh Das recreates the typology established by Kesar Singh Chhibber in the eighteenth century by treating Ranjit Singh as Krishan and the ‘Turks’ as ‘dusht’.45

The brahminical elements eulogising Ranjit Singh view him as fundamentally an anti-Muslim crusader, which qualifies him as an avatar. In addition, it limits his status as a military personality only. Hindu, Muslim and Sikh all the poets have called Maharaja Ranjit Singh an avatar. Maharaja Ranjit Singh as an all-conquering king:

Maharaja Ranjit Singh – rule was satyug incarnate:

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40 ibid., p.132-33
41 ibid., p.130. One is reminded of the transformation occurring in the vars of Bhai Gurdas – from humility to a militant ethic – after the martyrdom of G5. Interestingly, this event starts the process of militarisation of the Sikh Panth. And, it is the genre of var that conveys the eventual passing away of the Sikh sovereignty ‘from a freedom-loving stance to surrender/sycophancy’
42 ibid., p.135
43 ibid., p.136. This is significant – Gulabdsai Sampraday and its ideology, Piro and Gulab Das, Caste question and women, equality.
44 ibid., p.136
45 ibid., p.136
46 ibid., p.137. Sant Singh Sekhon’s observation about the upward social mobility of the Sikhs is reflected in this.
Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a military leader, brave and chivalrous:\textsuperscript{147}

The power and authority of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh:\textsuperscript{148}

This authority was practiced against the criminal and the poor and meek were protected by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In fact, this is the crowning achievement of his rule. Maharaja Ranjit Singh authority was diametrically opposite to that of the Nadir Shah.\textsuperscript{149} Maharaja Ranjit Singh as good samaritan, popular amongst people, donations for religious establishments.\textsuperscript{150} Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a consummate gursikh – his personal devotion to Sikhism - Maharaja Ranjit Singh was called ‘Singh Sahib’ even after the annexation of Punjab.\textsuperscript{151}

Ranjit Singh is portrayed as an aashiq and consequently worthy of respect and honour. Sawanyar treats him in the chain of classical lovers of the Punjab. Moran being his muse, even divan Amar Nath mentions it in significant detail in his ‘Zafarnama-Ranjit Singh.’\textsuperscript{152} It seems that Maharaja Ranjit Singh represented that ideal persona which inspired others to invest all the characteristics on him. A certain secularization process especially of the Sikh lore is displayed here. Sawanyar states that Maharaja Ranjit Singh-Moran ishq had permeated the entire Punjabi social milieu, where even the spinning-wheel sessions were agog with this event. The public had given its consent to this union.\textsuperscript{153} Maharaja Ranjit Singh as an ever-alert, intelligent, inspiring figure.\textsuperscript{154} Folk songs were composed in his honour, long considered the epitome of popularity among the masses.\textsuperscript{155}

There are two important texts available on Maharaja Ranjit Singh.\textsuperscript{156} In this Siharfi composed in baint metre he has given Ranjit Singh according to his own perception. He has compared Maharaja with Pandavas of Mahabharta, Raja Bikramjit, Firoun, Naushervan, etc. Sawanyar attributes Ranjit Singh’s political prowess to the spiritual greatness of the Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Nanak as well as the result of grace bestowed by Pirs on Maharaja Ranjit Singh.\textsuperscript{157} Mulkh Punjab - Maharaja Ranjit

\textsuperscript{147} ibid., p.138
\textsuperscript{148} ibid., p.139
\textsuperscript{149} ibid., p.140
\textsuperscript{150} ibid., p.140-41
\textsuperscript{151} ibid., p.141
\textsuperscript{152} ibid., p.141-43
\textsuperscript{153} ibid., p.142-43
\textsuperscript{154} ibid., p.143
\textsuperscript{155} ibid., p.143-44
\textsuperscript{156} ibid., p.144
\textsuperscript{157} ibid., p.144-45

63
Singh-------- later on when the Punjabis join Indians against the British and in Poet - 1947 era, -------- becomes synonymous with the Punjab itself. In the mid - 19th century, even the love of the land is mediated through personages, whereas, in 20th century it acquires a sovereignty of its own. Maharaja Ranjit Singh death was caused by poisonous liquor provided by the .............. This fills in with the general description of the British as ............ Suggesting that the very death of Ranjit Singh was also due to treachery further reinforces the earlier assertion that Punjab was annexed by chance.158

Jafar Begh has described the scenes of desolation of ordinary Lahoris very movingly. According to Jafar Begh, the prevalent feeling among the masses was to declare that today the Kingdom of Hind has been overturned.159 Prior to the first Anglo-Sikh War and Shah Mohammad Punjab was considered in distinction to the rest of Hind. However simultaneously, Punjab was an embodiment of Hind also and its hero, Ranjit Singh was a representative of India against the British. This also confirms that rather than being any token or synthetic figurehead, it was the militant-powerful opposition to the British that will determine who is a true Indian.

Nalwa has the distinctiveness of being the most written about Sardar .HSN died in 1837.160 Qadiryar was impressed by Hari Singh Nalwa’s bravery and secondly, both belonged to Gujranwala. Qadiryar’s composition was the most famous.161 Nalwa is compared with Raja Karan, Bikramjit and Hatimtai.162 Although he was killed in a battle against the Pathans, Qadiryar calls them ‘founders of tyranny’ (zulm de bani):163

This var is not written in the classical form of Pauri, without any Manglacharan and Kal-Narad dialogue. Although deficient in many formulaic ways, it stands apart due to its linguistic felicity, staccato narrative and dramatic intensity.164

How conveniently the Sikh terminology is made to treat the Lahore Darbar as something worth dying for. The writer being a Muslim his easy usage of such terms in a secular cause is full of interesting possibilities. A surefooted secularization is underway in Ranjit Singh – period.

158 ibid., p.145-46
159 ibid., p.146. One is reminded of the same when Haqiqat Rai was taken to gallows and the collective sorrows of Lahoris, captured in a Var by Agra Sethi.
160 ibid., p.147
161 ibid., p.148-49
162 ibid., p.149
163 ibid., p.149-50
64
Sahai Singh comes across as a Devi devotee who makes Nalwa follow a vrat during the battle of Jamraud. Nalwa and Jamadar Khushhal Singh are compared and the former passes the test with flying colours. Nishani Chhand is used. Khatris are given a prominent place in this ‘jangnama’ and the references are sourced from Hindu mythologies and epics. Nalwa’s mother castigates Ranjit Singh for not helping out his son. Muslims are derogatorily addressed as ‘Musle’. Khatris are mentioned prominently along with Brahmins emboldening the discourse of Ganesh Das, Anad, Kesar Singh Chhibber, and so on.

Nalwa has been made out to be a Chandi Bhagat. He is an ideal person, bringing along his qualities of righteousness, chivalry. Gurmukh Singh employs the ‘Bachittar Natak’ of Guru Gobind Singh to associate Nalwa in the pantheon of great martyrs of the battlefield.

Akali Phula Singh is considered a quintessential Sikh warrior with an active sense of divided loyalty between the Sikh tradition and the institution of the Lahore Darbar. His frequent altercations with Ranjit Singh are attributable to this attitude. Famously, to honour the ardas and its commandment, he courted martyrdom rather than beating retreat. He was a much-respected figure amongst the Sikh army. The Nihangs and Phula Singh are profusely eulogized with their attire getting due space. The usual description of their attire says a lot about the wide respect that they had acquired. Nihangs embodied the values of the Khalsa – TatKhalsa if you like. However, Oberoi should take note that the visual aspect of Sikh identity was in currency long before the advent of the Singh Sabha movement. Having said that, this attire is not an end in itself but a complementarity to individual valour and values. Although no separate text is available about him, Hakam Singh Darwesh and Ganesh Das have mentioned Phula.

164 ibid., p.150
165 ibid., p.151
166 ibid., p.153.
167 ibid., p.154-55
168 ibid., p.156 This virulently anti-Muslim strain is also alive in upper castes. Maharaja Ranjit Singh is also criticised in a wild manner. Lala Kirpa Sagar carries this strain further.
169 ibid., p.159
170 ibid., p.160
171 ibid., p.161
172 ibid., p.161-63
173 ibid., p.162
Singh in their texts Sham Singh is the hero of the battle of Sabhraon. Ganesh Das, Shah Mohammad and Matah have mentioned him in their writings in glowing terms.

Without any overt patronage, Ranjit Singh and his generals were a source of popular adoration and Hindu, Muslim and Sikh poets composed their odes. With those warriors becoming the protagonists, the earlier martyr is now transformed into a valorous fighter who courts death. This transition is also significant in our argument about the secularization of the Sikh lore. Neither the British nor their cohorts have been treated as heroes. Nalwa is the epitome of Maharaja Ranjit Singh period values. Distantiation should be seen in this case where Nalwa as a satellite is eulogized compared with the centralized symbol of Ranjit Singh.

Post-1849, many Sikh chiefs turned towards the British rule whereas the populace never accepted the British and never forgot the Maharaja. It was during the Singh Sabha movement that a discourse about the moral decay of the Sikhs responsible for losing the Sikh Raj. However, the gurdwara reform movement had a link with Ranjit Singh. The land grants to gurdwaras were a major component in mahants’ corrupt ways and its mass base was energized to launch a movement against the mahants as well as their backers, the British. The literary production honouring Maharaja Ranjit Singh is unparalleled. Available in many forms, it shows the grip of Ranjit Singh on Punjabi inspiration.

Said to be a free-wheeling translation of Walter Scott’s Lady of the Lake, Lakkshmi Devi (1915) reads like an original piece. Many interesting facets are available: protagonist though overtly is Ranjit Singh but the real one is a Rajput, Jaimal Singh. Rajputs are the bedrock of Hindu glory. Proximity in space and time to have a closer relation with Punjabi/Pahari Hindus. One aspect is that it is not just the Sikhs or Muslims who are brave but even Hindus can be as strong. Considered to be influenced by the Arya Samaj movement, Lakshmi Devi is a conscious attempt to arouse the Punjabi Hindu to rediscover his lost glory. However, the linguistic resource is Punjabi and the story revolves around Ranjit Singh – tells us about the discursive sway held over the Punjabis.

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174 ibid., p.162
175 ibid., p.163
176 ibid., p.166. Reference to Maharaja Ranjit Singh in GRM appeals, discoursey teach, etc., Ranjit Singh-rule is alive in Punjabis in very many ways. [Prakash S. Badal’s Maharaja Ranjit Singh-rule.]
177 ibid., p.167
178 ibid., p.168
No other king was honored like Ranjit Singh in literary output whose range and depth is exceptional. During the reign of Ranjit Singh there were many Muslims poets eulogizing him e.g. Shah Mohammad, Jafar Beg, Sawan Yar, etc. However, in later period there number virtually ceased to exist. Punjabi language is the preferred medium. Two categories of writers come to fore, those treating Ranjit Singh through a Sikh discursive practice and those who visualized him through the glory of Punjab and its culture.179

Amongst the most important figures, mention may be made of (1788-1843) who availed himself of the patronage of M Karam S. of patiala and Raja Udai, S. of Kaithal to produce the most charming poetic narrative, a grand mix of myths and his works of great magnitude of imagination aimed at accommodating SL to H mythology and S philosophy to the Vedantic metaphysics.180

Another significant name is that of Sahib Singh Mirgind (1808-1876) whose literature pursuits gained him the patronage of M Sarup S. of Jind.181

The most important literature --- phenomenon of Punjabi literature during the 19th century was its transformation from an Indo-Muslim literature tradition into a Sikh Punjabi Tradition. The last important non-Muslim poets of the Punjab were G5 (1566-1606) and BG (1551-1629). Both of them had an equal fibity and command over the Sadh Bhasha and Braj Bhasha variants of med Hindi. After them, for 250 years, the S lit stream flourished mainly and primarily in Braj Bhasha. Even during the SR, cS literature experience broadly confined to theology, metaphysics, exegesis, hagiography and historiography found Braj Bhasha a more congenial literature medium. But for some exceptions, the S authors showed practically no interests in composing their verses in Punjabi or adopting secular themes and concerns for their literature pursuits.182

Bulleh Shah and. Waris Shah, the two sayyid Muslim poets, reflect the emergence of jat Sikh chiefs as a new political force that displayed the strength of peasant community as a whole, and was detrimental to the cause of the ashraf in the

179 ibid., p.184-85[How much these two descriptions differ? This question can shed light on the process of Sikh → Punjabi [secularization coupled with regionalisation]Also, its comparison with Banda Bahadur may also enlighten us.[SIKH → AASHIQ → MARTYR → PUNJABI]

180 ibid., p.539
181 ibid., p.539-40.
182 ibid., p.540
Gradually, with the consolidation of Sikh rule under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Khalsa army at their back, the jat Sikh generals and chiefs become the political Chke. An abundance of romantic and war poetry, written to please and eulogize the new rulers and generals, is in itself a proof that the political elite constituted the most important segment of the Punjabi society. Can we discern some reeti-type influences on the contemporary ‘in terms of emerging state structures and regional formations’ literary production also the fact of private/state patronage to the poet needs to be taken into consideration.

M R S was lavish in his charities irrespective of the caste, creed or profession of the recipients... the Maharaja did not recognize any barriers to upward mobility and distributed jagirs for individual effort and achievement. As a reward for meritorious service jagirs were given after the Mughal pattern. They included shawls, clothing, crests and gold ornaments. Swords, horses and elephants were also bestowed. The Khalsa army, with its quest for money and in its shifting loyalties, remained the deciding factor until it was arrayed against the British – deserted, defeated and eventually disbanded. With the exception of a few reference to concubines at the Lahore Darbar there is no indication if the Jat Sikh rulers allowed slavery to continue as an institution which had remained a regular feature of the life of the Mughal nobility in India.

During the 1750s, when shahukars these people were the victims of arson and robbery, none come to their rescue in towns and villages because they were the exploiters. On account of unstable conditions of peace of stability were beneficial for them, and we find Khatri traders well settled in the markets of distant regions like Rawalpindi and Hazro.

184 ibid., p.404
185 ibid., p.404
186 ibid., p.405
187 ibid., p.406
188 ibid., p.406
189 ibid., p.407
It appears that commercial capital did not own or manage the industries. Manufacturers were the owners and the sellers of their articles. However, the manufacturers of arms and ammunition were employed in government factories.\textsuperscript{190}

Regarding industrial workers living in the cities we come upon a long list of craftsmen and manufacturers.\textsuperscript{191}

The people directly and in supported by land formed the largest section of the society. Jats, however, were the core of agricultural population as proprietors and landowners. Numerous Jat tribes of Hindu and Muslim affiliation were scattered throughout the Punjab towards the middle of the 12\textsuperscript{th} Century.\textsuperscript{192}

During RS's reign, Jat Sikhs constituted the bulk of the Khalsa army, had the advantage of reverting to their traditional occupation at any time. There are indications of the existence of social hierarchy among the Jats at the village level. The Jats attached great importance to property in land. The size of landholding was the basis of social status. It figured prominently during matrimonial settlements among case those who were well off. A Jat with a large holding also had more power and prestige because he had more labourers and menials attached to his family.\textsuperscript{193}

Much value was attached to the number of male members in a family among the peasant proprietors as they were a source of strength for the family in farming area in the village. They could bring dowry which included bullocks among other things. By contrast the birth of girls was a liability among the poor farmers; they practiced infanticide.\textsuperscript{194}

The economic conditions of Jat farmers had serious implications for their marriage system and customs as well... there are indications that among the Jats with small holdings, the chance of marrying was rather small. They reading paid price money to the parents of a bride. This encouraged selling of daughters, resulting in wide age gaps between husbands and wives.\textsuperscript{195}

\textsuperscript{190} ibid., p.407
\textsuperscript{191} ibid., p.407
\textsuperscript{192} ibid., p.408
\textsuperscript{193} ibid., p.408
\textsuperscript{194} ibid., p.408
\textsuperscript{195} ibid., p.408
The custom of widow remarriage, called karewa, was prevalent among them... Whereas it gave a wife to an unmarried brother, it protected the honour of a joint family. Also by retaining the widow one retained the property of the deceased brother.196

Since many Khatris held important position in the government, their status among the Hindus was also that of the social elites. As an educated class they adhered to the rules and rituals of the Hindu varna order. A Khatri shahukar being economically well off could spend enough on the dowry of his daughter. Infanticide was rare amongst them. Also, they did not favour the idea of widow remarriage and viewed such a custom among the Jats with contempt.197

Directly associated with the Jats were the tenants and landless labourers largely dawn from the castes like Chuhras and Chamars198

Indirectly related to the Jat farmers were the village artisans. They were not the employees of the Jats, but they maintained relations, with their clients as sepis.199

Broadly speaking, the learned ulama among the Muslims consisted of persons who possessed knowledge of the Fiqh and the Quran. They were variously designated as Sayyids, Shaikhs or mashaikh, mullah and qazis. Though most of them adhered to chulles of the Shariat, privately and publicly, quite a few of the Sayyids and Shaikhs had come under the strong impact of Sufism. Caste was strictly adhered to among them also. It may be important to note that for Waris Shah, Jats were not very different from mochis, qasais and sunars. Jats were believed to indulge in highway robberies and infanticide. They were not good Muslims because they did not believe in namaz and halal. Again, they were no good because they accepted price money while marrying their daughter. A Sayyid should not be a miser or cowardly. Waris does not like traders and bankers who throve on money-lending. Being a noble Muslim he recommends ‘chastity’ and ‘meekness’ for the women while he condemns ‘profession of prostitutes ‘Karyaris’.200

There was a strong reaction against the Mullah among the sufı Muslims represented by poets like Bullah, Hasham and Waris. They do not approve of the rigidity with which the Mullah indulged in contention. He is represented as an immoral

196 ibid., p.408-9
197 ibid., p.409
198 ibid., p.409
199 ibid., p.409
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person who exploits his religious position to fulfil lust. He is depicted as showing inhospitable attitude towards strangers, non-Muslims, beggars of low origin, and also as upholding the cause of the rich and the evil-doers. Because of the religious dimension of certain domestic rituals, he gained on all festive and sad occasions in the houses of the Muslims. The Mullah, however, did play a creditable role in the capacity of a teacher in mosques or maktabs, commanding respect equally from the parents of his Muslim and Hindu students. 201

Like the ulama in Muslims, the Brahmins were occupying the status of religious elite in the Hindu social order. Numerous thakurdwaras and dharmshalas were under the charge of Brahman priests. They performed prayer services for the Hindus, and like the Mullah they too were known for their rigid practices. 202

However, they had fallen from the high pedestal of learning and religious sublimity and were subsisting on royal bounties and public alms. 203

During RS's rule, social status of quite a few of them was improving because they were performing religious rituals not only for the Hindu nobility but also for the Sikh rulers. 204

The importance of the Brahmin in the socio-religious life of the Hindus was quite remarkable. 205 Besides the mullahs and pandits, there were Sikh priests called Bhais who were in charge of Sikh shrines. The Bhais conducted offerings of Karah parshad through ardas and read out the auspicious shabad from the holy Granth for the devotees. Though the prayer services of the Bhais were solicited by the Sikhs in general and the Khalsa armines in particular, the influence of Brahmanical rituals upon the Hindu and Sikh courtiers of RS was quite considerable. 206

The society highly valued the principles of asceticism. In any case there existed different categories of ascetic orders, who performed semi-priestly functions. Sufi saints commanded great respect among Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The descendents of the pirs who managed their seats were called makhdums. Among the important sufi orders of the period there references to Chishtis, Qadiris, Jalalis, Naushahis Madaris

200 ibid., p.411
201 ibid., p.412
202 ibid., p.412
203 ibid., p.412
204 ibid., p.412
205 ibid., p.413
and Naqshabandis. The most important of these was the Chishti order popularized by Shaikh Faridud-Din Shakarganj whose tomb and seat was at Pakpatan. According to Waris, this was the most popular center of pilgrimage in the Punjab, and people went there to fulfil their desires and vows. It seems that the sufi saints were believed to possess the qualities of exorcist, sorcerer and medical practitioners.  

Related to Shaivism and Vaishnavism among Hindus there were Sanyasi and Bairagi ascetics armed with small weapons to be used in a clash. The Sanyasis, Jogis and Bairagis had their respective monasteries, the ‘maths’. The most frequently mentioned jogis are the Kanphatas who pierced their earlobes to wear large rings. [Rawals, Jangams, Mundias, Jattadharis].  

There are numerous references to caste saint and local godlings. Most of the couple from the lower strata believed in their efficacious powers and miracles and thronged the local shrines.  

Among the professional entertainers, there were the traditional genealogists, bards or folk-singers at the level of tribal social structures in the Punjab.  

In villages as well as in towns there were panchayats and bhaicharas. The panchayat functioned for the whole village or a town locality. The bhaichara worked for a kinship group. The member of a panchayat was called a Panch, the head of a Panchayat was called the Chaudhari. They were generally respectable people who represented their caste or subcaste groups. In villages, Khatri Shahukars were taken as panches the landowning Jats. In case of general disputes, conciliatory efforts were made by the panches. They also dealt with issues like the division and demarcation of land.  

Bhaichara minimized the work of the Panchayat... Its decisions were virtually binding, though its rulings depended on persuasion. In fact, social and relation codes of ethics had become identical with the special interests of society in respect of these institutions. The Bhaicharas enforced rules of caste regarding marriage... A kin group of families of a subcaste the Bhaichara was called sharika. It included brother, paternal

206 ibid., p.413
207 ibid., p.413
208 ibid., p.413-14
209 ibid., p.414
210 ibid., p.414
211 ibid., p.415
212 ibid., p.415

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uncles and cousins. Due to conflicts over property and prestige they indulged in rivalry and mutual distrust, thus calling for intervention by the Bhaichara.213

An important feature of socio-economic setup was a certain degree of self-sufficiency and autonomy which enabled its various parts to function without state help.214

We can also notice certain significant features regarding value conflict inherent in the social structure at different levels between Khatri bankers and traders. Banias or Kirars on the one hand and the Jat cultivators on the other, cultural or value conflicts were intimately connected with their economic condition. Among Muslims, a similar conflict was evident between Sayyids and Shaikhs on the one hand, and the lower classes, including the Jats, on the other. At the level of religious occupations among Muslims the conflict between the Mullahs and the Sufis is a fair indication of qualitative transformation with respect to the principles of equality and morality.215

Bullhe Shah and Waris Shah, the two Sayyad Muslim poets, reflect the emergence of Jat Sikh chiefs as a new political force that displayed the strength of peasant community as a whole, and was detrimental to the cause of the ashraf in the Punjab. Gradually, with the consolidation of Sikh rule under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Khalsa army at their back, the jat Sikh generals and chiefs became the political elite. An abundance of romantic and war poetry, written to please and eulogize the new rulers and generals, is in itself a proof that the political elite constituted the most important segment of the structure of the Punjabi society.216

It may be relevant here to draw a line of distinction between jats and Khatri in so far as their social standing and values were concerned. Since many Khatris held important positions in the government their status among the Hindus was also that of the social elites. As an educated class they adhered to the rules and rituals of the Hindu varna order.217 Whereas for Waris Shah, Jats were not very different from telis, mochis, qasais and Sunars. Jats were bad for they indulged in highway robberies and infanticide. They were not good Muslims because they did not believe in namaz and halal. Again, they were bad because they accepted price money while marrying their daughters...
Being an ashraf he recommends ‘chastity’ and ‘meekness’ for the women while he condemns the profession of kanjaris.  

Ram Singh tells us about the popularity of Muktsar as a place of Sikh pilgrimage in his barahmaha ‘Padam’. Their ‘writers’ interest was not confined to their own religious community. The way they refer to the beliefs of ‘others’ reflects their acceptance of the idea of cultural co-existence as well as cultural plurality.

An important feature of the social and cultural life of the people was their tribal structure. Peasant communities formed the bulk of human settlements in the Punjab. They maintained a sort of hereditary co-operation with bards, minstrels and genealogists who delighted their patrons through eulogistic recitations of genealogies, ballads and love tales.

The number of Muslim poets during the 18th century was larger than the Sikh and Hindu poets combined. Sikhs were busy in their struggle. The trading community lacked interest in Punjabi literature. The Muslim population of the countryside was alone holding on to their routine life, their cultural pursuits and literary activities.

Persian metres and genres were converted to suit the expression in Punjabi e.g. baints and dwayyia metres. The qissa has undergone changes mainly in thematic typicalities. The Qissa spans a period of about 350 years from the early-seventeenth century to the fourth decade of the twentieth century. In the later half of this period, all the four types of qissas came to be produced as parallel streams, though their genesis was not simultaneous. Before the seventeenth century, love tales as prototypes of the qissa of ishq existed in folkloristic form.

With the advent of Khalsa Raj in the late-eighteenth century, qissas came to be overshadowed by romances. Kamrup Kamlata, Hatamta, Shah Behram Chander Badan, Saiful Maluk and Gulsanobar are some of the typical romances of this period. The qissas like Puran Bhagat which hinged on the theme of renunciation and yoga, also

\[217\] ibid., p.58
\[218\] ibid., p.61
\[219\] ibid., p.36
\[220\] ibid., p.39
\[221\] ibid., p.23
\[222\] ibid., p.24-25
\[223\] ibid., p.27
\[224\] Rahi, J.S.: Historical Dynamics of the Qissa, 522-534, p.523
\[225\] ibid., p.523
emerged at as time. But this theme reached its culmination only after the fall of the SR. 226

The theme of heroic deeds that remained predominant in var, jangnama or gurbilas, the typical narrative forms of heroic poetry in medieval times, also came to be subsumed in qissa in MRS’s — Siharfi Hari Singh Nalwa by Qadir Yar and Baitan Sher Singh by Nihal Singh are the two typical works in point. During the British period, this tendency assumed the form of narratives of heroic adventures of folk heroes fighting against the oppressive state machinery. They are invariably cast in the Robin Hood mould of benevolent daredevils and dacoits in qissas. 227 We need to find an explanation how these developments in the tone and tenor of Punjabi came about. 228

The essential nature of man–woman love in the qissas of this category is physical. 229

The sign system in Mirza Sahiban has no mystical pretensions. It is susceptible, however, to theological interpretation intertwined with man–woman relationship. 230 At the social plan, the dominant groups or classes elevate their sense of supremacy to the level of divine will to impart it a metaphysical legitimacy. In Waris, Heer’s parental clan identifies its collective will with the loftiness of remembering God.

The lover in qissas of ishq is always a stranger from outside. Its social dimension, codified in the idea of the forbidden, has an obvious psychological aspect embedded in passionate sexuality. 231

At the creative place, however, the man–woman love in qissa is portrayed as tagui, a Sufi-mystic’s humble living and spiritual longing for union which God. In Waris’s Heer the idea of faquir is imparted allegorical expansion. The Sufis disapproved of the luxurious life — style of the ruling elite. But they were no political rebels. They chose faquir as a kind of penance for themselves and atonement for the sins of their co-religionist ruling elites.

As stated already the qissa poets of love had a religious-cultural affinity with the ruling elite. This affinity foreclosed choice of themes and forms fraught with the potentiality of conflict with the established regime. The choice of man–woman love as

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226 ibid., p.524
227 ibid., p.524
228 ibid., p.525
229 ibid., p.526
230 ibid., p.527
231 ibid., p.529
their favourite theme was helped by their communitarian identity. The very nature of the theme ensured popular response. But what is more significant is that it yielded to their metaphysics rather easily. The metaphysics of the times did not permit the theme of secular love to be treated as a mere socio-cultural tangle. The transformation of the physical into meta-physical was a creative necessity of the qissa poets. The Sufis sought spirituality through annihilation of the ego. The qissa poets see hardships and death in love as the highest form of faqiri. It is a journey from the state of fana to the state of faqa, i.e., the blissful state of oneness which divine essence. 232

Hafiz Barkhurdar, a qissa poet of ishq during the seventeenth century, echoes Sufi perception when he says: 'There is no love possible without courting death'. More than a hundred years later, Hashim Shah, a Sufi and qissa poet, utters the same sentiment from mystical heights. 'Those who court love suffering/And suffering is a bliss indeed? The suffering of lovers in most of the qissas of the Mughal period is invariably attributed to preordained fate or the Will of God. Their spirituality lies in their submission to God's Will. 233

Waris Shah, the great qissa poet of the latter half of the eighteenth century, does strike a different note when he brings out the tragic destiny of the lovers as an inevitable consequence of social hostility towards those in love. However, the idea of Sufi love remains pronounced in his Heer too. 234

The Muslim qissa poets of the Mughal period show lovers attaining spiritual union ultimately. Muqbil an immediate predecessor of Waris, sees Heer and Ranjha gaining the hallowed status of walis·for their steadfastness in love. Similarly, Sassi in Hasham also achieves the states of buzurg. 235 The fate or destiny in Waris is not a mere metaphysical category. It is a secular category too. In secular terms it unfolds the social dimension of the dialectics of the tragedy of lovers. 236

The divergence of interpretations reflects the schism of the Muslim qissa poets. In their advocacy of love, they deviate from the prevalent social attitude towards love of the genders. But their religious affinity with the established regime prompts them to
spiritualise and mystify their dissent. 237 With the advent of qissakar, in Panjabi language, a certain 'secular poetics comes into being and new narratives, characters and ideas predominantly of the Semitic world – were introduced in Punjab.238

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237 ibid., p.532
238 ibid., p.295