Chapter-I

Whose (Post)Modernism?

Like other Indian literatures, Punjabi poetry, too, had a complex encounter with modernism. The event of its modernist phase had to negotiate with its inheritance of a tradition with religion as its final referent. Religion provided the ultimate framework for locating and solving human and social problems, whereas the folks idiom and song gave Punjabi poetry its diction and metre. The Modernist moment in Punjabi poetry is traced to Bhai Vir Singh's authentic creative endeavour which did come to terms with western Modernism as well as the strong religious element inhabiting Punjabi language and culture. Punjabi poet could not disavow his religious tradition merely by the dint of a borrowed secularism. He had to constantly deal with a language which was thoroughly contaminated with religious meanings. The cultural legacy of both genuine and inauthentic religious experience could not be easily shaken off by merely borrowing new literary forms from western Modernism. Bhai Veer Singh, according to Kartar Singh Duggal, "released Punjabi verse from the stranglehold of traditional forms. He eschewed the unwieldy, cumbersome forms of old and employed short, quick-moving rhythmic patterns, easier to handle and more congenial for the articulation of the moods of modern man".  

Bhai Veer Singh emerged as the first Punjabi poet to pose the question of significance to his own act of poetic performance. However the space of his Modernist adventure is severely circumscribed by the Mystical Sikh orientation of his poetry. He did introduce Punjabi poetry to Modernist idiom and style by using common language and various new forms. But the inheritance and ideological framework from the Sikh
religious faith marks the major portion of his work with an indifference to contemporary concerns. The search for meaning and authentic experience does not lead him to the Modernist philosophies of Existentialism, Marxism or Phenomenology; it is his profound faith in the metanarrative of Sikh religion which he articulates as an answer to his existentialist quest. As Sant Singh Sekhon aptly remarks, "The poetry is largely modern in form. In spirit, it is oriental in that it lays stress on other-worldliness. Indeed by some it has been called pre-modern, a bridge between the oriental and the truly modern."²

Pooran Singh was the first modern Punjabi poet to steer clear of the Sikh mysticism as the ultimate source of meaning. He celebrates Punjabi culture and nature without investing them with religious meaning:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Khlo jaan daangaan modhe te ulaarke}
\end{align*}
\]

(Eh bepravaah punjab de,
Maut nu makhaulaaan karan,
Marn thin nahin darde.
Pyaar naal eh karan gulaami,
Jaan koh aapni vaar dinde:
Par tain naa mannan kise di,
Khlo jaan daangaan modhe te ulaarke)
While he did a lot towards freeing Punjabi poetry from the shackles of traditional forms and themes, he created a comprehensive all-encompassing discourse of a Punjabi culture without any gaps, conflicts or contradictions marking its presence and plenitude. This valorization of "Punjabi culture" is achieved at the expense of other cultures, Indian as well as foreign, which are projected as lacking the vitality, vigour and meaning characterizing the Punjabi culture. This mysterious and superabundant life marking a particular regional culture is represented as immune to inter-cultural influences, enclosed with a 'blessed' territory which enjoys inherent autonomy and originary purity uncontaminated by traces of any alien linguistic or political influences, even though the Punjab he claims to represent was under the British colonial rule:

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मे वर्ष वाले लोग लोग लिखा मां ।
उन भाग भाग डूब गए ना देख आ देवी,
लोकों बांध लगे रहे देम भी।
अंधकार तीन, अभिज्ञ जो सपनी ठंदे,
मड़ शूरी शूरी रहस्य।

सतरुप भर शिशु बेड़ी बूढ़ी फिरी भारी मौ,
दिन भरी, भर-भर शिशु ठंदे, लौँचे,
ललित-भन्न शिशु मौ,
बेड़ी बूढ़ी रंग मकरण बूढ़ घरी बदिमगड़ी,
बुध दिखाना मौ ‘‘पुहे’’ रह,
...
हिंदी में रंग पृथक
दिखा मड़ भर,
भें भी बुढ़ भावना दिखा,

हिंदी में लिखा मग तपर भी,
भी दिख दिख आदिभाष बढ़ाते ठंडे ठंडे स्वं शिशु
शिशु मे दिखाना मुषाः, सिंट मे दिशाथ मां,
भी दिख ठंडे ठंडे ठंदे मे,
दिखाने हिंदी मिरी अभाजी भूषण ही।

शिशुई ठंदे मे मे दिखाना मिरी हे दिखा

लिखी बाहेर हे मगँ हे
रंगत हूँ दिशाखिजाँ,
अंधालो ची चावम ठंदी
रंगत हूँ भावभ कीजाँ,
हुटा गुटा एकट शिन देविया,
भूषण ची मिरी एक हेंदा ठंदा दिखाना दिशाखिजाँ रंग,
भी हिंदी मिरी हुट शिक दिखाना होटे ठंडे।
चतिह जे तरजग, चतिह जे सीज़, जिसे जिस मदिरहूं जा आदेश ते।
चतिह जे मेंसे हिरे,
चतिह जे काले हिरे,

(वे हैसम निता प्रशस्त बेदी तेज़ बौद्धिक,)

हिम ढङ बड़ी बड़ी है,
हिम नंदह सुभाष है,
हिम निरं हिमाशु मुख है,

(चिरी हांद्य हिम भक्तिरह सुभाष तथा गाँड़,
पिठ जों में धनान्तर है,
चिंते हेम हिमारे चत निता हिम अभाव।)

(Oe ! kidhre nahin lagdi hava punjab vaali.
Kidhre daa paani mainu naa eho jehaa mithhaa te maafak.

Mahaaraashtar vich,
Main takkiaan sohnian suhaagnaan;

Gujraat diaan suaanian takkiaan,
Sohne gore rang, naksh kamala de,-

Madraas vich dekhe uchhe uchhe taal te naarial de lamme
lamme birch,

Te heth baithe lok takke taambe de rang de,
Sohne zaroor lagge, nain unhaa de mast sun,
Par main kujh vehshi jehaa
Othoon hiran vaangoon nassea.

24
Bangaal vich, main dekheyaa, javaharaat diyaan gaaniaan.
Vadde vadde lok takke, kai mirg nainiaan,
Gehmaan, geham see, naatak chetak see,
Chitr banaan daa saamaan saaraa,
Ghar ghar rang sann, rasaan de paarkhoo,

........................................

Main uthe vi dabbaa dabbaa geya saan.
Te murr murr rooh mera aakhe kithe aa faseaa,
Machchiaan farran vaale desh main.
Angrez takke, amrican te japaani takke,
Sabh khushi khushi vassde;

........................................

Ghar ghar koi doonghi jhi khaai si,
Eh khaai, maan-putt viech takki, uthe,
Janaani-mard vich si,
Koi trapp naahn sakdaa oh khaai andisdi,
Kujh tyag si 'dooe' daa,
....nikki main daa puaarra
Peyaa ghar ghar,
Meraa jee kujh ghabraa geyaa,

........................................

Oe! main takkeaa saaraa jahaan ve,
Main fir fir aeyaa begaane deshaan vich
Dekhdaa main fireaa suhnapp, mithatt te milaap saara,
Par kidhre nahin takki main,
Eh nimaani jhi Aheeran Punjab dee.

Jisnu takk ke main dareyaa jihaa ho geyaa
Ithe baabe de shabd ne
Paththraan nu pighaaley,
Mardaane dee rabaas vajji
Parbataan salaam keetaa,
Boota boota vajad vich nachcheya,
Punjab di mithi da zarraa zarraa kambea pyaar vich,
Use ilaahi sur dareyaa pae vagde.

Dareaa ho rehnaa, dareaa ho jeena, ithe eh satguraan daa aadesh hai.
Dareaavaan de mele ithe,
Dareaavaan vaale vichorre,

Mainu Punjab jehaa mulch koi hor naahn dissda,

Eh guraan vaali dharti hai,
Ithe sachaa darbaar hai,
Ithe dil peaa jhukdaa,

Itthe gobind singh pyaarraa raakhaa saadaa;
Eh thaan sachche paatshaah dee,
Itthe us pyaare daa miththaa miththaa aasraa)

While Puran Singh did extend the horizon of Punjabi poetry by introducing new themes and forms, one cannot agree with Dr. Attar Singh that he articulated the anguish-ridden Modernist sensibility in all its manifestations. Puran Singh failed to express the alienation and fragmentation characterizing the modern man's quest for authenticity and wholeness. His privileging of Punjabi culture as the very embodiment of
freedom and plenitude cannot be situated as a little narrative of cultural difference; it seeks rather to become the master narrative, the ultimate text of cultural richness and vitality against which all other cultural narratives can be evaluated:

(Punjab naa hindu naa musalmaan,
Punjab saaraa jeendaa guru de naam te.

Orrak daa rooh zor aayaa Punjab vichch
Satguraan de kadmaan te raahaan de sadke
Harrh aaye rabb de prakaash de

Itthe jaan aayee, rooh aayaa, rabb aayaa,
Geet asmaani aayaa, dil aayaa bakhsh daa;
Itthe chaa de asmaan tutte,
Itthe husan khudaai daa avtaar aayaa,
Itthe dil chubhviaan moortaan,
Nigaahaan de teeraan de meehn.
This transference of belief in religion to an irrational belief in a singularly enlightened culture saturated with divine grace cannot guarantee a fullness of life, the fulfillment of desire for ultimate meaning. The adoption of Modernist modes of expression like free verse have only been made to serve his predilection for mystical and religious themes. The undecidability between immanence and transcendence of divine reality strongly marks his poetry as that of a human being in search of self-definition in this finite world:

Lokeen kehn rabb sabh vichch hai, sabh kujh uho,
Har thaan hai, har shai hai, jidhar deho, rabb hi rabb,
Par meriaan akkhiaan haale,
Kujh theek sujaakhiaan nahin jaapdiaan,
Mainu rabb eon har thaan nahin disdaa.

This ambivalence fails to translate into a full-fledged skepticism. This oscillation between faith and doubt only leads to an uncritical rejection of orthodox belief in religion which does not promise any spiritual salvation but deprives man of carnal pleasures.

However, Puran Singh did create new possibilities for Punjabi poetry by borrowing and assimilating Modernist forms from his authentic experience of Western poetry. Even though the unpresentable that a poem tries to deal with always seeks a passage through, and is inevitably coloured with, the influence of Sikh mysticism in his poetry, one can still...
glimpse the secular turn in the poems which celebrate the lived experience of contemporary Punjabi culture with a fresh abandon and gaiety. There is even an anticipation of the postmodern self-reflexivity in some of his poems:

अख्ख्राण दे अख्खर मेरे, हिंदी हिंदी दें की हिंदी खिंदा खिंदा मेरे,
मेरे हिंदी हिंदी दें की, रांच रांचीरां, इनां दे इनां पदे लाकर ।
मेरे बुध बौम लापे मे धी,
मेरे धूम धूम लापे धी,
मेरे धूम धूम दें धी,
मेरे मृण धूंधों धी,
कीरट्टी धी धी, वांटी वांटी, वांटी वांटी, कीरट्टी धी कीरट्टी,
मेरे मृण धूंधों धी कीरट्टी मे धी,
मेरे मृण धूंधों धी कीरट्टी मे धी।

Akhkhraan de akhkhar mere, nikke nikke haththaan vichchon
dig dig painde,
Mere nikke nikke hathth, daataan vaddiaan, jhanaan de
jhanaan pae vagde.
Saare gumm gumm jaande main theen,
Saare murr labhde naahn,
Mere baal-nain bhole bhaale dhoond n sakde, bhaaven
bhaalan chaar chufereean.
Reetaan vichch dulla chamakde, faraan nahn hunde,
Mere akhkhraan de dareaa nassde jaande,
Motiaan de harrh.

The poem articulates an awareness of the extreme difficulty of articulation of the inner poetic experience which can be compared to the Lyotardian concept of the sublime, the unpresentable which defies all
representation. The language does not correspond to the complex inner text which seeks to know itself in the externalized form of the poem. But the exteriority of the pre-articulated moment is not graspable in the symbolic realm of knowledge and understanding:

Mainu rang banhnaa nahin aundaa haali
Oh rang jehda kadi kadi,
Mere andar kani kani, achanchet varhdaa !
Maaraa maaraa rang kujh ghul ghul simmdaa.

Alaap meraa theek hai dhur andar,
Par door door dissdaa vaang asmaan de,
Mere hathth de banaae haar, tutte, bhajje,  
Nikke nikke haar mere baal-pyaar de,  
Meraa geet gummeaa gummeaa, ghuththaa ghuththaa dissdaa.  
Ik ik satar vich, gummein kai daane,  
Par motiaan de tutte tutte haar eh,  
Torr torr, ker ker, khaler khaler,  
Pyaar-desh nu denvdaa.  
Zameen thi akaash vall bhejdaa.

It was Mohan Singh who steered Punjabi poetry towards a secular, humanistic reorientation after Bhai Vir Singh had given it a Sikh revivalist turn. His success lies in blending various influences and traditions into a singularly different lyrical rhythm. According to Attar Singh, "The greatest achievement of Mohan Singh lies in synthesizing all different influences and traditions into a distinctly original personal style."\(^{10}\)

Mohan Singh's familiarity with Persian and English literature and his interest in western literary movements of symbolism and Imagism led him to an experimental kind of poetry which would integrate the Sufi strain with the Modernism, Romanticism. However, "unlike the western Imagist and Symbolist poets, Mohan Singh does not reject socio-economic themes and his symbolical poems are not merely sensations of beauty. They reveal a moral and social responsibility since the moral and social problems of his day captured Mohan Singh's subtle intuitions and contributed to the total design of each one of his poems in which he uses the symbolical device."\(^{11}\)

However, removed as they were from our socio-cultural text, both Modernism and Romanticism could not be usefully assimilated into our poetry. Both the borrowed Modernist impulse and the Romanticist "private, often idiosyncratic explorations generally contrasted sharply with
the public rhetoric of nationalist poetry, and created a distance between the poet and his or her audience and the text and its contexts.\textsuperscript{12} The strange mixture of these impulses and influences crystallized into a Punjabi poetry which also became the flag-bearer of Marxism and socialist politics as they were received in the form of the Progressive movement "launched effectively by the national conference of progressive Writers Association at Lucknow in 1936 (with a presidential address by Munshi Prem Chand, the foremost fiction writer in modern Hindi).\textsuperscript{13} This phase of Progressive Punjabi poetry found articulation in the voices of Amrita Pritam and Mohan Singh. Mohan Singh, in particular, emerged as the representative of the Progressive movement in Punjabi poetry. However his Progressivist "leanings are strongly contaminated with romantic and emotional anxiety and instability."\textsuperscript{14} He tries to ignore or sublimate his primarily Romanticist orientation, his poetry sounds didactic and ungrounded in lived experience:
Ki hoeyaa je pyaar meraa adhvatte.

Tur tur gittiaan lanjhaan hoiaan,
Pair jugaan de paate;
Ghum ghumaa ke ambar thakke,
Raah dehon no akke;
Tur tur khalh khalh lakhaan tare,
Tutt gae ant vichaare,
Ambb gae parbatt de paase
Jangal kharre udaase,
Goorh samaadhi de vich beh beh,
Ik-tang kharriaan reh reh.
Saagar ne kai taapoo trae
Dharti ne kai jheelaan,
Keerrreeon brehmand teerak grasea,
Jamman maran diaan peeraan,
Saun saun aadamdaa putt haareaa
Su su dheee aadam dee,
Soch soch ke dovein haare,
Bin socho vee mare,
Vug vug maandi pai ahinsaa
Veet veet ke hinsaa,
Besamjhi daa uvein haneraa,
Nazar naa aae saveraa,
Soch kharri adhvaate, dil kharraa adhvaate,
Dharam kharra adhvaate
Adharam kharra adhvaate.
Ki hoeaa je pyaar mera adhvaate)

The pre-Partition phase of Punjabi poetry is, among other factors, also influenced and determined by British colonialism and the nationalism informing the country-wide struggle for Independence. Most of the literary movements were either influenced by or addressed to the British Imperialism and the fight against it. "In the first half of the twentieth century, a series of successive, overlapping, and interacting movements appeared at the national level, which prepared the ground for the mixture of schools and styles we find in contemporary India"¹⁶ The nation wide movement of the Indian variety of western Modernism was crossed, "between the two World Wars, and especially between about 1920 and 1935," by another phase of 'Romantic' writing (an earlier, longer one had appeared in the nineteenth century), which overlapped with the nationalist movement."¹⁷ The formal innovations and secular orientation led to a consolidation of the Modernist transition launched by Bhai Vir Singh and invigorated by Puran Singh.

Amrita Pritam, the only Punjabi poet to get recognition at both the national and international level, has often been classified along with Mohan Singh as the major poet in the Progressive movement in Punjabi poetry. However her poetry has resisted the labels of Progressivist,
feminist, Modernist or Romanticist. Rather she never consciously joined the Progressive mainstream of Punjabi poetry and articulated her difference as the lone feminist (her feminism not falling into the western category either) among her contemporaries. Situating herself as a woman in the patriarchal order, she launches her quest for identity through relationship to the other. Her self-definition is always traced by a passage through the other. But it is different from the view of women one receives in medieval or modern Punjabi poetry. Attar Singh’s comment is very apt in this regard: "Whether it is Puran Singh intoning the glory of a virtuous wife, Mohan Singh celebrating the charms of her body, inscrutability of her mind (Apuhanch, Mangti) and her helplessness in the bondage of her husband (Jayedad) or Pritam Singh Safir satirizing her fickle-mindedness and frailty, the entire romantic Punjabi poetry conceived of woman in some form or the other of relatedness to man. And what is central to this conception whether implicitly or explicitly is allocation to her of a position secondary to that of man. For the woman to be defined as a person through relationship to man whether, wife, companion or beloved is actually to be denied individuality as a human being. And in spite of the romantic vigour of these poets, their conception of woman registered slight, if any, change from the medieval Punjabi poet’s view of a woman as a vessel of passion, emotionally confused and morally unstable."18

She never strives for a wholeness or identity which coincides with an impossible or sentimentally achieved self-sameness. She knows that she will have to struggle for any kind of human freedom in the male dominated world:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{मैं} & \text{ झी सं } \text{ हिंदी हिंदुमत चं} \\
\text{अलामपहिं लं टेबल हिंदी खेल चं हिंदुमत चं}, \\
\text{हिंदी जगन लं हिंदुमत चं} \\
\text{मे भी भीती दे भीती हैं छाते सज्ज भी।}
\end{align*}
\]
में कहीं भी नीचों भलसुब मही।

विकल्प रहे मे धुःध, किवडी दिलसल डूंगे मे जीवी
पेटिल्लर तथा धीर वचन ती सब टूट जाने मे अने
तत्काल हिंसा मे पुल ते चांदी चैदूँ भी मही।
में कहीं भी नीचों भलसुब मही।

मे धरीधर ता दिव सहम रहे, मे खेल रहे मे से सिमन रहे
मे हुस्मर रहे धुःध संभ ता मे मे में की खेली जोड़ी
मे में की हूँ देवत 'वे महाभाव दिव में की जोड़ी।

अवशंसक मे सहम रहे दिव थुः दिव पेट दे दिव पल्ला,
अवशंसक से चमक दे चेहरे मे चमका
सह तां धीर सहब रहे मे
अवशंसक चीने में बैठी हूँ मे दिव सम पूर भी मही।
में कहीं भी नीचों भलसुब मही।

(Main bhi taan ik insaan haan)
Aazaadiaan di takkar vich us satt daa nishaan haan ,
Us haadse daa chinh haan
Jo meri maan de mathe utte lagnaa zaroor si.
Meri maan di kuhk mazboor si.

Dhirkar haan main oh, jehdi insaan utte pae rahi
Paedaash haan us waqt di jad tutt rahe si tare
Jad bujh reha si suraj te chand vi benoor si.
Meri maan di kuhk mazboor si.

Main khareend haan us zakham daa, main dhabba haan maan
de jism daa

36
Main zulam haan oh bojh haan jo maan meri dhondi rahi
Maan meri nu pate chon sarriaand ik aaundi rahi.

Kaun jaan sakda hai kitna ku mushkil hai
Aakhir de zulam nu ik pate de ik paalna,
Angaan nu jhulsna te haddaan nu baalna
Fal haan us waqt daa main
Aazaadi diaan beriaan nu pai reha jad boor si.
Meri maan di kukh mazboor si)

There is something of the pain here which defines her subject-position in the singularity of her own situation as a woman. As Attar Singh says, "This is not just feminism that one could have imported from abroad. It is much deeper and much more human in depth than that, located as it is in the very traumatic experience of the partition of the Punjab."\(^{20}\)

But it was the horrifying event of Partition which was articulated in her most famous poem, "Aakhan Waris Shah Nu" (To Waris Shah) that changed the tone not only of her poetic voice but also of the voice of Punjabi poetry itself which had not till then recognized its difference, lost as it was in an imported Modernism, which reduced it to either formal experimentalism or programmatic Progressivism. She invokes the great Punjabi poet Waris Shah who had once voiced the pain of a daughter of Punjab, Heer, in his epical poem 'Heer Waris Shah':

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Meri maan di kukh mazboor si) (To Waris Shah)}
\end{align*}
\]
(Ajj aakhaan Waris Shah nu kiton kabraan vichon bol!
Te ajj kitaabe ishq daa koi aglaa varkaa fol!
Ik roi si dhee Punjab di tun likh likh mare vain
Ajj lakhaan dhaiaan rondiaan tainu Waris Shah nu kehn:
Ve dardmandaa dea dardiaa! uth tak apna Punjab
Ajj bele laashaan vichiaan te lahoo di bhari Chenab
Kisen e panjaan paanian vich ditti zeher ralaa
Te unhaan paanian dhart nu ditta paani laa
Is zarkhez Zameen de loon loon futea zeher
Gith gith chariaan laaliaan fut fut chara keher
Veho valissi vaa fir van van vaggi jaan
Ohne har ik vaans di vanjhni ditti naag banaa
Pehlaa dang maddariaan mantr gae guaach
Dooje dang di lagg gai jane khane nu laag
Laagaan keele lok-mooh bas fir dang hi dang
Palo pali Punjab de neele pae gae angg .
Galeon tutte geet fir trakkleon tutti tand
Trinjhan tuttiaan saheliaan charakhdeon tutti tand
Sane saej de bediaan ludhan dittiaan rohr
Sane daaliaan peengh aij pipplaan ditti tod
Jithe vajdi si fook pyaar div e oh vanjhli gai guaach
Raanjhe de sabh veer aj bhul gae ohdi jaach
Dharti te lahoo vasea kabraan paiaan chon
Preet diaan shehzaadian aj vich mazaaraan ron
Aj sabhe kaido ban gae husn ishq de chor
Aj kithon liaiye labh ke Waris Shah ik hor
Aj aakhaan Waris Shah nu tunhein kabraan vichon bol !
Te aj kitaabe ishq da koi aglaa varkaa fol !)

It is here that the Punjabi poetry takes a turn towards the postmodern problematization of the boundary between the history and fiction as the writing of an event, a singularly lasting trauma of a horrifying moment. Where shall the present generation read this defining moment of their cultural and political legacy in a history or in a poetry? Has not the history of the event, the event of the history, already become a fiction which is getting lost even as a memory in the larger text of culture increasingly being overwritten by a simulacral consumerism? Has not the unwriteable
moment of 1947 been appropriated as a consumerist material for popular films and histories. What opens our memory to the singular trace of that wounded moment more than Amrita's poem? Was it any less ruthless or barbarous for us than the Auschnitz after which, for Adorno, no poetry is possible. Is not Amrita's poem our best possibility of not losing the trace of that wound from our cultural memory? Is not the divide between the reality and representation, the event and the text, a little less blurred here than it is in fictional, filmic or historical accounts like Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan'. Do we not want just textual or simulacral reminders of Partition to display our moral indignation and relegate our socio-political responsibility to a cosmetic remembrance of our history? We clap our way into and out of the theatres of history without letting the trace of a wounded moment intersect the real body and text of our lives. Amrita's poem is the very voice of this concern that the singular trace of this wound might get lost among the thousands of holocausts history never cares to keep the memory of. Perhaps only poetry is possible after the Auschnitz, perhaps only poetry can be the possibility of keeping the memory of such a pain alive. When such a pain has become mixed up with the very texture of life, the textuality of a poem is nothing more than the cinders which can still burn the heart with the memory of that pain:

\[
\text{Ik darad si} - \\
\text{Jo cigarette di taraan main chupchap peeta hai} \\
\text{Sirf kujh nazamaan han-} \\
\text{Jo cigarette de naalon main rakh vaang jhaadiyan han)}
\]
This kind of rethinking of how the real pain of living can be translated into the text of a poem makes Amrita's poetry increasingly self-reflexive as she finds her body writing itself into the movement of various marks that the pen makes:

तत्पर, बदिं व्यक्ति द्वारा इन्हें ही हिंद बुद्धि भेंखी भाषा लेखन देंगे... वह बदिं, इन्हें केवल इन्हें बदल नहीं करती है उस व्यक्ति द्वारा इन्हें ही हिंद शृंगार मिला अवस्‌स्य है अपवाद बेंखी भाषान भेंखी होचन है उस चमक तो हिंद भी अवश्य लेखन देंगी... वह बदिं अंततः बदली हुई हृदय संगीति, नया भरी ललकारे भेंखी द्वारा इन्हें देनी है चेती ते घटत इन्हें कल्याण ते है जहुति ते है इन्हें भीत ते है सही ते है तहेंति ते है भवं समय निःशुद्धि संग देंगी... विष्टि ते उदेष्ट गंगा जंगा विस्मय इश्वर भूषी जंगा इन्हे जंगा, इस्ते जीते जंगा इस्ते इश्वर भूषी अभिनव मुख्य वेष्ट है इस्ते इश्वर भूषी अभिनव मुख्य वेष्ट है इस्ते इश्वर भूषी अभिनव मुख्य वेष्ट है विनेश बख्ति वंच हिंद टेंट्टा लहेंति है... अभिनव विनेश बख्ति अभिनव टेंट्टा है इस्ते इश्वर इस्ते वंच हिंद टेंट्टा है विनेश बख्ति अभिनव टेंट्टा जंगा इस्ते इश्वर इस्ते वंच हिंद टेंट्टा है इस्ते इश्वर इस्ते वंच हिंद टेंट्टा है जंगा इश्वर इस्ते इश्वर इस्ते वंच हिंद टेंट्टा है इस्ते इश्वर इस्ते वंच हिंद टेंट्टा है इस्ते इश्वर इस्ते वंच हिंद टेंट्टा है जंगा इश्वर इस्ते इश्वर इस्ते वंच हिंद टेंट्टा है इस्ते इश्वर इस्ते वंच हिंद टेंट्टा है...
दिन में कर्म वक्ताओं के पत्रकारों ने की जीवन
मिलीं हिर्न हृदय चीज़ें ते हुए दिखाई नै दृष्टे...
छुट देंगे ते भोजन, भूषण मालाड़ी, बेल्ली, मेल्ली-
कि बेल्ली अपनीं योद्धा हैं, भूटा बेल्ली भ्रष्ट महिला हैं
लक्षित दिन तुम्हारी रा वार्ड-पाड हिंसा दी गौरा है...

(Nazam, kade kaagaz nu takke te inj muhn mor
Jeon kaagaz paraae mard hunda hai...
Par kade, ik kanjak jeon karve daa vart rakhdi hai
Te us raat us nu ik supnaa jehaa aundaa hai
Achaanak koi mardaavan angg chondaa hai
Te supne de vich vi ohda badan kambdaa hai...
Par kade agg chatdi oh trabhak jaandi, jag paindi
Gadraae angaan nu tohndi
Choli de batan kholdi
Chaanani de bukk pinde te paandi
Te pindaa nachordi daa hathh sisk jeha jaanda hai...

Pinde daa hanera chattaai vaang vichdhaa
Oh moodhi chattaai utte letdi, ohde teele toddi
Te ohdaa angg angg sulag paindaa hai
Te ohnu jaapda, ohde pinde daa haneraa
Kise balwaan nu baanh vich tutnata chahundaa hai...

Achaanak ik kaagaz agaanh hundaa hai
Te us de kambde hathhaan nu chohnda hai
Ik angg baldaa hai, ik angg pighaldaa hai
Te oh ik ajnabi hawaarh sunghdi hai

42
The ever-continuing search for meaning & identity even in the face of their obvious impossibility led Modernist poets like Mohan Singh to construct binary polarities of self and society, history and fiction and reality. Both fiction and history are received as textual representations of a socio-political culture. The master narrative of Modernism has made the distinctions look so real that it disturbs us to see the increasing blurring of these genres. The rethinking of norms (as also of the norms of thinking) has to take place in the alternative, non-rational discourses. Poetry liberates itself from the risk of its own institutionalization by means of a built-in irony. Punjabi poetry too was earlier caught up into these binary structures and leveling of all difference. Modernist poetry found its Progressive and revolutionary phases complicitous in maintaining the metaphysics of transcendental signified, the closed territories of 'history', 'society' and 'selfhood':

शेव चढी ता अटरिभ्या टिटित्तम दरः,  
टिव धरिभ्या राम दरः, टिव भस्म दरः।
रात्रि के बाधे ज़ल्दिया पड़ा, 
बरकानी मुंहड़े लिखित हुआ।
हुएं थे निर्मल चेहरे नजर आ गए, 
बल स्थिति थे निर्मित सपना न दिखा।
जात दिक्षा थे जोने जीवन टेंशन, 
लगती थी मिलनी तेंजड़े।

रात्रि का पूर्णांक हिंदी सा दिखा 
दिख निर्दिष्ट भयातर हूँ हिंदी सा दिखा।

रेखा मिलबान खिचारे खिमटे, 
बेखर खिंटे रमण औंटे, खिमटे।

(Rathth kadi na atkeaa itihaas daa,
Ik paheea naa daa, ik aas daa.

Bhoot de kale hanere paarrdaa,
Vartmaani chaanane lateaarrdaa.
Yuggaan ton eh rathth chaldaa aa rehaa,
Vall bhavish de nitt vadhda jaa rehaa.
Raat dehon de ghore rehnde daurrde,
Jaan jivan dee samiggree jorrde.

Kaal daa raththvaan hikki jaa rehaa
Ik ik ghatnaa nu tikki jaa rehaa.
Lakhaan sabheaa chaar uggde nisarde,
Fer mitde naas hunde, visarde)

It is a meaningful fiction of the chariot of history set into motion, by a hidden negative force, on the twin wheels of hope, its obstruction leaving
in its wake the growth and decay of a million cultures. The wall of belief was only what stood between the dream and realization of a perfect society.

The history, the story of this struggle must be rewritten, so that one could see the 'underlying health' of a social structure better; the 'signifier' must truly present the 'signified', history must never be allowed to dissolve into the chaos of chance and deviant discourse. There is, however, some skepticism of fear about the appropriation of poetic irony by ideology for the perpetration of Modernist narrative. The boundary between appearance and reality, fiction and history is fast disappearing before the hyperreality of wilful play of provisional meanings and truths in a society of signs and simulacra. The poetic discourse is under no 'illusions' about its own ability to represent the essence of society and its historical promise and possibilities. These constructs are maintained by a structure of language whose metaphorical and metonymic character is always already destabilizing every notion and system. Can we re-involve, re-create the past in its truth and entirety. Perhaps we can only represent it selectively,
partially. History must acknowledge its own rhetorical and formative character, the functionality of its reconstruction if it has to be useful in reinterpreting our present.

This skepticism gets 'bolder' enough, in Pattar's poetry, to announce, perhaps under the Postmodernist impact of Fukwyama, the death of history and its accompanying constructs:

```plaintext
तिहेय तै विकल्पम दूः
छिन विचिन दूः भव विनाम
अदाल विद्वान वल विनाम
तुम विनाम दे बन विनाम

सिमटा जान मै धम हूः

छौं धवली देव विनाम
सं जीवन विवे नह विनाम
सं धर्मव दे चन्द्र विनाम

ध दे घटना लेखना
दे विनाम हे मान्यम दूः

विम बचत दे आ विनाम
बेंडुः दे सं जलत दे
सं दे पेल्लक आ विनाम
बेंडुः घुड़ सिद्धः विनाम

विवशे विवे विनाम
बेंडुः दे विवशे विनाम

सं दे वासुकं छें विनाम
उमे दे विन दुक विनाम
सं जापट दे मैठ दे
```

46
अगर चन्द दे पला हूँ

सं। बिह बिवहति तताति दे
भवानि दे बिवह भवानि दे

तीर्थ निविध जाति दे
सब भिगन्ति दे भवानि दे

मथ सैकिवा उद्व दे
थे बिलग बंड धण्डा हूँ

सं। बिस्ते तुम देश दे
थे 'इं सलिबा' देश दे
हुआ बिष बंडे धर्मां

सं। वे रत्न हुम्हावरा
बदव-बदी दे बांधटे
तालं पूण ईंधनां
सं। चौहान दे बिलां
मध्य बुड़ी दे तुर्क दिश
मध्य विषमिध हर लाक 'इं बंदि

सं। वे चपूर दुर्वमं वे
केंद्र विष पत्रकाण दे
एवं दे भुज अरक दे
बाहुभान बैंधवे भिन्नता की
बलात्ते दे अक्षम हूँ

सं। रि मथ तुषात बर्तमा
ब्राह्मण दे असाम्य हूँ
ठेबढ़ दे सवब्रव दान
भवभ महुवह दान
अपनें भरे विख्यात रा
ठे डुडिवर्दे रा राम हुई

किसे की दिलिगम हुई २५

(किथन हाईं इतिहास तौँ
ओ केहन्दे तौँ मर गेया
आतम हातेरा कर गेया
रूस दिग्गन तों दर गेया

जिझा यार सैं खास तौँ
क्होन्जीन खार्ली वारर गीए
जान बेठरा भीर रल गीए
जान परबत ते चार गीए

पा के बाँना गेरूरा
लई ले आई सैना सैं तौँ

किस वाहन मे आ रहान
काँच्छु ते जान गरार ते
जान के पाईडल आ रहान
कंडान चुब्ब लांग्रा रहान

किध्रे पिच्छे रेर गीए
ठाक्क के किध्रे बेह गीए

जान के रस्ता भूल गीए
हानेरे दे वीर रुल गीए

जान राकत ते बाईथ के
Pahuncheaa rabb de paas tun

Jaan fir kidhre nagan ho
Agni de vich agan ho
Neela nimbal gagan ho
Jal prithvi te pawan ho
Sabh janzeeraan torr ke
Ho geaa band khalaas tun
Jaan kidhdhre rooh posh ho
Hos ch lukeaa hosh ho
Luk chip bachche paaldaan
Jaan ke nazam udeekdaa
Waqt-kati de vaaste
Gazallaan baith uleekdaan
Jaan deewaana ho geaan
Beh toorri de kup vich
Yaar bilaawal khan ch jeon
Jaan ke bahut udaas ho
Labh rehaa dharvaas ho
Dar te khadhaa akaal de
Gurmukh pyaare Milan di
Kardaa hain ardaas tun
Jaan ke sabh kujh jaandaa
Ho geaa hai anjaan tun

49
Naukar ho sarkaar daa
Khaadam shaahookaar daa
Aapne manon vikaar daa
Ho chukkeaa e daas tun
Kithe hain itihaas tun?)

However, this kind of totalizing dismissal of the very possibility of history runs the risk of disavowing our own particular histories, the singularity of those wounded moments, of 1947 and 1984, whose memory can be saved from absolute amnesia induced by western consumerist discourse only by relocating, rearranging the dislocated lives, rearticulating the pains injected into our culture, bearing witness through the different writing of the wounds, the poems like 'Aakhan Waris Shah Nu (Amrita Pritam) and 'Rab Ni Kare Bhul Jayiye' (Pash). Pattar is simplifying the complex and extremely difficult-to-write history, poetry of wounds which one should not be lured into forgetting by the rhythmic and rhyming verses glorifying borrowed modernist aesthetic of 'negative theology', of death of all possibility of 'presence', 'reality', 'history' or even 'poetry' (which, according to Adorno, is a "barbaric" practice after the Auschwitz). The questions in the 'poem' are not the outcome of the memory of a ruthless barbarism which our own history has witnessed. Rather, they are in rhetorical consonance with Fukuyama's declaration of the "end of history" after which the "struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands".27
It was really by signing himself as a writer of 'ghazal' that Pattar not only himself made a dramatically fresh entry on the scene of Punjabi Poetry but breathed freshness into the popular sub-genre of poetry, the 'ghazal', too, requires much more craftsmanship, virtuosity, and mastery over metre than the sonnet. Pattar sang himself into the hearts of millions of readers when he uttered with an intensity hitherto unheard in Punjabi ghazal some questions which every honest intellectual, poet, artist or worker was posing to himself in those days after finding her day of hard-won freedom from British Imperialism darkened by the clouds of a 'desi' version of the same capitalism in the robes of a 'secular', 'democratic' nationalism:

तुड़ बिंग उं जोड़कर लौगा किन्ने ।
पूछ दिया उं ममलफ वी बदलतो ।
जीढ़ ची भें दिम रजर ने उं ती कादी ।
में नीठा में कुन विख्य मातड़तो ।

दिम भरत से 'द बैंटे विख्य ते कादी ।
बँक़े उदात्त उर्वरिज उदात्त शव बादे ।
उसे देखं तुं दुःख खले भरी समस्त गुड़ ।
मिठा बने खेल खेले भाले जितीलो ।

पाष भें तुं दिम भर ते भल कादे ।
विन में देखं दे कुंड द फटभंगा गोट ।
ते में सुध दी दिनग ते में कुंड द दिंग ।
बट ते दुःख मत ब्रदवल्ले बदलतो ।
से फटभंग 'छ गुड़े दे बैली कुली ।
पूछ नाथे दिम भरलटो अर्थे कुली ।
तुड़ उं मेंटवल्लो भं दे मिठे दी अवाल ।
भेंती बसल दे तुड़ ठेड ता माटटोली ।
वी फिर फिराने ज्यौंभे से पुछ बच्ची
वी हिर बनिएँ घेरत ले गुड़ बच्चे
से महीने ने टेंटी हे थपटे तटी
कप पट्टों लो कुड़ कुड़ टड़टड़े २८
(Kuch kehaa taan haneraa jaregaa kiven
Chupp rehhaa taan shamaadaan ki kehnge
Geet di maut is raat je ho gae
Meraa jeenaa mere yaar kinj sehnge

Is adaalat ch bande birkh ho gae
Faisle sundeaan sundeaan sukk gae
Aakho enanh nu ujjde ghareen jaan hun
Eh kadon teek ethe khade rehenge

Yaar mere ju is aas te mar gae
Ke main unaahn de dukh daa banaavaangaa geet
Je main chup hi rehhaa je main kuch naa kehaa
Ban ke roohaan sadaa bhatakde rehnge
Jo badesaan ch rule de ne rozee laee
Oh jadon des partange aapne kadee
Kuch taan sekange maan de sive di agan
Baaki kabraan de rukh heth jaa behnge

Ki eh insaaf haumai de putt karnge
Ki eh khaamosh paththar de butt karnge
Jo saleeabaan te tange ne lathne nahi
Raaj badlange sooraj charhan lehnge)
Here we have a poem which has a canonical status in the history of Punjabi poetry. The Punjabi poet, in the grip of revolutionary fervour, had to respond to the call of the moment to reflect and alter the social reality, to confront and rewrite the moment as essentially political.

Every poem that was written then would be measured against the metanarrative of a more or less borrowed Marxism. This poem marked the signature of another poet, of another sub-genre of poetry as well, on the overtly politically oriented text of what is generally called the ultra-leftist phase of Punjabi poetry. Hitherto, the ghazal had not lent itself to be appropriated for the political purpose as it was still carrying the burden of its Romanticist legacy. Borrowed as it was from Persian tradition via urdu the ghazal was still caught up into the style, tone and idiom of Urdu romanticist poetry which lent itself so invitingly to Formalist reading. This ghazal along with many others published in Pattar's first book, 'Hava Wich Likhe Haraf' was seen as marking a radical break with the earlier Punjabi ghazal in its complete subscription to a coherent, meaningful and unitary paradigm of Marxist poetry. However, read against the modernist norms of consistent meaning, thematic unity and the extra textual reality, the poem runs up against its own unacknowledged textuality:

Eh ju rangaan ch chittre ne khur jaange
Eh ju marmar ch ukkre ne mit jaange
Balde haththan ne jehde havaa vich likhe
Harf ohee hamesha likhe rehng

53
If Hava (wind) is taken as a metaphor for the movement of dark and immensely powerful forces of the capitalist system, any gesture against it must remain burning with an equally powerful question posed by the creative fire of a rebellious voice. Any other form of challenge would prove inaffective. For all their aesthetic value, the inscriptions and engravings lacking the necessary fire will be liable to eventual erosion by the pervasive ruthless violence of the wind.

But the certitude claimed by these lines, the lasting value of the letters inscribed in the wind by the burning hand, opens itself to a doubt (which is always already there as constitutive of the claimed certainty) much before the reader can grasp it to ignite her own revolutionary zeal. Its hope of becoming a revolutionary gesture against the all-pervasive power of the system is immediately undercut by the following lines:

Eh vi shaayad meraa aapnaa vehm hai  
Koi deeva jagegaa meri kabar te  
Je havaa eh rahi kabraan utte taan ki  
Sabh gharaan ch vi deeve bujhe rehng 

In the very moment of 'committing' itself to a hopeful search for a stable, radically alternative meaning, the poet despite himself, has to confront the futility of his passionate commitment, the impossibility of realizing his dream for a new permanent meaning. The flame of resistance will be blown out by the strong Hava (wind) even sooner than the reader
would have it registered on her mind. Even the memory of his signature will be erased, as the dominant discourse (ideology) will re-appropriate it into its self-serving aesthetic.

Neither is the poet able to circumscribe the semantic potential of the implicit metaphor of fire in the signifiers 'Balde' and 'Deeva'. Whereas within the context of this poem, the metaphor is on the 'right' side of the dichotomy between the fire and the wind, it crosses over to the other ('wrong') side in the preceding poem in the same book:

(Balda birkh haan, khatam haan, bas shaam teek haan  
Fir vi kise bahaar di kardaa udeek haan  
Agg daa safaa hai us te main fullaan dee satar haan  
Oh behas kar rahe ne galt haan ke theek haan)

Clearly the metaphor of fire signifies just the opposite of what it does in the above discussed poem by occupying the unprivileged position in the binary opposition between fire and flowers structuring, and also limiting, the semantic field of the poem.

On the other hand, it is precisely because of this co-existence of contradictory truths and the inherent though unintended irony of its textual nature that the poem continues to be popular and 'meaningful' well beyond its origin within a historical and political context. It has powerfully resisted the single meaning demanded of it as an intervention in the political text of
the time and has lent itself to a history of new readings in new contexts and intertexts. Its aporetic moments and intertextual potential make it irreducible to any hermeneutic reading within a given theoretical paradigm.

Written as an inscription in a particular historical moment of poetry's commitment to a political program, the poem stages the implicit revolt of the signifier trying to break free from its (forced) commitment to the signified.

The less 'popular ghazals' in the book are, however quite important as an intertext which serves to prolong the movement of the signifiers like 'Hava' before they can hope to glimpse the horizon of the final signified they are journeying toward. It is this unintended inter text of other poems in the same book which undermines the intended thematic coherence and the seriousness of the search for an extra textual meaning. The overall semantic 'discourse' available in Pattar's book is quite inconsistent with the way this poem has generally been read by the critics till now:

\[
\text{Shehar de harfaan nu hi karde rahe oh theek} \\
\text{Shehar vich vadhdaa geaa maili nadee daa shor}
\]

That is what exactly the poet (Pattar) himself does: refining, correcting the letters, syllables, meterical arrangements. He admits it too

\[
\text{Ik bansaree dee hake kee nadii nu rokdee} \\
\text{Nadii daa kehdaa jor see nadii daa tor te}
\]
The signifiers, like 'rivers', are in no position to control their own movement, their own flow of signification, no 'signified' has the power to stop this movement. Even the notes of a flute, the melody of a rhythm, the power of poet's sweet intention, cannot arrest the endless flow of signifiers into changing, constantly shifting patterns of signification. The will-to-power of the poet cannot master the textuality of the poem, the intertextual field of its units, its appropriation by the other unanticipated contexts.

The poet here is extending the genre of ghazal (where each two lines of verse can be treated as a poem in its own right even if it contradicts or does not connect with the rest of the ghazal) to its postmodern limits. While it attempts to integrate the formal continuity with thematic consistency, the very failure of the attempt constitutes the success of the poem through a double bind: The ghazal reasserting its structural self-destruction (constitutive of its very mode of existence as a sub-genre) against its attempted appropriation into self-constitutive thematic unity of the 'nazam', a kind of poem which does not violate the Modernist norm of semantic coherence. This playing of the ghazal and the nazam within the same poem structures the poem by, paradoxically, destabilizing the very structural norms governing both the sub-genres. This realization of the structurally inherent semantic potential of the ghazal signs another non-western sub-text as pushing the postmodern yet further towards the pre-modern, for the ghazal has been a popular form of poetry since the medieval times in Persian and Urdu literature. Even in the history of Punjabi poetry, the postmodern turn can be located as far back as 1960s, much before the literary theory had turned postmodern. One can read the postmodern in Shiv Batalvi's poetry, beginning with a popular poem in the form of a Punjabi song in 1961.
References

2. *Ibid*, p. 124
4. *Ibid*, pp. 79-83
8. *Ibid*, p. 40
10. Attar Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 116
12. Attar Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 188
13. *Ibid*
17. Ibid, pp. 187-88
18. Attar Singh, op.cit., p. 127
20. Attar Singh, op.cit., p. 130
22. Ibid, p. 201
23. Ibid, p. 220
24. Mohan Singh, op.cit., p. 90
25. Ibid, p. 68
29. Ibid, p. 28
30. Ibid
31. Ibid, p. 26
32. Ibid, p. 30
33. Ibid, p. 34