

Jugni, Dhola and Mahiya: Comparing three Genres of Punjabi Folklore

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Abstract

Among the amazing variety of forms of poetic expression by the folk of the Punjab region, this essay has selected three genres: *mahiya*, *dhola* and *jugni*. The study is meant to compare these three genres of Punjabi folklore, in their evolution, structure, expression and themes. The study finds that the three genres are very old in time origin and tracing their exact origins in history is impossible, only few hints are available. Their structures are variable, as *mahiya* has a fixed structure, *dhola* has rather loose structure giving more freedom to the singer-poet, and *jugni* has a specific meter in certain lines, but it has freedom to repeat some lines for perfect expression of the melody. The structures in fact follow the tunes, distinct for each genre. Three genres have many themes common, but *jugni* has spirituality as dominant theme, *dhola* has expression of love as dominant theme and *mahiya* has now become quite inclusive, but it originated as expression of love and it still retains that character in its core. The folk heart of Punjab has endeared these three genres so much that these are appreciated far and wide in original tunes, but new experiments of tunes and themes are also underway. Being a true mirror of simple unsophisticated villagers these folk songs would lose popularity if these villagers become sophisticated hence the need for their preservation is highlighted in this study.

Keywords: Folklore, Punjab, Jugni, Dhola, Mahiya, Saving folklore

*Culture is greater than the law
Culture is greater than the power
Culture is our lifestyle and our favourite character, too
(Uxi Mufti)¹*

Introduction

Folk are the simple unsophisticated villagers, unpretentious, living close to the natural environment, and dealing with emergent issues of life according to their own devices. In doing so, they use old transmitted knowledge from their ancestors and devise new solutions, too. They

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¹ Uxi Mufti, *Pakistani Saqafat* (Lahore: Al-Faisal, 2014), 212.

create folklore, which has to be defined, at the outset, because it has been declared as ‘a slippery term to define’. There had been no doubt about its being a part of ‘traditional culture’, so it had been conveniently labelled by modern minds as ‘related to the “by-gones”, or something of ‘popular antiquities’. The term ‘folk-lore’ was introduced in 1846 by the English scholar William J. Thoms. It was taken as a suitable label by the contemporary scholars as being ‘a proper name’ to be put on research into the vernacular tales, customs, and beliefs, felt to be in danger of vanishing.² Thoms has explained folklore as generally being;

‘understood to be a spectrum of human expressions and ways of living--the artistic ways of interacting with other people and generating creative forms in language, work, food, play, dance, song, gestures, beliefs, and so forth. Folklore may be seen as the products of human work and thought that have developed within a limited community and that are communicated directly from generation to generation, usually orally, with the author/creator unknown.’³

The Institute of Folk Heritage set up in Islamabad has conceived folklore as: centuries old traditions, transmitted from generation to generation, including orally transmitted literature, creation of people’s feeling, a part of collective consciousness, giving identity to the group, encompassing the whole spectrum of life, mostly un-written, even if it is written it is popular and learnt by heart by the commoners, reflecting the spontaneous genius of people, with incremental growth.⁴ Moreover the folklore is essentially an ingredient of history of a people, rather it reflects people’s reaction to historical currents, and stories of heroes of the people.⁵

Characteristics of folklore include a strong message of resistance as well, because folklore ‘has been used as a tool of consciousness-raising and consensus-building in a wide range of social movements and anti-colonial struggles’.⁶ The same is true for the folklore of Pakistan, especially of the Punjab because it had a long time of interaction and struggle against British colonialism. At the individual level, the history

² ‘About Folklore’, Centre of Folklore Studies, The Ohio State University, USA. Available at: <https://cfs.osu.edu/about/resources/folklore>

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Mazhar-ul-Islam, *Folklore ki Pehli Kitab* (Islamabad: Institute of Folk Heritage, 1977), 4-7.

⁵ Shafiq Ahmed Aziz, *Adab, Lok Geet aur Kahaniyan* (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 1983), 12-17.

⁶ *Ibid.*

of Punjab, full of invasions from outsiders and wars from within, consolidated resistance to authority and oppression in the collective and individual psyche. The folklore of Punjab has thus preserved such memories and people's reaction as well.

About Punjab it is said by a folklorist of Pakistan that: 'Punjab is like an extended long melody, having diverse moods, and Sufi mood is hanging above all, which is composed of dwelling in deserts, tenacious labour and the humming sound of spinning wheel. It has the warmth of breaths of Baba Farid Shakarganj, echoes of utterances by Bulhe Shah, Waris Shah, Ghulam Farid, Sachal and Bahu. All these are ingrained in its construction and temperament'.⁷ This assertion can be proved only by enlisting the variety of folk songs and song-like literary creations.

Distinct forms of folklore in Punjabi

There is amazing variety of forms of expression by the folk of the Punjab region. These include: mahiya, dhola, jugni, chhalla, suran, dohaday, see-harfi, kafi, war, loriyan, Jhoke, thaal, satwar, trinjan, baran mah, jindri, and bujharatain (riddles). Another set of songs include: ghand, jaga, sithniyan, ghorian, chhund, sehra, suhag, shahanay, which are types of songs of marriage functions). Then there are boliyan, akhaan, tappay⁸ and many more. They are sung in distinct tunes, a testimony to the creative genius of plain folk. Among these *mahiya*, *dhola* and *jugni* are three prominent genres selected for comparison in the current study.

Mostly women and children are involved in creating and promoting daily life songs or song-like phrases, couplets, etc. They sing in groups while men sing alone. Mahiya and dhola have the 'expression of love' by women for men, in particular, and the words mahiya and dhola are profusely used to address 'the beloved', 'the sweetheart'. Men usually sing mahiya, tappay, dholay, jugni, and heer. Perhaps, in no other language of the world the whole idea is conveyed in one single line, but this is the quality of mahiya. For instance: 'Two leaves of pomegranate; on listening to my anguish even the pebbles of mountains start crying'. And see: 'I have a pair of fans in my hand; you are not only my mahi but a light to my eyes as well'. Then look at this dhola: 'A cucumber is sold

⁷ Mazhar-ul-Islam, *Lok Punjab* (Islamabad: Institute of Folk Heritage, 1977), 454.

⁸ 'Tappay' is another genre, which is in the style of mahiya, but in some areas of Punjab it is called mahiya-tippa, and that's how they are sung. Tappa has also its unique tune, hence cannot be confused with any other form.

in the bazar; in which street is your home, my heart wants to know, O' dhola.⁹

The selected genres of mahiya, dhola and jugni are very popular forms of folk songs in the Punjab, the largest province of Pakistan. These three genres are very old, even no one can detect how old they are. These are sung on various occasions, ranging from ordinary functions of a poor household marriage, to get a feel of 'indigenous, raw, and exotic' in the high culture.

Rationale of the study

First of all 'no one can get at proper comprehension of a people's true spirit until they look into the folklore, Sufi poetry, folk songs and folk stories, as these are true basis of our culture;' asserts renowned folklorist, Uxi Mufti.¹⁰ The artistic achievements of the centuries of human history in the land of Pakistan, are a part of global cultural heritage, as well as a proud asset of our ancestors, deserving respect and promotion.¹¹ Second reason is the attitude of contempt, neglect, and devaluation of the 'oral and unwritten' text, not meeting Persian standards, in a plain rather crude language, while the folklore is more powerful, genuine, garden-fresh, expansive and impressive than the standardized manuscripts of the classic origin.¹² The third reason to do so is fast fading of the 'folk culture' in the face of rush of cultural globalization, as well as economic and political globalization processes. This diminishing status and role of our folklore was no way an inevitable outcome of socio-historical transformation, rather it is happening due to our ignorance, popularizing of urban values, and neo-colonial pursuits. Our urban intellectuals are easily attracted by emergent imported modern movements and start condemning the folk cultural values, thus leave them to perish ultimately undetected.¹³

Though the latest global age technologies are greatly helpful in preservation task, yet if the people gradually drift away from the folklore, then the preserved material would be available in the archives and museums only confirming the fading assertion. When one argues that 'folk is product of natural human emotions, spontaneity and urge to express one's heart out' the forecast of its extinction seems faulty, yet the

⁹ Shafiq Ahmed Aziz, 118-9.

¹⁰ Uxi Mufti, *Pakistani Saqafat*, 106.

¹¹ Shafiq Ahmed Aziz, 23.

¹² Qamar Raees, *Urdu main Lok Adab* (Lahore: Fiction House, 2019), 12-13.

¹³ Farigh Bukhari, *Sarhad kay Lok Geet* (Islamabad: Institute of Folk Heritage, 1987), 11-12.

inclination and trend of modernization has the power to devour up the ‘folklore’. This is asserted on the basis of the fact that *chopals* (community gathering place) and leisure activities of the yore are no more seen in that pristine form now. The process has started with the increased physical mobility of people from rural homes to the cities and foreign lands. The agricultural mechanization pushed out the surplus labour force to other modern sectors of the economy. Information technology has provided an efficient outlet for information, communication and recreation. Old age wisdom transmitted through the white-haired elders at home and community gatherings is now considered irrelevant. The singers and composers have also migrated to more lucrative sectors, offering more opportunities, or they have left their hereditary occupations. Though optimistically we can assert that ‘folk’ would stay until the plain ‘folk’ (simple people) are living, yet their economic hubs in remote areas are also being integrated into modern economy. Such an encroachment on ‘heritage’ is a crisis felt all around the over world.

In Pakistan, folklorist Uxi Mufti has been writing on this issue at length.¹⁴ Not only preservation, but comprehension and research on the worth and applicability of the folklore in present day Pakistani society is truly a felt need, hence this research, which is a part of the Pakistan Study Centre’s ongoing project on ‘Oral Cultures of Pakistan’.

Research question

To compare three genres of Punjabi folklore: *mahiya*, *dhola* and *jugni*, in their evolution, structure, expression and themes.

Methodology

There are certain collections available in print and digital form made especially to preserve the fading folk heritage. The samples of jugni, mahiya-dhola are taken from the following printed and digital sources:

- i. Mazhar-ul Islam, *Lok Punjab* (Islamabad: Institute of Folk Heritage, 1978).
- ii. Aslam Jadoon, *Mahayiey* (Islamabad: Institute of Folk Heritage, 1977)
- iii. <http://punjabiandpunjab.com/Punjabi/Mahiya/Mahiya-1.html>
- iv. <http://www.bollymeaning.com/2012/06/dum-gutkoon-jugni-ji-cocktail-lyrics.html>
- v. <http://sufiekalam.blogspot.com/2019/01/punjabi-lyrics-with-english-and-hindi.html>

¹⁴ Uxi Mufti, *Pakistani Saqafat*.

- vi. Video recording, available at youtube and internet
- vii. <https://aliimmam.com/2015/02/09/chambe-di-booti-lyrcis-with-english-translation/>
- viii. www.punjnud.com
- ix. Text of *jugni, mahiya & dhola* available at different websites.

These genres are compared and presentation is made in mostly English translation. At times original text is quoted to enhance the effect and give the true feeling for those who can read and understand the text.

Evolution

Folk literatures of Pakistani languages were gradually created over a long period of time. It can be asserted that folklore started from the day the humans started uttering meaningful words, so ‘O God’, or ‘O my love’ emerged from the deep seated emotions of human beings. Due to common human psyche and geographical proximity, there is commonality in the folk songs of the Pakistani languages.

The processes rooted in regional history and specific emotional and social background have been involved in the formation of their different genres. For instance about forced recruitment in the British colonial army, during the World Wars, the rural women’s wailing have been expressed in mahiya very well. Such as:¹⁵

- There are chambers in the walls; beware O German, the mothers have raised these [soldiers] from a tender baby size [to this strong body that you are going to destroy in war].
- ‘The tree full of ripe mangoes; my moon (*mahi*) has gone to *laam* (recruitment), so oppressive rule is that of the British’.

Mahiya and dhola are both very old forms of expression in Punjabi poetry. According to Hashmi, mahiya was a name of a lover in Pothohar many centuries back, and similar stories are found in Gujrat. So the name came from persons.¹⁶ Dhola is kind of band on men’s arm apparently used for protection (amulet), and this band had a type of decoration in the shape of drum (*dhole*), so gradually such a name was popularized for the male beloved and also for the genre expressing love for him. Both the names are understood to be very old form of short love songs.

The cultural environment of the region, the collective temperament of the nation, the tribal and familial character and traditions, as well as their cultural ethos, have contributed to various

¹⁵ Aslam Jadoon, 17.

¹⁶ Hameedullah Shah Hashmi (Dr), *Punjabi Adab di Tarikh* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Bashir and Sons, n.d.), 213.

stages of evolution. Even the geographical and climatic features of these areas have been prominently reflected in their cultures.¹⁷

Springing from this, the customs and norms of livelihoods have also played a role in the formation of their worldviews. It is confirmed by a renowned critic of literature that ‘the specific geographical conditions and the specific cultural, and socioeconomic environment that results from them are instrumental in the creation of literary genres.’¹⁸

Jugni: According to the research by Devander Satiarthhi, Ram Saran Das and Snawar Chadharr, it is confirmed that jugni is an old form of folk song, existing in the early 20th century, though its origin is old but is not traceable. In the start of 20th century it was fairly popular, as evidence was provided in research by people who:

‘... had heard Jugni in the first decade of the last century when the Golden Jubilee of the Queen was celebrated throughout India. There were two singer-poets Mahnda of Hasanpur in Amritsar district and his partner Bishna also from Majha area. They were folk singers and on the Jubilee they staged their show wherever in Punjab the Jubilee Torch travelled.’¹⁹

When Bishna and Majha turned hostile to the British they changed the name of Jubilee to Jugni, and surely they sang songs of resistance, because they were later killed by the police. Yet the jugni style was widely popularized because of their art.²⁰ According to Afzal Pervaiz’s book *Bann Phulwari*, ‘jugni was perhaps a character from folk story perhaps heroine of Jugni-Rawa’. That shows that Jugni is popular name of an old folksong genre which provides a chance for all those who have talent to compose more lines and add to that’.²¹ This description reveals that jugni has an over a century long history, and the name ‘jugni’ has an element of resistance, as well as of a love story. The jugni character was a female, so it is treated grammatically in feminine gender.

History and conceptualization associated with the word ‘jugni’ reveal more. According to Mazhar ul Islam, jugni is a multilayered metaphor, taking a seeker to the core of its ‘spirit’. It is a spirit of a Sufi,

¹⁷ Qamar Raees, 6.

¹⁸ Mujtaba Hussain, *Tehzeeb o Tehreer* (Karachi: Muktaba-e Afkar, 1967), 140.

¹⁹ *Dawn*, 14 November 2010, available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/581775/jugni-whose-creation>

²⁰ *Ibid.* This episode needs further authentication through research, which the sources known to the author are unsure.

²¹ *Ibid.*

rather all Sufis passed away so far, now living in this world putting their actions in practice, persuading others to follow the same path of divine love, seeking the eternal light. The word jugni is like female firefly in local language, hence it refers to light, guidance, power, life, in short a perfect 'jugni' reflects the spiritual series of holy men of Allah, as well as a reference point of social reform, a mission of the Sufis in their life. Jugni is a unique concept immensely helpful in comprehending the mood and temperament of the Punjab.²²

Structure

a. Meter and rhyming

Any song or musical expression is enriched immensely if it has rhyming effect. This quality has been maintained in the three genres very particularly.

- **Jugni:** It has an abundance of rhyming styles put together for composite effect at times, to give it musical appeal. Moreover, the same lines are repeated to enhance the effect. Examples are available in the video/audio recording available at the internet, and some example is given in this essay as well.
- **Mahiya and dhola:** Mahiya has a specific length, while dhola has variable length. Mahiya is formed by combining the word Mahi with the alphabet *alif* (sounding aa), which means: O my beloved, O gentleman, O companion, O Lover, etc. Mahiya consists of one and half line according to one concept,²³ while the other opinion is to describe it as of three lines,²⁴ or having two couplets, the first being meaningless and the second couplet used for regularity and rhythmic sound. Technically describing the structure, Tanvir Bukhari explains that mahiya might have three couplets and the prosody of the mahiya is:

فعلات مفاعيلن
 فعلات مفاعيلن
 فعلات مفاعيلن²⁵

Mahiya gradually and incrementally started incorporating new themes beyond expressions of love and complaints. Now it turned to relations,

²² This exquisite analysis is by Mazhar-ul Islam, *Lok Punjab*, 394-403.

²³ Arif Anjum, *Adab Nageenay* (Lahore: Jadeed Book Depot, n.d.).

²⁴ Aslam Jadoon, *Mahayiey* (Islamabad: Institute of Folk Heritage, 1977), 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

festivities, marriage and other celebrations, religious devotion and supplications, hence whole spectrum of life was absorbed by this genre.²⁶

It was also found that expression of love, naturally, cannot be restricted to women only, so men when singing mahiya, started expressing their own love for women, which of course added to the domain of mahiya without any corruption. 'Dialogue-style mahiya', are found in which both women and men sing alternatively and the 'love story' goes on.²⁷ No living genre can stay geared to its ancient style, if it has to keep pace with society, otherwise, it would become archaic, whereas its lyricists are unpretentious people, responding to life challenges every new morning.

b. Hybridizing the *mahiya* and *dhola*: Examples

Since both labels of *mahiya* (shortly *mahi*) and *dhola* are used for male beloved, there is no such scientific distinction followed in using them, rather true to the folk spontaneity in creative expression, both are used closely and interchangeably. For example:

Koi paani zamzam da dhola

Hik wari mil mahiya

Tainon wasta panjtan da

(O' *dhola*, there is water of zamzam, O' *mahiya*, come to see me at least once, I beg you in the name of five holy figures.)²⁸

This similar use, however, does not mean that two genres of *dhola* and *mahiya* are same. Both have 'love' as their central theme, but a lot more is integrated in the same story to convert a *mahiya* to a *dhola*. In Chiniot, for instance, people add few more lines to *mahiya*, thus making it a *dhola*.²⁹ Perhaps it is to allow full expression of message. This endorses what renowned Urdu poet, Amjad Islam Amjad, has said: 'Whatever exists there is an extension of Love'. So the whole world of emotions and philosophy of life resonate in both genres. *Dhola* and *Mahiya* are popular far and wide in the Punjab province, be it region of Seraiki, Multani, Gojri, Dogri, Hindko, Pothohari, Majhi, Lehande or the Bar.

Most popular *mahiya*s³⁰ have become proverbial. When *mahiya* is used in common parlance, it becomes the interpreter of our basic

²⁶ <https://www.punjnud.com/ViewPage.aspx?BookID=2880&BookPageID=53606&BookPageTitle=Punjabi%20Lok%20Geet.%20Maahiya>

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Mazhar ul Islam, *Lok Punjab*, 267.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 358.

³⁰ <https://www.punjnud.com>

emotions and folk philosophy. At this point the first couplet is omitted and only the second couplet is used, for example:

- ‘Recall the time when you had sworn [to be loyal]’.
- ‘Cuts and bruises heal up, but the [cruel] words of dear ones cannot be forgotten’.
- ‘Death is better than life full of agony given by my sweetheart’.
- ‘We have a big heart so we tolerate your cruelties’.³¹

In fact, most mahiyas are used as proverbs because these involve a thorough analysis of life. Dhola gives voice to intense feelings of amorous nature, so it has its own appeal even in its short single lines.

Expression

These folk song species are known and recognized by the people of their respective areas due to their distinctive appearance and performance. Their audio/visual expression is their real existence, as pointed out:

Folk songs are untranslatable. They cannot even be imprisoned in print. They are songs and not word composition and their charm consists solely in the rhythm, the emotional import, and the sweetness of their music. No stage free nature can provide the settings, which they need. The real spirit of a folk-song rests not only in its text but also tune. The popular tunes of Puniabi folk-songs ring with the heartthrobs of the simple unsophisticated villagers.³²

Famous Urdu critic, Mujtaba Hussain writes with reference to genres that; ‘These genres have (definite) limits in terms of their form, demands, language and principles of expression. That is why the distinction remains between them and that is what makes them popular’.³³ If not fulfilled, songs cannot retain their uniqueness in their genre and form. However, Inam-ul-Haq Javed points out about the folk songs and the art of singing them somewhat differently:

In terms of form, songs are not bound by any particular form, but they are related to mantras, ragas, tunes and melodies. So sometimes they are found in the form of pentagon, hexagons, or three lines or five lines, and sometimes they take the form of free verse, and then the words used in them are usually not bound by any particular

³¹ Aslam Jadoon, 6.

³² ‘Punjab: The Folk Songs & Music’, available at: <https://www.allaboutsikhs.com/punjab/punjab-the-folk-songs-and-music/>

³³ Mujtaba Hussain, *Tehzeeb o Tehreer* (Karachi: Muktaba-e Afkar, 1967), 140.

weight, but by fast or slow melodies. According to him, sometimes they are sung at length and sometimes they are paid quickly, but care must be taken in the use of words.³⁴

This assertion fits the dhola more, as it has variable number of lines, thus it resembles more to other folk song family, than mahiya or jugni.

Life is a source of art. It is from this fountainhead that art bursts forth and its reflections are also found in the art. The influence of the geographical environment inevitably influences the minds of the artists and their art adapts to this pattern.³⁵ This is the feature by which we can distinguish between the art forms of a particular region, analyze and test them. It is perhaps due to the familiarity with such tunes echoing in the cultural atmosphere, that such tunes continue down the generations. Moreover the ‘long type of mahiya’, identified by Jadoon, are those which start from: ‘I am here’, and then mentions a particular town or village, then comes the second line which is usually not related in meaning with the forerunner line. Apparently this started from the Gujrat (Pakistan) region, so many localities of this region were mentioned in this category, for instance:

- ‘I am here and my dhola is in Gujrat; my mahi does not ask what I really mean to say to him’.
- ‘I am here and my dhola is in Phalia; we go through a series of trials just because of our beloved’.

In this manner Kunjah, Seeray, Chhani, Malikwal inside Gujrat district and then many places outside Gujrat were added in the creative opera of long mahiya,³⁶ which is also labelled as Gujrati mahiya.³⁷

The folklore like its lyrics has also created its own unique tunes. Mahiya is sung in every region of the Punjab in similar style, and jugni or *tappay* have another particular style. Mahiya is mostly sung in pahari, sindhda, mand and Sindhi Bhairvin, Peelu, , and Bheem Palassi tunes. But even modern creators have not changed their specific style, that is, their appearance, even if some ‘innovative’ people have tried to bring them into literature by changing the form of these genres, they could not succeed.³⁸

Mahiya, dhola and jugni are sung with or without any instrument, depending on the mood of the singer and the occasion.

³⁴ Inam-ul-Haq Javed, *Punjabi Adab-o Irtiqa* (Lahore: Aziz Book Depot, 2004), 543.

³⁵ Farigh Bukhari, 26.

³⁶ Aslam Jadoon, 221-6.

³⁷ Mazhar ul Islam, *Lok Punjab*, 39.

³⁸ Aslam Jadoon, 16.

Mahiya singing is very much common in villages, often without instrument but sometimes with tongs and pitcher (called *chimta* and *gharha*). Interestingly the simple instruments like one-string guitar (*ektara*), king (another simple local instrument), and similar others have been popular in folk gatherings, or for that matter individual's own pleasure.

It is a distinction of folklore that it is representative more of the collective than the individual emotions. According to Raees, often these songs were created while working collectively in particular activities hence their rhythm also matched that activity. [For instance 'trinjan', the song of the wheel- spinner women.] Their music thus followed not any standardized formulation but sense of rhythm of the participants.³⁹ It fits more on dhola, about which it is asserted that:

Dhola has a variety of forms, those prevalent in Pothohar being quite different from those popular with the tribes of Sandalbar. The Pothohari Dhola is rather condensed in form. Each stanza consists of five lines which can be further sub-divided into two parts of three and two lines, respectively. The first two lines of the first part rhyme with each other, while the third one is left loose. The second part, which is a couplet, intensifies and polishes up the meaning of the first three lines. Although this couplet is a sustained part of the first three lines, in a way it is quite self-contained. The singers of Dhola liberally use this couplet even independently. The rhythm keeps changing according to the variety of emotions portrayed. Singers themselves are the folk poets of these songs. When they sing with a hand on the ear in a long lifting refrain, there is such depth of feeling in the voice that it sounds like the moan of a love-sick soul or the heart-rending song of a damsel torn apart from her lover.

Jugni is fast in pace due to its inherent restlessness, contents and thrust of devotion. Its companion instruments are also supportive to enhance its effect. All moods of jugni are sung in one particular tune.

³⁹ Qamar Raees, 6. One can imagine the songs of boating folk, camel riders, cattle herders, or peasants while tilling or harvesting.

Themes

This section explains the contents of the three genres in English translation arranged according to their themes.⁴⁰ The explanation is given in square brackets [...].

1. Mahiya

Literally taken, mahiya 'in substance is that form of folk verse in which the lover is addressed in the most touching expressions of love and pathos',⁴¹ yet the subject of separation or complaint from the beloved are also prominent. The themes of mahiya are not limited and it is one of the few folk songs that covers every subject of our life. That is why there are stories of beauty and love in the mahiya, points of philosophy and human psychology, love of Allah (God) and Rasoolullah (messenger of God), devotion to the sufi saints and their shrines, as well as human virtues, prominent being bravery and lastly humor, as inevitable part of cheering up life. Since mahiya themes spring from unpretentious genuine emotions, which are universal, they are played to tune of hearts of the folk, thus are popular since centuries.

Mahiya themes have been analyzed and presented by Jadoon (1977) under six themes:

- i. Separation, abroad, train/bus, letter;
- ii. Satire, humour, love;
- iii. Agony, pain, complaint;
- iv. City, village, weather, crime, punishment;
- v. Beauty; and
- vi. God, Prophet, mausoleum, destiny.⁴²

This categorization is not scientific, as one can see jumbling of distant themes under one group. The present study assumes that themes of mahiya are numerous, so need even more laborious research for categorization. Here within the scope of the research objectives, only broad themes are suggested.

⁴⁰ Mostly the translation is by the author. In the section on jugni, some translation was available so it is acknowledged there, and the format has been maintained to highlight the rhyming effect and style, needed in this essay.

⁴¹ <https://www.allaboutsikhs.com/punjab/punjab-the-folk-songs-and-music/>

⁴² The whole book by Aslam Jadoon, *Mahiaey*, is organized under this scheme and he has collected translated and explained hundreds of mahiyas in it, which is worth appreciation.

a. Folk philosophy of life

- ‘There are white rupees; the world is mean, and no justice prevails anywhere’. [The white color of rupee indicates ‘no fault’ with the wealth or symbols of wealth, whereas there is no just distribution of resources in the world.]

b. Troubles of life

- ‘There is an electric plug; people who are in pain should have a separate city to live in’. [Electric symbolizes here power to kill and danger of death.]
- ‘Some people are thrashing the heaps of harvested corn-crops in the field; those extinguished by death, are not remembered after departure’. [The harvest shows a complete cycle of life, sown, grown and reaped, similar to the human life—birth, life and death. So no one remembers the original crop field while using the corn, so when apparent form of life is transformed, the old form is forgotten even by those who keep taking benefits of it thereafter.]
- ‘I picked up berries from the berry-bush; I was so happy and jubilant in life, the ill-fate has circumscribed me now’. [Fruit of berry is to stay alive and picking it from bush shows care-free mind and boldness. Now the lover has no access, interest or courage to hunt berries, the ingredients of life, as misfortune has overpowered her.]

c. Expression and pangs of love

- ‘There is tightening rope of the charpoy; the world is full of beautiful persons, but no one can be beautiful except my beloved’. [Beauty lies in the eye of beholder, so among the most exquisite beauty spread around in this world, the lover picks the being who strikes to her eyes and heart only. So now she can focus her emotions more intensely on it/him.]
- ‘Water flows in bursts; my *mahi* washed his face and his hair has turned into a bunch of rings’. [Physical beauty, a wet-look, fascinating and adorable].
- ‘The plane is rising up to the sky, I don’t care about what the *mulla* (cleric) says; my heart prays only you being in focus’. [This emotion overpowers any other spiritual connection of pursuit.]
- ‘A *chappal* (slipper) having fur on it; the train going to Campbellpur has taken my mahiya (beloved) away’. [The slipper might have been left back home, and the beloved gone on train, so those who are left behind keep recalling their dear ones departed through various modes of shifting.]

- ‘There are ditches in the road; look out of the window o’ clerk, there lie many lovers dead’. [Lovers’ dying on train and bus stations.]
- ‘There is ash coming out of the pitcher; ask my mahiya to visit the homeland some time’. [Instead of water, a sign of life, ash, a dead stuff, is now showing what life has become for the waiting lover.]
- ‘There are fruit being drying up on the roof; I am sick from inside, but my life is being negotiated out there for marriage’. [It happens in the case of forced marriage.]
- ‘There is smoke of vehicles, my love; my bones are burnt down, now you pick up the charcoal remains’. [As if smoke comes out of burning, I have been smoldering, and now my bones have burnt in separation; now you have come so late that only my ashes are there to welcome you.]
- ‘When allied with the unknown people, our beloved changed his conscience, as well’. [Love emotions can be corrupted in the company of mean people, so it had happened.]
- ‘We have parted in such a way that there seemed no chance of us living together happily’. [Relations strained to an irreparable extent].
- ‘No one lamented the plight of my beloved (*dhola*), who once had a happy life and now is totally ruined’. [The sufferings of a loved ones are felt only by those who love him; mostly people are ignorant of other’s pains and deprivations.]
- ‘There is banana in the bazaar; don’t weep my eyes, *mahi* has come back after his journey’. [The crying heart and tearful eyes are given the happy news of *mahi*’s coming back.]

2. Dhola

Dhola, being very popular form, is highly lyrical and sentimental in character, while love and beauty are its prominent contents. Like ‘mahiya’, the word ‘dhola’ is also used for the beloved all over Punjab.

a. Expression of Love

‘Has earring in ears, eyes full of kohl, the damsel is just like central stalk of mustard plant, she jumps while walks if a young female snake’.

b. Love and its sufferings in dhola

- ‘Even you can take my life, but at no cost you scold my beloved (*dhola*)’. [The person I love, is to be accepted with all his shortcomings, so no one is allowed to hold him accountable. I am

ready to sacrifice my life for keeping my loved one happy and the whole world must do the same.]

- ‘A car has come from Jhang: you have met every one, but there was no moment of my turn to meet you’. [When the beloved comes from a distant city, he generally will embrace and exchanges greetings with all and sundry but not the woman who adores him the most. This is in fact socially unacceptable, even if she is his wife. If she is not, then whoever she is, she would not be greeted by the dhola at all; that is highly detestable.]
- ‘An airplane has come here; when dhola came to the mind, even deep sleep was broken’. [A mahiya, telling the impact of memory of beloved even waking up all of sudden.]
- ‘O’ God, either unite us the lovers or end up my breaths right now’. [Seeking help from the Divine, in sheer pains of love, tolerable no more.]
- ‘There is a red quilt; that day would be a day of Eid (rejoice), when this separation would end’. [This expresses feelings of a wife, as red quilts are dowry items in the Punjab. She is waiting for the beloved to return to end the phase of pains.]
- ‘A nail made of gold; in love it is not the life which is dissipated rather it is the heart totally squandered’. [The love is precious, has value of gold, but it has pierced into the heart, the source of life.]
- ‘The *paan* (beetle-leaf snack) was purchased with cash; o’ mahi your atrocities are taken up by us as a kind of favour to us’. [It indicates unconditional submission even in the face of oppression.]
- ‘You have ruined me in such a way as whoever looks at me, starts laughing at me’. [Rejection, parting or un-expressed love sometimes destroy the silent lover to the extent that people take pity on her, even make fun of her poor appearance.]
- ‘Cruel dhola, cruel dhola, you have engaged me, an alien girl in love affair, but after this affair no one throws the beloved away, o’ crule dhola, o’ cruel dhola’.
- ‘I am here and my dhole (beloved) is in Phalia; we have to go through sufferings because of the beloved’.
- ‘I am here and my dhole is in Thal (a desert region in Punjab); long hair of him/her have entangled me, come near me and listen to my plight, please get me out of this trouble’.
- ‘I am here and my dhole is in Hazara, the dear one has shot us with cruel arrows, so now you have won and I am the loser’. [Submission to the atrocities of the beloved.]

c. **Philosophy of Life**

- ‘Apply henna on hands; silence of the poor leads to destruction of the families’. [Applying henna is an obvious sign of happiness, but those who suffer in silence, are not obvious; finally they vanish to extinction.]

The following section would elaborate the genre of jugni, and finally a comparison will be made in the end.

3. **Jugni**

Jugni is an interesting genre, sung by both men and women. Its character is mysterious, active, perpetually perturbed, seeking solace in the holy world of spirituali. Jugni character is funny, oppressed, hilarious, sarcastic, innocent, sufi, downtrodden. In words of an analyst: ‘the character of jugni is so unfathomable and all-encompassing that to unfold its layers is a hard job. This is a character which can be quickly recognized at the level of perception and feelings, but in research and academic analysis would mean an unending endeavour’.⁴³ This is explained in the following famous examples, arranged under different themes. Jugni can assume any form and character according to the whim and wishes of its composer. Threads of jugni indicate the jewelry of women with name; jugni; and threads may represent characteristics of jugni.

a. **Sufi spirit**

- The first letter (Alif) of God's name is flower of love,
you have brought it to the earth of my heart,
There is no specific season of this earth,
You ____ the companion at a wrong time,
May the spirit live long, the spirit that
Brought God's flower to the heart..
O Pir of mine - Spirit being.
Indeed, this is the Godly Ones' Spirit-being
Indeed, this is the Holy Prophet's Spirit-being
Indeed, this is the Spirit-being devoted to God
Indeed, this is my Pir's Spirit-being
Indeed, this is the long-living Pir's Spirit-being!
- Like a dove's call, with every breath
my heart echoes
and reads the lesson of love, O pir of mine - Spirit being..

⁴³ Mazhar ul Islam, *Lok Punjab*, 396.

- The spirit being goes the way of love,
Doesn't get deceived anywhere,
She doesn't understand one bit,
The spirit being goes the way of love,
Doesn't get deceived anywhere,
She doesn't understand one bit,
Whether to bring the heart or not..
She loves with the heart, O pir of mine - Spirit being..
- Spirit being is lost in thinking,
She looks for someone in someone else,
She got mad in love,
Spirit being is lost in thinking,
She looks for someone in someone else,
She got mad in love,
She laughed outside n cried within,
She loves with the heart, O pir of mine - Spirit being.

b. Philosophy of Life

- My creation, share whatever you have
Remove yourself from worldly concerns
There is nothing that you can get from other human beings that you
can take to the after-life
Just keep your actions and intentions pure.

Even this theme is dominated by the kernel message of Sufis, that this-worldly attractions are transitory, so why to pursue them.

- Every time I breathe, my heart echoes his name
with every breath remembers him and sings the song of love
Put on your bangles, girls
Those that you get at your Master's shrines
- Daughter, don't be proud of your youth
Your mother scoffs and scolds you
with each day, the bloom of youth is waning
Even gold when put in the furnace moulds itself, there is absolutely
no permanence
Women, men are like so beautiful and precious
Like pearls, like the gems
Those who realize the One
drink from the cup of love
Whenever you visit the darbar of any saint
He showers you with his blessings by directing your eyes towards

the absolute

Put on your bangles, girls

Those that you get at your Master's shrines

- Every time I breathe, my heart echoes his name
with every breath remembers him and sings the song of love
I have the spirit of my beloved
The spirit of all the messengers who brought His message to this
Earth
The spirit of Holy Prophets
The spirit of the One
The spirit of my saint
The spirit of all his words
- 'Threads of my jugni are white; those who are hit by *ishq* (intense love of worldly or divine figure), they deserve to pronounce the kalma (faith line of religion, here of Islam). Enemy will run away in front of us when we shout the slogan of Ali (*Yaa Ali*), now I sing your jugni, ...'. [A mixture of various themes: true love, bravery, faith in God.]
- 'Threads of my jugni are five; sons of Bibi Zahri, who fought in the battle of Karbala, evil enemies were astonished by seeing [their bravery]; O my pir, jugni is here, who sings name of Ali...'
- My murshid [spiritual teacher], do me favours, Bring my sinking boat to the bank, fix up my disturbed matters of life; come on, come on my pir, O my pir; jugni is here, who sings name of Ali...'

c. Troubles of life

- 'Jugni entered the Rohi [desert], where she was put by peasants to drag the field-leveler log [sohaga], no one was there to enquire about her; so she wailed relentlessly; O my Pir, jugni is here, who sings name of Ali...'

Analysis and Conclusion

Pakistani folklore has evolved with three major ingredients: language, culture and religion. To some extent history and geography also play their part in shaping a people's consciousness, self-concept and worldview. Various genres of folklore especially the folk songs are like wild plants growing in a spontaneous process in the natural environment. These emerge out of emotions, contemplation and an urge for expression. It is like crying out, no matter it in sorrow or happiness. Therefore, it cannot be prevented, nor can it be restricted to a specific shape and weight.

Punjabi folklore, the identity of Punjab, includes folk songs and various poetic expressions which take multiple forms and are sung in specific tunes. Three forms selected for this essay have been *mahiya*, *dhola* and *jugni*. All three are beloved genres in the Punjabi language and literature. These are natural symbols and whole-hearted nurtured icons of Punjabi identity as well. This essay is meant to compare three genres of *mahiya*, *dhola* and *jugni*, in their evolution, structure, expression and themes.

Like other genres of the folklore, *mahiya* and *dhola* are the collective spokesman of their society. Although no one knows about the beginning and evolution of these two genres, but here are the opinions of some scholars about it. Some indicating millennia old traces of these names and concepts. *Jugni* cannot be traced beyond the beginning of 20th century, but there seems lack of research on it, to verify this assertion.

Mahiya has three lines structure; the first one usually serves only to provide a rhyme, and is not connected to the following lines in meanings, but there are many examples where this is not true and first line is also meaningful. Due to its three line structure, *mahiya* is distinct from *dhola* and *jugni*, which can be of any length up to the pleasure of the lyricist and the singer. The expression is also a unique aspect of the three genres, because these are identified mostly by their tunes, on which words are fitted. Despite this, one can find overlapping subjects in these popular forms.

Themes, though vary among the three genres, yet the above discussion reveals that folk philosophy of life, expression of love and sufferings of the lovers are common among the three genres, but this cannot be concluded so simply. *Jugni* has very high content and perhaps its jubilation is derived from its having spiritual love and sufi thoughts as predominant themes. Its different versions can be taken as masterpieces +of devotional music, also very popular in South Asian region.

Mahiya has broader range of themes than the *dhola*, which is specially allocated for expression and feelings of love. *Dhola* is like ‘talking to your beloved’, and generally if one refers to ‘*dhola*’ singing, it would surely mean some one singing love, in a folk (i.e., crude) style. Both *mahiya* and *jugni*, on the other hand, have a greater content of philosophy, devotion to divine, fun, wit, and even patriotism. The depth of pain expressed in *mahiya* could not be matched by *dhola*, so *mahiya* is more popular.⁴⁴

Another aspect of comparing the themes is worth noting. It is that in *mahiya* and *dhola*, the beloved is definitely a ‘male’, addressed by

⁴⁴ Hashmi, 214.

a woman. In jugni the addressee can be anyone....yet it includes the Almighty, the holy figures and lower orders saints. Personifications of jugni reveal it as a female abstraction. All the three selected genres can be arranged as jugni on one extreme with corporeal love in dhola on the other extreme, and mahiya lying in between with a larger diversity of themes. Jugni is a devoted figure assuming many characters and moods. Jugni has a broad range in its devotional aspect; mahiya has variety in its subjects and dhola is though predominantly for love, but it is specialized in this worldly love, hence unique to some extent. Grammatically, in the three genres the language used is that of females, suggesting that the beloved is a 'male', so this patriarchal posture of society and culture is re-confirmed. On the other hand the divine figure in the spiritual love is also male, at least the grammar suggests so. Hence the male is admired, by females, then who is in more exalted status? Apparently the male, but this higher status needs love feeling and their expression, which spontaneously generated among the women beings—are sources of love and its expression, on their own. The lover henceforth stands more significant in the equation. Not surprisingly the words 'dhola' and 'mahi' appear so frequently in the folk songs of various categories, but their being separate genres is an important aspect of Punjabi folklore.

The unique feature of mahiya is talking to the beloved (mahi); the same confers identity and disposition to mahiya. Mahiya is taken as a precursor to *ghazal* genre of Urdu literature, conceived as 'talking to women' in amorous tone. Being a universal feature of poetry and a base of human existence on this planet, mahiya, dhola or ghazal are ways of communication to the opposite gender, to rejuvenate life and ensure its perpetuation through reproduction. Women express their love for dhola or mahiya, but doing so the folk song assumes a status of ...⁴⁵

Following the traditions of the heroines of famous Punjabi folk stories, the lover in the three genres, is a symbol of defiance as well, because she is rebellious, believing in her true love and true feelings, she finds every opposing factor as; fictitious, baseless and atrocious. So defying the conventional norms of society, she follows the footsteps of Heer, Sohni, Sassi and Sahiban.⁴⁶ This is adeptly expressed and sung with full liberty by women as well as men of the land. For example one

⁴⁵ <https://www.punjnud.com/ViewPage.aspx?BookID=2880&BookPageID53606&BookPageTitle=Punjabi%20Lok%20Geet.%20Maahiya>

⁴⁶ As referred to many others including: Newworldencyclopedia.org, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Pakistani_folklore, <https://punjabics.com/punjabi-folklore.htm>, <https://brewminate.com/an-overview-of-pakistani-folklore/> (accessed 18 September 2020)

mahiya is: 'there lies a wire on the roof; O' my dear, just for you, my mother has beaten me up'. At least the resentment is expressed. When men sing this, they develop a different feeling—of pride, love connection and of defiance as well. In this sense men also become her voice, glorifying her love, and doing so, they indirectly celebrate their own being as the 'beloved'. Moreover 'jugni' is a female, whatever mood and action she adopts, it is reflection of people's mind, dreams and intense desire to seek solace in the ultimate Being.