



**“Ohde Je Hi Mai Te Oh Mirza Mere Varga”:
How Long Shall Sahiban Alone Be Blamed for
Mirza’s Death?**

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Abstract

The Punjabi love legends determine the cultural paradigm and social codes of its society. The love legends like *Hir Ranjha*, *Sassi Punnu*, *Sohni Mahiwal* and *Mirza Sahiban* celebrate fervent love, lofty promises, valiant endeavours, and catastrophic sacrifices. By connecting the individuals to their past legacy, they influence the collective consciousness and, hence, become contributory in carrying seeds of the past into the future. The paper focuses specifically on the qissa of *Mirza Sahiban* and probes the perceived image of Sahiban as traversed through generations of Punjabi ethos. The perceived image of Sahiban’s faithlessness, crystallized and circulated through various modes of artistic expressions like literature, cinema, music and other cultural aesthetics, has adversely influenced the minds of the millennial who actually may not have read the qissa of *Mirza Sahiban*. The present paper attempts to assess the negative and perfidious image of Sahiban as projected through popular media especially songs which out rightly blame Sahiban for Mirza’s death. The perusal offers an alternate perspective on the character of Sahiban by equating her with her gallant and celebrated lover. The major question arises, when both Mirza and Sahiban emerge similar in deed (have love affair), in action (become transgressors), in character (are flawed in their own way) and in fate (die) then why one is held guilty for millennia? The paper attends to this query by visiting the original text by Peeloo. To this end, it marks the flaws in the character of Mirza, discerns the role of fate and stresses the psychological trauma of Sahiban which unanimously played their part in the tragedy of the lovers. It thereby, vindicates the case of Sahiban, hitherto considered as the sinner of love, and re-sculpts her character which is torn between passionate love and sibling love.

Keywords: Qissa, Love, Betrayal, Tragedy, Fate, Anxiety, Collective Unconsciousness

Introduction

The Punjabi love qissas, like the legends of any culture, encode and regulate the cultural values and social patterns of its society. The love legends like *Hir Ranjha*, *Sassi Punnu*, *Sohni Mahiwal* and *Mirza Sahiban* celebrate passionate love, lofty promises, heroic deeds, and tragic sacrifices. By connecting the individuals to their past heritage, they influence the collective unconsciousness and, hence, become instrumental in carrying seeds of the past into the future. Being a significant part of popular cultural idiom, these qissas have successfully escaped from the mere oral tradition and have found an extended life on other platforms across media be it literary, dramatic, cinematic or musical.

Unlike the other qissas which indubitably have always secured the sympathy of the masses for their tragic outcome, the qissa of *Mirza Sahiban* has somewhat gathered rave views and has been regarded as provoking and controversial. In fact, it is the character of Sahiban which has attracted much flak and has been eternally branded as the sinner of love who viciously sides with her kinsmen to bring about the death of her gallant lover. The idea of Sahiban as a fickle and unfaithful woman has been projected over and over again especially in the popular culture so as to conform as well as re-instate the negative belief prevalent in the cultural consciousness. Seen in this light, who can forget the catastrophic scene in Yash Chopra's film, *Jab Tak Hai Jaan*, in which Katrina Kaif leaves the fatally wounded Shah Rukh Khan which instantaneously pulls one back to the song, "*Heer heer naakho mainu, mai tan Sahiban hoi.*" One cannot help but

listen to and compulsively detect a foreboding of untrustworthiness and deceitfulness in the song in accordance with the common parlance which holds Sahiban of the qissa *Mirza Sahiban* as the most perfidious beloved who sacrificed the life of her lover for the sake of her brothers. Such perceived image of Sahiban's faithlessness, crystallized and circulated through various modes of artistic expressions like literature, cinema, music and other cultural aesthetics, has adversely influenced the minds of the millennial who actually may not have read the qissa of *Mirza Sahiban*.

Aim of the Paper and Methodology Used

The paper attempts to vindicate the case of Sahiban, hitherto considered as the sinner of love, and re-sculpt her character which is torn between passionate love and sibling love. The legendary filmmaker Yash Chopra proves his Punjabi ethnicity by unearthing the complexity in the character of Sahiban which had remained unacknowledged before. The same foreboding song which the perusal earlier mentions avenges Sahiban's cause later by equating Sahiban with Mirza as equals: "*Ohde je hi mai te oh Mirza mere varga.*" To the cinematic visionary, Mirza and Sahiban are like each other. With this line of thought both of them emerge similar in deed (have love affair), in action (become transgressors), in character (are flawed in their own ways) and in fate (die). The major question arises, when both the parties share the same pedestal then why should one be dragged to the altar and held guilty for and by millennia?

Keeping in mind the invaluable viewpoint as conveyed through this iconic song, the methodological intention is to assess the image of Sahiban which is largely flawed. To support this line of thought, the data has been

gathered from the various popular songs in regional language. The hints to Sahiban's infidelity in the chosen songs further triggered the idea to conduct a survey and analyse to what extent the so-called image of the misunderstood heroine has been perceived by the collective unconsciousness. Next, the evaluative strategy demands to go back to the text of *Mirza Sahiban* and see the truth of the real image of Mirza and Sahiban. Since there are many versions of the qissa available, the qissa narrated by Peeloo, who as the legend goes is the first poet who penned down the story in beginning of 17th century, has been preferred. The chosen version of the qissa has been translated by Dr Satinder Aulakh and is a part of her thesis, *The Fast Horse and The Ferocious River*. The analytical paradigm extends to investigate the flaws of Mirza, the role of fate and the psychological perplexity of Sahiban which working in unison pushed the lovers to their doom. Such methodological approach stresses on digging out the necessary facts from the original text which establishes these multiple factors, and not Sahiban alone for the tragedy.

Collected Data

An auditory experience of the various songs in circulation in popular media unquestionably holds Sahiban alone as the precipitator of the whole tragedy. A quick review of a handful of songs in the regional language easily testifies this line of thought and perception. In fact, the connection of premonition between the song discussed in the introduction and the scene of the fatally wounded hero further prompts to listen to and analyse a series of popular songs based on the qissa.

To begin with, in Harbhajan Mann's song, "Mirza," the dying Mirza tells Sahiban that if he had known that his

much-loved woman would prove to be so fickle, he would have brought his brothers along to counter the attack of her siblings and fiancé. He accuses her whole family as a clan of traitors as: on one hand, Sahiban broke Mirza's arrows to save her brothers from her powerful lover; and on the other hand, her brothers killed the robust Mirza when he was alone and defenceless. Mirza mourns that he did not pay any heed to the prayers of his mother and sister who kept telling him to not to go to fetch Sahiban for they believed that women of Syal were, "witches, they bewitch poor men, they take out their livers and eat..." (Peeloo 140, stanza 15)

Another song, "Mirza" by Pammi Bai, begins with the discovery that Sahiban has eloped with Mirza on the back of his mare, Bakki. The lyrics run into a dialogue between Mirza and Sahiban, in which Sahiban requests Mirza to take her to his village quickly as they are not married yet. She implores that it is risky for them to stay midway as her whole village has become their dreadful enemy. But Mirza dismissively turns down her request assuring her to have faith in the strength of her gallant lover and his brave mare. Unperturbed, she should let him take rest and sleep for a while. When Mirza falls asleep, thinking that her forceful lover would kill all her loved brothers, Sahiban, out of anxiety, hangs the quiver of his arrows on the Jand tree and also decides that they would ask for forgiveness from her brothers. But when her brothers kill Mirza, the dying Mirza reproaches her for adultery that had brought death to an unarmed Mirza.

Likewise, "Mirza Bolda" by Bob Randhawa also holds Sahiban responsible for the pitiful death of her lover. In the song, Mirza tells Sahiban the reasons for which she has been labelled as a traitor and unfaithful beloved. He accuses her and says that neither did she belong to her

brothers nor to her lover because she cheated on both. In Randhawa's song also Mirza says if he had known that his beloved will cheat him, he would have brought his brothers. In that scenario, he says, he would not have died defenceless and it would have been an equal combat. At the end of the song, Mirza curses that Sahiban will be seen as traitorous till the end of life on earth.

By conducting such a practice, it can be observed that almost all the popular songs related to the qissa, *Mirza Sahiban*, act as testimony to Sahiban's much touted infidelity. Moving further, such popular image projection of Sahiban in media pushed the researchers into the domain of survey research to foreground its veracity. Resultantly, a survey was conducted amongst the students of Guru Nanak Dev University. More than three hundred questionnaires were distributed amongst the students of the university at random. A questionnaire was prepared with questions like: How many qissas you have heard? Which qissa according to you is the most famous? Have you watched movies/heard songs based on the qissas? Which protagonist (male/female) do you admire the most? Which protagonist of the qissas you dislike and why? Have you heard about *Mirza Sahiban*? What is the source of your information about *Mirza Sahiban*, (text/movies/songs)? What is your opinion about Sahiban's hiding the arrows of Mirza? How would you describe Sahiban in one word/50 words?

The analysis of the collected questionnaires shows that 98% millennial believe that Sahiban was unfaithful and their opinion is based on the popular movies and songs. Most of them have never read any written text on *Mirza Sahiban*, although many knew the names of the qissa writers like Peeloo, Hafiz Barkhudaar, and Bhagwant Singh. The versions that they had heard about or read

differed but the samples collected show that they almost worship Mirza as their ideal. They relate themselves with the invincible gallantry of Mirza. It was observed that the students use innumerable different epithets like ‘killer,’ ‘disloyal,’ ‘unfaithfulness personified,’ ‘ditcher,’ ‘infidel,’ ‘malicious,’ ‘fraud,’ ‘cunning,’ ‘truly woman like,’ ‘mean,’ ‘cruel,’ ‘dangerous,’ ‘murderer,’ ‘foul,’ ‘treacherous,’ ‘untrue,’ ‘wicked,’ ‘exterminator,’ ‘fickle,’ ‘traitor,’ ‘sinful,’ ‘harsh,’ ‘untrustworthy,’ ‘double-crosser,’ ‘unpleasant,’ ‘cheater,’ ‘slayer,’ ‘destroyer,’ ‘adulterous,’ ‘deceitful,’ ‘dishonest,’ ‘devious,’ ‘evil,’ ‘falsehearted,’ ‘sham,’ ‘immoral,’ ‘criminal,’ ‘heartless,’ ‘unkind,’ etc. to describe Sahiban in one word.

Moreover, it was interesting to note that they had also made some innovative comparisons of Sahiban to describe her. More than 80% students had compared Sahiban with Helen of Troy. On the one hand, they have compared her with Helen on the basis of her beauty and on the other hand, they associate her with wavering loyalty of Helen that had brought about death, bloodshed, destruction, massacre, devastation, damage, and ruin of two countries and innumerable warriors. The students of the Department of English, Guru Nanak Dev University, also compared her with disloyal wives like Clytemnestra (*Agamemnon*) and Padmini (*Hayavadana*). On the basis of data collected, it was perceived that as a matter of fact, the belief of the students is determined by two factors. First, the image of Sahiban projected in the songs and movies based on this qissa, *Mirza Sahiban*. Second, the collective unconscious has forced these images in the minds of the newer generation.

Analysis

The analytical exercise to exonerate the image of Sahiban requires a revisit to Peeloo's text. Such an academic voyage reads three significant factors that brace the case of misunderstood heroine. In doing so, the important pointers like tragic flaws of Mirza, the role of fate and psychological perplexity of Sahiban need an elaborate deliberation.

The Tragic Flaws/*Hamartia* in Mirza's Character

An in-depth peep into the text of Peeloo prompts that instead of seeing Mirza as a pathetic creature who dies at the hands of an unfaithful beloved, it may be said that Mirza inherits all the qualities of an Aristotelian tragic hero who dies due to his unfavourable fate (discussed in the next point), and more importantly due to his tragic flaw/*hamartia* (as Aristotle calls it). Mirza, the "object of imitation," of Peeloo, "necessarily possesses certain distinctive qualities of both character and thought" which become the reason that the "spectacle" of Mirza's life thrills the readers "with horror and melt to pity at what takes place," and effects into "the proper *katharsis*, or purgation, of these emotions" (Aristotle 11, 45, 49). Mirza arouses feelings of pity and fear due to the "unmerited misfortune" that he meets leading to a feeling that it is the "misfortune of a man like ourselves" (45). Mirza, "highly renowned and prosperous," is a man between "two extremes—that of a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty" (45).

Undoubtedly, Mirza is depicted as a brave, invincible, legendary hero whose impeccable archery and unparalleled horsemanship are marvelled by generations.

He becomes a representative of Jat community and is one of the most celebrated heroes amongst youth. The Punjabi ethos idealizes Mirza's gallantry, romantic passion, sense of honour and audacity. However, such idealization suggests one side of truth which overshadows the various flaws and frailties inherent in the character of the mighty hero.

To begin with, Mirza's act to reclaim Sahiban from her parental control on the eve of her wedding is prompted as much by the feeling of love for her as by his exalted sense of honour. To leave the woman he desires the most for another man would certainly fracture his ego and impinge upon his image as a brave man. The moment, he learns about Sahiban's plea of rescue, the plight of his beloved boosts his masculine ego and adds fuel to his simmering passions. At once, without any thought, he claims:

I can leave a married woman
But can't desert a betrothed one
If I give up a betrothed woman
It will be an act of disgrace for the Kharals.

(Peeloo 142, stanza 20)

Clearly, without paying any heed to the situation at home or to the on-going wedding of his sister, he starts from home towards his destination to satisfy his inflated ego. Deeply implicated in the rhetoric of family honour, he truly believes his father's parting words, "the lost honour can't be regained. Don't come without Sahiban or we will be disgraced!" (Peeloo143, stanza 18) It seems, as if, it is an overtly developed sense of honour and fear of shame for which Mirza is ready to risk his life. Presumably, he is more in love with the idea of conducting a heroic adventure than with his beloved. Such a viewpoint hints

how the intentions of the brave lover are conceited and coloured from the very beginning.

In fact, Mirza's inflated ego again surfaces later in the qissa. After his successful elopement with Sahiban, Mirza contended with the development, halts on the way to take some repose under a Jand tree. Fondled, he goes to sleep with his head in the lap of his beloved. Ditching a marital arrangement and already on a run, Sahiban understands the gravity of the situation and repeatedly reminds Mirza:

For God's sake awake!
Sahiban hasn't reached her destination
The rope of my life has been broken in the middle
If you could not save me
Why did you hold my wrist
Protect me, my lover
Or you shall get no place in heaven!

(Peeloo 147, stanza 50)

Arguably, Mirza is characterized as audacious, valiant, loyal, and intelligent, but he is overwhelmed by his blind belief in his bravery too. He turns down all the requests of his beloved and tells her, "the angels are afraid of my Bakki, And God is frightened of me" (Peeloo 145, stanza 41). Sahiban tells him that by eloping together they have brought dishonour to the name and fame of her family and as a result her brothers and fiancé would surely follow them and kill them. Certainly, Sahiban is aware of her lover's bravery and believes in his love for her, but she has no doubts about the valour of her brothers as well. Moreover, she knows that according to the social norms of a patriarchal society she has transgressed the laws of threshold. Her brothers would like to reclaim their honour

by killing both of them. She tries to remind her lover, “the village of the Syals is bitter as salt on the wound, they use their spears as the carder spins cotton!” (Peeloo 148, stanza 54)

But Sahiban’s entreaties fall flat on Mirza. Perhaps, Mirza is so intoxicated with the strong doses of patriarchal discourse that he does not want to give any credit to the sensible words of caution of his beloved. Sahiban could apprehend the danger better, but her voice of anxiety and vision of approaching danger are casually snubbed by him. Deluded with a sense of pride, he takes his beloved’s concerns as challenge to his male ego which he believes questions his competence in protecting his lady love. Even a crow sitting on the Jand tree chastises Mirza due to his pride and carelessness: “the drums of the death-god are beaten on all sides...O sleeping Mirza, get up, why do you linger in pride?” (Peeloo 149, 60) In fact, Mirza’s over confidence and obstinate nature bring out his foolhardiness. Otherwise, which wise man on a run with his beloved and vengeful kinsmen close to heels would sleep carelessly midway and boast of his invincibility in defence? Like Shakespeare’s Hamlet, the procrastination of a prompt action by Peeloo’s flawed hero, in spite of Sahiban’s incessant requests to take her to Danabad, hurl him towards his tragedy. Mirza’s pride, over confidence and foolishness become obstacle in assessing the gravity of the situation. Instead of taking quick and decisive action, Mirza revelling in the glory of his audaciousness indulges in self praises and whiles away the time which later becomes detrimental:

I don’t know a fighter who dares strike me
I shall hit the heads of all
Even the Brars are afraid of me

I shall cut these brave men
As the hailstorms destroy the crops
I shall make a heap
Of your brothers on the ground!

(Peeloo 148, stanza 55)

Such an exaggerated account of pride and violence against the brothers of a woman, and that too, on her face further highlights the thoughtlessness, imprudence and insensitivity of Mirza. How easily he resolves to plan a mass killing, that too alone, of the men in the presence of their sister without suspecting a counter action either from his beloved or her kinsmen. Consequently, his ‘action veers round to its opposite’ when ‘Reversal of the Situation’ takes place towards the end and Mirza discovers that his beloved for whom he had denounced everything, even his life, has hung the quiver of his arrows on the Jand. The “tragic wonder” of Mirza’s death is “greater” and leaves a “heightened” effect since it a combination of “surprise...cause and effect...accident...and [has] an air of design” (Aristotle 39). One may not deny that Mirza’s “wounds,” “bodily agony,” “destruction,” and painful death produce “the Sense of Suffering” because the “tragic incident occurs between those who are near or dear to one another...” (Aristotle 43, 49). But in lieu of his tragic death, the tragic flaws of Mirza cannot be ignored. The text emphatically suggests that confidence in bravery is good but pride and vaulting overconfidence in valour when clubbed with irrationality and inconsiderateness only lead to death and decay. Unfortunately, the “Recognition or a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune” never takes place in popular media (41).

The Role of Fate

Much like in the Greek tragedies, the role of fate or destiny in Punjabi love qissas is considered detrimental in the lives of the heroes and heroines. The power of providence contextualizes the qissas within the paradigm of life and death. Arguably, all the romantic couples in the qissas die at the height of their passion, a price of true love which they pay with their lives. Legend has it that everyone's life is predestined by God/Supernatural Being/Supreme Being and common people show deep belief in this statement. On the other hand, others believe that one can carve, control and become a master his/her own destiny. As a result, they do not want to abuse destiny as an excuse for the hard luck or good luck that they meet.

Keeping in mind the first point of view, it can be foregrounded how the power of fate/*honi* guides an individual's life which precedes even his birth. At the very outset, Peeloo's text declares how Mirza was born on "an inauspicious day" (Peeloo 137, stanza 2). The negative epithet which announces Mirza's birth signifies how the legendary hero, "Saradar of the Kharals," is cursed by the divine power right from his birth (Peeloo 137, stanza 2). It must be mentioned that the text provides the readers with many more forebodings that indicate that Mirza was destined to die. When Mirza begins his studies, the cupid strikes him and he falls in love with Sahiban in the mosque. The love affair of the couple emerges as a design of fate and the whole world ceases to matter for them. Arguably, back in the 17th century, the love affair of a couple was seen as a transgressive act against the society which would incur grave repercussions for the rebels. When the growing fondness between Mirza and Sahiban is known out in the world, the revelation pronounces doom for the couple which is forcibly parted and later Sahiban's

marriage is arranged in the clan of the Chandhars. The fixing of the girl's marriage unleashes a chain of predestined events to which the couple falls prey to.

Mirza seems to belong to the other category of people who believe in sculpting their own fortune and underestimates the power of providence. The news of his beloved's marriage with somebody else hurts his ego and he desires to rush to her as her saviour. One cannot forget that Mirza ignores the wedding of his sister and overlooks the frightening warnings from all the members of his family when he receives Sahiban's message. Mirza's parents and his sister try to stop him. Since Mirza's sister is to get married the next day, she entreats her brother to fulfil his brotherly responsibilities first. But Mirza dismisses her plea and declares his resolute resolve:

I must go, our kinsfolk are left behind
If they make good arrangements
They will save their good name
Or it will be a disgrace to the Kharals.

(Peeloo 140, stanza 14)

Mirza's speech gives a hint to his mother that he will not turn back for anyone's sake. Her motherly instincts understandably make her fearful as she could apprehend the approaching doom. She knows in her heart that if her son goes on the path of the Syals, he would be destined to die. So, Mirza's mother tries her best to stop her parting son with the warning:

Friendship with snakes and lions never succeeds
Don't be so persistent
It is like the boiling vessel of oil underneath
And flames reaching over your head
It is like the death of Moses...

Escape your fate today and go to the Syals tomorrow.

(Peeloo 141-142, stanza 20)

Paying no heed to his mother's concerns, Mirza mounts his mare. As he is about to start, the border of his shirt gets caught and someone in the neighbourhood sneezes. Both of these developments act as ill omens signifying looming danger. But Mirza nonchalantly brushes aside all the ill omens and suggestions, and embarks on his journey. Mirza's father also joins the other members of the family and tries to stop him, saying,

Friendship with women doesn't last
They are stupid to the heels
They fall in love with a smile
And disclose it in desolation
You should not put your foot in the house
Where your beloved is.

(Peeloo 141, stanza 18)

But Mirza's father soon realises that Mirza shall not stop listening to anyone's advice because he does not want to be dishonoured for breaking his promise.

Next, Mirza asks Peeloo to explain omens for him. Peeloo acts a Greek chorus and warns Mirza about his ill fate:

Even the strongest men have gone to the graves
If you are concerned for your well being
Don't put your foot forward!

(Peeloo 143, stanza 28)

The forebodings and warnings from different sources could not deter Mirza from his path. It is said that no one can challenge fate and predestined laws of nature. Satinder Aulakh also believes and says, "fate brings arrows or canes

with it which it hurls at the head of the person whom it wants to strike” (55). In such a situation, a man becomes vulnerable against its attack. Fate befalls at the pre-fixed time and place. After his escape with Sahiban (at a pre-fixed time), Mirza carelessly falls asleep under the Jand (at a pre-fixed place). The poet considers the gallant hero’s sleep as the design of destiny/*honi*, saying, “Fate threw its arrows, the death-god forbade him to go!” (Peeloo 146, stanza 47). Despite Sahiban’s sincerest efforts, he lingers his stay midway. But when destiny works against Mirza, how could he respond to the warnings? And, Peeloo further reasons Mirza’s fated procrastination, thus: “the fate of Mirza left his company, and joined the Syals” (Peeloo 149, stanza 64). As destiny is predetermined, Sahiban hangs Mirza’s quiver on the Jand (at a pre-fixed time, and at a pre-fixed place), and consequently, Mirza is fatally wounded by the Syals. The dying lover blames his beloved for his death. But Sahiban defends herself and clearly brings out the role of fate, justifying:

When the prophets were not spared by fate

How could you escape? (Peeloo 150, stanza 66)

Sahiban’s voice of reason suggests that even the prophets like Hasan and Hussain could not avert the all-powerful fortune/misfortune/*honi* and died before their mother Fatima. Mirza is just a normal human being who is ordained to die from the very beginning in this manner. One may then say that Mirza’s *hamartia* leads him into a conflict with the omnipotent fate and he dies his own death.

The Psychological Perplexity of Sahiban

Peeloo’s *Mirza Sahiban* represents Sahiban as a helpless creature caught up between her natural inclination for

Mirza and filial commitment towards her family. She emerges as a brave rebel who goes against the dictums of patriarchy and flees with her lover. Understandably, ditching her family on the day of her marriage, Sahiban not only soils her family name but also breaks their trust. A girl is bound to suffer from emotional turmoil, moral dilemma, mental stress and undecided state of mind as she takes such a bold step. In such a situation, what adds to the psychological trauma of Sahiban, is the reckless behaviour of Mirza. Instead of consoling her agonizing beloved and extending his assurance by providing the safe heaven of his roof, the brave hero gloats with success and sings glories of his invincibility while resting in procrastination halfway.

Arguably, Sahiban experiences a heightened sense of anxiety and moral turmoil due to Mirza's recurrent reference to his bravery and his confidence that he shall kill all the relatives of Sahiban who will come to reclaim her. The conceited lover repeatedly tells her, "no one is brave enough to strike me, I shall kill every brother of yours within miles" (Peeloo 146, stanza 46). She feels trapped between her attachment for her brothers and her love for Mirza. A sister only prays for the well-being of her brothers and she can never wish any harm to them whatsoever shall come. The callous statements of Mirza that he would make a heap of her dead brothers on the ground and hang her brothers to the Jand, produces an anxiety attack in Sahiban who imagines "that danger is about to occur" (Rector et al. 4). Perhaps, it is the release of "increased adrenaline [that] causes [her] to feel alert and . . . [prepares her] to attack (fight) or escape to safety (flight)" (4). Sahiban's fear results into a vision where she envisions:

Mirza saw Shamir, the brother of Sahiban

And took out a sharp arrow from his quiver
It went up the sky
And threw Shamir on the ground.

(Peeloo 149, stanza 61)

The actions issuing from the hallucination where Sahiban visualizes that Mirza has killed her brother are expressive of her character. The fear stemming whether from actual intimidations or imaginary vulnerabilities of death of her loved ones, be it her lover or her brothers, produces anxiety/panic disorder about the impending danger and risk in Sahiban's mind. As a result of this confrontation with a perceived threat, the destiny of Sahiban prompts her to make a choice of 'fight or flight response' (also known as the acute stress response). Since she does not desire her lover to fight against her own brothers, she prefers flight which unfortunately her lover does not respond to.

Sahiban's mind is no less than the "anticipation machine, [for which] 'making future' is the most important thing it does." (Gilbert 5). The unpredictable, uncertain and uncontrollable aversive event, which was not changing shape or size in spite of her incessant efforts and requests, heightens her emotional reactivity and she is led to actions that are "diffuse, psychologically expensive, and of questionable effectiveness" (Lazarus RS & Averill JR. 125). Sahiban performs the "irreparable deed" for the situation demands that "the deed must either be done or not done—and that wittingly or unwittingly" (Aristotle 51). Like Shakespeare's Hamlet, Sahiban also suffers the pangs of making an existential choice which was to end in disaster either way. Perhaps, had she not intervened in the situation, her brothers, as Mirza boasts of, would have been killed. Thereby, she enacts and commits a deed of hanging her lover's quiver on the Jand.

As is a rule in Aristotle, that “the deed should be perpetrated in ignorance, and the discovery made afterwards,” Sahiban must have thought of an alternative plan like asking for forgiveness from her brothers and be accepted in the family and the society (Aristotle 53). But “the monologic discourse of patriarchy, of the Jats, speaks only the binary language of either/or and cannot understand the relational possibilities [or relational polyphonic language] as experienced and visualised by Sahiban ... which rests on complementarity and inclusion, and has greater capacity for keeping exclusion and catastrophe out” (Singh 82, 94). Also, according to Pankaj K. Singh, the dying Mirza ironically “raises an accusing finger at Sahiban, ignoring his own role in the tragedy” (79). He accuses her and says:

Sahiban, you have deceived me
You hung my quiver on the Jand
There were three hundred arrows
Which could kill all the Syals
With the first arrow
I would have killed your brother Shamir
And with the second shot, his companions
With the third, I would have laid down the Chandhar.
(Peeloo 150 stanza 67)

It hitherto goes unnoticed that Sahiban was torn apart by ‘reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety’. It does not mean that Sahiban suffers from an “anxiety disorder [that] occurs frequently,” but she undergoes “normal anxiety response, called the “fight or flight” response, [and that] is what prompts [her] to either fight or flee from danger” (Rector et al. 1, 4). In the situation of the real or hallucinatory danger, Sahiban’s “attention shifts

immediately and automatically to the potential threat ... anxious thoughts ... anxious predictions ... and anxious beliefs” which then result in “extreme terror” and she hangs Mirza’s quiver on the Jand (Rector et al.4, 6). Since the two vibes (love for her lover and feelings for her brother) that Sahiban oscillates between are in perfect synchronization, she has to face a more complex consciousness. Her universe is split into two, and she wants an amalgamation of both.

Conclusion

When seen in common phraseology, the feudal and patriarchal voice in the songs quoted above and the movies into which the legend has been adapted and as testified by the survey, Sahiban has capriciously been sculpted as a traitor. They create and support gendered ideology and patriarchy. While Sahiban is painted as shrewd, ungracious, covetous, garrulous, insensitive, disingenuous, undependable, and seditious, Mirza has been depicted as courageous, rational, daring, honest, steadfast, prevalent, and anxious to take risks.

The perusal has attempted to re-read the love qissa of *Mirza Sahiban* by revisiting the original classic and has unearthed the truth behind the pre-conceived knowledge of the tragedy. In doing so, the present attempt equates the image of the two lovers on the lines of the confession of the persona of Sahiban in the Yash Chopra’s song, singing: “Ohde je hi maite oh Mirza mere varga.” The study investigates the combined role of the two lovers in precipitating their doom. Both Mirza and Sahiban involve in a love affair, make social transgressions of eloping against parental wishes, have specific dispositional flaws and are pawns in the hands of destiny. Seen in this light, the claim to hold Sahiban singularly for the death of Mirza

is baseless and unjustified. One may not forget that Mirza dies because of his unfavourable fate and bullshness in his own invulnerability. His haughtiness makes him unable to see through the precariousness and the susceptibility of their present position. Indeed, the readers must pay attention to the authorial voice which points out that Mirza's *hamartia* and fate are responsible for his death. After the death of Mirza, the poet Peeloo ends his epic with following words:

In this way the world goes on
The gay companies and courts pass away
Partly the gods of death and partly his pride killed Mirza
The beautiful body withered in the grave...

(Peeloo 150, stanza 67)

Likewise, in Sahiban's case, too, the fate is equally hostile, as it brings her at the edge of an existential agony where any decision would have brought her to face similar vehement cataclysm. She is pulled in two opposing directions with such forces that she could have been split into two pieces. She is more of a tragic hero than Mirza because she is crushed between the stalwart egos of her lover (who was ready to kill her siblings) and brothers (who would have never accepted the pitiable pleas of their pampered sister). There is a play of two desires in one woman; desire for her lover and her desire for the well-being of her siblings. The socially, culturally, religiously and politically constructed/sanctioned desire wins over her natural desire for love.

On the love front, if Mirza pays the price with his life, even Sahiban is not spared. If she lives along with Mirza, she also dies along with him. On one hand, she is glorified as a sister who proves her sibling loyalty by protecting her brothers; on the other hand, she proves her

sincerity in love first by eloping with her lover and later by dying with him. But patriarchal ideology eternally blames Sahiban as vicious. No matter which side she may have chosen, she would have borne the similar consequences. One may not forget that Sahiban with her bold choices and transgressive actions has challenged the authority of 17th century Punjabi social order. In any case, the patriarchal regime demanded to soil her image to re-instate its power and set an example for female social transgressors. More than Mirza, the legends seems to be a tragedy of Sahiban who becomes a scapegoat under patriarchal rule. It is, therefore, difficult to either call Sahiban a witch/infidel or a goddess/idol.

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