

Echoes of Oratory: Lexical Narratives in Punjabi Folk Music

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the long-established tradition of Punjabi folklore and the role of rhetorical devices in shaping meaning in folk songs. Folk songs were treated as cultural narratives transmitted across generations and closely associated with marriage rituals and communal life. The study aimed to identify how rhetorical and lexical choices contributed to cultural meaning in selected Punjabi folk music. Using an analytical-descriptive and discourse-based approach, two folk songs, “O’ Mehndi Taan Sajdi” (also referred to as “Lathy di Chaddar”) and “Chitta Kukar Banare Te,” were selected for rhetorical analysis. The analysis focused on symbolism, metaphor, repetition, parallelism, assonance, consonance, and alliteration. The findings showed that rhetorical expressions performed more than an aesthetic function. They generated linguistic effects, organized musicality, represented kinship and wedding practices, and helped preserve cultural memory and identity within Punjabi communities.



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INTRODUCTION

Folklore is an oral heritage that manifests the social norms, morals, and civilization of a society. Folklore is a long-established tradition, and things that are conveyed by verbal exchange from generation to generation are referred to as folklore. It delivers to the students a broad range and a viewpoint through which they examine the rituals, traditions, morals, functions, opinions, and nations distinctly without any obscurity and the mark of chroniclers. In 1846, the term folklore originated, and since then, scholars, recorders, and folklorists have paid attention to it. Dan-Ben Amos says "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context" (Dan Ben-Amos 1971) states that folk tradition is like an aesthetic interaction in intimate circles. This notion is reinforced by Barre Teolken, who combines both the aspect of humankind and identifies it as a blend of history with today, which developed through the ages of communication and engagement. Punjabi oral tradition is filled with the legacy of folklore.

Through the use of literary figures in literature, both verbal and documented, the composition and expression can become as influential as possible in terms of transmitting concepts, opinions, and emotions. The expressive techniques, such as metaphor, simile, and symbols, hold an important role in this context. These are artistic techniques commonly applied in verbal and written literature for the purpose of conveying information efficiently.

The literary expression is interpreted in the Collins English Dictionary (2006) as "An expression such as a simile, in which words do not have their literal meaning but are categorized as multi-word expressions that act in the text as units". This type of expression is known as a symbolic expression. The cultural songs are the foundation of the value system, the native background, and community relations. They are also a representation of the cultural heritage of the Punjabi societies. It is passed by the entire society, as folk songs are always distinct from conventional literature. These songs are recited and presented by both members and associations in Punjabi communities.

The American culture dictionary explains folk songs as “A song belonging to the folk music of people or an area, often existing in social versions or with regional variations”. Oxford Dictionary of

Literary Terms, "A song of unknown authorship that has passed on, preserved, and adapted in an oral tradition before later being written down or recorded". These traditional songs are termed "lot git" in the Punjabi tongue. These folk tunes in Punjabi also have various forms. The categories of Punjabi traditional songs are diverse, based on both form and concepts. The most prevalent of these folk songs are the following: tappay, bolian, and lambe Gaunh. Tappay's poetic lines, and they commonly reflect different sentiments, circumstances, notions, and concepts. These poetic lines are presented either in gatherings or in individual performances. Additionally, these short verses compose the folk, and the boli is commonly presented independently. It has many repeated phrases, and this chorus is expressed and performed with a loud tone, particularly while performing.

By comparison, the lengthy ballads (lambe Gaunh) are performed in gatherings or as few as two participants in front of one another in the shape of lyrical talk. Traditional Punjabi melodies are delivered free from any typical use of music devices; however, performers organize some specific pottery drums and other tools during the presentation of Punjabi cultural songs. These melodies are based on the rural areas, on events of weddings and delight. They are sung in the open spaces of the newlywed women's and the groom's houses. In particular, in Punjabi societies, the relatives of wedded women and newlywed men organize the communal event at night, where the relatives and loved ones of both bride and groom present traditional songs.

Traditional Punjabi melodies are presented at various events, such as the songs of 'Mehndi', 'Doli', and 'Rukhsati', which are popular forms during marriages in regional groups. Moreover, these Punjabi melodies are also presented at the beginning of the crop-gathering period, such as 'Baisakhi' and 'Basant' in Punjabi. Another significant type of traditional Punjabi melodies is 'Sithnhian', which are in reality humorous exchanges between the relatives of the parental families of marriage partners. 'Ghorian' is also a form of Punjabi melody that is sung in honor of the groom. And the tunes sung by the bride's family are known as "Chand parage". In contrast to festive songs, there are folk melodies performed at the sorrowful events of mourning. These kinds of songs are known as "Kirane" and "Alavnhian". Kirane are the Punjabi melodies with poetic pairs.

No significant study on the oral heritage of Punjab has been carried out throughout Pakistan. On the other hand, research about Punjabi melodies was conducted in India by researchers Singh and Gill, "Folk Songs of Punjab". In this research, the scholars have explained the classifications and topics of Punjabi folk melodies comprehensively. They have shown an example of ceremonial life songs in their research. In India, folklorist Devandra Satyarthi (1927) explored several regions in India for the purpose of compiling traditional songs. As stated by the folklorist Devandra, the traditional Indian songs cover all kinds associated with all aspects of life. Such traditional songs reflected the spiritual rituals, wedding festivities, and cultural observances involving both genders.

Schooler Kingra Sonam, in the research "The attributes and values of folk and popular songs", illustrates that there are two primary aims and goals of these musical compositions: amusement and merriment. As stated by Kingra, these songs offer cultural and historical insight. Professor Lavender (2009) states that a folk song consists of several dimensions of knowledge. These include: The thematic substance, the textual component, the musical rhythm, the presentation, the method of transmission, and the interpretation by the audience.

The interpretive framework concentrated on figurative language in the cultural songs of Punjab and on the ways in which figures of speech carry meaning. The analysis gave particular attention to figurative comparison, metaphor, and symbolism in the selected Punjabi folk songs. Perrine (1974) states, "A literary symbol is something that means more than what it is. It is an object, a person, a situation, an action, or some other item that has little meaning in the story, but suggests or represents other meanings as well".

The word analogy has been taken from Classical Greek. In Classical Greek, the word for metaphor is "Metaphora," which signifies to carry away. Metaphor is, in fact, a sort of implied comparison in which two different phenomena are linked. Aristotle has defined metaphor as "a shift carrying over a word from its normal use to a new one". Richards says "Semiotics for Beginners". In literary criticism, metaphor is a type of figurative language. Shaw defined metaphor as follows: "Bernard Shaw's Non-dramatic Literary Criticism" (Shaw, 1990)

"A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to a person, Idea, or object in which it is not literally applicable. A metaphor is an implied analogy that imaginatively identifies one thing with

another. A metaphor is one of the tropes, a device by which an author conveys the meanings of words. Moeinzadeh said that "Journal of English and Literature". (Moeinzadeh, 2006)

A dead metaphor loses its connotative and figurative meaning. It employs the old word. It also uses "concepts of space and time, the main parts of the body, general ecological features, and the main human activities. Tajali says "Symbols, Metaphors, and Similes in Literature" (Tajali, 2003). Newmark said, "Strategies of Translating Metaphors in Foreign Movies" (Newmark, 1988). The purpose of metaphor is to clarify and illustrate an object, occurrence, or feature comprehensively and concisely. There are further varieties of metaphors that are applied in verbal and literary traditions. They are as follows: convention metaphor, a creative metaphor. The word symbol has been taken from 'symbolleîn', which means 'to throw together'. In Greek, „symbolon“ and in Latin 'symbolum' are words that mean a sign or token. Symbol in the online „Encyclopedia Britannica“ has been defined as "a communication element intended to simply represent or stand for a complex of person, object, group, or idea."

This is a type of figurative language that adds meaning to the text and also enhances the beauty of the text. Symbolism as a movement originated in France in the 1880s. Symbols encompass various aspects and domains of life. Symbols are found in every type of literature, be it an epic or a short story. Shamisa said, "Symbols, Metaphors and Similes in Literature" (Shamisa, 2004) has divided symbols into two major categories: Arbitrary symbols and personal symbols. Arbitrary symbols are those that are commonly found and perceived as such. For example, a spring is an arbitrary symbol that represents freshness and youthfulness. Personal symbols, on the other hand, are new ones as they are created by the writer on the spot, and that is why it is sometimes hard to make sense out of them. For instance, „Lion“ is the symbol of God in Molana's poems.

Parallelism is the stylistic device in which similar grammatical structures are shown, and it occurs and all levels from words to clause levels. It is the most distinct feature in the poetic verses. This key term has been derived from the Greek word, which means repeating the same pattern of words or phrases. In his essay "Shooting an Elephant", Orwell has written on the illustration of parallelism, "Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some preferred not even to have heard of any elephant". Alfred lord Tennyson, in his renowned poem "Break, Break, Break," demonstrates an instance of parallel structure. "Oh, well for the fisherman's boy, that he shouts at his sister at play! O well for the sailor, that he sings in his boat to the boy! "

"Repetition- Definition and Examples" (Hall, 1880) is the literary device where words and expressions are reiterated at consistent points in the poetic text. In a brief section, repetition of words, phrases, or clauses. In the poem, repetition is at all places in the competition, as it can be in the beginning, middle, and end of the text. It is used in order to highlight some idea or concept, as we can see in the poem of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Rime of the Ancient Mariner".

"Water, water everywhere, but no drop to drink." William Hazlitt showed an example of repetition in the following: "If you think you can win, you can win". Ophelia in "Hamlet" as a melancholy soul utters the following repetitive rhymes: "He is dead and gone, lady, He is dead and gone, lady".

Against this background, the study sought to examine the lexical features employed in Punjabi folk music and their role in constructing cultural narratives, to analyze how linguistic choices reflect the social, historical, and cultural experiences of Punjabi communities, and to explore how oral storytelling and rhetorical devices shape those narratives. The study also considered the contribution of lexical narratives to the preservation of Punjabi cultural identity, traditions, and collective memory. Two research questions guided the analysis: how oratorical lexis enhance the values and promotion of Punjabi folk music, and how Punjabi folk music represents Punjabi cultural traditions.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study employed a qualitative analytical-descriptive design with a discourse-based rhetorical analysis of Punjabi folk music. The textual corpus comprised two Punjabi folk songs, "O' Mehndi Taan Sajdi" (identified in the source manuscript together with the name "Lathy di Chaddar") and "Chitta Kukar Banare Te." The songs were selected because they contain recurring figurative and patterned expressions associated with Punjabi wedding and communal traditions.

The analysis examined stylistic devices at the level of words, phrases, refrains, and couplets. Analytical attention was directed to symbolism, metaphorical comparison, repetition, parallelism,

alliteration, assonance, consonance, and related sound patterning. The source manuscript reports that English renderings were checked through retranslation by specialists. Interpretation proceeded by identifying each rhetorical form, examining its immediate lexical meaning, and relating the expression to the cultural and social meanings represented in the songs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Folk song 1: O' Mehndi Taan Sajdi

O' mehndi taan sajdi je nache munde di ma

The mehndi ceremony becomes truly beautiful when the groom's mother dances.

Talli taan wanjdi je nache munde di ma

The crowd bursts into applause when the groom's mother starts dancing.

Channar teri akhiyan da aaj beh gaya sehra laake

Today, your eyes are filled with pride and joy as you watch the groom wearing his wedding sehra.

Apne paraye anndi gawandi den mubarak aake

Relatives, friends, neighbors, and even distant guests come together to congratulate the family.

Mehfil taan sajdi je nache munde di ma

The celebration truly comes alive when the groom's mother dances.

Behna veer de sehra chumea, note bhabhia waare

The sisters lovingly kiss their brother's wedding sehra, while the sisters-in-law celebrate by showering him with money.

Munde di ma lutdi phirdi, unnu labde saare

The groom's mother is so busy enjoying the celebration that everyone keeps looking for her.

Rounaq taan lagdi je nache munde di ma

The wedding becomes lively and full of joy when the groom's mother dances.

Talli taan wanjdi je nache munde di ma

Everyone claps with excitement as the groom's mother dances.

O' mehndi taan sajdi je nache munde di ma

The mehndi ceremony shines with happiness when the groom's mother dances.

Folk song 2: Chitta Kukar Banare Te

Chitta Kukarh Baneyre Te

Chitta kukar banayray tey

(On the wall, there is a white cock)

Kasni dupattay waliyey munda sadqey tere tey.

(The boy fell in love with you, O'girl with a lavender cravat)

Sari khed lakeeran di.

(On our palm, it is all the game of lines)

Gaddi aaye station te akh pich gai weeran di

(Tears came into the bride's brother's eyes when the train reached the station)

Pipli dian chawan ni

(The shadow of the sacred peepal tree)

Aape hatti doli tor ke ma pay karan duawan ni.

(Parents pray for their daughters for their good life after sending the sedan)

Kunda lag gaya thaali nu

(The dish is covered by the lid)

Hattan utte mehndi lag gai ik qismat wal nu

(The lucky damsel's hand gets colored with Mehndi)

Heera lakh sawa lakh da hai

(The worth of the diamond is like a lac or quarter)

Teen walian dian Rab izzan rak tha hai

(The honor of the girl's parents is protected by God)

Aasman ich panj tare

(There are five stars in the sky)

Asan munda o lena jera saerae wich akh mare

(We shall get the youngster who could publicly wink)

Baghe wich aya karo

(You should come to the garden)

Jado asi so jaeeye tusi makya udaya kari
(And you should put the flies away when we fall asleep)
Bicycle chalaе janda hai
(He is riding a cycle)
Nale naq wagda hai, nale kulfi khai janda hai
(He enjoys the ice cream while running his nose)
Aalo matar pakaiu hoe ni
(There are cooked potatoes and peas)
Sade nalo button changeh, jere sene nallaye hoe nae
(You keep the button dear to you, so they are better than us)
Sarke utte rori hai
(On the road, there are pebbles)
Nale mera challe lay leya nale ungal marore hai
(Who has twisted my finger and taken the ring away)
Sarke utte rori hai
(In a dish, there are five pears)
Kera mera chala lay leya ungal marore hai.
(Who has twisted my right finger and put the left ring away)
Sarke utte rori hai
(On the road, there are pebbles)
Khaba mera chala laleya, saji ungal marore hai
(Who has twisted my finger and put the left ring away)
Thali wich panch nakha
(In a dish, there are five pears)
Maan deya gol gapya, teno logan wich ki aakha
(In public, what can we say to you, the dearest son of your mother?)
Bagae wich pital paya
(We put in the yard a piece of brass)
Mahey sano akh mari, sada hasa nikal giya
(When my beloved winks, we cannot help laughing)
Chitta kukar banayray tey
(On the wall, there is a cock)
Kasni dupattay waliyey munda sadqey tere tey.
(The boy fell in love with you, O'girl with a lavender scarf)

Interpretation of rhetorical and cultural patterns

In the methodology of the study which mentioned that the above-stated Pakistani songs are replete with instances of both the scheme and tropes. However, songs contain meaning in them, and also schemes are in abundance in them; that's why they are meant to be sung. Dances accompanied by them in certain performances, along with these songs, are sung in a jocund mood. The topic of most couplets is the near and dear ones of both the bride and groom in the first song selected. In a very happy and joyful mood, the mother of the groom is supposed to be. The other relatives of the groom increase the groom's happiness of the groom, and they are also very happy.

Similarly, the references and characters of near and dear ones are fully present in the second folk song. Parents of the bride wish for a better future and offer prayers for the good fortune of the bride. So, then this song becomes very grave and serious at one point. However, mostly it's in a joyful mood, and it shows the light satire from both sides in most places in the couplet of this folk song. Where the one line or verse is just used for rhyme in the Punjabi folk songs wrapped in the special local style of the couplets, there are repartees in the form of a question-and-answer session.

In particular events in the weddings of Punjabi-speaking communities, in 'O Mehndi Taan Sajdi', the symbol Hena or Mehndi stands for colour in life in the Punjabi selected folk song. The above-stated song is the song of Mehndi balsam, which is applied on the hands of both the groom and the bride, accompanied by certain folk songs at this event. In the life of both the groom and the bride, the word Hina or Mehndi is supposed to bring colour. Groom and happiness are symbolized by the word 'Sehra', which is another symbol in this folk song. In the Punjabi folk songs, the mother of the groom is

usually highly eulogized and appreciated. On the occasion of a Punjabi wedding procession, there are lots of songs sung.

The word 'Chitta Kukar' is the symbol of hustle and bustle in life, purity, and village life in the 'Chitta Kukar Banare Te' in another folk song. 'Tape' where these lines are not totally void of semantic connotations, just to complete the structure of the couplet as introduced in the first line. Musicality and rhyming scheme are incorporated in these lines. Another symbol, 'Kansi', is considered loving one who has the scarf of this colour, which stands for a damsel, for romantic colour, and for an attractive colour. 'Gadi' and the station used in this folk song are two other important symbols. Symbolic interpretations are for both the station and the train. Train or Gadi is the symbol of departure and separation at the same time, as it is the symbol of meeting, hope, and union. Omnipotent, helper, and protector symbolized by the word 'Rab', God, it is also the religious symbol, and the chastity of daughters is always saved by him in the Punjabi folk songs. The chastity of the daughters is associated with the honor of the family in the male-dominant community of the Punjabi community. Sacred boo tree, or the pipli, provides the daughters comfort, appreciation, cool shade, and protection as a symbolic one. Similarly, the chastity and honor of girls are symbolized by the word 'Doli'. To her in-laws in this particular carriage, the bride or female is escorted.

There are repetition of certain words or repetition of certain refrains or lines too in the selected Punjabi folk songs, which are rich in schemes such as assonance, consonance, and alliteration. In Punjabi folk songs, parallelism is also an important feature. Rhetorical devices add beauty and musicality as employment of them is stated above. 'Mehndi... Munde de ma' in the start of the line has alliteration in the following lines of 'O Mehndi Taan Sajidi'. In the song, the function of the chorus is performed, and a further refrain is also used in the first line. Similarly, the above-stated Punjabi folk songs, there are further instances of alliterations like other instances 'taali... taan', are also found in the schemes of the folk songs, 'Chitta Kukar Banare Te' as 'Nale.. naq', 'law leya', 'daen diya', 'asman ich', and in 'mundane.. mare'. In Punjabi folk songs with schemes, there are many examples of assonance. However, here are a few phrases and lines that show how rich the schemes of "nag wagda", "ma lutdi phirdi", and "Kukar banaray" are; rather, the songs are replete with assonance. In the Punjabi folk songs, there are many examples of repetition, i.e., "Kasni dupatta Waliye munda sadkay tere tey", "Channar teri akhiyan da ajj beh gaya sere laake", "Chitta Kukar banaray tey", as it is evident from the above two Punjabi folk songs in which rhetorical devices like repetition are commonly employed. During wedding ceremonies, the above-stated repeated lines of the Punjabi folk songs are often sung by the female, who also performs the function of refrain in them.

CONCLUSION

Methods of rejoicing through the centuries as it provides the chances to do catharsis for indigenous and local communities, as it is an important tradition of folklore. All folklore reveals the society and is also considered a byproduct of our society. In beautiful folk songs, rhetorical expressions are also rich, as in the Punjabi folk songs, as confirmed in the current study. Before the audience uses a folksong, it not only brings forth the wrapped meaning but also beautifully creates an aesthetic touch. Unfortunately, with the foreign tradition, our local tradition, which is no less, is being replaced in every aspect in modern families.

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