

# The Soul-bride of the Divine-groom: Bridal Metaphor in Sufi Poetry of Shah Husayn

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The Sufi poetic articulation of transcendent experience of Divine love is often characterized by gendered imagery, as it is expressed in metaphorical and figurative language by employing idioms of temporal human love. Reversing their gender and assuming a female persona, many male Sufi poets in premodern Punjab spoke in the voice of ardent female lovers, while portraying God as a male Beloved. They often employed a bridal metaphor, identifying themselves with a bride-in-waiting or a loyal and devoted wife, whereas the Divine Self was symbolized by a groom or husband. The poetic exegesis of the love lyrics of Shah Husayn of Lahore reveals that he expanded the bridal metaphor through borrowing rich imagery from socio-cultural topography of premodern Punjab, and situated it in context of local cultural ethos and literary conventions.

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## Introduction

The concept of love of the Supreme Being—Allah or God—is quite central in Sufism, the mystical tradition of Islam, which is often referred to as the ‘way of love’.<sup>1</sup> According to the Sufi worldview, God is not a transcendental Reality; being closer than one’s jugular vein, He is *al-Wudūd* (the Loving One), which is one of the ninety-nine attributive Divine names. The all-embracing Sufi notion of cosmic love embraces the entire universe and all the creation, and is the cause behind all causes, which brings out all existence out of nothingness. One of the earliest articulations of the notion of selfless and unconditional love for God is attributed to an eighth-century Sufi woman named Rabiah al-Adawiyah of Basrah (d. 801), who preached that one must love God for Himself alone.<sup>2</sup> Her advocacy for the worship of God out of love, neither out of fear of hell, nor in greed for paradise, radically transformed God’s image from a Wrathful Master, generally espoused by the conservative sections of the Muslim societies, to an Affectionate Friend.

This notion of Divine love later became one of the major themes in Sufi literature, and was further developed by the Sufis. A celebrated thirteenth-century Sufi master, Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), for instance, elaborated upon the Sufi philosophy of *'ishq* (intensified love coupled with passionate longing for union), and argued that the human souls had been separated from their Divine source of origin, and so had a burning desire to return to it. Renowned Sufis like the thirteenth-century Andalusian/Spanish master, Muhiyy al-Din Ibn al-Arabi (d. 1240) declared himself to be the adherent of 'the religion of Love'.<sup>3</sup>

The theme of Divine love has been elaborated upon considerably in all the genres of Sufi literature, but it is Sufi poetry that is considered the most appropriate vehicle for articulating its transcendent, subtle and lofty experiences. Nonetheless, the subjective experiences of Divine love, revealing the higher existential and metaphysical truths, are often expressed in metaphorical and figurative language. Therefore, the functional value of symbols in Sufi poetry cannot be overstated. The symbolic depiction makes the complex Sufi ideas and concepts more readily intelligible. Moreover, the representation of the higher and intricate truths of Sufism through the use of symbols in Sufi poetry does not make them objectionable in the eyes of the religious establishment, and may not mislead the novices or the common folk who do not completely comprehend them. That was why Ibn al-Arabi had warned, "Gnostics cannot impart their feelings to other men; they can only indicate them symbolically to those who have begun to experience the like."<sup>4</sup>

Symbols help us understand the nexus between outer and inner realities. Symbolism is based on the premise that a symbolic object, which represents the outer reality (*ẓāhir*), has an underlying meaning, which is its inner reality or the essence (*bāṭin*). The symbol or the external form conceals the inner reality.<sup>5</sup> In fact, a symbolic thing or the signifier is less real, while what it signifies or the signified is more real. In the words of Henri Corbin:

The symbol is not an artificially constructed sign; it flowers in the soul spontaneously to announce something that cannot be expressed otherwise; it is the unique expression of the thing symbolized as of a reality that thus becomes transparent to the soul, but which in itself transcends all expression...To penetrate the meaning of a symbol is in no sense equivalent to making it superfluous or abolishing it, for it always remains the sole expression of the signified thing with which it symbolizes.<sup>6</sup>

For the Sufis the metaphorical (*majāz*), representing the outward and external manifestations of reality, stand in contrast to the real (*ḥaqīqah*), which is the inner reality or the essence. The origin of the dichotomy between *ḥaqīqah* and *majāz* goes back to the early Muslim period.<sup>7</sup> The belief has been summed up in an adage: *al-majāzū qanṭaratu 'l-ḥaqīqah*, meaning the metaphorical or phenomenal is a bridge to the Real. So the external world is a bridge that leads to the Divine Reality. Therefore, the Sufis have always expected the readers or recipients of their poetry “to cross the bridge from the ‘metaphorical’ and figurative world of poetry and symbol to the world of ultimate and ‘truthful’ meanings. Hence, the process becomes a certain mode of understanding and perceiving existence. It is the transmutation of everything visible into symbols.”<sup>8</sup> Regarding the functioning of the metaphor, Omaima Abou-Bakr notes:

The symbol divorces consciousness from the plane of rational evidence; it is the cipher of a mystery, which must be deciphered. It is also now a symbolic truth that could not have been apprehended in any other way. In this sense, the writings of three medieval Sufis expressed the realities that they have discovered in symbolic language and must in turn be penetrated in order to reveal the hidden truth—behind the veil of the external forms of words and letters.<sup>9</sup>

While undertaking the analysis of symbolism and metaphor of an Arabic Sufi poem, Abou-Bakr further adds that the process of ‘poetic exegesis’ entails the movement from text to inner meaning, and from concrete imagery of the external world to abstract concepts of Sufism. To her, “it also embodies a spiritual Sufi journey from *zāhir* to *bāṭin*, from appearance to Truth. The vertical downward movement of digging into the implications of the text marks ascent to the Divine.”<sup>10</sup>

Coming back to the Sufi view of Divine love, referred to as *‘ishq-i ḥaqīqī*—the Real love—in Sufi writings, it was often expressed in symbolic language as the longing of a human lover for union with the Divine Beloved. In other words, it was artistically and poignantly expressed in idiom of earthly relationship—the temporal or carnal love between a man and a woman (*‘ishq-i majāzī*), or by drawing parallels between the two kinds of loves. Since such an equation necessitated gendered imagery, so in Sufi poetry, the male metaphor came to be used generally for the Divine, whereas the Sufi poets reversed their gender and identified themselves as well as the human soul with the feminine.<sup>11</sup> Sometimes, the metaphor of husband and wife was also evoked for God (imagined in masculine terms) and human souls (identified as women) respectively, and

sometimes God was depicted as a Bridegroom, and the human soul or the Sufi himself represented a passionate bride. Since the bride and groom relationship is the most intimate of all human relationships, human urge for union and intimacy with the Divine has been translated in bridal language. In Sufi literature, this phenomenon has come to be referred to as 'bridal mysticism', or 'betrothal to God', metaphorically suggesting the idea of spiritual marriage. Such bridal expressions in Sufi poetry seem to suggest a kind of eroticization of Divine love, but it must be remembered that it was squarely in line with the Islamicate literary conventions, particularly the Persian poetical tradition.

This paper proposes to discuss and analyse the use of bridal metaphor in the poetic compositions of Shah Husayn of Lahore. Undertaking poetic exegesis of his verses, the study investigates the symbolic significance of the said metaphor by going beyond the apparent meaning and literary characteristics of Sufi poetry. It seeks to explore and dissect the diverse meanings in which it was evoked and expanded, and the way it was situated in context of local cultural ethos and literary conventions of the then Punjabi society.

Studies on Sufi poetical literature abound, which focus on the multiple meanings, characteristics, literary style, themes and symbolic significance of Sufi verses. Nonetheless, the use of bridal metaphors in Sufi poetry has rarely been studied at length. Ali S. Asani's work, "The Bridegroom Prophet in Medieval Sindhi Poetry" (1991), explores the use of bridal symbol for Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) in premodern Sindhi poetry. In another work, Asani analyses bridal symbolism in the *gināns* (hymn-like poems) of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Ismailis, composed in the honour of the Shi'i Imams in general, and Imam Ali (d. 661) in particular, for whom the bridegroom metaphor was invoked. A more recent work, Hashmi's *The Brides of God* (2011), analyses the poetic utterances of three female mystics belonging to three different religio-mystical traditions in the framework of the notion of God's bride. These include Rabiah of Basrah, along with the sixteenth-century Spanish Catholic mystic St. Teresa of Avila (d. 1582) and the sixteenth-century Indian bhakti mystic Mira Bai (d. 1547). As far as classical Punjabi poetry is concerned, the bridal metaphor in the verses of Baba Nanak (d. 1539) has been analysed by Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh (1993), who also briefly analyses it in the Punjabi Sufi poetry of Bulhe Shah (1680-1758) and Waris Shah (1722-1798) in a more recent work (2012). Rosy Singh (2002) undertakes a study of the signification in the poetic compositions of Shah Husayn but does not systematically deal with the bridal metaphor in it at length. So far the theme of bridal symbolism in classical Punjabi Sufi poetry (including

that of Shah Husayn) is yet to be systematically studied and analyzed.

Coming back to the phenomenon of “bridal mysticism” or the notion of spiritual marriage, it can be found in the mystical traditions of many world religions. In the words of a scholar, “the omnipresence of the bridal symbol points to our human shared consciousness and imagination, to our fundamental oneness.”<sup>12</sup> A detailed survey of it cannot be attempted here but it may be noted that the idea of “Bride of God” is found in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>13</sup> In Catholicism, the human soul is conceived as the bride of God.<sup>14</sup> Not only that, Jesus Christ is imagined as the Bridegroom, while the Church is seen as his bride or as a bride of God. Many Catholic nuns viewed themselves as having been wedded to God or Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup> In Judeo-Christian literary tradition, the *Song of Songs*, also known as the *Song of Solomon* or *Canticles of Wisdom*, presents the interplay of metaphorical and “real” love by employing the imagery of a wedding.<sup>16</sup> In Jewish mystical literature Israel is often depicted as the bride of God, and the Torah in turn as the bride of Israel.<sup>17</sup> The bridal metaphor is also found in the Vaishnavite tradition in Hinduism, referred to as *Madhurya* or *Kanta Bhakti*, in which devotion to Lord Krishna is seen as “wifely” devotion.<sup>18</sup> The bhakti mystical tradition in India also shares the bridal symbolism. In the poetic compositions of Hindu *bhaktis* (devotees) and Sikh Gurus, which are replete with bridal imagery, the goal of a devotee is spiritual marriage with the Supreme Deity. Mira Bai evoked the bridal metaphor in her *bhajans* (devotional poems and songs) and portrayed herself as the bride of Krishna.<sup>19</sup> However, the male bhakti poets often spoke in a feminine voice, and identified themselves with the *gopis*, the young herdswomen, who had fallen in love with Krishna.<sup>20</sup>

In Muslim mystical or Sufi tradition, the concept of spiritual marriage between a Sufi or human soul and God has been a common theme.<sup>21</sup> The bridal metaphor can be discerned in the poetic writings of some of the early Sufis. The ninth-century Persian non-conformist Sufi, Bayazid of Bistam (d. 874) referred to it in his poetry.<sup>22</sup> Later on Ibn al-Arabi, in his *Tarjūmān al-'ashwāq*, and Rumi, in his monumental *Mathnawī-i' ma'anvī*, employed the wedding metaphor for the spiritual union of the human soul (symbolized as a bride) and God—the “Primordial Beloved.”<sup>23</sup> The symbolic expression of the bridal pair for God and human beings is characterized by gender reversal. It may be added here that the Sufi worldview discourages gender prejudices, and so in defiance to the patriarchal social structures, the Sufis seem to transcend the normative gender categories.

It is interesting to note that in South Asia, the death anniversary of eminent

Sufi masters is referred to as '*urs*, derived from an Arabic word meaning wedding. Disciples, devotees and the common people celebrate these anniversaries like wedding ceremonies, since it symbolize the spiritual union of the soul of the deceased Sufi with God. The Sufi is assumed as a bride, who has left for the house of *her* Divine Groom or Husband. It is customary at some shrines that devotees bring a *sehrā* (a veil of flowers traditionally worn by the brides and the grooms around the forehead) and place it on or near the grave, while the women devotees bring *mehndī*, or henna, which is also traditionally applied to the bride in South Asia for decorating her hands and feet. This occasion is celebrated with festivity and delight, with sounds of drum beating and dancing, lighting and distributing food. Women devotees also sing wedding songs, referred to as *sehrā*. In short, in South Asian shrine culture, many traditional wedding rituals are emulated.

The bridal symbolism is a well-attested tradition in South Asian Sufi literature, particularly in Sufi poetry in vernacular languages such as Hindavi, Punjabi, Sindhi, Saraiki, Gujarati and Marathi, etc. Nonetheless, it is important to note that in contrast to Persian (which has no grammatical gender), South Asian vernacular languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi and Saraiki have grammatical gender. Owing to its gender neutrality, classical Persian Sufi poetry is characterized by sexual ambiguity, but in vernacular Sufi poetry, gender plays a significant role as it allows a Sufi poet to acquire a feminine persona and speak in a female voice. Here it is important to bear in mind that traditionally speaking, in South Asian socio-cultural context, the relationship of a woman to a society in general, and more specifically, of a wife to a husband is considered analogous to the relationship of human seekers with God, since both relationships are characterized by extreme submission and intense devotion on the part of the wife and the seeker. That is why, in Sufi poetry, the feminine ideal is often cherished owing to the qualities of faithfulness, surrender and affection.

### **Premodern Punjab: Literary and Socio-historical Context**

Before analyzing the bridal metaphor in Shah Husayn's poetry, it seems pertinent to briefly set the literary and socio-historical context of premodern Punjab. The premodern Punjabi Sufi poetic tradition, beginning with Baba Farid of Pakpattan (d. 1271), presents a unique blend of Sufi metaphysics and spiritual-moral philosophy, and the imagery from local cultural topography, woven together in metaphorical and figurative language. Due to its apparent simplicity, plain diction and commonplace imagery largely drawn from the immediate environment, it

cannot be dismissed as popular folk balladry, aimed at merely entertaining the readers. The conventional scholarship of South Asian Islam has mistakenly considered the Sufi poetry in vernacular languages, including Punjabi, as something marginal, being associated with 'folk Islam,' espoused by the common people, in contrast to the 'high' Sufi literature in Arabic or Persian languages, having a popular appeal among the *ashrāf* or the elite,<sup>24</sup> primarily comprising the migrant Muslims from Arabia, Persia, Central Asia, and Afghanistan. The whole idea of 'high' Sufi literature in the so-called 'Islamic languages' needs to be de-centred, while bringing the premodern Punjabi Sufi poetry (along with the Sufi poetry in other vernacular languages) at the centre of academic discourse.

The apparent simplicity of premodern Punjabi Sufi verse masks its underlying complexity, as it presents a *mélange* of spiritual-mystical experiences, philosophical precepts, and ethical doctrines, though the ideational content of the poetic compositions of individual Sufi poets may vary. The real intent of these verses lies in their meaning.<sup>25</sup> It is meant for a variety of audiences ranging from the learned and the enlightened scholars to the laity, including the illiterate rural folk. The terminology employed in these verses have a wide appeal, and the imagery they evoke is largely borrowed from the socio-cultural landscape so that the common folk could relate themselves, and their day-to-day life, conditions, and concerns with the lofty mystical, philosophical and ethical principles of Sufism. In order to make the subtle and complex mystical and philosophical concepts intelligible, the premodern Sufis of Punjab did not hesitate to employ similes and metaphors of ordinary mundane objects like spinning wheel, yarn, millstone, glue of tree, tree bark, frogs, firewood, vessel, bullock, marshland, crane, raven, kite, shawl, mud or slush, rag or a tattered cloth, a fissure in a wall, woman's petticoat, fodder and bruise, etc. Their object was to bring home some social, moral and/or metaphysical truths.

Another remarkable characteristic of premodern Punjabi Sufi poetry is its melodious quality, for which it is popularly sung by the people. Proportionate diction and rhyming of words impart to it a flowing quality. Most of the Punjabi Sufi poets were well acquainted with musical prosody and modes. They employed multiple literary genres, the most notable being *kāfi*, a distinct literary genre of Punjabi and Sindhi vernacular poetry,<sup>26</sup> which is a "monorhyme stanzaic verse form usually set to music,"<sup>27</sup> and based on regional folk melodies. That is why the poetry of Shah Husayn, Sultan Bahu of Jhang (1630-1691), and Bulhe Shah of Qasur is still popularly sung in South Asia and beyond.

The human love motif has generally been employed by the Sufis of the

Punjab, as elsewhere in the Islamic world, to elaborate upon the subject of Divine love, which is one of its central themes. Nonetheless, this particular subject cannot be adequately analysed without reference to gender, which brings us to an important characteristic of premodern Punjabi Sufi poetry—the gender reversal. Acquiring the female persona, the male Sufi poets wrote in empathy for the women. One finds references to mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives or female lovers. The daily chores of rural women such as spinning and weaving, or husking and grinding are highlighted, and endowed with a symbolic significance. Not only these, but also the wedding songs (*suhāg* and *ghoṛiāṇ*)<sup>28</sup> sung by women in Punjab have deep symbolism. Analysing the Sufi folk literature of the mediaeval Deccan, including the *chakkī-nāmas* (songs sung by women while grinding food grain at the grindstone), Eaton observes that this literature was particularly popular among the women because its imagery was meaningful to them, and the women used to sing such songs while performing the household chores.<sup>29</sup> Much of the Punjabi Sufi poetic literature also revolves around women and their household chores. Rural Punjabi women are particularly involved in the tasks of cotton-picking in fields, as in its spinning. Since Punjab is a cotton-growing area, Punjabi Sufi poetry abounds with references to spinning wheel, yarn, bobbin, carded cotton, and cotton-field, etc. The popularity of Punjabi Sufi poetic literature also lies in its imagery taken from the everyday life of the village people.

The Sufi poets of Punjab articulated the feelings and emotions as well as the trials and tribulations of womenfolk. Historical accounts suggest that the position of women in premodern Punjabi society was not very enviable. Generally, they did not enjoy an independent status, as the society was patriarchal in nature,<sup>30</sup> as it is still to a larger extent. Women generally remained confined to their homes. The fantasies of the young unmarried girls were woven around their would-be husbands, and they were trained by the mothers and grandmothers to become good wives and daughters-in-law in the family of their future in-laws. Wedding was seen as the most important milestone in the life of a woman. The young unmarried girls dreamt of the day of their nuptial. Commenting on the mediaeval female worldview, Nijjar observes that all the dreams of the women were “concentrated on proving herself a devoted wife to her husband and in trying to please him.”<sup>31</sup> Much of her time was passed in longing in separation, waiting for the return of her husband from his sojourn. Her entire life revolved around her husband, as he formed the nucleus of her life. In relation to her husband, she was deemed as a custodian of the values of unswerving loyalty, single-minded

devotion, and selfless spirit of sacrifice. Owing to these and similar characteristics, the premodern Sufis of the Punjab employed women as a symbol for the human soul having the said qualities as prerequisite for its arduous and distressing journey to God. Various roles and status of women such as young unmarried girl, who is unmindful of her real destiny, bride or would-be bride waiting for her groom, and married woman, enjoying blissful marital life or passionately longing for reunion with her husband, are common characters around whom the entire narrative of Divine love was woven. In fact, the male poets “do not confront the female, but seek to merge themselves with feminine feelings and thoughts. The male-female duality which violates the wholeness of human nature and deprives each person of the other half is overcome, establishing, in turn, the significance of being human.”<sup>32</sup>

Nonetheless, this was just one side of the picture. The dramatic representation of bold female lovers such as Hir in Punjabi Sufi poetry defies the traditional conservative and subdued image of Punjabi women, who enjoyed social power in patriarchal Punjabi society, though in relative terms. The heroines of romantic folk tales can be seen subverting the gender regulations and norms of the Punjabi society. While analyzing the “Punjabi literary formation,” Farina Mir suggests that Punjabi Sufi poetry challenges the dominant narrative of female repression, and presents women as active agents, making choices and decisions on their own, and acting with determination and resolve.<sup>33</sup> Punjabi Sufi poetry, in fact, serves as an alternative source of (re)constructing the social and cultural history of premodern Punjab, and functions as a corrective to the impressions created by the statist historiographical accounts of the said era.

Even a superficial reading of the premodern Punjabi Sufi poetic verse suggests that it was unmistakably rooted in Sufi metaphysics, and was far from being an expression of Hindu Vedantic philosophy, having nothing to do with Islam, as mistakenly suggested in case of Bulhe Shah.<sup>34</sup> Sharda erroneously calls the premodern Punjabi Sufi poets “Vaishnava Vedantic Sufi Poets.”<sup>35</sup> That is why, contesting these arguments, Shackle stresses the Islamic-Sufi character of the premodern Punjabi Sufi poetic literature, and argues for its interpretation in essentially Sufi context.<sup>36</sup>

### **Bridal Metaphor in Punjabi Sufi Poetry before Shah Husayn**

In South Asian Sufi poetic tradition, bridal symbolism has been a consistent theme, and its earliest manifestation can be found in Punjabi Sufi poetry. The

renowned thirteenth-century Chishti Sufi of Pakpattan (Western Punjab in Pakistan), Shaykh Farid al-Din Masud, popularly known as Baba Farid (1173-1266), who is believed to be the first poet of Punjabi language, is also the earliest exponent of the idea of “bride of God” in Punjabi Sufi poetry. His poetry is mainly comprised of *dohṛās*, rhymed couplets, with each of its line having a caesura.<sup>37</sup> In his poetic verses, he evokes the bridal metaphor for describing the relationship between the human soul and God.<sup>38</sup> He employs the concepts of *suhāg* (wifeness/husband), *suhāgan* or *suhāganī* (a happily married woman enjoying marital bliss), as well as terms like *shauh*, *khasam*, and *pirr* for husband. In one of his couplets, for instance, he writes that everyone could fall in love (*pirum*) but it is the privilege of the Husband (*khasam*) to reciprocate it or not.<sup>39</sup> It symbolizes that all human souls are bound to love God, as promised by them on eve of the Primordial Covenant, but it is the discretion of God—the Self-Sufficient Lord, Who does not need anyone but Whom all creatures need—whether to return someone’s love or not.

Baba Farid elsewhere states that a married woman is helpless, as she cannot go back to her parental home if she does not command respect and support among her in-laws. She cannot call herself a happily wedded lady if her husband (*pirr*) does not take care of her.<sup>40</sup> In a symbolic sense, the parental home and the place of the in-laws symbolize two different worlds—the life and the life hereafter. If a human soul fails to win the love and favour of God, it cannot claim to have a connection or a relationship with Him. That human soul would be helpless and worthless in both worlds. In another couplet, Baba Farid addresses a married woman that she is pointlessly searching for her beloved husband or *suhāg*, unmindful of her shortcomings or deficiencies. The happily married ones do not look elsewhere.<sup>41</sup> In Punjabi, Urdu, and Hindi-Sanskrit linguistic terminology, *suhāg* refers to wifeness as well as husband. Here Baba Farid argues that the human efforts to search for God are futile until and unless we do not pay attention to perfecting our inner sincerity and purity. The faithful and committed ones do not search for God outside them, as He is essentially within them. In some couplets of Baba Farid, there is an implicit sexual imagery as well,<sup>42</sup> wherein the relationship of sexual metaphor with mystical experience is presented with panache.<sup>43</sup>

Some of Baba Farid’s *shaloks* (couplets) and *shabads* (a hymn or a section of a hymn), collectively referred to as *Farīd-bāṇī*, are incorporated in the Guru Granth—the Sikh scripture (112 *shaloks* and 4 *shabads*). In these verses, the bridal metaphor is used in an altogether different meaning: the symbol of a bridegroom

is evoked for death or the angel of death, which takes away the bride or the human soul.<sup>44</sup> The angel of death is also glorified, as he takes away the human soul against its will. Thus, the occasion of wedding is the moment of death, the moment of the merger of the soul in Godhead. Baba Farid evoked the bridal metaphor elsewhere, though not in his poetic verses, in another sense as well: he likened a Sufi Shaykh or a master to a *mashshāṭā*, the hairdresser of brides, who adorns them on the day of their wedding.<sup>45</sup> The imagery of a hairdresser suggests that Baba Farid believed that a Sufi master, who cleanses, embellishes and beautifies the human soul, and thus enables it for its possible union with the Divine, was as much important and necessary for a disciple or seeker of the path as a hairdresser for a bride. In Sufism, the necessity of a Sufi Shaykh or guide for the one who intends to traverse “the path” cannot be denied. But it is interesting to note that in classical Sufi texts, the relationship of a spiritual guide to his disciples is often depicted in gendered conceptualization.<sup>46</sup> Baba Farid, however, did not perceive this relationship in gendered terms; rather he related this relationship to the larger scheme of bridal metaphor evoked in his poetry, depicting the seeker of the Sufi path as a bride in relation to the Divine-Bridegroom. Baba Farid’s own mentor was Shaykh Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (d. 1235),<sup>47</sup> a *khalīfa* (deputy or spiritual successor) of Khwajah Muin al-Din Chishti of Ajmer (d. 1236), who popularized the Chishti *Silsilah* (spiritual order/lineage, or initiatic genealogy) in South Asia. It was under the vigilant supervision of his preceptor that Baba Farid traversed the difficult stages of the Sufi path,<sup>48</sup> so he knew well the inevitability of a Sufi master for spiritual training and guidance, and used the simile of a bride’s hairdresser for him. Baba Farid did not expand this metaphor, but Amir Khusrau (d. 1325), the disciple of Baba Farid’s principal *khalīfa* Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya of Delhi (d. 1325) later evoked and expanded it in his Hindavi poetry.<sup>49</sup>

### **Bride-groom Symbolism in Shah Husayn’s Work: Poetic Exegesis**

After Baba Farid, the bridal metaphor was evoked by Shah Husayn of Lahore, who must have been inspired by his predecessor, in his Punjabi poetic utterances. Before we analyse the use of said metaphor in Shah Husayn’s poetry, it seems pertinent to have a brief overview of his life-sketch and Sufi thought.

Shah Husayn (1539-1593) of Lahore is a renowned sixteenth-century Sufi poet of the Punjab. Originally known as Shaykh Husayn or Lal Husayn, he is better remembered as Madhu Lal Husayn. The word *lāl* refers to red or scarlet colour as

well as ruby (if spelled as *lā'l*). It is said that he assumed the name of his Hindu friend and disciple, Madhu, who later converted to Islam, as a prefix with his own name. Some believe that Shah Husayn used to don scarlet clothes, owing to which he was called Lal. What can be inferred from conflicting information regarding his ancestry is that his mother belonged to Dhadda clan (or sub-caste) of Rajputs in Punjab, whereas his father belonged to Kayastha clan of Hindus, the caste of professional scribes. His father "Nau-Shaykh" Usman was a weaver by profession. Krishna opines that the sarcastic prefix "Nau-Shaykh" with his father's name was generally added to the names of new convert Muslims.<sup>50</sup> Reportedly, one of his ancestors from his father's side named Kalsarai embraced Islam during the reign of Sultan Feroz Tughlaq (r. 1355-88), and was granted the honorific title of *Shaykh al-Islam* by the Sultan. From then onwards, the family adopted the surname of Kalsarai.<sup>51</sup> At the tender age of ten years, he was initiated in Qadiri *Silsilah* at the hands of Shah Bahlul Daryai (d. 1575)<sup>52</sup> of Chiniot (District Jhang, Western Punjab). During the next twenty-six years of his life, he followed the path of sober Sufism, and strictly adhered to social norms as well as the injunctions of *shari'ah* (the external law or exoteric dimension of Islam), but in 1575 at the age of thirty-six, he renounced sobriety, embracing the demeanour of intoxicated Sufis. He spent the rest of his life in singing, dancing and drinking in the streets of Lahore.<sup>53</sup> Thus he became the first and the foremost Sufi of the Malāmatiyya (literally meaning self-reproaching) or antinomian tradition in the Punjab.<sup>54</sup> He did not leave behind any book, except for the poetry in Punjabi language he composed, which was also not systematically recorded. His poetry is deeply embedded in the mystical traditions of Islam, and he was far from being "a Vedantic Sufi poet" or "almost a Hindu saint in his beliefs," as mistakenly suggested by some scholars.<sup>55</sup>

Shah Husayn is considered the pioneer of the tradition of employing *kāfi* (a short poem generally containing a refrain and rhymed lines) in Punjabi poetry. Since these *kāfis* were well rhymed and primarily meant for singing, these poems came to be popularly sung by the people. It may be interesting here to note that in Punjabi literary traditions, the refrain in a *kāfi* is called *rahāo*, which literally means to repeat, or to keep with you. Such refrains are present in the *kāfis* of Shah Husayn and Bulhe Shah. In Punjabi socio-cultural context, *rahāo* also refers to the tradition of a newlywed bride returning to her parents' home for a few days immediately after marriage.<sup>56</sup>

Though Shah Husayn composed verses in simple Punjabi, he also employed Arabic and Persian terminology. Moreover, he was the "first to make use of the

subjects and artistic devices of Punjabi folklore in spiritual lyric poetry.<sup>57</sup> More precisely, he originated the tradition of employing references to the tragic tales of folk romances in Punjabi Sufi poetry for dissemination of Sufi teachings.<sup>58</sup> Since these folk romances had wide appeal among the common people, the mystical verses of Shah Husayn earned popularity, and thus it proved a perfect vehicle for propagating the lofty ideals of Sufism. Drawing upon the Hīr-Rānjhā motif, one of the most legendary love tales of popular Punjabi culture, Shah Husayn referred to God as Rānjhā or Rānjhan, the hero of the tragic love tale. In Punjabi classical literature, Rānjhā is the archetype who represents love. He also represents the archetype of God, portrayed as a Beloved in the Sufi poetry.<sup>59</sup> After Shah Husayn, Bulhe Shah and also, more notably, Waris Shah (1722-1798) presented Rānjhā as a hero or an ideal.

Shah Husayn identified himself with Hīr, the heroine of the tragic tale, who is separated from her lover Rānjhā. Her tale is that of desire and longing for union during her painful separation. The intensity of these emotions, be it the joyful celebration of love or the agony and anguish of parting, has been beautifully and skilfully depicted in his poetry. That is why Shah Hussain is considered “by far the most articulate poet of separation and union”.<sup>60</sup> According to Sufi philosophy, all human souls are blessed with a Divine element, since Quran informs that God breathed His Spirit into man (al-Quran 38: 71-72). In Sufi philosophy, *‘ishq* (heightened love of God coupled with intense longing for union with the Divine) is based on idea of separation of human souls from their Divine source of origin. This blessed soul, during its earthly life and fleshly existence in the form of physical body, remembers its union with God in the pre-eternity, and longs ardently for deliverance from the world where it is stranger and in exile, and yearns to reunite with the Creator. This urge or burning desire to return to God is *‘ishq* in Sufi terminology. Much of the Sufi poetry, including that of Shah Husayn, revolves round the theme of love and separation.

Employing bridal metaphors and writing in the feminine voice, Shah Husayn invoked multiple but interrelated concepts for God such as *Sajjan*, *Sāi’yān*, *Ṣāhib*, *Kant*, *Varr*, *Pī*, *Prītam*, *Sajnā*, *Sāñwal*, and *Shauh*, which refer to husband, beloved or bridegroom, and *Mang* (fiancée) in common parlance in Punjabi. For wedding or marriage, he often used the common expression of *laṛṛ laggnā*, literally meaning to be associated with. To him, a *suhāgan* or a happily married woman is the one who wins over the Beloved through ecstatic unabashed dancing.<sup>61</sup> It suggests that on the path of divine love, the triumphant human soul which attains communion with the Divine is the one who has the ability to win the favour of the Lord by

whatever means, be it something against the social norms. So the blissful and accomplished human soul that achieves the Divine love is metaphorically represented by Shah Husayn as a wife in conjugal state whose husband is well disposed towards her. Employing the same figurative language in another *kāfi*, he adds that a *suhāgaṇ*, or a wedded woman, is the one whose husband recognizes her.<sup>62</sup> To Shah Husayn, a true bride is the one who recognizes her husband, as well as is recognized by him.<sup>63</sup> The verse suggests that a blissful human soul is the one whose love is fulfilled and passion realized by God, a soul that experiences the joyful union with Him. In another *kāfi*, Husayn highlights the characteristic of a *suhāgaṇ*; she is dyed in the husband's colour.<sup>64</sup> The development of the Divine aspect of the human soul, in contrast to the carnal self, brings the soul in harmony with God, which alone can make win His favour, and make union with Him possible.

It may be added here that a few decades earlier, drawing upon the Sufi and bhakti literary traditions, Baba Nanak (1469-1539) had also evoked bridal metaphor in his poetic utterances.<sup>65</sup> He writes that in relation to God the human souls can be classified in two categories: *duhāgaṇ* and *suhāgaṇ*. Literally speaking, the term *duhāgaṇ* refers to an unlucky married woman having unrequited love, whose love is never reciprocated by her husband, or who is deserted by him. Contrarily, in literal terms *suhāgaṇ* refers to a lucky woman who wins the love of her husband and enjoys union with him.<sup>66</sup> So according to Baba Nanak, a human soul is fortunate if it is blessed with divine love, and there is no misfortune like the failure to achieve it. In addition, he also evokes the symbol of face veil of a bride (*ghuṇghat*), who cannot see the groom due to it, for the illusion that obstructs the human vision of reality.<sup>67</sup>

In a delightful but lengthy *kāfi* by Shah Husayn, the central theme revolves around a *sālo*, a red-dyed embroidered piece of cloth usually worn by the brides. Highlighting its characteristics and usage, he weaves its striking imagery. Her *sālo*, for instance, cannot be shared with anyone. Its hue is not permanent, as it may fade away. Shah Husayn expresses the fear of a young bride as well, who is afraid of entering a new relationship with her husband, whose attitude is unpredictable for her.<sup>68</sup> It must be remembered that traditionally the yarn of the *sālo* is spun by the bride-to-be and it is then embroidered or decorated by herself. It symbolizes good deeds that a person earns during his/her lifetime. Like a *sālo*, these good deeds cannot be taken away or borrowed by anyone. With the end of life, the opportunity to earn good deeds also comes to a close. Moreover, like a newlywed bride, a Sufi or a seeker may feel anxiety regarding his/her possible

union with God.

As discussed above, the metaphor of human love with all its allied concepts and connotations has been used for the phenomenon of Divine love by the Sufi poets, whose poetic compositions at times appear to be erotic as well. Shah Husayn's poetry also contains references to physical union with sexual connotations as a symbol of spiritual or mystical union with God. He refers to *sej*, the conjugal/wedding bed or the bed of union in his poetry,<sup>69</sup> and in one of his *kāfis* says that the bride-to-be was weary of spinning for her dowry, and so after marriage when the bride was ready for union on the bed, she did not please her husband for lack of dowry.<sup>70</sup> Metaphorically, the human soul weary of good deeds and remembrance of God will not be able to achieve Ultimate Union with the Divine. In another *kāfi*, Husayn expresses his lofty experience of "becoming one" with God in figurative language. Literally translated, it means that he begs his Beloved to cast a loving glance at him, which alone can guarantee a sound sleep to the ardent lover in his private chamber. The term *chubāra* used for the upper-storey private chamber of a house can be interpreted to suggest a higher level of consciousness, but it must be remembered that in Punjab, the *chubāra* was traditionally used by the newlyweds for their wedding night.<sup>71</sup> Interpreted in this sense, Husayn suggests that spiritual union with God is possible if His mercy allows it. In his *kāfis*, he laments in feminine voice that without the beloved, the night seems prolonged:<sup>72</sup>

*Sajjaṅ bin rātāiṅ hoeyāṅ vaḍiyāṅ (rahaho)*  
*Rānjhaṅ jogī meṅ jogiyānī kamlī kar kar saddī āṅ*  
*Mās jharey jhar pinjar hoeyā kaṅkan lageyāṅ haḍiyāṅ*  
*Meṅ ayānī naeh ki jānāṅ birhoṅ tanāwāṅ gaddiyāṅ*  
*Kahaē Husayn Faqīr Sāiṅ dā dāman terey meṅ laggiyāṅ*

Without the beloved, nights have become long (REFRAIN)  
 Ranjha is jogi, I am a jogan; people call me possessed  
 I am shedding flesh, reduced to a skeleton, my bones crackle  
 Being a simpleton, what do I know of love? The ropes of separation are stretched  
 Says Husayn the Lord's devotee, I'm deeply attached to you

The poet regrets that the night is passing by and the beloved/husband has not enjoyed enough. To him, the wife who is in the arms of the husband, i.e. being loved, is *suhāgaṅ* or truly wedded.<sup>73</sup> This poem suggests that life is coming to a

close but complete union with God has so far not been attained. The blessed ones are those souls who enjoy the favour of God. Speaking in female voice in another *kāfi* with overt sexual/conjugal undertones, the poet bemoans that others had amorous play and complete union with their husbands except for *her* as *she* has not been insistent in this regard.<sup>74</sup> It suggests that ultimate union with God has to be reached by human effort and exertion, and does not come by itself.

In his poetic compositions, Shah Husayn's imagery is startlingly fresh and evocative. He evoked strong images from the cultural landscape. In his *kāfis*, he frequently portrayed the image of a *kuṛī*, a maiden or a young innocent girl—the bride-to-be, who is unmindful of the fact that one day she has to leave her paternal home for her in-laws' residence. For him, the young girl symbolized the ignorant folk, unmindful of the reality of death and unaware of the real destination of human beings—the life after death. That is why Shah Husayn in a *kāfi* admonishes the young silly girl to spin yarn for her dowry instead of roaming about aimlessly in streets.<sup>75</sup> Cleansing and beautifying herself along with learning the knack of spinning and weaving will alone enable her to win the love of the groom/husband.<sup>76</sup> In a melodious *kāfi*, speaking in female voice, Husayn takes on the persona of a young girl who does not know how to spin. She bemoans and weeps, and blames the spinning wheel.<sup>77</sup> The metaphor underscores the Sufi view that human beings have the capacity to improve their life and make their existence meaningful. Ghaffaar suggests that just like cotton that can be spun into yarn, woven into cloth, and made into garments to be worn, life can also be altogether transformed.<sup>78</sup> These *kāfis* suggest that one should not waste time in leisure and pleasures of life, and instead pay attention to prayers, worship and earning good deeds—the spiritual accomplishments—for life hereafter. God's favour can be won by these accomplishments, provided they are accompanied with inner purification. Moreover, as noted earlier that Shah Husayn's father was a weaver by profession, the metaphors of spinning wheel or *charkha*, and the acts of spinning and weaving (which involve repetitive circular movement), are often evoked by him to symbolize self-transformation through good deeds, remembrance of God and devotion to Him. The entire process, from cotton picking to making cloth at a handloom, involves a number of stages, which symbolize the varied stages of spiritual development a seeker has to pass, after which he/she is completely transformed like a raw cotton ball transforming into a fine cloth. Moreover, the acts of spinning and weaving symbolize remembrance of God, as they all are characterized by repetition. Furthermore, the spinning wheel may also symbolize the wheel of time, and also the cosmic wheel of creation.<sup>79</sup>

In his poetry, Shah Husayn expanded the bridal metaphor by employing wedding-related concepts such as that of *dāj* or dowry,<sup>80</sup> which symbolizes good deeds which the young girl (the human soul) collects during the pre-marital days (lifetime) in order to take them along to her husband's home (the life hereafter or the eternal destination). To Shah Husayn, those who collect dowry by spinning more and more yarn would be able to win over the favour of their husband after marriage, i.e. only good deeds in this world can ensure salvation in the next world. In Shah Husayn's poetry, like Baba Nanak, the face veil (*ghonḡhat*) of a bride symbolizes the worldly barriers that obstruct the vision of the Divine.<sup>81</sup> Husayn referred to *bābal* (father of the girl/bride and his home; a title used by the girl/bride for addressing her father, often used in wedding songs), the streets of *bābal*, *māikah* (parents and their home), and *sasurāl* and *sohurey* (the in-laws and their residence) to symbolize the life, and life after death respectively.<sup>82</sup> The *janj* (wedding procession of a bridegroom to bride's house) refers to the angel of death, or the moment of death, while *ḡolī* (a palanquin; an enclosed sedan to carry the brides from their parental home to that of their in-laws) carrying the bride (the human soul) represents the funeral bier which is meant for carrying the corpse after death to its original abode, i.e. the grave.<sup>83</sup> However, he argues that those (the brides or wives, symbolizing human souls) who win over the *shauh* or husband (symbolizing God) are not afraid of the angel of death.<sup>84</sup> Some *kāfis* of Shah Husayn have a tinge of wedding songs, sung for the departing bride who laments the loss of her parental home along with parents, siblings, childhood playmates and friends, and who is sometimes advised as to how to manage the in-laws' household or strengthen new relationships.

Owing to Shah Husayn's exaggerated inclination to Madhu, recent studies argue for his use of metaphors of same-sex love for divinity, and his "homeroetic" demeanour,<sup>85</sup> but as far as his verse is concerned, we fail to find any such insinuation or even a slight semblance of it. Lajwanti Rama Krishna's analysis of his poetry also attests it.<sup>86</sup> The dominant metaphor employed for divine love in his poetry is that of temporal romantic love between a man and a woman. The metaphors in Shah Husayn's love lyrics surpass all other Punjabi Sufi poets. In his poetry he weaved the complex Sufi doctrines and principles into the romantic folk tales for enhanced intelligibility and effective dissemination of the former among the common folks. He expanded the bridal metaphor by employing wedding-related concepts for articulating and explicating the intricate and lofty experience of Divine love.

To conclude: like all Sufi poetical texts, which are essentially polysemous,

containing multiple and at times conflicting meanings, the Sufi poetry of premodern Punjab urges its readers to unravel the verses by transcending the literal meanings, and delve deep into the symbolic world of denotation. The metaphorical significance in the premodern Punjabi Sufi poetry is not merely literary; its symbolism imparts a spiritual character to it, which enhances its significance manifold. The Sufi poets of premodern Punjab such as Shah Husayn, like their counterparts in many other parts of the Islamicate world, employed gendered imagery in their Punjabi poetry to depict the intimate relationships between human soul with God, as well as the relationship of a disciple with a preceptor. While engendering these relationships in conceptual terms, the bridegroom metaphor was often evoked. The bride, would-be bride or a young girl, a longing or a happily wedded wife, or simply a woman, all represented the soul of a seeker on the Sufi path, whereas the Divine Self as a masculine character was symbolized by a beloved, master, fiancé, husband or a groom.

The use of bridegroom metaphor seems an appropriate vehicle to convey the higher truths of Sufism, and the intricacies and subtleties of Divine love in an effective way, having maximum impact on the local audiences. Though the impact of the Sufi poetical tradition of the Islamicate Persia on South Asian literary traditions cannot be denied, the bridal symbolism was ingeniously evoked and expanded by Shah Husayn in his poetic composition in vernacular language Punjabi. The bridal metaphor interlaced with rich imagery drawn from the socio-cultural topography was embedded in the cultural ethos and literary conventions of premodern Punjab. Many local concepts were effectively appropriated by Shah Husayn and used to expand the bridal metaphor, such as the concept of *suhāg* and *suhāgaṇī*. Seen from another perspective, the message of Islam, and particularly that of Sufism, was vernacularized and disseminated by Sufis like Shah Husayn in Punjab through his poetic compositions, which was far more popular among the common folks than the 'high' Sufi literature composed in Persian or Arabic languages, which was meant for the Persian-speaking *ashrāf* or the elite. Moreover, Shah Husayn's identification with women, particularly with the female characters of romantic folk tales, and his feminine speech and the consequent imagery would not have been without implications: in the patriarchal social structure of Punjabi society, wherein masculinity as a social and cultural construct was (and is still) seen as a source of honor and pride for men, the symbolic gender reversal by the Sufi poets like Shah Husayn must have challenged the basic premises of gender relationships.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Edson, *Mysticism and Alchemy through the Ages: The Quest for Transformation* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2012), 73.

<sup>2</sup> Widad El Sakkakini, *First Among Sufis: The Life and Thought of Rabia al-Adawiyya, the Woman Saint of Basra*, trans. Nabil F. Safwat (London: Octagon Press, 1982), 58-64.

<sup>3</sup> Angus Macnab, "Sufism in Muslim Spain," in *Sufism: Love and Wisdom*, ed. Jean-Louis Michon and Roger Gaetani (Bloomington: IN: World Wisdom, Inc., 2006), 127.

<sup>4</sup> As quoted in Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London, Boston and Henley: 1979 [1914]), 108.

<sup>5</sup> John Baldock, *The Essence of Sufism* (Hertfordshire: Eagle, 2004), 75-85.

<sup>6</sup> Henri Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (Irving, Texas: Spring Publications, 1980), 30.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfhart Heinrichs, "On the Genesis of the *Haqīqa-Majāz* Dichotomy," *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984): 111-40.

<sup>8</sup> Omaira Abou-Bakr, "The Symbolic Function of Metaphor in Medieval Sufi Poetry: The Case of Shushtari," *Alif* 12 (1992): 44-45.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>11</sup> It may be added here that some of the Sufis did not differentiate between Divine and human love; to them it was like two sides of the same coin. They perceived it as two levels of the same love, and not as two distinct or exclusive types of love. That was why some of the Sufis, like the renowned Persian Sufi poet, Ruzbihan Baqli of Shiraz (d. 1209), even viewed the human love as a ladder toward Divine love. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 292. Emerson translates the views of an eminent fifteenth-century Persian Sufi poet, Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492) in these words: "Beholding in many souls the traits of Divine beauty, and separating in each soul that which it has contracted in the world, the lover ascends to the higher beauty, to the love and knowledge of the Divinity, by steps of this ladder of created souls." Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, 110.

<sup>12</sup> Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 92. See also Marilyn Hughes, *Bridal Mysticism: An Overview* (n.p.: CreateSpace, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Richard D. Patterson, "Metaphors of Marriage as Expressions of Divine-Human Relations," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51.4 (2008): 689-702.

<sup>14</sup> June McDaniel, "Bliss" in *Encyclopedia of Love in World Religions*, ed. Yudit Kornberg Greenberg, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara; CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2008), 87.

<sup>15</sup> Dyan Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women, 200-1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); and Asunción Lavrín, *Brides of Christ: Conventual Life in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Ernst, Carl W. "Interpreting the Song of Songs: The Paradox of Spiritual and Sensual Love" in *Song of Songs: Erotic Love Poetry*, ed. Judith Ernst (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); and Sarah Pessin, "Divine Love in Judaism" in *Encyclopedia of Love in World Religions*, vol. 1, ed. Yudit Kornberg Greenberg (Santa Barbara; CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 166-67.

<sup>17</sup> Barbara A. Holdrege, "The Bride of Israel: The Ontological Status of Scripture in the Rabbinic and Kabbalistic Traditions" in *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Miriam Levering (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 180-261.

<sup>18</sup> John Hawley, "Images of Gender in the Poetry of Krishna," in *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, eds. Caroline Walker Bynum, Steven Harrell and Paula Richman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 236; and Edward C. Dimock, *The Place of the Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava-Sahajiyā Cult of Bengal* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Robert Bly, "A Few Words about Mirabai," in *Mirabai: Ecstatic Poems*, trans. Robert Bly and Jane Hirshfield (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), x.

<sup>20</sup> Hawley, "Images of Gender in the Poetry of Krishna," 231-56.

<sup>21</sup> Lloyd V. J. Ridgeon, *Sufism: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 73.

<sup>22</sup> Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 1997), 60.

<sup>23</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam* (New York and London: Continuum, 2003), 110.

<sup>24</sup> Ali S. Asani, "Sufi Poetry in the Folk Tradition of Indo-Pakistan," *Religion and Literature* 20.1 (1988): 81, 91.

<sup>25</sup> Najm Hosain Syed, who identifies and analyses the recurrent patterns in the Punjabi poetic tradition, sums them up as such: "...the conception of technique as inseparable from context; the drawing of imagery from immediate environment; the tendency towards a dramatic mould of presentation; simplicity bordering on naivete in external form; the intensity of concern with the ultimate and the eternal." Najm Hosain Syed, *Recurrent Patterns in Punjabi Poetry* (Karachi: City Press, 2003), 31-32.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed study, see Saeed Bhutta, "Kafi: A Genre of Punjabi Poetry," *South Asian*

*Studies*, 23.2 (2008): 223-29.

<sup>27</sup> A. Singh, "Punjabi Poetry" in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, eds. Roland Greene et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 1132.

<sup>28</sup> Nahar Singh, "Suhāg and Ghoṛiān: Cultural Elucidation in a Female Voice," *Journal of Punjab Studies*, 18: 1&2 (2011): 49-73.

<sup>29</sup> Richard M. Eaton, "Sufi Folk Literature and the Expansion of Indian Islam," *History of Religions*, 14.2 (1974): 119.

<sup>30</sup> Bakhshish Singh Nijjar, *Panjāb under the Great Mughals: 1526-1707* (Bombay, Thacker, 1968), 139.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>32</sup> Singh, *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent*, 92-93.

<sup>33</sup> Farina Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 123-24, 140-49.

<sup>34</sup> Lajwanti Rama Krishna, *Pañjābī Ṣūfī Poets, A.D. 1460-1900* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 59-60.

<sup>35</sup> Sadhu Ram Sharda, *Sufi Thought: Its Development in Panjab and its Impact on Panjabi Literature, from Baba Farid to 1850 A.D.* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1974), 104.

<sup>36</sup> Christopher Shackle, "Punjabi Sufi Poetry from Farid to Farid," in *Punjab Reconsidered History, Culture, and Practice*, eds. Anshu Malhotra and Farina Mir (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 26-27.

<sup>37</sup> Though each *dohṛā* is complete in itself in terms of meaning and message, sometimes it is followed by a complementary couplet to further illustrate the intended meaning.

<sup>38</sup> Brij Mohan Sagar, *Hymns of Sheikh Farid* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1999), 118-19; and Baghwant Singh Dalawari, "Divine Songs of Sheikh Baba Farid," *Sikh Review*, 47.3 (1999): 8-11.

<sup>39</sup> Muḥammad Āṣif Khān, *Ākhiya Bābā Farīd nē* [Punjabi: Baba Farid Says], (Lahore: Pakistan Punjabi Adabi Board, 1978), 156.

<sup>40</sup> Khān, *Ākhiya Bābā Farīd nē* 174.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>43</sup> Muzaffar A. Ghaffaar, *Masterworks of Punjabi Sufi Poetry: Baaba Fareed Ganjshakar Within Reach* (Lahore: Ferozsons, 2006), 291.

<sup>44</sup> *Siri Guru Granth Sahib*, vol. 1, trans. Sant Singh Khalsa. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Tucson; AZ: Hand Made Books, n.d.), 1377.

<sup>45</sup> Amir Hasan Ala Sijzi Dehlavi, *Fawā'id al-Fuād: Malfūzāt of Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya*, ed. and Urdu trans. Khwajah Hasan Thani Nizami Dehlavi (Delhi: Urdu Academy, 1992), 44.

<sup>46</sup> Malamud, Margaret. "Gender and Spiritual Self-Fashioning: The Master-Disciple Relationship in Classical Sufism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 64.1 (1996): 89-117.

<sup>47</sup> Shaykh Qutb al-Din, a native of the town of Osh (also spelled as Ush; presently, the second largest city in Kyrgyzstan, located in the Fergana Valley in Central Asia), had emigrated to India, and settled at Delhi. For details of his life, see Tanvir Anjum, *Chishti Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi: From Restrained Indifference to Calculated Defiance* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 119-24.

<sup>48</sup> Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Faridu'd-din Ganj-i-Shakar* (Aligarh: Muslim University, 1955), 21.

<sup>49</sup> Tanvir Anjum, "Bridal Symbolism in the Sufi Poetry of Islamate South Asia: From the Earliest Times to the Fifteenth Century," *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, XXXIV/1 (2013), 12-14.

<sup>50</sup> Krishna, *Pañjābī Ṣūfī Poets*, 12. n. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Nur Ahmad Chishti, *Taḥqiqāt-i Chishtī* (Lahore: Punjabi Adabi Academy, 1964), 363; Krishna, *Pañjābī Ṣūfī Poets*, 12; John A. Subhan, *Sufism: Its Saints and Shrines* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1938), 265.

<sup>52</sup> For details see Chishti, *Taḥqiqāt-i Chishtī*, 364-76.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 372-73; Subhan, *Sufism: Its Saints and Shrines*, 265-66. For detailed biography of Shah Husain, see Shaykh Parvaiz Amin Naqshbandy, *Hazrat Maadho Laal Hussain* (Lahore: Umar Publications, 2001).

<sup>54</sup> Fateh Muhammad Malik, "Shah Husain and the Malamatiya in the Punjab," *Sufi Traditions and New Departures: Recent Scholarship on Continuity and Change in South Asian Sufism*, ed. Søren Christian Lassen and Hugh van Skyhawk (Islamabad: Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations, 2008), 40.

<sup>55</sup> Sharda, *Sufi Thought*, 122; and N. Hanif, *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: South Asia* (New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2000), 140.

<sup>56</sup> Muzaffar A. Ghaffaar, *Masterworks of Punjabi Sufi Poetry: Shaah Husayn Within Reach*, vol. 1 (Lahore: Ferozsons, 2005), 22.

<sup>57</sup> Anna Suvorova, *Muslim Saints of South Asia: The Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 194.

- <sup>58</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 384. It may be added here that in South Asian vernacular Sufi literature, Maulana Daud's *Candayan*, composed in 1379, is considered the first Hindavi romantic folk tale, which adapted the Ahir folk-epic of Lorik and Canda for articulating the love relationship between God and a Sufi adept. Aditya Behl, "The Magic Doe: Desire and Narrative in a Hindavi Sufi Romance, circa 1503," in *India's Islamic Traditions, 711-1750*, ed. Richard M. Eaton (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 183. See also Kartar Singh Duggal, *Folk Romances of Punjab* (New Delhi: Marwah, 1979).
- <sup>59</sup> Azra Waqar, "The 'Lover Archetype' in Punjabi Classical Poetry," *Journal of Historical and Cultural Research*, XXX.1 (2009): 131-58.
- <sup>60</sup> Harjeet Singh Gill and Rosy Singh, "Shah Hussain," *South Asian Ensemble* 4.1 (2012): 157.
- <sup>61</sup> Muḥammad Āṣif Khāṇ, ed. *Kāfīaṅ Shah Ḥusayn* (Lahore: Pakistan Punjabi Adabi Board, 2014), 166, 160.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.
- <sup>63</sup> Ghaffaar, *Shaah Husayn Within Reach*, vol. 1, 177.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, vol.2, 421, 427-28.
- <sup>65</sup> Singh, *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent*, 90-117.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 79; Ishar Singh, *Nanakism: A New World Order, Temporal and Spiritual* (New Delhi: Ranjit Publishing House, 1976), 166.
- <sup>67</sup> *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, vol. 1, 2.
- <sup>68</sup> Khāṇ, *Kāfīaṅ Shah Ḥusayn*, 80.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 115, 186.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 56; see also Ghaffaar, *Shaah Husayn Within Reach*, vol. 1, 78.
- <sup>72</sup> Khāṇ, *Kāfīaṅ Shah Ḥusayn*, 148, see also 198.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 94, 103.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.
- <sup>78</sup> Ghaffaar, *Shaah Husayn Within Reach*, vol. 1, 382.
- <sup>79</sup> Gill and Singh, "Shah Hussain," 157.
- <sup>80</sup> Khāṇ, *Kāfīaṅ Shah Ḥusayn*, 83, 65.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 60, 105, 125, 204, 205, 212.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, 162, 192, 205.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>85</sup> Scott A. Kugle, *Sufis and Saints' Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 182-209.

<sup>86</sup> Krishna, *Pañjābī Ṣūfī Poets*, 20.

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