

Shiv Kumar Batalvi's *Luna*: An Archetypal Meme of Punjabyat

Simple Kochar

Freelance Researcher, Punjab

This paper examines Shiv Kumar Batalvi's *Luna* and how it documents various shades of Punjabyat with reference to memes and archetypes. Richard Dawkins postulated the idea of memes almost four decades ago. When Jungian archetypes are prefixed with memes, the flippant tone analogous to the latter as a genre disperses. Archetypes and memes are both cultural reflectors and informative models. By examining archetypal discourses in relation to contemporary ones, memes offer an opportunity to record the literary and cultural evolution of a society. In *Luna*, Shiv recounts the legend of a community that has been displaced, destabilized and yet gathered itself from the fragments of the past. *Luna* strives to reinstate the crushed individual from the communal periphery to designated positions. Shiv titles his work after the female protagonist and shifts the paradigm from Puran to Luna. The archetypal female voice becomes a figural meme for the congested territory womankind has been relegated to. Shiv helps Luna to spread her revolution and gradually the archetypal feminine voice mimics the voice of the Punjabi community articulating its suffering. The characters inhabiting the discursive space are archetypal memes of dreams, aspirations, and freedom of thought.

Introduction to Shiv Kumar Batalvi

Shiv was born in the summer of 1936 in district Shakargarh (now in Punjab, Pakistan). The three religious communities – Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs – lived there in complete harmony during pre-partition days which greatly impacted Shiv's poetic sensibilities. The partition of the country was both traumatic and nostalgic for Shiv when he migrated to a small town Batala on the Indian side of Punjab. In less than a decade long poetic career, Shiv journeyed inwards in search of the self and simultaneously in search of the collective self of mankind. The search for self begins in earlier poems on a subtle note, heightens in *Luna* (1965) and culminates in *I and Me* (1970). In his collected works like *Handful of Pains* (1960), *Lajwanti* (1961) and *Bid Me Farewell* (1963), death was a dominant metaphor.

Charismatic in persona and enigmatic in poetry, Shiv's writing is a blend of the classical Punjabi tradition with modern aesthetics. He speaks in the language of the common man effortlessly striking a chord of affinity with them. His imagery and metaphors are common to everyday life rooted in the topography and psyche of Punjab. Shiv did not fall for any political group or ideology. He voiced for a cause, the existence of an individual in the social space. It would be

inappropriate to deem him a hopeless romantic as some critics have. His work is not an elegy or an ode to the unrequited lovers. Shiv as an archetypal meme is rooted in the heart and soul of Punjabis and the popular discourse (media) has played a vital role in disseminating him to the regional and the global audience.

Shiv, an Archetypal Meme:

<i>Maae ni maae</i>	<i>Mother, o mother,</i>
<i>Mere geetaan de nainaan vich</i>	<i>My songs are like eyes</i>
<i>Birhon di rarak pave!</i>	<i>That sting with the grains of separation.</i>
<i>Adhi adhi raateen-</i>	<i>In the middle of the night,</i>
<i>Uth ron moye mitraan nu</i>	<i>They wake and weep for dead friends.</i>
<i>Maae sahnu neend na pave!</i>	<i>Mother, I cannot sleep.¹</i>

In the garb of romance of the lovers forlorn or separated in death, Shiv recounts the legend of a community that has been displaced, destabilized and yet gathered itself from the fragments of the past. Shiv's Punjabiness debunks all bias and speaks for humanity. He strives to reinstate the crushed and the subdued individual from the communal periphery to designated positions. He delivers the suffering of the individual, of broken dreams and celebrate imperfections. Like Waris' Heer-Ranjha, Shiv and his characters too are archetypal memes discoursing the evolution of Punjabiyaat.

An Anecdote

The *India Today* byline, 'A 50-character tweet from Rihanna (famous international artist) was enough to set Twitter on fire with comments, posts, memes and jokes.' She asked a simple question, 'why aren't we talking about this?! #FarmersProtest'. Farmers mainly from Punjab, later accompanied by fraternity from the neighbouring states as well, had gathered on Singhu border adjoining Delhi-Haryana to protest against the new farm laws. 'In about 2.5 hours, Rihanna's tweet...in India had garnered over 77,400 likes, 178,700 comments and about 16,000 retweets' (Rawat). The incident highlights the powerful impact of memes on social and cultural consciousness and how it unites people from different walks of life – farmers, international singer, journalists, and masses on a common platform.

The Darwinian Doctrine

Charles Darwin proposed evolution by natural selection in his seminal work *On the Origin of Species* (1859). In its struggle for existence, each organism adapts and changes itself according to the environment. The beneficial variations increase their chances of survival and reproduction by passing the favourable traits to the next generations while rejecting the unfavourable ones. As offsprings compete for limited resources available, the fittest ones with most favorable attributes survive, thus guiding the evolutionary process. However,

Darwin does not limit the application of natural selection to the species only. In his next critical work *Descent of Man* (1874), Darwin documents how languages have evolved through natural selection as even the words 'struggle for life'.

Dawkins' Conceptualization of Memes

Richard Dawkins, a twentieth century British biologist, further expands on the Darwinian thesis. While discussing how natural selection might extend beyond biological replication, Dawkins proposed that ideas could be subject to Darwinian principles as well. To label this kind of information, Dawkins coined the word *meme*² as a behavioural equivalent of genes. Meme is the abbreviation of a Greek word 'Mimeme', which means an imitated thing. Meme is the 'new replicator, a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*' (Dawkins, 249). Genes are biological replicators and basic functional units of heredity that transmit information from generation to generation. Similarly, memes are cultural replicators carrying information that illustrates a meaning. A meme can be an idea, a song, a fashion in trend, an architectural design, a behavioural pattern, a slang, etc which spreads widely becoming a commonplace phenomenon. Memes reproduce themselves through multiple channels like verbal and non-verbal, print and electronic media, art forms and rituals, etc. Like their biological counterparts, memes also have the ability to multiply, evolve, transmit and mutate the information that they carry.

Dawkins view is supported by other theorists like Daniel Dennett, an American philosopher, in his famous work *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (1995). Also, Susan Blackmore, a British author and a cognitive scientist, combines both Dawkins' and Dennett's viewpoints to describe the replicating traits of memes in her popular work *The Meme Machine* (1999). John Perry, professor Emeritus at Stanford University, in one of his podcasts, 'Memes and the Evolution of Culture' (*Philosophy Talk*, 2016) also elucidates on the gene-meme analogy.

How do Memes Propagate and Survive?

Memes require a physical medium to be carried on so they copy by passing the information from one person to another. As Dawkins' writes, 'Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body...so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation' (Dawkins, 249). Thus, human brain acts as a vehicle for the proliferation of a meme. How successfully a meme is replicated depends upon how efficiently the host retains and reports it to others, thereby contributing to the advancement of an idea. Imitation thus is the key phenomenon in understanding the discourse of memes. For ideas to spread, language acts as a significant medium because ideas evolved within our personal imagination are greatly enhanced by the import and export of language along with other non-linguistic means.

Dawkins lists three qualities that make genes excellent biological replicators

'longevity', 'fecundity' and 'copying-fidelity' corresponding to 'time available for making copies', 'speed of replication' and 'accuracy of replication' (Dawkins, 21, 23). He claims that these characteristics are applicable to memes as well and are essential in determining how quickly and precisely an idea is copied. Mutation also plays a vital role as it determines the extent of change that occurs in the essence of an idea while transmission. Dawkins' also explains that some memes have a high survival value in the cultural environment because they come with a 'great psychological appeal' (Dawkin, 250). That is why, they survive and flourish more robustly in the meme pool while others disappear quickly, and gradually the recurrent one's merge into tradition.

Significance of Literary Memes

Man is born into the world with rich inheritance of his ancestors genetically coded in DNA. Similarly literary world offers him cultural heritage encoded in narratives (myths, legends, folklores, etc). By examining archetypal discourses in relation to contemporary ones, memes offer an opportunity to record the literary and cultural evolution of a society. It empowers man to coalesce himself with his kind or community based on ubiquitous socio-cultural, psychological and other attributes. Thus, memes as symbolic repertoires are very influential in constructing our social and cultural identities. Memes are not merely for entertainment purposes; they articulate the language of creativity and shared experiences of a community. As American philosopher Daniel Dennett in his Ted Talk (2007) defines, 'A meme is an information packet with attitude' (07:57). One of the essential features of meme genre is intertextuality. Memes not only carry stories of the past but also impacts future generations intellectually facilitating the culture they want to create thereby promoting cultural and temporal integration. Limor Shifman in '*The Cultural Logic of Photo-Based Meme Genres*' discusses the power of iconic photos with respect to broader framework of digital culture. Her analysis holds true for iconic narratives as well.

Iconic photos (texts) freeze concrete historical moments, with a single frame serving as an index of a series of happenings unfolding before and after it. At the same time, these images (texts) symbolize values and sentiments that transcend the specific event, as they are perceived as channels for greater truths about societies' fundamental structures, norms and paradoxes (Shifman, 2014, 347-48).

The iconic texts act as cultural stimuli. They position the events in a chronological sequence on a timeline which lends a constant factor to otherwise identity and culture in flux; and yet simultaneously assume larger function by delimiting themselves from exclusive labels as they reflect broader social mores within which the culture of a community evolves.

Defining Archetypes

Carl Jung, a famous twentieth century Swiss psychoanalyst, has closely influenced the disciplines of philosophy, anthropology, literature and religious studies. His key concepts like Collective Unconscious, Archetypes and Dream Analysis are avant-garde in understanding human psyche. Archetype is a combination of two Greek words, *arkhē* (origin) and *typos* (model) which means the first or initial type of which later copies are made. Jung elaborates, 'there are present in every psyche forms which are unconscious but nonetheless active – living dispositions, ideas in the Platonic sense, that perform and continually influence our thoughts and feelings and actions' (Jung, 1981, *Archetypes* 79; par. 154). The foundation of archetypes rests on the collective unconscious. Archetypes replicate themselves in the narratives as themes, motifs, images and characters which are universal in nature. Jung observes that archetypes are inborn and inherited and transmitted through generations. The external environment acts only as a stimulus to activate them. They are also referred to as 'ancestral memories' and 'primordial images'. Jung cites the analogy of human body to illustrate the concept of archetypes and calls them the organs of psyche shaping up our thoughts and perceptions.

Culturally, archetypes most commonly propagate through the art of storytelling. Though archetypes carry both positive and negative connotations, the meaning largely depends on how they are perceived in reality, good or bad, evoking similar responses in our minds. Each archetype carries a predefined notion, yet it stores possibilities to expand its avenues which might sound contradictory at the outset given its inherent nature. Jung presents archetypes as dynamic in nature. As human consciousness evolves, so do archetypes broaden their nuances and reorganize themselves. Each individual reflects one dominant archetype in his or her personality though there are multiple of them acting together. Jung identified four major ones – Persona, Shadow, Anima/Animus and Self. Since they are reproduced so frequently in literary and cultural narratives, their presence is easily discernable in mankind.

(I) *Self* – The Jungians call self as the archetype of archetypes as it embraces all other archetypes in the pursuit of consciousness. As Jung defines, 'the Self signifies the unification of consciousness and unconsciousness in an individual and represents the psyche as a whole' ('The Self Archetype'). Figuratively, Jung represents self by a circle or a *Mandala*, 'symbolizing the presence of opposites to be integrated in the human psyche – the anima and animus, the ego and the shadow, the Father and the Mother, matter and spirit, good and evil, etc' (Leigh, 2011, 103). The prime focus is on the synthesis of polarities for self to emanate as a whole. It gives a sense of unified identity and existence to an individual. Jung differs from his predecessor, Sigmund Freud, primarily in portraying self as the center of one's personality rather than ego. Though ego and self are often used interchangeably, they do not mean the same. Jung also associates the archetype of self with the presence of Greater Personality or God/Goddess image within an individual which seeks to achieve cosmic unity. This sense of harmony is inherent in the self and often gets disrupted with ego acquiring

supremacy. The self thus longs to return to its original state of unity which is facilitated by myths and archetypes. In Shiv's *Luna*, the archetypes act as powerful antidotes wherein characters and readers experience renewal of the self individually and collectively while living the customary.

(II) **Shadow** – While Persona (public face of an individual) consists of impulses which befit the social framework, shadow envelops urges which are undesirable to both society and to our personal unconscious. Usually, sexual instinct is the most suppressed of all. The origin of shadow lies in what Jung calls the 'confirmation bias'. Jung asserts if the shadow is well assimilated with the consciousness, it has a positive impact on one's personality; if left unattended, it leads to distortion of the self. Jung also talks about the *group shadow*. As an individual suppresses personal desires, similarly society rejects certain shared values and practices due to moral and cultural conditioning and gradually it takes the form of a shadow. For instance, the notions of pride, community, identity, etc. are absorbed by the cumulative spirit of society. If we talk about Punjabis, past traumas have overwhelmed our everyday rhetoric as well as literature altering the perception of collective Punjabi identity.

(III) **Libido** – Libido in Latin means desire. Freud introduced and defined the concept 'as a primal psychic energy and emotion...associated with instinctual biological urges and which manifest themselves in various human activities, most notably fulfilling sexual instincts' (New World Encyclopedia, 2008). In common parlance, libido is associated with sexual desire, though the term has gathered liberal overtones with time. Libido in broader Jungian sense is the desire which creates physical, psychological, emotional, cultural and even spiritual energies experienced in conscious activity. Unlike Freud, Jung views sexuality as one of its components only. He prefers to call it 'psychic energy' because it 'denotes a desire or impulse which is unchecked by any kind of authority, moral or otherwise. Libido is appetite in its natural state' (Jung, 1967, *Symbols*, 213; par 194). Libido is key motivational factor behind human actions. Like archetypes, libido also plays a significant role in one's personality formation. The intensity of libido changes along with changing desires. In his narrative, Shiv addresses *Luna* as an individual and presents a rational justification for her desire in wanting more.

(IV) **Mother** – The most common archetype that frequently recurs in myths and fairytales. Like all archetypes, it carries both positive and negative connotations. For the nurturing maternal instincts Jung states, 'all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility'; and for the awful side, 'anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate' (Jung, 1981, *Archetypes* 82; par. 158). The dark traits associated with mother archetype disgrace Luna in the traditional discourse whereas Shiv acquits and 'project(s) Luna as an archetypal symbol of suffering womanhood that has been more sinned against than sinning' (Minhas, 2017, 120). Mother archetype also personifies earth, homeland, and mother tongue. Metaphorically, we address

them with feminine phraseology. In religious and mythological discourses, the mother archetype is also a representation of a goddess or a deity, the one who nurtures all.

Relationship between Archetypes and Memes

Both archetypes and memes 'exist in...the world of human culture' and together they act as social and cultural constellates thereby documenting the evolution of humans (Nunn, 1998, 348). Archetypes are mimetic by virtue of being repetitive and universal in nature while Dawkins' titles memes the new age replicators. Archetypes are present in the unconscious mind as abstract concepts. When they enter the conscious realm, they behave much like memes in passing on the idea in tangible form. So, both archetypes and memes are the architects of cultural *infosphere*. Moreover, the medium for their propagation is also identical. We, the human beings are their hosts or vehicles to replicate the information. Archetypes play a tremendous role in formulating one's personality; so do meme culture of the day impacts the individual and collective consciousness. Both archetypes and memes are dynamic in nature and evolve with changing times. Memes can also be described as modern archetypes connecting ideas on global level while narrowing down boundaries. As literary tools, archetypes and memes together enhance greater connectivity of ideas in the 'informational diaspora' (Gleick, 2012, 317).

Defining Punjabilityat

In common parlance, Punjabilityat is the essence of belongingness to the Punjabi community. Anne Murphy, a cultural historian describes, '*Punjabilityat* means 'Punjabiness': it represents an aspiration, an aesthetic, a call for accommodation, and a ground for meeting' (Murphy, 2021). Critics and researchers have also defined Punjabilityat as an imagined space, a social idea in making and an extended territory. Punjab's unique geographical and historical backdrop makes it very challenging to define Punjabilityat. According to Professor Pritam Singh, 'The moment we use the word Punjabilityat, it suggests a reference simultaneously to something that is very tangible while still elusive. This dual character opens the term to many imaginations and possibilities' (Singh, 'The idea', 2010). Without a single physical perimeter, without a common language, script and religion, Punjabilityat seems amorphous; while it is the undying spirit and resilience of Punjabis that makes it distinctive. During the partition of 1947, Punjab was bifurcated forming two distinct regions in two different nations. This division also marginalized '[t]he universe of Punjabilityat – a shared way of life' which was apparent in the pre-partition era (Bhardwaj, 2012). On the other hand, however, the 'multiverse'³ of Punjabilityat comprising different communal and national identities also present an opportunity to explore visions and narrations around Punjabi self-image through the lens of an extended fraternity. In the complicated schema of Punjabilityat's evolution, literature offers the freedom and flexibility of a mutual coexistence otherwise denied to its people via borders. It

is only through books and media that the cultural historiographies are formed, altered, and restored to communities.

The Traditional Narrative

The story of Puran Bhagat is a longstanding part of our oral and folk tradition – a stepmother falls for her stepson disrupting the familial ties. The most popular version is chronicled by Kadaryar in nineteenth century⁴ with strong moral overtones projecting Luna as a vicious tormentor. The legend revolves around King Salwan of Syal-Kot, his wife Ichran and their son Puran. On his birth, Puran is deemed inauspicious for his father and is confined in a dungeon for twelve years. Meanwhile, Salwan remarries a young, low born girl named Luna who seeks fulfillment in his stepson Puran. Puran rejects her advances and leaves the palace whereas Luna accuses him of violating her dignity. Salwan orders to sever Puran's limbs and throws him into a well to die. Puran lies in the well for twelve years until he is saved by *Jogi Gorakhnath* (ascetic) who restores his hands and feet. Puran becomes Jogi's disciple and achieves miraculous powers. When Puran reaches his hometown, he restores his mother's eyesight and Luna too confesses her evil-doing. Puran then blesses the childless Luna and Salwan with a son named Rasalu, who too will be inauspicious for his father and would be kept in seclusion for twelve years. The story then continues with Rasalu's escape followed by the rest of his tirades.

Reproduction of the Narrative

Prior to the play, Shiv had written a poem with the same title 'Loona' published in *The Sparrows of Kneaded Flour* (1962). It seems as if it was the destiny of the poem to undergo poetic evolution and emerge as a play emblematic of the *self* and *being*. Shiv keeps the main plot of Kadaryar's *Puran Bhagat* with few plausible changes to make the narrative more authentic and contemporary. For instance, Puran is a young boy of eighteen instead of twelve; after Salwan remarries, Ichran leaves for her parental home; introduction of new characters like Natti and Suterdhar, King Varman of Chamba and his wife, Luna's father Baru, Luna's friends Ira and Mathri. Also, Shiv reconstructs the story till Puran's mutilation only as it serves his purpose of redirecting the classical discourse leaving the readers contemplating over fateful questions. Shiv also mentions in the introduction to the play that the difference lies in his ideology and approach towards the treatment of the subject which makes *Luna* stand apart. Like Waris, Shiv also titles his work after the female protagonist and shifts the paradigm from Puran to Luna. The archetypal female voice is a figural meme for the congested territory womankind has been relegated to. In doing so, Shiv helps Luna to spread her revolution and gradually, the feminine voice mimics the voice of the community articulating its suffering. In challenging the patriarchal discourse, *Luna*⁵ brings forth other significant issues like social hypocrisy, cultural taboos and economic undercurrents. *Luna* also actively probes an individual's sense of self and identity in shifting times.

Suterdhar and Natti, the Supernatural Beings

The play is introduced by Natti and Suterdhar, also called the string-pullers in accordance with the tradition of Sanskrit drama. Act 1 begins with their physical union and ends with their departure from the earth. Their conversation with Chamba (Luna's hometown) maidens frames the context of the play. Firstly, Natti and Suterdhar stand remarkably distinct from the Chamba lasses who are vibrantly decked up heading for King Varman's birthday celebrations. Secondly, the bloodshed which will turn the land of Chamba red with the killing of the animals foreshadow tragic happening ultimately ending in Puran's sacrifice. Thirdly, the song of Chamba maidens sets the tone of separation of a mother yearning for her son as Ichran later grieves for Puran. And lastly, Natti juxtaposes the imagery of fire and water to indicate the presence of a lovelorn lass which turns out to be Luna in the play.

The readers also visualize the beauty of Chamba despoiled by the slaying of animals particularly sheep, the 'central archetype of pastoral imagery' and the symbol of divinity and purity (Frye, 2000, 143). The human action of shedding its blood implies that the Arcadian world has lost its innocence. Thus, Natti and Suterdhar bring out the initial contrasts in the play simultaneously foregrounding the opposing forces that the readers will encounter in the narrative ahead – life/death, sin/grace, morality/immorality, individual freedom/social norms, etc.

Alchemy of the Self

In *Luna*, the readers discover the alchemy of archetypes, especially of the *self*. According to fundamentals of alchemy, each individual constitutes the three primes – salt, mercury and sulfur corresponding to body, mind and soul respectively. 'The primes are philosophical in nature rather than chemical...more (in the sense of) universal archetypal language' (Foley, available online). Shiv brings alchemy of the self through body, the most corporeal among all. Through body, individual enters the realm of consciousness to reconcile dualities. Shiv deliberately closes the play with Puran's mutilation. His limbless body brings out society's hollowness and callousness, while Luna's bodily needs brings out the whole gamut of moral scruples against individual desires. The body therefore communicates the *raison d'être* of an individual's *being*. Warren Kidd and Alison Teagle define individual identity as 'the unique sense of personhood held by each social actor in her or his own right' (Kidd and Teagle, 2012, 26). Shiv brings out individuality through different themes, with sexuality being one of them. Each character has their own problematics of sexuality, and they act accordingly. It is hollow for Salwan with Ichran and for Luna with Salwan. Unfulfilled passions could have left Shiv's characters in limbo, but they try to outlive their circumstances.

Self and Journey as Symbolic Representations of Community

Self as an archetype brings forth issues pertaining to Punjab as homeland and Punjabis as a community. The partition of a nation itself is an event of archetypal magnitude. The resulting loss and trauma has ruptured the essence of Punjabiya as a collective entity. Shiv takes the pain and suffering of individual characters and elevates it to the cosmic level where self assumes the role of mankind. The use of expressive phrasing like 'distant land', 'distant home', 'new country', etc. notably enclose wounded retrospection on one's self, identity and home due to dispersion and resettlement (Batalvi, 2003, 40-41; part 3)⁶. At the individual level, each character endures their piece of tragic fate. There are also different types of journeys we witness in *Luna*. Salwan makes a journey to Chamba, falls in love and gets married for the second time; Luna travels from Chamba to Syal-Kot and from a carefree lass becomes the second queen of King Salwan; Ichran leaves her home and son to make a return journey to her parents as her husband has remarried; Puran makes an outward journey from dungeon only to return to the lap of darkness. These are not only personal but collective journeys of the people of Punjab. These characters as archetypal memes are journeying Punjabi psyche in the form of unanswered questions and unresolved issues.

Luna, the Archetypal Meme of Punjabiya

Heer's bridal litter is often memorized as a heartrending discourse which addresses the Punjabi cosmos. The entire community travels from Jhang to Rangpur and wails with her. Luna in her bridal attire 'identifies herself with Heer who has such feelings when against her will, she is married to a person other than her lover' (Gill, 1985, 47). When Luna leaves for Syal-Kot in her palanquin, she transfigures into archetypal apotheosis of a community that has been forcibly uprooted and turned an orphan. *Luna* along with *Heer* thus bring forth the framework of pre and post-colonial Punjabi society wherein the composite fabric of Punjab is torn with internal fissures and external censures. Consequently, it affects the self-definition and perception of us as Punjabi nationals. Puran, a prodigy of the same soil, personifies the tragic fate of Punjab. He is fatherless, motherless and homeless despite having all, reminiscent of lonely Ranjha. Puran also steps in as a symbolic meme of post-partitioned Punjabi community dissociated and dispirited.

Ichran, the Co-Victim

With Salwan's second marriage, Ichran's sense of pride and self-worth are injured. Ichran's use of negative imagery like 'burning pyre' and 'fear of witches' verbalize her agony and self-despair (Batalvi, 2003, 63; part 4). Ichran is at crossroads caught up in the dilemma of being a wife and a mother. If Ichran leaves her home, perhaps more appropriate to call it Salwan's home, she has to leave his son behind who is still in guards. Pankaj Singh aptly observes that Shiv, 'in tune with the ethos of the sixties when the discourse of nationalism was giving way to individual quest, foregrounds Ichhran the *individual* who in fact

overwhelms the mother in her. Her sense of injury is even greater at the thought that Salwan has married a low caste woman...' (Singh, 2000, 136). In spite of her status and designation, Ichran's position in Salwan's life is vulnerable and challenged. Here, Shiv presents Ichran with the choice of acting out of her dignity which is denied to her in the traditional discourse. Ichran's ordeal also reimages the quagmire in which modern man is trapped, ultimately rupturing one's sense of self and identity. Both, Luna and Ichran become the archetypal memes echoing the suffering of their kind.

Mirror: The Reflection of Self, Identity and Time

The mirror that Ichran refers to in the 'time's courtyard' is the mirror of social norms and customs bound to reflect the fixed reality (Batalvi, 2003, 132; part 7). The time bygone, out of its own experience, wants to liberate the times existing and forthcoming from the entrenched practices but is itself trapped in the same mirror. Ichran affirms, '[t]he mirror being the slave of every age,... / Is shattered and remade' of self-proliferating stereotypes (Batalvi, 2003, 132; part 7). When Luna looks at her distorted face in the 'broken mirror', the desire hidden in the recesses of her mind engulfs the reality around, reflecting back an unpleasant image (Batalvi, 2003, 80: part 5). Like Medusa, whose gaze turns everyone into stone, Luna's spirit is stoned in her reflection. 'She is a victim of sterility of the spirit' (Sharma, 1979: 69).

In Luna we see womankind fragmented and Ichran is one such fragment of Luna. Like Luna, Ichran too has been oppressed by the man in her life. Luna's disintegrating reflection in the mirror therefore embodies the fate of many such Lunas and Ichrans – broken, dejected, exploited, repressed, voiceless and lonely. The blogger Michelle Arch describe the symbolic nature of mirrors in the following words:

Through mirrors we see our cognizant, social, 'better' self and...the darker, depraved image of our subconscious 'second' self and the frightening, otherworldly realm in which it resides. It is these richly complex, magical, and often contradictory aspects of the mirror that continue to make it an irresistible and poignant symbol of identity intact and identity in crisis (Arch, 2008).

Shiv's mirror is neither an artifact of beauty wherein his protagonists are gazing at themselves for self-admiration nor the world of magic remedying all ills. It forms a threshold between the conscious and the unconscious mind of the characters and the society they inhabit. The blurred mirror is suggestive of the loss of sense of self, distortion of truth, void in relationships, social pretense, and spiritual deprivation. Mirror holds the binary and separates self from the shadow. The mirror imaging prompts the characters to accept what is hidden behind seemingly apparent reality for them to experience self-awareness.

Snake Symbolism

Suterdhar in sensual tones speaks of snakes ‘sipping the milk of moonlight’ or embodies them ‘[n]aked with desire’ (Batalvi, 2003, 5: part1). It brings out the suppressed desires of the characters especially in Luna and Salwan. The snake hopelessly stings all the characters either with pangs of loneliness, misery, or passion. In Christianity, snake is considered both a symbol of evil and wisdom. Bernadette King, in ‘Snake Symbolism and Meaning’, writes that some feminists interpret the story of Adam and Eve from a modern perspective, ‘...Snake is not evil. Snake encourages Eve to eat the forbidden Apple because it will grant her wisdom. Snake, therefore, becomes a symbol of empowerment and liberation’ (King, online). Similarly, snake first tempts and then liberates Luna from negative labels and establishes her as an individual. Snake is emblematic of awakening in Luna and with her of mankind, from oppressive stereotypes.

Snake is not physically deformed though it is structured without limbs. Similarly, Puran is also complete without limbs, in essence. With psychological transformation of his characters, Shiv heralds a social and literary renaissance. The archetypal symbolism in snake and fire brings alchemy of the self in Luna, Puran and Ichran. And their alchemical rendering brings collective realization, healing, and growth of the community by shedding their illusions. It helps vindicate Punjabiyyat of an injured self and remerge as a whole cherishing valuable traditions of the past while discarding the shadows.

Luna, Puran and the Rendering of Mother Archetype

When Luna demands, ‘I want fire for my fire-deer’, Ira dissuades Luna moralizing how her desire for union with Puran is unethical, ‘[t]here is the taste in his mouth, / Of Ichran’s milk, / And also yours’ (Batalvi, 2003, 76: part 5). Luna seeking love in Puran is contradictory to the archetypal mother figure perceived in the image of a Goddess. Society cannot comprehend her as an ordinary being with desires of her own. That is why Luna is discredited in traditional versions. Before their rendezvous, Luna introduces herself with a very powerful statement, ‘I am passion-fire’, whereas Puran, in contrast, is introduced addressing Luna as mother (Batalvi, Year, 39: part 3). The difference in Luna and Puran’s perspective accentuates her urge. Puran is identical to the image of the youthful lover nested in her. Citing example of Kadaryar’s narrative, Najm Hosain Syed points out, the conflict between Lunan⁷ and Puran is shown to be a clash between two conceptions of the word ‘Ma’ (mother)’; he then elaborates how Luna ‘counters his conception of ‘Dharma Mai’ (mother according to moral order) by her conception of ‘natural’ relationship (Syed, 2003, 88, 90). Puran casts Luna in the image of Ichran as he is deprived of his mother’s love since childhood. His only solace is to have maternal presence in Luna in the absence of his mother.

Salwan and the Father Archetype

Father is the antithesis of the mother archetype. He is a figure of authority, administrator of law and order, esteemed in reason and rationality. Puran does not have a father figure to idolize. Puran is wronged by his father who condemns him to eighteen years of captivity⁸. When he comes out, his mother has left because his father has remarried. When Luna accuses Puran of immoral advances, Salwan blindly believes her without putting his faith in his son. Puran himself is on the other side of the hierarchy, a victim of royal prediction and his father's prejudices. 'It is amazing that neither Salwan's credulity nor his cruelty has become proverbial in Punjabi culture' (Pankaj Singh, 2000, 120). He displays absolute paternal authority. Salwan as a father is more erroneous than Luna's father. Baru's decision of marrying Luna to a much older man still makes some sense if perceived out of dire economic necessity. In a role reversal, Shiv directs Puran's empathy towards Luna. It also presents Shiv an opportunity to re-sketch Puran's character from a saintly figure to a more compassionate flesh and blood human.

Allegorical Characters

Shiv's characters are archetypal figures personifying the fable of human existence. Shiv writes about the strengths and flaws of individual characters while figuring them out on mankind. Puran bespeaks that he 'symbolises all mankind'; Salwan 'my father' who lacks 'all understanding' of life; Ichran who 'represents all motherhood...and nurtures life'; and Luna 'that craving...which destroys, / All life' (Batalvi, 2003, 143: part 8). If Ichran is the nurturing matriarch, Salwan is an inefficacious patriarch. Luna seeks the essence of her being in articulating herself and Puran understands the motive behind Luna's allegation. Hence, he makes a sacrifice to redeem all Lunas from getting married to Salwans, from Ichrans returning to their parents, from Lunas seeking love from stepsons and from fathers making their sons limbless. Shiv writes in the introduction to the play, 'Salwans are not rare even today. Luna is not thought blameless even today. The only difference is of name and time' (Batalvi, 2003, xii).

Puran, the Quintessence of Punjabiyat

Before his execution, Puran wishes that his 'story for others become a guide' (Batalvi, 2003, 145: part 8). Unlike traditional versions, there comes no Jogi or saint to rescue Puran. Shiv employs death as a metaphor to get rid of orthodox values and plutocratic culture which has substituted humanness in relationships. About Puran, Najm Hossain Syed appropriately states, 'He is thrown away by the society and yet the society needs him to come back and resuscitate it...[h]e is the instrument of fundamental change in the patterns of living...' (Syed, 2003, 128). The darkness of the dungeon is a projection of society's shadow of fear, guilt, shame, and honour and committing Puran to execution is acting them out. Puran is glorified in his death and consecrated as *Puran Bhagat*, the cosmic child

of Punjab and a symbol of awakened humanity. Ironically, Puran has already experienced death in his confinement. When he comes out, his essence metamorphosis from darkness to light, from forsaken to legendary in terms of catalyzing resurgence of mankind.

Severing of Puran's limbs by Salwan disrupts the organic unity of the body. The dissevered hands and feet represent Salwan's broken family and metaphorically they are offshoots of the Punjabi community scattered across the globe. The negative connotations with body parts are indicative of unstable atmosphere that was prevalent in Punjab before partition and continued beyond, ultimately resulting in trifurcation of the state in 1966, a year after the text was published. Puran's physical incompleteness also highlights rifts in the concept of Punjabi identity construction contending multiple tags of class, caste, religion, language, and ethnicity. *Luna* leaves a legacy for Punjabis as a community to fill the distinct fault lines dissecting Punjabiyat. And such legendary characters like Heer, Ranjha, Puran and Luna indeed alchemize various trajectories back to its genesis.

Luna and Modern Man's Imbrolio

Shiv's poetic landscape seems to be a modern version of T.S. Eliot's *Wasteland* (1922), stripped of selfhood caught in dismal reality. In this dead and dreary existence, Luna seeks hope in Puran. She desires to immerse herself in the colour of youth and passion. Luna becomes Shiv's envoy and brings forth modern man's plight, empty relations, and frivolous subsistence. 'Everyone is crippled here, / Because of one's own misery' says Puran (Batalvi, 2003, 102: part 5). In Waris Shah's *Heer*, Kaido is physically handicapped (lame). In Shiv's narrative, people are emotionally crippled which makes them even more vulnerable to their impulses. Their dilemmas trigger conflicting forces and persuade them either to break the ground or reconcile dualities.

Puran's remark that the '[t]hree-tongued snake of time, / Has already stung itself' has abysmal nuances with reference to time as a defunct entity (Batalvi, Year, 102: part 5). If time ceases to be, everything is inanimate. In his short span of life, Shiv has lived on either side of the border. It is the predicament of the entire community who has experienced mass exodus. It has infused in Punjabis a sense of disorientation towards themselves regarding temporal and spatial dimension. It also heightens the feeling of both attachment and instability they witness for their home, land, and country. Shiv candidly foregrounds hidden impulses in his characters making it easier for the readers to identify similar feelings in them.

Luna, Cathartic for Community

Luna admits to Ira that Puran is innocent and by charging him guilty, she has sinned as per the conventional definition. As a repercussion, it will cast Puran as an epitome of virtue and 'grace' and Luna as an evildoer whom people will 'curse' (Batalvi, 2003, 125: part 6). Ideally, the death of Puran should be

considered a revenge of Hellenic intensity, but this is not what Shiv's *Luna* intends. Her journey does not end with Puran's sacrifice. It will continue till Salwans are marrying Lunas to gratify their fire of passion. The development of the plot forebodes a tragic happening, so it is imperative for the readers to experience some sort of purgation as the play ends, though not in the strictly Aristotelian sense but in bringing about a significant change. *Luna* conjures the aesthetics of life and art and offers purgation in the form of alchemy of the psyche. When innocent characters of the traditional tale are refurbished, it is emotionally exhilarating or liberating for the readers. As an individual, the reader alone might not muster the courage to initiate change. But as an ideal meme the protagonist they admire is definitely replicated in their minds. Thus, the readers are also positioned in a speculative mode to reevaluate worn-out norms and practices. As the ultimate catharsis of *Luna* is to rewrite mankind's destiny.

The 'Personal Legend' of *Luna*

The 'flaming tale' of passion begins with Salwan marrying *Luna* and ends with Puran getting lacerated (Batalvi, 2003, 152: part 8). It is a ceremonious fire which first consumes the characters and later celebrates their transformation like the phoenix rising from its ashes again. In Puran's death the 'Personal Legend' of *Luna* is reborn wherein she vociferates guilt-free. A poet with gifted faculty, Shiv redefines physical desire (libido) from vulgar and erotic to a loving emotion, and eventually changes *Luna*'s destiny. Shiv's subjective pain finds artistic expression in his poetry and becomes therapeutic for a fragmented community. He celebrates life, love, suffering and death as poetic metaphors. Punjabi critic Karamjit Singh¹⁰ writes, 'ਜਿਥੇ ਸ਼ਿਵ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨੇ ਪੀੜਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਵੇਦਨਾ ਦੇ ਘੋਰ ਸੰਤਾਪ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਗਤ ਆਤਮ ਪਛਾਣ ਦਾ ਰਚਨਾਤਮਕ ਸਾਧਨ ਬਣਾਇਆ। ਉਥੇ ਇਸ ਸੰਤਾਪ ਨੂੰ ਸਾਂਸਕ੍ਰਿਤਕ ਸੰਦਰਭ ਵਿੱਚ ਵਿਸਥਾਰ ਕੇ ਉਸਨੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਲੋਕਮਨ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਆਤਮ ਪਛਾਣ ਦਾ ਆਧਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ...' [Where Shiv Kumar has transformed intense individual pain and agony into a signifying creative medium expressing himself, there by extending this agony to cultural context he has bestowed Punjabi psyche the foundation to recognize itself...' (Quotation in Punjabi taken from Kaur, 2008, 106 and English translation by the author). Like Jung, Shiv is a shaman of the self, the community, the mankind and his philosopher's stone is his ideology characterized in *Luna*. The narrative and the characters inhabiting the literary and cultural space are archetypal memes of dreams, aspirations and freedom of thought.

Luna is a *kunstlerroman*, a German term meaning an 'artist's novel'. It indicates the growth and development of an artist with respect to his/her work. Shiv had already established his credentials as a poet. With *Luna*, his potential reached zenith. He rejects all that is anti-growth of an artist and of an individual. Shiv sheds social, cultural and psychic infirmities in *Luna*. He does not provide magical solutions to the issues raised. He directs the path and leaves it on Lunas,

Ichrans and Purans of forthcoming generations to determine the course of action. *Luna* demands a change of perception and change of values. The success of *Luna* can be attributed to shared psychological appeal, spirit of imagination and collective national culture. Shiv's characters, their charms and graces rush in the DNA of Punjabiyaat. These characters as beau ideals are literarily globalized in Punjabi consciousness. Together, *Heer* and *Luna* are the meme templates of Punjabiyaat, of its *collective culture* and *culture in making*.

Notes

¹ 'A Song' is one of Batalvi's famous poems published in *Lajwanti* (1961). The English translation is rendered by Suman Kashyap.
<http://apnaorg.com/poetry/suman/17.html>

² The previous research paper 'Waris Shah's *Heer* as the Meme of Punjabiyaat and Punjabi Identity' also dwells on the concept of memes. The details are mentioned in the bibliography.

³ The idea of a Punjabi 'multiverse' occurred while watching the movie *Dr. Strange* (2016), from the Marvel series. The idea holds up a possibility of existence of infinite universes together constituting a multiverse.

⁴ Kadaryar (1802-1892) was a nineteenth century Muslim poet in pre-partitioned Punjab. He enjoyed the patronage of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who ruled Punjab from 1781-1839. The exact date of narrating the legend of Puran Bhagat by the poet is unknown. Hence, the boarder reference to nineteenth century is cited.

⁵ The paper follows B.M. Bhalla's (2003) English translation of Shiv Kumar Batalvi's *Luna* as the primary source of reference.

⁶ The play is divided into eight parts. In-text citations include page numbers followed by part numbers as there are no scene/line divisions in the play.

⁷ As mentioned above, the present paper follows B.M.Bhalla's (2003) English translation of Shiv Kumar Batalvi's *Luna* as the primary source of reference. To avoid ambiguity, the spellings and the name of the characters as well as of the places correspond to this text only. However, some writers spell Luna as Loona/Lunan, Ichran as Ichhran. While citing Najm Hosain Syed, the spellings of 'Lunan' have been quoted unaltered from his article.

⁸ Shiv's version of the story is primarily based on Kadaryar's narrative. But Shiv had made some changes in the original narrative to make it more realistic and plausible. To quote Shiv, 'in my story Puran's age is 18 and not 12, because accusing a young boy of 12 of characterlessness makes little sense. To say that Puran's age was 18 means that Puran was young' (Bhalla, 2003, viii).

⁹ The term is coined by the Brazilian author Paulo Coelho in his fictional work *The Alchemist*. 'Personal Legend' is one's ultimate purpose in life and by pursuing it, we help further the destiny of the universe.

¹⁰ Dr. Karamjit Singh is a Punjabi author and critic. The original quotation is from his book in Punjabi language titled, *ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਕਾਵਿ-ਧਾਰਾਵਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚਾਰਧਾਰਾਈ ਆਧਾਰ* (*The Ideological Basis of Modern Punjabi Poetic-currents*).

However, I have cited the quotation from Dr. Jatinderdeep Kaur's book, details of which are mentioned in the bibliography.

Bibliography

Arch, Michelle (2008). 'Mirrors.' *Archetypes*. Available online at: <https://michellearch.wordpress.com/mirrors/>

Batalvi, Shiv Kumar (2003). *Luna*. English translation by B.M. Bhalla. Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.

Bhardwaj, Ajay (2012). 'The Absence in Punjabyat's Split Universe.' *The Hindu*, 15, Aug. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-absence-in-punjabyats-split-universe/article3772133.ece>

Dennett, Daniel (2002). 'Dangerous Memes.' *Ted Talk*, Feb. https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_dennett_dangerous_memes#t-481432

Dawkins, Richard (2016). *The Selfish Gene*. 40th ed., Oxford University Press.

Fisher, Amelia (2023). 'The Self Archetype.' *Know Your Archetypes*. Available online at: <https://knowyourarchetypes.com/the-self-archetype/>

Foley, Micaela (2019). 'Alchemical Principles for Personal Growth.' *The Alchemist's Kitchen*, 26 March.

<https://wisdom.thealchemistskitchen.com/alchemical-principles-for-personal-growth/>

Frye, Northrop (2000). *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton University Press.

Gleick, James (2012). *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood*. 1st ed., Vintage Books.

Gill, Tejwant Singh (1985). 'Nexus of Myth and Reality in Luna.' *Bharati Journal of Comparative Literature*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 41-54. Guru Nanak Dev University Press.

Jung, C.G (1981). *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Translated by R.F.C. Hull. Edited by Herbert Read, et al., 2nd ed., vol. 9, Routledge.
<https://www.pdfdrive.com/archetypes-and-the-collective-unconscious-e54714964.html>

----. (1967) *Symbols of Transformation*. Translated by R.F.C. Hull. Edited by Herbert Read, et al., 2nd ed., vol. 5, Princeton University Press.
<https://www.pdfdrive.com/collected-works-of-cg-jung-volume-5-symbols-of-transformation-e61543249.html>

Kaur, Jatinderdeep (2008). *ਸ਼ਿਵ ਕੁਮਾਰ: ਸੁਹਜ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਦਰੋਹ* [Shiv Kumar: *Sohaj Ate Vidroh*]. Lokgeet Parkashan, Chandigarh.

Kidd, Warren, and Alison Teagle (2012). *Culture and Identity*. 2nd ed., Palgrave Macmillan.

King, Bernadette (Available online, year not mentioned). 'Snake Symbolism and Meaning.' *What is My Spirit Animal.com*.
<https://whatismyspiritanimal.com/spirit-totem-power-animal-meanings/amphibians-reptiles/snake-symbolism-meaning/>

Kochar, Simple (2021). 'Waris Shah's *Heer* as the Meme of Punjabyat and Punjabi Identity.' *Dialog*, no. 38, autumn, pp. 245-259.
<https://dialog.puchd.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/14.-Waris-Shahs-Heer-as-the-Meme-of-Punjabyat-and-Punjabi-Identity.pdf>

Leigh, David J (2011). 'Carl Jung's Archetypal Psychology, Literature, and Ultimate Meaning.' *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, vol. 34, no. 1-2, March, pp. 95-112.
<https://utpjournals.press/doi/citedby/10.3138/uram.34.1-2.95?role=tab>

Minhas, Manjeet Kaur (2017). 'Luna as a Collective Voice of the Subjugated Women: A Study.' *Innovation The Research Concept*, vol. 2, no. 7, Aug. pp. 120-123.
<http://www.socialresearchfoundation.com/upoadreserchpapers/6/173/1710071034201stmanjeet%20kaur%20minhas.pdf>

Murphy, Anne (2021). 'Punjab, Punjabi, Punjabyat: Understanding Language, Geography and Belonging' *Rungh*, vol. 9, no. 1. Fall.
<https://rungh.org/punjab-punjabi-punjabyat/>

New World Encyclopedia. (2008) *Libido*, 3 Apr.

<https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Libido&oldid=686713>

Nunn, C.M.H (1998). 'Archetypes and Memes: Their Structure, Relationships and Behavior.' *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 344-354.
<https://philpapers.org/rec/NUNAAM>

Rawat, Mukesh (2021). 'In just 50 characters, Rihanna's tweet on farmer protests breaks internet. Best memes.' *India Today*, 2 Feb.
<https://www.indiatoday.in/trending-news/story/in-50-characters-rihanna-tweet-on-farmer-protests-breaks-internet-best-memes-1765300-2021-02-02>

Sharma, O.P (1979). *Shiv Batalvi: A Solitary and Passionate Singer*. Sterling Publishers, New Delhi.

Shiffman, Limor (2014). 'The Cultural Logic of Photo-Based Meme Genres'. *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol.13, no. 3, 16 Dec. (first published online), pp. 340-358.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412914546577>

Singh, Pankaj K (2000). *Re-Presenting Woman: Tradition, Legend and Punjabi Drama*. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

Singh, Pritam (2010). 'The idea of Punjabin.' *Himal Southasian*, 1 May, Himalmag.com.
<https://www.himalmag.com/the-idea-of-punjabin/>.

Syed, Najm Hosain (2003). 'Puran of Sialkot.' *Recurrent Patterns in Punjabi Poetry*. Justin Group Printers, Lahore, pp. 87-129.