

Lyrics as Travelogue beyond Boundaries: An Anthology of Punjab's Mystical Wanderings

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Abstract: *The hallmark of Punjab's mystical traditions is an amalgamation of religious materials of pluralistic mystical expressions like nirgunsampradaya, sahasamadh, sahasaniyabudhism, mahayana, vajrayana, tantric, hath yogis, nathpanthi, kannphata yogis, sahasiya Vaishnavism, bauls of Bengal, chisti, qadri and sohrwardisufi traditions amongst others. Punjab became the epicenter of these far flung regional expressions of mystical traditions within and outside India. Each tradition carried within itself a global world view represented through respective regionalities. However, these regionalities instead of being watertight compartments participated in a porous interpenetrative multicultural, philosophical, theological, socio-cultural, politico-economic terrain. Moreover, on Indian soil these varied mystical expressions, instead of relying on textuality, were highly oral, carrying within themselves components of cultural performances which engaged with regional myths, symbols, dialects, idioms, rituals, etc. Hence, these became mediums of the flow and sites for exchange of theological, philosophical, ideological and intellectual trends. Orality, as a cultural performance, found expression through lyrics. The paper attempts to analyze this exchange of ideas and mystical precepts through traditionalism and changing dynamics of contemporaneous East and West Punjab. Lyrics, as travelogues present an interesting field of study to analyze these changing platforms, within a globalizing world, where regionality fosters globalism. Acceptability of a variety of identities through myths, symbols, idioms, dialects, rituals points towards dissent and a deconstruction of identities in contemporaneous Punjab. Resistance to, and redefinition of traditionalism through dissent, placed mystical tradition in Punjab on multiple highways that connected both East and West Punjab through inter-continental and inter-regional mystical expressions. The paper attempts to explore lyrics as multiple travelogues on this highway of mystical expressions. Interestingly, religion as an identity, gets deconstructed on these travelling ideas, producing multiple images of collectivism. These travelling ideas painted a new canvas of collectivism. The paper attempts to analyze these images on the 'lyrical-canvas' by documenting the emerging lyrical imagery that redefined collectivism.*

Keywords: Mystical, Lyrical, Oral, Travelogue, Collectivism, Regionalism, Globalism, Dissent, Punjab

Language and religion share a symbiotic relationship with each other. Linguistic capabilities have adapted themselves to the evolutionary reality of the changing times. Noam Chomsky discerns similarities in the structure of all languages through the existence of a "universal grammar". He regards grammar as a "deep structure" of human languages, which are innate to humans and their evolution.¹ Many religions are associated with a sacred language like 'hebrew' for Judaism, 'classical arabic' for Islam and 'sanskrit' for Hinduism. The antiquity of religion and their languages presupposes linguistic remoteness and their subsequent irruption into many vernaculars. Overtime languages acquired regional dialects just as religion acquired regional hues. Studying both the processes present a sort of a dichotomy between the elite from the popular, universal from the local, great from the little, and institutional from the diffused. Some scholars like Peter Brown and Stanley Tambiah instead look from a 'total' field of religion which glues together the entire society.²

Punjab stood at the crossroads of this interpenetrative popular, diverse, collaborative expression of mystical dimensions. Here, the varied vernacular lyrical expressions were based on multiple imageries drawn from the 'universal deep structures' that Chomsky refers to. Regarding Punjab, Harjot Oberoi observes the existence of 'region-wide multifaceted cultural system'. He further elaborates "it was a world in which members of different religious communities and people of diverse social backgrounds easily collaborated

in order to face the uncertainties and afflictions of human life, their medium being the framework of a popular religion".³ Punjab saw the crystallization of various mystical expressions. Mystical ideas and practices of the nirgunsampradaya, of sahasiyaniyabudhists, of mahayanavajrayanabudhists, of tantric hath yog, of nathpanthikanphatta yogis, of sahasiyavaishnavs and tasawwuf found expression in the various dialects across regional boundaries. The lack of 'domain-concern' was based on the imagery of inclusivity of a shared universe which expressed 'global' interconnections. Guru Nanak chose esoteric terminology from a variety of traditions current during his time. The symbolism of this collectivism was 'bhagatbani'. This internalized the religious journey through a universalistic imagery expressed in lyrical form.⁴

Indianists and Orientalists like Andre Wink and C.I.Beckwill as the 'growth and development of a world economy in and around the Indian Ocean with India as its centre and the Middle East and China as its two dynamic poles'. Hence, this euro-asiatic chain of causation and global interdependence busts the idea of the medieval world as being made up of isolated Civilizations.⁵ Andre wink has described medieval Islamic India as a "world on the move" ... this world of overland connections that tied India to the cities and steppes of Central Asia and Iran, survived until the economic and geographical shifts that accompanied the

³Ibid. pg.160

⁴Sameena H. Siddiqui, *Sufi Symbolism and representation of power in pre-colonial and colonial Delhied*. Susan Visvanathan, *Art, Politics, Symbols and Religion* (New Delhi, Winshield Press, 2019) p.252

⁵ Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and settlers in early modern India* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2012) pg. X preface

¹ Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind: Enlarged ed.* (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972) pg.11-25

²Harjot Oberoi, *construction of religious boundaries: culture, identity and diversity in sikh tradition* (Chicago, University of Chicago press, 1994) pg. 138

onset of colonial rule.⁶ According to Nile Green, urban spaces were in turn connected by long but effective culture roots that tied the peoples and places of muslim India into patterns of long term interaction, imaginary as well as actual, with a *gedachtnisraum* 'memory space' composed of texts as much as territories.⁷ He studies "different aspects of interdependence of communities and the narratives and places in which they creatively 'located' their senses of history and memory of belonging and home". Regarding Islam, S.H. Siddiqui observed that the particularity of Islam's spread narrates a million stories. "Islam as a religion, offers social mobility, it starkly simplicity and cosmopolitanism provided space to cultural localism which in turn extended the boundaries of cultural interchange".⁸

Punjab, in its geographical and ecological affinity, shared multiple commonalities (historical and sociological) with *Sindh, Makran* and *Multan*. These regions experienced not only a demographical influx, but also offered shelter to multiple deviant groups which were facing peripheralization. This process was on a global scale, which provided blurred boundaries of cultural interchange. *Zakaria Al Kazwini* writes in his *AsarulBilad*.

"*Saimur*, a city of *Hind* near the confines of *Sindh*. The people are very beautiful and handsome, from being born of Turk and Indian parents. There are Musalmans, Christians, Jews and fire worshippers there".

Similarly, *Ibn Khordadba* mentions that "in *Hind*, there are 'forty-two' religious texts, part of them believe in a creator and prophets (blessings of God be upon them), part deny the mission of a prophet and part are atheists".

In addition, the presence of heterodox ideological sects and numerous deviant groups like '*khawarij*' or dissidents, *zanadiqa* or free thinkers, *malahids* or atheists, escapists, *Ismailis*, *Fatimids* took shelter in towns like *Qudsar*. These heterodoxies and their esotericism found a pervasive foreground in this frontier zone of Punjab, *Sindh*, *Makran* and *Multan*. Punjab and its frontier past with *Sindh* and *Multan* emerged "as the geo-cultural ground carrying this imprint of cultural dialogue based on fluidity of identity and practices".⁹

Punjab absorbed pluralistic interpenetrative Indic spiritualistic traditions. *Guru Nanak's* emphasis on intuitionism and *Guru Arjan Dev's* compilation of *Adi Granth* including *Gurubani* and *Bhagatbani* reflected this pluralism. This perception of collectivism engaged with diverse mystical utterings like those of *Baba Fareed*, *Jaidev*, *Namdev*, *Trilochan*, *Parmanand*, *Sadana*, *Beni*, *Ramanand*, *Dhanna*, *Pipa*, *Sain*, *Kabir*, *Ravidas*, *Bhikan*, *Surdas*. The uniqueness of this mystical anthology was their orality and devotional populism. These diverse traditions coalesced into the Sikh community. This participative orality redefined the

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Sameena H. Siddiqui, *Sufi Symbolism and representation of power in pre-colonial and colonial Delhi* ed. Susan Visvanathan, *Art, Politics, Symbols and Religion* (New Delhi, Winshield Press, 2019) p.252

⁹Ibid.

dynamic of plurality. Subsequently *Mian Mir's* presence at *Harmandir Sahed*, *Amritsar* indigenized, regionalized and universalized the diverse mystical popular tradition. The popular Sikh devotion to *Sufi Pir Sakhi Sarwar* and *Gugga Pir* and *Goddess Devi*, *Durga*, *Kali*, *Sheetla*, *Kalka*, *Mahesri*, *Bawani* and '*bhoomia shrine*' and village deity-ancestor pointed towards the wider sacred universe. In the popular imagery, the *Pir Sakhi Sarwar* had *Bairavi*, *Lord Shiva's* manifestation as his messenger. The shrine at *Nagaha*, near *Dera Ghazi Khan* besides having four tombs like those of the *Sahaba* of Prophet *Mohammad*, also has two sacred sites associated with *Hazrat Ali*.

Punjab specifically expressed these aesthetic forms of interaction through varied mystical lyrical genres. As Punjabi language evolved, these multiple mystical expressions borrowed from a variety of literary conventions including the Persian '*qisse*' or anecdotes/*latifas* from the *malfuzat*, *tazkiras*, *chands*, *sabds*, *dohe*, *sloka*. A variety of oral traditions existed expounded by preachers like *Sidhas* of *Tantric* and *Nathpanthi* ideas who belonged to lower orders of the society. Anyone irrespective of caste, creed or sex could be enunciated by them. The oral tradition of *Sidhas* and the *Yogis* carried fantastic imagery of flying through the air over long distances and was widely accepted by the masses. Similar imagery was put forward by the *sufi* saints which gained popular credence. Satish Chandra mentions references of women from the category of 'untouchables' being accepted as *Guru*.¹⁰ Similarly, the *Nathpanthi* provided the oral tradition for the growth of popular monotheism. The *sufi* emphasis on the monotheism and the significance of the *Pir* and the mystical union with the beloved coincided with many aspects of these multifarious mystical traditions on Indian soil.

The existence of this wide 'global' mosaic offers the foreground for an interpenetrative experiential domain where a variety of mystical traditions found connectivity. Spatially dispersed community experienced informal ties of a shared culture, language or kinship. Integration of small communities into great total community based on a shared mystical ideology defined this 'global' interdependence. Assertions of these blurred boundaries were constructed in defiance to peripheralization and the emerging elitism based on religious identities. This was a 'global' phenomenon which connected regionalities and their diversities into a syncretic mystical bondage. Expressions of these deviant assertions travelled throughout the various geo-cultural zones.¹¹ Lyrics mirror these travelling expressions of dissent and diverse assertions in various languages and dialects. *Firdausi* criticizing the Arabs called them –

zeshir e shutarkhurdan o susmar
(drinkers of camel milk and lizard eaters).¹²

¹⁰ Satish Chandra, *Historiography: Religion, and State in medieval India* (New Delhi, HarAnand Publications, 1996) pg. 120

¹¹ Acc. to Earl Miner (2000) "lyric is the foundation genre for the poetic or literary assumptions of cultures throughout the world".

¹² Irfan Habib, "Questionings within Religious Thought: The Experience of Islam." *Social Scientist*, vol. 41, no. 5/6, 2013, pp. 3–13. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23611114. Further he quotes; *Amir khusrau* defiantly asserted – "*khalq mi goyadkekhusrav butt parasti mi kunadariari! mi kunam, bakhalq e alamkarnist*".

*For this is my religion and my faith*¹⁴

Esotericism became the language of heterodoxies which adapted the vernacular and local dialects to express defiance. This collectivism borrowed various genres of literary expression. Tradition of *qissagoyi*¹³ connected regionality through narratology sharing concept of piety, *ishq, mahabba, peer, mureed, qibla, tasbi, mulla, pandit*, textuality, identity, inequality amongst others.

The geo-political location of Punjab provided spatial proximity to these heterodoxies. The lyrical tradition of Punjab carries the imprint of sociological and circumstantial factors through re-adaption and reinterpretation. In contemplating the construction of the self, diversity found uniformity through mystical expressions. *IbneArabi's* verse resonated in Punjab:

*“My heart has become receptacle of every form
It’s a pasture for gazelles, a convent for Christian monk
And a temple for idol and a pilgrim’s Kabah
And the tablets of the Torah
And the book of the Quran
I follow the religion of love
Whichever way its camels take*

Hafiz expresses his deviant assertion “*badehsaqimeyebaqi, keghar Jannat nakhawahi waft, kinariaab e ruknabad o gulgash timusalara*”.

Amir Sijzi writes “*harqoumrastrahe, deen o qiblagah.. man qiblarastkardam, bar simtikajkulahe*”.

Hafiz writes “*bamayesajjadarangeenkum, agar peer e mughangoyad..kesalikbekhabr nabood, ze rah o rasmimanzil ah*”.

Dara shikoh asserted “*bahistanjakemullaenabashad, zemullabahs o ghaughainabashad..dar an sheharkemullakhanadarad, daranjahechdanaenabashad*”.

¹³ Farina Mir (2006) Punjabi ‘qisse’ are integral to understand aesthetic and religious culture of colonial Punjab where representation of piety is a central motif of ‘qissa’ narratives. These Punjabi language ‘qisse’ lie at the nexus of perso-islamic and local Punjabi aesthetic forms. She argues that Punjabi ‘qissa’ writers drew heavily upon the literary conventions of Persian ‘qisse’ thus, drawing their compositions into the sphere of perso-islamic literary aesthetics. At the same time, Punjabi ‘qisse’ constitute a regional tradition, one that incorporated local aesthetic principles and responded to the religious plurality and social organization of the Punjab. Term ‘qissa’ used widely in north indian languages to mean story, is derived from Arabic. In early Islamic era, the term ‘qissa’ was used to describe tales told by popular religious storytellers. With time, however, arab storytellers (qussas) increasingly narrated tales with no religious character and the term ‘qissa’ came to mean story more generally. Adopted into the Persian lexicon with the spread of islam, the term follows a somewhat similar trajectory, initially carrying religious overtones, but by 2nd millennium C.E, increasingly used outside a religious context particularly romantic stories. This romance tradition was refined by the eminent Persian poets ‘gurgani’ (d. after 1055) and ‘ansari’ (d. 1088) and reached its apogee with the compositions of ‘nezami’ (d. 1209). These romances drew on both arab and Persian tales for e.g. ‘lailamajnu’ (Arabic) and ‘khusraushirin’ (Persian) and shared a specific poetic form ‘masnavi’ or epic poem in rhymed couplets. Whether ‘qisse’ first entered south asia’s vernacular literature through texts or orally is impossible to discern. What is clear though is that by the 17th century ‘qisse’ were circulating in India’s vernacular languages both orally and in textual form.

Influences such as Neo-Platonism, Buddhist and Christian monastic traditions, and *Vedantic* and *Yogic* philosophy shaped this mystical tradition. This dynamism realigned various sub-cultures and sub-zones and stamped with the new regionality. This complex process engaged with regional substratum cultures which got represented in the lyrical and intellectual history of the region. Punjab’s lyrical tradition carries this imprint of cultural dialogues which points towards reinvention of collective identities beyond boundaries.

Punjab’s mystical lyrics used inter-religious imagery of pilgrimage to escape textual rigidity in an effort to establish blurred boundaries.

<u>Lyrics</u>	<u>Translation</u>
<i>Haji lokmakay nu jaande Asanjanatakhtazaray Jiswalyaar us walkabba Asanpholkkitabancharay</i>	<i>Hajji proceeds towards the Makka However, I proceed to TakhtHazara The Kabba is positioned where my beloved stays I have researched all the texts.</i>

The emphasis on the *mursad* shifted the focus from the hierarchical *silsila* orders to personalized *Pir* akin to the concept of *Guru* on the Indian soil thereby sharing the mystical space through indigenization.¹⁵

<u>Lyrics</u>	<u>Translation</u>
<i>Dar mursad da khanaqabba Hajj zrurikariye Taqrarakhmehbubanvala Chaldwaraphariye</i>	<i>The place of the spiritual guide is equivalent to the Kabba Where pilgrimage is imperative Keeping the patience like a lover Seek the shelter in his dwelling.</i>
<u>Lyrics</u>	<u>Trtanslation</u>
<i>Mala lakad Thakur pathar Tirthahai sab paani Rama mar gye Krishna mar gye Chaaronedakahani</i>	<i>Rosary is wood, idol is stone Pilgrimage sites are all water Rama died, Krishna died All four vedas are stories.</i>

Punjab’s mystical lyrics bordered on blasphemy, in an effort to redefine blurred collective identities. This alludes to the presence of transcontinental identities within a common mystical framework. The kaleidoscopic socio-religious mosaic of Punjab caused the prioritization of establishing the platform of collective identities through persistent pluralism.¹⁶

<u>Lyrics</u>	<u>Translation</u>
<i>Bullyadharm salaadharmire hnde Thakurdware thug Vichmaseetan de rehnkusandhi Ashiq rehnalag</i>	<i>BullyaDharm sala is inhabited by impious And Thakurdwara by the crooks Mosque houses the sly whereas lovers dwell elsewhere</i>

¹⁴SAA Rizvi, *History of Sufism in India vol.1* (New Delhi, Manohar Lal Publishers, 2003) pg. 108-109

¹⁵Sanjay Dansalia, “Mystical oral re-tellings and its lyrical representation ardera baba murad shah, nakoder, in contemporary east Punjab” *paper presented at JTA Conference March 2020*, Visit https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340435661_Mystical_ora_l_re-tellings_and_its_lyrical_representation_ar_dera_baba_murad_shah_nakoder_in_contemporary_east_punjab

¹⁶Ibid.

A counter-narrative based on the construction of the concept of 'ashiq' is another rendition of defiance.

<u>Lyrics</u>	<u>Translation</u>
<i>Ikjaangangeteylenpange Pujanpathravattya nu Ikjaanmakkaytey khan takkay Chumanchaarekakhya nu Ikdevanbaaganteymaranchangan Jivenmajjanrondiyakattya nu Bulla shahkonkehnda Rabb nyimilda Nyimildaulludeyapathya nu</i>	<i>One proceed to the ganges and seek trouble By worshipping pebbles and stones The other proceed to the makka getting pushed and shoved While kisses the four sides One crows and screams as the buffalo calls for its calf Bulla shah who says God cannot be found Only idiots cannot find him.</i>

Similarly, the rendition of the concept of *Ishq* as a counter narrative to strict compliance of *sharia* in 'qisse' genre gets interwoven within the lyrics of the *qawwali* performance. The following are two such renditions using lyrics interspersed with 'qissagoyi'—

In a *qawwali*¹⁷ titled "vey sonaydeyakangna" by Wadali Brothers, they narrated a 'lailamajnuqissa' which is as follows;

Qawwals started by saying that for *majnu*, *laila* was his *Rabb/Khuda* and went on to narrate that when *majnu* was in school, he used to write *laila* on his slate and when *maulvi* wanted to correct him saying that its *la ilah* not *lai la*, *majnu* replied that for you its *la ilah* but for me its *laila*. God became happy upon *majnu's* act and sent angels to call him. When angels went before *majnu* and told him God's message, *majnu* replied that if God wants to see him, why should he go to God, rather God should come to him in the form of *laila*. Meanwhile the *qawwals* also narrated few couplets of *Bulleh Shah* with similar piety in order to make their point, which are as follows;

"natunsadarabb, naasinterebandhe,
jeyteremaarenaasinmardhe,
jeri Jannat da tunmaankrda,
os Jannat vichnawardhe,
pharkepallaasinapnemursad da, ja dahishtanvichwardhe".
(neither are you my God,
neither I am your creature,
had we not died as per your plan,
what was the worth of heaven?

that heaven we would not have entered rather followed our *mursad* and entered hell instead.)

In the same *qawwali*, Wadali Brothers also mentioned *Guru Nanak's qissa* of 'weighing 13kg (in the name of God) for all the customers, once when he was serving at a *sarkari* ration depot. Then he mentioned *Guru Gobind Singh's qissa* when all of his four sons were martyred for the cause of *dharm/qaum*. Further going on to mention *qissa* of *Khwaja Ghulam Fareed*, narrating that where he used to sit, all day he kept watching faces of people (passing by him) and used to say that O' dear God, how do you make such beautiful faces. When a random guy asked Baba, when do you

worship? As the entire day you are only watching faces of people sitting here. The *faqir* replied that 'I don't count beads of the wooden rosary but these beautiful faces are the beads I count with my eyes and therefore this is my *ibadat*'. Again the *qawwals* here paused to narrate few couplets of *BullehShah* with similar form of piety which are as follows,

"Bullyamandirdha, masitidha, dha de jo kuchdhendha, par
iknadaavindilbandhe da, mera Rabb dilanvichrehnda"
(O Bullya! demolish the temple, demolish the mosque,
demolish whatever can be demolished but never break a
person's heart as my Rabb resides there)

Again *Bulleh Shah* says;

"Bullya Rabb da naambhaveinlavonalavo,
parayisurat nu dekhkeraaziteyravo"

(O Bullya! it matters not whether you recite the divine name
or not,

but remain amenable when you see other's countenance)

Qawwals, then making their point, say 'harsuratvichaaveyaarnazar' (every face carries my beloved's image) and therefore, the above mentioned person stood speechless before *faqir*. Then the *qissa* continued further, narrating that the *faqir* moved forward and saw a young girl combing her hair near her window. Upon watching her, the *faqir* said *waahparvardigar Allah tallah*, have you just created and sent her, how beautiful she is! When the people around saw this, they felt that this *faqir* is a fraud as they could not understand his way of *ibadat*. Immediately that girl called her *maalik*/husband complaining about the *faqir's* comments. The husband quickly came down in anger and beat him up with his sandal, upon which the *faqir* laughed and said *waahparvardigar Allah tallah*, is this also your creation? And in a complaining mood questioned God, that the one who loves your creation does he gets beaten up? *Qawwals* further narrated that God listened to him and when the *maalik*/husband of that girl was going back upstairs, he slipped and fell unconscious. The girl now screamed and gathered people around complaining that this *faqir* has done something to my husband. When people questioned the *faqir*, he replied, "I have no power to do anything and this is a fight between the *maaliks*/husbands". When people further asked him to explain, *faqir* replied that, when girl's *maalik*/husband beat me, my *maalik*/husband i.e. God beat up her *maalik*/husband thereby equalling the account and thus finished the fight.

In an another *qawwali*¹⁸ titled "koi esi namaz prha de" by *GulamKibriaqawwal*, carries a narrative 'qissa' of *NizamuddinAuliya's* sandal where the *qawwal* also mentions that the purpose of the *qawwal* is actually 'qawwlbayankarna' i.e. to narrate the sayings of the *Pir*. In *sufiqawwalis* throughout the Punjab (both east and west) these stories specifically deal with the concept of *Pir* and *Ishq*, the latter being either *majazi* (illustrative) or *haqiqi* (actual). According to the *qawwal*, the purpose of such 'qisse' is to emphasise the precedence of *Ishq* over *sharia* in piety. There is a famous saying in Punjab that 'ishqshara da bairi' i.e. *Ishq* is always against *sharia*. Punjabi mystics

¹⁷Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NC9LpHQ8O7A>

¹⁸Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fIUoJajzk>

gave so much importance to *Ishq* that there was a *sufinara*/slogan popular during 18th-19th century in Punjab “*la ilahlil l ishq*” i.e. there is no God but Love.¹⁹ The *qawwal* narrates that once a *mureed*/disciple of *NizamuddinAuliya* who was a *diwana*/crazy lover of his *murshad*/mentor went to a cobbler to get a sandal repaired which belonged to his *murshad* i.e. *NizamuddinAuliya*. The cobbler seeing the beautiful sandal, enquired whose was it? To which the *mureed* replied that “*ae Rabb di jutti ae*” i.e. this sandal belonged to God. The cobbler warned him that, “don’t you know rule of *sharia* is prevalent here and you can be jailed for saying this”. But when the *mureed* was still adamant, cobbler gathered a few people to look into the matter including the *sipahis* (policemen). When they all heard him claiming that the sandal belonged to God, the *sipahis* caught him and took him to the court of the *qazi*. *Qazi* then questioned the *mureed* and thought him to be mentally unstable. He sent him to the *shahimehmangah* (the royal guest house) to be fed and to be questioned later again. Next day in the morning the *mureed* was called and the *qazi* questioned him tell me what is the time? To which the *mureed* answered correctly, then the *qazi* questioned what is in my hand? to which he again replied correctly by answering ‘*kalam*’. The *qazi* then asked now tell me whose sandal is this? But to this the *mureed* again replied it belongs to God. The *qazi* came to the conclusion that he is saying this deliberately. So he pronounced a death sentence and charged him for going against the *sharia* which during those days was done by hanging publicly. Meanwhile *NizamuddinAuliya* while sitting with his *mureeds* suddenly decided to roam around the *bazaar* and while roaming around he saw a crowd and asked one of his *mureeds* to see what is happening there? The *mureed* enquired and told *NizamuddinAuliya* that a public hanging is being given to someone for going against the *sharia*. *Nizamuddin* went forward to see and when the *qazi* saw him he stood up from his chair in honor and offered him to have a seat. However, *NizamuddinAuliya* politely refused by saying that you are the *haakim* (judge) of the time hence you sit, let another chair come for me to sit. Then *Nizamuddin* enquired from him what is the offence he has committed for which he’s being given death sentence by hanging publicly to which the *qazi* replied that he’s crazy, he claims to have a sandal of God which is against *sharia*. To this *NizamuddinAuliya* replied that how is this against *sharia*, haven’t you read the Holy *Quran* properly? As it says that everything between this earth and that heaven belongs to God, then how is a sandal separate? As it also is a thing between this earth and the heaven. The *qazi* replied, “yes it is true but you are not understanding his intention behind saying this”. To which *NizamuddinAuliya* replied, “no its you who is unable to understand his intention”. Then turning towards the *mureed*, he enquired about his intention in saying this. The *mureed* replied by singing thus;

“*pa leya main Ishq da cholajerhakadhmailanahovay,*
milyasanuhun e haqiqijerhakadhifananahovay,
milya o mehbulpyarajerhakadhijudanahovay,
ishq namaz main nitijerhikadhigazanahovay”
 (I have found the cloak of love which never gets dirty,

I have found the eternal beauty which never dies,
 Found a beloved who never separates from me,
 I perform the prayer of love which I never miss)

On hearing this, *NizamuddinAuliya* stated that the *mureed*’s intention is pure and that he is at a stage where he see/feels the presence of God everywhere. The *qazi* humbly requested *NizamuddinAuliya* to grant him this *ilm*/knowledge. However, *NizamuddinAuliya* recommended him to pray before God and request him rather to bestow upon you this *ilm*/knowledge. The *qazi* then prayed and that prayer, the *qawwals* actually sang in their performance, the beginning lyrics of which are as follows;

“*rabbamerya o ilmsikha de jis di intehanahovay,*
koi esi namaz prha de jerhiqazanahovay”

(O Lord! Grant me that knowledge which has no limits,
 Teach me to pray that prayer which never ends)

A deliberate variety of sacred imagery from various religions was adopted to create a supra-identity based on humanhood rather than sacred piety.

<u>Lyrics</u>	<u>Translation</u>
<i>Ganga gya gall mukdinyi</i>	<i>Pilgrimage to ganga will not save you</i>
<i>Bhavainsousoughotaykhayiy</i>	<i>Even if you take hundreds of dips there</i>
<i>Makkaygya gall mukdinyi</i>	<i>Going to makka does not save you</i>
<i>Bhavainsousoujumaparhayiy</i>	<i>Even if you offer hundreds of Friday prayers</i>
<i>e</i>	<i>O Bulla shah you achieve the final goal</i>
<i>Bulla shah gall tan mukdi</i>	<i>Only by self-abnegation.</i>
<i>Jadh 'main' nu</i>	
<i>dilonbhulayiy</i>	

Another universalistic concept which portrays this supra-identity of the self was the deconstruction of extreme intellectualism through the concept of ‘*ilm*’ and the text. The concept of ‘*ilm*’ was posited against the concept gnostic knowledge.²⁰

<u>Lyrics</u>	<u>Translation</u>
<i>Parhparhilmhazarkitaaban</i>	<i>After studying thousands of books</i>
<i>Naamrakhalyaqazi</i>	<i>You claimed yourself to be a qazi</i>
<i>Farshshamsheermujahidvali</i>	<i>Carrying the sword like a crusader</i>
<i>Naamrakhalya ghazi</i>	<i>You claimed to be a ghazi</i>
<i>Makkay ja ja hajj guzaray</i>	<i>Performing multiple hajjs in makka</i>
<i>Naamrakhalya hajji</i>	<i>You claimed the stature of a hajji</i>
<i>Par aje vi Bullyakujnyibanya</i>	<i>Even then you became nothing</i>
<i>Jeytunyaarnakitaraazi</i>	<i>If you did not please the beloved.</i>

Similarly, the obsession with ritualism was counter posed with the concept of intuitionism.

<u>Lyrics</u>	<u>Translation</u>
<i>Jeyrabbmildanahateyadhotyan</i>	<i>If ablutions ensured attainment of Divine</i>
<i>Mildadaduyanmachiyen nu</i>	<i>Then frogs and fishes would have attained Him</i>
<i>Jeyrabbmildamandirmasiti</i>	<i>If temples and mosques house the Divine</i>
<i>Mildachamchrikiyan nu</i>	<i>Then bats and birds would have attained Him</i>
<i>Jeyrabbmilda jungle firyan</i>	<i>Had access to Divine been through wandering in forests</i>
<i>Mildagayiyanchachiyen nu</i>	
<i>Bulla shah rabbona nu milda</i>	
<i>Niyytaachiyansachiyen nu</i>	

¹⁹Originally attributed to *Fakhruddin Iraqi* and mentioned in the *lama'at*: Divine Flashes.

²⁰Ibid.

	<p><i>Then cows and calves would have gained his presence Bulla shah Divine is attained by those Who have honest and pure intentions</i></p>
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<u>Lyrics</u>	<u>Translation</u>
<p><i>Nafalnamazankamzanana Rozaysarfa rote hoo Makke de waloyijaande Gharonjinhataroteehoo Uchiyanbangansoyidende Neeyayjinha di khoteehoo Keeparvahtinhamoo Jinhagharvichladhibautihoo</i></p>	<p><i>Formal prayers are feeble pursuits Fasting has little merit except saving food Only they go on pilgrimage Who are not wanted at home Only they pray loudly Who are deceptive of intent But those who have found God in their hearts Care not to perform all these activities.</i></p>

This is a powerful imagery for establishing a populist counter-narrative of piety beyond identities. This was also a non- elitist statement targeting the structural elitism.²¹The cohesion that these centres provide cut across all identities. These centres provide a counter narrative of cohesion through dissent based on rejection which is well expressed in the *Qawwali* lyrics.²²

<p><i>Bulle nu lokimattidende Bullya aa baejavichmaseeti Vichmaseetiteykikujhunda Je dilon namaz naneeti Bahartovaylattangoday Andarrahepaleeti Bina kamilmursadbullya Aweingyiibadatkiti</i></p>	<p><i>People offer advice to bullah Come and sit inside the mosque What can a mosque offer? If the heart is not inclined to pray Washing the outer surface does not clean the inner self Without a perfect Spiritual Guide All worship is in vain</i></p>
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Here, oral lyrical tradition and cultural space acted as mirrors to these commonalities.²³

<u>Lyrics</u>	<u>Translation</u>
<p><i>Hindu kirabb da sauralgda Musalmankisala Amlanvaajo baba bullya Dohan da munh kala</i></p>	<p><i>what special proximity does Hindu possess with God Or what special relationship does a Musliman possess with God Without deeds baba bulla, faces of both are blackened</i></p>

Punjab placed at the crossroad of centuries of demographic movement across continents and its geo-cultural mosaic provided the foreground for the incorporation of transcontinental haven of ideologies, cultures and religious

²¹ Poetry alone offered an outlet for the expression of individualistic mystical experiences (Rizvi 1978:84).²¹ From the thirteenth century onwards Hindu mystical songs were recited at ‘sama’ gatherings. The recitation of Hindawi music at ‘sama’ was popular at major Sufi centres.²¹

²²Sanjay Dansalia, “Mystical oral re-tellings and its lyrical representation ardera baba murad shah, nakoder, in contemporary east Punjab” *paper presented at JTA Conference March 2020*, Visit https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340435661_Mystical_oral_re-tellings_and_its_lyrical_representation_ar_dera_baba_murad_shah_nakoder_in_contemporary_east_punjab

²³Ibid.

discourses over a period of centuries. Cultural dialogues on multiple plains – socio-cultural, religious and so forth was a complex phenomenon. Linguistic and literary tradition of Punjab reflected the various hues of this cultural dialogue. The mystical wanderings evident in the lyrical traditions of Punjab exposed a wide canvas of genres borrowed from Arab-Persian traditions and Indic traditions like *NirgunSampradaya*, of *SahajiyaniBudhists*, of *Mahayana Vajrayana Budhists*, of *Tantric Hath Yoga*, of *NathPanthi - Kanphatta Yogis*, of *SahajiyaVaishnavs*. Similarly, the peripheral and frontier zone regionality of Punjab attracted heterodoxies from around the globe including *khawarij* or dissidents, *zanadiqa* or free thinkers, *malahidsor* atheists, escapists, *Ismailis*, *Fatimids*.²⁴ Esotericism became the language of heterodoxies which adapted the vernacular and local dialects to express defiance. Vernacularization of mystical discourse in Punjab engaged its multilingual literary and linguistic traditions.²⁵ The dialogic narration of lyrics engaged with the regional milieu, giving expression to multiplicity, collectivism, dissent, etc. through lyrical re-tellings featuring *Baba Farid*, *Bulleh Shah*, *Hazrat Sultan Bahoo* and *Shah Hussain* amongst others. A defiant populism expressed a beyond boundaries collectivism which found individual and local concerns far more relevant than a universalistic cosmological concept of piety. This was a conscious effort towards a deliberate distance creation from universalistic piety, and in the process create space for a new collectivism which defied boundaries and identities beyond the self.

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²⁴S.H. Siddiqui, “Literature, culture and society” *Third Frame, Islam and Frontier zone?* Vol.2 No.2 April June 2009. Pg. 74-75

²⁵Harjot Oberoi (1994) “From the time of the so-called ‘Sapir-Whorf’ hypothesis, it has been widely acknowledged that language plays a pivotal role in our construction of reality and the way we act on that reality. This insight has been further consolidated in the field of ethno semantics whose proponents assert that all culturally significant phenomena tend to be reflected in lexical, grammatical or syntactic structures”.

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