JAT MASCULINITY AND DEVIANT FEMININITY IN A PUNJABI ROMANTIC EPIC:

EXPLORING GENDER THROUGH WARIS SHAH’S HīR

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the representation of gender in Waris Shah’s *Hīr*, a romantic epic (*qissā*) composed during the late 1700s in Punjab. The author, Waris Shah, a Sufi of the Chishti tradition, lived during the eighteenth century. *Hīr* portrays the tragic story of the love between Hīr, a young woman of the Siyal clan, and Rāṅjhā, a young man known by his clan name; the story is sometimes called the “Romeo and Juliet” of Punjabi literature. This *qissā* is set in the rural, feudal plains of Punjab, where multiple clans strove to maintain or improve their status.

In the *qissā*, *Hīr*, Waris Shah portrays gender through poetic metaphor, dialogue, character, and plot. I focus primarily on his protagonists, treating each of Hīr and Rāṅjhā as pivotal male and female characters, and secondarily on the character of Sahiti, Hīr’s sister-in-law in the story. I interrogate the gender representation of each character to uncover the social constructs to which Shah subscribed. I will argue that through the plot of the story, the dialogue, and the exchanges between the characters, a multiplicity of forms of gender is articulated. The portrayal of Shah’s main characters forces us to question the idea of gender norm, while recognizing how it functions as a social force. Through his complex characters Shah demonstrates the unorthodox gender is normal in this text. In Part I, I propose an overarching meaning for Shah’s multi-vocality of femininity as tied to the character of Hīr (and secondarily Sahiti), by paying close attention to the language Shah uses in describing her, the arc of her plot which ends in her murder, and her interaction with other women characters. In Part II, I propose an overarching meaning for Shah’s multi-vocal portrayal of masculinity as tied to the character of Rāṅjhā, by attending to descriptions of his appearance, his loss of property and arc that ends in his death, as well as his interactions with other characters. Through these two figures, Hīr and Rāṅjhā, Shah articulates a range of gendered forms, while ultimately adhering to patriarchal norms that are presented alongside other models.
Lay Summary

Written in the late eighteenth century, the qissā (romantic folktale) of Waris Shah’s *Hīr* is recognized as a landmark Punjabi language text. Often described as India’s equivalent to Romeo and Juliet, the tale focuses on the love of Hīr and Rānjhā, the opposition they face, and their eventual deaths. *Hīr* was written when Punjab found itself within a significantly complex social, political, and religious environment. Despite being written 250 years ago, Waris Shah’s *Hīr* has retained a prominent presence in Punjabi cultural life. My research focuses on the role of gender in Waris Shah’s *Hīr*, particularly examining how masculinity and femininity are portrayed in the story. More specifically, this thesis examines how Waris Shah illustrates gender through his main characters, and how Shah presents multiple forms of gender identity, while ultimately privileging one of these.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Gurinderpal Mann.
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Note to the Reader:

The translations in this thesis are my own. While in the footnotes I have provided the verses in Gurmukhi Punjabi script, they have been transliterated from the Shahmukhi Punjabi script, in Sabir, Sharif, ed. Hīr Vāriš Šāh. Lahore: Progressive Books, 1986.

I shall be referring to the female protagonist as ‘Hīr’, except when using a direct quotation, at which time she shall also be referred to as ‘Heer’.

I shall be referring to landowner/farmer with the word ‘Jat’, except when using a direct quotation, at which time the word shall also be seen as ‘Jatt’.
Dedication

To my family.
Introduction

This thesis seeks to understand how Waris Shah understands gender in his poem, *Hīr*, belonging to the romantic folktale (*qissā*) tradition. Relying on Judith Butler’s work on gender and religion, I examine the ways that characters reprimand and praise one another as constitutive of gendered norms. As well, through Butler’s idea of what constitutes a liveable identity, I examine, quite literally, who lives and who dies in Shah’s plot. In broad terms, Judith Butler argues that gender “is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized.” Ellen Armour and Susan St. Ville, based on Butler’s theories, argue that “masculine and feminine gender roles,” are “understood as socially constructed or matters of custom rather than nature.” She argues that sex is produced by gender in a way that ties bodies closely to performance. In *Hīr*, females are portrayed as women and males are portrayed as men. Butler’s understanding allows us to see that Waris Shah’s gender ideology governs the sexual morphology, bodies, performance, and speech of all the characters.

In the contemporary period, as Butler asserts there exists “a restrictive discourse on gender that insists on the binary of man and woman as the exclusive way to understand the gender field,” and that this “performs a regulatory operation of power that naturalizes the hegemonic instance and forecloses the thinkability of its disruption.” While as I will show this is only partially true in the early modern period, which precedes the period of Butler's concern, her idea of regulation is useful in understanding this pre-modern text.

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2 Butler stresses that the “norm is not the same as a rule.” Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 41-42. I will be discussing “norms” rather than “rules” with respect to the narrative *Hīr*.
4 Ibid.
In this thesis I approach Waris Shah as attempting to intervene in this process through the narrative of Hīr and, in so doing, to authorize specific gender norms within the field of eighteenth century Punjab. Butler, using the metaphor of a policeman calling out a jaywalker, understands that individuals shall be subject to “reprimand” when they do not abide by certain gender norms, which “does not merely repress or control the subject, but forms a crucial part of the juridical and social formation of the subject.”\(^5\) Hence, I will look to instances of reprimand, praise, and silence to tease out Waris Shah’s overarching gender norms. Armour and St. Ville have further argued that while gender is “socially constructed,” “the reigning expectations of masculinity and femininity are putatively open to revision.”\(^6\) We will see in Hīr both the malleability of gender, and how it is regulated.

Waris Shah presents a range of gender identities through his narrative, which provide in some ways a varied range of gendered identities that were available in the world he sought to create through this text. The fact that the characters, in particular the main protagonists of the story are consistently reprimanded throughout the narrative demonstrates that Shah has included a number of gender performances, not all are liveable. Their failure in the story however, particularly when it comes to their union, is due to their inability to completely follow the gender roles as they had been created by others, further confirming that Shah has allowed a number of gender identities to find a place in the story, but privileged one.

If gender is a social construct, and norms are created within a society, attributes and behaviours are reinforced within a social climate as to what it is to be masculine and feminine.

\(^5\) Butler, *Bodies that matter*, 82.
\(^6\) Armour & St. Ville (eds.), *Bodily Citations*, 2.
Through his multi-vocality, Waris Shah shows that the concept of gender can be interpreted in numerous ways. At times, the alterity he presents is identified by other characters in the narrative, and characters are reprimanded or praised for these deviations from the concept of what is considered normal by others in the story.

There is evidence in the text that the pastoral climate in which the story’s setting finds itself is one that is patriarchal in nature, where girls are expected by their elders and religious figures to play a subordinate place in the family. Hīr is encouraged by elders in the story to be obedient, compliant with social and religious traditions, and refrain from exercising their desires, particularly in the context of romantic desires. Waris Shah however, through his primary character of Hīr, and secondarily Sahiti as well, is breaking down and defying their social expectations, and carving out different explanations as to what it means to be feminine. The feminine characters that Shah is creating are ones which are rebellious, feisty, and demonstrate no apprehension in fulfilling their desires. They are depicted as both aware and comfortable with their status and do use it to their advantage also, but evidence in the text reveals that they do not passively follow the path, which has been carved out for them by their elders. Hīr is reprimanded for not adhering to the advice of her elders, but this does little to alter her approach. Through these female characters, and Hīr in particular, Shah is showing that the feminine gender can be depicted in a number of ways.

Similar to what Waris Shah does in expressing his version of what it can mean to be feminine is the same approach he takes for his male character, Rānjhā. The narrative is set in the background of rural Punjab, where male masculinity was strongly connected to land ownership. Furthermore, the attributes of strength and assertiveness is emphasized in the social setting, as it enhances what is considered to be masculine. Shah however, chooses to make his male
protagonist multi-dimensional. In the text, Rāṅjhā is seen as a fashionable “dandy” that is
delicate and gentle more so than a muscular young man with brute force. Shah chooses to depict
Rāṅjhā as a handsome young man that does not conform to religious and social stereotypes, and
he is chastised for his look as well, although he is shrewd enough to use it to his advantage on
occasion too. While Shah depicts Rāṅjhā in this manner, he also allows him to fit comfortably
within the confines of a more neatly masculinist and chauvinist model as well.

0.1 Overview of the Tale

The story of Hīr is generally consistent across versions. It is set on the banks of the river
Chenab in East Punjab. Dhīdo Rāṅjhā—Dhīdo as personal name and Rāṅjhā as clan name—lives
with his father, brothers, and sisters-in-law. As the youngest of the brothers, he is his father’s
favorite son. Waris Shah portrays Rāṅjhā as a handsome young man whose beauty casts a spell
on all young women who encounter him, and has Rāṅjhā’s own sisters-in-law swayed by that
charm as well. Following the death of his father and having been swindled out of his land and
inheritance by brothers, the powerless and empty-handed Rāṅjhā heads off to the village of
Jhang. Shah presents Hīr’s legendary beauty, known throughout the region, as Rāṅjhā’s
motivation for heading to Jhang. Rāṅjhā must overcome numerous struggles and obstacles before
Shah has him successfully arrive in Jhang. There, he meets Hīr and their romance commences.

Hīr is successful in convincing her father to employ Rāṅjhā as their buffalo herder. This
gives the lovers ample opportunity to secretly pursue their love. Upon discovery of Hīr’s
relationship with their buffalo herder, Hīr’s family, partially influenced by the qāzī (Islamic legal
magistrate), quickly arrange her marriage to Saida. Saida is portrayed as belonging to a rich
family with plenty of land, and Hīr’s family, for which reason they see Saida as worthy of their
daughter. Interestingly, Shah has Rāṅjhā refuse to elope with Hīr, since it is not the honorable
thing to do. This sets up a situation in which their love could only succeed if Hīr’s family relented. They do not relent, however, and Hīr is married to Saida.

A distraught Rānjhā eventually makes his way to Balnath, a yogi, and requesting initiation to become a yogi. Rānjhā’s plan is to enter Hīr’s village in disguise. In spite of his followers’ objections, Balnath is swayed by Rānjhā’s charm and charisma, and initiates him. Rānjhā becomes a yogi and goes in disguise to Hīr’s village. He first encounters Sahiti, Hīr’s sister-in-law, at which time they engage in a lengthy dialogue with each, much of which is overshadowed by their quarreling. Ironically, it is with Sahiti’s assistance that the lovers are able to meet and escape. At this point, the lovers try to convince everyone that their love is divine in nature. Although initially Hir’s family agree, afterwards upon discussion amongst the clansmen, Hīr’s family, described as “intoxicated” by honor, kill her with poison. Rānjhā takes his own life when he learns she is gone.

0.2 Persian Language in Punjab

Waris Shah's Hīr is a qissā, representative of a popular genre in the region in the early modern and modern periods. The earliest examples of qissā poetry in Punjab are from the thirteenth century. Amir Khusraw (1254-1325) composed versions of the romances of Laila and Majnun, as well as Shirin and Khusraw in Persian. Both stories originated from the Arab and Persia subcontinents respectively. Pritchett stresses that the qissā came to India in its Persian form. This form achieved notable popularity and found a place in the Mughal court and after the

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9 Ibid.
flourishing of Persian qissā in South Asia, the form soon gathered momentum in other languages in South Asia, such as Urdu.¹⁰

The Persian language was of fundamental importance in the early modern period in South Asia. Muzaffar Alam stresses that there had been interaction between South Asian and Persian languages for two millennia, but it was only towards the end of the tenth century that Persian gained a foothold in Punjab due mainly to the Ismaili population there.¹¹ Later on, as Alam claims, Persian’s relationship with India and Punjab grew when Mahmud Ghazni conquered the Punjab region in the eleventh century.¹² He made a Persian cultural center there, paving the way for Persian literature to grow.¹³ According to Alam, the arrival of the Turkish conquerors in Punjab during the twelfth and thirteenth century served to further strengthen Persian language use in northern India and expanded it eastward toward Delhi.¹⁴

Beyond the courts, common people and soldiers had a taste for Persian poetry and spread its influence.¹⁵ The Sufis also played a prominent role, since their religious centers were an important public meeting place, and worshippers demonstrated a keen interest in understanding Persian, the language of significant religious scriptures.¹⁶ This momentum continued, as Persian poetry experienced a considerable lift during the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century.¹⁷ This was predominantly the case during Akbar’s rule. Akbar demonstrated a committed to Iranian

¹⁰ Pritchett, 2.
¹² Ibid.
¹³ Ibid., 132-133.
¹⁴ Ibid., 133.
¹⁵ Ibid., 147.
¹⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷ Ibid., 158.
literature, which led to a significant amount of Persian poets and writers travelling to India.\textsuperscript{18} In contrast to Iran at that time, where there was fear of persecution, the literary community found a safe harbor under Akbar’s rule in India, as well as considerable praise.\textsuperscript{19}

Persian language in South Asia experienced what Alam has called “Indianization.”\textsuperscript{20} It was influenced by Indian vernaculars. Persian forms, such as its rich \textit{qissā} style, developed in a situation of mutual influence between Persian and South Asian vernaculars. This was particularly visible in the case of Hindavi poets. Amīr Khushrao, who was one of the most prominent writers of the fourteenth century and who wrote in Persian, identified his writing as “Hindavi.” Notable poets, such as Munjhan, Jayasi, and Qutban, and writers of Hindavi romance poetry chose features of a Persian poetic genre of rhyming couplets (\textit{masnavis}) for their works.\textsuperscript{21}

Vernacular languages such as Hindavi appeared in north India during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, developing further during the Mughal Empire in the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{22} Mughal courts attracted intellectuals and authors who composed in Persian. According to Shantanu Phukan, the nature of Hindi within the Mughal Empire demonstrates how Persian and Urdu were “each defining the other, and even bleeding into the other.”\textsuperscript{23} Phukan attributes Persian influence within that period to Sufis, who played a role in expanding the influence of Islam in South Asia. Hindi vernacular was used by the Sufis as a tool to connect with the rural,
non-elite Hindu community who were not well versed in Persian. Sufis produced their material in both Persian and Hindi in order to communicate with the Hindi speaking rural community. One could argue that the role Sufis played in spreading Islam facilitated the influence of Persian on Hindi vernacular during the Mughal period. As Anne Murphy has argued, the emergence of Punjabi as a literary language is framed by the literary lives of both Persian and Braj, the latter of which provided both a model and a kind of competitor for Punjabi in the eighteenth century. Literary genres from both the Persian and Braj literary worlds provided models for Punjabi literary production.

0.3 The Qissā Genre

Romance stories of similar nature to the qissās have enjoyed a long popularity within the Indian context, and played a formative role in the development of north Indian vernaculars. For example the most famous of the romance stories are the Prem-ākhyān, shared in multiple Indian vernaculars. The Prem-ākhyān were essentially love stories in which characters travel a spiritual journey for their beloved, which reflects a path towards greater “spiritual maturity.” The Prem-ākhyān were written by Sufis during the Pre-Mughal and Mughal periods. Although the Sufis initially shared these stories in the Avadhi dialect, they subsequently shared them in other vernaculars, in particular those being Urdu and Bengali. This “hybrid narrative texture”
of the Prem-ākhyān allowed it to be shared in multiple vernaculars and, it can be argued, paved the way for romance literature to be told in other vernaculars besides Persian. In Punjab, romantic qissās garnered a significant amount of interest. Some claim this romantic focus is the hallmark of Punjabi qissās, but they are not unique by any means. Romantic qissās in Persian go back as far back as c.1000 C.E. 32 Qissās became widely published in the nineteenth century and Northern India in particular, in both Hindi and Urdu. In the modern period, the inexpensive price of printed qissās enhanced their attractiveness to the general public. 33 The simplicity of qissā, made it available to the masses in India, and the fact that it was shared through performance further enhanced this quality, making it all the more appealing to the layperson. These stories fulfill “the typical oral-literate dynamic of Indian literature.” 34 The qissā in comparison to other types of literature did not have a single purpose; Pasha Khan stresses that qissās “always incorporate intertexts of various genres,” making the “hearers eloquent” as well as “prudent.” 35

Prior to the twentieth century, when the Urdu novel became popular in the North Indian context, the genre of qissā experienced considerable popularity. 36 During the Colonial Period in the nineteenth century, qissās experienced great momentum in the Punjabi language as well. 37

31 Phukan, 34.
32 Francesca Orsini, Print and Pleasure: Popular Literature and Entertaining Fictions in Colonial North India (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2009), 107.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 106.
36 Ibid., 185.
37 Mir, 12.
0.3.1 Formal Characteristics

Qissā narratives are written in rhyme. Waris Shah’s is written in a baint\textsuperscript{38} metre style. The baint is apparently derived from “Punjabi oral tradition”\textsuperscript{39} and not from its alleged source, the Persian Mutaqarib, which is the metre used for the qissā in Persian.\textsuperscript{40} The Punjabi baint is a metre composed of two lines, which possess a Persianate rhythmic scheme.\textsuperscript{41} Earlier baint examples, such as the versions of Hīr by Muqbil and Ahmad Gujjār, demonstrated a structure arranged by stanzas made by two couplets and ending with a line which would contain the signature (takhallus) of the poet, later conformed more to a masnavi style, arranged by couplets that could be of significant length.\textsuperscript{42} Observed carefully, even from examples offered already, one can ascertain that Waris Shah’s poetry is more in line with a masnavi style with a longer strain of couplets, which end with Waris Shah offering his signature in the final line of the stanza.

The Punjabi qissā, in general, however differed from the classical types. The classical qissā is typically separated into three sections: the prologue, the main body, and the epilogue.\textsuperscript{43} This demonstrates the connection of the qissā is actually based onto the original form of the Persian masnavi, recognized by having a prologue (dibachah), in which there is praise for God and the Prophet; then the main par (dastan); and finally, the epilogue (khatimah).\textsuperscript{44} In general the prologue goes through stages, beginning first with the grandeur of the Lord and the applause of love, the Prophet, those loved by the Prophet, the Sufi saints (Pirs), to finally recognizing the

\textsuperscript{38} Jeevan Deol, “Sex, Social Critique and the Female Figure in Premodern Punjabi Poetry: Varis Shah’s ‘Hīr,’” 
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 147.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
humble poet himself and the world in which the *qissā* is written. This pattern is followed by the introduction of Waris Shah’s *Hīr*, which begins first with a focus on God and love:

I begin by singing the glory of God, who created this world through love  
First God fell in love himself, the Prophet his beloved  
Love is the status of the Saint and Sage, the man in love shall suffer  
Blossomed have the gardens of those hearts, who have accepted love

Further on in the prologue, Waris Shah recognizes the companions of the Prophet:

All four friends of the Prophet are gems, in a world filled with sinners  
Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman, and Ali, all marvelous in their way  
Who have trusted in the search of truth, giving themselves to the path of God  
Those that renounced pleasures, bravo to those men of God

The poem begins with the author sharing that the poet’s friends requested him to create the poem for their reading and pleasure, for which reason he is embarking on this endeavor. This is demonstrated by Waris Shah in the beginning of his poem:

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45 Deol, “Sex, Social Critique,” 147.  
Friends came and posed a question; create a new tale of Hīr
The story of this love tale, should be told with beautiful words
Through saying marvelous verses, bring together Hīr and Rānjhā
Sitting together with friends, let us enjoy the love of Hīr and Rānjhā.  

Waris Shah shares that he is writing at the request of his friends, and below he shares his acceptance of this request:

Obeying the command of friends, a great tale has been composed
Through the compilation of correct phrases, a new rose has been plucked
After much pondering of the soul, Farhad has broken the mountain
Creating a bouquet of chosen flowers, whose fragrance is like the nectar of roses. 

The main section of the poem, or what would be considered the equivalent of the *dastan*, shares a beautiful image of the setting of where the *qissā* shall take place, and in particular shall describe the attractiveness of the main protagonists, and the beauty is described from the head to the foot of the characters, which is called a *sarāpā*, and is shared by Waris Shah as he describes Rānjhā:

What shall we say of Takht Hazara, where Rānjhās live joyfully
Fashionable, intoxicated young men, each one more handsome than the previous

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49 जानो अभी भाभि मर्फ़ल औँ। दिलमल छीन दत तथा जटापीटी नी
देखे अभी छोर दल मल लिखिये। चढ़ी ललित तल मुटापीटी नी
सह अभय चंदन दे सिंहासन वधि वे। तथे छीन दल में भेल भिलापीटी नी।
जानो तल मलाफ़म लिख वधि वे। अभा छीन दे सिंहासन दा पाहिटी नी।

50 युवक भेल दे ललित ढापिए। सिंहासन चंदन दा सोनिटा दी
हिर्नुमा संदे दे धुध तुम्मड़ छीन। तल में जुलाफ़ दा केरिना दी
दुधार दोरू पी दे लिखी ऊचाईयूं दब दे। इबूल भस्म दुई देविया दी
ललित छीन दे सेंद जटा हिर्नु, सेंद हिर्नु मुलाफ़ लिखिता दी।

51 Deol, “Sex, Social Critique,” 147.
52 Ibid.
Wearing earrings, rings, and lungis tied at the waist, they look gorgeous
What can I say about Takht Hazara, it appears heaven has descended on Earth\(^3\)

Succeeding this section, the *qissā* flows into the narrative and story.\(^4\) Following the dialogue and story, the *qissā* concludes by reiterating the beginnings of the *qissā* and then sharing the time and setting of where it was compiled.\(^5\) Waris Shah explains the social and political context in which the *qissā* was written, as apparent from the following verse:

> I am disheartened by my weakness, as the guilty is on the consequence of pain
> Muslims are afraid of God, and Hajis are afraid of beatings under religious law
> The Officer worries about soldiers, and servants about wounds inflicted for mistakes
> Out of all the nation of Punjab, I am most disheartened for Kasoor
> We worry about our honour, as Moses did about Kohtoor
> May these warriors go to heaven, and martyrs receive virgins
> Honorable from outside, but evil inside, like a beating drum from a distance
> Waris Shah a resident of Judiala, and a student of Makhdoom of Kasoor\(^6\)

Waris Shah describes the context and the circumstances of Punjab during the time he had compiled his text.

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\(^3\) Sabir, P.4

\(^4\) Deol, “Sex, Social Critique,” 147.

\(^5\) Sabir, P.410, Verse: 628.
0.3.2 Performance of Qissā

The qissā’s popularity, especially within Punjab was particularly due to its role in entertainment.57 This specific attribute of the qissā played a role in ensuring its “longevity.”58 Folk songs and poetry of qissās were performed in the streets of Punjab by youngsters; Mir shows this by quoting Syad Muhammad Latif, who described street activity in Lahore in 1892.59 In addition, Punjabi villages had performers, known as mirasis, who entertained the public. They would play music and sing Punjabi folk songs about qissās; they would perform at cultural events and wedding celebrations.60 Most often, qissās were narrated orally.61 In Mir’s words, qissās “were not meant for silent reading,”62 as the material was “intimately linked to scribal, performance, and listening traditions.”63 This allowed qissā to be performed and distributed in multiple social environments.64 Qissās are tailored for oral recitation and performance based on their format and structure; their stories and storylines are straightforward, consisting of actions with dialogue and without long explanations.65 This format was suited to the farming region of Punjab. Orsini states that the qissā possessed modest tenses and verbs, and the dialogue was frank and straightforward, appealing to an audience that wanted to “understand everything
immediately. For these reasons, even during the mass printing of qissā during the Colonial period, as Orsini identifies there was no “transition from oral recitation to silent reading.”

The climate of Punjab was one in which music and performance played a significant role, and this is something that had an undeniable influence on literature, primarily that of qissā. Mir quotes Charles Swynnerton to stress that “performance of Punjabi literature texts intersected with important social customs,” which was “embedded in the practices of everyday life.” The social environment of Punjab was very fertile for the qissā genre to grow, given the role of music and performance. Nowhere was this more evident than the role of spiritualism and devotion. For instance, in the thirteenth century, the shrine of Baba Sheikh Farid was a site at which devotees would come and recite verses and dance. The performance of qawalis and sama, songs and dances performed by Sufis and devotees were embedded in the culture of Punjab. The role of music played a part in all religions, as the Gurdwaras of the Sikhs functioned in a similar way to the Sufi shrines, and it is important to identify that the audiences at these spiritual centres did not belong to any one religion, just as the audience of the qissā became to be.

0.3.3 Content of the Qissā

Francesca Orsini explains that the audiences of qissās are “less respectful” to authority figures. Waris Shah’s Hīr catered to such an audience by portraying members of the religious authority as immoral, dishonest, and corrupt. The following example demonstrates the dialogue that

66 Orsini, Print and Pleasure, 116.
67 Ibid., 109-110.
68 Mir, 120 (Mir referencing Charles Swynnerton)
69 Ibid., 104.
70 Ibid., 104-105.
71 Ibid., 112.
72 Ibid., 107.
Rānhā, the male protagonist, has with the corrupt *mullah*, who possesses significant power in the village.

Beard of a Sheikh, actions of the devil, attacking those that pass by
Sitting on the platform with the Quran in front, yet committing deceitful acts
You are unaware of good and evil, we are aware of the religious law
You bring impurity to this place, thank God for his generosity
Not sparing a donkey, sheep, monkey, married or unmarried woman
Oh Waris, mullahs go commit immoral acts in brothels, lying they are farming

*Qissās* often take up social issues that their audiences would have been familiar with. Mir confirms this, claiming that *qissā* poets (she specifically refers to those writing in Punjabi) chose to create plots and descriptions that would resonate with the lives of the audience; the aim of the *qissā* writer is not necessarily to create something new, but rather to stay within the confines of conventional stories and touch on matters of “contemporary concern.” Orsini speaks to this, as well.

Waris Shah’s *Hīr* does just this: taking up issues that would connect with his audience in eighteenth century Punjab. As a result, an understanding of the social context aids in our understanding of Waris Shah’s version of *Hīr*. The context was immensely complex, with upheaval in social, political, and religious spheres. In this period, the once powerful Mughal

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73 *Sabir*, P.18, Verse: 37.
74 Mir, 86.
Empire was in decline while Sikh and other martial forces were experiencing growth and resurgence. Shah connects with a resurgent martial ethos with metaphors inspired by battles and conquests. Following the growth of Islam between the eighth and fourteenth century, Punjab saw the birth and progress of Sikhism during the fifteenth and sixteenth century, after which the Khalsa rule came in the eighteenth century. These all played a role in the development of Punjabi society. These events serve to explain the “interconnected phases of Punjab culture,” and clarify the “cultural exchange and conflation.” This was a period in Punjab during which religious “standards and conventions also underwent change.”

Punjab experienced political transition during the time Waris Shah wrote his version of Ḥīr, as successor powers vied for control in a post-Mughal environment. The text's verses show the social and political environment within society in eighteenth century. Punjab was patriarchal in nature, and Waris Shah’s Ḥīr expresses this patriarchal structure. Men, particularly those in the religious realm, had great power in society and these positions were rarely available to women. It is important to note that the “tribal organization was the chief characteristic of society in medieval Punjab.” These tribes or Jat (farming/landowning) clans provided a highly male-controlled culture in the villages. The story of Ḥīr Rāṅjhā is based in front of the backdrop of three Jat groups or tribes, all of which were honorable in their villages.

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76 Ibid., 35.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 36.
79 Ibid., 117.
80 Ibid.
0.4 Versions of the Hīr and Rānjāhā Narrative

The story of Hīr Rānjāhā was well-embedded into the cultural history of Punjab prior to Waris Shah’s account, and was well known to Punjabis both in and out of the qissā context. Long before the story of Hīr Rānjāhā entered the literary ambit it existed within the margins of the religious and spiritual arena. The mention of Hīr Rānjāhā can be traced back to Sikhism, by Hari Das Haria during the 1520s-50s, and Bhai Gurdas Bhalla in the 1550s-1635; however, it is important to note that these manuscripts are late. Bhai Vir Singh, a Punjabi writer of the modern period, portrayed Rānjāhā as the tenth Guru in his writings. Bhai Vir Singh wrote during the nineteenth century, a period that saw great focus on religious reform in an environment that perceived religious threats. As a result, Bhai Vir Singh’s mention of Rānjāhā was a personification of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, and through his writing the author expressed a longing for the Guru, who played a pivotal role in reforming and sustaining the religion throughout a period of threat from the Mughal Empire.

Outside of the religious context, the story itself had other versions well before Waris Shah. According to Jeevan Deol, the first textual version of the entire story in written form was Hayat Jan Baqi Kolabi’s Masnavi Hīr o Rānjāhā written in approximately 1581-85. This version was written in Persian, reinforcing Frances Pritchett’s claim that the initial qissās in Northern India were in Persian. The first edition of the story of Hīr to be shared in Punjabi was

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81 Mir, 7.
82 Ibid., 160.
83 Deol, “Sex, Social Critique,” 143.
of Damodar Gulati, \(^{84}\) likely in the late sixteenth century, during the rule of King Akbar. Gulati’s version was soon followed by versions of Ahmad Gujjar and Muqbil. \(^{85}\)

Nowhere is the mention of Hīr Rānjhā more evident than in the Sufi lyrical tradition, which is said to have come much before Waris Shah’s account of the *qissā* in the late eighteenth century. References of Hīr Rānjhā are found in the poetry of Sufī poet Shah Hussain from the 1530s to 1600, \(^{86}\) and some of the most popular references to Hīr Rānjhā till date in Punjabi are found in *kāfīs* of Bulleh Shah, whose writing had a profound impact on Punjabis. Again, it must be noted that all the manuscript evidence for these is late, from the nineteenth century. Most scholars have indeed interpreted the *qissā* to be a metaphor for Sufism, \(^{87}\) meaning that the love of the lovers in the *qissā* is a personification of divine love. A fine example of this symbolism present in Sufi poetry is the following *kāfī* from Bulleh Shah, in which Hīr is expressing her love for Rānjhā.

\[
\text{Uttering Rānjhā Rānjhā, I have become Rānjhā} \\
\text{Call me Dhīdo Rānjhā, do not call me Hīr} \\
Rānjhā is inside me and I in him, no other thought do I have} \\
\text{There is no me, there is only him, he himself shows care for him} \\
Whoever lives inside us, only they determine who we are} \\
\text{With whom I have fallen in love with, like him I have become} \\
\text{In my hand a staff, buffaloes ahead of me, a coarse blanket on shoulders} \\
\text{Take me to Takht Hazara, oh Bulleh, I cannot find shelter at Siyal.} \(^{88}\)
\]

\(^{84}\) Deol, “Sex, Social Critique,” 143.  
\(^{85}\) Ibid.  
\(^{86}\) Mir, 160.  
\(^{87}\) Ibid., 155.  
\(^{88}\) ढँका ढँका खड़ी, पृथ में अपना ढँका खड़ी
As Mir argues, this particular kāfī of Bulleh Shah displays the essence of what it is to be a Sufi and what their objective is: the objective of Hīr in this poem is the same aim which Sufis have, which is “to be united with the beloved-God.”

The texts by Damodar, Ahmad Gujjar, and Muqbil are the three primary texts of Hīr Rānjāhā in qissā form in Punjab that predate that of the Waris Shah’s Hīr, although key differences are present in these versions. According to Jeevan Deol’s analysis, Gujjar’s vilifies Hīr, as once she is married off against her will to Saida, the rich suitor her parents choose instead of Rānjāhā, her character no longer plays any active role in the story. Relying on Deol’s analysis, one thing that distinguishes Ahmad Gujjar’s version from others is the fact that following the death of Hīr and Rānjāhā, they live forever on the path of Mecca. Muqbil’s version is considered a critique of the Shari’ah, and speaks to the fundamental characteristics of Sufism.


89 Mir, 158.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
According to Shackle, Muqbil’s version is certainly the more “simpler eighteenth-century version” of Hīr Rānjhā, as it does not have the complexities that are presented by Waris Shah. Christopher Shackle has argued, the mullah in Muqbil’s version is described in a positive light, but this is in sharp contrast to the way Waris Shah portrays him. In Waris Shah’s version, the mullah is shown to be a “narrow bigot,” who taunts Rānjhā and expresses discontent on his appearance and morality. Furthermore, this section in Waris Shah’s text is, as Shackle has pointed out, “twice as long” as well. One of the most significant parts of the story of Hīr Rānjhā is when Rānjhā decides to become an ascetic, a yogi. Shackle argues that relative to Muqbil’s version, Waris Shah’s dedication to this particular part of the text offers “well over three times the number of lines.” Shackle further emphasizes that although Hīr Rānjhā is a love story, “less than half” of Shah’s version describes the romantic interactions between the two lovers. Waris Shah is more pre-occupied with developing the individual characters, explaining interactions between diverse characters, and discussing the changes and revelations that the characters undergo in the story.

0.5 Approach of the Thesis

In his version of Hīr, Waris Shah offers his characters a variety of gender identities, through their actions, their personality, and their appearance. These identities are not always recognized or accepted by diverse characters in the story, and through their chastising of the characters, one

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94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., 251.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid., 256.
sees how particular gender identities can be accepted, and some can be regulated. Shah demonstrates through his characters that gender can be understood and interpreted in different ways, but that not all ways are deemed acceptable. In this way, Waris Shah's male and female characters demonstrate what the male and female norms are. This thesis utilizes the ideas of Judith Butler\(^{100}\) to understand how gender operates in the text to articulate multiple gender formations as well as different kinds of norms and their enforcement. Several key terms of Butler's will be used here. One of these is the idea of "reprimand."\(^{101}\) Shah uses reprimand and praise in his text towards the behavior of his main characters. Similar to how Butler claims that gender norms are made and enforced through the ‘police officer metaphor’, where one is reprimanded for certain types of behavior, and through praise, which is offered for behaviors that are socially accepted. Secondly, it shall be assessed, what kind of lifestyle for the characters leads to a “liveable” situation.\(^{102}\) Here, this involves exploring the various types of behaviors articulated through the plot, and identifying which are defined, in the text, are livable. Through these ideas we see both the multi-vocality of gendered formations in Waris Shah's text, and the limitations on that multi-vocality that are achieved through regulation and reprimand.


\(^{101}\) Butler, Bodies that matter, 82.

\(^{102}\) Butler, Undoing Gender.
Part I: Hīr

In Part I shall introduce the model I conclude is most persuasive for the character of Hīr, one which addresses the shortcomings earlier scholars' understanding of her. Shah’s Hīr demonstrates a feisty and rebellious nature. She asserts herself to fight for what she wishes. Nonetheless, although she persistently battles to fulfill her objectives, she does not fight directly against the patriarchal culture around her, which she appears to be more than content to be a part of. She is not after social change; she is after love. This analysis allows us to understand what is both rebellious and conservative about Hīr's character.

Shah’s portrayal of Hīr is complicated by his portrayal of other women. Lastly, in the third chapter, I will show how Deol's and Gaur's attention to the character of Hīr, in isolation, limits our understanding of how Waris Shah constructs female characters in his work. The character of Sahiti, among others, is crucial for understanding the operation of gender in the work.

By looking beyond Hīr, and more carefully at Hīr herself, we see that Waris Shah is portraying the contradictory and complex nature of women's place in his world. Women in Hīr embrace available forms of power, through caste and class, however, when they challenge the social constructs of their gender, as created by their social context. This challenging of gender norms leads to their failure, as it did with Hīr, who was successful so long as she stayed within the realm of what was considered socially acceptable, but where she stepped outside of that domain, society castigated her.
Chapter 1: Docile or Rebellious?

Waris Shah introduces Hir’s character as an exquisite beauty, with lengthy verses that stress the extent of her magnificence; however, he provides subtle suggestions within his verses of her rebellious nature, providing a foretelling the kind of role that she shall play in the story.

What can a poet say about Hir, the moon’s beauty reflects on her forehead
Her snakelike tresses like the night orbiting the moon, red skin tone like that of a star
Flower-like eyes like that of a deer, cheeks a sparkling rose
Eyebrows appear as arches of Lahore, no end to the beauty
Kohl beautifully situated around her eyes, like the marching armies of Punjab upon India
She openly paces through the courtyard, as an intoxicated elephant of the emperor
The fetching make-up on her face, like the calligraphy in a book
The ones that have come with desire to see, they are so fortunate
Seeing her would be so auspicious, Waris Shah it would be a great deed

In describing Hir, Shah presents a sarāpā, a “head-to-foot description of the heroine.”

Jeevan Deol stresses that this initial description of Hir is “everything that one would expect from a Persian sarāpā, plus a liberal sprinkling of distinctly Punjabi elements.” Shah describes Hir’s forehead, and then delicately moves down her body, describing her eyes, her cheeks, and

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103 Sabir, P. 27, Verse 56.
the rest of her body. Deol is correct in recognizing the Punjabi elements in this description of
Hīr, such as references to fruits, trees, and the Trinjan (Punjabi young women sitting together
with spinning wheels in the courtyard) which resonate with a Punjabi audience. He argues that
Shah has sexualized Hīr, confirmed through the sarāpā. In Shah’s second introductory verse
describing Hīr she is sexualized by offering metaphors to describe her arms, her breasts, her lips,
and her navel.

Red lips glittering like gems, chin an apple from overseas
Nose sharp line Hussain’s sword, snake like tresses are treasures
Her teeth a string of pearls for swans, like seeds of a pomegranate
The Jatti appears as a beautiful portrait, tall as a plant from heaven
Neck of a swan and fingers like vegetables, hands cool as a leaf of the Chinaar tree
Her arms are rolled butter, chest like fine marble
A full chest like silk balls, like apples from the orchard
Her navel fragranced by the heaven, her silk-like belly so special

Lips are red like bark, searches to kill those in the bazaar
As attractive as the queen fairy, can be seen amongst thousands
Walks around carefree, like deer out of a forest

Like the fairy from Lanka, Queen Indra, a beauty appears from the moon
Walks dangling with desire, as the army marches from Kandhar
A mannequin of China with features of a Roman, like a moon in the wilderness
She comes walking smoothly, as a crane comes out of a flock
Lovers that approach her, they escape the cutting edge of the sword
The love of the girl speaks everywhere, like music playing from strings
Galloping like the Qāzīlbash horsemen, running through the bazaars
Oh Waris Shah when you place a bet on love, no one is spared in the gamble

106 देह सुमाव लगभग निन्दन लग छहीनता, ढेकी भिड़ बोलती मनाई मन में
तंजा भल्ला के माँगी चा धुधा मी, सुहाना राज भागते ही फल बिरनी
टेंट बीची दी दाँत हर बटन में, दोहे दिखाते उनका भल्ला बिरनी
हिंसी तीन बादनी दागी मंदान मंदी, चेंट में घाट में बनना बलात बिरनी
बातें बूझ लेनी तरह के दलील में, दोहे बुझे घटना बिरनी बिरनी
Waris Shah’s introduction of Hīr is an exceedingly sexualized description, lathered with imagery and metaphors that endlessly discuss the various parts of her body in a suggestive fashion. Shah shows no restraint in describing Hīr through an erotic lens. Deol notes that “in his very first description of her, the poet introduces imagery which removes Hīr from the world of the chaste heroine and transforms her into a sexual being.” In the opening introduction of Hīr, Shah has provided the reader an indication as to the type of female protagonist he wishes to portray; one who was not going to be innocent or conservative. Examining the opening verse, one can ascertain, not only has Shah chosen to sexualize Hīr, but he has attempted to demonstrate she is not a girl that shall take a passive approach in exercising her sexuality or her desires, but rather, is cognizant of this fact and ready to execute her lust without restriction. Through his description of Hīr, Waris Shah confirms that not only is Hīr beautiful with great sex appeal, she is someone that is aware of this fact and boasts it in the locale.
Shah has dedicated these sarāpās to introducing Hīr’s beauty. Shah does not allow her appearance to encompass who she is. Rather, he consciously gives Hīr arrogance, indicative of her rebelliousness. In the first sarāpā, he mentions she openly paces through the courtyard, as an intoxicated elephant of the emperor; this is a direct contrast to how in verse 111, Hīr is told by the qāzī (Muslim legal magistrate) that girls are supposed to sit obediently in the courtyard with their spinning wheels and occupy themselves with domestic chores, as roaming around outside does not suit girls of respectable families. In this verse below, the qāzī gives Hīr an extensive lesson on how girls belonging to Jat families are supposed to behave, outlining a clear gender role.

Sitting with your red spinning wheel, sing songs about the Chenab River
Keep your eyes down in respect, all the elders request you
Your father Oh Hīr, is the leader of this village
Look at the honour of your parents; they are well to do Jats
Roaming outside is not good for Jat girls, messengers are bringing proposals these days
We are preparing for a wedding, as the Kheras are as well
Oh Waris Shah in a few days, the Kheras marriage party shall come for you108

Through Shah’s initial description of Hīr, he is making his first attempt to allow the character of Hīr to effort to break down gender binaries and what is meant to be feminine. Shah is allowing his female protagonist to come outside of the domain of what is socially meant to be ‘feminine’

108 कल चनबन ब्रजिट वे हे ठें घरीटे, लेले मेंटे बीज जरांजऱे ही तीव्र ललच जिवरांटे ते रुल ललांटे, लेले मेंटे घडऺे भुजरांजऱे ही ढुंघळ जिहतर झेंडीं तीटे। माहतरी हे, मठरचं वे शेण विलक्क वे ही माहत भंवरां ही व्हाग जिहतर झेंडीं, हिस लाहूं जे लेले मेंटे बांधके ही वर्षाव विवाह ते मेंटे सेटीट्टे हूं, खान तूत खुली अर्न काढिटे पैरे ते हेटे तिमोट दे हेंठ-मामल येंटे, फेंटे अंटे घट बांधके ही वाकशम लाहूं सेटीट्टे लेले मेंटे मांजर, मेंटे हिल वे लेंट हे हांचिटै ही Sabir, P.57, Verse: 111.
in the narrative. Shah’s verses introducing Hir therefore are equally a reflection of her disposition. Shah is as interested in showing Hir’s nature as he is in revealing her glamour.

In contrast, Ishwar Gaur argues that Shah does not simply attempt to show that Hir is beautiful and a typical object of sexual attraction through his usage of metaphors and similes; he believes Shah intends to describe Hir’s “female rebellion.”\textsuperscript{109} As Deol himself highlights, woven into these verses are ample martial metaphors.\textsuperscript{110} For example, Hir’s eyebrows appear as arches of Lahore and the kohl in her eyes like marching armies of Punjab. Through this, Shah offers a glimpse into Hir’s disobedient and aggressive character; as Deol agrees, through them Shah “alludes to her determination.”\textsuperscript{111} Deol however suggests this “martial imagery” works as a “foreshadow of Hir’s attacks” on other characters during the initial part of the story.\textsuperscript{112} Shah’s martial imagery is thus, a representation of Hir’s feisty personality, which is trying to break down gender norms as presented by Hir.

In his interpretation of Hir, Gaur argues she is rebellious based on her resistance to characters representing religious and legal authority in the narrative. He bases his conclusions regarding Hir’s behavior on the fact that she “does not adhere to the terms set by the ‘elders,’”\textsuperscript{113} in the context of who she is allowed to marry, or not marry. Gaur emphasizes that Hir is ready to give her life in her battle to unite with Ranjhâ,\textsuperscript{114} suggesting that she is steadfast in persistently pursuing her aims, and willing to be chastised for them if necessary. Hir is anything but obedient and compliant, which are considered feminine traits according to the qâzî in verse 111, as he

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[109]{Gaur, 199.}
\footnotetext[110]{Deol, “Sex, Social Critique,” 153.}
\footnotetext[111]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[112]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[113]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[114]{Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
reiterates girls should keep their eyes down in respect.\textsuperscript{115} Gaur demands that we note the discussions that Hir has with the qâzî prior to her marriage, which are against her will.\textsuperscript{116} He asserts that the magnitude of Hir’s rebelliousness can be identified when “she assumes the role of adversary of the qâzî,”\textsuperscript{117} who is the legal authority in their religious tradition. During the time leading up to her marriage, Hir is depicted confronting the qâzî on his actions, and is willing to engage in a religious debate on justifying her actions, a debate that she is shown as having the upper hand on winning.\textsuperscript{118} Gaur stresses that Hir is a “rebel daughter” who is “determined to lead her revolt to the logical end,” not willing to compromise her desires or abides by any rules.\textsuperscript{119} Gaur sees Hir as a character that “prefers to die on her feet than to live on her knees.”\textsuperscript{120}

Jeevan Deol, in contrast, argues that Waris Shah’s Hir is placed in “secondary position,” particularly in comparison to Shah’s predecessors, who were more generous in offering Hir’s character a larger role within the story.\textsuperscript{121} Deol claims Shah’s Hir “refuses to fit into the socially constructed image of the female,” yet stresses her character “demurely avoids conflict with social ideology.”\textsuperscript{122} Deol does not consider Hir as playing an active role in the story, asserting she is a submissive character. Although Deol recognizes the use of martial imagery, and agrees that Hir instigates a few attacks on other characters, he argues that following those limited attacks, “she becomes a largely passive character,”\textsuperscript{123} for which reason Deol also criticizes Shah for his


\textsuperscript{115} Sabir, P.57, Verse: 111.
\textsuperscript{116} Gaur, 208.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{121} Deol, “Sex, Social Critique,” 152.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 155.
portrayal of Ḥīr as being uncertain. Even for the attacks initiated by Ḥīr, Deol sees Ḥīr’s friends playing a more significant role, whereas Ḥīr’s part receives modest emphasis. Deol questions Ḥīr’s defiance, predominantly in the context of her debates with the qāzī, as he does not see Ḥīr as “forceful” in her exchanges at all, but rather, portrayed as taking a passive approach, reiterating “traditional discourses of love,” where she attempts to explain the love her and Rāṇjhā have for one another.

There are significant problems with Deol’s characterization of Ḥīr as docile, behaving within the bounds of social conventions. Deol stresses that Ḥīr is a “conventional romance heroine,” however, he does not make his criteria explicit as to what that is, and hence, I shall attempt to construct and summarize his position. Deol implies that Ḥīr and Rāṇjhā’s relationship is unequal and imbalanced, and influenced by the patriarchal climate in which the story develops. He interprets being overwhelmed by desire as evidence of female inferiority, which is interesting, and evidently, he downplays the instances of anger and violence. Deol suggests Ḥīr’s character is “subdued,” and questions the equality of her relationship with Rāṇjhā, implying she plays a subordinate role to Rāṇjhā in the qīssā. Deol concludes based on Ḥīr and Rāṇjhā’s initial meeting, where Ḥīr is first angry but after seeing Rāṇjhā is overwhelmed with desire for him as indicative of inequality in their relationship. His argument is left somewhat vague as he provides little or no evidence for his assertions. He is criticizing Shah, claiming “his

125 Ibid., 155.
126 Ibid., 156.
127 Ibid., 152.
128 Ibid., 145.
characterization of Hīr is a deeply ambivalent one.”

Deol erroneously claims that “Hīr’s companions play the major role in the attack on her uncle Kaido, and her part in the attack is not even mentioned,” failing to appreciate that it was an attack led by Hīr. Waris Shah demonstrates how Hīr plans the brutal attack, and through Hīr’s description of how to beat Kaido, he demonstrates the extent of her rage.

Hīr says take him into the closed space, put a rope in his neck
With bats and oars of fishermen, completely assault him
Grab him from his legs and waist, throw him into a pit
Beat him, burn his hut, set ablaze his things and loot him
Oh Waris Shah, tear off every hair in his beard

Waris Shah illustrates how Hīr plans the vicious attack, and through Hīr’s description of how to beat Kaido, shows the extent of Hīr’s fury. Hīr is very specific about the manner in which she expects her friends to attack Kaido, and the verse demonstrates that Hīr’s anger is such, that she would not be satisfied by simply attacking Kaido, but wants to burn his home and belongings, in order to teach him a lesson for committing the mistake of thinking he could attempt to blemish her reputation and get away with it. Deol also does not consider that although Hīr led this attack against Kaido, she had already previously attacked him earlier in the text, when she had caught him spying on her and Rānjhā.

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130 Ibid., 155.
131 Hīr AwiKAw vwV ky plHy AMdr, gl pw r`sw mUMh g`ut G`qo lY ky ku`qky qy ku`Fx mwCIAW dy, DVw DV hImmr ky ku`t G`qo tMgoN pkV ky l`k iv`c pw j`PI, iksy tobVy dy iv`c su`t G`qo mwr eys nUM lwie ky A`g Ju`gI, swV bwl ky cIz sB lu`t G`qo vwirs Swh mIAW dwVHI iBMnVI dw, jo ko vwl id`sy s`Bo puyt G`qo Sabir, P. 74, Verse: 136.
Hīr caught up to him on the way, first deceitfully began talking to him
She came close and roared like a beast, her eyes dripping with rage
She took off his hat, broke his necklace, threw him to the ground from his waist
She grabbed him and slammed him to the ground over her shoulder
Oh Waris Shah, the angels from heaven have thrown this devil to the ground\textsuperscript{132}

The way in which Hīr assaults Kaido for spying on her and Rānjhā gives a stunning visual of the wrathful nature of Hīr. She is depicted by Shah as a girl that becomes furious when she realizes that someone dared to cross her. The manner in which she is assaulting Kaido is also revealing, as Shah describes her body slamming Kaido over her shoulder, a maneuver which is used by men in traditional Punjabi wrestling. Through this graphic battering by Hīr’s character, Shah depicts her trying to fracture the gender constructions that surround her. Kaido was spying on Hīr and Rānjhā whilst they were together, yet, Shah chooses to have Hīr’s character attack him in this brutal manner, instead of Rānjhā. This is a point to be noted, as Hīr is showed as more proud, aggressive and violent in this scene, a sharp contrast to Rānjhā who chooses not to do anything.

Deol continues his argument by claiming that when Hīr debates the qāzī, who is threatening her to marry according to the will of her parents, she “is not willing (or perhaps not able) to engage the qāzī on his own terms.”\textsuperscript{133} I assume what Deol is trying to argue is that she

\textsuperscript{132} फिल्ली कर पिँच भा तकरी, पहुँची तल बदेश टे चटिका मु
लेते आठ बे शीर्षदिर लज़ुल कौनी, भरकी कौं ए तोल उलटिका मु
मिँनें सूणि टैंकी, बांसें डंडे मेलङ, लेकर चापिव सभीह टे मटिका मु
छः चम्कीं टे मारिवा तल बोंमे, पेशी धंकते टे देम मटिका मु
कलिन पन सट डाकिताँग्रां अलम टिंडे, टिम मेटल हुं किमीं टे मटिका मु
\textsuperscript{133} Deol, “Sex, Social Critique,” 156.
does not challenge the qāzī to a greater extent, or more wrathfully defy what he is saying. Deol appears to have overlooked the forceful rhetoric of Hīr, as she dismantles the qāzī’s argument:

The heart of the believer is God’s throne, do not break that qāzī
Where Dhīdo and I have reached, the Kheras have no place there
I have climbed into the slingshot of love, from where I cannot be lowered
For which life should I sell my faith, all shall die in the end
As there is no Pir among illiterates, there are no Kings among Liddhars

Not only does Hīr engage in the acrimonious debate with the qāzī, but speaks to him in a disdainful fashion, having the audacity to educate him on religion and claiming there is no way that she would consider backing away from Rānjhā. Hīr’s character is also making an argument about the place of love. She is giving her love for Rānjhā the highest status possible, overriding her life, society, and family traditions. Instead of demonstrating a timid approach in front of the qāzī, Hīr defends her love for Rānjhā, arguing that it is non-negotiable, and refuses to turn away from Rānjhā. Hīr is bringing her and Rānjhā’s love within the sphere of something divine. Far from being docile, Hīr is defiant as she is portrayed providing a religious justification for her actions. Hīr demonstrates she shall not conform to any standard of obedience, and in doing so exemplifies the essence of rebelliousness.

Mother! God sent this servant to our home, you are blessed from above
To find a man like him, the whole world prays to God

134 ِبِلَٰغٍ ﻦَـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰ~

Whatever God has desired is occurring, why do you blame me mother
The wise have said to the nation, do not bare swords, women and love
You should not mock the people of God, who have coloured their clothes in dust
Those who carry the load of love, Oh Waris, are not shy of anything

Living in a highly male-controlled patriarchal society, Hīr chooses to rebel, the consequences for which would be calamitous. This is evident from the response from Hīr’s father, Chuchak, to Hīr’s mother, Malki, when he realizes their daughter has become romantically involved with Rānjhā, who herds their buffaloes.

Chuchuk says Malki, we should have strangled her at birth
You did not give her poison, which is why we get this response today

Waris thus depicts Hīr living in a setting where girls play a subordinate role to men. Demonstrated by Hīr’s father’s response to her actions, it is a social context in which female infanticide occurred, and an environment where sons were preferred. This intense reference from Hīr’s father, Chuchak, also depicts a setting which severely limits the ability of women to participate in religion, especially non-domestic religious vocations. This is described by Shah in verse 111, where the qāzī tells Hīr to obediently stay home and occupy herself with domestic chores, as roaming around outside does not suit girls of respectable families.

135 mwey! r`b ny cwk Gr G`ilAw sI, qyry hox nsIb jy DuroN cMgyy
eyho ijhy jy AwdmI h`Q Awvx, swro mulk hI r`b QIN duAw
mMgy ijhVy r`b kIqy kMm ho rhy, swnUM mwauN ikauN .gYb dy dyieM pMgy
kul isAixAW mulk nUM m`q id`qI, qyg, imhrIAW, ieSk nw kro nMgy
nhIN CyVIey r`b idAW pUirAW nUM, ijnHW k`pVy ^wk dy iv`c rMgy
ijnHW ieSk dy mwmly isrIN cwey, vwirs Swh nw iksy QIN rihx sM
136 cUck AwKdw mlkIey jMmdI nUM, gl Gu`t ky kwhy nw mwirE eI
Gu`tI iek dI Gol nw idqIAw eI, Eho A`j soAb inqwirE eI
Sabir, P. 49, Verse: 98.
Look at the honour of your parents; they are well to do Jats
Roaming outside is not good for Jat girls, messengers are bringing proposals these days\textsuperscript{137}

Through the qāzī’s comments, Shah is providing an explicit indication of the social setting in which Hīr finds herself, and what is expected from her. Here, there is a strong contrast made between the courtyard/home and the ‘outside.’ A girl is not supposed to “roam”, and is expected to stay home and control her gaze. The expectations from parents and society is that she obediently follow the wishes of her parents and expel any hopes of following her own wishes, as doing so would be against their honour. However, Hīr’s disregard for her parents’ wishes demonstrates her defiance and rebelliousness nature. She exhibits no hesitation in quarrelling with her mother, who expresses discontent with her disobedience.

Mother! Stop this swearing, it is a sin to give swears
The woman is the source of divine, killing daughters invites a curse
Take me as I am a disgrace, to a place which is evil
Oh Waris Shah, I shall not leave Rānjhā, even if my father, grandfather, or great-grandfather say\textsuperscript{138}

Deol bases his assertion that Hīr is submissive on her initial encounter with Rānjhā, and how that is illustrated in verse by Waris Shah. Christopher Shackle has an alternative and more plausible interpretation of this scene in comparison to Deol, who argues that Hīr is portrayed as a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{137} मजब भाविनों ची बड़ बिभाल बकसी, टिला मातृ जी तंद मराम्दरे ही माता मिललार पूरा सेटीमाँ हुं, भाँत कले लाही भव माराम्दरे हुं
Sabir, P.57, Verse: 111.

\textsuperscript{138} माता! बंग जह गाज़ीमां टूटी ताजी, गाज़ी मिलिंगों बंदह्य जुप भाँड़े लिरीं चंद ली पेन्दी भली माती, यीरों मिलिंगों बंदह्य जुप भाँड़े
कै सारे म्रैं बीजा-पिंढीमां हुं, बेणी हैव सुग पैं जुप भाँड़े
अलिम मातृ जी मुझे बंदह्य जुप भाँड़े
Sabir, P.72, Verse: 132.
\end{flushright}
passive and submissive character by nature. Shackle argues that passage reflects a broader tradition whereby the “poet-heroine is always the suffering human seeker after divine love,” and “the hero-beloved always either the Divine Bridegroom or His earthly representatives.”

Shackle’s interpretation demonstrates that the scenes in which Hir is depicted as submissive are more a representation of Sufi elements, and do not disqualify her from her portrayal as an aggressive and defiant girl by nature. Shackle shows Hir is a Sufi text, but although the characters might be symbolic of Sufism, that does not encompass their entire personality. Based on the following verse, Shackle’s conclusion of Hir representing the human that is suffering to unite with her love and Râňjhâ being a representation of the divine does garner some support.

My dear, Hîr, the bed, everything is yours, I give all this life to you
I did not swear I plead with you; I did not touch or hit you
I plead and fall at your feet; I have given up all for you
I come and salute you, why are you acting indifferent
No peace in the Trinjan now, having met the Divine
Oh Waris who can bother those, for whom God is there

In isolation, this verse exemplifies an expression of Hîr where she can be construed as being subordinate to Râňjhâ. Its meaning changes if taken in broader terms. Gaur supports Shackle’s

140 Sabir, P. 32-33, Verse: 63.
assertion, identifying Shah’s *Hīr* is a “sufic quest for mystical union with Allah,”\(^{141}\) claiming the characters of Hīr and Rānjhā are representations of God and devotee, and that the “entire text is steeped in the non-conformist ambience of Sufism and the bhakti traditions that confronted religious patriarchs such as the qāzī and the mullah,”\(^{142}\) for which there are clear indications, principally the manner in which Hīr and Rānjhā confront immoral religious/legal authorities, such as the mullah and qāzī. This is seen by Gaur as a component of her overall rebelliousness. Hīr is portrayed as challenging the religiously orthodox qāzī, who not only advises her but threatens her to do as her parents and religion demands, and to marry a boy of the same social class as her and stay far away from Rānjhā. Hīr defends her love for Rānjhā and uses religious justifications in the process, all of which only further infuriate the qāzī who simply amplifies his threats, none of which have any impact upon Hīr whatsoever, who sees Rānjhā in a divine light. From this standpoint Gaur’s argument does have some support, since Waris Shah’s version undeniably has Sufi elements scattered throughout the text. Shackles’s argument of Hīr Rānjhā representing Sufi features provides an explanation as to why Hīr is depicted by Shah as submissive on occasion. This provides an alternative to Deol, who claims she is a submissive character in general, by supporting the assertion that she is a rebellious character by nature, as Gaur argues, but is portrayed by Shah as submissive at times to reflect the Sufi elements of the *qissā*.

Although Hīr is portrayed as submissive at times to reflect the Sufi aspects of the text, her character’s behavior towards Rānjhā overall is not consistently submissive. Hīr does not simply

\(^{141}\) Gaur, 106.

\(^{142}\) Ibid.
admire and adore Rāñjhā as a hapless devotee as Deol suggests, but expresses resentment towards him, evidenced in the verse below, where the two lovers are angry with each other due to misunderstandings, and Hīr is attempting to disguise Rāñjhā and bring him into her home. Their argument appears petty, anything but divine:

Hīr stated, disguise him as a girl and bring him here
Keep him hidden from my parents, and do not tell anybody
If he argues with me face to face, you judge who is right and wrong
Who is right shall be free, and the other shall be chastised
I tried telling that fool, do not waste time, elope with me
He did not listen to me, now why is he lamenting
Oh Waris Shah, time is such that it cannot be stopped by a prophet\textsuperscript{143}

As mentioned in the verse, Hīr also refers to him as a fool for not recognizing the timely opportunity and eloping with her when they had the chance. The image of Hīr as a devotee of Rāñjhā and being a rebel co-exist, as she is depicted as someone who is devoted to Rāñjhā, and claims that he has been sent from heaven for her, and concurrently, she is rebelling with all others around her who are attempting to prevent her from being with him.

\textsuperscript{143} Sabir, P.102, Verse: 184.
Chapter 2: Hīr’s Status and the Question of Intersectionality

Waris Shah describes Hīr as galloping like the Qāzīlbash horsemen, Turkman warriors from the Persian region during the early modern period.\(^{144}\) The confidence Hīr exuberates is very much due to her social class, a position she is very contented in. This adds another layer of complexity to the portrayal of Hīr. Both Deol and Gaur do not recognize that Waris Shah’s martial images speak not only to Hīr’s character but also to her social power, because that is from where she derives her aggressiveness. Her social place has given her a sense of entitlement, and a launching pad to argue for her choices and desires. Shah depicts Hīr as feisty, unwavering, and at times arrogant as well. She has been represented as a girl that does not adhere to social norms. As Gaur has argued, Hīr was within the confines of a patriarchal society that limited her control, and the only way for her to exercise her desires was through rebelling; however, Gaur does not appreciate that although Hīr does choose to rebel, she does not rebel against the social structure as a whole. She claims her high status in her rebellion. Hīr is not simply challenging patriarchal society, but rather triggering the privilege she feels she has claim to. Gaur thus inaccurately concludes that Hīr “initiated a personal struggle against the feudal patriarchal class to which she herself belonged,”\(^{145}\) when in actual fact what Hīr is doing is articulating her desires within it.

The very social framework of the culture Hīr challenges is one that she herself is proud of. The patriarchal culture she was born in offers her power and status that she is very cognizant of, and those around her are aware of this as well, in particular her close friends. We see this when Hīr first encounters Rānjhā. When she learns Rānjhā has slept upon her bed in her boat,

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\(^{144}\) Francis Robinson, *The Mughal Emperors And The Islamic Dynasties of India, Iran And Central Asia, 1206-1925* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 183.

\(^{145}\) Gaur, 195.
she is furious and reiterates her status and heritage. She is enraged at the fact that someone would have the audacity to sleep on her bed, given her status.

Youth is wild under Chuchak’s rule, I have no care for anyone
I shall pull and throw him of the bed, where has this king come from

Hīr is thus as a portrayed as being proud of her heritage and her status, for which reason she unabashedly asks Rānjhā his social class when she first meets him.

Which is your country, what is your father’s name, and what is your caste?

Hīr’s consciousness of her social standing and its importance is only enhanced when, after their initial meeting, where she challenges him, she remains curious about Rānjhā’s caste and social background, to ensure that the boy that she is falling in love with shares the same status and heritage that she is so proud of. Later, when Kaido deceives her and informs everyone of Hīr’s affair with Rānjhā, leading to disrespect towards the family in the village, her friends appeal to her sense of inflated pride, which results in Hīr leading a brutal attack on Kaido.

Hīr’s friends immediately, told the story in her ear
Kaido condemns you of being with a servant, and is announcing it
The devil is beating this drum openly in the bazaar
If this action goes unanswered, then how can you call yourself Hīr

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146 Gaur, 195.
147 Sabir, P.30, Verse: 59.
Hīr is a proud and arrogant girl that takes her reputation and status seriously, and anyone who endangers this status, she deals with swiftly. This led to Hīr leading her friends to assaulting Kaido, burning his home, and dismantling his positions.

Hīr’s neglect for her family’s honor ignites the wrath of her father, who is shown regretting not murdering Hīr at birth, in verse 75. As we saw described by the qāzī in verse 111 above, girls were expected to stay at home and act in accordance with the wishes of their parents. Girls were to respect their elders and not roam around, particularly when suitors were coming to the house. This concept of honor is a central notion in the story, and the reason why Hīr’s family rationalizes killing her in the end, instead of allowing her to be with Rānjhā. Honour and shame was connected to daughters.

The Siyals met together to discuss, respectable men guard their honour
Friends! It is a well-known fact, Hīr has given us a bad name
There shall be no honour left, if the girl is sent with the buffalo herder
Strikes of the tongue, shame from a daughter, mistakes of youth lead to dishonour

Hīr’s social power allows her to seek what she wants, yet paradoxically, what she has to battle to achieve what she wishes is that same power structure that grants her status. To fully

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149 विंग दीर भू मकड मकडीण हे, छाद दोळू दे लिंघ मुळहिंआ ती
वैधे मेंग चर ए दींछ धैरे, लिंघ धरे दे मैंग भक्षक्षिण ती
लोंग चर उचाव स्वेत ते ती, इंग लिंघ राजर दे माडिंआ ती
देख बांड मे समी भान धारी, ते तीच विन्दुर नामी माडिंआ ती
Sabir, P.73, Verse: 135.
150 निमालूँ वैंत दे मंझ निमालूँ वींती, अके भानभी वैंत धरुड नी
जाअले! बांड भागाल राजर तु, मांइ मेंढे तीच निमालूँ दे सी
पूंड वैंती भू मे दठ नींढी, तेंढी रूड भूर्ड भक्षक्ष दे सी
देख तीच दे, ब्रह्मांवे बेटीण दी, अके भालाल दे मेंढे वार दे सी
Sabir, P.405, Verse: 622.
understand her position, an intersectional analysis is required. "Intersectionality" “describe[s] intersection among identity categories” and “capture[s] interrelations among a complex of other variables.”

Vivian M. May discusses the feminist and race movements, and how white women receive privileges which are not available to black woman, demonstrating “‘white feminists’ troubling loyalty (conscious or unconscious) to race supremacy.”

White and/or economically privileged woman do play a role in fighting for women's rights, and in Hir’s case it is class that affords her status. However, unless they do so with a specific consciousness of race and class, they do so within the domain of their privileged role of being white and/or economically privileged. The impact of an intersectional analysis is necessary for understanding all forms of relative exploitation and hierarchy. To take the analysis further, for example, Carole Pateman and Charles Mills question, when discussing the issue of exploitation and black Americans, whether or not black Americans benefit from being American citizens globally?

Blacks do experience exploitation at the national level themselves, in particular because of their history, they argue. However, they are undeniably also beneficiaries of global relationships the United States has with other nations, through which the United States exploits other nations. We cannot understand any one position, therefore, until we understand the matrix of social positions that such a position stands in relation to.


154 Pateman and Mills, 116.
Waris Shah’s Hīr is portrayed within a society where she and other women in general were expected to conform to a standard of a dutiful wife, sister, or daughter; nonetheless these women also at times benefited from the same social structure that at times exploited them. Therefore, Hīr is anything but simple. To understand her in intersectional terms, May suggests, “necessitates engaging with a multidimensional sense of self.”\(^{155}\) As we see in the privilege enjoyed by white women even as they fight for their rights as women (which are denied them), or even by racialized persons in the USA vis-a-vis those in countries exploited by the USA, power is enacted in diverse and differential ways. The Hīr we see in Waris Shah's text fights for her rights to choose who she wants to marry, something seldom an option in the patriarchal society she is portrayed as living in. Yet, Hīr does so while drawing on the privileges associated with the socially superior class that she is born into. Therefore, she cannot be credited, as Gaur does, for attempting to dismantle the patriarchal society that she is part of, as she does not appear to have an issue with her status, but rather, utilizes it to her benefit.

By nature Hīr demonstrates her rebellious personality, however, since she has been granted her power through her family and society, she is also in some terms accepting of the social structure, and chooses to comply at times to preserve the authority she has in society. Deol’s argument of Hīr’s docility is therefore, not completely dismissed. Deol interprets Hīr's behavior as a form of submission, delinking it from her negotiation of her status. It is in these terms that Hīr is portrayed as eventually following her family’s direction and marrying whom they have chosen for her.

\(^{155}\) May, “Intellectual Genealogies,” 60.
My dear Rānjhā, I tried my best, but I was helpless
The qāzī, parents, brothers sent me away, our relationship is over.\textsuperscript{156}

The social structure that privileged Hīr is one that she could not completely abandon, and hence married who her family chose for her. So while Hīr is rebellious and arrogant, she is docile concurrently, as this enables her to retain her social power.

Thus while Hīr does dare to rebel, she also does not abandon the benefits of her aristocratic lineage. This is why she reveals a sense of apprehension in breaking social obligations. She initially encourages Rānjhā to elope with her, but later demonstrates a hesitation and does not accept his proposal due to the fact that she wishes to do what is socially acceptable.\textsuperscript{157}

Hīr said if I go like this, women shall say an eloped girl has come.\textsuperscript{158}

Hīr wishes for Rānjhā to come and take her away following marriage, since that is the more socially acceptable outcome.

An intersectional analysis thus allows us to reconcile the seeming contradictions between Gaur's and Deol's interpretations of Hīr. Hīr’s obstinate nature is therefore partially indicative of her social class, as she considers herself the Hīr of Siyals, bold and audacious to do as she wishes, and relentless against those who stand in her way. Hīr’s class privilege is consequently in many ways the basis for her rebellion, making her discourse one of privilege. She is not arguing

\textsuperscript{156} ते हे लड़किया राज मै लड़की चंद, माथे छेड़ बीं गोल खेड़ तेंदी
अफी, रामिन, ललितम चंद टेंदी, माथे पैड़ी चंद टेंदी
Sabir, P.124, Verse: 221.
\textsuperscript{157} Gaur, 195.
\textsuperscript{158} ते हे लड़किया, हिरसे से आ बड़मां, जेंदा भागमत, हिरसे आसीं ती
Sabir, P.400, Verse: 615.
for a broad social revolution, but is endeavoring to attain her ambitions, and in doing so challenges to use the social structure to her advantage.
Chapter 3: The Relevance of Sahiti

One assessment of Deol that appears partially accurate is the amount of time that has been dedicated to Hīr in Waris Shah’s version, compared to earlier versions.\(^{159}\) He argues that his predecessor, Muqbil, provided a depiction of Hīr that was much more “comprehensive” and Ahmad Gujjar allows Hīr to “dominate” the first part of the story.\(^{160}\) Shah does spend part of the first half of the story dedicated to demonstrating who Hīr is, whether that is through her encounters with the qāzī, Luddan the boatman, or interactions with her parents in regards to her relationship with Rāṅjhā. There is conversely, relatively limited narrative on the relationship between the two lovers. This assertion is supported by Shackle, who stresses that “less than half” of Waris Shah’s version describes the Hīr and Rāṅjhā’s love story and when Hīr was married to Saida against her wishes.\(^{161}\) Relative to previous versions, Shah's version contains fewer scenes that play a key part in Hīr’s life and character development.

Even though Waris Shah has limited the portrayal of Hīr in his qissā, this does not mean that he has not dedicated his story to other female characters. Sahiti, the sister-in-law of Hīr, who has largely been neglected by Gaur and Deol in assessing the qissā, represents a tenacious young woman. Through her, Shah continues his representation of the rebellious girl in the qissā, one who challenges all those around her, while comfortable within the social structure in which she was born. Pankaj Singh argues Sahiti’s “has been the loudest and most aggressive voice contesting the idle, impatient, intolerant, egoistical, quarrelsome, boastful imposter” Rāṅjhā, and

\(^{159}\) Deol, “Sex, Social Critique,” 152.
\(^{160}\) Ibid.
\(^{161}\) Shackle, “Transition and Transformation,” 256.
has been presented by Shah as “Fearless and ingenious.” Shackle correctly identifies that in Shah’s version, Rāŋjhā has “an immensely extended confrontation” with Sahiti. A substantial part of the latter half of Shah’s version is dedicated to Rāŋjhā’s confrontation with Sahiti, who is portrayed as being even more full-blooded and vigorous than Hīr at times. As Anne Murphy notes, the dialogues between Sahiti, Rāŋjhā and Hīr “comprises a major component of the narrative: 60 verses, with the scene continuing with further conflict among Hīr, Sahiti, and Rāŋjhā for more than 50 additional verses.” Murphy considers Sahiti to be the “the real heroine of the text,” based on the fact that “hers is a strong independent voice,” in the narrative.

Sahiti, is portrayed as not only holding her own against her sister-in-law Hīr, but depicted as overshadowing her in the argument, evident from when Sahiti enters an argument with Hīr, following a confrontation with Rāŋjhā.

I shall die, and I’ll kill him, and I’ll kill you sister-in-law
I’ll weep aloud when my brother comes, and get you beaten
I’ll tell my brother about you and that servant, and your past antics
You’ll be killed as will the yogi; I’ll spread your dress on the ground
As Sita had done to the Raavan, I’ll do such a calamity
I am woman only if I get you kicked out the house, and unite with Baloch Murad
I’ll cut off both your heads, and put them in this bowl

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165 Anne Murphy, "At a Sufi-Bhakti Crossroads: Gender formations in early modern Punjabi Sufi Literature," submitted to Archiv orientální (Journal of African and Asian Studies), special issue on Bhakti and literature.
Oh Hīr, take care of yourself, I’ll rid you of your intoxication tonight
I’ll beat you and have you beaten, dragged out the house from your hair
Oh Waris, you’ll be tied from your legs, and your limbs shall be struck.\footnote{Sabir, P.179-180, Verse: 444.}

One of the reasons that Sahiti is depicted as being successful in the story is that she is portrayed by Shah as not challenging social order. She is cognizant of her social role and her social surroundings. As shown in the verse above, she threatens Hīr that she shall tell her brother on her, and she shall suffer dire consequences. Through the verse, Shah is trying to show that Sahiti is knowledgeable about the power that is held by men in the pastoral climate, and how she utilizes that power to her advantage.

The wrath of Sahiti is evident from her encounter with Hīr. She unabashedly challenges Hīr and threatens both her and Rānjhā explicitly, and following their argument, it is Hīr who eventually comes to Sahiti for forgiveness.

As students go to a teacher, Hīr goes to Sahiti
Forgive all my mistakes, if you do, I fall at your feet
God so often forgives sins, there are many men filled with sins
Waris comes to facilitate, helping me reconcile with you.\footnote{Sabir, P.179-180, Verse: 444.}
Sahiti’s aggressive nature plays a key role in determining the direction of the story. Her defiance and inability to retreat led her to planning the escape of Hīr and Rāṅjhā, as well as that of her and her lover, Murad. She is depicted by Shah as the character that battles aggressively, but also finds a way to succeed under any circumstance; this is confirmed by the fact that unlike Hīr and Rāṅjhā, Sahiti “does not meet a tragic end,” as she is depicted as someone who is able to “transcend the repressive social order.” Shah depicts Sahiti as running away with the man she loves, rather than consistently battling to unite with him while living in society. Through Sahiti, Shah is demonstrating the only way in which love can triumph within the social climate presented in the story, since battling for it within that social setting would lead to a tragic end, as it did for Hīr and Rāṅjhā.

Sahiti also, like Hīr, relies upon her sense of her social class in articulating her status. Waris Shah has limited the role of Hīr in the second half, however, has presented a lengthy part of Sahiti. She shares many similarities with Hīr; particularly that she is also a character that derives her power from her social class. Sahiti makes this clear from when she is first introduced in the story.

Rāṅjhā asks who is this girl; [girls reply] she is the daughter of Ajjoo
[Sahiti enters and replies] Who are Ajjoo, Bajjoo, Chajjoo, Fajjoo, and Kajjoo
Oh Waris Shah, it is the sister-in-law of Hīr, daughter of the King of the Kheras
Through her entrance in the story, she swiftly reminds everyone that she is the daughter of the chief and the village. She is proud of her social status, and this is evident when Sahiti engages in a rancorous argument with Rānjhā. Murphy stresses that she “challenges Rānjhā in all things, arguing at multiple instances on behalf of women,” and uses both historical and social examples to counter his critique of women.172

We have drunk all magic potions, and make crazy the magician
We have contained the likes of Raja Bhoj, you do not know our capabilities
Kings jail their own brothers, allowing brothers-in-law to rule
Look at the ordeal we gave Rasalu, using our cunning ways
Raavan lost his Lanka and became dust, for disguising himself for Sita
Yusef was thrown in prison as a prisoner; Sassi tormented those who came on camels
Rānjhā became a buffalo herder, then a fakir, but the Kheras took Hir
Roda was cut in pieces and thrown in the river, just look at Jalali’s tricks
King Fogoo suffered all his life, Marvan became of the servants
What happened to Mahinwal and Sohni, just ask those failed in love
The Pandavas lost eighteen battles, earned nothing as a result
Woman made the Imamzadeh fight, killed the religious ones
Oh Waris Shah, who are you yogi, you shall make a payment173

172 Sabir, P.220-221, Verse 359.
As demonstrated by the verse, the character of Sahiti is stressing the power that women possess, and in making her argument, Shah has Sahiti cite historical examples that allow her to make a cogent and compelling argument as to why women are more powerful than men. Shah depicts Sahiti as a character that is cognizant of her family’s powerful status, for which reason Shackle describes, their dialogue “introduced every argument that could be raised between an ascetic (who is really a lover) and a dutiful woman aware of her family’s rights and respectability.”

A large portion of Waris Shah’s *Hīr* is dedicated to the interactions that Sahiti has with Rānjhā, as well as Hīr. Sahiti, plays a fundamental role in the bringing together of the two lovers after separation, and she also pursues her own lover in a conservative climate. Waris Shah’s presentation of Hīr in the latter half of his story is somewhat limited. However, he compensates her absence by providing a lengthy part of his narrative to Sahiti, who is presented by him as an equally, if not more feisty and rebellious female. Sahiti is depicted as a character that is arrogant and proud, and it is not surprising for which reason that a majority of the verses that include her presence are ones where she is engaging in some form of quarrel with either Hīr or Rānjhā; quarrels in which she almost always retains the upper hand. Similar to Hīr, Sahiti assumes her power through her social status. She is a willing recipient of her social rank and takes every opportunity to utilize this to her benefit. It also allows her to act as the catalyst that re-unites Hīr and Rānjhā, and enables her to successfully pursue her own love interest as well.

Summary

Gaur and Deol have categorized Hir in significantly different terms. Deol chooses to argue she is depicted as a passive and sexualized female protagonist. Gaur offers a contrasting perspective, stressing Hir is rebellious, battling for her Rāñjhā, and the social structure that she is born into. Shackle offers an alternate view, suggesting the characters are a depiction of the Sufi tradition. Gaur and Deol did not unravel the complexity of Hir’s character and more importantly, in reaching their conclusions, did not rely on the complete representation of Hir from the time she is introduced to when she is killed.

Hir’s complex character can be described neither as completely docile nor completely rebellious. She is depicted by Waris Shah at times as a devotee of Rāñjhā, personifying Sufi love, as Shackle argues, where the characters of Hir Rāñjhā portray features of divine love; nonetheless, consideration of the entire text reflects a Hir that is much more than a follower of Rāñjhā, portrayed by Shah as a defiant and rebellious female. However, as rebellious as Hir is shown to be, she does not rebel against the patriarchal culture she is part of, as Gaur misinterprets, but utilizes it advantageously.

Not only do Gaur and Deol not fully appreciate the nature of Waris Shah’s female, as they oversimplify Hir, but they do not offer an interpretation of Sahiti, who plays an equally, if not more important female role in Hir, certainly based on her presence in the latter half of the book. Assessing Hir and Sahiti more comprehensively, one grasps Waris Shah’s attempt to demonstrate that he depicts his female characters as being rebellious, but nonetheless cognizant that there are some societal obligations that they must abide by if they aim to maintain the power that they have grown to admire.
Through his treatment of his female gender, Waris Shah is above all offering a commentary as to what is acceptable behavior and what is not. Shah attempts to praise certain behaviors of Hīr, while reprimand her for others. Certain actions and behaviors are shown by Shah to be “liveable” and acceptable, but others are not. Through the interactions between relationships, Shah further allows different characters to perform their behaviors, particularly Sahiti, and these characters perform actions which are competing with Hīr’s, and Shah decides on which actions shall lead to a successful outcome in the story and which ones shall not.
Part II: Rāṅjhā

Waris Shah’s characters serve to remind the reader that persons have limited and paradoxical agency towards a gender that is given to them prior to choice: We see this in the portrayal of his character Rāṅjhā.

The concept of land ownership holds major significance in forming Jat caste masculinity, and I shall address this in the first chapter of this Section, where I discuss how masculinity is defined through land ownership and Jat identity, which shall also address the matter of Jat caste. Given the association between land ownership and masculinity, a lack of land challenges Jat masculinity. Rāṅjhā faces this experience of lack throughout the story, as he is considered an unsuitable match for Hīr by her family based on the lack of owning land. In this sense, he is an atypical masculine figure. Rāṅjhā can be seen as a contrast to the brave heroic male that would be considered symbolic of the male protagonist in the qissā, as Deol describes Mirzā, a courageous male character from another prominent Punjabi qissā.¹⁷⁵

In the second chapter of Part II, I will discuss how Waris Shah has portrayed Rāṅjhā through his physical appearance. Through Rāṅjhā’s physical beauty and his sense of fashion, Shah reveals a delicate, attractive, and stylish young man. These qualities are only enhanced as he becomes the subject of male attention in the story, in addition to that of female, particularly when Rāṅjhā encounters Balnath, the leader of the yogis. Rāṅjhā’s appearance breaks down the gender norm as presented in Hīr. Rāṅjhā is not portrayed as a gallant and brave young man, but rather one that is vain and has a self-absorbed image of himself. This is important as through his

¹⁷⁵ Jeevan Deol, “To die at the hands of love,” 150.
appearance Shah constructs a different gender role for Rāṅjhā, and this portrayal of Rāṅjhā tries to undermine the male gender role created by other masculine characters in the story.

Finally, I will examine how through Rāṅjhā’s arguments with Sahiti and Hīr where he voices support for men and condemns women, Shah portrays Rāṅjhā as also conforming to traditional stereotypes, acting as a man whose sensibilities are chauvinistic and misogynistic. For a significant portion of the text, Rāṅjhā is depicted as quarrelling extensively with Sahiti, and even goes as far as to assault her. Rāṅjhā is also cruel towards Hīr at various points throughout the text as well. Rāṅjhā’s character does embody narrow-minded traits, and has the expectation that women should act in a certain way. Rāṅjhā believes that the obligation of protecting family honour should be the aim of women, and they should not quarrel with men, who as he claims are the superior gender.
Chapter 4: Defining Masculinity through Land Ownership & Jat Identity

If you like you can come and see, if you want to ask about our land and wealth176

This dialogue from the film *Putt Jattan De* (Sons of Farmers) demonstrates the historical importance of land to the Jat male, since it forms Jat identity. It depicts the scene when the male protagonist’s brother goes to arrange his marriage.

Sikata Banerjee states that “patriarchy and male dominance have meant that masculinity has been seen as immutable and natural,”177 in India, when, in fact, “masculinity is historically, politically, and culturally constituted.”178 Similarly, Mrinalini Sinha argues “there is no domain where masculinity necessarily or naturally belongs;”179 and Ronald Jackson and Murali Balaji stress that masculinities have to be examined “within their own domains.”180 As these scholars attest, then, our understanding of masculinity in *Hīr* must be placed within the context in which Waris Shah’s *qissā* is written, and must be understood as something that is constructed. With reference to more recent cultural production, Harjant Gill has argued that a Jat’s “identity and status….are inextricably linked to his land and marked on to his physical body though his occupation as a farmer.”181 As Gill identifies, an essential part of the culture in Punjab is land ownership, considered to be the yardstick of Jat masculinity. There is great pride associated with

178 Ibid, 7.
the Jat male, and this is derived from “their desire to live a dignified life.”\textsuperscript{182} Gill stresses that Jat masculinity is fundamentally connected to land, and “dispossessing a farmer of his land is framed as equally egregious as sexually violating the women of his family, hence posing a direct challenge to his masculinity.”\textsuperscript{183} The “celebration of Jat caste identity” occurs through their “patriarchal inheritance of land,”\textsuperscript{184} the lack of which compromises the construction of the Jat’s masculinity within the Punjabi context. Male pride and their sense of honor and prestige are connected to their land ownership, and preserving that land and honor was considered of utmost importance.

In the cultural setting of Punjab, the construction of Jat masculinity is considered to be the quintessential type of masculinity. A Jat represents “hegemonic masculinity” and the men from other castes “are measured according to their ability to live up to this form of masculinity.”\textsuperscript{185} Iqbal Sevea argues that “other caste groups are valued according to characteristics that are supposed to mark out a manly Jatt.”\textsuperscript{186} Therefore, men in the Punjab cultural environment shall be compared to the masculinity of the Jat male, and if they fail to possess many of the characteristics that have been considered in socially creating the ideal male, then they shall be thought to be less of a male, also impacting their ability in being measured a worthy groom by girls and more importantly, her family. Speaking again about modern film representations, Sevea agrees with Gill’s claim that the “value of other caste groups was judged

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\textsuperscript{182} Gill, “Masculinity, mobility,” 113.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
on the basis of their likeness to Jatts,” and the “measure of the manliness,” which they exhibited was based on the benchmark established by the Jat. Sevea recognizes that “examining traits of masculinity that are depicted as superior to others, one should not assume that the traits being celebrated are naturally masculine.” These qualities that are considered superior in the Punjab context in defining what a ‘man’ should be are culturally constructed, and the culture determined that the benchmark for the quintessential Punjabi male, were the traits associated with a traditional Jat landowner, who was proud, courageous and willing to do what it takes to protect his land and woman. In the Punjab context it just so happened to be the case that “traits associated with the Jatt hero come to assume a hegemonic position.” The ability to engage in confrontation and exercise aggression to both protect honor and reach one’s goal are therefore seen as a favourable qualities of the Jat male. According to Sevea, however, it is the case that “there are multiple codes of maleness in society,” suggesting that although Jat masculinity was considered to be a certain way, it was something that could be de-constructed or modified both in the Punjab context and outside of it.

As Gaur suggests, the patriarchal Jat order is demonstrated by Hīr’s father, Chuchak Siyal. Hīr’s father was the chief overseeing five villages, a significantly larger role than Rānjhā’s late father who was chief of only one. Upholding this status was considered paramount, and one of the primary ways that this was ensured was through safeguarding that

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187 Sevea, 137.
188 Ibid.
189 Ibid.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid., 138.
192 Gaur, 125
193 Ibid., 123.
marriages between children occurred with families that possessed a similar status. We can see the importance of land ownership in the construction of maleness in Shah's text. For example, the verse below describes when Rānjhā addresses his sisters-in-law, when he decides to leave his village after being swindled out of his land by his older brothers.

Rānjhā said, my food is gone! What are you asking me  
You took all of our father’s wealth, you are not my family  
If you can, like Mansoor, go hang me by the noose  
You are happy I am leaving, Waris says, why are you shy to say

Frances Prichett claims, qissā heroes are “nobly born.” Rānjhā fits that prototype; however, following the death of his father, he was wrongfully disinherited. Rānjhā was born into a Jat clan, meaning land possession played an integral role in defining him and his masculinity, the loss of which left him in misery, resulting in him leaving his village of Takht Hazara and eventually going to Hīr’s. The banter between Rānjhā and his sisters-in-law demonstrates Rānjhā's loss of status, as he has lost his land.

Oh sister in-law! I have nothing, why call me home now  
First you burn my heart, and then come to apply balm  
My brothers have estranged me, what is my relation to you

194 Gaur, 125.  
195 अंि का न्याय! धियम निपन नैन, नैछं बाय्यलाई! उन्हीं लिभा मंटते हे  
भांष लिभा ने कप्त रा निन्य मानव, उन्हीं मात्र ता पैट रा भाजा दे हे  
रम ललामे उंि भलबू रंबू, मैंतः कप्ति मूली ठुंठें ठेके  
पिंछे धमुं इंि आभमे दे निंजले दे, भूकिंि आबते गाड चिखुं नंबते हे  
Sabir, P.13, Verse: 29.  
196 Pritchett, 7.  
197 गाय! धिमस झंठस संि दे टाकिंगि, जुड जाम हुं मेव दे ठाकलिंगि हे
Rānjhā’s loss of land weakens him, compromising his position as a potential suitor. For this reason, when Hīr’s mother realizes she is involved with their herder, Rānjhā, she is infuriated, knowing Rānjhā does not share their status.

Wait till your brother Sultan knows of this, he is concerned about your marriage
You have disgraced your father Chuchak, what use of us spoiling you
You have cut off our noses, shamed the home, what was gained through raising you
I shall tell that servant to leave tonight; we do not want him to herd our buffaloes
Oh my dear! Take off these jewels, there is no use for them
Oh Waris Shah, this girl plans on having her limbs cut off

This verse below elaborates how Hīr’s father refuses to marry his daughter to Rānjhā, and instead aims to marry her in the Kheras, who are of higher status with more land.

We have never married with Rānjhās, never had any engagements
They are wandering servants, and looking at daughters of Siyals
We shall marry with Kheras; all brothers have given that advice

पाँचो मार दे नीडी दिनपर्दे रह, दिने कुंडीयाँ तरफे तरफ़ीयाँ दे
बाढी मयज मज में उमा रंग गोद, उमाई मार दिना मारदीयाँ रंगटीयाँ दे


198 उसे लील मुलाफ़ हू भाव देख, बाहे ठंबर हुए उसे मुत़ब़े दे
चुचुल सेलर दे वन हूँ लील सादी, बेगा डाकिया ममड़ीयाँ उड़े दे
तेंदु देख दे बेकरा बाटिली दी, बोटिया घड़ देख ममड़ीयाँ माखे दे
कर्जीं चद तूँ च तद्दे देंगे, लीली में युर भटीयाँ चढ़े दे
भालीए! लग ही मार बांदई, बुर बैठ दे बाटिलिया घड़े दे
बाड़म मार भींगि देंस भेंगी रह, नीडी देनिया दी लिख बुटचे दे


199 तल बोटियाँ दे हार मार बीड़ा, तों दिनियाँ मारां बुरमालाईयाँ हे
ढंडे कुलस्थां बोटियाँ भाटियाँ भाटियाँ हूँ, बिनाले में बालिया लगड़ीयाँ नाचिया दे
तल बोटियाँ दे देंगे मार लीच्छे, दिनी भानलुट बुटड़े काटीयाँ दे

This dialogue from Hīr’s father reiterates the importance of land and power in their patriarchal society. In order to live up to his Jat caste masculinity, it was imperative for Rānjhā to possess land.

Caste and social structures play a major part in the communal framework in which Hīr and Rānjhā fell in love. Paramjit Judge argues “caste could be regarded as the single most structural element of the Indian society.”

It is important to identify, as Ronki Ram notes, caste discrimination in the Punjab context is different than Hindu Brahmin Society, which is focused more on pollution and purity.

In Punjab, power “is based on land ownership.” There was hence a higher preoccupation with land, status and power in Punjab, rather than considering whether another person or group met the threshold for a certain level of pureness. We can see this emphasis in the interactions that Waris Shah portrays. Thus, when Hīr first encounters Rānjhā, she immediately questions his status, who he is, and where he has come from:

I shall roll myself on your path, tell me where you have come from
Has someone kicked you out of the house, why are you wandering around?
Who have you left behind, for whom are you repentant
Which is your country, what is your father’s name, and what is your caste?

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202 Ibid.
Hīr is cognizant of the social structure to which they belong and that Rānjhā would have to belong to a certain caste and class to be considered worthy to marry her. When Hīr attempts to persuade her father to hire Rānjhā as their buffalo herder, he too, has a preoccupation with Rānjhā’s status, family, and where he has come from:

Of which landowner is he a son, what is his caste, and is he considered smart and intelligent
Why is he upset with the world, which saints provide him support
He comes here like a leader, like he is someone special
Of which Jats is he a grandson, and what is he lacking

The importance of caste is argued by Farina Mir, who stresses that it plays a fundamental role in shaping “everyday experience.” Mir reminds the reader that Rānjhā is even recognized in the story by his caste’s name, Rānjhā. Mir claims that the issue of caste “is the root cause of conflict in the narrative’s overall plot,” since the story demonstrates an “anxiety about social classifications.” She argues that in the Hīr Rānjhā text, caste “is one of the primary ways in which characters identify themselves and others,” and the connection between the person and their caste is “perhaps most closely fused in the character of Rānjhā.” Caste plays a central role in preventing Rānjhā from being with Hīr, as it is the basis for “Hīr’s parents’ rejection” of

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204 विद्वे चेंज० स• खूंिण व• छेंट छैं, चेंज० अबरल मन्दि छैं छेंट छैं ती त्रिंग० विन्दू मरल मन्दिउ छैं छेंट छैं ती त्रिंग० विन्दू मरल बनल बुझ पाण, भए मिंटे जिन्दे छेंट छैं ती त्रिंग० नेंट० च• खूंिण व• छेंट छैं, त्रिंग० गल छैं चेंज० छेंट छैं ती Sabir, P.38, Verse: 74.
205 Mir, 124.
206 Ibid., 125.
207 Ibid.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid., 127.
210 Ibid.
him, since they “perceive a gulf between his status and their’s.” Although by caste, Rānjhā belongs to a Jat family, Mir argues, in the Punjab context, caste functions and relates to a “system of social status and differentiation.” Hīr’s parents refuse the match due to the fact that they are of high social status, while Rānjhā is a cowherd, of much lower social status.

Gaur furthers the argument of Mir, stressing the “tribal organization was the chief characteristic of society in medieval Punjab.” He claims the “reading of Hīr Waris reveals that its entire canvas has been set on three villages and three dominant Muslim Jat (agriculturalist) communities: Siyals, Rānjhās, and Kheras.” Rānjhā loses his social status in a setting in which “kin dominated social relations.” Losing his land meant Rānjhā was no longer a zamindar, meaning landowner, and in “the political, social, economic and cultural life of medieval India/Punjab, this zamindar class played a vital role,” since they embodied power in society. Gaur identifies that in comparison to Rānjhā, Hīr’s family were “of Rajput origin, and claim higher rank than surrounding Jat tribes, to whom they will not give their daughters in marriage,” supporting the premise that caste played a defining role in determining social relations. Clan and caste fraternity, or biradari as Gaur defines, plays a critical role in defining the social framework, since medieval Punjab was defined by customary laws. According to Gaur, this clan and caste fraternity was controlled through marriage, and hence, men who did

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211 Mir, 128.
212 Ibid., 126.
213 Ibid., 129.
214 Gaur, 116.
215 Ibid., 117.
216 Ibid.
217 Ibid., 119.
218 Ibid., 124.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid., 125.
not fit the social level necessary to marry daughters of those in a higher social class were rejected. It cannot be ignored that the caste structure had a significant part in social framework during medieval Punjab. Anne Murphy confirms that “caste-based systems proliferated across north India in this period,” 221 and this element was a “vivid feature” of the period in which Waris Shah wrote his text. 222 For this reason Chuchak Khan, Hîr’s father, a zamindar and chief in their village, did not accept Rānjhā, who was simply a peasant working as a herder for Hîr’s family, and furthermore, his clan’s “status had come down to the level of the Jat agriculturalists.” 223 Saida Khera, the boy who Hîr’s family chose for her had a considerable amount of land, making him a more worthy suitor for Hîr.

Waris Shah’s Rānjhā does not have the vigour or strength that Orsini describes as the hallmark features of the qissā male protagonists of the nineteenth century, which are the focus of her study. 224 Rānjhā bears a sharp contrast to the male character Mirzā, from one of Punjab’s most popular qissās, Mirzā Sahibaan. Mirzā took away Sahibaan on her wedding day, and is considered to personify the quintessential Jat male in Punjab. Deol notes that Mirzā possessed a great sense of pride and would boastfully assert that “there is no warrior who can defeat me. I will fight off whole armies,” 225 and went as far as to claim “God fears me”. 226 In contrast, Rānjhā did not have the courage to elope with Hîr. Mirzā’s character, in Hafiz Barkhurdar’s (also known as Hafiz Rānjhā Barkhurdar) version dated to the late eighteenth century, argued that if he was to

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222 Ibid.
223 Gaur, 126.
224 Orsini, Print and Pleasure, 119.
225 Jeevan Deol, “To die at the hands of love,” 150.
226 Ibid.
abandon his beloved and she was married elsewhere, then that would be a disgrace to his family. 227 Shah's Rānjhā makes no active attempt to stop Hīr’s wedding. It can be inferred that since Rānjhā’s character was not a zamindar, Shah portrays him as a character whose sense of pride had been eroded. Shah depicts him as a male who lacks a sense of egotism. It is for this reason he is portrayed as having chosen to accept his fate, which is something a traditional Jat male character would not have chosen to do, since it would compromise his sense of manhood. In his discussion on folk qissās of Punjab, Kartar Singh Duggal identifies Rānjhā as the “weaker link” between him and Hīr, and advocates “it would indeed have been a different story if Mirzā and Heer had fallen in love.” 228

Christopher Shackle does see Rānjhā as possessing some courageous attributes, which are associated with ‘Jatness’. Shackle argues that “all Hīr has to do is to fall in love with Rānjhā, argue with her parents and their allies, get married off to her Khera husband, then elope with Rānjhā,” 229 but it is Rānjhā who undergoes “two main transformations” in the story, the first was going from being the chief of Takht Hazara’s desired son to a herder for Hīr’s family, and the other was when he had to leave Hīr’s village to become a yogi. 230 Shackle’s assertion implies that although Hīr is feisty, Rānjhā embodies a deep inner strength that enables him to battle adversity and have the emotional will and mental courage to undergo the transitions that he goes through and face the trials and obstacles that his fate has in store for him. As Shackle describes, Shah depicts Rānjhā undergoing major transformations throughout the story, and successfully does so, reflecting that inner strength.

227 Jeevan Deol, “To die at the hands of love,” 147-148.
230 Ibid.
Pankaj Singh argues that Rānjhā does not exemplify any sense of courage whatsoever.\textsuperscript{231} She instead sees those characteristics in Hīr, stressing she is “articulate, resolute, courageous and clear minded,” considering Rānjhā on the other hand as “inactive, immature, dependent, timid, and at best pompous, boastful egoist.”\textsuperscript{232} Singh asserts that he is described as “insane” and “crazy” throughout the book,\textsuperscript{233} and argues Rānjhā “does not seem to grow beyond his childhood role of a darling youngest son of his father.”\textsuperscript{234} Singh sees Rānjhā as a character that fails to grow up, focusing on spending “time playing on the flute and combing his hair” and who throughout the story “continues to be taken care of by those who love him – his father, Hīr and above all the Panj Pirs.”\textsuperscript{235} Singh asserts Rānjhā is depicted as someone that is incapable of solving any of his problems, and “either turns away from them or seeks refuge in the miraculous or in the five Pirs.”\textsuperscript{236} According to Singh he is handed everything on a platter.

Shackle and Singh both offer valuable insights into the character of Rānjhā; however, their arguments possess shortcomings. Shackle argues that all Hīr had to do was argue with her parents and eventually elope with Rānjhā, while he is the one undergoing the transformations, implying that he somehow embodies a greater resilience. Shackle fails to consider that it was Hīr that strategically arranged for Rānjhā to become her family’s herder, it was her that protected him against her family, Kaido and the qāzī, and most importantly, the one that tactfully derived the plan for Rānjhā to become a yogi and come in disguise to see her, after Rānjhā fails to initially agree to elope with her. Shackle is hasty in attributing accolades to Rānjhā simply for

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[231] Singh, 56.
\item[232] Ibid.
\item[233] Ibid.
\item[234] Ibid.
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having gone through life changes. As Singh points out, Rāṅjhā always has someone to support him through those changes.

Singh critiques Rāṅjhā’s character, stressing he barely possesses any respectable characteristics, does not achieve anything through his efforts and is a “timid” individual that “does not have much to recommend him as an admirable character,” as he has not earned “any human endeavors or accomplishments.” Singh sees Rāṅjhā’s character embodying a timorous nature, rather than any assertiveness associated with Jat masculinity, which Rāṅjhā arguably demonstrates momentarily when he engages in a debate with the mullah, from whom Rāṅjhā does not appear to be intimidated.

Oh tell us what is a prayer, and how was she produced
How many ears, noses does she have, for whom has she been sent
How tall and wide is she, and what is her age? How was she created?
Oh Waris Shah, how many pegs are there, upon which she is hung

Rāṅjhā is depicted as taking on of religiously orthodox figures. In a society that is both respectful to and compliant towards religiously orthodox individuals, such as the mullah, Rāṅjhā openly insults him, accusing him of immoral behavior and hypocrisy. Furthermore, in insulting the mullah during an argument, Rāṅjhā is portrayed as daring enough as to question orthodox practices and prayers as well. In having the courage and audacity to challenge religious authority

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237 Singh, 56.
in an open fashion depict Rāṇjhā as having a bold side to him. Through this example, Rāṇjhā
does not recognize authority and does not have any apprehension in opposing it. While this is an
audacious stance from Rāṇjhā exhibiting some element of masculinity, he also insults religious
authority, through which he outcast himself from that social environment.
Chapter 5: Why Should We Care About Rānjhā's Appearance?

Rosalind O’Hanlon asserts that the “emphases on the manliness of personal restraint” are revealed in how men dress and “elaborate ornaments usually associated with luxury” fall outside of the conventional dress code for what would be considered manly.239 This is but one interpretation, however, of what is "manly." Rānjhā is constructed by Shah as a character that selects to dress fashionable with ornaments. O’Hanlon's argument for a conventional dress code for the man, therefore, completely ignores the fact that conventional is dependent on the social context. As Sylvia Walby stresses, masculinity and femininity is a construct of socialization,240 and hence dependent upon the social framework to which groups belong. Masculinity and femininity in the South Asian context has always been more fluid than the western context. Subhadra Mitra Channa argues that “masculine and feminine qualities are not separated or dichotomized.”241 While O’Hanlon sees the division between how a man dresses and how a woman dresses quite distinct, that does not necessarily fully reflect the South Asian context from a social or historical standpoint. According to Channa, there is no apparent contradiction of a brave warrior donning women’s clothes for he remains strong and a skilled warrior even as a eunuch dancer.”242 However, having said that, as discussed with Butler, each cultural setting still possesses some form of what it entails to be male and female. The male gender in a cultural setting might possess certain traits which may be considered feminine in a different era, nonetheless, there is a construction of gender in every setting, and there is the expectation that

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242 Ibid.
males and females of that period shall conform by those norms. Waris Shah establishes what
gender should be in his story, and the norms that are established are done so by his characters.
Through their interactions, the reprimands they face, and their failures and successes, Waris Shah
is demonstrating what male and female gender should essentially look like.

Rānjhā's appearance is, in fact, a major preoccupation in Waris Shah's Hīr, as Jeevan
Deol has noted. Rānjhā is a pretty boy, whose sexual appeal and suggestiveness captivates all the
females that he encounters, and as Deol notes, “it is hardly surprising that sexuality pervades the
relationship between Rānjhā and his sisters-in-law.”243 His sisters-in-law are evidently overcome
by his boyish features and as Deol suggests “the eroticism of his relationship with his sisters-in-
law”244 provides an indication of his attractiveness. Deol compares Rānjhā’s appeal to the likes
of Krishna, which he supports by noting Rānjhā’s sexual encounters with Hīr’s girlfriends.245
Shah appears to depict Rānjhā with sensual appeal and handsomeness, rather than allowing his
character to demonstrate any physical strength.

O’Hanlon cannot argue that the character of Rānjhā would not be “considered manly”
since what is considered manly in a Western or even modern Indian context would not be the
same as what was or is considered masculine in the early modern South Asian setting. Caroline
Brettell and Carolyn Sargent point out that Arjun, the protagonist of the Mahbharata dressed as a
“eunuch” for a year, with bangles and braided hair, teaching women dancing and singing.246
Brettell and Sargent further note that Hindi Gods such as Shiva and Vishnu possess both male

244 Ibid., 161.
245 Ibid., 163.
and female characteristics. Hijras do identify with Shiva for this reason, since he is half man
and half woman, and Vishnu has “dual gender representations.” Therefore, O’Hanlon might
argue that certain types of dress for men were not indicative of maleness, but as Sinha stresses,
there is no natural sphere where masculinity resides. However, according to the gender
boundaries that were defined within the pastoral agricultural climate of northern Punjabi within
the medieval period as per Waris Shah’s text, Rāṅjhā’s sense of fashion was not conforming to
the surrounding masculine prototype based on the models outlined in the story. Nancy Bonvillain
confirms cultural “constructs of gender are conveyed through beliefs and practices that prevail in
diverse societal domains.” Through Rāṅjhā’s character, Waris Shah has attempted to distort
the lines and definitions of gender, as we see in the way Rāṅjhā’s sisters-in-law describe him:

There is talk about you at the riverbanks, and courtyards where women spin their wheels
Many girls have been ruined, having fallen in love with you
Your black curly tresses are like cobras, suck blood from the chest
Oh Waris Shah those who have beautiful brothers in-law, they are finished

Rāṅjhā is a stylish, fashionable, and smooth young man. He is portrayed as a “dandy,”
which according to the Oxford thesaurus is a “pretty boy” that is “trendy” and a “snappy
dresser.” He is presented by Shah as a cute and frisky boy who knows his ways with women.

247 Brettell and Sargent, 278.
248 Mrinalini Sinha, “Giving Masculinity a History: Some Contributions from the Historiography of
250 qyrI pnGtW dy au`qy ipaU peI, DuMmW iqRMjxW dy ivc pweIAW nI
Gr bwr ivswr ky ^Awr hoeIAW, JokW pRym dIAW ijnHW nuM lweIAW nI
zulPW kuMFIAW kwlIAW honk mMgo, JokW ih`k qy Awx bhweIAW nI
vwirs Swh ieh ijnHW dy cMn dyvr, Gol G`qIAW sy BrjweIAW nI
He appears well aware of his looks and takes every opportunity to style himself, confirming his preoccupation with vanity. The following taunts from his sisters-in-law almost depict Rānjhā as a narcissist, one who has a fixation with his appearance.

Oh you mad young man, why spit on your shoulder  
With a turban on oiled locks, you roam around the Trinjan  
Should your food lack salt, you throw the food away  
You do no work, but eat and wear well, you shall uproot yourself

Rather than focus on hard work and vigor, Rānjhā is portrayed as focusing his concentration on his appearance. He is portrayed by Shah as a lazy and arrogant boy that has a sense of entitlement, and is fascinated with his looks and impressing the women.

Rānjhā’s looks and sex appeal do not even spare his sisters-in-law, whom he lures; as he does all other girls he comes across. They engage in debates with him, but there is an underlying sexual tension between them, which is fairly obvious in the following verse, where they are annoyed by the fact that he does not appear to be paying them attention and seems to be curious about Hīr, as news of her beauty has travelled in all directions.

If you don’t like our beauty, then go get the Hīr of Siyal  
Play your flute and cast the net of love, bring the girl from Siyal  
You know how to entice females; go get the queen of Kokila  
If you can’t reach her from the front door, at night go over the back wall  
Take Waris Shah with you; get her by hook or by crook

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Shah takes the opportunity to describe his style and swagger, through his altercation with the mullah, who refuses to allow Rānjhā in the local Mosque. Through his altercation with the mullah, Shah also provides a subtle indication as to Rānjhā’s inability to conform to religious or social norms, a result of which, he is chastised and abused by the mullah.

Mosques are the house of God; we do not allow the lawless here
Dogs and ascetics are dirty; we tie them up and beat them
You have long locks; we beat the ones with whiskers
Clothing too long we rip away and moustache we chop off
One who does not know religious rules, we shall hang
Oh Waris Shah, enemies of God shall be scolded like dogs

In their exchange with each other the mullah selects to criticize Rānjhā’s appearance and clothing. In insulting Rānjhā, the mullah is targeting his appearance, which is outside the ordinary for a religiously orthodox society. Rānjhā adorns long hair along with a long moustache, unusual for Muslim boys. Rānjhā is more concerned with looking trendy than conforming to any religious or cultural ideals. His clothes are long and baggy. Rānjhā’s gentleness and panache is only further elaborated in the story at the point when after initially firing him for becoming involved with Hīr, her father sends a letter to Rānjhā’s brothers sharing
in detail his impression of Rāṅjhā: Hīr’s father in fact compliments the attractiveness of Rāṅjhā to his brothers, and admits the impact he has had on their village. He describes the features of Rāṅjhā and the ornaments he adorns.

Chuchak of the Siyals wrote to Rāṅjhās, this boy is the servant of Hīr
The entire village is afraid of the servant, he has a way with the herders
We took him on because he was a Jat, we’d beat him if he was a menace
Such a young man why did you kick out, he’s not a cripple, lazy or without a hand
The boy has attractive hair and earrings in his ears
Oh Waris Shah, he knows no one, stays with Hīr day and night

Waris Shah is portraying Rāṅjhā with a great sense of style. Rāṅjhā wears elaborate ornaments, which enhance his delicate nature and tender appearance.

The Nath saw the very gentle boy, who is so fashionable
He is a treasure of beauty, the darling of his parents
Some grief has brought him here, gotten into sort of problem
The Nath says tell the truth, why you wish to become an ascetic

Nowhere are Rāṅjhā’s soft and gentle traits more apparent than his encounter with Balnath, the leader of the Nath yogis. Upon losing Hīr, Rāṅjhā travels to the yogis with the hopes

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255 सुचक निहारल दे लिखिता वकिला हूँ, तंगी दीव दे चचा देव भंडार मे कावः धिलं देवा हम चचा बेले, निहारल वकिला दे हिला भंडार मे भांत देह दे सर्व दे चचा लाहिना, चत्तीस दुर्ग मे सर्वी देव भंडार मे दिवं गंगा दुर्ग मे विप्त मरियं तथा विप्त मरियं मे, लंका त्रिपी वंशखं दा टांका मे निहारल वकिला दे पंचे दे, बेली सज्जन मे केहीं टंदन मे, धम दीव दे राज दिलत टांका मे
Sabir, P.87-88, Verse: 162.

256 तलं हेन दे পুষ্প কল্যাণ ব্যস, ভাগল ইপু দে মেঘলা ব্যস ভূঁ, বেই সমত দী অট হ্রিস্মুজ মূল, ভাগল লঙ্কা অধিতে দে রমণ মূঢ়া বিদে রুদ্ধ দে কুম দে পুষ্প কল্যাণ, কিছু কিছু দে দে রাণ দে বিহার পঁচার তল ভাদ্য দোম দে মূঢ় মেঘ, বুঝি দে বুঝি দে পুষ্প কল্যাণ
Sabir, P. 146, Verse: 256.
of being initiated by them, so he can then disguise himself as a yogi and go to Hīr’s village without anyone suspecting or recognizing him. Upon seeing Rāṇjhā’s beauty and gentleness, Balnath is taken a back. He is stunned by Rāṇjhā’s attractiveness and his tenderness, for which reason he is skeptical as to why a boy such as Rāṇjhā, so handsome and fashionable, would want to renounce his worldly desires and join the yogis. Balnath continues his dialogue, endlessly praising Rāṇjhā, to the extent that the reader is forced to consider that maybe Balnath himself has developed a sexual attraction to Rāṇjhā.

Bracelets beautify the hands, earrings adorn the ears
Your lungi (loincloth) of silk, your hair drenched in fragrance
Beautiful rings that are finely cut, kohl decorating the eyes
Living life at the cost of parents, why would you want to be an ascetic?257

Balnath describes Rāṇjhā’s hair, his ears, his face, and how he is dressed, along with how his hands and arms are ornamented. Rāṇjhā’s style and tenderness lead to Balnath ultimately deciding, despite facing the wrath of his own yogis who are furious for the recruitment of Rāṇjhā, to initiate him into their group. Balnath’s infatuation with Rāṇjhā is evident to other yogis, who see that Rāṇjhā’s attractiveness was too much for him.

The helpless yogi had mercy, which angered the disciples
Their fiery tongues lashed out at him, like sharpened swords
Based on the boy’s attractiveness, you are ready to make him a yogi
These yogis are attracted to young boys, god has ruined their minds
You did not do that for us, who worked so hard for it
Oh Waris Shah, those captured by beauty, never realize the truth258

257 उस लीले पर्फुलैरं दिख्ना तरीकाम, लीले टोलसे मैं हुई होने ती
भेंड पेंट लीरे लुर्ने ती
भिं ठुंडें, जिन हिंदे हुलेले दे हुंडे हो
जिन हीके लिंहीरे नाल हो, जिन हीके नाल रुंडे हो
ध्वज ऊंचीरे हिंसा भड़ी भड़ी हुंडे हो
Sabir, P.147, Verse: 258.
Waris Shah depicts Rāṅjhā as a character whose attractiveness and sex appeal has the ability to win over everyone. Shah enables Rāṅjhā to utilize it as a weapon in attaining his ambitions, as he is able to with Balnath. He follows that approach throughout the story. He is depicted as playing the flute and acting flirtatiously, which mesmerizes women and men. Shah has delicately placed Rāṅjhā in a role where he uses his looks to reach his goals. For instance, when he aims to go across the river in the beginning, and Luddan the boatman refuses to allow him on the boat despite Rāṅjhā pleading, he is able to appeal to the boatmen’s’ wives, who command them to allow Rāṅjhā in. After first ruthlessly kicking him off of the boat, they return to him and address him as follows:

Grabbing him with both arms, they bring him back on the boat
Please forgive the mistake; they brought him back to heaven
Like Azrael coming in a dream, he was brought again to paradise
Oh Waris Shah, he was bathed and brought to Hīr’s bed

Rāṅjhā does reflect traits that can be described as "delicate." Kate Teltscher describes effeminacy as a symbol for “weakness, softness, tenderness and aversion to violence;” traits that

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259 Sabir, P.23, Verse: 49.
were at a traditional level connected with the female.\textsuperscript{260} His depiction as indicated above, when he encounters the yogis enhances Rānjhā’s tender features, which attracted Balnath. Based on Teltscher’s definition, Rānjhā’s physical appearance is enough to argue he demonstrates some female qualities, however, Sikata Banerjee identifies that the “British had categorized Indian men as the “effeminate other” by using a gender hierarchy rooted in a specific Anglo-Protestant interpretation of manhood—Christian manliness—defined by values of martial prowess, muscular strength, rationality, and individualism.”\textsuperscript{261} Like O’Hanlon, Teltscher has defined masculinity based on a ‘Western’ construct and lens. In the South Asian social context, masculinity and femininity may have been seen less rigidly, however, nonetheless, as Butler has suggested, there is a concept of what was male and female, and the fact that characters in Hīr, whether that is the mullah, Balnath, or Hīr’s family members, all consider Rānjhā’s appearance out of the ordinary reinforces the claim that he does not fit the traditional stereotype of what was masculine within the narrative. Shah therefore, purposely has created a male protagonist that is attempting to break gender norms, but whether or not he is successful in his endeavor is a different story.

In addition to a lack of land weakening Rānjhā’s Jat masculinity, the way Waris Shah chooses to portray his personality compromises any depiction of masculinity in the traditional sense. Particularly in comparison to Hīr, who is feisty and engages in physical altercations with multiple of characters in the story, Rānjhā’s personality is one where he shows a reluctance to engage in violent behavior, even when his love for Hīr is attacked. When Hīr is arranged to be

\textsuperscript{261} Banerjee, 3.
married, Rānjhā hesitates to elope with her (verse 184), and makes no active attempt to protect his love for her or preventing the marriage from occurring. This speaks to the construction of Rānjhā’s character’s Jat masculinity or lack thereof, since he takes a passive approach when realizing that Hīr was to be betrothed to Saida, a rich suitor that her family felt matched their social status.
Chapter 6: Chauvinism, Misogyny, and Waris Shah’s Commitment to Patriarchy

Waris Shah creates multiple performances of masculinity through the character of Rānjhā, as the other chapters in this Part have argued; however, there are aspects of Rānjhā’s character that do not contrast far from a traditional male within the narrative of the story. This provides an indication of the perspective of Waris Shah, and the gendered formations he ultimately endorses. On one side Shah has broken down gender constructs and portrayed Rānjhā in a manner that is dissimilar to the masculine ‘Jatness’, yet, when it comes to his social perspectives, Rānjhā is depicted as possessing chauvinistic viewpoints, which are indicative of the patriarchal setting of the era. In this way Waris Shah reprimands female characters for their behaviour, and shores up a misogynist perspective.

Jean Chapman argues misogyny to be “the dislike or hatred of females,” and that the “overt kind is when women are hated simply because they are women.”262 Chapman stresses that misogyny “manifests itself in diverse ways: sexual discrimination, objectification and commodification of women, and mental and physical violence and the threat of violence.”263 According to David Gilmore, “misogyny is a complex, multilayered phenomenon involving man’s deepest wells of feeling about woman”264 Gilmore considers misogyny to be driven by greater complexity in comparison to Chapman, claiming that the “inner struggle” that men are undergoing leads to “not only unremitting tension, frustration, and the inevitable aggression

263 Chapman, 50.
against the object of desire, but also moral self-doubt,” for which the “woman serves as a convenient and helpless physical object for the aggression.” Based on definitions provided by both Chapman and Gilmore, Waris Shah’s portrayal of Rānjhā would be considered misogynistic.

Despite being madly in love with Hīr, at least ostensibly, and being the main ‘hero’ of Waris Shah’s text, Shah depicts Rānjhā as a chauvinistic male, who deep in his heart holds beliefs which are patriarchal. Rānjhā’s chauvinism and traditional male mentality are illustrated in the following verse where he chooses to insult Sahiti and women in general.

Men are good by action, Sahiti, women are enemies to good
In comparison to men, you are of a lesser standard
Men are ships of goodness, women are boats of evil
They sink the good name of parents, and strip the honour of brothers
They cut your flesh and bones, they are axes of butchers
They shave your moustache and beard, like scissors of the barber
Give your head but save that of the beloved, protect the honour of love
What are you fuming about, what have you ever accomplished
You quarrel with an ascetic; look at this girl and her sister-in-law
Oh Waris Shah, I should hit you on your face, with the sacks of goodness

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265 Gilmore, 222.
Though this verse, Rānjhā’s character stresses that men are inherently good, and women are evil. He is describing women as perpetrators of immoral acts, and accusing them of stripping men of their honour. He accuses Sahiti and all women of being of lower standard in comparison to him and all men. Based on Chapman’s definition of misogyny, Rānjhā’s character is clearly exercising overt misogyny, considering his blatant dislike of women.

In the following response to Sahiti in their quarrel, he continues his insults, and also shares examples which are demeaning to women. Through this exchange the character of Rānjhā demonstrates his belief that genders should adhere to some form of stereotype:

Without justice the man is a fruitless tree, a woman is selfish if not faithful
A dancer is a barren if not tasteful, a man a donkey if not intelligent
Without humanity a man is not a nothing, without the slayer the sword is useless
Without patience and prayer a yogi, and without breath one’s life is useless
A youth without bravery, a beloved without beauty, and food without salt is useless
A moustache without respect, a beard without good deeds, and an army without pay is useless
A minister without sense, a priest without prayer, and an accountant without accounts is useless
Oh Waris, a woman, fakir, sword, and horse, all four are nobody’s friend

Through this dialogue Waris Shah chooses to depict Rānjhā as seeing men and women falling into specific stereotypes. He is shown to see women, whether it is a woman, wife, dancer, or beloved, as someone that should possess physical beauty and the ability to entice men, as

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without having those traits she is inadequate. He is placing the value of woman on their physical characteristics, and in contrast, when describing men, Rānjhā is portrayed as expecting them to possess wisdom, sense and intelligence, as if that is expected from their gender. Rānjhā is shown to further attack the character of women in his final line, when he claims that women, like horses are nobody’s friends, stressing they are a characterless gender.

Beyond the abuses and insults, the manner in which Rānjhā is shown by Waris Shah assaulting Sahiti and her friend during their altercation convinces the reader that Rānjhā’s character has misogynistic tendencies, and additionally, this informs the reader that Shah is not condemning these sorts of actions, when establishing the norms within his text, since Rānjhā is not chastised for committing these acts.

He beat them both, gave them five to seven blows
Pulled their cheeks and tore their blouses, then beat their breasts red
Grabbing them by their braids, threw them around the yard
Pinched their checks and scratched them, gave them a few on the neck
Like an performer does to a bear, beat their behinds with a stick
Holding them from their ankles, made them dance like monkeys
‘For God’s sake Jogi Stop’, Hīr is pleading from the inside

Rānjhā is described as not only assaulting Sahiti and her friend, but touching them in sexually invasive ways. This treatment of women expresses a clearly patriarchal position.
Through this rancorous dialogue from Rāṇjhā, Shah expresses patriarchal and chauvinistic values and furthermore, through the passionate beating of Sahiti and her friend, he is promoting those values through the figure of Rāṇjhā.

Sahiti is portrayed by Shah as forceful and rebellious, however, in the end of their long altercation through a significant portion of the book, Singh rightly argues that Waris Shah brings “the woman, down on her knees admitting Rāṇjhā’s, the man’s supremacy and regretting her own behavior.”269 Shah has chosen the woman to concede defeat against the male in his narrative, indicating that no matter how assertive she is, she shall be defeated by the male. Shah’s narrative appears to reflect an environment where “little girls are more likely to be told to be quiet and not to make a noise in circumstances where little boys would be expected be boisterous.”270

Sahiti folds her hands in front of you; she is your follower from heart and life
I serve you as a slave, constantly on hand and foot
I have realized you are a true Pir, my heart and life is yours
I have faith in your miracles, which have won us over
Everything of mine is yours, including Hir and all friends
I have never listened to another; I am amazed at your great love
I only trust the one Allah, and given up on all the rest
I can never compare to you, and Waris Shah, never able to pay back271

269 Singh, 63.
Shah does not even allow Rānjhā to spare Hīr from his wrathful and demeaning insults. Along with Sahiti, he insults Hīr and the female gender in general. These abuses towards Hīr support Gilmore’s assertion of tension and frustration leading to aggression towards the object of desire. Rānjhā is evidently frustrated by the fact that he has not been able to unite with Hīr, and his aggression is appearing in the most flagrant manner towards Hīr. Below are insults, which he aims at both Hīr and her sister-in-law Sahiti.

What are you stirring? What are you scheming against me?
You consider yourselves equal to men, what is so good about you
Who do I have except God, while you sisters’ in-law have each other
Whoever does good in God’s name, he shall be rewarded in the future
Their future outcome is bad, Oh Waris who commit evil deeds272

The faces of men reveal goodness, the face of women shows evil
Men are smart, intelligent and capable, what sense do women have
Men are sensible and know contentment, and with contentment stay stable
Cunning, deceitful and shrewd, these women have no decency
Women in their silk clothes are hateful, while men in the simple dress are noble
Oh Waris, men are foreign fruits, while women dried fruits273
We see Waris Shah's Rännhā as one that sees men as good, decent and intelligent; women on the other hand are portrayed as evil, conniving, and hateful. This distinction between women and men is seen further, through the work. Despite the broad range of flaws that the character of Rännhā possesses, Hīr is never depicted by Waris Shah as referring to Rännhā as evil, or conniving. He is not portrayed as having any flaws. Yet Waris Shah selects to allow Rännhā to relentlessly make verbal attacks on the female gender. Rännhā also accuses Hīr of being unfaithful and not being committed to him. The range of consistent insults that Shah directs at women through Rännhā are both excessive and one sided, urging the reader to question Shah’s values. As demonstrated by the verse above, and pointed out by Singh, Shah frequently connects females to “deceit” and “fraud,” yet, Shah does not describe the character of Rännhā or male characters in this manner; the connection with negative traits such as deceitful and fraudulent appear reserved for women.²⁷⁴ Waris Shah does not allow Hīr any way out when it comes to salvaging herself. Rännhā refused to elope with her, and then blames her for marrying Saida. Rännhā is conveniently exempted from taking any responsibility in the situation. Hīr is penalized despite her being the one that attempts to find a way for them to unite, while he passively accepts his fate.

Oh Hīr, there is no enjoyment in love, if you elope
This creates great trouble, I have heard many stories
You deceitfully kept me herding buffaloes; these are the fraudulent ways of women
Oh Waris Shah the goldsmiths know what is pure and what is not²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ Singh, 64.
Pankaj Singh argues that the “patriarchal bias of Waris Shah reveals itself frequently in the voice of the omniscient narrator,” stressing that “Waris himself is no less eloquent than Rānjhā in denigrating women.” Singh is correct in her assessment, as demonstrated by the verses above; all the shortcomings and obstacles that are faced by Hīr and Rānjhā being together are pinned upon the deficiencies in Hīr. Rānjhā is never blamed for any of his actions.

Misogyny is not unique to Waris Shah’s Hīr, however, as elements of it exist in other Sufi texts as well. In his discussion on ascetic Sufi narratives, according to Aditya Behl the “eroticized female body” is a “centerpiece” which allows a man to “progress on his ascetic quest,” as the “male subject can be transformed only by using the woman's body as the erotic and aesthetic impetus to draw him out of himself.” In Sufi narratives “women were understood as vehicles of ideology” that allow men to advance in their spiritual ideology. Behl stresses that “such poetry indicates a deep cultural misogyny in which women's erotic bodies draw the seeker out of himself and on to the path to God, while the women themselves are ultimately sacrificed in the annihilation of the narrative universe.” Hence, features of misogyny have been present in Sufi narratives long before Waris Shah wrote Hīr. There is a difference however, in the way women are being used in previous Sufi narratives, such as the Prem-ākhvān, as described by Behl, where they were used as a tool for spiritual journey, in comparison to the way they are depicted in Shah’s Hīr. In Hīr, the female gender itself is more so attacked, as is their character.

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276 Singh, 63.
277 Ibid.
278 Behl, 218.
279 Ibid., 222.
280 Ibid., 182.
Summary

While Shah has chosen to create a character for Rānjhā that represents him as challenging norms within his text, as well as appropriating sexuality to manipulate others, yet his character also expresses patriarchal condemnation of women's character. Shah portrays Rānjhā as a male protagonist who does not fully conform to any single typecast in the story, particularly that of the Jat masculine prototype, who would be recognized from land ownership and bravery.

Waris Shah’s portrayal of Rānjhā, especially his lack of land ownership and appearance of a “dandy” is breaking down gender norms as created in Shah’s plot, which do not work towards his advantage in the story. His sense of style is shown as failing to conform to traditional and religious customs, for which reason he faces the wrath of the mullah. At the same time, he is clearly alluring to other characters. His unique sense of style allows Rānjhā to generate a multivalent sense of what it means to be male in the narrative. His looks are able to entice females, and shown to mesmerize Hīr. Even the leader of the Nath yogis, Balnath is depicted as unable to resist his attraction to Rānjhā.

Although Rānjhā is portrayed as a character that despises conformity, Shah depicts parts of his behavior as being quite stereotypical for a man as recognized in the storyline. Rānjhā shows elements of chauvinism and as a misogynist, when he engages in a debate with Sahiti, voices his support for men, and has spirited arguments with Sahiti, during which time he also assaults her. Waris Shah’s showcasing of Rānjhā and degrading Hīr and female characters urges the reader to conclude that Rānjhā’s chauvinist voice is echoing the sentiments of Shah.
Conclusion

Waris Shah’s ability to incorporate the culture and nuances of that time into his qissā is one of the reasons why it continues to hold a place in the hearts of Punjabis 250 years after it was written. In addition to illustrating the landscape and environment of the region, Shah showcases a narrative that discusses gender, social relations, caste, and kinship. Through poetic verses, dialogues, metaphors, and exchanges between characters, Hīr depicts an image of what gender norms look like according to Waris Shah. The plot focuses on the love story of two primary characters, Hīr and Rānjhā, and through the treatment of both by society and characters in the story enable us to ascertain the gender norms which are being reinforced by the narrative. The marginalization and chastisement of Hīr Rānjhā in the course of the story demonstrates the social constructs that are being established. Waris Shah creates these complex characters, which stand out in comparison to others in the story, and Shah chooses to establish gender norms through chastising them when they deviate away from the norms he elects to establish.

Jeevan Deol argues that Hīr is a submissive and sexualized female. Ishwar Gaur on the other hand claims that Hīr is a rebellious character that rebels against the patriarchal society. However, both these scholars did not appreciate the complexities of Hīr. Deol does not consider the assertiveness of Hīr and the way that she violently attacks characters that dare come in her way or challenge her status. Deol also does not consider the defiance that she exercises in dialogue with her mother, father and the qāzī, as she persistently refuses to let Rānjhā go, even when they threaten her. Deol chooses to emphasize the isolated moments where Hīr is shown to submit to Rānjhā in love, which is not consistent throughout the text, and moreover, as Christopher Shackle supports, shows the Sufi nature of the narrative, a tradition Waris Shah
himself is part of. Gaur on the other hand amplifies Hīr’s sense of rebellion, not questioning the aspect of intersectionality. Hīr most definitely does rebel in the story, but she rebels for love, not against the social structure she is part of. Hīr is both happy and content to be in the social status that she finds herself in, and the text exposes countless occasions where she demonstrates a preoccupation with status, shown particularly when she questions Rānjhā’s caste and status. Despite being rebellious and defiant, Hīr constantly loses every battle; she loses Rānjhā and is married off, is considered a disgrace every step of the story and in the end is killed by her clan. Utilizing Judith Butler’s concept of reprimand, we can see that Hīr is consistently reprimanded throughout the story, through which Shah demonstrates the social norms established. Through the character of Sahiti, a character which has not been dealt with significantly by scholars, Shah further establishes the female gender norm. In contrast to Hīr, Sahiti is shown as discreetly meeting her lover and never visibly defying her family in any way. Sahiti is comfortably seated in the patriarchal structure, and when she chooses to be with her love, she elopes with him, something Hīr and Rānjhā fail to do successfully throughout the story for various reasons. Sahiti understands that she cannot successfully live with her love in the social environment that she is in, and her comprehension of the social norms enables her to make sound strategic decisions.

Like Hīr, Rānjhā’s character is also presented differently in comparison to other male characters, and through him, Waris Shah is establishing the masculine gender norms in his narrative. Rānjhā is reprimanded throughout the story, through which Shah is able to platform what he wants the reader to understand masculinity to be within the context of his narrative. Rānjhā is a Jat, belonging to the Rānjhā clan. His name itself identifies his caste, through which Shah reinforces the importance of class and status. His sense of status and masculinity are carved through ownership of property. In a pastoral setting the Jat caste are dependent upon land
ownership. Rānjhā’s lack of land prevents him from being considered a worthy match for Hīr, by family. He is disinherited by his family in the beginning, and this lack of land consistently reprimands him through the story. Hīr’s family refuses to accept him and he undergoes one challenge after another to overcome this. Rānjhā’s appearance of a “dandy” is interesting. Rānjhā is chastised by the mullah for his unorthodox and unconventional appearance; however, there are moments that this look also rewards him in the story, particularly when the leader of the yogis agrees to initiate him, primarily because he felt an attraction to him. Rānjhā’s tender, delicate, and charming look is successful in winning over attention. However, in the end, his gentle look and passive nature do not succeed, as in comparison to other qissā heroes, such as Mirzā, who is discussed by Deol, his lack of courage, bravery and strength prevents him from stopping Hīr’s marriage and making her his own. Rānjhā is not portrayed as strong enough to depict his own fate.

The social norms and sense of gender that Waris Shah demonstrates in his story reveal a patriarchal and misogynist perspective, particularly through the actions of Rānjhā. Rānjhā and men are rarely spoken against in the story, but Hīr and the female gender in general are consistently disrespected. The sense of loyalty and intelligence of women are constantly questioned. From the manner in which Rānjhā is depicted as abusing and assaulting females, especially the character of Sahiti, one can infer the standards that Shah is establishing. The relationships between characters and the references Shah provides reveal the gender structure Shah is choosing.
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