

Warris Shah (18th century), the greatest among the *Kissa* writers of Punjab, has enthralled generations of Punjabi readers through his immortal *Kissa Heer*. Unique among Punjabi poets, he caught the spirit of the legend as none else did, although the ballad had been composed by many.

Containing some 600 odd stanzas, *Kissa Heer*, the saga of two ill-fated lovers, is rich both in its emotional variety and range. What gives it strength and style is its folk idiom. It is the people's language that he has fashioned into a verse of beauty and splendour. The village sayings and aphorisms have been exquisitely woven into the fabric of the poem. In fact, there is none who has translated the Punjabi way of life into song and story as movingly as Warris. Amrita Pritam aptly calls him "a solace for the sufferers, a balm for the bruised hearts"

Gurcharan Singh (b. 1917), the author of this monograph, is a short story writer, novelist, playwright, literary critic, poet, biographer and educationist. He is also the recipient of a number of awards. In this monograph he interprets the 18th century Punjabi romance mainly for the benefit of the non-Punjabi readers.



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WARRIS SHAH

The sculpture reproduced on the end paper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi,

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

WARRIS SHAH

GURCHARAN SINGH



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Life

Warris Shah, popularly called Warris, the author of the most celebrated Punjabi romance *Heer Ranjha*, remains till date, the greatest among Kissa-writers of Punjabi. 'Kissa' literary means, 'an account', 'a story'. The Kissa of Heer Ranjha is the only one in that form that Warris is known to have written in his lifetime.

One thing singular about this greatest singer of the most characteristically Punjabi love-romance is that his own life-account is shrouded in mystery except for a few facts gleaned from the text of the Kissa he wrote. It is fairly certain that he belonged to village Jandiala Sher Khan near Shekhpura city, a district headquarters now in Pakistan. Jandiala literally means, 'of Jand tree' and 'Sher Khan' denotes the name of the founder of the village. He was an officer of some sort, or a Jagirdar during Humayun's reign. Its main inhabitants were Muslim peasantry and a few Sayyad families who were Muslim priests by profession. Again, it is not certain whether Warris was born in one of the Sayyad families living here or came to be settled here along with his parents. According to some, he was born in A.D. 1735 and his father's name was Sayyad Gulsher Shah. In the Kissa, Warris states himself as a resident of Jandiala Sher Khan. He gives his father's name as Kutb Shah, and not Gulsher Shah. He took his religious education at Qasur, in those days a famous centre of Muslim priesthood, and Maulvi Mohiyuddin was his teacher. Beyond this, nothing is known for certain about Warris's career. A large number of legends got current and are still in circulation but not much is authentic or reliable. The statements, allusions and references that figure in some other later Kissa-writings are not many. The exact date of his birth, even parentage, family background, lineage, remain untraced. Ahmed Hussain Ahmed Quraishi is definite that his birth-place was Bucha Chathha while Chaudhuri Gulam Mohd. traces his ancestral village to Rasul Nagar now called Ram Nagar, located on the bank of river Chenab. Similarly,

there are variations about Warris's life-span and dates of his birth and death.

Warris is credited with the authorship of some *siharfis** but this assertion too has not gone beyond a conjecture. The year of the completion of the Kissa, 1180 Hijri, is however definite and beyond question. The author was at that time having his sojourn at Malika Hans—a village in District Montgomery (Pakistan). This information is given at the end of his narrative.

According to some, Warris took his religious instruction from a famous divine—Maulvi Gulam Qadir. After that he repaired to Pak Pattan where he is known to have practised religious austerities and had mystical experiences at the seat of the great Sufi Savant Sheikh Farid Shakarganj, his spiritual mentor. He has indicated that he belonged to the Hanfic denomination of the Sufi order. According to Maula Bux Kushta, a literary commentator and historian of the early twentieth century, Warris then left Pak Pattan for Thhatta Zahid and actually functioned there as a Maulvi in an old mosque of the village. From here he moved back to Malika Hans, not very far from Pak Pattan. Here, he composed his famous love-story that immortalised him. From all accounts it is apparent that he did not belong to the eastern region of the Punjab now in Pakistan but was actually born somewhere in the southwest of Lahore and after his studies at Qasur shifted further to the west in Pak Pattan and around.

Was he ever in love? There is a flourishing legend about one peasant damsel named Bhagbhari (Lucky) with whom Warris had a love-affair. Again this is a conjecture.

*Poems of 30 stanzas in which each stanza begins with the letter of the Persian script also in alphabetical sequence.

Background

When the British East India Company turned imperialist and was moving from Bengal in the east towards Delhi, capturing territory after territory, the Punjab lying as it did to the west of India and on the borders of Afghanistan, was in the throes of an unprecedented political, social and religious upheaval that at the end of the eighteenth century shaped its scenario totally out of recognition. Yet this period, spanning some one hundred years, inexplicably forms the richest period in the history of Punjabi poetry. Besides Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last Guru of the Sikhs, who founded the Khalsa Crusading Order in 1799 and Warris Shah, the great, the century can boast of Sufi saint Bulhe Shah, the eyeless narrator Muqbal, the lyricist Ali Haider and exalted ones like Hamid Shah Abbasi and Nijabat, who narrated Nadir Shah's invasion of Delhi and his passage through the Punjab and a host of others. (It was a bleeding Punjab, turbulent and chaotic without a moment of peace and stability that proved at the same time to produce the best poetry—mystic, romantic, lyrical and heroic.)

The century began with Guru Gobind Singh and ended with Maharaja Ranjit Singh capturing Lahore by the close of it. The tenth and the last Guru of the Sikhs initiated the liberation struggle. After his death in 1708, the crusade was led by the Bairagi convert Banda Singh Bahadur from 1708 to 1716. He overran Sirhind (1710), captured Nawab Wazir Khan, its governor, who had tormented the Guru and was responsible for the death of his mother and four sons. Within a few years, he uprooted the Mughal rule from across Jamuna beginning with Saharanpur (in U.P.) and captured cities like Karnal (now in Haryana), Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and in the further north Pathankot and Gurdaspur. Bahadur Shah, who succeeded Aurangzeb, staged a quick march back towards north from Maharashtra, outlawed the Sikhs and even ordered all Hindus in imperial services to shave off their beards. Farakhsiyar, who succeeded him in

1713 appointed Abdus Samad Khan and his son Zakriya Khan, governors of Lahore and Jammu respectively. Both were given the charge of destroying the Sikhs—root and branch. While the Delhi Government now decayed rapidly, the governorship of Lahore passed on to Zakriya Khan and then to his two sons, Yahiya Khan and Shah Nawaz. Then came Mir Mannu, the scourge of the Sikhs. By this time Nadir Shah appeared on the north-east and began his series of invasions in 1738. Between 1748 and 1767 Ahmed Shah Abdali devastated the Punjab nine times, causing administrative collapses each time he led his invading hordes through the Punjab on towards Delhi and back. He is known to have unleashed extermination campaigns against Sikh commandos during periods intervening these expeditions. Despite all this, the Sikh bands not only survived but were able to raid Lahore in 1757, capture it only to be ousted quickly by an advancing Abdali. On his triumphant return from the Battle of Panipat, it was on the 5th of February, 1762 that almost the entire Sikh community was taken by surprise near Malerkotla and was wiped out. Abdali's last invasion took place in 1767 when his troops were decimated and plundered again and again by Sikh desperados while returning, right up to Peshawar. By the close of the 18th century the Sikh rebellion had triumphed and the alien rule stood transplanted in the Punjab.

All this, if described in detail would present bizarre reading. A more disturbed period is hard to imagine and yet contradictory as it may sound, it is a fact that amid all this blood-shed and chaos Warris wrote his masterpiece. Not only that, he is believed to have recited it to huge spell-bound audiences, taking the entire text to its highest pinnacle of glory and surpassing popularity unequalled in history. Contradictory as it does seem, the hard fact of the existence of Warris and his *Kissa Heer* and many more narrators and lyricists of high calibre in this war-torn century in the Punjab does ask for some really convincing explanation. An attempt can be made.

In fact there still were large areas left where peace prevailed. Clashes were taking place between Sikh guerillas and the ruling Nawabs and also invaders while the local rulers would criss-cross between Delhi and Qabul authorities as and when

it suited them. The Muslim populations in cities like Lahore, Qasur and Multan had long spells of peace while the disturbances in the triangular area between Qabul, Delhi and Lahore had little concern with the Muslim and Hindu peasantry in most of the Punjab, especially the Muslim dominated areas away from the army passage-routes which fell mainly in central Punjab. The disturbances, howsoever ruthless, did not reach the unconcerned masses in the rest of the province. As we go farther from Lahore more and more stable conditions prevailed and these were the regions which produced and nourished composers like Warris, Bulhe Shah, Ali Haider and others.

Not that the tragic sword-play being staged in the Punjab went unnoticed by sensitive souls in the Punjab. This is how the Sufi mystic Bulhe Shah describes the contemporary scene:

The portals of Hell are wide open. The Punjab is in calamity.

Men with torn clothes have become rulers. The Mughals have taken cups of poison.

Bulhe Shah and Warris also allude to the developing conditions and incidents in a number of couplets:

The Nawab fought with Hussain Khan like Abu Samad in Chunian. We are greatly sorry about the fate of Qasur, although the entire Punjab has suffered grievously.

God has shown to 'Warris' how thieves have turned into revenue collectors and tenants into rulers.

When Jats of the country became ruling chiefs and Governments came to be formed from house to house.

Warris Shah-the Yogi was looted by the roving bands.

Punjab and India both tremble at the mention of Nadir Shah.

It was in this way that the strange phenomenon of the masterly writings of narrative, lyrical and descriptive poetry came up to their prime under the shadow of the clashing swords and in the midst of the bleeding bodies, from the inspired pens of poets, mostly Muslim by faith, who not the least interested in worldly losses and gains, were humanistically motivated and were able to maintain their aloofness and could find repose

and felt creatively intoxicated amidst spasmodic turmoil. Although they were of Muslim faith and the prevailing scene amidst which they thought, perceived and composed would just naturally lead to communal biases and antagonisms of all sorts, yet in all Kissas composed in this period nothing of this sort, not even an iota of it, exists. This is a positive proof of the feelings of not only of formal unity but of fundamental oneness among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs that subsisted in the 18th century Punjab.

Heer Story by Warris

The romance of Heer and Ranjha was narrated by Warris in a manner that had already attained a standard form. It was in the Bait metre, which too had been perfected by his predecessors, markedly Muqbal, also known for this very Kissa. But, it was his own personal contribution to the story and theme and the characteristic Warrisian way the whole thing was manipulated to form an allegory as also a representative and in some sectors comprehensive description of the living culture of the 18th century rural-side Punjab that bestowed on it the distinguishing hallmark of a glorious creation.

The Kissa of Heer Ranjha starts with a prayer to God and an ode to Love—the foundation of creation; and an obeisance to the prophet, his four Friends; Chishti, the founder of a well-known Sufi order; his successors, including more specifically Baba Farid of Pak Pattan follows.

After this initial religious invocation, the poet refers to the requests made by friends to him to write afresh the love-story of Heer which assignment he obligingly carries out.

The scene is laid in Takht Hazara where the Jats of the Ranjha tribe rule the roost. Manju, Ranjha's father, expires leaving him exposed to ill-treatment by his seven elder brothers and their spiteful wives. Ranjha is forced to quit the village out of sheer disgust and revulsion. On his way to Jhang where Syal Sardar Chuchak is the chief he has to spend a night in a village mosque where he has some hot exchange of words with the Maulvi (Priest) who happens to be a typically debased soul. Eventually he comes upon the bank of river Chenab (*Jhanan* of popular Punjabi). Luddan, the boatman, is nice to him and makes him sleep in Heer's bed there. He meets the heroine here in an exquisitely dramatic way. Heer, the winsome daughter of the Chief of Jhang, and his destination, confronts him on the other side of the river and falls in love with him at first sight. Ranjha is then taken to her father and Heer sees

to it that he is employed as a cow-boy, in fact, a buffalo-boy. He would drive the herd to nearby grazing areas by the river-side called *belas* in Punjabi. Here in idyllic surroundings, Heer gets Ranjha typically Punjabi meals everyday and indulges in love-making in seclusion. However, one day they are discovered by the lame mendicant uncle of Heer named Qaido who carries the tale to her parents and, of course, the entire village, with the result Chuchak quickly gets her engaged to a nearby landlord of village Rangpur Khere and a very early marriage is fixed. Piquant scenes between the lovers, Heer and her parents, brothers and at the marriage time with the Maulvi (Muslim priest) follow. Heer is sent to her in-laws forcibly. Before this happens, Ranjha, in dismay, harkens to the proverbial Five Peers (Divines) who offer Ranjha full solace and after they have listened to his marvellous flute-play in classical tunes, generously bestow Heer, the peasant girl, on the youth. Fortified in their faith thus and convinced of their ultimate good-luck, the two lovers give up their design to elope before the marriage and decide to face the situation with growing resolution. It is Heer who suggests this course to her cow-boy lover. Marriage scenes are described in profuse detail. Although Heer refuses to say 'yes' to Mulla's (the priest's) query whether she agrees to the marriage with Khera, she is forced into it despite her wails and screaming protests.

The scene now shifts from Jhang to Rangpur, the village of Heer's in-laws. Ranjha discards his flute, turns a begging friar, and makes his way to far away Guru Bal Nath's hill-top resort, called *tilla* and after some time is admitted by the Guru curiously enough, into the order of Ear-torn Hindu Yogis. We see here a Muslim Ranjha converted into a Hindu Yogi without any hitch or hesitation. With his ears breached and Mudras (ear-rings) inserted therein, love-lorn Ranjha proceeds to Rangpur—a Yogi begging-saint garbed in the typical outfit prescribed by his Guru. A series of piquant scenes on the doorstep of Heer and places around Rangpur take place. In the end Ranjha, through the good offices of Sehti—the venturesome unmarried sister of Heer's husband, romantically disposed, succeeds in getting Heer tricked out of her virtual prison-house and then the two flee with no particular

destination in view. At the same time Sehti too makes a successful bid to run away with her lover, the young camel-riding Shah Murad. Kheras armed to the teeth, run in hot pursuit and are able to locate Ranjha and Heer in a desolate deserted place. They are quickly apprehended and produced in the court of a nearby Chief Adli Raja (Judicious King). The Islamic judge favours the Kheras and Heer is sent back to her lawful husband.

At this juncture God comes to the rescue of the lovers. Suddenly the city catches fire. The earlier verdict has to be reverted. The two now return to Jhang, the parental village of Heer and leaving her there with her parents, Ranjha leaves for his own village in order to return on the due date with a marriage party to solemnize at Jhang a regular marriage with Heer. At his back a conspiracy to kill Heer is hatched and executed. When the news of her death is conveyed to Ranjha he takes poison and falls a martyr to love.

Kissa Tradition in the Punjab

Romantic folk tales were in vogue in the Punjab from as early as the 11th century. They were sung to rural audiences by bards and minstrels called Waars. Waar is an abbreviation of 'Warta' meaning a 'happening' or a 'story'. These early folk stories had adventure or love or a mixture both for their subject-matter and were woven around popular heroes, generally mythical, with comic endings, supernatural always forming their invariable part. But all these were oral compositions. There were a number of singing tribes whose profession it was not only to compose but also to recite them from door to door or to rural gatherings on festive occasions. Quiet a large number of such Waars got current in the 13th century Punjab and onwards but the real Punjabi Kissa poetry came much later.

When thinking of the fraternity of regions, provinces or states of Indian sub-continent, we have got to keep in mind certain peculiarities of the old Punjab that mark it out as a shade different from the rest. The Muslim rule, with its resulting influences, came to the Land of Five Rivers some 200 years ahead of all other parts of India including Delhi and its adjoining areas. Persian came to this soil as the court language right in the beginning of the eleventh century when Mahmood of Ghazni annexed Punjab to his native Afghan dominion. In the same way Islam as well as Persian entered Punjab centuries in advance. Urdu was born in the Punjab and modern Punjabi too resulted from this Punjab-Afghanistan intercourse. Phenomenal conversions of Hindus to Islam in this part of the country took place far ahead of others. Along with all this came romances from the Western Muslim side augmenting the local stock. As a result the two types got intervened and interwoven, or even amalgamated to give birth to a new brand of hybrid Punjabi stories. Then followed the written poetised romances from the Muslim west called *masnavis*. *Masnavis* got current among the Punjabi literates, eventually to assume the folk form among the Punjab masses and still

later on to be taken up by the Kissa-writers in the centuries to follow. Among these love-romances stories like Laila Majnoo, Sheereen Farihad, Yousaf Zulaikha came to be owned by Punjabis and their foreign source or origin was soon forgotten. Bhai Gurdas, a contemporary of Akbar and Jahangir wrote in the 16th century mentioning the love-passion of Laila and Majnoo as ideal, along with that subsisting between native couples like Soarth and Beeja, Sassi and Punnoo, Sohni and Mahiwal, Ranjha and Heer.

Bhai Gurdas has alluded to some of the main love-romances already in vogue in the Punjab in the 16th and 17th centuries. However nothing is available in the written form except for the Kissa of Heer Ranjha of Damodar. Towards the close of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century came many Kissa poets, each one writing more than one Kissa and evolving in the process the standard form of Punjabi Kissa with its most popular and characteristic verse form called Bait which not only took birth but actually touched its ultimate pinnacle of glory during this period. By now the word 'Heer' was the symbol of idealised love as well as beauty. A damsel, possessing the highest degree of feminine charm would be called Heer and a handsome, wayward, love-lorn youth, Ranjha. Even to-day they are used in the same sense in Punjab.

Kissas derived from Arabic, are known as *masnavis* in Persian. Firdausi, the classic Persian poet is the author of the well-known *masnavi* of Yousaf Zulaikha. Attaar and Roomi are also famous as authors of quite a few well known *masnavi*. How the *masnavi* coloured up and even transformed substantially the native tradition has been very candidly admitted by Iman Bakhsh, a later contemporary of Warris Shah and the author of dozens of romances of Persian as well as Punjabi origin.

I took rice from Nizami
and pulse from Hatif
from Khusro came the butter
and salt was added by ourselves.

Actually, right in the Punjab itself, dozens of Punjabi poets came to write all sorts of Kissas in Persian as well. Thus

masnavi was supreme in the beginning but as time passed and by the time we come to Warris and his Heer we find the assertion of the native coming to its full-blooded fruition and getting to the top.

With the story of Heer and Ranjha, the Punjabi people came upon a characteristically Punjabi romance and thus it became most popular, all the others taking a back seat.

After Damodar, Ahmad Gujjar is known to have composed the Kissa of Heer Ranjha in 1682, followed by Muqbal in 1746. Mian Chirag Aman, a much less known figure, however, versified the story much earlier to Muqbal in 1711. And then came the greatest of all, Warris Shah, who completed his work in 1766. The following century saw a veritable crop of Heers coming up and the number of the more known poets and their productions exceeded full one hundred. But, then, none could eclipse the classic creation of Warris. He wrote only one Kissa-Kissa Heer and stopped at that. Thus, this author of the central love-story of Punjab-characteristically of this land of green fields, grazing cattle and crops, idyllic riverside grassy grounds and feudalistic disparities, venture-some romantics and lyrical abandon, had the capable outfit as well as cultural, mental and spiritual make-up that could express copiously in musical notes better than his predecessors and also successors, one and all, to stay at the top with his unmatched poetic genius.

Forerunners of Warris

Damodar

As the poet of the romance of Heer and Ranjha, Damodar, a Hindu shopkeeper, was the pioneer. We can take him to be as one who laid the first outlines of the story. Later narrators only reshuffled it, but not in a major way. The main incidents and the sequence in Damodar and Warris are the same yet there are important departures, twists and turns as well in Warris's *Kissa*. The names and the number of characters also differ. There are other striking variations too in the texts of the two.

Damodar invokes only God as 'Sahib' (Master) and none other from the Hindu pantheon. Thus he seems to be influenced by Sikhism which by that time had spread in the Punjab and some areas outside also. Warris, being Muslim, prays to God, the Prophet and also his Sufi pontificates.

There is no introduction or preface in the love story of Damodar, unlike Warris's, who says that in composing his *Kissa Heer* he acceded to the demands made on him by friends who wanted him to narrate the love-story in a novel way. Muqbal, Warris's nearest predecessor, also gives the same plea.

Damodar says that he was an eye-witness to all that transpired between Ranjha and Heer. Warris does not make any such assertion.

Warris starts with Ranjha, the hero, his village and his family description, while Damodar begins from the heroine's end.

According to Damodar, Heer was already engaged to Saida Khera when the two lovers met and fell in love. Warris takes the engagement to be subsequent to the love affair getting scandalised through Qaido the Lame, Heer's uncle in Jhang.

As a result, in order to characterise Heer as an embodiment of chivalry, Damodar paints her the dare-devil militant leader of the village damsels who fought a pitched battle

against Chandhar tribals, putting them to flight in no time. Warris omitted the clash altogether.

According to Warris Ranjha was taunted by his Bhabhis (Wives of brothers) that he was a hopeless case and could not win over Heer for marriage, and this provoked him to leave his native village for Jhang to which place the renowned beauty belonged. Damodar, on the other hand, has a different version to make. He says that when fleeing Takht Hazara, Ranjha had no particular destination in view and the meeting with Heer was a chance meeting.

Both Damodar and Warris make Ranjha stay in a village mosque when on his way to Jhang but according to Damodar, Ranjha, while in the mosque, has a discussion with the village peasants while a water-carrier's wife and her daughter are described as getting infatuated and falling simultaneously for the youth. Warris only narrates the hot quarrel that takes place in this mosque between Ranjha and the priest and omits the incident depicted by Damodar.

According to Damodar the Five Saints (*Panj Peers*) met Ranjha while on his way to Jhang but as per Warris the event occurs when Ranjha had already met Heer.

Warris omits a sequence of happenings with Ranjha subsequent to the marriage of Heer with Saida Khera; for instance—attempt on Ranjha's life, while he was accompanying Heer's bridal palanquin, and his escape back to Jhang, his meetings with a number of girls who were all in love with him, his return to Takht Hazara, his native village, Warris omits all these.

According to Damodar, Heer, when in her husband's village Rangpur sends her message to Ranjha to come to her in the garb of a Yogi through Rammu Brahmin but Warris makes her communicate with her paramour through a married lady of the village of her in-laws.

Similarly, the story of Heer's elopement from Rangpur with Ranjha differs. While Damodar is silent about Sehti, sister-in-law of Heer, Warris has described her in detail. He makes Sehti and Heer elope at the same time with their respective lovers.

Damodar makes Kheras in pursuit of Heer and Ranjha come to an armed clash with Nahars on the way but Warris takes them straight to the Qazi (Judge) of Kot Kabula.

Damodar makes the love-couple move in the direction of Mecca after they were united by the court, thus making the story end in comedy. But Warris gives an absolutely tragic ending to the romance. Heer is poisoned by her parents while Ranjha ends himself on hearing this news.

Muqbal

Muqbal, who wrote his *Kissa Heer* about two decades earlier to Warris, was, it seems certain, his immediate predecessor. In all probability Warris took the story directly from him. All the main incidents and their sequence are the same but the two Heer-writers have concluded the story differently. Muqbal making it end like Damodar in comedy. When declared husband and wife and Heer is handed over to Ranjha by the Adli Raja (Just ruler) or Qazi of Kot Kabula, the liberated and united love-couple is shown by Muqbal also to have moved to Mecca in Arabia where they are believed to be still living in love and perpetual romance. But Warris differed with Damodar as well as Muqbal and gave it a tragic end by making them die. Thus for the first time Warris converted the story into a stark, unrelieved tragedy unlike both Damodar and Muqbal.

There are a few other minor differences too. Muqbal's Heer and Ranjha are both literate and can exchange letters while Warris has made them totally without schooling. The story by Muqbal is slim and solid, and also quick pacing. He is not that elaborate in giving detail and does not indulge in display of sheer erudition and funds of knowledge he possessed, a feature that distinguishes Warris. What makes Warris great is, however, the realistic manner in which he has sought to make the Heer-story a stark tragedy instead of the artificial, sentimentalised comedy it had been with all his predecessors in the past, including Muqbal. But many aspects are the same or similar. The diction is not different. Perhaps the craftsmanship of Muqbal is better. In employing his diction—dialogic as well as ~~as descriptive~~—he is much more disciplined

as well as economical. It is not unoften that Warris strays from the central narration and goes at a tangent. Warris has taken bodily a large number of verses from Muqbal. Even then, Warris remains far superior to Muqbal in the matter of his narration, in the way he makes it full of realistic descriptions of persons and scenes. He surpasses everybody else in the matter of person to person dialogic repartees that take place in his Kissa at every dramatic juncture from beginning to end.

Gallery of Punjab Picturised

What about the extraneous material that Warris has been accused of writing throughout the length and breadth of the popular romance? The practice, as it strikes, should obstruct the natural flow of the narration and to some extent the charge looks to be substantially true. It does effect the organic uniformity and continuity of the Heer story. But, then, the diversions so caused, somehow, fail to denigrate it in any strongly perceptible way. On the other hand, these do make the story somewhat fulsome and complete with its environments trappings and stage equipment. It is also true that the cavalcade of incidents as it unfolds itself along the route and moves forward before our curious eyes, our senses remain assuaged all the time as if a multidimensional something big and broad moves ahead alive in flesh and blood, while you do not miss the detail and at the same time the speed with which the events proceed remains steady and fails to be affected too much. One can call this characteristic quality of Warris as a narrator an exceptional excellence matched by less than many indeed. With this quality of exhaustiveness at requisite points and stages at full play in the Kissa, we find the 18th century Punjab recreated in its picturised abundance even as we move from situation to situation and place to place and person to person, say from Takht Hazara to Jhang Syal, to Rangpur and back to these places keeping pace with the hero and the heroine, Ranjha and Heer.

Critical Appraisal

Of all Punjabi folk-lore, the romance of Heer Ranjha is the most popular and of all Kissa-writers of Punjabi Warris Shah remains at the top. Not that the Kissa by him is without its drawbacks, small or big or for that matter other Punjabi story-tellers are bereft of points of excellence at all but mainly because when all drawbacks and points of beauty are considered and compared, Warris leads in totality. Actually he remains incomparable in more than one respect with all those who preceded or succeeded him as versified story-tellers in the Punjab.

Although he was a Muslim by faith and lived and wrote in as far back as the 18th century, his lines, sung in the classicalised Heer style hold rural as well as urban Punjabi audiences still in their grips. One thing why it is so is that the Kissa of Heer by Warris Shah is more Punjabi than all the rest.

His 'Punjabism' results from his characteristic realism. We have seen that he departs from the age-old Indian tradition of ending all stories into comedies. Love-romances of Iranian source that had infiltrated and got assimilated into Punjab like Sheereen Farihad and Laila Majnoo ended tragically. This was as it should be, because in those days free love was taboo and those who tried to violate this law of society had to pay a price for it. Therefore, Warris was realistic when he led the lovers—to death instead of perpetual, blissful married reunion.

Warris is singular among old Kissa-writers for inserting a lot of realism into the texture of his story. It is not seldom that this type of weavery strikes true with its monologues, dialogues and descriptions of the countryside. There are group meetings, discussions, vituperative argumentations, exchanges of sentiments, soliloquies that recreate scenes of life in rural Punjab belonging to the times of Warris Shah.

The characterisation too is true to the soil. The hero, heroine, their associates, Qaido the lame, the parents of Heer,

brothers of Ranjha and their wives, the Mulla in the mosque the cow-boys, the rustic *yogi*, Saida Khera and his rebellious sister, Sehti and all other small or tall characters figuring in the Kissa seem true to life. The psychology of the village-brotherhoods, popular moral values and thought-processes, life-styles of the different social strata of the time, customs, practices and beliefs are all there in the Kissa for anyone to discover and get historically enlightened.

Warris refused to confine his story to its bare outline as it descended upon him through earlier writers like Ahmad Gujjar and Muqbal. His elaborate descriptions of incidents and situations make the entire narrative deeply and elaborately rooted in contemporary times.

At a few places the supernatural also intervenes to give decisive turns to the developing story. For instance the bestowing of Heer on Ranjha by the revered Five Saints as a gift for his beautiful flute-play on his way to Jhang at the start of the story, the fire that suddenly erupts and engulfs the court of the Qazi of Kot Kabula who first gave his verdict against Ranjha and in favour of Saida Khera, etc. Warris's entire narration, from beginning till end, smacks of reality in all matters—none else approaches him even distantly in this respect.

The Kissa of Heer Ranjha concerns characters of the Muslim faith and therefore, mentions and delineations of Muslim peasantry and their ways predominate. But as the bulk of the Muslim population were converts from among Hindus, the social fabric with its typical ways and customs remains uniformly Punjabi of the middle ages. However, in spite of the Muslim character of the Kissa some Hindu aspects derived from the earlier folklore remained. For instance Ranjha, a Muslim peasant is shown to have been prevailed upon by Heer (also a Muslim) to join the Hindu order of Yogis which he actually does. A Muslim Qazi (Judge) hands over a Muslim married girl to a Hindu Yogi, disregarding disparity of their religious faiths.

Being a poetic work, however, there permeates here and there some exaggerations in portraying main as well as supporting characters, professions and places but nevertheless the essentials of reality remain unimpaired. There are types,

individuals and not infrequently symbols and idea-characters. Types, however, predominate in all such narrative poetry and this is the case here as well.

The hero Dheedo (Wahiduddin Ranjha) is a raw, peasant youth, robust but sensitive, unequal with his usurping brothers and their wives who combine to push him out of the household and the village just when his father expires. He is desperate, romantically disposed and quite resolute, tough but without initiative. He is painted as an unsophisticated rustic boy, a wonderful flute-player, not capable of hard work, quick to take offence and ready always to go into wilderness. He has no friends. When he is forced to leave his parental village, he goes unsung and uncared for. Even the females of the place consider him good-for-nothing. The Bhabhis wanted him to be in love with them when they said :

You think, we are not beautiful. Then go and fetch Heer Syal if you are capable of that.

This provocation makes him a homeless vagrant. He is intolerant of hypocrisy and his rebukes to the vicious Mulla of the Mosque assume the proportion of downright condemnation. He has an irresistible sex appeal. Women fall for him easily. Heer, wayward, self-confident and conceited, proud of her status and endowed with all qualities of leadership and also in fact, a paragon of beauty confronts him in full fury on her Jhangside bedstead and is immediately won over without the least effort on his part.

It is impossible to convey the Punjabi flavour brought out in the Kissa by Warris Shah to one who cannot go to the book in original. Only a Punjabi or a Punjabi-knowing person exposed to the Kissa/lines when being recited in its classic tunes, known also to have been developed and popularised by the author himself, is capable of discovering the supremacy of Warris over earlier and later composers of this most 'Punjabi of all Punjabi' tales so far poetised.

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Says Warris Shah

To gain some idea of the nature and style of Warris's classic—*Kissa Heer*, a few extracts from the massive text in their English rendering is reproduced here. Some idea about the sequence and turns of events will also get outlined. About characters, it can be said that the main ones have come to be mentioned in these translated versions and piquant situations also have got alluded to, but the smaller ones, and these are numerous, have been omitted.

In any case, the typical rhythm and musicality of Warrisian lines could not be transplanted as such. One would also like very much to get introduced to the local colour and complexion of this 'classic creation' but this too will remain a missive. In spite of all these necessary blanks, the translations in the following pages are going to fulfil a felt need. Without these pages, the material provided in the preceding portion of the book in hand would have been casually more sketchy than, let me hope, it is now going to be with these quotations and extracts in the translation form suffixed to it. These can serve as illustrations.

Opening Invocations

God

First of all I contemplate God
almighty

He who made Love the first principle
of creation

He, who was the primeval lover. He
fell in love with *Rasool*, the
prophet

Love is the hallmark of all men
of high spirituality

Love is the fundamental quality
of Man

Gardens blossom in the bosoms
of those who cherish Love

The Prophet

My next invocation is to Rasool,
the beloved of God himself

The creator of Heavens conferred
upon the prophet the most
exalted status

He was made free of all blemishes,
all deficiencies, all defects
that inflict mankind

Four Jewels

Again I invoke the four 'jewels'
of the prophet, one exceeding
the other

Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali,
resplendent with their unique
qualities

They were faithful, devoted and
sold out on the path of God

They relinquished pleasure and took
to deep meditation—how wonderful!

Verily, they are the chosen ones of God
Almighty

Sheikh Farid

He who is the darling head
of the Chishti denomination

He who is the embodiment of
sweetness without limit

He who is a perfect *pir* among
22 *kutabs*

He who belongs to the lineage of
Chishti, the sublime and has
his abode in Pak Pattan

I bow before him whose benign
presence here has rendered the
Panjab free of all ills and
ailments

Story Starts

As was destined, Manju expired
Seven brothers of Ranjha were left behind
They started a regular feud with him,
he being the youngest

“You glutton, you eat and eat,
and do no work

You run after women with lustful stares”

The brothers decried him, striking
his soul deeply, painfully
injuring him internally

Their wives continued to tease and
tear him like hell

The Rift Deepens

Brothers called a meeting of the *panches*

The same was attended by a judge also.

The legacy of ancestral lands was

measured and divided among

the eight of them.

Everyone was heavily bribed. The entire

productive land went to the elder

seven

The barren one full of brambles and bushes

was the lot of the youngest—Ranjha

Collaterals were jubilant and

mad with triumph. They passed

stinging remarks

Village folk were derisive. They would

say:

“The youth is made a downright

pauper.”

They would make fun of the Jat youth

and follow him with sharp pitiless

tongues.

Exchanges with Bhabhis (wives of brothers)

Says Ranjha, "Bhabhis, you are turned into
enemies. You have set my brothers
against me. You have put the wedge
between me and them."

"I was a singing lark. You have killed
my song. My heart-beats have gone wrong.
You have rendered me wretched—an object
of derision."

"You have plucked a blooming
rose and done it into the dust."

"It is too painful, agonising, the rift
among brothers—you have caused it."

"Like body and soul we were—all eight of us
You have put the sword in between"

"You have done your very worst.
You are the cause of my
heart-break."

Says Warris Shah : "When you move to the other world,
please do not make me turn back."

Ranjha to Sisters-in-law

"Bhabhis, my fortune has failed me,

I am being thrown out

You make cutting remarks. You

make fool of me

You put me on coals. You pierce my

heart and make it bleed

First you put it on fire and then sprinkle

water on the burns

They were my kith and kin, my blood of

blood. Who else has sundered us

if not you? And why? let me know

Be off. You are nothing to me"

Says Warris Shah: See, I am alone, only one against

seven of you combined. I am a poor one-

I cannot match up to you—my wicked

Bhabhis

Mulla to Ranjha in the Mosque

Says Mulla, looking at his
dishevelled hair:

“O you, the violator of the Islamic
tenets—who you be, by the way?

“Be you off. Get you away and out
of my sight”

“There is no place here for infidels
and rascals”

“Take off your boorish head-crop
and be acceptable to God”

“You are an egoist, an atheist. Like
Mansoor, the heretic, you move about
calling, ‘I am God, I am God’.

You will meet his fate. Like him you
deserve the gallows.

Says Warris Shah: “Odour of *hing* does not go even
when you mix it with camphor.”

Ranjha to Mulla

**You are a Satan in the shape of a bearded
Sheikh. I was on my way and look at
the way you treat me!**

**You mount the minaret and pour over the
Quran—all to beguile the believers.**

**You differentiate between pure and
impure—we know all that
code of conduct dictates.**

**God is careless indeed who has
allowed you to enter irreligious
places—thank Him for that.**

**You copulate with donkeys, sheep
and slave-girls and spare not
married or virgins**

**Says Warris Shah: "In secluded corners they,
the Mullas, commit dirty acts and
plough deep in long stretches."**

To the River-bank

When sparrows start twittering and
Churners begin moving in the milk-pot
When youths who had had their fill
in the beds at night begin moving out
to wash and clean themselves
Ranjha leaves the Mosque and proceeds
towards the river-side
There he meets Luddan, the boatman
ready to take his load across the
sweet flowing waters.

Says Warris Shah: Luddan looked a real clown—
a veritable shopkeeper's pot
full to the brim with darkened honey.

Heer on Finding a Stranger in Her Bed

O you sleeping like one expired,

get you up; open your eyes

Could not you sleep at night?

Why have you dirtied my bed?

tell me.

Is your pulse beating?

Are you breathing?

Are you dead?

Gone to hell?

How dared you, fool, occupy my bed?

Do you know who the mistress is?

Get you away and be off

You spread your dirty legs

on newly washed bed—how could

you be that bold!

Get up quick, you big fool!

you nasty yokel!

Are you sick? insane? caught by spirits?

Struck by ghosts, witches or fiends?

:Says Warris Shah: Are you really asleep? Or, are

you a finished one, dead and gone for
good?

The Meeting

Repeatedly she applied her sharp stick
on Ranjha still in sound sleep

Getting up, in wonderment said he,
“What is all this, my sweet-heart ?”
Heer laughed and at once turned benevolent
Ranjha stuck his flute under his arm,
his locks flowing down his face

In this pose he shone bright like a full moon
Four eyes met in a ruthless skirmish
The scene was like Zulaikha standing
bewitched and aghast with her eyes
riveted at Yousaf’s visage

Crazy looks made way deep down
into her heart

Heer felt like making a sacrificial
plunge into Ranjha—her ideal.

“Well, scared I am”, she sighed in relief
“I could have done you real harm, but
God has been kind—real kind.”

Then Heer moved close and leaned on Ranjha.
It was like a sword going into the scabbard
Starved she felt for him and her eager
gaze floated avidly on the body and
the face of the peasant boy.
She felt sacrificed to him again and again

Says Warris Shah : “None can possibly take a breath
when two eyes meet the other two and
the four grapple in an unrelenting
wrestling bout.”

Ranjha Declares

If sweethearts like you get gratified,

I will tend herds in the pastures of your

Kajal drenched eyes, O my dear one.

I will act a slave to your eyes. This

one will play the slave and carry out

all orders that get issued by them.

Never will I flinch—O my dear one .

Heer

O No--it is I who will be your slave, not you.

All my mates of the spinning wheel

will carry out your biddings too

We will have an evergoing spring time

and life full of colour down in the woods.

It will be honey-sweet love-making all the time

How beautiful is my God ! In His Grace

He has made me meet my love

Be sure my darling boy, we are going

to have the best of time, day in and

day out.

We will play hide and seek in the cattle-

yards and high enclosures

God in His grace will surely help us.

Ranjha to Heer

You will be drawn by the girls of the
spinning wheel. You along with your
wheel will resort to them. . .my dear

When a homeless buffalo-boy comes
to your court-yard you will not look
at him. You will be away with your
friends and mates—

You will throw a crumb of
rotten bread to me to appease my
hunger and tell me to remove myself.
This is what you will do, my dear
This will be your practice, my dear

Don't you make me face the ordeal—
In that case I will not last my dear
Will you play a cheat to me ? No, my dear, no.
You will have to go the whole hog with
me-come you out with a truthful and firm
promise, my dear.

Heer

O my darling Ranjha,
By my father, I take this pledge :
I shall stand by you through
thick and thin.

Let my mother die if I turn my
face and let you down
Without you I will deem it sin to
touch a loaf of bread

I declare on Oath, I will not join
my eyes or body-parts with any
one other's than your alone.

Seated on the God of waters, I take
the oath let me be born a she-pig
if ever I break the rules and the
honoured ways of love.

I may turn leperous and die of the fell
disease if I seek any man other
than you—O my darling Ranjha.

Five Saints Appear

Uttering God's name Ranjha enters the

riverside grazing woods—O my worthy man

Fortune favoured the fellow at this juncture

Luck came to him—O my worthy man

When on his way came across the Five Elders (Saints)

They were in a generous mood—O my worthy man

“Dear son” they said, you will have

the best of food, milk and brown

buffalos—O my worthy man

Be in high spirits, never feel unhappy

or downcast—O my worthy man

Gift me some really dainty damsel, my

reverent sirs—you are saints of

God and you are omnipotent—

O my worthy man

Heer, we dedicate to you. Heer we give you

straight from God's own premises.

Remember to call us whenever you are in trouble—

we will not be late to come—O my worthy man.

Qaido, the lame

When Heer made for the river-bank
to fetch water, Qaido makes his
sinister appearance on the scene

“I am dying for want of eatable”, he begs
half weeping. “Give something for Allah’s sake”

Ranjha took out a handful of *churi**
and deposited it in his begging bowl

With that Qaido, the lame, races full-speed to the
village

Ranjha enquires from Heer, “Who be
this lame one ? To what place does
he belong ?”

Says Warris Shah : At this Heer went into jitters. Something
most unwanted had taken place and she
felt suddenly upset.

**Churi* : Buttered sweetened bread preparation.

Chuchak's Retort

Chuchak says, "Qaido, you are a straight liar.

Heer plays with her playmates. She swings
in the fields with her girl-friends
She participates in spinning competitions
like all girls do. This she does at home."

"You are a back-biter, a habitual
offender—a dirty pig, although with
a saint's cap on a dirty head."

"You prepare *bhang** with tribals, the
snake-charmers. Sometimes you
join in rapturous dance with
your female followers."

A *chuhra*'s* son cannot
turn into a *Sayyad* just as a horse
cannot be born of a sheep

Says Warris Shah : "The sons of Jats (Peasants),
shoe-makers and oil-men cannot
turn Faqirs (Renouncers of the world)

**Bhang* : an opiate drink

Chuhra : Scavenger

Sayyad : Muslim priestly class

Maliki, the Mother of Heer

(after the scandal spreads)

Maliki opens herself to Chuchak (Heer's father):

“People talk ill of Heer and we are

thorough sick with ugly aspersions

being thrown into our face

The villages and the collaterals make such

biting remarks ! They denounce us

and talk jeeringly and insultingly.

We stand lowered in the eyes of all

They say, “Look, how this chit of a girl

has brought shame to all the Syals.

She is entangled with just a grazier

lad of a low caste.

And just see, when I admonished

her about this raging scandal

She fell in a foul quarrel with me—

her mother!

How shamelessly she confronted me

and faced me squarely. What may

we do with such a dirty daughter ?

She may be either drowned deep in the

flowing waters. No doubt she is sinful

The cow-boy will have to be turned out

Let him be dispatched to hell

This is worse than dead-one (Heer) has brought

only humiliation and dishonour

Says Warris Shah : Although Chieftains of the area, **Heer**

has pushed me down into the drain.

After Dismissal

Ranjha flung his round-headed stick,
took off his blanket and made ready
to leave the cattle-yard—O my man

Thief-like, with a sleek step, bereft
of all his earnings, shamefacedly
he decided to go—O my man

Disgusted with the place and the area,
feeling heart-broken, he realized
that the weather had gone too hot
for him—O my man

‘Let your buffalos go to the thieves and
dacoits—why should I bother’
—O my man

‘I never wanted to turn into your
menial, only the girl insisted’
—O my man

‘For this your herd, I made mid-night
forays into quagmires and thorny
bushes and dark woods’—O my man

‘The buffalos, one and all, follow me
wherever I go—tell me which are
yours.’—O my man

‘You even do not pay my wages—you are a
miserly shopkeeper.’

Says Warris Shah : For full twelve years I have
slaved for you and your flock.

Heer Writes Back

Keeping it a closely guarded secret from

her father, Chuchak, Syal Heer writes back

to the wives of Ranjha's brothers :

“All is well here. Hope, it is the same with you too.

We pray to God for your well being”—the
way letters are written.

“All that you have written about Ranjha is

highly inappropriate. I keep him close to
my bosom ? like the sacred Quran.

Why are you after his life even now ? Let me

know. Why don't you keep off from him ?

We all love him here and he is so fond

of all of us. We go to the singing parties

together. In the spinning groups we sing

in chorus his songs.

He goes to the grazing pastures. This is his

daily routine. He returns at sunset.

At night he goes into meditation

Says Warris Shah : “In this he is a friend of mine.”

Problem with the Herd

The buffalos refused to eat and take their food

They will not graze either

Without Ranjha they would rather starve
and die.

Some got lost straying in the jungle—

some others were eaten up by lions and
tigers.

The Syal youths tried their hardest,
using sticks and other appliances
to keep the herd in-tact but to
no avail.

Says Warris Shah : Chuchak felt sad and sorry
and regretted his decision. The
cattle were out of control.

Ranjha to Heer

“Now your mother is again after me
since last night. She pleads for return”

“O my dear man,” says Heer “say ‘yes’
at once. After all she happens to be the
dear mother of your darling Heer.”

Again she said, “Should we run away
or stick to home ? For it will be long
to get ourselves married—as I see.”

Says Warris Shah : “In the commerce of love,
there has never been an earning—not a
pie.”

Brothers of Chuchak Said . . .

**“Ranjhas were never considered equal
to us, the Syals, and worthy of matrimonial
relationship with us. We cannot give our
Syal daughters to them. They are inferior
as you know.**

**Here is a homeless brat serving as
a grazing boy—a vagrant Ranjha—no,
it is impossible**

**Kheras are all right. Let us have
them instead. They are of proper status.
They are respectable, men of means, owner
of lands.**

**We, the gentlemen, should go for gentlemen
alone. This has been the practice
always.”**

**Says Warris Shah : The coal was already red hot.
Someone secretly put the explosive
on it.**

Heer Reacts

O my mother dear, please do not call
him names. It is sinful and
blasphemous. Therefore, you will
please stop.

Love you cannot root out—it
is the gift of God. It is sinful to
kill one's daughters.

You take this 'mourner-of-brothers'
away to a place where intense torture
be her lot.

Says Warris Shah : I will not turn from Ranjheta even
if my father's father's father bids me
to do so.

Girlfriends Come to Heer

Then all of them came to Heer and said to her :

“Your dear one, Ranjha, has caused us to come
to you and we have come

He has thrown away the driving staff, the flute,
the blanket and is about to leave
for some unknown place

Now, please do not let him down. He will
not survive. This is definite. And the
sin will be upon your head alone
and *on none else.*”

Heer Protests

Heer tells her mother in anger :

“You have settled my marriage forcibly
against my will

Did I ever ask for a man from
your people ?

For what particular reason, let me
know, you have taken this dire
revenge ?

You are proceeding stealthily against
me. This is not fair, mother
dear

Only those who are without brains
would fix a high-dome brick
into a drain

An eagle has been made to snatch a
delicate *koonj*. The owl has
pounced upon a lark—this is
what you have done, my mother dear

Says Warris Shah : “This world is like a sugarcane.
Let it be relished piece by piece.”

Ranjha Writes to Bhabhis

Life-moments gone by do not return
Fortunes lost do not stage a come back
The word once out will not be put back
into the mouth

The arrow released will never be
back into the bow.

Soul once left will not re-enter
the dead body

Life has deserted me and I am a
living corpse.

Only if nature alters its course
will Ranjha return to you

Says Warris Shah : Who really wants me back ? None.
Brothers and Bhabhis, you are
only playing tricks and pranks
I will not be fooled.

The Guru's Benediction

Nath (The Guru) opened his eyes and spoke to
Ranjha

“Now listen, my son, your work is done
The plant you sowed in God's domain
has come to fruition

True God has granted Heer to you
The pearl and jewel have been strung
together

Go you quick, triumph over Khoras
awaits you.

O my dear son, you have met a
Good Omen”

The depression got dispelled and neo-yogi
braced himself and made ready to move

“Now give me the pleasure of bidding
goodbye”—with hands folded
he made the request and took leave

Says Warris Shah : Nath saw him going down
the steps. Then he broke into high speed.

Sehti to Yogi Ranjha

Says Sehti (Sister of Heer's husband, Saida
Khera) : Come out with the truth, O
you, dressed in saintly attire

You are in search of something lost—
your eyes speak out

You are passing queer remarks. You started
on this course with your first step in my
courtyard. You are a strange one.

You look like a thief in the royal
garden, bent upon plucking
the blooming rose.

Says Warris Shah : You are a bridleless camel.
Some one will definitely break your
lusty face with a solid stick.

Heer to Yogi

Heer said : O *yogi*, you are speaking lies
None there is who will bring together the
separated lovers

I have made frantic search. There is
none who would bring back the one who is far away

O *yogi*—the one who will do it, I
will offer him my body-skin to be turned
into his shoes.

Please, please, let me know if God is
compassionate to make two loving souls combine
as one—the ones who are fallen apart.

Who, let me know, will dissolve the
distance and remove the mountains lying in the way ?

People talk of such things only to
beguile persons like us. Otherwise
the dead and gone do never meet.

A crow has robbed a *koonj* from a royal
falcon. Who can say
if he is weeping, shrieking or
keeping mum :

The peasant's field is set on fire-
who can say as to when he will
come to put down the flames

Says Warris Shah : Butter-oil lamps I will lighten
and distribute *churi* in glee
if I get the news that he is coming
my way.

Ranjha

Smoking and smouldering within,
sobbing and breathing hot and cold,
uttered he :

“O God, you put us together and
then caused our separation
How cruel of you!

My ship had touched the shore
and was safe, you made it sink—
How cruel of you !

What unpardonable sin there
was that we committed?
You chose to withdraw the grace
you bestowed upon us once !

Says Warris Shah : “Why did you give up high thinking,
meditation and worship ?
O, why have you handed over your
heart to Satan ?
I put this question.”

Girls at Rangpur

Said the girl, "No, no, do not hit me please
O *yogi*. Don't you apply the supporting
staff you carry. I will get finished—
O my ravishingly handsome one.

In case you apply the staff I will die,
you have got to keep me alive—
O my ravishingly handsome one

When the angel of death is at your door-
steps, you will not escape. He will
not leave without taking your life

You are a grandiose giant and I am
so delicately built ! Just a leg-shot
and I will expire

But you let me know what is that
special thing you seek and I will
carry your message—
O my ravishingly handsome one

Your girl-friend is related to me. She is
my senior aunt and here everyone knows all
about the affair. I will go and speak out my
heart to Heer—
O my ravishingly handsome one.

Says Warris Shah : Do tell me what may I say to
her. You know the exact position.

Ranjha's Message to Heer

Fetch me Heer. I want to look at her
resplendent face—O my beloved, I beseech you

Lift your veil and show your eyes and cheeks,
this submission Ranjha makes—please go
and convey to her—O my beloved, I
beseech you

Be you merciful and appear before .
separation-stricken Ranjha—
O my beloved, I beseech you

Your forelocks have coiled round
my neck and throat and will
strangulate me,
O my beloved, I beseech you

I desire you and have lost my peace
O my beloved, I beseech you

O, you inflictor of disasters, keep them
off from me—O my beloved, I beseech you

There is a pleading scarf around his neck and
grass in his mouth—forgive him and agree with him.
—O my beloved, I beseech you.

Says Warris Shah : “I have been a
regular sinner. Forgive
me, my lord, O my beloved, I beseech
you.”

Girls to Heer after Her Honeymoon Night

The *champa* garlands of your beauty
some gallant one has looted.

Your sound firm breasts stand brutally
molested

Your scented hillocks are stretched,
it seems clear

The hidden points and places you kept under
cover stand pierced and pricked
by some marksman, no doubt—

Some one crushed you underneath and
pressed his breast against yours,
and rose-buds lying in-between.

Says Warris Shah : Tell us, who was the decanter who
drove into you so hard that the scent
is out and the rest is thrown away ?

Heer at the Sight of Ranjha

I am struck, cut and murdered within

I am under a magic spell

I have gone limp and do not want to work

Have I crossed some charmed plant?

Or, have I been struck by the glimmering
glance of my cheat ?

This red suit of Kheras that I put on burns me
like a burst of fire

O, how I remember now my one friend
for whom the whole world blames me
and points accusing fingers to me.

My bra is getting loose. Some one holds
my warmed body in his tight masculine embrace

The river of my youth is in high flood
Foam has gathered on the whirling waters

Says Warris Shah : No one should speak a word to
me. I do not like being disturbed.
None should come, I like no one.

In-laws of Heer Speak Out

We brought her here duly married

She feels as if caught in a snare.

When we ask her to do the right thing
she flares up

She is at loggerheads with her husband

She is downcast since when she entered
our household—sad and
crestfallen she remains.

Lying on bed or seated straight she is off her spirits

She keeps a swollen face. Since
yesterday her condition has worsened.

Homes go gay and robust

When daughters-in-law arrive but
with us the case is otherwise.

There is gloom in the rooms, verandahs
and outside.

Says Warris Shah : She keeps hungry, does not take
food, milk or anything. She is losing her
health day by day.

Girls in Praise of Ranjha's Love

Our single love plays tricks in hundreds
and thousands

Dear friends, a true lover will never be
in repose, will never feel gratified

But he or she, if honest, will never make
shifts, whatever the temptation

Such love turns kings into beggars.

Such is Ranjha's love. He will not
look at any one of us, the choicest
virgins

We are nobodies in comparison

Heer is, in fact, not the only one to fall
in love, the entire world is
deeply engrossed.

Love has carried Sohnie across
flooded rivers and down deep into
unfathomable depths.

Love put Mirza in hell-fire and
got him consumed in barren
wastes.

Love made Sassi part of the desolate
scorching deserts, never to be recovered.

Says Warris Shah : This world has tortuous
ways—strange, indeed very strange
Love has stranger flags that keep
fluttering high in the Heavens.

The Last News

He made enquiries about Ranjha
and his living place

Entering, he delivered the letter he carried,
his eyes streaming profusely

He said, "Ranjha, you have been knocked
off the throne of life. Fortune
has taken a drastic turn

Your estate has been looted by cruel
brigand hands

And none could come to your rescue !
A day and a night before Heer
breathed her last

But only to-day the Syals sent me to
you with the news."

Says Warris Shah : The sad one I carry is nothing
but truth. This has happened. You will
not disbelieve me please.

Completion Note

The book was completed in the year
eleven hundred eighty Hijri

The Bikrami Calender-year was 1882
These were the stormy years when Jats (tillers)
of the land turned rulers and new
Governments came to be formed
from house to house

The elite were in bad shape and the have-nots
turned into haves. The peasants and
tenants rejoiced, thieves became
barons and the corrupt and
debased were then worshipful

The demonic and the evil ones had gathered
strength. They were at the top.

Says Warris Shah : "Those who recite the holy
Quran will have an easy passage
into life beyond death."

Place of Composition

Kharl Hans Malikan is the celebrated
place where these lines came to be
composed.

Friends asked me to re-write the love-story
of Heer and I carried out their behest.

Worthy poets will kindly appraise and
evaluate the lines. I have made a
wide display of my racing horse
for all to see and judge

Let the youth of the country relish my
verses and get abundant pleasure

Heer is a flower for those who would
like to smell and feel good.

Says Warris Shah : "There is no stock with me of
practicable goodness. This humble one
lacks all that could make him feel
proud."



