

The Shrine of Waris Shah: A Symbol of Punjabi Heritage and Poetry

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Abstract:

This study focuses on the Sufi poet Sayyad Waris Shah and his famous legend, Hir. It examines the architectural details and decorative elements of his tomb, highlighting their significance. Waris Shah's poetry is analyzed in the context of social norms and issues of his time, such as politics, religion and their effects on daily life. The research positions Waris Shah as a critical voice against social norms and an influential literary figure whose works continue to resonate in modern society. His literature is uncovered to have a significant impact on the community, reflecting the struggles and aspirations of the common people. The architectural details and decorations of Waris Shah's tomb are examined, highlighting the significance of the site as a place of homage. This essay relies on both primary and secondary sources for references and is qualitative in nature, based on observations and statements. The collected evidence aims to provide valuable information for future researchers.

Keywords: Waris Shah, Sufi Poet, Hir Ranjha, Architecture, Punjabi, Tomb

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Introduction:

The eighteenth-century Sufi poet Waris Shah is renowned for his Punjabi poetry. He is also called the Shakespeare of Punjabi language (Shaheen). The poetry of Waris Shah is recognized as a great contribution in Punjabi literature. The impact of his literary effort on modern times is discussed. It has been more than two hundred and fifty years that his poems still captivate to listeners or readers. The research focuses the architectural elements and decorations. It documented and analyzed the details of architecture. The map of the tomb is not found. However, the map from the www.pakistaniat.com is quite similar to the map on google map website. The architectural references are documented and photographed as much as possible. Hir Waris Shah is a popular love folklore in Punjab. It is still common among the literary circles of Punjabi literature. The legend of Hir was borrowed by Waris Shah and restructured according to his subjective requirements. The fact about the legend Hir versus

the true-life story is also discussed in detail. The biography of Waris Shah is examined. There are no reliable evidences about his date of birth, father's and mother's name. The poetry is extended with the passage of time for commercial reasons. Due to these unfair additions, the book 'Hir Waris Shah' by Muhammad Sharif Sabir is considered more authentic to reach to the truth. The stanzas of Hir are taken from Muhammad Sharif Sabir's book 'Hir Waris Shah' as reference.

The influence of Waris Shah's Hir on modern society is the critical are. The dating system is followed as BCE for BC and AD or CE is not used for Common Era. Turabian style is followed for referencing. The photographs are treated by software Adobe Photoshop. All pictures are taken by the author unless otherwise mentioned.

Waris Shah's Biography:

The assured date stated by the historians is the compilation date of Hir Waris Shah in 1766 as mentioned in his book's concluding stanza. Thus, he was few decades younger than Bulleh Shah and Shah Abd al-Latif Bhitai. He was before Sachal Sarmast, Mir Taqi Mir and Khuwaja Mir Dard (Ejaz). (Born in Jandyala Sher Khan, Sheikhpura forty-kilometers from Lahore. Till 1960, the poor condition of his grave describes that he belonged to a poor family. His wanderings towards Pakpattan and stay at Malka Hans's Mosque shows that his family was not supporting the unemployed poet (Hashmi))

Waris Shah was son of Sayyad Gulsher Shah. Most of the historians agree on 1722 his year of birth and 1798 the year of his death. He was student of Baba Makhdum. During Waris Shah's period, Punjab was under attack by Ahmad Shah, Nadir Shah, and Sikh were

emerging as a native force. Under these circumstances Waris Shah wrote the epic of Hir at Malka Hans Mosque in a village district of Sahiwal, Muḥallah Uchcha Tibbah. later on, this epic became popular 'Ibid.' Waris Shah had indicated about his country in his Hir. He is buried in Jandyala Sher Khan (Ejaz)

In 1972 'Maqamat-I Waris' by professor Ali Abbasi Jalalpuri only describes the height of knowledge and the craftsmanship of Waris Shah. In 1981 Mrs 'Uzra Waqqar had written Waris Shah Aihd awr Sha ri'at. This book discusses about Waris Shah's poetry and time only (Hashmi 15). (In 1978 a research publication by professor Hamid Allah Hashmi combined the all researches of the time. He also repeatedly stated about not finding any considerable information about this famous poet. (Ejaz) (Waris Shah's family conditions are unclear. The only thing known is that he was Sayyad of his nation.

Some of the writers say Sayyad Quṭab Shah was his father, which cannot be proved. Same is the case with the rumour that he had a daughter and had no son (Ejaz). (Sayyad sabṭ al-Ḥasan Ṣaigham's research say that Waris Shah's father name was Sayyad Gul Sher Shah. The family tree of Waris Shah is safe with his brother Qasim Shah's nephew Sayyad Qadir Shah's family at district Sheikhpura. Waris

Shah studied both mysticism and formal education of the period. Ḥafīẓ Ghulam Murtaḍa was acknowledged as teacher by Waris Shah. He went to Baba Farid Shakar Ganj's shrine in Pakpattan and submitted himself to his successor Makhdum Jahaniyaṅ. He taught him Tasawuf the concept of Chishti order (Hashmi 19).

Waris Shah's Migration

A famous Punjabi poet Tanwir Bukhari in his research written in "Panjdarya" states about Jandy ala Sher Khan. In the beginning Jandyala was unpopulated. The Jand] Prosopis cineraria is a type of flowering tree that belongs to the pea family. The tree is famous for its spiritual uses as many cultures value it for its significance in rituals and beliefs (Shambhu Vyas). [(This tree was everywhere and due to this it was termed Jandan wala later Jandyala village. Then on behalf of its pioneer Sher Khan, it was named Jandyala Sher Khan. Sher Khan was a Ghazni Pathan and he founded this village in 1556. It was the period of Mughal emperor Akbar (Shareef Kunjahi 42). Due to the findings of the Jand many villages were named Jandyala. The tree is found in less rain regions of Punjab.

Jandyala is situated near the highway going through Sheikhpura towards Lahore. At that time Lahore was the way to reach to Qasur. According to Dr Muhan Singh Diwana Waris Shah went through Lahore on foot due to his financial conditions. Lahore

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city was not Waris Shah's destination 'Ibid, 51.' Dr Muhan Singh Diwana had developed some disliking for Waris stated in his book History of Punjabi literature 1932) Waris Shah evaluated in Punjabi, Urdu and English. (



Figure 1. Waris Shah's Home in Jandyala Sher Khan

Source: Book by Hammid Ullah Shah Hashmi. Sayyad Waris Shah, 1978



Figure 2. Mosque Malkah Hans

Source: Book by Hammid Ullah Shah Hashmi. Sayyad Waris Shah, 1978

After departure from Qasur, there are no clues about Waris Shah's migrations. There is a word of mouth that he went to Pakpatan. Here he fell in love with a woman called Bhag Bhari. He started living in a small mosque. The love story spread in the village. Bhag Bhari's relatives beaten him and thrown him out of the village. This separation provoked him to write Hir. Muhan Singh Diwana does not agree with this love story. (Shareef Kunjahi 91-92)

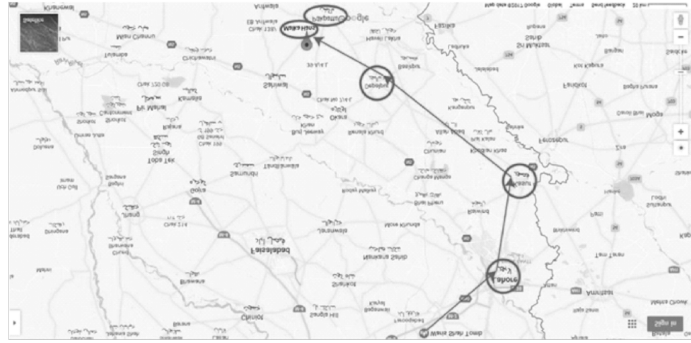


Figure 3. Migrations of Waris Shah

Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Malka+Hans>

The research of Talib Bukhari on Waris Shah's life is different from all the previous researches. It is presented in Punjab University for PhD. According to him, Waris Shah was also knowledgeable in Punjabi, Persian, Arabi, Hindi, Bhakha, Sanskrit, Balochi, Pashto, Sindhi and Chinese. He was also fond of fine arts. He travelled nationally and internationally like Delhi, Bombay, Agrah, Madras, Calcutta, Sindh, Sarhad, Baluchistan, China, Kashmir, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, Saudi Arab and Roam etc. he performed Haj and visited the shrines of Ahal-i Bait. He also saw the sculpture of Cleopatra in Paris. He also made a model of Taj Mahal and Cleopatra in clay. These master pieces were stamped by his uncle Sayyad Salamat Shah. Both of these pieces were installed in temple and mosque 'Ibid, 172-173.'

Reality of Hir Folklore

The beginning of Hir legend is not fascinating like the end is terrible. The story starts when Ranjha was employed as shepherd by Hir's father. He fell in love with Hir because of her beauty. The village principles were not against free meetings. There were no obstacles in their way. Later Hir's parents got aware of the affair and engaged Hir to Muḍa Rang Pur.

Ranjha was not a holy man who followed social values. He was an ordinary shepherd. He went to Hir's in laws and took Hir with him. Hir's in laws chased and finally caught both of them. Hir was rescued and poisoned. Ranjha died too due to the news that Hir is no more. The dates and history of Hir's legend is difficult to find. Before Waris Shah this love story influenced the people. It was completed by Sayyad Ṣaḥib in 1180 Hijra. This proves that the legend of Hir was popular in Punjab before Waris Shah. Afterwards, many Punjabi poets written Hir but Waris Shah's got popularity 'Ibid, 99-100.'

The study of Hir portrays the Punjabi society of his period. Aristotle said Art compensates the deficiencies found in nature. So, poetry and literature fill colours in history.

Waris Shah's portrayed the Punjabi society in a literary way to compensate the shortfalls

made by the historians 'Ibid, 130-131.' Dipal Pur comes between Malkah Hans and Qasur. So, it might be possible that Waris Shah stayed there for some period. As he completed his story for Hir in Malkah Hans, it can be assumed that he came here by passing through Depal Pur. Malkah Hans was settled during the reign of Shah Jahan. It is associated to a person named Malik Muhammad. He belonged to Hans nation 'Ibid, 163.'

In 1764 Muhammad Azim occupied the surroundings of

Malkah Hans. During these days Waris Shah arrived there. Within two years Bhangi Sikh leaders evicted Muhammad Azim as they attacked on Multan ‘Ibid, 163-164.’ Afterwards Muhammad Hayat ruled over Malkah Hans. It is assumed that Waris Shah might disliked Hayat’s to fight against Pakpatan. The old village is called Uchcha Tibba where the Waris Shah Mosque is located. This mosque was built during Tughlaq period in 1339. There are no records about who has built this mosque. It might be possible that during Aurangzib’s reign, it was built by Shikh Qutab. This is the place where the story of Bhag Bhari emerged ‘Ibid, 164-167.’

Before the arrival of Baba Farid Shakar Ganj, Pakpatan was named Ajhodan later Patan both means passage. This place links the highways of Dira Ghazi Khan and Dira Ismail Khan. Mahmud Ghaznavi, Timur and famous tourist Ibn-i Batuta had travelled through this location. During Akbar’s period word Pak is added with Patan ‘Ibid, 167-168.’ The story of Hir travelled from Daimudar to Waris Shah and is dissimilar in story events and characters.

Daimudar wrote the legend after one hundred years and Waris Shah had written after three hundred years. Both versions are based on personal imagination ‘Ibid, 173.’

Hir by Waris Shah is not only a love story. It was not made to entertain people however to convey his message effectively for the society. It is important to know the circumstances, environment and period of the poet to analyze. It is essential to know about the era of Waris Shah to enjoy his poetry. His story of Hir makes one to visualize the situations of Punjab. Thus, Hir is a mirror to see political, social and religious states of the 18th century Punjab. The writer who truly portrays the society in front of the world is considered great and honest. Waris Shah’s literature provides evidences of the downfall of social and political situations (Hashmi 20)

Literary Criticism on Waris Shah

The collapse of economy and ideology had developed an opportunity for the thinkers to formulate the rational dialogue. Bulleh Shah properly recognized the ills and evils of the social system. The Punjabi literature, Sindhi and Urdu of the eighteenth century evolved as a revolt against this context. Waris Shah took further this concept from Bulleh Shah (Ejaz). (The literary critics called Waris Shah an epic writer rather than Poetic philosopher traditionally associated with Baba Farid to Bulleh Shah. Waris Shah took the thinking approach to next level. Which is confusedly associated with the Şufi traditions. Before Waris Shah many writers wrote poems as a philosophical dialogue. The intentions of Waris Shah seem to portray the conflict between the guardians of religion and their challengers. The selection of Hir epic and its characters presents this dilemma. Waris Shah wrote Hir's new version as he was aware of the epic written by Daimudar Das which was equally if not better than his version. The Hir by Waris Shah is not narrative of the story nonetheless a medium of philosophical debate. He focuses on the core conflict in the society. For instance, when Ranjha's father died his brothers quarrel with him. Here Waris Shah criticizes the ideology and concept of the world 'Ibid.'

Waris Shah's verse has not use the word Şufi or Ahl-i Ȧariqat as opponent to the followers of Shariat. Hir Ranjha was popularized as anti-establishment symbol by Shah Hussain and Bulleh Shah. Waris Shah had also chosen the epic story for the same purpose. To promote the philosophy of unity known as Waḥdat al-Wujud or Advaita Vedanta [refers to a school of thought in philosophy known as non-dualism. The concept teaches that there is only one ultimate reality and also characterized by diversity or multiplicity] [Buitenen. (Though Waris Shah's Hir portrays clear characters of the guardians of

Shariat and ruling elites as compare to his predecessors. He unambiguously exposed the class and caste system of the society which had made living a tiresome tussle against right living. He energized the epic of Hir Ranjha as a rebellion couple against class system of the people. Philosophically, Waris Shah paved the foundations of institutional inter-dependence and relationships. For example, starting with the institution of family and property he goes towards the religion, trading judiciary and feudal class and eventually the state. (Ejaz)

Sayyad Najam Hussain in his 'Recurrent Patterns of Punjabi Poetry' states that Waris Shah viewed the society from outside as glamorous and at the same time terrible from within. He criticized how greed, bribery, narrow mindedness and corruption are widespread in Takht Hazara. The social issues and their manifestation are cruel 'Ibid.' Another important aspect which distinguishes Waris Shah's writing from previous versions is his use of Persian and Arabic words. Thus, readers from all kinds can enjoy his poetry. Ghalib and Waris both used Persian language. The common strength of both writers is their ideas which make them famous poet-thinkers of respective languages 'Ibid.'

Waris Shah identifies institution for critique. He marinated institutions through Ranjha and his life's journey. Ranjha's brothers were jealous because his father loved him the most.

When his father died, his brothers bribed jury to get even with him. By cheating and taunting him to marry Hir, they provoked him to leave village. Thus, Waris Shah relates this to class and social relations. Ranjha travels and reached to the mosque and plays flute. Here Waris Shah presents Mullah as hypocrite and sodomizer. Ranjha goes to river Chanab to cross over to go to Jhang. The boat owner Luddan trade only for money. Luddan two wives fall in love by

Ranjha's charm. The fear to lose wives pursued Luddan to take Ranjha across the river.

Ranjha takes up buffalo herder's job at Hir's father, who was chief of the Siyal tribe. When the love affair of Hir Ranjha became talk of the town, Hir's lame uncle Qaidaw fired Ranjha from his duties. Waris Shah shows exploitation of working class by hypocritical and greedy feudalist. He portrays feudal can sacrifice his honour for economic interest. He indicted Jatts for their negative character. The institution of Jog establishes the intellectual level of thought not a random Jogi. Ranjha takes away Hir and caught by Khaira's. Ranjha was brought in the king's court before Qazi. Ranjha was blamed and a miracle sets him free. Waris Shah exposes the justice system under feudal states. Eventually Siyal poisoned Hir and Ranjha died on hearing the news. Waris Shah is the first Hir writer who plotted the end of Hir Ranjha as tragedy. He gave the opinion that society cannot tolerate such couple 'Ibid.'

Architectural Characteristics of the Tomb

The tomb of famous Sufi poet Sayyad Waris Shah is situated at Jandiyala Sher Khan the birth place of the poet. It is fourteen-kilometer northwest of Sheikhupura at the intersection of Waniky and Churkana roads. He is buried here in the graveyard in a humble tomb. Annually thousands of his devotees visit and pay tribute to him. In 1975 the Punjab government agreed to build his mausoleum complex (Alvi). Waris Shah Mausoleum Committee was founded in 1975 for the construction of the tomb. The architect Abd al-Rashid Ghuman designed the tomb. The tomb is located at Kasha Road. It consists of 83x83 meter graveyard with one side for open air theatre and other side of road. The octagonal mausoleum is domed and housed within rectangular pavilion with 24x24 meter elevated platform 'Ibid.'

All four sides of the tomb have approach to the main grave with decorated. The square shaped garden is enclosed with brick walls. The façades walls surrounding the garden of the tomb, are decorated with panels and Tudor arches in terracotta lattice or Jali work. The walls of rectangular pavilion are decorated with molded brick design and arches. The rectangular panels in white tiles painted with blue-coloured decorative motives. It is applied on both friezes and piers on the wall. Five arches in each wall are around the octagonal mausoleum are composed for multiple entrances. The Eight walls around the grave are embellished with terracotta lattice arches and engraved marble slabs on top. The verses are selected from Waris Shah's famous poems. On each slab only one verse is engraved. The frieze around octagonal wall is decorated with molded bricks. The grave of Waris Shah is in the middle of his father Gul Sher Shah's grave and his brother Qasim Shah's grave. The ceiling of the dome is decorated with mirror-work decaying rapidly. Allah Hu recital, flowers, stars with arabesque and geometric motives are repeatedly composed on the ceiling of the dome. A chandelier of glass is also added to enhance the interior decoration. The squinches are decorated with mirror-work of ordinary geometric motifs. The 99 names of Allah with black colour are written on white tiles and it is in circular sequence connecting dome with squinches. The 99 names of Prophet PBUH are written below the squinches in octagonal sequence. Ya Waris is written in the central space between the squinches.

The library is situated in the centre of the southern wall around the tomb. Library has not developed yet and has no records or documents related to Waris Shah. The space for prayers is located in the centre of western wall around the tomb. The main northern entrance is built in the centre of the boundary wall. The entrance also has shops at the front side on both sides of the wings. The eastern

wall enclosures are used for the pilgrims who stays. On the eastern side of the tomb four graves of other family members are placed. An Iron stand is placed in front of the graves for Vow Diya (small lamps) People lit up lamps with butter instead of oil for the accomplishment of their vows.

Road is built on all four sides to facilitate the people to reach to the entrance point.

The construction of the tomb was completed in 1978. Though it was built in late 20th century, it has features borrowed from Mughal style of constructions at Lahore. The layout of walled garden is similar as that of Shalamar Garden in Lahore. The wall corridors are similar to Badshahi Mosque Lahore. The dual walkways, rectangular elevated platform with steps towards main pavilion resembles with Jahangir, Nūr Jahan and Asif Khan tombs. Red brick and white plaster are used as major construction material. The use of white and blue tiles is borrowed from pre-Mughal Tughlaq styles in Multan. Over all assemble is proportionate and symmetrical(see figure 4–14)



Figure 4. View of the northern wall around the tomb has main entrance in midpoint Source: Photograph May 6,2023



Figure 5. View of the eastern wall around the tomb Source:
Photograph May 6, 2023



Figure 6. Eastern entrance of the tomb in midway Source:
Photograph May 6, 2023



Figure 7. Details of terracotta lattice or jāli work on the façade of the eastern walls Source: Photograph May 6, 2023



Figure 8. View of the southern wall around the tomb



Figure 9. Western wall around the tomb Source:
Photograph May 6, 2023



Figure 10. The tomb of Waris Shah



Figure 11. Decoration details around the tomb Source:
Photograph May 6, 2023



Figure 12. Decoration details of white tiles of pavilion around the
tomb Source: Photograph May 6, 2023



Figure 13. Decoration details around the elevated platform of the tomb
Source: Photograph May 6, 2023



Figure 14. Octagonal walls around the tomb Source:
Photograph May 6, 2023



Figure 15. Details of the frieze decoration on octagonal walls Source:
Photograph May 6, 2023



Figure 16. Mirrorwork inside the dome and squinches of the tomb



Figure 17. Traveller's compartments of the tomb Source:
Photograph May 6, 2023

Conclusion

Waris Shah's Punjabi literature serves as a lens to see the 18th century Punjab. Waris Shah stressed upon human values and rights by restructuring Hir Ranjha through poetic plot.

Most of the people in Punjab are engrossed with class system and caste system. By analysis of poetry and the architectural features of Waris Shah's tomb, the research reveals the influence of the poet on Punjabi literature and society. His poetry addresses important social issues of his time, including politics and religion, reflecting the struggles of ordinary people. The details of architectural elements on his tomb pays tribute to his legacy and remembrance in cultural heritage. The colour schemes applied on architecture appears local and seems away from the 18th century architectural characteristics once existed in Punjab. The space to accommodate the visitors is capacious and well planned. The tile work on the exterior walls around the grave is roughly executed in terms of painting and finishing. There is lack of harmony between the elements of architecture and the decoration on the tomb. The main entrance arch to the grave on the octagonal wall is in neglected condition. The interior decoration themes applied on the ceiling and squinches of the dome are locally produced and show lack of skills of in appearance. The library is not functional and carries no records or books for readers or researchers. Through qualitative analysis of various sources, this research provides valuable insights into Waris Shah's life and work, which continue to resonate with modern audiences and followers.

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