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**Once Upon a Time in the Land of Five Rivers:
A Comparative Analysis of Translated Punjabi Folk Tale Editions, from
Flora Annie Steel's Colonial Collection to Shafi Aqeel's Post-Partition
Collection and Beyond**

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Abstract

This thesis offers a critical analysis of two different collections of Punjabi folk tales which were collected at different moments in Punjab's history: *Tales of the Punjab* (1894), collected by Flora Annie Steel and, *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab* (2008) collected by Shafi Aqeel and translated from Urdu into English by Ahmad Bashir. The study claims that the changes evident in collections of Punjabi folk tales published in the last hundred years reveal the different social, political and ideological assumptions of the collectors, translators and the audiences for whom they were disseminated.

Each of these collections have one prior edition that differs in important ways from the later one. Steel's edition was first published during the late-colonial era in India as *Wide-awake Stories* in 1884 and consisted of tales that she translated from Punjabi into English. Aqeel's first edition was collected shortly after the partition of India and Pakistan, as *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan* in 1963 and consisted of tales he translated from Punjabi into Urdu. Taking as my starting point the extensive (often feminist) scholarship on the ideological functions of folk lore and tale-telling, I explore the assumptions affirmed or challenged in these collections. My particular focus is on the differences between Steel's late nineteenth-century, female-edited, Western/colonial Indian collection and Aqeel's post-partition, 'native,' male-edited, Islam-inflected Pakistani collection, keeping in mind the collectors' sociohistorical and political backgrounds along with differences in their implied audiences.

The first chapter considers the history of and motivations for folklore collection in nineteenth-century British India and the colonial folklorists who were involved in this activity, especially in the Punjab. The second chapter offers a discussion of Flora Annie Steel's biographical background and her various writings in order to suggest how her position as a (ostensibly) feminist colonial Memsahib, along with the editorial supervision of Richard

C. Temple, may have influenced her collection and translation of Punjabi tales. The chapter also discusses how, at the time, female collectors like Steel relied on the authority of men to secure the validity of their work, needing a male scholarly stamp of approval. The third chapter discusses the life and works of Shafi Aqeel and the differences between the two editions of the collection (one published in Urdu in 1963, the other in English almost fifty years later in 2008). My own translation of the Urdu version illuminates the extent to which the English translator of *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*, Ahmad Bashir, added yet another level of appropriation to what were originally oral tales from the Punjabi region. Chapter Four provides a comparative analysis of selected tales from each collection focusing on the differences evident between similar tales that appear in each collection and discusses the reasons behind the changes introduced. Building on this, my concluding chapter, makes claims about what is distinctive about each version of the tale and collection, and offers possible reasons for their differences. As a supplement to the thesis I have included my own translations of selected tales from Aqeel's Urdu edition as an Appendix, along with a note detailing the principles followed in the preparation of these translations. I have also appended two scanned versions of one tale from Aqeel's Urdu edition and its English version, my own translation of which is already in the appendix.

Through the analysis of the historical, social, political, and authorial background of the collections, and the analysis of the prefaces and notes to these, my study concludes that each collector (and/or translator) has imposed their own particular set of assumptions and values on the tales they have chosen to collect. The differences I observe between the collections and editions are often subtle but sometimes startling. These differences, I argue, can be attributed to the historical moment in which they were collected/published, and the ideological/political persuasion of the collectors and their anticipation of readers' expectations. Differences between the editions not only prove revealing about the workings

of folktales but also about how the collection of these might reflect cultural and social shifts and understandings, particularly in the Punjab region of Pakistan.

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Introduction

Once Upon a Time in the Land of Five Rivers

In Pakistani Punjabi culture, oral storytelling occupied a special place until very recently because electronic media had not yet entered the lives of its people. Also, the joint family system, in which extended family members lived together, was very common. However, nowadays Pakistani/Punjabi families are more nuclear and family gatherings are less frequent. Before the emergence of electronic and social media, wherever people gathered, a popular pastime was to share personal experiences with the group, be it friends or family, by telling inherited, adapted or newly-minted stories. I remember as a child I loved going to my family gatherings, because once all the activities of the day were finished—Eid festivities or a wedding—it was time for everyone to come together in a living room or around a fireplace (if it was winter), and the hosts, mostly women of the family, would make and serve tea for everyone in the party. And then the storytelling session began. The stories ranged from personal experiences to fictions. Most popular among children were the ones about supernatural beings or experiences of paranormal activity: jinns, fairies, witches and talking animals. In summer, the story-telling session moved outside in the open yard, where charpoy (wooden, moveable lightweight beds) were lined in front of pedestal fans, and people found spots wherever they could. Then one or another child would ask someone known for their mastery of telling stories to tell some interesting tale. Sometimes we knew the tale already, but would ask the storyteller to tell us that story again. It never failed to entertain us. Now, when I think back, I realise it was the way they told the stories—the performance—that made the story interesting every time.

I am a Pakistani Muslim woman from the Punjab region, and while I recognise the biases this might bring to my research, I believe that my gendered, geographically and

historically situated position provides me with a valuable perspective on the ways that Punjabi oral folklore has been collected, translated, rendered in print and disseminated since the late colonial era. As a child I was oblivious to what I now recognise as the cultural and ideological work folk tale telling often involves — and the impacts of the “fossilisation” of tales once they are fixed in print. However, my studies, first in Pakistan and now in New Zealand, have encouraged me to think carefully about such issues.

My study seeks to explore the changes introduced in published Punjabi folk tales over the last hundred years, and the relationship of these changes to the different social, political, and ideological assumptions of the collectors, translators, and the audiences for whom the tales were intended. The choices made by the collectors, translators and editors of Punjabi folk tales are a product of their sociohistorical, geographical, cultural and ideological contexts coupled with the consideration of their intended audiences. Terry Eagleton defines ideology as “the process of production of meanings, signs and value in social life” or as “a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class” (1-2). In my study, I have taken the concept of ideology in a similar way: understanding it is a body of ideas that a particular social group or class follows and cherishes. This could be imperialist ideology, orientalist ideology or the Islamic ideology, all of which can be traced in the re-workings of these tales in different historical moments.

My research journey began by learning that in the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century, considerable scholarly attention, in the West, was focused on fairy tale and folklore genres. This Western scholarship has made claims for both the subversive potential of these forms and their tendency to normative inscription, particularly regarding the representation of gender and class. The Disney (re)productions of fairy tales and the Hollywood remakes of the classic fairy tales into movies

for popular and consumer cultures remain a major part of our lives—but one open to increasing scrutiny and criticism. A notable trend in the field has been the contributions of feminist readings and retellings of classic fairy tales, such as Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*. These retellings act as a medium to subvert the stereotypes often embedded in these tales and highlight the hidden sexist and misogynistic elements that have gone unremarked for centuries. Inspired by my readings of these feminist retellings, I commenced research into such retellings of Pakistani tales. Unfortunately, I was unable to uncover any contemporary feminist variants of these tales. As I dug deeper, I realised that there is a great deal that is unexplored about Pakistani folklore, and found a basic lack of research on folk tales from a purely Pakistani viewpoint. It is this lack of scholarship that has inspired my work.

From the mid-twentieth century there are extensive scholarly studies of the role and function of western folk tales and fairy tales, pioneered by, for example, Marcia Lieberman ("Some Day My Prince will Come" 1972), Bruno Bettelheim (*The Uses of Enchantment* 1976), Jack Zipes (*Breaking the Magic Spell* 1979, *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale* 1993, *Grimm Legacies* 2014), Kay Stone (*Some Day your Witch will Come* 2008), and Cristina Bacchilega (*Postmodern Fairy Tales* 1997, *Fairy Tales Transformed* 2013). Much attention has been paid by these feminist scholars to the normative (gendered, class) assumptions encoded in familiar fairy tales (often based on generations-old folk tales and their variants) such as those collated by the Grimm brothers in nineteenth-century Europe. Donald Haase, in his essay "Feminist Fairy Tale Scholarship," quotes Andrea Dworkin's observation that "fairy tales shape our cultural values and understanding of gender roles by invariably depicting women as wicked, beautiful, and passive, while portraying men, in absolute contrast, as good, active, and heroic" (3). These patterns are the major ingredients of all the tales with 'happily ever after' endings. However, I came to understand that there is a

great deal more to feminist scholarship on folk and fairy tales than simply identifying the prevalence of passive female figures and lamenting the ways in which such portrayal might influence the gendered understandings of young women (and men). Such an approach is far too simplistic, as Haase notes in his introduction to *Fairy Tales and Feminism* (2004):

Some feminist fairy-tale analyses remain stuck in a mode of interpretation able to do little more than reconfirm stereotypical generalizations about the fairy tale's sexist stereotypes. Such studies are oblivious to the complexities of fairy-tale production and reception, sociohistorical contexts, cultural traditions, the development of the genre and the challenges facing fairy-tale textuality. (ix-x)

As I began my work on Pakistani folk tales, I wanted to investigate the kinds of “complexities” Haase alludes to, particularly issues to do with “production and reception, sociohistorical contexts [and] cultural traditions.”

When it comes to the discussion of fairy or folk tales, India's name appears as “the cradle of folk tale tradition or as the land of plenty” (Bacchilega “Genre and Gender” 179). For the most part, in the western idea of the Indian “wonder” tale, India has been appreciated for its wonders, while its people have been ignored or misrepresented. Its women, in particular, have been represented as both submissive and lacking agency or as controlling, mysterious beings, hidden in zenanas, often plotting evil, hence posing a threat. With respect to the latter, Bacchilega notes that “while underplaying its threat, it [“India as a wonder tale”] evokes mystery. In Western imagination the racialized figure of [Indian] woman has centrally represented the mystery and fascination of the Other” (“Genre and Gender” 180). It is the representation of this mysterious and fascinating “Other,” and the stereotypes embedded in these tales from an outsider's and an insider's perspective, that this study seeks to explore.

Through comparative analysis of the two folk tale collections (and their various editions)—one, *Tales of the Punjab*, by a Christian, female, British, colonial collector, in nineteenth-century British India, and the other, *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*, by a post-partition male, Muslim, Pakistani collector—I explore the portrayal of gender, culture, religion, and hidden biases and stereotypes evident in the collections. Kathleen Ragan’s work (among that of others) has drawn attention to how “the editor, the collector, and the storyteller” act as “filters” through which tales pass until a significantly mediated version achieves publication (230). Similarly, Haase notes that “editors and collectors have a shaping, authorial role in the construction of the texts they are transmitting. This is also true of translators who transmit and spread texts by copying them into other languages (“Reception” 541). “What,” he asks, “do collectors, editors and translators use to frame the stories they are making available to [readers]? How do their prefaces, introduction, notes, and other paratexts try to shape [readers’] understanding and response to folk tales and fairy tales?” (541). These questions are important. Focusing on the representation of female characters, my study also seeks to reveal the differences that are added to oral tales when they are filtered through collectors and translators with varied backgrounds, interests and ideological motivations, and in different sociohistorical moments, before they are fixed in print. I examine how the religion, the society, the culture and different aspects of the life of Pakistani/Indian folk are portrayed in these texts.

While India occupies a significant position in the study of folklore, there has been almost no scholarly attention focused on the folklore of Pakistan—perhaps because Pakistan was a part of India before 1947, and after Partition has been overlooked. There is also little work by Indian scholars and none by Pakistani (Shafi Aqeel lacks any claim to certified “scholarship”). I have made use of western scholarship, where it seems applicable, as the means of understanding and interpreting the folk tales I consider. Along with western

scholarship, I have made use of the relatively few works by Indian scholars on Indian folklore, such as those by Sadhana Naithani, Kirin Narayn and A. K. Ramanujan.

There was much activity involving folklore collection in India under the British Raj and this has received considerable attention, especially from western postcolonial scholars. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in particular, collectors from throughout the subcontinent variously sourced tales, transcribed and translated them into English, and published them for British and Anglo-Indian readers, or for an Indian cultural elite.¹ In general these works were intended for leisure reading, and/or for armchair folklorists to analyse ‘scientifically.’ Discussions of the activities of these collectors have largely been from a postcolonial perspective, with an emphasis on the ways in which colonial folklore collection functioned as part of a larger project of “ethnographic surveillance which strove to produce the space of British India in order to control it” (Crane and Johnston 2007 82).² In these terms, Indian folklore collection is most often understood as an activity that served the larger Occidental project of ‘knowing’ the Orient as a means of exerting power over it. Scholarship with this postcolonial focus, influenced by the works of Michel Foucault and Edward Said, almost unanimously considers the act of collecting folk tales in relation to the British imperial endeavour in colonial India.

In my research I take seriously Haase’s suggestion, quoted above, that the study of folklore should take into account not only what is represented in individual tales but also their “production and reception [and] sociohistorical contexts.” My dissertation considers

¹ To name a few—Romesch Chunder Dutt, Indian Civil Service officer (1848-1909), Toru Dutt, a poet and a linguist (1856-77), Rabindranath Tagore, the first non-European to win Nobel Prize in literature (1861-1941), Syed Ahmad Khan, a philosopher, Islamic reformist and educationist (1817-98), Sarojini Naidu, a poet, and activist (1879-1949)

² See also Kabbani (*Imperial Fictions Europe’s Myths of Orient*, 1994) and Naithani (“The Colonizer-Folklorist,” 1997, *The Story-time of the British Empire*, 2010).

examples of the collection and publication of folk tales in a specific region, the Punjab, over an extended period, beginning with the 1880s, through the aftermath of Partition in 1947, and into the present. My research is based on two collections of Punjabi folk tales, each of which has two different editions; thus it is effectively a comparative analysis of four books. The first collection, by a colonial folklorist, Flora Annie Steel (1847-1929), was initially published in Bombay for a mix of British and elite Indian readers as *Wide-awake Stories* in 1884, with notes and few tales collected by Richard Carnac (R. C.) Temple. It was then republished in England in 1894 for British readers as *Tales of the Punjab* with considerable “scholarly” and paratextual additions by Temple. The second primary text is a postcolonial and post-partition collection by Shafi Aqeel (1930-2013). It was first published in Urdu in 1963 as *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan* [Folk tales of Punjab] and later published in English by Oxford University Press (Pakistan) in 2008, translated by Ahmad Bashir (1923-2004), as *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*. As their titles suggest, both collections are presented as tales specifically from the Punjab. Of particular interest to me is the fact that some of the tales in each collection are clearly drawn from the same originals, but they are rendered in such a way that, despite similar plot elements, they appear as very different works in each publication. I have used the later, translated English version of Aqeel’s collection as a primary text for my study for the obvious reason that many in my likely reading audience will not be able to read his Urdu original. However, I have also personally translated a selection of tales from the 1963 Urdu edition and compared these with Bashir’s 2008 translation (Appendix 1) as a means of discussing the significant “filtering” role performed by translators.

My research is based on close analysis of formal and structural elements in the selected tales, with a particular emphasis on narration, characterization, and plot (especially in relation to the ways in which the stories conclude). Read together, these collections reveal how much collectors/editors and translators, in addition to cultural context, sociopolitical

scenarios, and historical moments, influence how the tales are “told.” A guiding question for me has been, “How can a comparative reading of these texts together help us to better understand what is at stake in the collection and publication of folk tales and, more specifically, the folk tale traditions of the Punjab?”

Folklore collection in India, Pakistan and the Punjab

Folklore collection in Europe was booming in the second half of the nineteenth century and the trend expanded to the British colonies, such as India, where gathering information about the “natives” became something more than a mere leisure activity and contributed to the consolidation of anthropology as a distinctive academic discipline. The formation of the Anthropological Association (1863) and the Folklore Society (1878) is evidence of the rise of this new science, intimately linked to the imperial project of “knowing” its colonial subjects³. In India, folklorists, notably Richard Carnac (R. C.) Temple and William Crooke, began collecting all kinds of folklore material from different parts of the country. The conjunction of scholarly endeavour and political expedience is evident in Temple’s assertion that “We foreigners cannot hope to understand them rightly unless we deeply study them, and it must be remembered that close acquaintance and a right understanding begets sympathy, and sympathy begets good government.” (qtd. Gerry Abbott & Khin Thant Han 20).

A year after the ‘Mutiny’ of 1857, the British monarch took charge of India from the East India Company and the British began to take their role as colonial agents (not just traders and profiteers) in India more seriously. This increasingly involved studying Indian

³ R. C. Temple in his addresses delivered at the meetings of the British Association at Birmingham and published as *Anthropology as a Practical Science* 1914 details the anthropological significance of folklore from colonies.

people and their ways of life in order to control them more effectively. One way of doing so was to collect and analyse Indian folklore, to better understand the culture and beliefs of their subjects. Until recently, there have been few Indian contributors to scholarly debates about the western collection and dissemination of Indian folklore, but in the past decade or so a number of Indian scholars have begun to address this, notably Naithani. Naithani coined the term “colonizer-folklorist” to describe Temple and the conjoined words emphasise the connections between the two activities in which he engaged (1997). These colonial folklorists were colonising the people and their folklore, and in turn the folklore was being used as a tool to colonise the people as well.

Naithani’s important discovery of the British archives of William Croke led her to question the authenticity of these colonial folklorists’ collections. In the course of archival research into Indian folklore, Naithani uncovered a unique relationship between two folklorists. One was William Croke, “a doyen of colonial Indian folklore scholarship” (“To Tell a Tale” 201), who along with Temple was one of “the ‘twin giants’ of colonial folklore scholarship” (*In Quest* vii-viii). On returning to England after many years in India, Croke was awarded an honorary doctorate from Oxford University for his contributions to the discipline. The other was a local Indian man, “Pandit” Ram Gharib Chaube.⁴ Naithani closely considers original manuscripts and correspondence between the two men held by the Folklore Society, London, and explains that Chaube was the one who collected, translated, added notes, and provided Croke with information regarding the native terminology and significance of the folklore items. Naithani writes:

In 1996, I tracked down an unpublished collection of the folktales of Northern India, said to have been collected in the last two decades of the nineteenth century by

⁴ “Pandit” means scholar, teacher, religious leader.

William Crooke, a doyen of colonial Indian folklore scholarship ... as I started reading, it soon became apparent that the writer of these English texts was not the British civil servant William Crooke, but rather an Indian called Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube. (201)

Crooke added paratextual apparatus to Chaube's collected and translated tales, including a systematic attempt to index types and themes in the tales, as was common practice in the "science" of folkloristics at the time. While Chaube rendered hundreds of Indian folk tales into English, he has, Naithani claims, been "anonymous and unacknowledged for one hundred years," his work appropriated and counter-signed by Crooke (*In Quest* xiii). Chaube died, apparently unrecognised, impoverished and insane, in stark contrast to the success and fame achieved by Crooke. Naithani proposes "a new identity and voice [for Chaube]; that of an Indian folklore scholar in colonial India" (xiii). She maintains that the Crooke-Chaube relationship developed at a time when "[t]he British in India settled down to establishing distinctively their identity as rulers, which meant distancing themselves more from the local people, codifying their social behaviour, and generally asserting an English way of life" ("The Colonizer-Folklorist" 3).

Crooke never gave any literary or scholarly recognition to Chaube. After Crooke left India, Chaube wrote asking him to provide a reference regarding his ongoing research, but he did not respond. Chaube was thus a "pandit" at the wrong time and in the wrong place. He died, "insane and destitute" because "in the colonial scheme of scholarship, there was no place for his name" (Naithani 213). He was a victim of Victorian attitudes towards class and race, where urban, lettered, white male authority was supported even by natural science, and where works by women and non-white people required white male scrutiny and approval.

In my thesis I take as a starting point Naithani's assertion that "we need to read the history of British scholarship of Indian folklore anew, with a special interest in the processes

of collection and translation” (*In Quest* 38). However, while I am indebted to her work, my interests extend further than her emphasis on the colonial/British mediation of *Indian* folklore, and the unacknowledged contributions of “native informants” like Chaube. My original contribution in this thesis is in my extension of Naithani’s postcolonial appraisal of the colonial collection of Indian folk tales by comparing two specifically *Punjabi* folk tale collections published in two very distinct moments in the region’s history. If Naithani’s quest was to learn more about the mysterious Chaube and shine a light on his previously ignored (and significant) contributions to colonial Indian folklore collection, my own smaller discovery is that of Shafi Aqeel. While his name and work have not been overwritten by that of another, as was the case for Chaube, he has nonetheless all but disappeared from discussions of Pakistani literary endeavour despite his huge contributions to a specifically nationalised approach to the nation’s literature, especially in the first decades after the nation was formed. I was particularly excited that in my search for more information about Aqeel, a librarian at Government College University Lahore showed me a copy of his original Urdu collection of tales, which Aqeel translated from the local Punjabi tongue. This Urdu collection has almost completely gone out of circulation and has never been analysed. Rather mysteriously, however, a version of it was translated into English by Bashir and published in 2008 by OUP, Karachi, Pakistan. I say “mysteriously” because despite numerous approaches to OUP (England, India and Pakistan) I have not been able to gain any information about why it was published, on whose recommendation, or for what intended audience. There is further work ahead for me as I try to establish answers to my questions about its publication. Nonetheless, the Bashir translation of Aqeel’s Urdu original (itself a translation from Punjabi sources), has provided me with the opportunity to carefully consider the several translations (from Punjabi to Urdu to English) the collected tales have undergone.

Considerations of colonial collection of Indian folklore, explored in terms of imperial dynamics, tend to ignore the cultural and religious tensions that had arisen in India under the British rule and which resulted in its partition by the departing colonisers in 1947. With the focus on colonial folkloristics and imperialism, Indian folklore is most often discussed in monolithic terms that ignore local differences, and is routinely set in relation to the British Empire and its “scholarly” endeavours, with an emphasis on the knowledge-power nexus involved. This critical focus on colonial folklore collection largely ignores the kinds of culturally specific ‘work’ such tales might have originally performed in specific regions prior to partition—like the Punjab, a region in which three major religious groups resided side by side: Muslim, Hindu and Sikh. The tales collected during the colonial era, although collected from different people belonging to different religious groups, completely ignore these religious and cultural differences and generally represent the Hindu majority. This is certainly evident in Steel’s collection which makes comparison with Aqeel’s decidedly Muslim collection all the more important.

There has been no attention given to the ideological function of folklore promoted as Pakistani (a country whose creation, ostensibly, was premised on its Muslim identity). My study begins to address this lack in scholarship by analysing folk tales from the Punjab collected under British rule and comparing them with the folk tales of Pakistani Punjab after freedom from the British. The title of my dissertation has two phrases: “Once upon a Time” and “in the Land of Five Rivers.” The first phrase is very familiar to everyone—it can teleport someone into the past, or to a magical world of fairy tales. The second phrase will sound familiar only to those who have some connection with Pakistan and India and/or the region (province) called Punjab. The phrase refers to the rivers that flow through this region: Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum. The word Punjab is a combination of two Persian words, “*panj*” which means five and “*aab*” which means water, thus it literally means five

waters referring to the five rivers in the Punjab. In the introduction to the English edition of Aqeel's collection, *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*, Navid Shahzad throws light on the origin of the word, Punjab:

Geographically, Punjab is an area that lies to the north-west of the Indian subcontinent. While the Vedic era identifies this region as *Sapt Sindhu* or the land of seven rivers; the Persianized version of the name reduces the seven to five and renames it the *Panj-Aab* meaning the land of five rivers. (xiii)

As my study is a comparative analysis of the two collections of Punjabi folk tales (each with two variant editions), the title could have been “Twice upon a time” rather than “Once upon a time.” Steel's and Aqeel's collections were initially published in two different historical moments, one during the heyday of British colonial rule of India, and the other not long after the creation of Pakistan. My thesis discusses three different historical moments of Punjabi folk tales' publication, through analysis of collections published seventy years apart (by Steel and Aqeel), and the translation of Aqeel's collection published forty-five years after the original. Steel's 1894 collection has been repeatedly reprinted (most recently in 2015), and is available on multiple websites; it has thus attained seminal, even representative, status. The authority of Aqeel's edition, originally published in Urdu in 1963, is less secure but the fact that it was published (reprinted, translated) in a 2008 Oxford University Press, Pakistan publication suggests its importance and credence, although the circumstances surrounding this publication remain obscure. A comparison of the two is validated not only by their editors' assertion of the centuries-old *Punjabi* (rather than ‘Indian’) status of the tales, but also by the re-publication of both in the last decade.

My comparative analysis explores how, in these editions, a colonial ‘outsider’ and a Pakistani ‘insider’ portray the people and culture of the Punjab region via the collection and

translation of folk tales, with a particular emphasis on the portrayal of gender roles and how these might be reflective of cultural difference. Besides consideration of the collection, selection and compilation process, my comparative analysis discusses the collectors', translators', publishers', and the intended audiences' influences on the representations of the tales, and the effect of these influences on what might be called their ideological function.

Salman Rushdie gets to the heart of my interest in these tales and their various retellings: "Every story one chooses to tell is a kind of censorship. It prevents the telling of other tales" (*Shame* 68). From the very start, a collector begins making choices—choosing to tell some stories, and rejecting others. Thus, the process of "censoring" the tales is already at work. In deciding which tales to select for publication and which not to, the collector makes important choices based on certain external factors. My discussion explores the factors that influence these choices in the selection process. Both these collections, in their titles, claim to be collections of *Punjabi* tales, and they each (re)present to their readers/audiences a selected sample of Punjabi tales. Both the collectors claim to have gathered different versions and variants of the tales, and then to have selected one over the others, or combined elements of these variants in their published version. Their selection choices invite comparative discussion.

Obviously even the same storyteller would not be able to re-tell a story in the exact same way (something that was a great delight in my childhood experiences of listening to oral tales)—let alone a collector listening to a tale told in one language in a very informal style, translating it into another language, writing it down, and imposing upon it a definite shape and order. My research considers how the changes imposed by collectors, and what Steel refers to as the necessary introduction of "literary sequence" (Steel 2), affects the meanings they convey, and to what end. Where appropriate, I have made use of Western

scholarship on folk tales to approach this work, but always within the context of the particular historical and cultural moment in which the tales were collected and published.

Folk, Folklore and Folk Tales

Most written folk tales have their origin in oral tales passed down through centuries and later collected, transcribed, edited and disseminated by folklorists, translators, and publishers. Folk tales come under the umbrella term of folklore. The word folklore is a combination of two words, folk and lore: a particular group of people (“folk”) and their customs and knowledge (“lore”). As an oral form, folk tales were reshaped by tellers’ modifications and often changed with each retelling. As a result, there can be various versions of the same folk tale and those collecting them for publication make decisions about which oral version they prefer and will prioritise. When rendered in writing by collectors, the organic reshaping practised by oral tellers comes to an abrupt end. Folklore, in its oral form, is super-organic because, as argued by Dan Ben Amos, an American folklorist and a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, it flourishes beyond the culture in which it originated, and can exist for centuries even after the extinction of its culture of origin. Crossing borders and swimming across rivers, these forms of literature mingle with the folk culture of other parts of the world (Ben Amos 2)—and can be subject to appropriation, or simply mistranslation, especially when they are set in print. They begin as an integral part of the culture from which they originate but any kind of displacement in folk tales (and songs, and other arts) from their indigenous locale invariably results in qualitative changes (Ben Amos 2). It is best to observe such changes via comparative analysis of similar translated and printed tales from a specific culture or region.

Folk tales are among the most common types of folklore narratives. The history of modern folk tale collection began with the publication of a volume of German folk tales

under the title *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* [*Children's and Household Tales*] in 1812 by the Grimm brothers (Zipes 54). However, the definition of both folklore and folk tales remains contestable. According to Jacqueline Simpson and Stephen Roud in *A Dictionary of English Folklore*,

‘Folklore’ is notoriously difficult to define with rigour, and the term now covers a broader field than it did when invented in 1848, linking many aspects of cultural traditions past and present.⁵ It includes whatever is voluntarily and informally communicated, created or done jointly by members of a group (of any size, age, or social and educational level); it can circulate through any media (oral, written, or visual); it generally has roots in the past, but is not necessarily very ancient; it has present relevance; it usually recurs in many places, in similar but not identical forms; it has both stable and variable features, and evolves through dynamic adaptation to new circumstances. The essential criterion is *the presence of a group whose joint sense of what is right and appropriate shapes the story, performance, or custom—not the rules and teachings of any official body* (State or civic authority, Church, school, scientific or scholarly orthodoxy). (v; my emphasis)

This is a very broad definition including all aspects of life of a group of people and whatever they do “voluntarily and informally.” Importantly, however, there is an emphasis here on the fact that folklore “recurs in many places, in similar but not identical forms” and that it “evolves through dynamic adaptation to new circumstances.” Just what this “dynamic adaptation” might involve is a key concern in what follows.

⁵ The term was in fact suggested or “invented” by William John Thoms on August 22, 1846 in his letter to the *Athenaeum* (Duncan Emrich “‘Folk-lore’: William John Thoms” 1).

Once the discipline of folklore attracted the interest of antiquarians, and folklore study became a popular genre, the scope of folklore widened. But it remains true that it evolved as a means of understanding a group of people “whose joint sense of what is *right and appropriate* shapes the story, performance, or custom” (Simpson and Roud v; my emphasis). This group of people are the “folk” who shape the lore, and the lore in turn shapes the people. For the purpose of this study, I have focused on one category of folklore, folk tales, as defined by Simpson and Roud:

In the broad sense it [folk tales] applies to all prose narratives following traditional storylines, which are told orally, or were so told in previous generations. It thus covers fairy tales, legends of all types, memorates, fables, tall tales, and humorous anecdotes. The original author is always unknown; in the rare cases where an individual who shaped the current version has been identified, the tellers are unaware of this... (132)

The notion of ‘folk’ was defined by an American folklorist, Alan Dundes, in this way:

The term ‘folk’ can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is—it could be a common occupation, language or religion—but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions, which it calls its own. In theory, a group consists of at least two persons but generally most groups consist of many individuals. A member of the group may not know all other members, but he [s/he] will probably know the common core of traditions belonging to the group, traditions which help the group have a sense of group identity. (*The Study of Folklore 2*)

Broadly speaking, the “folk” in my study are the people who live in the Punjab—this is the “linking factor” they share.⁶ Punjabi people have a distinct and rich culture, a way of life, cuisines, festivals, rituals, dresses, tales, poetry, songs, dances, and music. Their folklore engages with their culture and traditions.

There are different theories about the origin of folk tales. Some, like Joseph Jacobs (1969) quoting Emmanuel Cosquin (1860), claim that “India is the Home of the Fairy Tale, and that all European fairy tales have been brought from thence by Crusaders, by Mongol missionaries, by Gipsies, by Jews, by traders, by travellers” (Jacobs viii). Others, like Stith Thompson (1951), disagree because of certain prominent differences found in the tales of India and those of Europe, and maintain that

[t]he ordinary wonder tale is given as a piece of pure fiction in Europe but is expected to be believed as true in India. Such tales are nearly always localized in India. ... The structure of the complicated tale is very loose [in Indian tales], so that the plot is often very difficult to fit into patterns determined by European analogues.

(16)

Thompson’s Eurocentric perspective is evident here in the way he discusses how Indian “wonder tales” differ from what he takes as his norm, “European analogues” and their “patterns.” This is not surprising as the global history of folkloristics has for the most part been Eurocentric in its approach (Naithani 1). Colonial collections identified and isolated the “other,” placing the “self” [Europe] at the upper end of the developmental ladder, and locating the “other” at its lower end, in ways that have been discussed in detail by Edward

⁶ The word Punjabi refers to those who live in Punjab but it also refers to the people who speak Punjabi language. There are many other languages spoken in Punjab, such as Urdu, Saraiki, Hindko and Potohari.

Said. Thus, in the very act of folklore collection, superiority was asserted and the process of marginalisation begun, with a view to dominating colonised peoples. The first chapter of my study discusses this European (British) interest in Indian folklore and its socio-political motivations. As I discuss, European folklore studies had an inherent objective of dominating the knowledge system of the “other,” collecting it and appropriating it if useful, and if not, defining and dismissing it as inferior.

The intermingling of folk and culture, and the fusion of different disciplines such as Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, Literary Studies, Gender Studies, Education and Linguistics have changed the scope of Folklore Studies since the colonial era. In more recent approaches any item of folklore is considered as a living aspect of a valuable—if different—culture. Contemporary folklore studies incorporate multidimensional approaches responding to contemporary socio-cultural and economic theories and methodological concerns. International folkloristics has broadened its scope from the analysis of folklore texts to the study of their performances, functions and social sphere of impact. It is with these approaches that my work engages. The analysis of folk tales is particularly complicated, as I have suggested, because there is no one definite form of each tale and not a single author; from the listening and performance phase to the textualising of the tale, a collector is engaged in a process of selection and deselection. They select one version of the tale out of many heard, and decide to place it in their collection, alongside others selected, after “restoring order to their plots” (Aqeel x) and imposing on them a “greater literary sequence” (Steel 2). These mediating factors make definitive analysis of any tale difficult—indeed impossible. What is perhaps of more interest and relevance is the *differences* that can be noted between collections. Indeed, differences between the two collections I consider, and their collectors’ backgrounds, have enabled me to make inferences about how the collectors’ ideologies, historical moments and intended audiences account for variations in their collections.

Folk tales of the Punjab

Pakistan has rich reserves of folklore in each part of the country. However, my research is confined to the study of folk tales of the Punjab. Why did I choose to work on folk tales and particularly folk tales from the Punjab? As folk tales, in origin, are specific to particular areas, it would not be possible to do justice to folk tales from the whole of what is now Pakistan without extensively discussing the different histories and cultures of individual regions. I have, therefore, limited my study to one province, Punjab, in part because that is where I am from. I belong to a middleclass, Siraiki-speaking,⁷ Muslim, rural family, and working on tales collected from the Punjab was the obvious choice. But there were other reasons, too. The Punjab offers a particularly striking opportunity to discuss religious and cultural differences evident in the tales because it was at the centre of British partition in 1947. As a result, this region was divided into two in the worst possible manner.⁸ Consequently, a part of Punjab is now in (Hindu-majority) India and a part is in (Muslim-majority) Pakistan.

In my childhood in (Pakistani) Punjab, the tales most often taught and read to children were either religious, or translated versions of western fairy tales (like those of the Grimm brothers) or English translations of ostensibly local South Asian tales. The majority of the latter were translated and collated in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and are notable for their reflection of colonial attitudes and assumptions. Many tales are specific to a particular religion: Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh. In a Muslim household, for example, there is a huge body of Quranic tales and incidents related to the lives of different prophets,

⁷ Siraiki is a language (often called a dialect of Punjabi) spoken in southeastern Pakistan mostly in southern Punjab. See María Isabel Maldonado García's "Siraiki: language or dialect?" See also Nukhbah Langah's monograph *Poetry as Resistance: Islam and Ethnicity in Postcolonial Pakistan* (2011).

⁸ This is not to dismiss the significant religious tensions in the area, magnified and manipulated by the exiting British, between Muslims and Hindus. Rather, I want to stress the cultural and linguistic commonalities of all people who inhabited the Punjabi region.

from Adam, Noah, Moses (Musa), Joseph (Yusuf), to Christ (Isa), which form the repertoire of storytelling sessions along with censored versions of the tales from the *One Thousand and One Nights* and *The Tales of the Four Dervishes*. There is, however, also a significant body of South Asian folklore that remains largely uninfluenced by colonial interpretation and translation, passed on orally. Given the entwined history of Pakistan and India prior to partition, and the long oral history of many of the tales, there are links and shared influences between the folk tales of both countries (and those of Bangladesh, formerly a part of Pakistan before it gained independence as a sovereign nation in 1971).

In her preface to *Tales of the Punjab* Steel draws a vivid picture of one of the storytelling sessions in which she gathered raw materials for her collection. Although this is more than a century old, it has striking similarities to the summer-night story times I remember as a child:

[A]s the short-lived Indian twilight dies into darkness, the voices one by one are hushed, and as the stars come out the children disappear. But not to sleep: it is too hot, for the sun... has left a legacy of warmth behind it... [and] the hours, though dark, are not dreary, for this in an Indian village, is storytelling time. ... [Children] drag their wooden-legged, string-woven bedsteads into the open, and settle themselves down like young birds in a nest, three or four to a bed, while others coil up on mats upon the ground, and some... beg a place here or there. (6)

While the similarities with my childhood experiences are clear, there is a stark difference. The tale-tellers in my childhood were usually adults, but in Steel's case, as she mentions, they were "generally boy[s]" (vii). More importantly, they spoke to members of their "folk"—who, especially as they grew older, were able to set each telling of a tale told within a history of iterations of that tale, and link them to other tales. Moreover, the "folk" to

whom they were addressed had intimate knowledge of the cultural traditions embedded in the tales. All this is lost in Steel's edition, in which there is no indication of who told the tale(s) or why. It appears they were told for the Memsahib or at least with knowledge of her recording presence, and this is likely to have influenced not only what was told, but how. Even if multiple variants of a tale were heard by Steel, she has clearly reduced these to one (ostensibly representative) version, with the only consideration, apparently, given to what she calls their "greater literary sequence"—presumably in anticipation of a British reading audience primed for such "sequencing." Of course the same applies for Aqeel's collection of ostensibly representative Punjabi tales, although the two editions clearly appeal to vastly different audiences: the first published in Urdu, the official language of the newly-created Pakistan, soon after Partition; the second published in English in a post-9/11 climate.

My research explores the ideological assumptions affirmed or challenged in these two collections of tales and, in particular, seeks to assess the differences between Steel's late nineteenth-century, female-edited, Western/colonial *Indian* edition, translated from Punjabi oral originals, and Aqeel's post-partition, 'native,' male-edited, Islam-inflected *Pakistani* edition, translated from Punjabi oral originals. The latter is further complicated by the mediation of *his* translator, Bashir, from Urdu into English, as I will discuss. My comparative analysis of the collections, keeping the historical, cultural, and socio-political backgrounds in mind, and the several editions/translations, includes an analysis of the way gender roles are portrayed and endorsed or challenged in these (Punjabi) tales. It explores how they represent the culture, class division, and locus of power in Punjabi society, keeping the intended audience in mind.

Discussing the audiences for which each collection was intended has enabled me to focus on the different ideological work each collection appears to be doing. I argue that these variant narratives, in each collection, though apparently naïve, endorse certain gender, class,

and religious roles that can be seen to conform with and sometimes challenge assumptions regarding cultural values of and about the Punjab that were dominant at the times in which they were collated.

As discussed, most folk tales are believed to have their origin in oral tales passed down through centuries and later collected, written down and disseminated by collectors, translators, and publishers; they journey from oral illiterate society to the written literate part of the same or different societies, from the margins to the centre. With the spread of colonialism, these oral tales were disseminated across continents, and told to new audiences who did not know the society from which they came. According to Iona Opie and Peter Opie, part of the attraction of folk tales is that they “describe events that took place when a different range of possibilities operated in the unidentified long ago” (15); the tales themselves are attractively free from the confines of time and space. This freedom of time and space also makes them susceptible to any sociopolitical change, depending on the narrator (and their audience) when in oral form, and on the collector and translator (and their intended audience) when in written form. As long as they were oral in form, the tales were unfixed, although central aspects of the main plot and characters were continuously remembered until they were finally written down. They are malleable, organic entities, as Stith Thompson observes, that might have grown or shrunk with time. They are likely to gain fresh significance or lose it over the course of decades or centuries, and as a tale “goes through the hands of skilled and bungling narrators, [it] improves or deteriorates at nearly every retelling” (4-5).

Tales inevitably change when told orally or when written down, but it is not possible to record the changes to oral versions as easily as it is for the written variants of the tales. Therefore, much depends on the collectors of formerly oral tales and on how they shape the stories, in writing, to make them suitable for their intended audience. The oral tales from the

Punjab reached new ears when Steel, in 1894, transcribed, translated and “doctored” these tales to make them fit for the “ears polite” (1) of her “un-travelled English reader” (1). In doing so, I argue, although she claims to have “preserve[d] the aroma” (2) of the tales, she has actually “robbed the tales of all human value” (2) by making subtle changes in the service of a British imperial ideology. Aqeel’s edition is no less ideologically complicit, I argue. In his editions, the tales become a tool to help the newly formed nation *become* one nation and build provincial and national solidarity among the people who had been through the trauma of the grand divide. His version of the tales has been sanitised (Islamised) in its own way, yet it attempts to retain the original Punjabi elements of the tales, especially in the 1963 Urdu edition.

My comparative analysis of similar tales between Steel’s and Aqeel’s original published collection, in Chapter Four, seeks to prove this point. This also confirms Ben Amos’s argument that when translated in different cultures and among new people, tales reflect different meanings and nuances depending on the intended audience (4). As Aqeel was a native Punjabi collector, writing for the new nation of Pakistan, in its official language (Urdu), his versions of the stories tend to endorse the cultural and (Muslim) religious values of this new nation, in stark contrast to Steel’s complicatedly feminist, outsider, and largely Hindu perspective.

In order to better understand Aqeel’s collection, I have translated his Urdu edition *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan* into English (a translation of selected tales is in an appendix), with the aim of comparing my translations and those of Bashir in the 2008 published English edition. The findings of this comparison are revealing, and reinforce my claim that the translator and collector inevitably leave their own (ideological) marks on a work. I argue that just as Steel was doing Empire-building work through her translation and collection of

Punjabi folk tales, so too the Urdu edition of the Punjabi tales by Aqeel and the later translated edition in English by Bashir reveal their own motivations of nation-building and strengthening the national language. I argue that Aqeel's first edition, written merely a decade after partition, can be read as actively contributing to the building of the new Pakistani, Muslim nation, seeking to bring people to one united cultural-religious platform, through the endorsement of cultural, religious and traditional elements more suitable for Muslim readers. The translated English edition, when compared with Aqeel's original Urdu edition, suggests yet another layer of mediation to the tales. This edition, published for a post-Zia era Pakistani audience, portrays Punjabi (Muslim, Pakistani) people as far more conservative—in terms of religion and gender assumptions, say—than is suggested by Aqeel's Urdu version. This edition of the collection adds sexist elements to the tales, and overtly Muslim religious asides that are highlighted by their comparison with the original Urdu edition. The 2008 collection, ostensibly, highlights the changes that the Pakistani Punjabi society had gone through by depicting the changes in the tales. Another remarkable political change was the 9/11 incident that caused increased interest in literature from Pakistan. The extent to which Bashir, translating the original for a post-9/11 audience of English readers, might subtly reconfirm Western stereotypes about Muslim culture is not really possible to prove, but this is worth some consideration nonetheless.

Although a rich collection of oral and literary folk literature exists in Punjab—from folk romances to folk tales and tales of magic—there are few English translations available. If folk tales are a depiction of a “folk” and their culture, then they are also archives, storehouses of history and culture. In focusing on the folk tales of the Punjab and analysing the normative assumptions encoded in them—especially through the depiction of their female characters—my study will be a useful addition to the sparse literary database of Punjabi tales. Sandra Smidt (2012) suggests that “[w]here there is no print, storytelling is the way in which

the values and ideas and history and practices and rituals of a community are passed on from generation to generation” (31). As I have noted, in recent decades Punjabi family gatherings are becoming rare, and storytelling is not as common as it once was. As a result, we can observe a gradual decline in the telling of tales, which were once not only a form of recreation and entertainment but also a way of passing on traditional beliefs, codes of behaviour and assumptions of value. My research works on the premise that these cultural tools change the way we think; they act as ideological apparatus to convey and imprint certain norms and traditions; they are chosen carefully so that they convey the appropriate message to the intended audience. When these folk narratives are compiled for a foreign audience who have no real knowledge about the land the tales come from, the tales become problematically representative. Readers and listeners, often children to whom these tales are being read, form an image of the people and culture they ostensibly represent. For the researcher who is analysing these texts, it is a challenging, sometimes impossible, task to discern what was there originally in the tales and what has been added or removed from them, requiring in-depth reading as well as background, contextual and historical reading around the texts.

My research explores the background forces at work when these editions of the tales were collected and published, and how each differs in its portrayal of Punjabi society. The comparative analyses also examine the changes that each collector, either intentionally or unintentionally, added to the tales to better suit their intended audience and to satisfy their own motivations. The historical, socio-political, and religious aspects of the times when the collections were published will also be considered. Both in the thesis as a whole, and within individual chapters, I work from the biographical and contextual toward historically informed close readings of folk tales, developed further through comparative analysis.

Chapter Breakdown

I have divided my study into the following parts: an introduction, four main chapters, a conclusion, and an appendix consisting of my own translations of Urdu edition of Aqeel's tales and a note of the translation principle that I followed while translating the Urdu tales. In Chapter One, I discuss the history of and motivations for folklore collection in nineteenth-century British India and those colonial folklorists who were actively involved in this activity, especially in Punjab. The chapter discusses the orientalist views which underpinned the work of colonial folklorists and the ways in which they used their collecting and classifying for the imperialist purpose of Empire-building. This chapter develops the theoretical approach for the thesis as a whole.

Chapter Two is a discussion of novelist and folklorist Flora Annie Steel, the collector of the first primary text, *Tales of the Punjab* (1894). Beginning with her biographical background, the chapter draws on Steel's other works to attempt to understand what might have motivated her and what was at stake in her collection of Punjabi tales. The chapter also discusses how, at the time, female collectors needed a scholarly male stamp of approval and authoritativeness for their work. I thus examine the role of Richard Carnac Temple in endorsing and framing the tales in this edition with the scholarly apparatus of his "Notes and Analysis," and a co-written preface. I discuss the preface and Temple's "Notes and Analysis" to reveal how these paratextual elements frame the Punjab and its people. The second half of the chapter discusses Steel's collection, offering a broad summation of its contents and the way in which tales are presented.

Chapter Three turns to Shafi Aqeel's much later collection, *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*. Like the chapter on Steel, this chapter also begins with a biographical and contextual discussion. The research in this chapter provides a much-needed and long overdue first study

of Aqeel's life and works. As mentioned earlier, regarding Aqeel's collection, I argue that by adding certain elements to his tales, he offers an Islamic and decidedly Pakistani slant to the tales. The last part of the chapter offers a comparative analysis of Aqeel's Urdu edition and the later English edition of the tales. My own translation of the text, from the 1963 Urdu version, illuminates the extent to which the translator of *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*, Bashir, has added yet another level of appropriation to the text.

Chapter Four is a comparative analysis of selected tales from each collection focusing on the changes in tales and the effects of these changes. This chapter draws on some aspects of translation theory and suggests what may be the different motivations behind the translations of these two collections. Through the comparison of similar tales in the collections, I am able to make claims about what is distinctive about each version of the translation of the tale and collection, and to offer possible reasons for their differences. The different ways the collectors treat their male and female protagonists, their old and young characters, and Punjabi society in general—issues of marriage, for instance, and poverty and hunger—are revealing. Following the Conclusion, I have included my own translations of selected tales from Aqeel's Urdu edition as an Appendix, along with a note detailing the principles followed in the preparation of these translations.

Chapter One: The role of the Indian Antiquary and the Folklore Society in the collection and dissemination of folk tales in colonial India

“Cultures are formed, reformed, and destroyed in the process of storytelling” (Sadhana Naithani *The Story-Time* ix).

The epigraph to this chapter makes a huge yet important claim. Through the course of my study I will discuss different collections of Punjabi folk tales and the functions they performed—of forming, reforming, destroying—culture. In this chapter I focus, in particular, on the interest of the British colonisers in the collection of folklore from their colonies and the implications of this fascination. The quest for antiquities of all kinds intrigued Englishmen (and women) throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth centuries. The field of their research expanded to people and stories from all over the world, especially British colonies such as Africa and India. In the process, oral narratives of people from different countries and continents were collected and disseminated. There were different motivations and methods involved in collecting these folk narratives. One such colony, with a huge storehouse of folklore, was India. This chapter will explore the efforts and role of those associated in collecting the folklore of pre-partition India, under the British Raj. The chapter will examine the motivational forces behind the collection of historical artefacts from various cultures, and how this activity fostered interest in Indian folklore and folk tales.

A timeline of events that led to organised research, a discipline, and a science provides a historical context for this discussion. In 1572, a group of Englishmen formed a society for the promotion of historical study and research of what were then known as “popular antiquities,” under the patronage of Archbishop Matthew Parker (Robert Livingstone Schuyler 91). However, the society was dissolved by James I who, as Schuyler summarises, appears to “have been suspicious of the tendency of the antiquarian research into

matters of state and church” which he felt was a “menace to Divine Right monarchy” (92). From the very start the field had political undertones. A new English Society of Antiquaries was formed in the early eighteenth century and was awarded a royal charter in 1751 (Schuyler 92). The existence of the Society demonstrates the interest of the British in English history, but as the horizon of the British Empire widened, its interest in the antiquities of other countries expanded the Society’s mission. The 1751 charter stated the Society’s aims as “the encouragement, advancement and furtherance of the study and knowledge of the antiquities and history of this and other countries” (*Society of Antiquaries of London* website, n.p.). This British interest in the antiquities of other countries and colonies increased gradually, perhaps as the significance of the information gathered became better understood. The folkloristics of what are now known as Pakistan and India in general, and of Punjab in particular, is the central subject of this chapter.

Beginning with a discussion of popular antiquities, later known as folklore, I then focus on Indian folklore, the history of folklore collection, and an examination of those involved in the collection and dissemination of collections of Indian folklore. I examine whether the British interest in the folklore of their Indian colony was for its own sake, or whether it had an ulterior motive—that of gaining knowledge and furthering the imperial power. This discussion will contribute to my hypothesis that these folk narratives serve a larger imperial purpose in the colonial enterprise.

1.1 Folklore as a New Science

Interest in the collection of folklore begins with the development in the field of natural sciences in 1735 when Carl Linne or, in Latin, Linnaeus, a Swedish naturalist, published *The System of the Nature*. His book was an “extraordinary creation that would have deep and lasting impact not just on travel and travel writing but on the overall ways European

citizenries made, and made sense of, their place on the planet” (Mary Louise Pratt 24). His work on plant species and taxonomy revolutionized European thinking, and many of his students explored the flora of different countries in order to place the plants in the classification system introduced by Linnaeus. As a result travel-writing, and keeping records of everything related to a journey in a journal while travelling, became very popular. Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection* (1859) also had a major impact on the advancement of European scientific understanding. Darwin’s theory revolutionised knowledge about human origin, and his ideas helped develop scholars’ interest in evolution of not only the human species, but also of human culture. Herbert Spencer coined the phrase, “survival of the fittest” after reading Darwin’s evolutionary theory and applied the concept of natural selection to human society and culture. His ideas were later called by Richard Hofstadter Social Darwinism in his work *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1844). H. L. Wesseling notes that “Social Darwinism exerted a great influence on the politicians of the imperialist era” and that “the Theory of Evolution was a powerful weapon in the debate on the differences between races and peoples” (126).

Edward Tylor (1832-1917), an English anthropologist and founder of cultural anthropology inspired by Darwin’s theory of evolution, presented the idea of cultural evolutionism and believed that research into history and prehistory of man ... could be used as the basis for the reform of British society (Tylor qtd. Herbert S. Lewis, 25). Tylor applied Darwin’s *Theory of Evolution* to culture, and proposed it be used to “reform British society.” He presented the idea of “a universally shared mental development,” and formed “a uni-linear evolutionary model” (Tylor 58). He postulated the concept of three developmental stages, savagery, barbarism and civilisation, on a cultural ladder that all societies climb on their own pace.

Following the concept of evolutionary stages, Tylor's theory of Cultural Evolution originated as a comparative method for the study of different peoples and customs and rituals of the past, and to observe how things have changed and *improved* over time. The graph of the progress and improvement was supposed to help calculate the future pace of human cultural progress. But the British, during the study of evolution of their own culture and history, had come to the conclusion that they were on a higher level in the evolutionary journey than other nations in the context of what Mary Louise Pratt calls a "Eurocentered form of global or 'planetary' consciousness" (4). Simon J. Bronner maintains that "Evolution intrigued Victorian thinkers, for it established their civilization at the height of a cultural progression. A basic presupposition was the ultimate superiority of modern European civilization" (57).

This in turn, "whetted their appetites for insights into exotic customs, stories, and peoples" (Bronner 57). This theory gave the folklorists an opportunity to present their ordinary work of folklore collection as a scientific one. Their main purpose was collecting tales, translating them into English and spreading the information and knowledge thus collected (Gillian Bennet 29). Rana Kabbani in *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myth of Orient* maintains that the West has a misconception about being

superior to other cultures; that it is somehow more humane, civilized or tolerant, less violent and less misogynistic. Such assumptions formed the bedrock of nineteenth century imperialist thought, and provided the intellectual justification for colonizing other peoples' societies. But imperial ideas did not perish with empire. They serve as much of a manipulative function as they did a hundred years ago. (viii)

Such ideas not only created a myth about the colonies, but promoted a myth about innate British superiority as well. The more the British gained knowledge about the colonies and other cultures, the more they concluded their own superiority in the natural order. These

collections not only created a database of the colonised people, they also helped aggrandise the British image for the people in the metropole. In other words, the study of folklore was working in two ways, proving colonies to be inferior and proving the West, especially the British, to be superior, on a higher rung of the evolutionary ladder. Creation of this knowledge and database was a one-sided activity where the Empire raised questions and then found answers that proved its own superiority. The ‘Other’ was not given a chance to explain or express its own point of view or if there were any local voices, they were over-written by the Centre.

As Naithani contends, “Knowledge about natives constituted a subject which was of general and scholarly interest” (5). Andrew Lang, a member of the “Great Team” of British folklorists, employed Tylor’s work in folklore studies and developed the concept of survivals.⁹ Lang compared traditions of people who were at the ‘highest’ level of the evolutionary ladder with those at the ‘lower’ level, in order to find a connection (Bronner 58). Writing in 1953, William Bascom proposed in similar terms to Tylor that “Folklore forms a bridge between literate and non-literate societies and any ethnographic study without the study of folklore would be incomplete because folklore is clearly part of a culture” (27). Bascom further concludes that “Folklore is thus studied in anthropology” (28).

In *The History of Folklore in Europe* Giuseppe Cocchiara and John N. McDaniel maintain that the growth of folklore studies was a result of interest in developing an overarching history and philosophy of man. Naithani notes that the global history of folklore collection is Eurocentric in its approach (*The Story-Time* 1). An interest in “primitivity” stimulated these studies, which developed from attempts to analyse the origin of the arts and sciences, society and customs.

⁹ Survival is defined as those customs that had lost their original meanings but still continued to be practised (Bronner 58).

The Eurocentric scientific approach to folklore studies provides a means of asserting Britain's greater "civilization" in evolutionary terms. But these studies became functional to help maintain a theoretical justification for British rule over the colonies. The discipline that had originated as a means of studying human cultural evolution scientifically later became a way of comparing different societies, cultures, and races, focussing mostly on the differences, for political and financial gains. This knowledge acted as a tool for Britain to maintain her hold over foreign lands and colonise people all over the world, including those of the Subcontinent. Naithani rightly points out that "the whole Empire could be made into a comprehensible entity for the common people only by sketching out its various parts" (*The Story-Time* 5), part of which was achieved by the collection of folklore.

Naithani maintains that an important aspect of colonial folklore theory was sketching out the cultural life of the colonised subject for the knowledge and information of middle-class readers back at home (*Story-Time* 79). The study of human culture that originated as an evolutionary science, and which intended to study the evolution of people's rituals, customs, beliefs, and lifestyles, thus became a political tool as nineteenth century imperialism took hold. Richard Carnac Temple, an early twentieth century antiquarian and folklorist, while emphasizing the significance of the knowledge about the colonial "natives," made the link between anthropological endeavour and imperial politics clear in *Anthropology as Practical Science*:

If [British] relations with the foreign peoples with whom they come in contact are to be successful, they must acquire a working knowledge of the habits, customs and ideas that govern the conduct of those peoples, and of the conditions in which they pass their lives. (39)

Of course much depends on what he means by "successful." Temple says, "Youth must imbibe the anthropological habit" (26) and "success is dependent on the knowledge [the

British] may attain of those with whom they have to deal” (39). He seems to have derived this “practical science” of handling and colonising ‘foreign peoples’ from spending most of his life in India. His words are comparable with those of Flora Steel in *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1898) where she, with her friend Grace Gardiner, guides her British readers to the similarities between running a home in India and an empire: “We do not wish to advocate an unholy haughtiness; but an Indian household can no more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige, than an Indian Empire” (9). Through her work, she implies, she is adding necessary cultural knowledge of “foreign peoples” to the Empire and for those who are planning to take administrative roles in India. This way, as Pia Pal-Lapinski says, “She [Steel] is as much a tool of imperialism as any memsahib” (Lapinski 73). Similarly, Temple’s comments, which apparently promote the science of anthropology, in fact promote imperial control and domination. Anthropological information serves to strengthen the empire and imperial rule over the colonies. By understanding the material, social, and cultural world of the indigenous people, the anthropologist could gain insight into the “large-scale moulding matrix,” the “gigantic conditioning apparatus,” which Bronislaw Malinowsky called culture (qtd. Bronner 66). This knowledge of the indigenous culture was considered useful information to the colonisers in maintaining Britain’s dominance over non-British others.

In his introduction to *Anthropology and Colonial Encounter*, Talal Asad emphasises the relationship between the growth of anthropology as a discipline and the rise of British/European imperialism. He maintains that anthropology is “rooted in an unequal power encounter between the West and Third World, which goes back to the emergence of bourgeois Europe, an encounter in which colonialism is merely one historical moment” (16). Anthropology became an applied discipline which worked in two ways, as described earlier: it helped maintain British superiority, and it proved the ‘natives’ to be primitive, lagging

behind, lacking in intellect and manners, in constant need of being ruled. But creating this understanding of natives, under colonial rule, was a complicated process, as it entailed generating a specific mythical and exotic image of the colonised.

One source of such exotic stereotypes of the ‘natives’ was the collection and dissemination of folklore. In the nineteenth century, European interest in the folklore and folk tales from around the world increased. Such cultural artefacts as tales, riddles, jokes, songs, and anecdotes came under the umbrella term of ‘popular antiquities’ until 1846, when William John Thoms (1803-1885), a pioneering antiquarian, under the pseudonym of Ambrose Merton, suggested in a letter to *The Athenaeum* that “what we in England designate as Popular Antiquities ... would be most aptly described by a good Saxon compound, Folk-Lore ... ”¹⁰ Thoms’ real purpose of writing to C. W. Dilke, the editor of *The Athenaeum*, was to gain some space in the journal for the notes about the customs and beliefs still existing in the country. A few years later, in 1849, Thoms started his own journal *Notes and Queries*, which opened the columns of the new journal, “to the reception of articles and notes on our fast-fading folk lore” (223). To his audience in the editorial he said, “Any contributions illustrative of [British] folk lore will always find a welcome admission to our pages” (223). His invitation seems to have received a welcome response as there were contributions from all over the country on a weekly basis (Gomme 2). According to Richard M. Dorson there was much work being done on folklore collection in England from 1870 to 1910 and it was within this period that

the first folklore society in the world was formed [1878]; the first folklore journal was issued, and filled with brilliant articles; collectors’ handbooks were compiled, and systematic county collections were undertaken; folk materials hidden in

¹⁰ *The Athenaeum*, August 22, 1846, reprinted in the first Report of the Folklore Society, May 1879. *The Athenaeum* was a literary magazine in London (1828-1921).

magazine files, chapbooks, and similar antiquarian sources were located and reprinted; an International Folklore Congress was held at London in 1891, dominated by English scholars; and a steady outpour of theoretical and controversial treatises wrestled with the problems of the new science. (1)

But who organised this Folklore Congress, who founded this Society, who played what role, and what were the ‘problems’ of this new science? While the distinguished members and collectors were mostly men, it was a woman, Eliza Gutch, under the pseudonym of St. Swithin, an avid contributor to *Notes and Queries*, whose suggestion prompted the formation of the Folklore Society. The recommendation was published in the February 1874 volume of the journal:

A Folklore Society—I am not alone in thinking it high time that steps should be taken to form a society for collecting, arranging, and printing all the scattered bits of folk-lore which we read of in books and hear of in the flesh. Such a society should not confine its labours to the folk-lore of our own land, but should have members and workers everywhere. (Gutch 124)

It is interesting to note that along with proposing the formation of a folklore society, she points to the importance of obtaining collections from *everywhere*. Though St. Swithin or Gutch was not present in person when the Society was officially formed in 1878, her suggestions and notes were the background impetus for the formation of the Society, and the Society’s reports and other writings acknowledge that “the origin of the Society was really due to the suggestion of a lady correspondent of *Notes and Queries* ... she wrote under the signature of St. Swithin” (“The Folk-lore Society First Annual Report” 13).

In December 1877 William Thoms, in *Notes and Queries* and *The Athenaeum*, announced the formation of the Society in these words: “the Folk-Lore Society will be a

society to collect and store a vast amount of curious, out-of-the-way, old-wives' lore" (421), and

any lady or gentleman (for the *Folk-Lore Society* is one which may be greatly promoted by ladies) who may be disposed to join it, is requested to communicate such intention to that gentleman [J. L. Gomme, Honorary Secretary] ... If this invitation be freely responded to, the *Folk-Lore Society* may be established and at work early in the ensuing year. (422)

The Society was thus founded following the suggestion of a woman who had to use a male pseudonym, and who remained hidden from the Society's members and readers throughout her writing career until after her death in 1931. It was a Society that "may be greatly promoted by ladies," yet it had no female members. A woman had to write as a man for her work to be accepted and have the reception that it deserved, and for her voice to be heard. If she wrote under her own name, a male sanction was needed to lend the writing a necessary authority. This sexism was embedded in the very roots of the field. The same materials when told by women were labelled "old-wives' lore," but when collected, they transformed into science and became a discipline.

On 19 December 1877, according to the Honorary Secretary, Laurence Gomme, "four men met together and formally resolved to form *The Folk-lore Society*" (Gomme 5). These four men were Laurence Gomme himself, W. J. Thoms, Edward Solly and W. R. S. Ralston.¹¹ The first to join these four, according to Allan Gomme (1952), was Henry Charles Coote, and he was quickly joined by others. Although these men had other writing

¹¹ Dorson, on the other hand, contends that "at the core of the English folklore boom lies the work of six men": Andrew Lang, George Laurence Gomme, Edwin Sidney Hartland, Alfred Nutt, Edward Clodd and W. A. Clouston. It was the efforts of these members, he contends, that laid the basis of the *Folklore Society* in 1878, and for a number of years "Gomme was the Society's Director, Clodd its Treasurer, Nutt its publisher, and Lang and Hartland members of its executive council" (3).

commitments to fulfil, they “regarded themselves primarily as folklorists, and crusaded energetically for the new discipline” (Dorson 3).

While the men mentioned above were the main body of the British Folklore Society, there were many others who performed important work during the same period. A complete survey of the movement, which included women, would need to include Temple, a major figure in Indian folklore dissemination, Joseph Jacobs, Charlotte Burne, F. Hinde Groome, Marian Cox, J. A. MacCulloch, T. F. Thiselton Dyer, S. Baring-Gould, Sir John Rhys, W. R. S. Ralston, and Sir William Craigie who assembled Indian, Russian and Scandinavian tales (Dorson 3). These people began the consideration of folklore as a significant area of study, and it was Gomme who proposed that the study of folklore should be treated as an independent discipline in these words: “I strongly urge that *Folk-lore* is a science by itself, with distinct work of its own to accomplish, but I must protest against its being only another name for anthropology. The sanction at the back of folk-lore is *tradition*” (Gomme, qtd. Dorson 7).

It appears that the problem of this new “science” was defining its scope and function, and deciding to which area of study it belonged. From the definitions given in the seventh *Annual Report* of the council, the members of the Society appear divided on whether to call it an independent science or a sub-discipline of anthropology. Gomme defined it as “a science which treats the survivals of archaic beliefs and cultures in modern ages” (Gomme 388); Sydney Hartland proposed that “[f]olk-lore is anthropology dealing with the psychological phenomena of *uncivilized man*” (7th *Annual Report of FLS* 386).

Folkloristics became ethnography, the study of human traditions, customs, and behaviours, and it is crucial to anthropologists, because it reflects culture (Bronner 61). Folkloristic studies flourished and played a very significant role in the collection of information about indigenes and their ways of life. Naithani argues in *The Story-Time*,

regarding India and the study of its folklore, but applicable to other colonies as well, that there was a “veil” “lying heavily over India’s past” which had to be “lifted” by the collection and publication of her folklore (qtd. Naithani 99). She maintains that the folklore was collected from the colonies published in Britain and then “travelled in many directions” (Naithani 7). Thus orality became one of the sources of different kinds of writings and information on the colonised. What is omitted from this collection of data about the natives is the point of view of the natives; materials were going from the colonies to the centre, not the other way round. Native voices had been silenced, overwritten, or neglected. Much of the knowledge that the Empire was collecting through the folklore of other countries (with the help of “overseas folklorists,” (332) as Dorson called them), was increasingly used for utilitarian purposes, to ‘exemplify’ imperial supremacy by demonstrating the lesser civility of imperial subjects. For these collectors ‘real India’ “was rich in folklore and narrators, but backward, poor, rude, and unlearned in every other respect” (Naithani 99).

The interest in these folk materials was new for Britain but dates back to the onset of the nineteenth century, when the Grimm brothers’ pioneering work, *Children’s and Household Tales* (1812), inspired the interest in local tales, which had always been considered a woman’s domain. According to Ben Amos, the biographies of the Grimm brothers and the history of British folklore appear to show that folkloristics is “intellectual slumming”; it was assumed that middle and upper class people study those whom they regard as socially inferior via the collection of folklore (119). These studies not only take advantage of the cultural knowledge of the natives, they presuppose European superiority over the natives. And when someone is superior, s/he considers it her/his duty to help *enlighten* the inferior nations, a duty Rudyard Kipling designated as the “White Man’s Burden” (1899).

Whether the study of folklore is an independent science or a branch of anthropology, my concern here is with the *functions* that it performed at the time of its inception. Temple,

who seems to be in favour of the anthropological school, says, “It should be remembered that anthropological knowledge is as useful to merchants in *partibus* in dealing with aliens as to administrators so situated” (“Anthropology as Practical Science” 30). He maintains earlier in the essay that

in order to succeed in administration a man must use tact. Tact is the social expression of discernment and insight, qualities born of intuitive anthropological knowledge and that is what it is necessary to induce in those sent abroad to become eventually the *controllers of other kinds of men*. (Temple 25; my emphasis)

The intention from the very start was to educate “controllers of other kinds of men [and women],” and the “tact” was to express insight into the lives of the natives and ultimately use that insight against them. Temple’s comments clearly show that the usefulness he conceived for anthropological study lies in its ability to assist administrative power over *other* kinds of men. He suggests that those planning to go to the colonies should develop an “anthropological habit” that facilitates this control. He adds that the study of human culture and rituals can be a very interesting occupation, as well as a very useful way of “filling up the leisure hours of Europeans in a foreign country ... especially in remote and lonely localities” (41), and that “the Empire might learn to think and act in accordance with the lessons taught by the science of Anthropology” (46). His view is essentially pragmatic: anthropology is useful insofar as it furthers the interests of the Empire, as “he who *profits* first and best is he who knows the most of mankind and its ways” (64; emphasis mine). An extensive knowledge of those who are in an administrator’s charge is essential (66). Temple himself was working in India and from the lessons learnt from the Rebellion of 1857, he understood the significance of knowing the inner workings of the minds of colonised people and their religions.

The compatriots of the folklorists who were working in colonies and missions, and who travelled the globe, soon began collecting materials from the lands in which they were stationed, in order to better understand the people and disseminate knowledge about them. By the end of the nineteenth century, England was the biggest depository of folklore collection. Temple, one of the “overseas folklorists,” (Dorson 332) was quite clear about its scope and functions, and promoted the dissemination of folklore in the subcontinent where he was appointed. Naithani underlines two reasons for collecting stories from the colonies: “one, to save and store orality for use in the future; two, to formulate handy definitions of the culture, history, and mentality of the people under consideration” (*The Story-Time* 19-20). The importance of their work, Naithani observes, made the collectors feel important in themselves, and they took their work more seriously and more scientifically. They saw themselves as

[P]reserver of that which the natives themselves could not preserve; as entertainer back at home with the narration of exotic stories from faraway lands; as creator of archives of knowledge that would further create knowledge and also influence the state policy. (*The Story-Time* 20)

As my study is concerned with exploring the role of those folklorists who were involved in folklore collection and dissemination in British India, it is to this particular cultural context I turn now.

1.2 The British in the Indian subcontinent

In a discussion of the historical context of the British in India, the role of the East India Company cannot be overstated. The ‘discovery’ of the New World in 1492 had ignited the desire to find hidden countries. One such expedition was carried out by the East India Company, which was an English and later British joint-stock company. It was formed to

pursue trade with the East Indies but ended up trading mainly with the Indian subcontinent and Qing China. This company laid the foundation for the British Raj in India in 1600. After the discontent that arose among the Indian masses in 1857, known variously as the Indian Rebellion, the Sepoy Mutiny, or India's First War of Independence, the power to govern India was transferred from the Company to the British Crown. The end of the war in 1858 marks the beginning of the British Raj, and of the systematic colonisation of India. Alfred Lyall (1835-1911), a pioneering British anthropologist, witnessed the Mutiny of 1857 and was deeply influenced by it as he wrote in one of his letters sent home from India in 1859:

[I] am always thinking of the probable future of our Empire and trying to conceive it possible to *civilise* an enormous nation by the mechanical process of the present times by establishing schools and missionary societies. Also, having *civilised* them, and taught them the advantages of liberty and the use of European sciences, how are we going to keep them under us, and to persuade them that it is hoped for their own good that we keep all the high offices of government. (qtd. Durand 89; my emphasis)

Lyall's preoccupations with the future of imperial power in India, are obvious in his question, "how are we to keep them under us," and in his suggestion that the "enormous nation" might make it difficult to rule, and his condescending expressions such as "to civilise," "[teach] them the advantages of liberty and use of European sciences," "keep them under us" and "persuade them," "for their own good that we keep all the high offices." The only concern Lyall has is to maintain British power and to "keep all the high offices of government," which may be difficult if the Indian people get a taste of "liberty" through education. Once the "savages" were "civilised" how would the British Empire justify colonising them? Hence

knowing the mind of the people became even more important than knowing their language; learning the language was a means to this end (Naithani 22).

The Anthropological Association was formed in 1863, and this decade also marked the “scientific” study of Indian society (Roger Owen 224). Naithani observes it was the time when “[t]he British in India settled down to establishing distinctively their identity as ruler, which meant distancing themselves from the local people, codifying their social behaviour, and generally asserting an English way of life” (“The Colonizer-Folklorist” 3). As the British started to take their position in India more seriously, the study of the people and their ways of life intensified, which, in turn, made it easier for them to control the Indians. As Edward Said has demonstrated, the British created ‘texts’ about colonised people, and although these texts professed to be objective descriptions of the ‘Orient,’ they described an imagined ‘Orient’ which could be expressed as the West’s ‘Other’ (Thomas Metcalf 13). The study of folklore became a part of efforts to prove the superiority of the West.

In the history of folklore India occupies a very significant place, as it has a rich collection of myths, epics, and legends. From epics such as *Ramayana* to *Mahabharata*, and story collections of traditional tales such as *Panchatantra*, India has been one of the main sources of European folkloristic subject matter, and has proved an inexhaustible treasure house of “native” traditions. The wealth and colourfulness of Indian folk literature and the great age of its sources fascinated Western centres of scholarship. Numerous scholars and amateurs were involved in recording this lore.

1.2.1 The Indian Antiquary

We’ve struggled, you and I, for fifty years

To pierce the veil of mystery, that lies

On India’s past so heavily, and cries

Aloud for rending with the searcher's shears. (Temple "Fifty Years of the *Indian Antiquary*" 1)

These are the opening lines from the publication of Temple's review of *The Indian Antiquary: A Journal of Oriental Research in Archaeology, History, Language, Philosophy, Religion, Folklore, &c, &c.* on its golden jubilee. Terms such as "veil of mystery," and "so heavily," "cries", for "rending with the searcher's shears", draw a visual image in the readers' minds of a woman with a veil asking for help from the British researchers. The overall image is of a feminised India pleading for an imperial white male to save her. It was one of the significant journals of its time engaged with the collecting of Indian antiquities and "oriental research." The journal was produced in the subcontinent, from 1872, under the editorship of James Burgess, "the founder and father of modern Indian archaeological science" (Obituary Notice 195). It was a private venture by Burgess; those involved had to pay their own expenses. According to Temple, who became the editor of the journal in 1884 when Burgess had to leave because of his failing health, the journal was concerned with Archaeology, Ethnology, Geography, History, Folklore, Languages, Literature, Numismatics, Philology, Philosophy and Religion of the Indian Empire, and, to a certain extent, of its surroundings ("Fifty Years of the *Indian Antiquary*" 4). It was intended to provide a means of communication between the East and the West on subjects connected with Indian Research, and offered a journal to which students and scholars, Indian and non-Indian, could send notes and queries of a nature not usually acceptable in the pages of *Asiatic Society*, founded by Sir William Jones in 1784 to enhance and further the cause of Oriental research. According to Temple, the main aim of the *Indian Antiquary* was to promote and encourage research ("Fifty Years of Indian Antiquary" 3). Hence, research into the cultural and traditional beliefs of the people of the colonies was one of the scopes of these journals.

Temple's strong belief in anthropology as a means of asserting and confirming British cultural and racial superiority is evident in his observation that "in the matter of administration, the position of the inhabitants of the British Isles is unique. It falls to their lot to govern, directly or indirectly[,] the lives of members of nearly every variety of human races" ("Anthropology as Practical Science" 19). These words are another form of expressing the white-man's burden and the British civilising mission, which used this excuse in order to colonise different people and lands. A folklorist who considers it his duty to rule "nearly every variety of human races" cannot be collecting folk tales without the same intentions. His male scholarly stamp on Steel's collection gives it the necessary sanction that a woman author and collector of colonial folk tales required to make her work publishable.

1.3 Three phases of folklore collection in India

The folklore of India was textualised in English and disseminated internationally in the second half of the nineteenth century. England was the first collector of vast amounts of folklore from its colonies in Asia and Africa, and was considered the biggest collector in the late nineteenth century. The modern study of Asian and African folklore is closely connected to the process of colonialism, especially in the fields of culture and education. Folklorists of India can be broadly divided into three phases. The first phase of folklore collection was carried out by well-educated British men (and women) of the colonial administration in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century. Naithani explains the periodicals these administrators produced:

[T]hough not official publications, they were quasi-official in their scope and objective. They were largely "miscellanist" in nature, carrying small notes of information on subjects around which the journal was conceptualized; were generally ethnographic; and were meant essentially for the use of the British

residents of India who were also their major contributors and subscribers. (*Folktales from Northern India* xxiii)

In the second phase, missionaries who wanted to learn the language of the people recreated their religious literature for evangelical purposes. Learning folklore provided an easy access to the language. The third phase was the post-independence period, when many indigenous people started studying the folklore of their area. The purpose was to define the national identity through legends, myths and epics, and to maintain religious, cultural and traditional identity and language. The collections of folk tales that concern my project are from the first and the third phases.

A detailed discussion of the scholars and administrators who started gathering stories from the Indian subcontinent, in the first phase, translated and interpreted them, and made them available to the English-speaking world, will be useful here. The credit for the first field-collected book of Indian folk tales belongs to the daughter of the Governor of Bombay, Mary Frere, in 1868, when she published *Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends*. In the introduction to the book, Bartle Frere (Mary's father) claims that the stories were collected "when [Mary Frere] was bored and lonely on an administrative tour" (*Old Deccan Days* 182). The following words from "The Collector's Apology," at the beginning of her collection, seem on the one hand to praise the people for protecting these stories from going into oblivion and, on the other, to explicitly acknowledge that these collections were gold mines to their collectors in ways that will be explained in the pages that follow. Frere writes:

That world [depicted in the tales] is gone and those who can tell us about it in this critical and unimaginative age are fast disappearing too, before the onward march of civilisation; yet there must be in the country many a rich gold-mine unexplored. Will no one go to the diggings? (*Old Deccan Days* 19)

This metaphorical gold-digging, after the publication of her stories, became a popular mode of field research in India, particularly for women. Her metaphor compares with that Thoms used, in his letter to the *Athenaeum* in 1846, encouraging the collection of folklore as “gathering the few ears which are remaining scattered over that field from which our forefathers might have gathered a goodly crop.” Thoms represents this work as that of gleaners, after the harvester has gone, collecting the fallen-off or left-out ears of the crop (Nicolaisen 73).

Naithani maintains that Frere can be considered the “first folklore collector of the British Empire for two reasons: one, her collection was composed of ‘folktales,’ not mythological stories ... two, it inspired several people to become folklore collectors, as is evident in the spate of folklore collections that followed” (*The Story-Time* 13). Collecting folklore from colonies made contact between the coloniser and colonised a necessity. In their day to day life the British officials in India and their families came in contact with the ‘natives’ and hence it became easy for them to use their “privileges of power” (Naithani 26) and authority to gain cultural and social information from the people.

First one to follow Frere’s advice was an Anglo-Indian girl, Maive S. H. Stokes, who published a collection of thirty stories, *The Indian Fairy Tales*, in 1879. Stokes collected these stories from her house servants (Dorson 1968: 335). She was only twelve at that time and her father and mother helped her. Surprisingly, despite her age, she understood Hindustani well enough to translate the tales into English. She noted that the “last five [stories] were told Mother by Muniya [Ayah]” and that “[n]otes to this book were written by Mother, and Father helped her to spell the native names and words. He also made the index” (vi). The major work was done by women, but the male scholarly sanction was added by mentioning Bartle Frere’s involvement: the work had been reviewed and was subject to imperial male scrutiny.

In the year 1884, the same year that Temple became the editor of *Indian Antiquary*, two illustrious names entered the realm of Anglo-Indian folklore collection. The Reverend Charles Swynnerton brought out, in Calcutta, *The Adventures of the Panjab Hero Raja Rasalu and Other Folk-Tales of the Panjab*,¹² and, importantly for my purposes, Flora Annie Steel published *Wide-Awake Stories, A Collection of Tales Told by Little Children, between Sunset and Sunrise, in the Panjab and Kashmir*. The same year, Temple published the first volume of his collection of translated bardic poems or versified legends, *Legends of the Panjab*. The second and third volumes were published in 1885 and 1900 (Dorson 337). Temple also began a journal, following the pattern of *Notes and Queries*, called *Punjab Notes and Queries* in 1885. This was the first journal of its kind in India.

As I have noted, all the collections by women collectors were endorsed by their husbands, or fathers, or male friends, who were British colonial officials. Most of the work of collection and translation was done by women collectors, but a male voice provided introduction or notes, making the work more scientific and acceptable for British nurseries and libraries. This complicates the gender divide in British India even more, as the British sought to liberate the women in zenanas¹³ but British women were themselves subject to male scrutiny if they aspired to publish anything. Many used their initials (e.g. F. A. Steel) or pseudonyms (Georgiana Kingscote, for example, wrote as Mrs Howard Kingscote or Lucas Cleave).

Frere's *Old Deccan Days* was the first collection of Indian oral folk tales published in English, whereas Temple's *Legends of the Panjab* was the first collection of Indian oral folk-poems translated into English. With the publication of Temple's *Legends of the Panjab* (1883-1885), collection of Indian folklore became a scientific pursuit (Naithani *The Story-*

¹² The spelling used in most British texts are Panjab (which conveys the right pronunciation and meanings), but now instead Punjab is used, I have also tried to stick to the later spellings.

¹³ A part of a Muslim home allocated to women only.

Time 21). Naithani further maintains that “the ‘scientific’ nature of folklore collection was essentially the claim to authenticity of the record ... Collectors who wished to be taken seriously made this claim by detailing the scientific nature of their method” (28). In 1886 Temple edited a *Dictionary of Indian Proverbs*, and James H. Knowles published a collection of sixty-four folk tales, *Folk-Tales of Kashmir* in 1888. Joseph Jacobs edited the *Fables of Bidpai* in 1888. In 1890 Mrs. Howard Kingscote (Georgiana Kingscote), in collaboration with Pandit Natesa Sastri, brought forth *Tales of the Sun or Folklore of Southern India*. Jacobs published his *Indian Fairy Tales* in 1892. As this list suggests, the “business” of imperial folklore collection and publication was booming. The oral and scripted tales from India had grown to impressive proportions and in 1894 and 1895 Rudyard Kipling published *The Jungle Book* (one and two). Although this was not a collection of transcribed folk tales, his story collection was written in the manner of traditional folk tales. The characters’ names and the setting of his stories are Indian. The work remains a classic in children’s literature. It would not be wrong to say that the British were shaking the pagoda tree in every way possible.

By the late nineteenth century, Anglo-Indian collectors realised the positive reception their collections were getting from their British audience and sought to improve their productions. One such example is Flora Annie Steel and Temple’s second edition of *Wide-Awake Stories: A collection of tales told by little children, between sunset and sunrise in Panjab and Kashmir*, republished (and re-titled) as *Tales of the Punjab, Told by the People* published in 1894. The new title changes the tale-tellers from “little children” to “the people.” The audience of this republished collection also changed from Anglo-Indians to British. The first subtitle seems more apt, as Steel in the preface of the book describes her raconteurs as “generally small boys” (v).

The motivations of folklore collectors play an important role in the way they approach their subjects—their narrators and their narratives—and the way they present them to readers (Naithani *The Story-Time* 18). I propose that the intended audience also plays a very important role in defining the narrative's presentation and the language of presentation. As colonial folkloristics was multi-religious and multilingual, the goal of these collections was to be in language that can be understood by the people in the metropolises, language of the centre. Textualising the orality meant not only taking the narratives from their original oral state and transforming them into a literary, orthographic state, but also relocating the narratives from their natural, social setting/context to a different environment and presenting them to a different audience. The written record was devoid of the elements of performance and listening that were the true spirit of the tales.

Another important figure in the colonial folklore collection, in the Punjab, was William Crooke (1848-1923), who according to Naithani was considered a doyen of colonial Indian folklore scholarship (“To Tell a Tale Untold” 201). Crooke was a civil service officer and ethnologist. He published *An Introduction to the Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* in 1894, which was reprinted in 1896. He also acted as the editor of *Punjab Notes and Queries (PNQ)* from 1885 when Temple had to lead a military campaign to Burma. Crooke renamed the journal in 1891 to *North Indian Notes and Queries (NINQ)*. Though it was a continuation of the *PNQ*, the periodical differed in many ways from its predecessor. Under Temple's editorship, “the journal refused to accept any writing critical of the government” (Naithani xxviii). Crooke focussed the journal's attention on the contemporary Indian people and their customs and stories. *NINQ* was clear in its perspective and objectives: the entries were not random notes from British residents in India; rather all the entries were by Indians. In *NINQ* “a discourse was created by Indians belonging to different walks of life; cooks, attendants, peons, water carriers, traders (actually small

shopkeepers)” (Naithani xxv) —all from the lower strata of society. As discussed earlier, Crooke’s proclaimed status as a central figure in Indian folklore studies is challenged in Naithani’s “To Tell a Tale Untold: Two Folklorists in Colonial India.” In her essay “The Colonizer-Folklorist,” she analyses the prefaces of the first and second volumes of Temple’s three-volume collection, *Legends of the Panjab*, and contends that the “[f]olklore collections cannot be defined only by what they contain. They must be defined also by what they do not contain” (10). These collections contain no information, apart from their names and villages, about their original narrators and the role they performed. She asks why do colonial folklorists erase local contributors from their published editions. This is, she concludes, another form of suppression and usurpation, in which colonisers receive the services of indigenous helpers without giving them credit for their literary and intellectual endeavour.

These texts depict Indian landscape, flora and fauna, but the people of India do not seem to exist on a realistic level (Kirin Narayan xxvi). Naithani maintains that the British treated India as ““a raw material supplier of folkloristics’ as it was of cotton for the British textile industry” (“The Colonizer-Folklorist” 12). They took Indian folklore, moulded it, added their own meanings to it and used it for their own ends. The voices of the indigenous people are either missing from these texts or have been overwritten by their colonisers. The gains from these productions, as I have discussed, were manifold: political, ideological, social and financial. Narayan notes that many folklore collectors gained popularity because of their collections, and went on to become folklore scholars. While Mary Frere, for example, published many editions of her collection during her lifetime, Anna Liberata de Souza, the woman who originally told her tales, is absent and

despite having provided materials for a best-selling book, Anna continued to work for different British colonial families. ... Unfortunately, there are no records of how *Old*

Deccan Days might have affected Anna's life in terms of personal satisfaction, status, or financial security. (Narayan xxvi)

Folklore collection, translation and compilation would not have been possible without the contribution of native scholars. Yet the language of their publication is English, and British men and women have been considered their "folklorists" (Naithani xlv). I have pointed out earlier, in my discussion of Maive Stokes' collection, her surprising ability to translate Hindustani at the very young age of twelve years. Steel herself admits in her preface; "The only difficulties are, first to understand them, and secondly, to get them to go away" (vi). After my own attempt at translating Aqeel's Urdu edition into English, I understand how tricky the task is and how unlikely it is for these British collectors to be able to completely fathom the depths of meanings in these folk narratives without help from local helpers or scholars. Ironically, those who told the tales or helped in collection and translation have been wiped from the history of folkloristics, but the stories and their (imperial) collectors' names—Frere, Stokes, Steel, Crooke, and Temple—remain.

The collection of folklore is a multilingual process: its essential character is international and intercultural, and all colonial collections were intended for international publication. As we have seen, colonial folklorists were interested only in the narratives, not the narrators. Not only that, but they also tended to conveniently ignore the natives' interpretations of the tales. These collections were purely based on the personal choice of the colonial administrators. Thus "the tales of Indian folk, which depicted their colonial reality, were not included in the folklore material" (Naithani "An Axis Jump" 184). Naithani contends that colonial folklorists were accomplices in colonisation and colonialism, and that in the process of transforming orality into writing, they "had clear boundaries of loyalty to their own race and nation" (*The Story-Time* 64).

1.4 Travellers' Tales

Many collectors were also travellers, so the discourses of travel and travel writing are closely interlinked with colonialism and with the collection of folk tales. Travel writing in the Victorian period was meant to contribute to the newly developed discipline of anthropology, and add to Europeans' knowledge of other people and lands. As Mary Louise Pratt observes, it produced the "rest of the world" for European readers (*Imperial Eye* 4). Instead of making use of this knowledge, Europeans used this information for self-aggrandisement and these representations of other cultures and races "often served to bolster the self-esteem of the European by convincing him that he was the culmination of excellence in the human species" (Kabbani 8).

Through their travelogues, travellers were bolstering imperial rule over India and other colonies. Travel literature became increasingly popular in nineteenth-century Britain, as travellers were the "seeing eye, and the recounting voice" and helped Britain "to know the world it was in the process of conquering" (Kabbani 6). Pratt maintains that

[t]ravel books ... gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in and colonized. (3)

In many translated stories, the colonialist world view is revealed through the promotion of a stereotypical image of the Orient and the taking advantage of its 'otherness.' In a Mansion House conference in 1914, Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, observed that "Oriental studies were no intellectual luxury; they were a great Imperial obligation ... part of the necessary furniture of Empire" (qtd. Kabbani 10; Dallmayr 100; Said 214). As Kabbani puts it, "[i]n the European narration of the Orient, there was a deliberate stress on those qualities that made the East different from the West, exiled it into an irretrievable state of 'otherness'" (5). In his address to the House of Lords earlier in 1909, Curzon said,

our familiarity, not merely with the languages of the people of the East but with their customs, their feelings, their traditions, their history and religion, our capacity to understand what may be called the genius of the East, is the sole basis upon which we are likely to be able to maintain in the future the position we have won, and no step that can be taken to strengthen that position can be considered undeserving of the attention of His Majesty's Government or of a debate in the House of Lords. (qtd. Said 214)

To justify its political control of the Orient, Europe needed an excuse to make it legal to colonise oriental 'others.' Using the pretext of 'the white man's burden,' they hegemonised whole continents, but in the process of colonisation and annexation "the image of the European coloniser had to remain an honourable one; he did not come as exploiter, but as enlightener" (Kabbani 6). Kabbani's description of those who visited colonies is both illuminating and interesting: "The colonies provided niches for misfits, for unruly or impoverished sons ... Such men could rise to distinction and exercise power in the colonies in ways that would have been unimaginable in their own birthplaces" (9). Gauri Viswanathan, in *Masks of Conquest*, quotes J. Farish's¹⁴ "chilling" words that echo Lyall's preoccupations quoted earlier: "The Natives must either be kept down by sense of our power, or they must willingly submit from a conviction that we are more wise, more just, more humane, and more anxious to improve their condition than any other rulers they could possibly have" (2). Antonio Gramsci posits that cultural domination can work by consent and can precede conquest by force:

The supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership' ... It seems clear ... that there can, and indeed

¹⁴ Minute by J. Farish, August 28, 1838, quoted in B. K. Boman-Behram, *Educational Controversies of India*, Bombay, D. B. Taraporevala, 1943. p. 239.

must be hegemonic activity even before the rise to power, and that one should not count only on the material force which power gives in order to exercise an effective leadership. (239)

By treating the locals as childish and uncivilised, the colonisers had made them doubt themselves and believe in their innate need to be colonised. On the other hand, the Anglo-Indians created the phantom of their own fundamental superiority in the colonies. Those who were once nobodies became heroes, and their depiction of the East became the final word and defining criterion: “often the travellers became the self-created heroes of the colonial world, who advocated firm rule in order to exorcise the phantom of their own insignificance” (Kabbani 9). Their years of experience were sufficient to guarantee their ethnographic authority. A colonial official “knew because he had been there; his statements did not need to be grounded in theory” (Morrison 152). Thus, by degrading and demeaning the natives, these colonisers sought to aggrandise themselves and strengthen their position.

Sara Mills contends in *Discourses of Difference* that “[t]ravel writing cannot be read as a simple account of a journey, a country and a narrator, but must be seen in the light of discourses circulating at the time” (69-70). To be able to write properly about their travels, the British travel writers were supposed to read the previous works— “discourses circulating at the time” — about the land they were going to explore. As a result they held preconceived ideas about the Oriental lands to which they travelled; consciously or not, they reinforced and supported these ideas. In these one-sided depictions of the Orient, the human prejudices and misconceptions of travel writers must not be ignored.

In his introduction to *Old Deccan Days* (1868), the collector’s father, Sir Bartle Frere, wrote that it was important for “Government servants ... missionaries, and others residing in the country,” to undertake such collections as a means of understanding “the popular, non-Brahminical superstitions of the lower orders” (“Introduction” 13). The fact that these folk

tales were gathered from the lower classes, from villagers and peasants rather than from Brahmin pandits versed in Sanskrit, who prior to this had been the primary source of Orientalist scholarship, reinforced the text's perceived authenticity.

Kirin Narayan, in the "Introduction" to her more recent edited version of *Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends* (2002), says:

Though the tales were beautiful and the narrator's voice novel, the success of *Old Deccan Days* was partly predicated on the authoritative introduction by Mary's father, Sir Bartle Frere ... The original manuscript for *Old Deccan Days* in the British Library does not carry Bartle Frere's introduction. He drafted it in the course of negotiations with John Murray,¹⁵ who readily welcomed Frere's participation, no doubt recognizing that such an introduction would transform the book from a collection made by a young girl into an *authoritative statement about Indian life and culture* in the context of nineteenth-century British colonial aims. (xviii, emphasis mine)

Moreover, as Naithani points out, the collectors (often District Collectors) were conscious that their work "would produce images which could affect the deliberations of the government and the people back in Britain, especially those leaving for India." Most of these translations, like Steel's, as Narayan notes, have "an alluring charm ... they make easy reading as English stories and so allow for a sympathetic entry into fictional Indian worlds" ("Banana Republics ... " 184).

As mentioned earlier, after the Rebellion of 1857, the British began to establish themselves as rulers, not just traders, and this required them to maintain a distance from the Indian masses, "codifying their behaviour, and asserting an English way of life" (3). The

¹⁵ A British publisher who published the works by authors like Lord Byron, Jane Austen, and Charles Darwin.

“new discipline” (Dorson 3) of folklore became one means of supporting this. Temple seemed clearly aware of this fact and expressed his political interests openly: “[Folklore collections] will enhance our influence over the natives and render our intercourse with them more easy and interesting” (qtd. Morrison 150). Naithani contends that “Temple’s specific object [of study] is the colonised subject, whose mind must be studied through folklore so that it can be ruled or controlled more effectively” (6). Naithani notes elsewhere that “British collectors of Indian folklore were also administrators, and their narrators were their colonial subjects; their folklore collections had intentional, incidental and potential administrative implications” (“An Axis Jump” 184). And when these colonial administrators came with their fleet of workers accompanying them, as elaborately described in Steel’s preface to the *Tales of the Punjab*, “how is it possible that such basic and acute contradictions did not play a role in shaping these collections, not only from the point of view of the collector but also from that of the narrator?” (Naithani “Colonizer-Folklorist” 10). Naithani adopts the term “colonizer-folklorist”, rather than mere “folklorist,” for three reasons:

First, these collections in some cases are the earliest published records of oral tradition of India and are thus major pillars of the history of Indian folkloristics. Second, given the Eurocentric nature of the history of folkloristics and the poor state of folkloristics in contemporary India, these collections are often used uncritically and unconsciously for analytical and encyclopaedic purposes and thus need to be placed in perspective. And third, the situational context of these collections has elements unique in terms of folklore field research—namely, the colonial power structure which makes the research possible, the mutual linguistic and cultural ignorance of the collector and the narrators, and the resultant methodology of collection. (2)

In other words, the term “colonizer-folklorist” serves to remind us that those collecting folklore were not neutral observers or transcribers. They were colonisers, and their work was part of the colonising process. As Narayan observes, “[t]he role of folklore collection in India during the Victorian and Edwardian periods particularly was not lost on the men who ruled India, who saw it as an opportunity to further the coloniser’s knowledge of, and control over its colonised subjects” (81). The collected tales of villagers, often of women or even occasionally children, emphasised the unchanging traditions of the ‘real’ India, ostensibly demonstrating the ‘backwardness’ of the country and the need for British rule. Folklore collections joined the larger imperial tradition of orientalist writing about India.

Like other Orientalist modes, folkloristics are key site where Foucault’s dictum about knowledge as power manifests itself materially (Narayan 81). In the words of Thomas Richard, “[l]ike the proliferation of photography in India in the late nineteenth century, the collection of folk tales sought to map and codify Indians and their diverse cultures” (qtd. Narayan 82). These collections comprised not only words but sketches and illustrations too, which were a helpful medium to convey “real” Indian life. I will discuss this point in the chapter on Steel’s collection.

Peter Hulme and Russell McDougall begin their “Introduction” to *Writing Travel and Empire* with the observation that “[t]he conceit of history used to be that it just recounted what had happened” (1). Indeed, the history of British India remained, for a large part, a one-sided (his)story which completely ignored the Indian perspective. Similarly, these folklore collections are collaborations of British and Indian collectors, but represent a biased worldview that disregards the perspective of those whom they are supposed to describe.

1.5 The culture of gender

While the role of women in folklore studies remained overshadowed by their male counterparts, gender adds another layer of complexity to these collections and how we understand them. As mentioned previously, texts are heterogeneous, and multiple factors affect them. In colonial folk tale collections, these factors include narrator(s), translator, colonial and imperial administrators and their perspectives. Another major factor is the gender of the collector. Mills explains the complicated situation of British women during imperial rule, by asserting that “the [female] writers were at one and the same time part of the colonial enterprise, and yet marginalized within it” (106). Mills further contends that as the forces exerted on the works of women and men were different, their works cannot be analysed with the same lens.

At the start of this chapter I pointed out that the first two published collections of Indian folklore were by women folklorists, Mary Frere and Maive Stokes, and that the formation of the British *Folklore Society* was initially proposed by a woman, Eliza Gutch. Further, the Society’s announcement notice said that “the Folk-Lore Society is one which may be greatly promoted by ladies” (*The Athenaeum* 422). However, the genre was considered a largely male domain, and as these women had no official rank, their collections needed an authoritative, official stamp of male sanction. Also noteworthy is that the Folklore Society which was collecting folklore of the colonies had no member from among the ‘native’ races of the Empire. The Empire was treating women and the ‘natives’ in a similar way—as inferior and needing scrutiny.

Steel’s collection is no exception, although she was not as young and inexperienced as the other two collectors were—Frere and Stokes. In her case the official authority of Temple—who wrote the preface and contributed “the appendices on Analysis and Survey of Incidents” (Preface *Tales of the Punjab* 3)—was so dominating that people confused him for

the author.¹⁶ The illustrations for her book were given by J. Lockwood Kipling, although Steel herself used to draw. The necessity of having official (male) approval suggests that these collections had political motives, and that they were supposed to fit within an already provided mould. The colonial administrators were making sure that representations of Indians and Indian life were as authentic as required for Imperial purposes. This also suggests that the intellectual capacities of women were not trusted, were not dependable and their work required polishing and scrutiny by men. In most of these collections, women did the major work, of collecting and translating, but men, after writing the introductions and notes, were designated as orientalist and folklorists.

These British women had a greater chance of being able to communicate comfortably with both male and female informants because of the Indian zenana system. Also the tales collected by the British women are likely to have been told in a more informal setting, and thus “may act as a critique of the colonialist enterprise” (Mills 106), than those collected by the colonial administrators, who, however ‘friendly’ they might be, would have intimidated the narrator with their official presence. Women’s folklore is expressive of women’s attitudes, values, anxieties, and worldview, and is of considerable importance in interpreting society and women’s role within it. But these informal and personal collections might not fulfil the political role they were supposed to perform.

As I have demonstrated, women have played very important and constructive roles from the very beginning of the discipline, yet their work did not receive the appreciation that it deserved. Moreover, according to Claire Farrer, “when a collector had a choice between a story as told by a man or as told by a woman, the man’s version was chosen” (v). Farrer claims that women were consulted only when male informants were unavailable, or if the

¹⁶ Joseph Jacobs in the preface to his *Indian Fairy Tales* has attributed “*Wide Awake Stories*” to R. C. Temple, although the major work of collecting and translating tales was done by Steel.

material concerned an area thought of as being in the female domain (v). This view is supported in prefaces and introductions written by men.. This supervisory and editorial scrutiny from men also suggests a patriarchal system in which a woman's words have no significance until endorsed by a man.

Mills (1993), in an analysis of colonial travel writings by women, observes that “[w]omen’s writing has a very problematic relation with authoritative status, particularly within the colonial context” (47). The status of these British women in India is complex. Even as they raise their voices for the liberation of Indian women, these British ‘memsahibs’ are themselves portrayed as “an impediment in the colonial enterprise” (Sen 17), a point discussed in detail in the chapter on Flora Annie Steel. It has remained a tradition to read women’s writing as “trivial or as marginal to the mainstream” (Mills 59), and thus to give it very little value as compared to the one given to a man’s writing.

The position of white women in colonial India was paradoxical as they often believed they were charged with the duty of ‘saving’ brown women from brown men but at the same time their own rights and freedom were dependent on white men’s whims. Nineteenth century European women folklorists and travel writers in India were, in stark binary terms, culturally and racially dominant, but in gendered terms they were considered inferior to (white) men. This placed them in a complicated and often conflicting position in relation to non-European women—and non-European men, of course. Mills notes that “their writing is not taken seriously in the same way that male orientalist writing is,” and that “[f]emales play an important part in the colonial enterprise as signifiers, but not as producers of signification” (59). Steel, in some of her collected tales, has deployed strong female protagonists, which may be representative of Punjabi society, but which may also be construed as role-models that Steel wanted women to have. Mills observes that most studies which deal with women

and imperialism “consist of descriptions of ‘native’ and British women as the objects of male gaze or male protection within colonial texts” (58).

The discussions above make it clear that political motivation and desire to build the Empire played a significant part in the production of colonial collections of folk tales. Studies of folk tales collected at this time highlighted the weaknesses and shortcomings of the native people, making it necessary for European ‘liberators’ to come and help the ‘downtrodden’ Indians. But there were other features that can be explored through deeper analysis of the texts, such as differences between collections by women and collections by men.

Folklore reflects the culture in which it circulates, and folklore responds to what changes are occurring in that culture. The stereotypes embedded in folklore are fundamental, and these narratives concern themselves with the maintenance of traditional sex role behaviour and, ultimately, a reaffirmation of traditional values. Alice Neikirk maintains that folklore is used to condition women to accept certain attitudes and gender roles and “they have morphed into a very effective means of exercising power over women and maintaining gender inequality” (38). Two of the main factors influencing the promotion of such stereotypical tales are the editors and anthologists, as they select those stories that portray traditional sex roles. Frequently they ensure that the stories depict natives in ways that support imperial objectives, but also affirm traditional gender roles.

The interpretation of folklore texts has two leitmotifs: (1) texts as reflective of social-psychological realities, and (2) folklore as record of history (*Story-Time* 90). Arguably, these folkloric texts contributed to the hegemony of Western knowledge. They were produced by collectors under the guise of helping protect folklore materials. The British considered Indians to be so ignorant that they were unaware of the richness of its folklore, and the colonial folklore collector was “lifting a veil” (qtd. Naithani *Story-Time* 99). Ironically, these works created a mask, rather than lifting a veil. They created an India which was unknown

even to Indians themselves. The simple tales were interpreted and used for political and social motives; the meanings in them were taken too literally, and people made to appear too naïve, simple, or cunning—whatever suited imperial objectives. The next chapter analyses Steel's collection of Punjabi folk tales keeping in mind these British colonial and imperial motivations.

Chapter Two: Representations of pre-Partition Punjab and Punjabi people in the *Tales of the Punjab* disseminated by Flora Annie Steel in 1894.

2.1 Introduction

The practices and beliefs included under the general head of Folk-lore make up the daily life of the natives of our great dependency, control their feelings, and underlie many of their actions. We foreigners cannot hope to understand them rightly unless we deeply study them, and it must be remembered that close acquaintance and a right understanding begets sympathy, and sympathy begets good government. (Richard C. Temple 1886 qtd. Gerry Abbott & Khin Thant Han 20)

Temple's words, and the discussion in the previous chapter, describe the motivating spirit of applied folklore and explain why the Empire was so keen to "deeply study" the "natives" from its colonies. His comments on the usefulness of folklore collection and study to achieve "good government" of "the natives" suggest the extent to which folklore collection, and the work of folklorists, were part of the machinery that helped to build and maintain the British Empire. Folklore collection was more than a leisure activity for the British in their colonies. It served a dual purpose: research into the lives and the minds of the natives and using it to consolidate the Empire by devising ways to subjugate them.

India, one of the British colonies also known as the subcontinent owing to its large size, offered "the adventure of lifetime" for the British (J. K. Buda 15). Indeed, it was often referred to as "the jewel in the crown of Victoria's Empire" (Buda 15). The history of Britain's colonisation of India can be divided into two halves, separated by the Sepoy Mutiny or India's First War of Independence in 1857. Peter Marshall describes it as "an age of ill-considered reform, followed by an age of iron conservatism" (n.p.). The Rebellion proved

futile for the Indians, and resulted only in a change of rulers. The Government of India Act of 1858 transferred power from the East India Company to the Queen of England, and a new era of ruling India began. The result of the Indian uprising was distrust and lack of interest in the Indians on the part of British, leading to the withdrawal of Anglo-Indians from locals (Naithani 1997 3).

At about the same time, travelling to India became significantly easier due to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which reduced the journey from England to India from months to weeks. During this time, the Anglo-Indian population in India grew significantly, which in turn increased the already existing inter-racial and cultural prejudices between the British and the Indians (Buda 4). As Rozina Visram observes, quoting a correspondent's words to *The Times* (1858), "the most scrubby, mean little representative of *la race blanche* [the white race] ... regards himself as infinitely superior to the Rajpoot with a genealogy of 1000 years, or a Mussulman, whose ancestors served the early Caliphs."¹⁷

Central to this shift in attitude and greater accessibility to India was the fact that more and more British women joined their husbands, fathers, or brothers in India in this period, explicitly in order to create a homelike environment for their male family members. With the arrival of more women, a little Victorian society began to flourish in India. However, in a patriarchal Anglo-Indian society, there was not much for women to do. Flora Annie Steel, whose life and work are the central subject of this chapter, herself observed at the time: "housekeeping [was] proverbially easy" due to a ready supply of local servants and "in many cases [there was] an empty nursery" as children often remained in or were sent to Britain to be raised and educated (Steel *Garden of Fidelity* 122, 123). Anglo-Indian women were not

¹⁷ In a letter, dated August 28, from Simlah, in India, headed "The Sahib and the Nigger" (*The Anti-Slavery Reporter* Vol. vi. Third series. 1858 264)

only bored, but limited in what they could do and where they could go. LeeAnne Marie Richardson describes the situation of Anglo-Indian women at the time as sharing much with that of Indian women, ranging from their physical separation from men to concepts of honour related to women. Richardson concludes that “British women were in their own kind of zenana, secluded from Indian society, shuttled off to hill stations in hot weather, barred from mixing in native Indian society” (133). Fanny Parkes, who lived in India for twenty-four years between 1822 and 1845, in her analysis of *sati* and its relation to the position of English women,¹⁸ went so far as to declare English women to be every bit as oppressed as Indian women who were forced to commit *sati* (14).

2.2 White woman’s burden

The Anglo-Indian women’s colonial status and ostensible racial superiority over the ‘natives’ complicated their position. They were deemed superior to Indian men and women but the imperial white male was superior to them. This kind of racially inflected gender hierarchy, common across Europe’s many colonies at the time, complicated the position of women like Steel in the imperial order. Steel and her contemporary women writers had the privilege to describe Indians in their writings, whereas Kipling and his contemporaries, being on a higher level in the social hierarchy, had the prerogative of delineating memsahibs in their works. As Edward Said famously argues in *Orientalism*, the one who describes the other has authority and superiority over that other as they can name and define the person they are talking or writing about, without giving them the chance to explain their point of view or write back. More than a neutral act of naming or describing, it is an act of differentiation that functions to assert the namer’s or describer’s superiority. Said observes that “European

¹⁸ A largely obsolete Hindu custom, where a widow immolates herself on her husband’s funeral pyre.

culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (11), and that “Orientalism puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand” (Said 15). Said further argues,

if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author’s involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. (11)

Said maintains that in Orientalist discourse it is an “inert fact” to be Occidental, and these people belong to a part of the world which has been interested in the Orient “since the time of Homer” (11). As with other forms of colonial discourse, this one is also based on the concept of inherent superiority of the one describing over the other being described, securing hegemony. In this process, the described other has no power, no ability to “talk back” or to give an alternative perspective. As far as my project is concerned, this hegemony is maintained by muting the voices of the native and local Punjabi scholars and tale-tellers in particular and Indians in general.

The relationships at stake, in the case of British women in India, were not only those between “Westerners” and “Orientals” but also between men and women. As a number of critics have noted, the introduction of questions about gender significantly complicates the notion of a monolithic “Orientalist” discourse and the notion of a “potentially unified and paradigmatically male colonial subject,” a charge that has been laid against Said’s *Orientalism* (Lewis 3). One such critic is Reina Lewis, who asserts that “discourses of gender ...were racialized and...discourses of race...were gendered” (12). Lewis continues:

[D]iscourses of femininity constrained access to positions of power and participation in colonialism and culture even whilst that very limitation, couched and understood in terms of gender, was also animated by imperial ideology – the gender specificities that accrued to women *qua* women were always built on their difference as *white* women. (15; emphasis in original)

This makes Steel's position complicated, as she is one with authority to name (Indian others) and a woman deemed inferior by colonial men. She is a coloniser, yet colonised by white men; she belongs, at the same time, to the centre and to the margins. In deciding to write about Indians, she accepts the notion that she is superior to the Indians and that she has the right to describe them in her works; a coloniser who considers the colonised inferior yet exotically other. Her work, I will argue, appears to conform to Meyda Yegenoglu's claim that "[w]omen's texts on the orient are imbued with contradictions, sometimes straightforwardly Orientalist and other times undermining the dominant discourse ..." (69).

2.3 Flora Annie Steel and her collection of Punjabi tales

The Oriental is depicted as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual). The point is that in each case the Oriental is contained and represented by dominating frameworks. (Said 40)

Said argues that the 'oriental' is treated as an inanimate object by these colonisers, as something not someone, with no voice and no ideology of their own. In the context of the discussions above and Said's observation, I intend to analyse how Steel's Punjabi tales judge, depict, contain, discipline, and illustrate the Punjabi people. The discussion will start with a

contextual consideration of Steel's biography and the historical context of her works, before moving to a discussion of her collection of folk tales.

Before considering the tales in depth, it will be useful to develop an understanding of the personality and life of the woman who compiled these tales. Flora Annie Webster was born in 1847 at Sudbury Priory, Harrow (Steel *The Garden of Fidelity* 1) and married Henry Steel, a British Civil Servant in India, on 31st December 1867 at the age of twenty. The newly married couple left Britain for India on 1st January 1868, and remained in the subcontinent for twenty-two years. During this time she metamorphosed from "Steel's baby bride" (as she referred to herself in her autobiography) to a *memsahib*, *burra* [big] *memsahib*,¹⁹ to finally, the "star of India" (Steel *The Garden...* 30). On her journey from one world to another, Steel describes how she "at twenty, accustomed to the varied life of a large family, went out to the solitudes and distractions of India. Knowing nothing: absolutely nothing—save what [I] could learn from books" (*The Garden...* 27). These words mark the beginning of Steel's journey to India, and her feelings about how different life was there from her life in England.

Steel presents a complicated study in character as she is, ostensibly, quite the opposite of the stereotypical *memsahib* about whom authors such as Rudyard Kipling have created a "fictional image," encapsulated by Pat Barr as "a frivolous, snobbish and selfish creature who flitted from bridge to tennis parties 'in hills,' while her poor husband slaved 'on the plains'" (1). In her autobiography, Steel paints herself sometimes as a doctor or nurse administering to patients, and sometimes as counsellor saving people's marriages and relationships. Steel also worked as an inspector of schools and promoted Indian women's education, something that was denied to her as a child. Unlike her brothers, who went to Eton, Steel had no formal

¹⁹ Big ma'am, a title used by Indians for upper-class Anglo-Indian women

education.²⁰ Steel's writing was neglected for almost a century, but has become the subject of sustained critical attention in the past few decades or so.²¹

By her own account, what Steel received in return for what she saw as her services in the subcontinent was “endless love” and respect and a vast sea of knowledge about India and Indians: “In her final exit from India [1898]... Flora carried with her a literary harvest that was to last her for the next thirty years” (Powell 105). Her literary career, which spanned almost half a century from 1884 to 1930, began with the publication of *Wide-awake Stories* (1884), her collection of folk tales, and reached its zenith with her most popular novel, *On the Face of the Waters* (1896), about the Indian Mutiny. Her other notable works include *In the Permanent Way and Other Stories* (1897), *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1888), *English Fairy Tales* (1922), *Voices in the Night* (1900), and *The Garden of Fidelity: Being the Autobiography of Flora Annie Steel* (1930).

The image of Steel that is developed in her biography (by Violet Powell, 1981) and in her autobiography (1930) is not that of a typical memsahib, but of a woman who did not mind enjoying the privileges of one. In both autobiography and biography, it is maintained that Steel was not content to waste away her time in idle sitting and leisure activities. In fact, she presents herself as being as much a *helper* of the Empire as her husband, Henry Steel. If Henry Steel left behind the legacy of gardens in Punjab, Flora Steel left her works and writings, which kept his memory alive, as well as hers. It would not be wrong to say that, today, Henry Steel is known less for his gardens and more for his “autocratic” (Barr 150)

²⁰ As she says in her autobiography, “[I] went to...Brussels for six months. It was the only real schooling I ever had. My cousin and I went to a magnificent school...” (*The Garden...* 22). Apart from this, she was home-schooled and self-taught.

²¹ For example Susmita Roye's *Flora Annie Steel: A Critical Study of an Unconventional Memsahib* (2017), Danielle Nielsen's “Survival and Acceptance in Flora Annie Steel's *On the Face of Waters*” (2012), Shampa Roy's “‘A miserable sham’: Flora Annie Steel's Short Fictions and the Question of Indian Women's Reform” (2010).

wife and her writings. Harold Lee, in the 2002 “Foreword” to an edition of Steel’s folk tales, renamed *Tales of the Punjab*, maintains that

[b]y means of exceptional energy, imagination, and intelligence, [Steel] transcended the social professional limits placed upon the role traditionally allotted to the *burra memsahib* to become a pioneering educationist, achieving the highly unusual distinction for a woman of appointment as Inspector of Schools for the Lahore Division [a city of Punjab, now part of Pakistan]. (vii)

In a patriarchal, colonial context, for a woman to be appointed as an Inspector of Schools is a notable achievement. Steel was arguably one of the very few Anglo-Indian women who left their mark during their Indian sojourn on the lives of Indian people through her educational reforms and other services. Her work, aimed at benefitting Indians, also contributed to British rule. As an Inspector of Schools in Punjab, Steel promoted female education, but also pointed out that the education being endorsed was based on English ways, and did not take into account the specific needs of the Indian people. She argued that Western education in India resulted in “a forcible imposition of ‘alien’ ideas which only succeeds in producing confused, fractured psyches” (Roy 68). She did not remain quiet about this opinion and kept pointing out the system’s flaws, which earned her much disfavour. Steel proudly claims in her autobiography that she had a habit of calling a man a fool if he was one in her opinion (182); the same attitude is evident in her dealings with the officials working in the education department in India. Her straightforward, opinionated, and bold outlook caused trouble not only for her but for her husband as well, who was transferred to another station because of her criticism of those working in the Education department. According to Steel, one such secretary who had been trying to deal with her asked her husband, “Why don’t you keep your wife in order?” to which Henry Steel replied, “Take her for a month and try” (*The Garden...*

173). Things became so dire that Steel had to live alone in the house when “rumours would go round that [she] was to be assassinated, and forty or fifty women would come up from the city to watch all night to prevent this”; later a commission was appointed and the “scandal was proved”²² (*The Garden...* 173). Unlike the stereotypical ‘memsahib’ in Kipling who, allegedly, spent her time in India idly waiting for hot summers to pass, or travelling between plains to the hill stations, Steel took charge of things when her husband could not stand the Indian summer heat.

Her involvement with the affairs of the government and Indians gave her an Anglo-Indian experience that she depicted in her fiction. This position, at times, gave her a license to propagate claims about the Indian people with an authority that she did not probably have. All these different aspects of her personality and behaviour show that she was hard to intimidate – a strong-headed woman who could make her own decisions even if they caused trouble for her and people around her. Juliet Shields, in her project *Dangerous Women*, maintains that,

Flora Steel’s outspoken criticisms of colonial inefficiency and corruption made her a dangerous woman as far as the Indian Civil Service was concerned. Yet she was also dangerous from the perspective of traditional Muslim and Hindu communities in the Punjab, as she established schools for women that introduced them to literacy, numeracy, and to the basic medical knowledge that could save their children’s lives. While Steel was by no means free of the racial prejudices common to Victorian Britons, the challenges she posed to patriarchal authority opened new opportunities life [sic] for British and native women in late nineteenth-century India. (Web n.p.)

²² An issue related to a junior official in the Forestry department, who had a fake diploma from Punjab University, although he “could barely read or write” (172). This came under Steel’s inspectorship and her integrity was called to question.

Steel's critics are divided about her perspective on India and the extent of her support of imperial endeavours. Some suggest she was an imperialist helping build the Empire, and others insist she sincerely worked to improve the living conditions and educational opportunities of Indian people. Her near contemporary, Maud Diver, another Anglo-Indian *memsahib*, wrote approvingly in the *Englishwoman in India* (1909) that "Steel ... has left behind her such a legacy of good works as has not been bequeathed to India by any other English woman in her sphere of life" (qtd. Hulme and McDougall 74). The phrasing of Diver's comments reveals her colonialist assumptions, evident in the idea that the English (or an Englishwoman) has "bequeathed" something to an apparently dependent India. Indeed, Steel herself said in her autobiography, of her activities in India, "I had, so far, helped the prestige of the British Raj" (182). LeeAnne Richardson articulates the complexity of Steel's position, her works and their reception as follows: "When she speaks in the voice of the Englishman (or woman), modern critics accuse her of racist, imperialist attitudes. When she speaks in the voice of the Indian, they fault her for misunderstanding Indian culture or of colonising the other" (122). Richardson concedes that

[n]onetheless, she remains a product of her culture and ... displays unconscious racism in her fiction. But Steel is less reductive than her male counterparts. Her negative characterizations are countered by images of Indians who are true to their beliefs, brave, compassionate, and intent on doing their duty. (122)

In many ways, Steel can be seen as an outsider with an unusual insight into the lives of [Punjabi] Indians, and consequently it is tempting to privilege her portrayal of India and Indians, to be seduced by what Jonah Raskin (writing about Kipling) refers to as "the illusion of intimacy" (qtd. Peter Hulme and Russell McDougall 74). Hulme and McDougall argue that

[o]n the one hand she was an ardent supporter of British rule in India, while on the other she made a genuine attempt, in all her Indian writing, both fiction and non-fiction, to interpret the country and its culture using Indocentric rather than Eurocentric measures. Ultimately, though, it is difficult to escape the sense that in all her writing, her knowledge of India is used to control the natives, to support British rule of a subject race. (74)

This seems to concur with Steel's own evaluation: "I was everyday acquiring knowledge of India and its people, and learning more or less how to manage them" (*The Garden...* 52). Steel's contemporary, Cornelia Sorabji, an Indian and the first female graduate from Bombay University, accused both Steel and Kipling of exaggerating the unpleasantness of aspects of Indian life (218). At one point in her autobiography, Steel admits that she found it difficult to understand this vast country called India, "No! Not even when I left India finally in 1889 had I learnt half; it is a hard country for a Westerner to grip" (*The Garden...* 92). Still, she propagated certain stereotypes and generalisations about Indians and Indian women. For example, Steel claims that "I had gripped that the Mahomedan women in towns and therefore in the *purdah*, were inevitably over-obsessed by sex" (*The Garden...* 121). Although, earlier she maintained that, "People have often asked me how I came to know a certain amount about Indian ways, to acquire a certain small understanding of Indian mentality. To this I have but one answer: 'Kasur' [a city in Punjab]" (*The Garden...* 104). She thus assumes that knowing women from one area qualify her to pass judgements about the women all over India "in towns and therefore in *purdah*," and a misconception that Indian women belong to a homogenous group, and by knowing women from only one part of a huge place like India, she had marked all 'Mahomedan' women as "over-obsessed by sex." Kasur was the district in Punjab where Steel spent most of her time in India, and where she gathered many of the folk

tales that would comprise her collection. As we will see, some of the attitudes evident in her autobiography are also apparent in her retellings of the tales.

Shampa Roy points out that Steel's contemporary Anglo-Indians such as Bithia Croker,²³ Alice Perrin,²⁴ and Fanny Penny wrote fiction that completely ignored Indians, and contained only "station romances that dealt with colonial flirtation, courtship, marriage and domesticity" (58). Roy maintains that the "remarkableness of Steel's stories lies in their attempting to look at the reform question from the Indian women's perspectives" (55). She further maintains that, despite her imperial views, Steel is unique not only in her use of an Indian background and setting in her stories, but also in the ways these fictions draw attention to the harm that "poorly visualised, inefficiently administered reform projects cause in the lives of various Indian women, the supposed beneficiaries of these reform projects" (58).

To date, critical engagement with Steel's writing focuses on her long and short fiction, housekeeping guide, and memoir. The present study will explore whether, and to what extent, Steel's complex position as a colonial woman is reflected in her folk tale collection. My task is complicated by the way written folk tales are derived from oral accounts told and retold by large numbers of people, and by issues to do with translation and editing. Ruth Bottigheimer contends that these processes of "'writ[ing] down,' and 'collect[ing]'" strongly suggest an act of appropriation, as Marxist critics would express it, a kind of intellectual piracy or theft from an unlettered teller by a literate author" (6). Thus, the

²³ An Irish novelist, who lived in Madras and Bengal, India for fourteen years with her husband, published works including *Given in Marriage* (1916), *Jungle Tales* (1913), *Her Own People* (1905), *Beyond the Pale* (1896), *Married or Single* (1895) and many more. (Internet Archives)

²⁴ Born in India in 1867, her father was Major-General John Innes Robinson. After completing her studies in England, she married and returned to India in 1886 for sixteen years. She wrote seventeen novels, "many of which focus on British experience in India" (Alice Perrin *East of Suez* 5-6)

very act of collecting and writing down these folk tales is in itself politically charged, an appropriation or theft of intellectual property.

2.3.1 Steel as a Feminist

Given the Victorian ideal of a clear-cut dichotomy between male and female roles, the only ostensible reason for the Anglo-Indian women's presence in India was to create a family and homelike environment for their husbands, fathers, and sons. The intention behind this was to keep these men away from the Indians – thus increasing the distance between colonisers and colonised, and further entrenching racial prejudices. Barr argues that because of the social prejudices and conventions of the time, Anglo-Indian women were bound to perform traditional roles within the home, which were mostly supportive and secondary in nature (1).

A number of women in the colonies with their husbands, fathers or brothers, were there to arrange parties and be at the table to entertain their guests, such as Emily and Fanny Eden who came with their brother, George Eden, Governor General of India, in 1836. Many of these British women and girls in India, 'imprisoned' in their own kind of 'zenana' (Richardson 133), found for themselves a pastime: listening to and recording the tales told by their Indian servants, or, as in Steel's case, by children. Steel's setting for collecting the tales sitting under a tree on a carpet, is different from the typical one where the storyteller sat on the floor and the listener on a chair in a comfortable lounge or domestic space. The following illustration, by John D. Batten, from Joseph Jacobs' *Indian Fairy Tales* (1892), depicts one such typical setting.



Fig. 1. John D. Batten. *Indian Fairy Tales*. Joseph Jacobs. 1912.

For a self-proclaimed ‘feminist’ like Steel, entertaining and caring for the needs of her husband could not be the only purpose of her being in India, and, by her own account, she struggled to fit in the stereotypical mould of a *memsahib*. I have put Steel’s feminism in inverted commas because like all her works and attitudes, the issue of her feminism is complicated and fraught with inconsistencies. In her autobiography she claims, “I have always been a vehement Suffragette”; however, in the same passage she also writes, “but as I saw that typical figure of manhood at its best [an unnamed host], tidying the drawing-room while his sister lay abed, I wondered, at that time somewhat sadly” (222). Perhaps she was a proto-feminist, who was nonetheless saddened by the figure of a man doing a woman’s chores. Steel belonged to the era of feminists and feminism in the late nineteenth century that was “characterized by tensions between ‘authoritarianism and voluntarism,’ between conservatism and radicalism, and between egalitarian sisterhood and maternalistic protectionism” (Paxton 335). Nearly twenty years ago, Karyn Huenemann suggested that there was “insufficient critical work attempting to reconcile [Steel’s] proclaimed feminist attitudes... with her complicity in the patriarchal imperialism of the British Raj” (237). This has changed, with a number of recent studies focussing on precisely this issue. Steel’s

collection of folk tales provides a particularly rich site for investigating this further, in part because of their explicit connection to the colonial endeavour.

Steel had internalised the imperialist ideology that the British had a right to rule, and Indians as a nation were meant to be ruled and needed to be treated with what she tellingly referred to as the “highhanded dignity” (*The Garden...* 133) to which she believed they had become accustomed over thousands of years. She admits of herself, “I was autocratic enough,” going on to claim, though, “that my insistence on obedience where I had a *right* to command [n]ever roused the very slightest antagonism” (ibid; my emphasis). It is evident in her autobiography that Steel thoroughly enjoyed her *memsahib* status and considered the authority that it afforded as legitimate, and she “[did] not recognize the evidence that her power was derived from her husband’s position and limited by the conventions that defined the memsahib’s proper role” (Paxton 337).

It is noteworthy in the context of understanding Steel’s folk tale collection that although claiming to be a Suffragette, Steel appears to be uncomfortable with female sexuality. On the first page of her autobiography, *The Garden of Fidelity*, she says that she had an “inborn dislike to the sensual side of life,” (1) and later puts the blame of many domestic problems on women: “[N]ot that there are no matrimonial troubles in India. On the contrary, there are many though, admittedly, I think it is invariably the woman who begins them” and that, “The man may be quite ready to make love to the woman if she asks him to do so; otherwise he is—or was—a gentleman” (122). The last chapter of her autobiography, written by her daughter Mable Helen Webster, reports that Steel believed “woman’s jealousy was the primal cause of that disharmony of the racial instincts which is the root of so many of our social evils” (292). There are a number of instances where Steel explicitly puts the blame on women for creating trouble and making a marriage unhappy. This notion of “female

jealousy” is quite prominent in the selection of her Punjabi tales, where the blame for most misfortune is put, directly or indirectly, on women. Though these stories may not be her own creations, the selection of such tales, and her characterisation of women as evil-doers, amplify her view that, west or east, it is women, and their jealousy, that are to blame for “so many of our social evils.” Steel narrates an incident about an old gardener who married a young woman and had a child, but the young wife was not happy with the marriage, “for the old man was mad, undoubtedly mad. I believe the young wife used to drive him so. He was hanged for killing her [when she told him that the child was not his]...and there was no one to speak up for the poor soul [old man].... But I personally think this woman had earned it...” (129). Later in the chapter she maintains that “men ... are more gentle than women: they are far more afraid of hurting” (130). Her promotion of harmful stereotypes about women complicates her claims to be a feminist. Steel also seems to be using the tactic of, in Deniz Kandiyoti’s term, patriarchal bargaining (274). This is when a woman accepts and even reinforces patriarchal norms that are disadvantageous to women in general, but offer her, personally, some degree of power.

Steel’s weak belief in women’s ability to do anything independently is demonstrated in *The Garden of Fidelity*, where she claims to have become conscious of a figure in her “mind’s eye” who helped her write: “A figure in the white uniform of an [Anglo] Indian railway guard” who asserted that “his name was Nathaniel James Craddock” (197). She avers that it was this imaginary figure who helped her write, or rather dictated to her, three stories, of which “The Permanent Way” was the first. Her concluding remarks on the supernatural character are that he “has come and told me [three] stor[ies];²⁵ and those stories are good ones, better than most I turn out” (198). Paxton, analysing Steel’s autobiography argues,

²⁵ “The Permanent Way” (197), “The King’s Well” and “The most nailin’ bad shot” (198).

“[W]e see the literal internalisation of male authority” (338) in this fantasy. At a time when women authors were using male pseudonyms, such as George Eliot, Steel created a male alter ego to affirm the value and lend credibility to her writing. She knew about the treatment accorded to women writers, which made them use male pseudonyms in the first place. Her collection and publication of the Punjabi tales were her first venture into writing, yet both editions came with a disclaimer in their subtitles: these are not Steel’s tales but rather ones “told by little children” (1884) or “told by the people” (1894). Steel positioned herself as a mere transcriber, a conduit rather than a creator—and, I will suggest, one reliant on male guidance and masculine scholarly authority.

2.3.2 Folklore Collecting in India

As discussed in the previous chapter, a large number of folklore collections were published in India between 1860 and 1920, along with “a spate of travelogues, dictionaries, monographs, gazetteers, and surveys of ‘customs and manners’ of Indian populations by British officials, and their families, and by missionaries” (Leela Prasad 5). The Anglo-Indian community found this new vocation a very fruitful one, with literary as well as political significance. The dissemination of local tales from Indian servants, their translation into English for a British audience, and the addition of notes and annotations for research purposes, made these collections political tools in the service of the Empire.

However, Anglo-Indian women, as mentioned earlier, despite their ostensible position of racial and class privilege, were disadvantaged by their : “In other words, [they] occupied a position that was beset with contradictions between [their] class/race power and [their] gender disadvantages” (Sen 11). This ambivalence is evident in Steel’s work. In 1884, the same year that Temple became the editor of *Indian Antiquary*, Steel published *Wide-Awake Stories, A Collection of Tales Told by Little Children, between Sunset and Sunrise, in the*

Punjab and Kashmir. It included extensive comparative and explanatory notes written by Temple, who also co-authored the Preface and collected some of the stories. A second edition was published ten years later (1894) as *Tales of the Punjab: Told by the People*, with Temple's notes and scholarly additions. The changed title reflects the shift in emphasis from tales told by children, collected from children in the Punjab and Kashmir, to a more 'scholarly' edition of tales claimed to be representative of "the people" from a specific Indian region, the Punjab. The following comment from the preface implies that male scholarly intervention was needed to render the collection 'valuable' as anthropological "science", via the provision of 'outside' commentary on what was formerly considered merely women's/children's/local's entertainment: "It is therefore hoped that the form of the book may fulfil the double intention with which it was written; namely, the text should interest children, and at the same time the notes should render it valuable to those who study Folklore on its scientific side" (3).²⁶ The first edition, *Wide-awake Stories* (1884), which was also Steel's first book, contained the same 43 stories. In the preface, Steel and Temple write:

The tales in this collection... have mostly appeared before in the *Indian Antiquary*... but they differ from their formal shape, in so far as they are now presented in purely literary form, whereas previously the object aimed at was to give them in a strict translation, however uncouth to English ears. (iii)

Steel collected the Punjabi tales, translated them into English and published them in the *Indian Antiquary* and other journals from 1880 to 1883, before compiling them in a book along with other stories in 1884, and then republished under a different title in 1894.

²⁶ For the later edition of the collection, *Tales of the Punjab*, I have used the printed, unabridged edition of 1973, "decorated by David Gentleman" and published by The Bodley Head, London, Sydney. As the illustrations are different, I also consulted the 1894 version digitized by Internet Archive, Project Gutenberg. I have also consulted the Internet Archives of the volumes of *Indian Antiquary* where the tales were first published between 1880 to 1882.

Having attempted my own translation of Aqeel's published collection of tales (discussed in the next chapter) from Urdu (my first language) into English, I have first-hand knowledge of how difficult it is to translate "one colloquialism by another" (*Tales of the Punjab* 2). Steel listened to different variants/versions of the tales, and then decided their "greater literary sequence" by "select[ing] carefully" to achieve "a good story" (2). Temple, in the preface to his *The Legends of the Punjab*, describes his collection process:

The procedure finally adopted ... is to have recitation taken down roughly as related, then carefully copied out in a clear Persian hand, and corrected and explained by the bard, his explanation being marginally noted. I then transcribe the whole into Roman characters myself, and translate it. The Roman transliteration and the translation is then gone over by the munshi who heard the song sung, and both are revised by myself finally in consultation with him. (Vol. 1 xi)

The process involved multiple languages and multiple minds, and the colonisers had the final word. The description is of Temple's process, but is likely to have been followed by other collectors as well. To understand the essence of local terms and expressions in Punjabi tales, they needed someone with native expertise in the Punjabi language and culture. In the Preface to the 1884 edition, which was published in Bombay (now Mumbai) by the Education Society Press, Steel and Temple write about a "coadjutrix" named Bakhtawar;

The authors have had a coadjutrix in collecting their tales, who has been so useful in aiding them that they gratefully acknowledge her services. Her name is Bakhtawar, a *zamindar's* (farmer's)²⁷ daughter, from the Lahore District, educated and brought up

²⁷ This is a slightly mistranslation, as *zamindar* means a person who owns land, and 'farmer' can be a person who works on someone else's land. This is possibly intentional, in order to make Bakhtawar look more native and unspoilt.

by F. A. Steel and subjected to no other foreign influence. She has since married a Qoreshi Shekh and still collects. The great value of her help consisted in her knowledge of the ways of her class, and of the words peculiar to it. The authors are quite sure of her ignorance of all matters connected with European life and notions.

(viii)

The preface focusses more on the woman's nativity and lack of experience rather than her contribution—that she was a *zamindar*'s daughter, “subjected to no other foreign influence” is testimonial to authenticity. The odd information about her marrying a “Qoreshi Shekh” appears significant as,²⁸ according to Gloria Goodwin Raheja (1996), the record of the Indian people's castes helped the British categorize those who participated in the Rebellion. The prefatory comment raises some interesting questions: If Bakhtawar was “still collect[ing]” why did none of her stories find a space in the journals of that time? Why did she just disappear? There is no mention of her in later editions of the book, nor in Steel's autobiography, a noticeable omission given the claim that Bakhtawar was “educated and brought up by F. A. Steel.” Instead, her autobiography includes details about the imaginary male figure discussed earlier, who prompted her to write her three stories. The second edition of the book, published as *Tales of the Punjab*, omits to “acknowledge [Bakhtawar's] services.” As a result, Bakhtawar has disappeared not only from the literary but also the scholarly record, her presence unnoticed, to my knowledge, by other scholars up to the present day. Another anonymous native scholar is mentioned, in passing, at the start of the first edition: “The tales about Raja Rasalu were translated by [Temple] from the original rough manuscript written down by a *patwari*, or village accountant, of the Rawal Pindi district of the Panjab, [who wrote the stories] for Mr. J. G. Delmerick, about 15 years ago”

²⁸ A family name or caste, also spelled as Qureshi Sheikh.

(iii). In the later edition (1894) his name is mentioned in the notes at the end. These co-collectors, and the nature and extent of their services, appear to share the fate of Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube who, according to Naithani, assisted William Crooke in his collecting work. Chaube's contribution was lost in the British archives for a century until Naithani discovered it (2006 vii). Perhaps, the village accountant's (from Rawal Pindi) identity could be traced in Delmerick's archives, if they are available somewhere in British libraries.

In an apparent attempt to make the work appear more authentic and truly Indian, Steel and Temple claim in the 1884 Preface that the "collection is out of the mouths of many witnesses, whose complete freedom from any European influence is beyond all question" (ix). This is a disingenuous claim, of course, given the process of European collection and translation, and the overlay of Western scholarly apparatus on the text notable in the second edition. Moreover, while the collated tales remain the same in both editions, the change of title is worth noting, from *Wide-awake Stories: A Collection of Tales Told by Little Children, between Sunset and Sunrise, in the Punjab and Kashmir* to *Tales of the Punjab: Told by the People*. These changes, along with the erasure of the co-adjutrix, Bakhtawar, suggest the "scientific" and "scholarly" metamorphosis of the collection, and the different readerships to which each edition was addressed. Interestingly, Steel preferred the first edition to the grander version intended for an adult British audience. In her autobiography she writes, "I had brought out in India, a volume of Folk Tales which I had collected, with a few of Captain Temple's Notes; I called it *Wide Awake Stories*. I wrote it entirely for children, so that I considered it suffered considerably by being published in England with copious notes as *Tales of the Punjab*" (187). This might also be the reason for Steel to have introduced golden-haired princesses, as the tales were targeting western children. There are many native terms and elements (in both the editions) that Steel has literally or scientifically translated to make them comprehensible for her intended readers. For example, instead of the native word

charpoy, she uses the long explanation, “wooden-legged, string woven bedsteads” (6); instead of *surma*, for a type of eyeliner, Steel uses “powdered antimony” (27).

The scholarly focus of the second edition is clearly emphasised in its “Preface” which informs readers that the stories were collected by Steel who was “responsible for the text, and Major R. C. Temple for the annotations and the appendices on Analysis and Survey of Incidents” (3). As discussed in the previous chapter, Temple’s co-authorship of the Preface is reflective of the gendered hierarchical setup in which Steel, being a woman, did not have as much credibility as he did. It was undoubtedly helpful to have a stamp of approval and collaboration from someone with official ranks and badges, like Temple, who had so many other research works to his name. The list of Temple’s works at the time of first publication of the tales appears in the para-textual introductory passages of the book like this: “Works by Captain R. C. Temple. *The Lord’s Prayer in the South Andamanese Language*, *The Legends of the Panjab*, *A Dissertation on the Proper Names of the Panjabis*, and *Panjab Notes and Queries*” (iii).

Temple’s contribution of tales to the collection were “The Wonderful Ring,” “Adventures of Raja Rasalu” from tale number 32 to 39, “The King who was Fried,” and “Prince Half a Son.” As already discussed, the tales of Raja Rasalu were not collected by him.²⁹ The elaborate citation of his titles and works gives the impression that Steel’s collection of tales has been peer-reviewed by someone of scholarly stature, and has received a certificate of being useful and suitable for British/Western audiences: this is no simple collection of children’s tales. It adds to the consumerist value of the collection, as Steel’s name was new to the literary world at the time.

²⁹ In 1884, the same year when *Wide-awake Stories* was published, Charles Swynnerton’s *The Adventures of the Panjab Hero Raja Rasalu and other Folk-tales of the Panjab: Collected and compiled from original sources* was published by W. Newman & Co., Ltd., Calcutta.

2.4 Steel's wider writings in context

As I have already noted, British women in India cannot be seen as a homogenous group, as they have often been portrayed. Another Anglo-Indian woman, Fanny Parkes, expresses her love for India in exaggerated terms in *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque* (1850): “How much there is to delight the eye in this bright, this beautiful world! Roaming about with a good tent and a good arab, one might be happy forever in India” (qtd. Barr 28). Parkes declares her appreciation of the beauty of India as a traveller, an outsider, appropriating it in picturesque expressions. In contrast, Steel attempts to ‘help’ the people of India by seeking to understand their daily life and becoming a part of it. These are two different experiences of India, one focussing on the beauty and serenity of the place, the other trying to decipher the minds of the people to control them in better way.

The critical reception of Steel's work compared it with that of Kipling, and her ‘Mutiny’ novel, *On the Face of Waters* (1897), was judged superior by some to Kipling's works on the same subject. Kipling, according to Kaori Nagai “rarely wrote on the Mutiny” (93), apart from few articles such as “The Little House at Arrah” (1888). One review applauded Steel's novel by saying, “Mrs. Steel has challenged comparison with Mr. Rudyard Kipling and she need not fear the result” (*The Daily Chronicle*). This was also the opinion of an earlier reviewer for *The Critic* in 1897, who praised Steel for her knowledge of India and Indians: “No writer—not even Mr Kipling—knows the life of the mixed population of the Anglo-Indian empire better than the author of *On the Face of the Waters*” (1897). Yet despite receiving much applause and critical acclaim, Steel lacked the fame and popularity that Kipling enjoyed. Indira Ghose and Sara Mills claim in the preface to *Wanderings of a Pilgrim* (2001), “For British women of the mid-to-late nineteenth century, there were difficult choices to be made about presenting oneself as knowledgeable” (6). Women had to be careful in how

they expressed their knowledge through their writing, so as not to seem “narcissistic” (Suleri 83). Women writers were told by their (male) publishers and editors to avoid writing about scientific subjects and they were expected to write about non-serious, unscientific things: “[W]omen’s texts are not supposed to be scientific and authoritative, but rather, supposed to be amateurish” (Mills 83). This background may explain Temple’s entry into Steel’s *Tales of the Punjab*: not only could he claim to have authoritative knowledge about India (he was born there), but also he was a white man. It is tempting to ask if this is why, “[w]hereas Kipling has become virtually synonymous with literary representations of British colonial rule, Flora Annie Steel (1847-1929) [until recently] all but disappeared from the canon of writers on empire” (Ayres 119).

Ignored for much of the twentieth century, Steel has been the subject of extensive critical discussion in the past couple of decades. Critics are divided about her loyalties to the imperial project in India. One group of critics contends that her works and her life in India helped Indians in multiple ways. Roy, for example, in her analysis of Steel’s short fictions, maintains that “Steel, in her stories, examines questions of gender, sexuality, and reform in the context of Indian women’s lives in ways that often seem to go beyond such racial stereotypes” (55). On the other hand, according to Susmita Roye, “by adding her unique vision of the female side of the Raj experience,” Steel “happens to complement the contribution of her male counterpart [Rudyard Kipling]” (xiii). Amrita Banerjee in “The Other Voice,” argues that Steel had an advantage over Kipling, whose “success as a writer made the subcontinent a backyard for him” (29), but Steel “had the privilege of being able to visit the inner sanctum of Indian domesticity” (34). Ghose and Mills, in their Introduction of Fanny Parkes’ travelogue on India, declare that “There is one field in which women travellers alone were qualified to contribute to the production of knowledge about the Orient, and that was in their accounts of harem or zenana” (*Wanderings* ... 11). Although it was not the only

field for Anglo-Indian women writers, it was one they knew better than Anglo-Indian male authors and travellers who did not have access to Indian zenana or women's quarters. In Steel's own words, "I had, so far, helped the prestige of the British Raj.... The people had liked me, liked my autocratic ways, my habit of calling a man a fool, if he was one *in my opinion*" (*The Garden...* 182, Steel's emphasis). Her work, then, can be read as a part of the colonising mission, helping to fill in gaps left by her male contemporaries.

A dominant thread in these recent critical discussions of Steel and her work focuses on her uneasy position as both a feminist and a coloniser. Danielle Nielsen notes that although Steel "worked to extend native women's educational opportunities, encouraged Anglo-Indians to purchase native material when possible, and at times even created strong, feminist Indian characters, she was not against the colonial regime" (24). Amrita Banerjee observes that "Steel ... stands apart in her courage to portray native women with an agency that is often opposed to the system of colonial domination" (34-35), but also notes that "Steel's narrative voice is often tinged with overt racism and cultural superiority" (48). Roy (2010) claims that "the Indian women in Steel's fictions are not essentialised as shadowy long-suffering figures, silently surrendering to their cruel fates" (55), while acknowledging that "given her privileged position within the capitalist Imperial structure, Steel's responses to Indian women [were necessarily] embedded in cultural and political hierarchies of power based on class and race" (55). Nielsen cautions against Steel's "use of Indian characters as representatives of Victorian women's potential freedom" (8), and LeeAnne Marie Richardson (2003) maintains that "[a]lthough this representation of Indian ways sets Steel apart from other adventure novelists, she nonetheless oscillates between racial pride and racial understanding. She is caught in an ideological double bind ..." (121-122). Huenemann maintains that Steel's fictive Indian women are used as a political tool to emancipate British women (238).

Steel's attitude towards gender is filled with contradictions as "her gender sympathies [are] often ... complicated by her class and race biases" (Sen 134), and, as we will see, these contradictions are manifest in her collection of folk tales, and in its female characters. Sen maintains that her gender descriptions in her novels are so "discursive" and ambivalent that they "sometimes appear to actually amplify major colonial myths about [British] women" (134). She argues that Steel's views about Indian women were also fraught with "contradictions and paradoxes and displayed a mixture of censure and praise" (135). Amrita Banerjee in "Other Voices" maintains that through her work in public affairs, Steel wanted to bring substantial change to the lives of Indian women, which is evident in her novels, such as *The Potter's Thumb* (1894) and *Voices in the Night* (1900) (41). Ghose and Mills maintain that, in general,

[t]his seeming philanthropic concern of British women for their Indian 'sisters' had complex and troubling implications. It was always predicated on an image of Indian women as inferior, and above all served to consolidate the Western woman's self-image as more liberated and civilized. (*Wanderings* 17)

Steel's resourceful personality and her "maternal imperialism" (Banerjee 48) seems to have made her popular among the Indian people, especially women. There is an exotic account, in Steel's biography, of the huge gathering of women who had come to see her off at the station, as she is leaving India following her husband's retirement in May 1889: "Three hundred veiled women had gathered at the railway station to do Flora honour, but they were so excited at finding themselves in such an emancipated situation that weeping was kept at bay" (Powell 60). Powell, writing in 1981, has exoticised the scene with the mention of veiled women who were "emancipated" by the white woman who provided them with a rare opportunity to come out of their houses, and to visit a train station. Steel's apparently close

relationship with the purdah-clad women of Indian zenana gave her license to develop and propagate her generalisations about the Muslim women of India, such as her view that they were “over obsessed by sex” (*The Garden...* 121). Here she follows in the footsteps of other Anglo-Indian writers who propagated the image of “the harem to cater to voyeuristic male fantasies and contribute towards the production of knowledge about the Other” (*Wanderings...* 12). She knew women from only one part of Punjab, Kasur, as she rather humbly admitted in her autobiography, yet she formed a view about all Muslim women, and promoted it.³⁰

Steel’s attitude towards India remains complicated. Sometimes she behaved like a rude *burra memsahib* who would not tolerate anything less than what she believed her status deserved, and tried to teach other Anglo-Indians to do the same:

I was never disturbed again. This little incident again shows an important truth –the absolute necessity for high-handed dignity in dealing with those who for thousands of years have been accustomed to it.³¹ They love it. It appeals to them, they know – or they did know—that authority has to be justified. (*The Garden...* 133)

In Steel’s other writing, what Banerjee refers to as her “maternal imperialism” is sometimes evident, as when she reports that she cried with the Indian women in zenanas. “Maternal Imperialism” is clearly a gendered form of the benevolent paternalism displayed by colonisers towards their colonial subjects, whom they considered childlike, far below on

³⁰ She also, at one point in her autobiography, maintained that, “the native women of the Punjab races have an unerring instinct for the truth” (*The Garden...* 150).

³¹ “It was in my work in the city close to a big military cantonment that I had my first and only experience of insult. A lewd woman, in a street through which I would not have gone had I not been stranger to the town, cast a bad word at me. Within ten minutes I had her bound over for using language calculated to cause a breach of the peace, in the Indian magistrate’s court hard by” (*The Garden...* 133).

the developmental ladder and needing on occasion to be reprimanded. Steel's *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* has often been discussed as evidencing her master-slave/coloniser-colonised relationship with India and Indians. In this book, co-authored with her friend Grace Gardiner, her strong imperialistic views are evident, as she describes how she taught the new Anglo-Indians to deal strictly with Indian maids and servants. In her autobiography, Steel ruthlessly describes how she whipped an Indian servant who mistreated her mule:

I was still in my habit with my whip—and I belaboured him with it till I nearly dropped, he shrieking with terror, thinking a female demon had got him ... I don't know if it was, but it was done, and if anyone blames me for having horse-whipped a man, I don't blame myself. (154-5)

What she appears most concerned about, after the incident is that “it is unladylike” (155) but shows no qualms of conscience for beating the man. Would she exercise this same power over a white man, whatever his status?

2.5 Richard Carnac Temple: The Coloniser-Folklorist

Another important figure in the collection, who has sometimes been confused as being the sole collector of the *Tales of the Punjab*, is Temple. His main contributions were co-authoring the preface, providing notes and a survey of incidents in modern Indian Aryan folk tales, and a few tales. But these are the elements of scientific value to Western researchers. In addition, the Preface is the space where Orientalist and colonialist expressions have been used to frame the collection. Naithani begins her essay on Temple, “The Colonizer-Folklorist,” with a brief biographical summary:

The title of this paper refers to Richard Carnac Temple (1850-1931), a British military and civil service officer in colonial India who collected folktales, legends, and versified tales in the west Indian province of Punjab during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. (1)

Naithani notes that her title also refers to other folklorists collecting tales from India “whose primary role was representing British colonial interest in India” (1). Unlike Steel, Temple was born in India, in Allahabad, a North-western Province of India, now known as Uttar Pradesh, in 1850, where his father, Sir Richard Temple, was an administrative officer. He was educated in England, as so many colonial children were, first at Harrow and then at Trinity College, Cambridge. Having completed his degree in Anthropology at Cambridge, in 1871, he returned to India and joined the Indian Army in 1878. He was later selected for the post of Cantonment Magistrate in the Punjab. His duties on the bench left him leisure to devote to the collection of materials that appeared in the three-volume *Legends of the Punjab* (1884-1900) and in *Punjab Notes and Queries* (1883-87). His knowledge of local folklore and his works on regional folklore led him to collaborate with Steel in her collection of tales of the Punjab. He retired in 1904 and went back to England where he delivered his first “lecture on anthropology at Cambridge” (Naithani 3).

As discussed earlier, Temple contributed few tales to Steel’s collection, some of which were not actually collected by him, yet he took the credit, giving very little credit to the original collectors. Temple’s real contribution, and a major one, was adding the preface, notes and survey of incidents to the tales. Significantly, Temple’s role in the work appears to have eclipsed that of Steel, at least around the time of publication. His contribution of extensive notes and the Preface, packed with racial stereotypes, have made the collection more than just a collection of tales. Another folklorist, Joseph Jacobs, in the preface to his

collection *Indian Fairy Tales* (1892), completely ignores Steel when referring to *Wide-awake Stories*: “To Major Temple I owe the advantage of selecting from his admirable *Wide-awake Stories*.” This misattribution clearly suggests the gendered politics that shaped the field in which Steel was engaged.

2.6 Collecting, Interpreting, and Scripting *Tales of the Punjab*

Steel’s ‘understanding’ of the Indian people was aided by her knowledge of the local language, Punjabi, and her understanding of their culture. Aided by this knowledge (and by her coadjutrix?), in about 1880 Steel began to collect folk tales from villagers, including children, as she travelled around the Punjab province (Crane and Johnston 74). As Said observes, “the Orient is rendered silent and its reality is revealed by the Orientalist”: the one Punjabi helper that Steel and Temple had in the process of textualising these tales is lost in the process, and by the next edition, she is not given any credit.

In their Preface to the second edition, jointly written by Steel and Temple, they claim to have been true to the originality and style of the stories, because altering the style would have “robbed the stories of all human value” (*Tales of the Punjab* 2). Steel further informs her readers that, first, out of the many stories told to her, she selected few, and then second, out of many forms of each tale she selected one form over the other and finally selected the one which appeared in *best* form to her. She elaborates that “[the stories] have been selected carefully with the object of securing a good story in what appears to be its best form; but they have not been doctored in any way, not even in the language” (2). This makes explicit the multi-layered selection, deselection and interpretation process that was followed. The third step of interpretation, which in this case comes closer to censoring, is expressed in the very first paragraph of the Preface (1894), which maintains that the tales were “then in the form of literal translations” published in the *Indian Antiquary*, the *Calcutta Review*, and *Legends of*

the Punjab, and were in many cases “uncouth or even unpresentable to ears polite,” and “all scarcely intelligible to the untravelled English reader” (1). This implies that some changes to the literal translations were necessary. These factors, considered in the context of my earlier discussion of the translation process that involved one work going through many languages before scripting and transcribing, are revealing and significant.

The explanations given in the Preface prepare readers and those who are going to study these tales on the “scientific side” (Preface 3), for an authentic collection of exotic tales, unspoilt by foreign influence. At the same time, the opening paragraphs set the tone, addressing and framing readers’ expectations of an uncivilised, childish, illiterate people who are in dire need of colonisation for their own good. Through these para-textual elements of their collection, Steel and Temple develop an image in their readers’ minds that, I suggest, further reflects their Occidental assumptions about the Orient.

This conversion of the raw material into charming written texts is central to my research into Steel’s work. A possible reason behind the transmutations undertaken by Steel is the colonialist perspective that the native tongues contained improper words and immoral ideas inappropriate for British children (Barr 84). She was therefore required to make necessary changes to that raw material. What changes were made, and to what extent have the stories retained their original flavour and meaning as they were orally shared between Punjabi people? In the absence of the original Punjabi transcripts of the oral versions, we will never know.

To encourage villagers to tell their stories and to feel comfortable, Steel notes in the Preface, “When the general conversation is fairly started, inquiries are made by degrees as to how many witches are in the village, or what cures they know for fever and the evil eye, etc.” (2). This provides a sense of the extent to which Steel shaped what was told to her by putting

words in the villagers' mouths, or directing them to tell her stories about witches, evil women, magic, and superstitions. This adds further to the censoring and selection process. At one point in the preface of their collection Steel and Temple maintain that "... it is possible to waste many hours, and in the end find yourself possessed of nothing save...a compilation of oddments which have lingered in a faulty memory from half a dozen distinct stories" (2). Steel seems to be rejecting some of the tales immediately, based on her own previous knowledge, without realising that these tales are oral and part of one tale can seep into another tale and still be a folk tale.

Steel and Temple, in the Preface, compare their collection with other contemporary collections, and assert its literary superiority:

Some of the tales in this volume have thus been a year or more on the stocks before they had been heard sufficiently often to make their form conclusive. And this accounts for what may be called the greater literary *sequence* of these tales over those to be found in many similar collections. (2; emphasis mine)

The essence of the folk tales lies in their orality and the looseness of their plots, but Steel and Temple's claims for "the greater literary sequence" of these tales, suggest that they were forgetting these tales are not meant to be literary.

Steel has also added some elements or expressions that are from Western fairy tales: "Abracadabra!" (5), "Hey presto!" (5), "Fee! Fa! Fum! I smell the blood of a man!" (109). One could argue that she is Westernising the tales as well as Orientalising them. In some stories, the situations are also represented in ways that echo Western fairy tales. For example, in one tale, "Princess Aubergine," after the princess's death her body is left on "a flower-strewn bed, looking as if she had just fallen asleep" (56). The Punjabi story is made to sound

a lot like the story of *Sleeping Beauty*. As Steel claimed to have collected the tales for British children, these changes appear to have been introduced to make the tales more familiar to her intended audience, and to gratify the expectations of her audience.

2.6.1 Picturing the Exotic East

As Said writes, “What is circulated by [cultural discourse] is not ‘truth’ but representations” (21). Thus through these tales an image of India and Indians was created and supported by more Orientalist materials to feed the Western imagination. These published texts became the representations of their native narrators for the people in far-off lands who would never see them, but would read about them and claim to be experts on them. As if words were not enough, the new art of sketching, and later photography, added images to the words in the journals and notes. The 1884 version of *Wide-awake Stories* was without illustrations, perhaps because the edition was for Anglo-Indians or Indians who could read English.

The 1894 version, *Tales of the Punjab*, had illustrations to supplement the textually represented situations and to help the imagination of an untraveled British audience. Steel herself had previously shown a talent for sketching (*The Garden* 11, 81, 90, 98), but the collection’s sketches and illustrations were by J. Lockwood Kipling, who as illustrator of *The Jungle Book*, published the same year, needed no introduction. The similarities between the illustrations in the two books are striking, yet (given their common source) unsurprising. These drawings helped British readers to see (and imagine) India and the settings of these stories. In these drawings, Kipling has beautifully illustrated some of the main characters and events of the stories with emphasis on the exotic—be it a wee old man or woman, a beautiful princess, a weaver, a spinning wheel, a millstone, a palanquin, or the animals of India such as crocodiles, tigers, bears, and elephants. The princesses and women are exoticised by wearing

jewels which are absent from the written details of the stories. In these illustrations, Kipling makes use of the picturesque, described by Ghose and Mills, as “an aesthetic mode in landscape art that originated in the mid-eighteenth century” which is “predicated on a power distance between the observer and the observed: those who represent and those who labour” (*Wanderings...* 7). Other elements “deemed as Picturesque were ruins, old cottages, rural inhabitants with their carts and horses, and especially exemplars of the rural poor like gypsies” (7). Kipling’s drawings in this collection follow the same pattern, and present not only the people and/or characters of the tales, but also the setting, the location of the stories, in a picturesque manner. In most of these pictures, the dome shaped structure is prominent, whether it is needed or not. For example, in the following illustration (Fig. 2), from the 1894 edition of the book (“The Two Brothers” 132), all the elements combine to evoke an exotic picture of an over-populated place, a prince with sword and jewels, an elephant with Swastika (which symbolises the sun in Hindu mythology) drawn on its forehead bowing to the prince, people in different clothes (loincloth and turbans), and pointed footwear on the prince’s feet known as *khussa*, or *mojari*, or *Saleem Shahi* (named after Mughal Emperor Jahangir). The buildings have windowed balconies called *Jharokas* that are very popular in Indo-Islamic architecture. As Ghose and Mills observe, “In addition to obscuring material relations of power, the picturesque served to appropriate the country for aesthetic consumption” (*Wanderings* 8). These tales, as we can see from the Preface of the book and the frontispiece, are producing a Punjab that the collectors think would appeal to their audience and satisfy their appetite for the exotic.

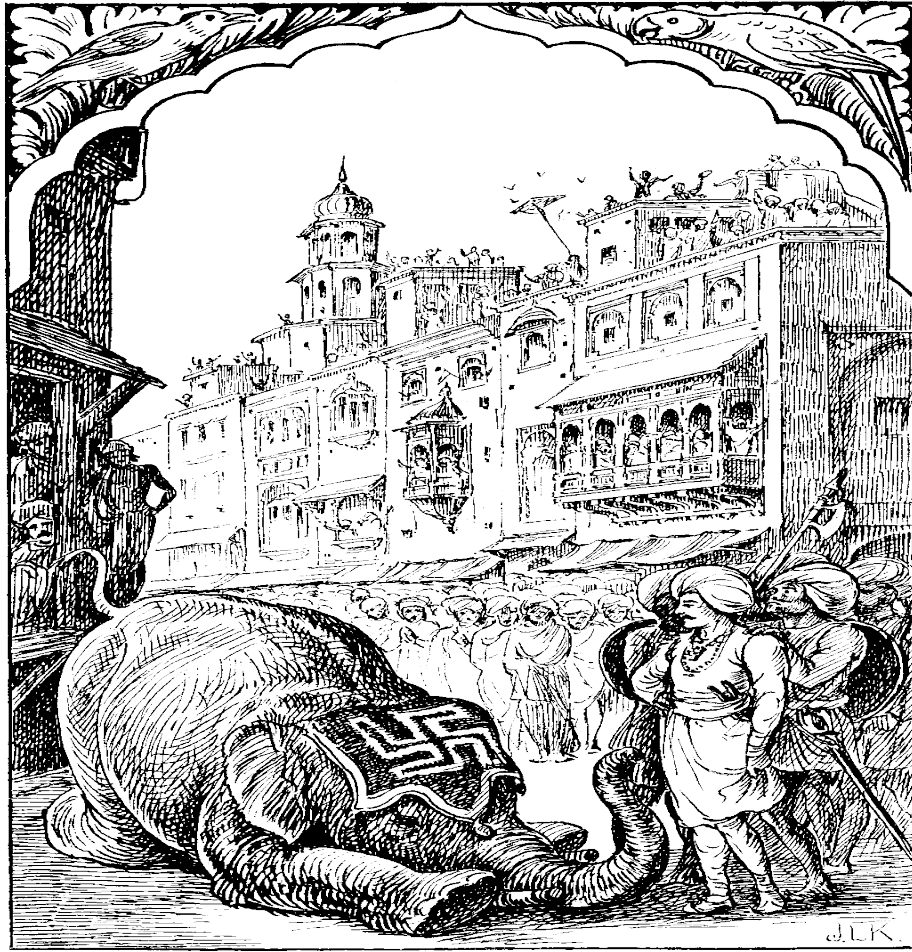


Fig. 2.³² J. Lockwood Kipling. "The Two Brothers." *Tales of the Punjab*. 1894.

³² The images are from the internet archive of the original 1894 edition of the collection.



Fig. 3. J. Lockwood Kipling. "Little Anklebone." *Tales of the Punjab*. 1894.

In the above illustration, which is the frontispiece to Steel's 1894 edition, a boy or man with a turban is playing a flute under a tree, with animals gathered around him. This is the pictorial representation of the tale of "Little Anklebone," who plays his flute so sweetly that the entire world around him is mesmerized by the melody. This picture also symbolically represents a tree of knowledge or stories, for which India has become a popular source. The settings these pictures represent would have seemed very old and exotic to Western readers.

These images add to the exoticisation of the Orient and, by implicit comparison, suggest how progressive and developed the West is.

The tales mention princesses dressed in colourful silks and satins (52), marble halls, huge marble walls, exotic gardens, carved galleries, spacious corridors (38), rubies of enormous size (38), a nine-lakh necklace (54), an emerald mountain (26), *fakirs*, jinns, and demons (23), a *pipal* (a very common tree famous for its cool shade) (34), *khichri* (a staple dish of rice and lentils) (29), elephants electing kings (89), mothers eating their sons because of hunger (68), and a queen killing her own seven sons out of jealousy (54). Steel also describes some rituals and customs such as the exchanging of veils or turbans to become close, like siblings (53), or a bride wearing red-coloured dresses for a year (50). This information is scattered throughout the tales, but emphasised and foregrounded by the illustrations.

2.6.2 Notes to the Tales

As mentioned in the preface there are extensive notes (1973 edition pp. 203-234) at the end of the collection, which provide information about the vernacular terms used as well as explanations of unfamiliar expressions. The notes also explain the original Punjabi titles of the stories, which is interesting as the names have been translated into English. Why, for example, has “Fatteh Khan, the Valiant Weaver” (*Indian Antiquary*, xi, pp. 282) been changed to “Valiant Vicky, the Brave Weaver” (in *Wide-awake Stories* and *Tales of the Punjab*), which clearly is a non-eastern name. In the notes, Steel and Temple explain that it is the literal translation of the name, Fatteh, which means victory. They have literally translated all the names in the stories. “Sir Buzz” was Miyan Bhunga, “The Faithful Prince” was originally titled “The Story of Bahramgor and the Fairy Hassan Bano,” “Prince Lionheart’s” vernacular title was Sherdil (having heart of a lion or very brave), and so on. These changes

in the titles may make the stories more palatable to Western readers, but they also de-familiarise them to their native readers. The tales are rendered *sufficiently* familiar to appeal to western readers, and not so dissimilar as to alienate them. These changes to the translations to an extent deprive the tales of their originality and made them foreign to their native readers. The familiarisation of the exotic undertaken in the stories ironically undermines the scholarly authority of the edition.

Some of the terms have been translated in such a way that renders them very different from their original intended meanings. In one of the tales, for example, the word “pipkin” (17) has been used, and in the Notes provided at the end, the reader is informed that the original Punjabi word used was “*ghara*” (206), which should have been translated as ‘Indian pitcher’ to convey its correct meaning. Elsewhere, the words *kajal* and *surma* (which is a powdered substance used as eyeliner) are translated as “powdered antimony” (27), an oddly scientific term to be used in a folk tale. Even the translation of the word *Nau-lakha har* to “nine-lakh necklace” has deprived the story, “Dear as Salt,” of its real charm, by literally translating the expression, which would have been better left in original form. “Shilling” has been used instead of Indian *anna*, which was the currency unit in India at the time, again clearly indicating the implied audience for this collection. In “The Close Alliance,” “*khuda* and Allah”—the tale was originally “a Muhammadan one” (215)—the Muslim god has been replaced by “providence” for Steel’s intended audience. The expression, “The Lord of Death” (140), instead of *Malik-ul-Maut* (223)—the angel of death—again familiarises the tale for its audience. Interestingly, although the tales explicitly mention Hindu castes and names, Muhammadan elements have either been neutralised or removed.

These literal translations of Punjabi words and expressions into English have made the stories literary while losing their essential Indian/ Punjabi flavours. Despite what the

Preface says, none of these words were so impolite, or “unpresentable to ears polite,” that they needed to be replaced. It was a collection and translation for readers who had perhaps never set foot in India, and represented the tales in a language that these readers could understand. The extensive notes and analysis make clear that the problem lies with the two different languages, not the *native* language being vulgar.

2.6.3 Politeness

As mentioned before, Steel and Temple maintained in their Preface that the raw stories originally told to the collector(s) were not for “ears polite” (1), so they had to change them to make them suitable for their intended audiences. As a result, in these tales, we find that all the main characters are polite. Even the rat in “The Rat’s Wedding” is extremely polite: “The Rat... with the sweetest of voices and best of bows begged the bride to descend” (19); “the Rat stepped forward with the greatest politeness...” (19). In “Sir Buzz” the soldier’s poor son, who has no worldly possessions, wins the damsel’s heart by his politeness; the princess “began to scream, but stopped at once when the soldier’s son with the greatest politeness, and in the most elegant of language, begged her not to be alarmed” (12). Even the animals, when they meet humans greet them politely: “‘Peace be with you, friend!’ said the bear” (“The Bear’s Bad Bargain” 29); “a tiger walked up to him and said, ‘Peace be with you, friend! How are you this fine morning?’” (“The Close Alliance” 85). A wolf, before eating a boy or his cattle, asks him to choose: “One day came a great big wolf, and looked hungrily at the small shepherd and his fat sheep, saying, ‘Little boy! Shall I eat you, or your sheep?’” (“Little Anklebone” 82).

No amount of politeness, however, stops various characters from harming others. In fact, the use of manipulative civil language to gain one’s desired ends is evident in many of the stories. Of all the characters, women, especially older women, are portrayed as the most

manipulative and are time and again shown to exploit others. These old women are cunning, deceptive, evil, and greedy. They say one thing and mean another, suggesting the ways in which “polite” language may mask evil intentions. In “Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends,” for instance, an old woman comes to trick a princess. Before kidnapping her, she speaks very gently and sweetly with the Princess making her believe that she is her well-wisher: “‘My daughter,’ cried the wise woman, ‘I weep to think that what will become of you if the handsome Prince is slain by any mischance, and you are left there in the wilderness alone’” (“Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends” 41).

2.6.4 Characters

The forty-three stories in this collection contain a multitude of different kinds of characters: princes, princesses, kings, queens, jealous and ugly women, poor villagers, wee old men and wicked old women. Some of the stories are fables with animals as main characters, and some portray anthropomorphised animals and birds interacting with humans. About half (twenty-two) of these stories are about nobility and feature kings, queens, princes and/or princesses. The remainder are stories about common people and their problems, mostly involving hunger and poverty. Analyses of the characters in Steel’s tales reveals more about her attitude toward Punjab and Punjabi people.

In what follows I will consider the stories’ characters in groups and clusters based on common physical or behavioural traits. In particular, I will focus on these repeated figures: beautiful, young and golden haired princesses; handsome princes (with an obsession for golden haired princesses); wicked old crones (witches and hags) and ugly jealous women; old men; and poor people with “terrible appetites” (12).

2.6.4.1 Portrayal of women in the tales

If male writers use Oriental females to stress their masculinity, women writers use them to show their superior womanhood. The Oriental woman is the Other against whom the identity of the English woman is forged. (Hager Ben Driss and Hagen Ben Driss 173)

In colonial folk tale collections, the oriental woman is usually presented as someone who needs rescuing from the clutches of her own people. Female protagonists in the tales are an obvious starting point for discussion in my thesis given the complexity of intersecting gender-considerations in Steel's work. She portrays a variety of female characters, using stark binaries of good vs bad, pretty vs ugly, kind vs evil, innocent vs manipulative, young vs old, brave vs coward, and rich vs poor. As in most European folklore, almost all the positive traits are manifested by young and beautiful girls, as opposed to old and ugly women.

Like many folk tales, *Tales of the Punjab* portrays beautiful girls and princesses who can make kings and princes fall deeply in love with them in a blink of an eye. Their beauty is described lyrically (if also in clichéd terms), and this alone is sufficient warrant to ensure the title of princess: "So they took the greatest care of her ... always calling her the Princess Aubergine; for, said the worthy couple, if she was not a Princess really, she was dainty and delicate enough to be any king's daughter" ("Princess Aubergine" 52). Beauty is synonymous with wealth and riches, and if a young woman is beautiful, she deserves material wealth. In "Sir Buzz," Princess Blossom is described as "so lovely, and tender, and slim, and fair, that she only weighed five flowers. Every morning she was weighed in golden scales, and the scale always turned when the fifth flower was put in, neither less nor more" (12). This ridiculous and calculated description of princesses limits the concept of beauty in specific ways. Why must she be weighed every day, and why must her weight be five flowers only?

Why is it so important for her to have good looks and beauty? Is her beauty the only means by which she may live ‘happily ever after’?

As I have noted, a considerable number of princesses in Steel’s collection are golden-haired and fair-skinned, thus emphasising a British ideal of beauty. In “The Faithful Prince,” “the Chief Constable of the town happened to pass by [where the Princess was hiding], and hearing the window open looked up and saw the lovely Shahpasand, with her glittering golden hair. He was so overcome at the sight that he fell right off his horse into the gutter” (Steel 25). In “Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends,” the prince falls in love with the severed head of “the most lovely, the most perfect young Princess” whose “golden hair fluttered in the breeze” (38). In “The Son of Seven Mothers,” the King is bewitched by the “white-skinned and golden-haired” girl (65).

In Steel’s “The Faithful Prince,” the princess is described as having golden hair and fair skin: “Princess Shahpasand took the opportunity of washing her beautiful golden hair, which hung round her ivory neck and down to her pretty ankles like a shower of sunshine...” (“The Faithful Prince” 28). The Chief Constable falls in love with the Princess, who is already married to Prince Bahramgor, upon seeing her golden hair; to save herself the princess leaves for her father’s country and Prince Bahramgor goes through many hardships to be with his beautiful wife again. In another tale, “Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends,” again the defining beauty of a princess is her golden hair:

The basket contained the head of the most perfect young princess that ever was seen! The eyes were closed, the golden hair fluttered in the breeze, and every minute from the slender throat a drop of crimson blood fell into the water, and changing into ruby, drifted down the stream. (“Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends” 38)

The golden-haired beauty of her severed head is enough to tell that she is a princess. Her golden hair alone makes the King send his men on a quest to find her: “The King was sailing...when he espied something sparkling like sunlight on the water ... the glittering golden hair,” and “[h]e thought he had never seen anything half so beautiful, and determined not to rest day or night until he had found the owner” (40). Later the Prince is overjoyed at finding the golden-haired princess, and his father also: “But when he saw the golden-haired bride his son had brought home, his joy knew no bounds” (“Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends” 44).

In another tale, the princess herself wants to be transformed into gold: “O dear Prince, I wish to be turned into gold by the power of the magic ring by which you built this glittering golden palace” (“The Wonderful Ring” 190). Women characters in Steel’s collection seem to have internalised that beauty is synonymous with golden hair. From these examples, it appears that Punjabi people are obsessed with golden-haired princesses, and given the opportunity, women will choose to be transformed into golden-haired, fair-skinned beauties. A Punjabi man, the tales suggest, will go to any limits to win a golden-haired and fair-skinned princess, even if it means kidnapping a married woman, or gouging out the eyes of seven women who are not young and golden-haired as in “The Son of Seven Mothers”. The implication is that only blonde and fair-skinned women are beautiful and worth fighting for. All other women, according to the tales, as we will see, are ugly and evil. The mad desire Indian men feel towards golden-haired princesses in the tales also supports the colonial idea of British women being unsafe in India, and at risk of being raped. This in turn justifies British attitudes and their colonisation and ill-treatment of Indians. As we will see this forms a striking contrast with how women are depicted in Aqeel’s collection.

Whenever Steel has described the features and appearance of beautiful girls, golden hair and white skin are usually part of the description. Not once does she mention a black-haired, brown-skinned princess, which would actually be the case for a Punjabi princess. As Said observed, texts such as these create a picture of the ‘natives’ for Western readers at home, who might never visit the outposts of the Empire. Why, then, did Steel recreate the golden-haired princesses already familiar to these readers from Western folk tales? An obvious reason that I suggested earlier is to make the unfamiliar familiar for her audience. I will now offer additional reasons, with further examples from the text.

2.6.4.2 Beautiful vs ugly women

It is remarkable that in the romances of a country where women are generally supposed by us to be regarded as mere *slaves or intriguers*, their influence (albeit most frequently put to proof behind the scenes) should be made to appear so great, and as a rule, exerted wholly for good; and that in a land where despotism has such firm hold on the hearts of the people, the liberties of the subject should be boldly asserted... (Frere xviii)

Keeping in mind Frere’s words that women are “supposed generally by *us* to be regarded as mere slaves or intriguers,” [emphasis mine], I will now compare the treatment and examine the characterisation of Steel’s old and ugly women with that of young and pretty women. Most of the evil in these stories comes from ‘wicked old women’ who are either jealous themselves, or someone, usually a man, makes them use their powers for wicked designs. Wickedness, in Steel’s tales, is an attribute reserved for old/ugly women, not men.

In “The Rat’s Wedding,” the queen who tricks the Rat and disposes of his claims to be the Princess’s husband is called a “wily old queen” (20). The “wee old man” in “Sir Buzz,” in contrast, who tricks shopkeepers and obtains lots of food items without paying for

them is never referred to in such terms. In “The Faithful Prince,” the old woman is referred to as a “cross old mother” (25), and twice as a “blind old crone” (25, 26). I have discussed the further examples in my comparative discussion of Steel and Aqeel’s collections in Chapter 4.

Indian men’s treatment of women varies in the tales depending on the women’s appearance and age. Men are biased toward young and beautiful women, while old and ugly women not only have no chance of winning their hearts, they cannot even earn their respect. This bias towards youth and superficial beauty is so dominant in the tales that good and evil are judged by mere looks and outward appearance, which may determine whether a woman lives or dies as in this example the king claims to save a woman because “So fair a maiden must not die while Ali Mardan can deliver her” (“The Snake-woman and King Ali Mardan” 120). In “Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends,” the Prince finds it hard to kill a pretty looking monster, so he asks her to change her shape so as to make killing her easier for him: “I must trouble you to take your own shape again, as I don’t like killing beautiful young women!” (37). The implication here is that killing an ugly and/or old woman would be easy. In the following example, the severity of the revenge-killing appears to be influenced by the age of the woman:

Whereupon the Carpenter [the Prince’s friend] seized her [the king’s sister] by the waist, and threw her overboard, just as they were sailing above the river, so that she was drowned; but he waited until they were just above the high tower before he threw down the wicked wise [old] woman, so that she got finely smashed on the stones. (“Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends” 44)

In “The King of the Crocodiles,” the old couple are worried about their daughter being forced to marry a crocodile not because he is a crocodile, but because “their daughter was as beautiful as the moon, and her betrothal into a very rich family had already taken

place” (78). Later, when they find out that he is King of the Crocodiles, their worries and fears are gone. The tales reinforce the stereotypical notions of beauty and looks, which explains why looks are so important for these women: they depend on them to get their basic human rights and to be accepted as good humans.

2.6.4.3 Strong and confident women

On the other hand, and adding a layer of complexity, these tales often represent princesses as notably brave and strong when it comes to getting what they want. Having sometimes led a very dependent life, once they are in love they leave no stone unturned to win their heroes, and stand up for their right to choose independently. Choosing who to marry is an independent decision in most of these stories. Again, as we will see, this is in stark contrast with Aqeel’s version. In Steel’s tales, in most cases couples fall in love and decide to marry without asking for their elders’ permission, and sometimes devise cruel or ruthless plans to get rid of those who stand in their way. In “Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends,” when the Prince asks the princess to elope with him, “she assured him they must first kill the Jinn, or they would never succeed in making their escape” (38). She is the one who decides to handle the situation and talk to the Jinn: “So she promised to coax the Jinn into telling her the secret of his life, and in the meantime bade the prince cut off her head once more...” (38).

In another tale, the princess after falling in love with the young man, threatens to go on hunger strike and says, “Tell my father I will neither eat nor drink until he marries me to the young man...” (“The Two Brothers” 94). In some cases, marriage is made, forcefully, without the girl’s or even parents’ consent to some animal, such as a crocodile or a rat. In the marriage to a crocodile, it is revealed to be an advantageous marriage as the crocodile-husband is a King: “Then the gold-clad horseman smiled, saying, ‘I am the King of the

Crocodiles! Your daughter is a good, *obedient wife*, and will be very glad to see you” (“The King of the Crocodiles”; emphasis mine 116).

In “The Son of Seven Mothers,” the Princess wanted to marry “one who was the son of seven mothers” (67), and as soon as she saw the boy, “she blushed and turning to the king, said, ‘Dear father, this is my choice!’” (67). She is “very learned and clever” (67), and helps the boy and saves his life. Although she is not powerful, her wisdom changes the course of events. She is wise, even if the reason why she selects her partner is unreasonable. In this tale the learned and kind princess competes with a cunning witch and wins. In “Bopoluchi,” the protagonist kills the evil thief who tricked her into marrying him by pretending to be a rich landlord. Bopoluchi gets rid of the “ever so old mother” (67) by pounding her head in the mortar “with such a will that the old lady died” (68).

Even when the pretty women behave brutally, the narrator’s commentary on their actions is not negative. For example, in “Princess Aubergine,” Aubergine turns the “wicked” queen’s trick on her and makes her kill her own (and the king’s) seven stalwart sons. Consequently, the Queen loses everything, and Princess Aubergine becomes the queen and resides with her son in the palace. She gets rid of the “wicked” Queen by insisting the King must kill her in the cruellest possible way:

I will never be your wife till that wicked sorceress is dead.... If you will dig a deep ditch at the threshold of the palace, fill it with the scorpions and snakes, throw the wicked Queen into it, and bury her alive, I will walk over her grave to be your wife.
 (“Princess Aubergine” 57)

She is not even once called a cruel or wicked woman, although she suggested the punishment for the queen as well as her seven sons, to get rid of her and become queen herself.

In these Punjabi tales, the women are depicted and painted in positive colours when they are young, beautiful and from upper strata (e.g. princesses), but old, ugly, and low class women are often portrayed as cunning, jealous, and cruel tricksters. When an ugly woman is cruel or inhumane she is described as evil, and condemned, but if a pretty woman does something bad, such as pounding an innocent old woman's head in the mortar in "Bopoluchi," there is no judgement. I will discuss such double standards later in comparison with Aqeel's Punjabi tales.

Although Steel claims to believe in women's rights to vote in her autobiography, she often depicts stereotypically evil female characters who are jealous of each other, and who can even kill their own "seven sons" just to remain young and the most beautiful of all, as in "Princess Aubergine."³³ If Steel was making necessary changes to the language of the tales, why did she not think of removing these toxic misogynistic notions? As mentioned earlier, many stories involve women who are plotting evil against other women. Karyn Huenemann observes that, "[a]s in *On the Face of Waters* (when the impetus of the 1857 uprising in Delhi is attributed to the help of courtesans, even considered to be behind the massacre in Kanpur),³⁴ the manipulative Indian female is held explicitly responsible for the aggressive actions of the weak Indian male" ("Flora Annie Steel: A Voice for Indian Women?" 239). In her folk tales, too, it is women who make decisions and tell (in some cases, force) men to do things that, because of their cowardice or indecisiveness, they would not have done otherwise.

Old women in Steel's folk tales are usually evil, jealous and/or manipulative, reinforcing Steel's own generalisation expressed in her autobiography: "the older women are

³³ The tale's resemblance to Snow-White is remarkable.

³⁴ Lata Singh. "Visibilising the 'Other' in History: Courtesans and the Revolt" (2007).

becoming more and more jealous of the young ones, as is but natural” (63). In Steel’s Punjabi tales, old women are described negatively as hags, or crones: “a wily old queen” is “awful and forbidding, with black wrinkled skin” (36). By contrast, old men are invariably harmless, kind, and helpful. Even Jasdrul, in “The Faithful Prince,” although a demon, is described as a “wee old man” (23). These descriptions are not as harsh as those used for old women. In “The Death and Burial of Poor Hen-Sparrow,” the old couple is introduced in these words: “There lived a cock-sparrow and his wife, who were both growing old. But despite his years the cock-sparrow was a gay, festive old bird, who plumed himself upon his appearance, and was quite a ladies’ man” (100). As the old cock-sparrow was “tired of his sober old wife,” he decided to marry “a lively young hen” (100). One feels the tale will be sympathetic to the old hen-sparrow, as she is the victim, but even in the title, the tale favours the young sparrow, mourning her subsequent death and the jealousy of the old sparrow. The young sparrow is not blamed even once, nor the old cock-sparrow for dumping his old wife. The old cock-sparrow is not described as doing anything wrong, and nobody takes him to task for such insensitivity towards his old wife. No one consoles the poor old hen-sparrow when her husband marries the younger bird, although the narrator shows sympathy: “the poor old wife, who crept away from all the noise and fun to sit disconsolately on a quiet branch just under a crow’s nest, where she could be as melancholy as she liked without anybody poking fun at her” (100). The whole village attends the wedding festivities and after the young sparrow’s death, they all mourn her. Everyone joins him in his sorrow but nobody says a word about the old hen-sparrow who has been left alone to cry. This story highlights the practice of polygamy or having co-wives which was legal in India (until 1956) and especially among Muslims where a man may find a young bride even if he is old and married, and no one will blame him. If the poor wife (or wives) reacts in any way, she will be considered evil and frowned upon. The tale represents a patriarchal society where men can do whatever they want, but a woman,

especially if she is old and even if she is a victim, cannot raise her voice. This tale reminds us of the incident related in Steel's autobiography in which an old man kills his young, second wife, and Steel herself exonerates the man and blames the murder victim (129).

Steel's selection of such gory tales as "Son of Seven Mothers," "Princess Aubergine," "Little Anklebone," "The Lord of Death," and "The King who was Fried" raises the question of whether these tales are appropriate for children and for readers with "ears polite" who could not be exposed to the "vulgarism" of the original language. This relates to the discussion in my previous chapter, which established the political motives behind the dissemination of these collections. Collectors such as Steel could choose to select or omit stories. That Steel opted to keep these tales, with their elaborately graphic details, suggests she wanted to give a certain flavour to aspects of 'native' life. Cumulatively, these stories create an image of Indian 'natives' as lawless, cruel, superstitious, inconsiderate and barbaric.

2.6.4.4 Wicked Wise Old Women

In "Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends," there are three different types of ghosts who appear but only the ghost in the form of an old woman is described in detestable and loathsome terms: "the ghost appeared in the form of an old woman, awful and forbidding, with black wrinkled skin, and feet turned backwards" (36). The three wise women in this tale, when summoned by the King to help him find the golden-haired princess, are called the "wisest women in his kingdom" (40). But later, after choosing the cleverest of them all, the old woman is called "cunning wise woman" (41), "the wicked old hag" (42), "shameless old thing" (42), and "the wicked wise woman" (44). The King who set the 'evil' task is not called any such thing. It is the old woman who is blamed, even though she is following the king's orders.

In “The Son of Seven Mothers,” the fair-skinned beauty agrees to marry the King on one condition: “[G]ive me the eyes of your seven wives, and perhaps I may believe that you mean what you say” (65). Her old mother has been addressed as “the white witch’s mother, a hideous old creature,” and “the old hag” (68, 70). Steel believed in “[w]omen’s jealousy as the primal cause of evil” (*The Garden...* 292). In “Little Anklebone,” the little boy’s aunt, when asked to choose between the boy or the flock of sheep to be eaten by the wolf, heartlessly chooses the boy: “[She] looked at the wee little shepherd, and at the fat flock, and said sharply, ‘Which shall it be?—why, you, of course!’” (82). In contrast to the stone-hearted, greedy aunt, even the wolf has a bit of sympathy for the little boy, “savage as wolves always are, could not help having just a spark of pity for the tiny barefoot shepherd” (82), suggesting that old women are so greedy and heartless, even beasts have stronger feelings of sympathy. There are other instances as well where an old woman is crueller than even a beast or a demon.

Why are these women so greedy, and so concerned about their looks and outward appearance? Is it society, or the mind-set of the people, or the scientific concept of the survival of the fittest, or the male gaze? These insecurities in women’s minds are a product of patriarchy. Women did not have financial security or education, at that time, and were dependent on their husbands. These apparently heartless old women hankering after riches are actually fighting to survive. They need their looks to stay the King’s or the Prince’s favourite, because they know these men will leave them if they find someone younger and more beautiful. No one blames men for their fickle and unfaithful nature, always falling for beautiful young women. This results in fierce competition among women for favour and for survival and in the end one or the other woman dies fighting for a man.

2.6.4.5 Princes, Kings, and valiant young men

Not only the princesses but the princes too, in these tales, are beautiful and handsome. The male protagonists in these tales are mostly rich, handsome, brave and independent. In most cases they are kings and princes, but in a few instances they are poor, but still handsome and brave men. In “Sir Buzz,” the boy leaves home with only four pence in his pocket and the Princess falls in love with him when she finds “a handsome young man kneeling beside her” (12), and over the course of a single night, “they were now convinced they could no longer exist apart” (13). A few polite words were enough for him to win over a princess, who leaves her comfortable life and elopes with him.

Prince Bahramgor in “The Faithful Prince” is “as handsome as the noonday sun, and as beautiful as the midnight moon” (22). “Catching sight of the beautiful, splendid, handsome young prince,” the Fairy Princess Shahpasand “sank to earth in sheer astonishment at beholding such a lovely sight” (23). Prince Lionheart is named as Lionheart as soon as he is born “because he was so brave and so strong” (“Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends” 33); soon after his birth they, somehow, know that he is strong and brave. He is described as “the most charming, lovely, splendid Prince that ever was seen” (33). His three friends are also introduced as valiant young men, although they prove otherwise when circumstances call for bravery. As soon as they come face to face with the demon, their “courage disappeared at once,” and they end up “beg[ging] for mercy” (34). But later, the Prince stands his ground and proves as brave as his name. Men may not always be brave, but the hero always rises to the occasion with courage. The Crocodile King is “the handsomest young prince anybody ever set eyes upon” (80). Nobody mentions how he forcefully marries the farmer’s daughter, and takes her with him into the sea with the other crocodiles without revealing that, under the sea, he will be a normal human. But as he turns out to be handsome and rich, “the farmer’s daughter had been too happy even to think of her old home...” (80). Thus, if someone is

beautiful and handsome, his actions receive a positive recognition from the people around, and if someone is weak and plain-looking, whatever they do they do not get any recognition.

Bravery and good looks in men are very important and in a comic tale such as “Valiant Vicky, the Brave Weaver” the protagonist, an anti-hero, is mocked for his tiny physique and his tall tales: “[H]is head was big, and his legs thin, and he was altogether small, and weak, and ridiculous...” (58). Because his physical appearance is not that of a strong man, he is a figure of fun, and nobody believes his claims to bravery—unlike the three friends of Prince Lionheart, who are apparently strong. A patriarchal system thus not only controls how women should appear, but also defines masculinity. Like women, men are also under pressure to look and behave in certain ways: for some, outward strength hides their inner weakness, while in a few instances, such as Valiant Vicky, his shrewdness proves him brave, yet he was never believed to be brave and never respected. Within the tales, appearance seems to have an important role to play in the recognition of a man’s bravery. The people in these tales are easily carried away by mere appearance, be it beauty, bravery, position, or wealth.

2.6.4.6 Witches, Demons, and Fakirs

In many of these stories, a wicked woman intervenes with her magical powers and helps the villain. Women, in these tales, often know magic and use it for evil purposes. Contrasting with these wicked women, male demons can be seen, in these tales, helping the princes and princesses. The introduction of such characters makes the tales more exotic to English readers and also contribute to an image of India as a superstitious, conservative, and unreliable land, a place where people use magic and ungodly beings for sinister ends.

Demons and witches, in these tales, have the same gender bias as Steel’s old men and women. Old men are helpful and endearing; old women are wicked. Similarly, male demons

and *jinn*s are benevolent and friendly; she-demons and witches are evil and ignoble. The Queen in “Princess Aubergine” “was a sorceress, and learned in all sorts of magic” (53), whereas demon Jasdrul, Nanak Chand, and Demon Safaid are all positive helpful characters in the story. In “The Faithful Prince,” on the other hand, all the female characters are villainous. These characters exemplify familiar gender prejudices even as they highlight the strange, superstitious, and exotic aspects of India.

Some of the tales feature fakirs or devotees who are sympathetic and helpful and in most instances appear when a King is childless, and herald the happy news of a male child’s birth—never a girl child. In “Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends,” an old fakir gives the Queen some barleycorns and “told her to eat them and cease weeping, for in nine months she would have a beautiful little son” (33). In another Punjabi tale, a fakir comes to the King and says, “[Y]our prayers are heard, your desire shall be accomplished, and each of your seven Queens shall bear a son” (“The Son of Seven Mothers” 64). Through showing these beliefs in beings other than god, the collectors also reinforce the stereotype that the people in these exotic lands are non-believers and need help of the British missionaries.

In “Adventures of Raja Rasalu,” the Guru Goraknath restores the prince’s hands and feet that had been cut off, years ago, under his own “jealous” (159) father’s orders:³⁵

Raja Salbahan had the poor young man thrown into the well. Nevertheless, Puran did not die...for God preserved the innocent Prince, so he lived on, miraculously, at the bottom of the well, until, years after, the great and holy Guru Goraknath...finding

³⁵ The tale resembles the Quranic tale of Yusuf (Joseph the prophet), who was thrown into well by his jealous brothers, because they thought their father loved him more than his other sons. He was rescued from the well by some travellers, sold as a slave in the slave markets of Egypt, and then adopted by the Aziz of Egypt (king), whose wife fell in love with the beautiful Yusuf who was only fifteen at the time. When Yusuf refused her advances, she accused him of attempted rape and Yusuf was put in jail for years.

Puran still alive, not only released him from his dreadful prison, but, by the power of magic, restored his hands and feet. (159)

The tale is a myth or a legend, which another collector likened to the tale of Phaedra and Hippolytus (Swynnerton 1884, viii).³⁶ But in Steel's text Temple, perhaps in an effort to cleanse the tale, leaves out the detail of the stepmother being in love with her stepson and accusing him of rape, and rather begins by saying, "So being a bad, deceitful woman, envy and rage took possession of her heart and she so poisoned Raja Salbahan's mind against his son..." (159). The analysis of the tales at the end of the collection gives a summary of the tale where it mentions the incident: "[the] king has two wives, has a son from the elder with whom the younger falls in love and accuses to [sic] the father from jealousy, he cuts off his hands and feet and throws him down a well..." (259). Even in this legend a woman is the cause of destruction and chaos because of her jealousy and causes the trouble for all of her family and herself.

2.6.4.7 Poor and hungry people

Finally, as with most folk tales, these tales highlight class difference: a poor society on the outskirts and a rich, lavish royal life in the centre. Again and again the tales describe hunger and lack of food. Hunger is a recurrent motif or theme in many of these tales; even the Princes and Princesses are sometimes hungry. The first tale, "Sir Buzz," introduces the main character by observing how poor he is: "They were dreadfully poor, and at last matters became so bad that they had nothing to eat" (9). When he finds the "one-span manikin" (10), the first thing he asks for is dinner: "[S]erve me with some dinner, as I am mighty hungry" (10). Later, Sir Buzz exclaims, "[Y]ou men have such terrible appetites" (12).

³⁶ Rev. Charles Swynnerton was the senior chaplain to the Indian Government. He published two books of Indian folklore *Indian Night's Entertainment* and *Romantic Tales from the Panjab: With illustrations by Native Hands*

In “The Rat’s Wedding,” the Rat encounters different people, including a man whose children are crying “piteously.” When the Rat asks why they are crying, their father replies, “The bairns are hungry...they are crying for their breakfast” (16). At his next stop, the Rat finds other crying children who are hungry as well, and their mother has gone to buy some flour. “The Bear’s Bad Bargain” is preoccupied with hunger and food. The Prince in “Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends” exclaims, “Not until I’ve had my dinner, for I am just desperately hungry!” (33). The tale continues like this, and there are three different episodes of Prince being hungry: “‘After we have had our dinners!’ quoth hungry Lionheart” (36). There are many more examples of hungry and poor people, who have nothing to eat and who have “terrible appetites” (“Sir Buzz” 12).

2.7 Conclusion

The tales in this collection were, the title claims, “told by the people” of Punjab. The challenging question is how much the oral tales were altered by Steel and her co-author and publishers. As these tales were translated for a British audience, there is no doubt Steel made changes tailored to the intended audience, as she herself states in the preface: “They were then in the form of literal translations, in many cases uncouth for ears polite, in all scarcely intelligible to the un-travelled English reader.” She further observes that “all these stories are strictly folk tales passing current among people who can neither read nor write, and whose diction is full of colloquialisms, and, if we choose to call them so, vulgarisms” (“Preface” 1). Having prepared her audience for the book they are about to read, Steel has changed the stories into rather polite ones, with repetition of the word “polite” in many instances. Yet if/when there are any grisly episodes of bloodshed and killings, she has not tried to make them less graphic. This raises the question whether these stories were actually for the “Little Reader[s]” (5), or only for “those who study Folklore on its scientific side” (“Preface” 3).

These ostensibly innocent and harmless folk tales can perform exceptionally larger ideological and political functions if/when the variations and changes made to them are politically and/or racially motivated. Crane and Johnston argue that folklore, “by recounting the tales of villagers, often of women or even occasionally children, and emphasising the unchanging traditions of the ‘real’ India, demonstrated the ‘backwardness’ of the country and the need for British rule” (*Writing, Travel...* 81). This seems to be the case with the collection under discussion here as well, as I have demonstrated in my discussions above. The political motive of strengthening the Empire underpinned all these collections, along with proving British superiority over all other nations and people.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the general shape, narrative and plot of the tales disseminated by Shafi Aqeel. The discussion above becomes important when we compare Steel’s tales with Aqeel’s, a comparison that reveals significant differences.

Chapter Three: Shafi Aqeel and his *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*

As discussed in previous chapters, the British ruled India for more than two centuries, and finally departed the subcontinent in 1947, after enforcing the partition of the Indian subcontinent into Pakistan and India. In this chapter I will discuss the post-Partition collection of Punjabi folk tales by a little-known (in the West) Pakistani journalist and author, Shafi Aqeel. Aqeel originally published the collection in 1963 in Urdu as *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan*, which translates as “Folk Tales of the Punjab.” The collection was published almost half a century later in an English translation by Ahmad Bashir as *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab* (2008) by Oxford University Press.

3.1 Historical background

In this chapter, I will begin with the historical background of the publication and biographical details about Aqeel and his translator, Bashir, to put their work in context. Then, through close analysis of selected stories, I will compare Aqeel’s/Bashir’s 2008 English edition of Punjabi tales *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab* with the original 1963 Urdu edition, *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan*, with the sociohistorical contexts of publications in mind (post-Partition and post 9/11), focusing on what appears to be their different intended audiences. To facilitate this comparison I have myself translated into English the original Urdu edition of the collection. I have added a couple of tales at the end of my thesis in an appendix so readers can see the differences. I will explore the differences between the two editions that reveal the significance of the sociohistorical contexts in which each was produced and published. I will also discuss the extent to which the later English edition is more ‘literary’ at the expense of what I perceive as the attempt to retain the orality of the original tales as collected and written down by Aqeel. In the chapter that follows, I will turn to a comparison between Steel’s and Aqeel’s collections.

The differences between these editions—Aqeel’s Urdu edition (1963) and Aqeel and Bashir’s translated English edition (2008)—invite questions about the ideological work each of these editions is doing. To what extent might these differences simply be the result of the personal inclinations of the collectors, translators, and publishers? How significant was the political situation in Pakistan at the time when the two editions of the collection were published? The introduction of Bashir as translator makes the analysis even more complicated, as there is no mention of Aqeel’s involvement in this process. The title page of the collection distinguishes Aqeel as main collector from Ahmad Bashir as translator. It is impossible to say with certainty that Aqeel agreed to the significant changes added to the English translation by Bashir, but that he kept these changes and published them with his name as the collector makes it likely.

In this regard, it is important to note that Aqeel’s original Urdu edition was published in 1963, sixteen years after the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Aqeel claimed in his Preface to the translated English edition to have spent “forty years” (2008 vii) collecting the tales, suggesting this project was probably conceived not long after the creation of Pakistan, or perhaps conceived beforehand but gained impetus from Partition. The first edition (1963) stakes a claim on *Punjabi* tales. The Punjab region was one of the most severely affected by Partition, as the new border cut directly through it. The tales were then translated into Urdu with a distinctly Muslim focus, suggesting that the edition was conceived as a contribution to the nation-building efforts of the newly created Pakistan. The second edition (2008) takes the claim a bit further by adding *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab* suggesting these tales are favoured and approved by Punjab and its people and hence are representative tales. The differences in the editions that I will discuss in the chapter make it incumbent to discuss the historical moments of the collections’ publications, its collector Aqeel and translator Bashir, and the significance of the respective publishers—Guild Publishing House and Oxford

University Press, Karachi. The historical background of both the editions seems a useful starting point, as it was for Steel's collection in the previous chapter.

Aqeel's Urdu edition was published in 1963, after the Partition of India and departure of the British from the subcontinent, will be discussed in this regard. In the years following World War II—a catalyst in activating the process of decolonisation—it became increasingly clear that India would not remain part of the British Empire. There are many reasons why the Empire weakened and began to lose control over its colonies after the War. In general, the Empire's flaws became more visible to its subjects; the myth of its military grandeur was undermined, for example, by extensive defeat in Asia at the hands of a small Japanese army. The cost of the War and other international conflicts took its toll on the British economy (and manpower), and uprisings and unrest in far-flung colonies were expensive to control. Another major factor, ironically, was the education of the colonial masses initiated by the British themselves, along with a greater awareness of political rights and democracy. In India, the rising middle class and bourgeois elite, partly under the banner of the Indian National Congress Party, had begun calling for autonomy several decades before WWII broke out (Valentin Boulan 5). The call for Indian independence became louder during the War, in which many Indian men died fighting for the British. Following the War, surviving soldiers refused to be a part of the Royal army. The Muslims of India, through the platform of the Muslim League, under Muhammad Ali Jinnah's leadership, decided to part ways with the Indian National Congress, and demanded a separate state for Muslims. These economic, social, and political circumstances combined with many other factors ensured the withdrawal of Britain from the subcontinent. The independence of India, which had hitherto seemed distant, became a reality two years after the end of the Second World War (J. K. Buda n.p.).

The Indian Independence Act (1947) formulated by Prime Minister Clement Attlee and Governor General of India Lord Louis Mountbatten (in agreement with various representatives of the subcontinent community) declared that India would be free from British rule on 15 August 1947 (Malhotra 9). The Independence Act instituted a double independence for Muslims of India, by dividing the country into two unequal parts: India and Pakistan. British barrister Cyril Radcliffe was chosen to perform the task of dividing the country into two according to the religious majority residing in each part. The plan that he followed was to divide the areas where Hindus were in the majority to form part of what is now known as India, and the regions with a Muslim majority population would be part of the new Pakistan. The partition of India in 1947 resulted in the partition of the Punjab as well.

Qazi Shakil Ahmad notes that “[t]he Boundary commission [established to define the new national boundary lines] was asked to start work on 30 June 1947. Radcliffe arrived in New Delhi on July 8, 1947; the final award was delivered to the viceroy’s staff on 12 August 1947, and was formally announced on 15 August 1947, after Radcliffe had left India for London” (28). British poet W. H. Auden, shaken by the partition and its impact on the lives of so many people, wrote a twenty-six-line poem, “Partition,” about Radcliffe and the border-lines he drew:

The maps at his disposal were out of date
 And the Census Returns almost certainly incorrect,
 But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect
 Contested areas. The weather was frightfully hot,
 And a bout of dysentery kept him constantly on the trot,
 But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided,
 A continent for better or worse divided.

The next day he sailed for England, where he quickly forgot

The case, as a good lawyer must. (n.p.)

These lines mockingly capture the haste and ineptitude in deciding the fate of a country as complex as India, a task that was completed in seven weeks. Astonishingly, Radcliffe was assigned this duty without having any previous knowledge of the vast country and its people. As Alastair Lamb sardonically comments, “Sir Cyril Radcliffe’s major qualification for this task, it appeared, was his almost total ignorance of Indian affairs: he had never before set foot in the subcontinent” (104). Following the mandated division, India, once one country, became two on the stroke of midnight on 15 August 1947: Hindustan India, and the newly formed democracy Pakistan, with a Muslim majority.

This thesis focuses on Punjabi folk tales, and it is important to emphasise the huge impact Partition had on the Punjab, which was one of the worst affected provinces. When Hindus and Muslims were negotiating for separate homelands, one religious group, Sikhs, a minority that nonetheless was “the third largest community of united Punjab before India’s Partition” (Busharat Elahi Jamil 89), was neglected despite their efforts to form a separate state. Many Sikhs considered Punjab their homeland (Jamil 92). As Akhtar Hussain Sandhu notes, “Punjab had great importance for the Muslims as they were the majority occupying this area, but [it was] sacrosanct for the Sikhs from the religious point of view because it was [the] birthplace of their Gurus, therefore their religious affiliation made it sacred for them” (Sandhu 215). However, the British showed little interest in claims Sikhs made about the Punjab. Their dismissive attitude is captured in this extract from a letter by the Earl of Listowel (William Frances Hare, the last Secretary of State for India) to Mountbatten:

The Sikhs have an exaggerated idea of their proper status in the future set-up. No doubt this is due partly to their historical position as the rulers of the Punjab, partly to

the rather flattering treatment they have received from us as one of the great martial races of India, and partly to the fact that they consider that they have contributed out of proportion to their numbers to the economic wealth of the Punjab. (qtd. Jamil 100)

The Sikhs' attachment and sense of belonging to the Punjab made its division harder than the overall division of India, because India was divided between Muslims and Hindus, but in Punjab there were three religious groups, each with its own nationalist aims. This caused a dilemma for Sikh leaders, as Sandhu observes, any division of the Punjab would also divide the Sikhs. Of course, it was not only Sikhs and Hindus that contested the proposed divisional boundaries. Disparate groups of Muslims came together because of anxieties about survival and marginalisation at the end of British colonial rule. These fears drove demand for the creation of Pakistan as a homeland for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, for their socio-economic and cultural development. Widely dispersed Muslims of the subcontinent, in the words of Benedict Anderson, became an "imagined community" that vociferously stated their desire for an autonomous homeland. Anderson explains he uses the adjective "imagined" "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). These people (Muslims) who had never met each other became a nation under the Muslim League's flag.

Many influential Muslim scholars and activists contributed to the debate about—and demand for—an independent Muslim nation. First, to conceive of this idea, or put it into

words, was the Muslim scholar and revolutionary poet Muhammad Iqbal. Iqbal, in his address to the All India Muslim League,³⁷ at Allahabad in 1930, contended that

[t]he Muslim demand for the creation of a Muslim India within India is, therefore, perfectly justified Personally, I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province,³⁸ Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire, or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India. (qtd. Latif Ahmad Sherwani 10-11)

Iqbal's desire for a self-governing Muslim State was based on the increasing tensions between Muslims and Hindus (in the later years of colonial rule) and the concern that if the British left India undivided it would simply mean a change of masters for Muslims, as Hindus were in majority and had greater power (Sherwani 12). At the historic Lahore Conference of the Muslim League in 1940, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a lawyer and a politician, known as the founder of Pakistan and Father of the Nation, declared:

We [Muslims] are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of values and proportions, legal laws and moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions. In short, we have our own distinctive

³⁷ All India Muslim League, popularly known as Muslim League, was a political party established in 1906 by Muslim leaders of India under British Raj.

³⁸ Now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

outlook on life and of life. By all canons of international law, we are a nation. (qtd. Yasmeen Niaz 68)

Jinnah claimed in his Presidential Address to the Muslim League session at the Lahore Conference that “Mussalmans are a nation according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their homelands, their territory, and their state” (qtd. *Sources of Indian Tradition* 838). Such ideas gave birth to the “Two Nation Theory,” which highlighted the differences between Muslims and Hindus and depicted how next-to-impossible it would be for the two to be “yoked” together. As Jinnah declared, “To yoke together two ... nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state” (Jinnah 1940 n.p.). As Yasmin Khan observes, “Indian and Pakistani ideas of nationhood were carved out diametrically, in definition against each other, at this time” (9). Khan continues:

The [Muslim] League played on the motif of exclusionary Islam, tapping into pre-existing chauvinism towards kafirs or unbelievers. The language used was prejudiced and bigoted. ... Even the word ‘Pakistan,’ which literally means ‘land of the pure,’ had multiple resonances. (35)

Playing the religion card, Muslim League leaders gathered the Muslims of India to one platform. The use of religion on Jinnah’s part was, as Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal observe, “a political tactic” (*Modern South Asia* 192). The more powerful Hindu majority in India held a contrasting perspective. Aanchal Malhotra writes, in *Remnants of Separation*,

On 5 July [1947], in his daily prayer meeting, Mahatma Gandhi [president of the Indian National Congress] proclaimed in response to the decision to divide India that

‘the very creation of two nations is poison. The Congress and the Muslim League have accepted this but a vice does not become a virtue merely because it is accepted by all.’³⁹ (9)

The leaders of both parties, the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress, held different views: the leaders of Muslim League wanted to have their own separate country where they could independently practise the beliefs of Islam, and the Congress leaders supported a united India.⁴⁰ The outcome of these differences was chaos in most parts of India in general and Punjab in particular. Millions of people were forced, due to their religious identity, to migrate, because they were deemed to be on the wrong side of the newly formed border. Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs who had lived harmoniously for centuries as friends and neighbours became bloodthirsty enemies. They became foreigners in their own homes and homeland. The resulting forced migration is the greatest in recorded world history, involving at least 14 million people. Urvashi Butalia, in *The Other Side of the Silence*, describes the statistics of the bloodbath and plunder of the Partition maintaining, “[n]early one million died. Some 75,000 women were raped, kidnapped, abducted, forcibly impregnated by men of the ‘other’ religion, thousands of families were split apart, homes burnt down and destroyed, villages abandoned” (34-35).

³⁹ The Indian National Congress, known as the Congress, is a political party in British India established in 1885. It was initially formed to represent people from all religious backgrounds in India; but later Muslims felt that it excluded their interests and so formed the Muslim League in 1906.

⁴⁰ Although the Muslim majority in India was convinced of the need to form an Independent Muslim state, there were many Muslims, like Abdul Ghaffar Khan (the “Frontier Gandhi”) and Sheikh Abdullah of Kashmir, who opposed the idea.

In *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition* (2015), Nisid Hajari focuses (as his title suggests) on not only the lead-up to Partition but also the “deadly” consequences to this day, and offers this charged description of the carnage that resulted:⁴¹

Gangs of killers set whole villages aflame, hacking to death men and children and the aged while carrying off young women to be raped. Some British soldiers and journalists who had witnessed the Nazi death camps claimed Partition's brutalities were worse: pregnant women had their breasts cut off and babies hacked out of their bellies; infants were found literally roasted on spits. Foot caravans of destitute refugees fleeing the violence stretched for 50 miles and more. As the peasants trudged along wearily, mounted guerrillas charged out of the tall crops that lined the road and culled them like sheep. Special refugee trains, filled to bursting when they set out, suffered repeated ambushes along the way. All too often they crossed the border in funereal silence, blood seeping under their carriage doors. ... At least 14 million refugees were uprooted in what remains the biggest forced migration in history. (xviii-xix)

Many Anglophone literary texts, written in both India and Pakistan, have tried to incorporate the gruesome history of Partition. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* begins with the carnage of 1947 massacre,

Muslims said the Hindus had started and planned killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped. From Calcutta, the riots spread north

⁴¹ While many reviews have praised this book, with Kirkus declaring it an “even handed history,” it has not been received as a careful and accurate historical account by all reviewers. Aatish Taseer, writing in *The New York Times*, for example, describes it as an “entertaining and gossipy history” and comments on “the strangeness of reading rehashed secondary sources, many English and American...” (n.p.)

and east and west: to Noakhali in East Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus; to Bihar, where Hindus massacred Muslims. (8)

The violence and mass murdering was from both sides, each side blaming the other to have started the bloodbath. The narrator, for instance, in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* (published as *Cracking India* in the USA), a highly regarded novel that deals with Partition, vilifies the Sikhs:

Ranna saw his uncles beheaded. His older brothers, his cousins. The Sikhs were among them like hairy vengeful demons, wielding bloodied swords ... he felt a blow cleave the back of his head and the warm flow of blood ... Every time his eyes open the world appears to them to be floating in blood. From the direction of the mosque come the intolerable shrieks and wails of women. It seems to him that a woman is sobbing just outside their courtyard: great anguished sobs—and at intervals she screams: 'You'll kill me! Hai Allah [Oh God]...Y'all will kill me!' (201-2)

An enormous amount of poetry has also been written about Partition in both Pakistan and India, such as this elegy, "Ajj aakhan Waris Shah nu [Today, I call Waris Shah],"⁴² by Amrita Pritam, a Punjabi poet:

Today, I call Waris Shah, "Speak from your grave,"

And turn to the next page in your book of love,

Once, a daughter of Punjab cried and you wrote an entire saga,

Today, a million daughters cry out to you, Waris Shah,

⁴² Waris Shah was a Punjabi Sufi poet who immortalised Heer-Ranjha's folk romance in his poetry. The romance is also known as Heer Waris Shah.

Rise! O' narrator of the grieving! Look at your Punjab,

Today the fields are lined with corpses, and blood fills the Chenab. (n.p.)

The pain and lament articulated are deeply personal. The disillusionment and sense of loss these lines express must have been baffling. What was it that changed people who had been living harmoniously together for centuries into bitter enemies, overnight? Why could they not live together anymore? Who exacerbated their differences to such an extent that they were ready to sacrifice everything and move to a new place leaving all their belongings behind? The women who survived the rapes and humiliations, as lamented in the poem above, had no place afterwards. The British took advantage of India's weaknesses and religious differences, and the political claims of those in favour of "Two-Nations Theory", to formalise the religious differences among the nation's people. This divide highlighted differences, making it seem impossible for those who had for centuries been living together to do so any longer.

Ayesha Jalal argues that, "Jinnah's resort to religion was not an ideology to which he was ever committed or even a device to use against rival communities; it was simply a way of giving a semblance of unity and solidity to his divided Muslim constituents" (16). Jinnah in his presidential address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11 1947 acknowledged the presence and the rights of the religious minorities in these words, "You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the state" (n. p.). Jinnah thus envisioned a secular Pakistan and called for the formation of a new nation on the basis of citizenship, although the majority supporting him was drunk on the idea of Muslims being a separate nation.

However, religious slogans were exploited on both sides during and after the Partition, especially in the Muslim majority that supported the formation of Pakistan. Zaid Haider maintains that the Indian Muslims were divided into three groups.

The first was affiliated with the Indian Congress Party, which advocated territorial nationalism. The second was affiliated with the All-India Muslim League led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which contended the Muslims had special identity that would be erased in a Hindu-majority India—an argument that [led] ...to an eventual demand for a separate Muslim homeland. The third included the religious parties that opposed a separate Muslim homeland to avoid dividing the Muslim *ummah* yet shared the Muslim League's concerns. (3)

The majority of Muslims supporting the idea of Pakistan belonged to the second group, the new nation, allegedly, was conceived of as an ideological state, with an Islamic ideology. This meant that Pakistan was imagined as a state where Muslims would be able to live according to their faith based on Islamic principles. One of the major defining slogans at the time was “Pakistan ka matlab kya, La illah ilallah,” which became a battle cry and greeting for the Muslims of India. It literally means, “What is the meaning of Pakistan? There is no god but Allah.” This strong religious expression makes explicit the significance of the use of religious sentiment in the Partition of India and Jinnah's August 11, 1947 speech was intended to get rid of this mentality. Although, after his death in 1948 his speech and messages were lost on the people who reverted to the ideology that had united them under Muslim League's flag. This was later intensified in Zia's era and in many cities, this slogan is displayed on walls.

These historical events are vitally important to my analysis of Aqeel's folk tale collection. Aqeel, who was in Lahore at the time of the segregation and a member of the

Muslim League National Guard, witnessed and helped clean the bloodied trains (Naseer Ahmad n.p.) that came with mutilated dead bodies from India and, at the very young age of sixteen or seventeen, must surely have experienced unimaginable trauma. His youthful, first-hand experiences of the horrors of Partition, along with his firmly held belief in the creation of the new nation, must surely have provided impetus for, and shaped, his collection and translation of Punjabi folklore.

3.2 Shafi Aqeel (Mohammad Shafi): 1930-2013

An important part of my study is gathering the background and biographical information about the collectors, so here I turn to Aqeel's life and his works to put his collection of Punjabi tales in historical context. It is the first study of Aqeel's life and works, and a lot of material used here is from newspaper articles about him, an unpublished interview, and a few other miscellaneous pieces including his obituary. I have combined almost all the information available, knowing there is a lot more research to be done on Aqeel's works and life.

Aqeel was born Muhammad Shafi, in 1930, in a rural area of Punjab which was close to Sadar Bazaar, Lahore. Aqeel, despite his many literary and cultural achievements, did not have a formal education. He learned to read the Qur'an at a mosque and had to seek his own living at an early age (Naseer Ahmad n.p.). We get a glimpse of Aqeel's harsh childhood through his description in one of his autobiographical essays, "Thrashing on Thrashing" (*Namwer Adebo'n aur Shayaro'n ka Bachpan* 236). In the essay, he states that he lived in Lahore cantonment area, which was half a mile away from the famous Lahore canal (237). He tells of being the youngest child of four, having two older brothers and a sister. Later he describes how a farmer beat him severely for stealing corn from his fields (238). He writes of how, after four to five hours of beating, when he went to the mosque for his routine Qur'an

and alphabet lessons, the *maulvi sahib* (priest) thrashed him for being late, hence the essay title. The essay does not provide much insight into his life, but it shows he had a questioning mind and a hard childhood, and despite these sufferings, he became a man of refined taste and sophistication. Many years later, in one of his rare interviews (unpublished) with Sheen Farrukh, a fellow journalist and writer, when asked how a person who never had any formal education could be such a prolific author and editor, Aqeel replied,

My father was a poor mason and he could not afford to send me to school. I was sent to the village mosque to read Qur'an. I had been a disciple of Maulvi Sahib for many years.⁴³ I used to wonder that I pray[ed] to God regularly yet remain[ed] poor. Whereas others who do not, live a luxurious life. So what is the purpose of spending whole day in the house of God? (Sheen Farrukh 2)

Nobody seemed to be able to answer this question. Disillusioned, at a very young age Aqeel ran away from the mosque and looked for a job. This was the beginning of his struggle for existence and he found menial work on daily wages of four *annas* (a quarter of a rupee) per day (Farrukh 3). Later, according to Farrukh, Aqeel worked as a signboard painter and a vendor selling snacks. He also had training as a tinner and for some time worked as an ironsmith (blacksmith) and mason. During his impoverished childhood he also had to endure the hardship of forced labour when a relative, owing to some family feud, kidnapped him. For two years, he worked hard as a farm labourer and was poorly fed by his masters. Although he endured many hardships, the Punjabi society in his tales is gentle, helpful, and loving.

Aqeel recounted, in the same interview with Farrukh, that he once asked his brother to write an Eid (greeting) card to his friend. His brother snapped back saying he did not have

⁴³ Any religious person who teaches Quran and prayers is called Maulvi sahib. He doesn't have to be a religious scholar. Most of the time these maulvis, due to their limited knowledge, misinterpret religion and misguide people.

time for that. The brother's rude reply prompted young Aqeel to learn to read and write. He started picking up stray pieces of newspapers and, using his basic knowledge of Arabic while learning to read the Qur'an, became his own tutor, gradually learning to read Urdu. Later, the Punjab Public Library of Lahore proved to be his main source of learning. It was here that an unnamed man taught him some of the main languages of the subcontinent, i.e. Hindi, Urdu, Persian, Gurmukhi and Punjabi (Farrukh 3). An unnamed person advised Aqeel to try to pass matriculation so he could get a clerk's job, but he refused. His knowledge of the Qur'an introduced him to the basic Arabic/Urdu alphabet and reading, which then set him off on a journey of scholarship. In later years, he passed the Munshi-fazil (Honours in Persian) and Adeeb-fazil (high proficiency in Urdu) exams (Farrukh 3).

As a young man in Lahore, Aqeel served in the National Guards (Farrukh 2), a volunteer wing of the Jinnah-led Muslim League, which supported Partition. It is hard to say anything with certainty about Aqeel's role in the Guards, or about whether he joined because of religious/political convictions or the need for employment. However, it is clear he was directly engaged with and witnessed the brutal consequences of Partition. He recalls, "When trainloads of bodies arrived at Lahore [at the time of Partition], we removed the bodies to a tent pitched at the railway station. Initially we were frightened. But soon we became used to it. It was an awful scene, indeed," he continues, "the stinking bodies spread cholera in the station area as many migrants had nowhere to stay but the station" (qtd. Ahmad n.p.).

In *Midnight's Furies*, Hajari presents a chilling account of the role of the National Guards in promoting religious-partisan violence in the awful days and weeks before and after Partition. He writes, "The League's National Guards came out into the open in full uniform and took over the streets ... directing attacks against Hindus and Sikhs who had not yet abandoned the city" (2015 132). Yasmin Khan writes similarly:

Many provincial politicians ... rejecting conventional forms of policing ... looked to their own volunteer bodies, nationalist training groups and assorted gangs of volunteers and helpers who, they argued, were more imbued with the ‘nationalist spirit.’ By March [1947] F.K. Khan Durrani, a correspondent living in Lahore, was seeing the writing on the wall. His warnings are even more striking because he was a loyal Leaguer and friend of Jinnah. While pledging loyalty to the ‘Muslim Nation’ he was warning that the activities of the Muslim Leaguers were getting out of hand. ‘At present one must shout with the crowd or get lynched by the crowd, and the feeling has been created that one who is not a Leaguer is worse than a kafir and should be hanged like a dog forthwith.’ (53)

While Aqeel’s exact role in the Guards and motivation for joining it is uncertain, what we do know is that his literary career began in the same year as Partition and his debut article was politically motivated. His first article appeared in the *Zamindar* in 1947,⁴⁴ and at the same time he changed his name from Mohammad Shafi to Shafi Aqeel, later using Sheen Ain as his pen-name (Farrukh 1). The article, unavailable now, was an outpouring on the then raging controversy regarding Illam Deen Shaheed, a 21-year-old man who killed Mahashe Rajpal, the publisher of a pamphlet, “Rangeela Rasool,” which members of the Muslim community believed to be disrespectful and challenging to the Muslim Prophet, Muhammad. Illam Deen was hanged in 1929 after the British Raj introduced a law that prohibited insults directed towards founders and leaders of religious communities. He was subsequently lauded as a saint and hero by Muslims of the subcontinent. I am unsure of Aqeel’s stance, but as he was writing for the *Zamindar*, which supported Muslim views, I infer that he supported Illam

⁴⁴ The newspaper was launched from Lahore in January 1903 by Maulana Sirajuddin Ahmed—Zafar Ali Khan’s father—and was initially intended to highlight the problems faced by farmers. The word *Zamindar* means landowner. After his death in 1909, his son Zafar Ali Khan became the editor and started publishing the newspaper from a different stance, and it became the mouthpiece for the Muslims of India. It was one of the most important and influential newspapers of pre-independence India. (*Dawn* November 06, 2011)

Deen's action, who to this day is considered a hero by many Muslims in Pakistan. Writing his first article on Illam Deen's actions suggests that Aqeel's commitment to the newly formed nation of Pakistan was charged with religious conviction.

What Aqeel did and where he went in the years following Partition are unknown, but he arrived in Karachi in 1950 with the manuscript of his first major literary venture—a novel, *Khoon hi Khoon (Blood All Over)*, that he had conceived during the riots of Partition (Farrukh 3). Unfortunately, there is no record of the novel's publication. However, on seeing the draft of the novel, Majeed Lahori (1913-1957), a journalist and satirist, offered Aqeel a job as assistant editor in his fortnightly magazine *Namakdan*. Until then, apparently, Aqeel had never thought of becoming a journalist (Farrukh 3). While working for the magazine, he wrote columns for other publications as well that shaped his journalistic career. Aqeel joined the *Daily Jang* (an Urdu newspaper) the same year (1950), which was the beginning of his extended career in journalism (Farrukh 3).

In the preface to *Childhoods of Famous Authors*, Aqeel, in the role of editor, provides further details about his early life and the start of his career as a journalist:

It was the year 1950 and the day was 22nd January, when I first set foot in Karachi. I had come in search of a job with my friend B. A. Najami [art director, at that time Jang's cartoonist]... and then in May 1950 I got associated with the *Daily Jang*. I was given charge of children's section, thus I became bhai jaan [big brother].... After contemplation of few days, I was made the editor of *Bhai Jaan*... Thus, in June 1951 first edition of the magazine was published. (7-8)

This was just the beginning of an escalating career. In the same year (1951) he was appointed to the job of magazine editor with a salary of PKR60 per month, about which he recalled, "It was really a big amount considering that a hearty meal cost a man only four

annas (a quarter of a rupee). A roti (flat bread) was sold for one paisa (1/16th of a rupee) and daal (lentil curry) was free with it” (qtd. Naseer Ahmad, *Dawn* 14 Feb 2008). This very specific detailing of daily food costs suggests how significant the appointment was to Aqeel, and how much material considerations meant to him at that time. It is clear that coming to Karachi proved fruitful for him: within one year he became editor of a magazine with a hefty salary. Nasir Baig Chughtai notes that

Shafi Aqeel began his career with Majeed Lahori’s magazine and gradually rose to prominence in journalism. He was also a very good translator. The children’s magazine which he edited (*Bhai Jaan*) was a veritable effort because in that he introduced many a quality writer. (qtd. “Journalist Shafi Aqeel Remembered” n.p.)

Aqeel also began writing and publishing creatively in the years after Partition—but he experienced some mishaps. His first collection of short stories, titled *Bhookay* [The Hungry-Ones] (1952), “an authentic portrayal of young bachelors” (Farrukh 4), landed him in trouble with the authorities, who declared it obscene and put the author on trial in Lahore while he lived in Karachi: “The West Pakistan government charged me under the Obscenity Law (Section 292)” (qtd. Naseer Ahmad *Dawn* 14 Feb 2008). It was another harsh phase of his life: for two-and-a half years, he was unable to bring all three of his defence witnesses, Maulana Abdul Majeed Salik, Shorash Kaashmiri and Saadat Hasan Manto to the court. Interestingly, one of his witnesses, Sadat Hassan Manto, himself had to face obscenity charges six times in his literary life. Ayesha Jalal observes that, “[c]harged with obscenity by both the colonial and the postcolonial states for his brutally honest depictions of everyday life, he was condemned in conservative social circles for daring to write about prostitution and sexuality” (*The Pity of Partition* x). This might help to define the concept of obscenity in that time, which was challenged by Manto himself in court: “If you cannot bear these stories then the society is unbearable. Who am I to remove the clothes of this society, which itself is

naked. I don't even try to cover it, because it is not my job, that's the job of dressmakers" (n.p.). Manto's example shows the concept of obscenity current at that time. I assume Aqeel's stories were also considered obscene for depicting realistic images and showing a mirror to the society.

Over the ensuing years, Aqeel worked as a journalist, writer, poet, art critic and translator. He edited and co-edited a number of magazines, and contributed columns on art and literature and, in his final decade, weekly book reviews to the national Urdu-language newspaper, the *Daily Jang*. He published numerous books in Urdu and Punjabi,⁴⁵ and his love and dedication to the Punjabi language inspired him to undertake translations of Punjabi literature into Urdu: *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan*, *Punjab Rang*, and *Punjabi kay Panch Qadeem Shair*. The collection and translation of the Punjabi folk tales that appear in *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab* are certainly a part of this effort. In the preface to *The Chinese Folk Tales*, Aqeel recalls:

I started working on folk tales approximately 35 years ago and started reading my own country's as well as other countries' tales.... In this regard before *The Chinese Folk Tales*, other collections of folk tales that I have published are *Punjabi Folk Tales*, *Folk Legends of Pakistan*, *Japanese Folk Tales*, *Japanese Folk Legends*, *Japanese Parables*, *German Folk Tales*, and *Iranian Folk Tales*. (15)

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1. ⁴⁵ *Punjab Rang*. Merkazi Urdu Board, Lahore. 1968.
 2. *Zehar Piala*. Three Arts Academy, New Chali, Karachi. 1980. (Punjabi Poetry).
 3. *Sair-o-Safar: Maghrabi Germany ka Safarnama*. [A Travelogue of Western Germany] Three Arts Academy, New Chali, Karachi. 1980.
 4. *Punjabi kay Panch Qadeem Shair* [Five Poets of Ancient Punjab/Ancient Poets of Punjab], Anjuman-e-Taraqi Urdu, Pakistan, 1994
 5. *Pakistan ki Lok Dastanain* [*Folk Legends of Pakistan*] National Language Authority, 1997
 6. Ed. *Namwar Adeebon aur Shayaron ka Bachpan* [Childhood of Famous Authors and Poets], Fiction House, Lahore. 1998.

As discussed above, the scope of Aqeel's writing is not limited to one genre; he wrote novels, short stories, poetry, essays, newspaper articles, art criticism, and biographies of prominent Pakistani artists (writers, journalists, painters). However, his extraordinary contributions to Pakistan's literary arts have been largely ignored. Despite his obvious engagement with the literary and artistic elite of Pakistan, there has been no recognition of his work in academic publications. It is alarming to see how oblivious the world of Pakistani journalism and literature has been to the author who has given so much to Pakistan and whose work is so revealing about a vital period in the nation's history. One of the few commentators on Aqeel, Quddus Mirza (*Art Now*), describes Aqeel's personality in "The Writer on Art." Aqeel was

[w]arm and friendly—yet [an] extraordinary individual, who [could] connect with everyone on a basic human level. His simple and humble appearance was merely an outside layer, because Shafi Aqeel possessed a unique analytical and great critical mind that was busy till his last breath, particularly in his book reviews, published every Sunday in the *Daily Jang*. (n.p.)

In one of his interviews, Aqeel mentions working on his autobiography: "Publishers and friends insisted that I write one. I have already collected notes for it" (Ahmad n.p.). It appears to remain unpublished. Aqeel passed away at the age of 83 on September 6, 2013. At the time of his death, he had worked for the *Daily Jang* for almost sixty years, and was in charge of its literary magazine. According to Naseer Ahmad, he lived a life of celibacy, about which he said, "The charm of words, though they sit in black on paper, was so absorbing that I did not find time to look elsewhere hard enough" (2008).

As a thorough researcher, Aqeel not only translated works but he also gathered background knowledge and data on the works that he was translating. As he claims in the

preface to his *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan*, “Along with the collection and dissemination of these Punjabi folk tales, I also studied the folk tales of other countries and regions...” (10). Hence the process took many years. In the introduction to *Punjab Rung [Colours of Punjab]* (1968)—a translation of the works of famous Punjabi poets—Aqeel writes, “These translations are motivated by the passion and interest that I have for Punjabi language and literature” (9), later claiming that Punjabi language and literature do not get the attention and value that they deserve. To make Punjabi literature available to the wider public he translated Punjabi tales, poetry and proverbs. In doing so, he claims to have helped Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, become stronger: “If we have to make Urdu language the National language in real sense, we will have to add all the colours of its cultures and heritage, which are spread all around us like precious pearls” (*Punjab Rung* 9).

Aqeel maintains that Punjabi as a language is very unfortunate because its own speakers do not know much about its literature, culture, and heritage (*Punjab Rung* 9). This is part of a long-standing debate in Pakistan about the relative prestige of the (Urdu) national language and that of local, provincial languages. The publishers of *Punjab Rung* claim that in order to achieve “linguistic solidarity,” “[t]he main objective of Markazi Urdu Board is to widen and promote the horizons (roots) of Urdu language, so that it can become the language of the whole West-Pakistan” (Book Cover, back matter).⁴⁶ These linguistic efforts seem to be a part of nation-building as different provinces had different languages, with a persistent political and linguistic struggle between East and West Pakistan that later resulted in another partition no less destructive and grizzly than the partition of India.⁴⁷ East Pakistan was formed into a new independent state, Bangladesh, in 1971.⁴⁸ There was a need to make

⁴⁶ After Partition Pakistan consisted of two parts, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan, geographically separated by India between them.

⁴⁷ See Yasmin Saika’s *Women, War, and the Making of Bangladesh: Remembering 1971*

⁴⁸ See Safar Ali Akanda. *Language Movement and the Making of Bangladesh*.

speakers of all local languages feel included and to strengthen to unifying role of Urdu as the national language. The first step toward this goal was to translate works from local languages into Urdu and thus assert Urdu's linguistic superiority over other languages.

Although he has not received much academic recognition, Aqeel received a number of awards for his work and in 2004 was awarded Tamgha-e-Imtiaz by the state of Pakistan.⁴⁹ Other awards included the Dawood Literary Prize (1968) and the Habib Literary Prize (1976) from the Pakistan Writers' Guild; the Pakistan Book Council Best Book Award, 1977; The Khushal Khan Khattak Award, Government of the Punjab, 1990; the Sir Abdul Qadir Award, International Urdu Conference, India, 1990; the Award of Services to the Cause of Freedom of the Press, Karachi Union of Journalists, 1995; the Best Book Award by the Government of the Punjab for *Sassi Punoon-Hashim Shah*, 2002; and the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Press Club, Karachi, 2005. Given such accolades, his absence from literary-historical accounts of Pakistan is all the more astonishing.

3.3 Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab

Now I return to my discussion of Aqeel's collection of Punjabi tales, within the context of the political and historical moment in which it was published and the publishers of the collection. As noted earlier, *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab* was first published in Urdu in 1963 by the Pakistan Writers' Guild as *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan*. The English edition, clearly published for a global audience, adds the adjective "Popular" to the title. These tales may have been popular in 1963 but in 2008, when the English edition was published by Oxford University Press, it seems optimistic to claim that they remained so. What makes this study more complex is that the Urdu edition was translated into English by another writer

⁴⁹ I have formed the Wikipedia page on Aqeel after I collected this data on him for my study.

with prominent additions and omissions to the tales. The tales were thus reproduced from oral Punjabi in Aqeel's Urdu written translation and then, a half-century later, in English in Bashir's translation of Aqeel's Urdu text. The fact that Aqeel's collection was originally published in Urdu, unlike Steel's English collection(s), is extremely important. Clearly, Aqeel's collection was initially intended for a local, Pakistani audience in the official, national language of the new nation, whereas Steel's various editions were always intended for English (British) readers. Given Aqeel's intended original audience (Pakistani Urdu readers), it is not surprising that his original Urdu text avoids Anglo exoticising. However, his assertion that he "restored order to [the stories'] plots, and... arranged them in what seemed to be in the best and most harmonious form" begs questions about the principles and the purpose that underlie this restoration, arrangement and harmony.

3.3.1 The Publishers

The original Urdu edition was published by the Guild Publishing House, Karachi. The Pakistan Writers' Guild, which established this publishing house, was founded in 1959 during the rule of Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan, who was the first martial Law administrator and the second president of Pakistan (in office from 1958-69). The Guild was necessary, its website maintains, because "[i]t was President Ayub Khan's era and the martial law was at its peak. National dailies could appear under strict censorship. Rumour-mongering was a crime. Writers were too cautious in their chats" (Web n.p.). Aqeel describes the situation after the martial law of 8 October 1958, in the preface of his book *Surkh, Safaid, Siah*: "There was fear in the atmosphere, and everyone seemed scared and anxious. The dailies were under strict censor, and the newspapers had to go through scrutiny before going into print" (9-10). He then relates his own personal experience of the strictness and rudeness that the columnist and writers had to endure. After reading his column for the *Daily Jang*,

“Gird-o-Pesh,” humorously describing the life of a common man under martial law, the military Major who was supposed to censor it said,

‘Why did you write it, don’t you know it is martial law time?’ I tried to explain and said, ‘I know that is why I have brought the column for you to have a look because it does not have anything against the martial law.’ He just got out of control and told me in an authoritative tone, ‘Be it in favour of the martial law or against it, how dare you write about it?’ (11-12)

With the help of two friends, who were in the army and also fellow writers and journalists, Aqeel managed to get out of trouble and preferred not to write any columns for a while. Later he says that he started writing again but he changed the style of his column “Gird-o-Pesh” (12). As it was the first experience of a military rule for the newly formed democracy, people were very fearful and careful in their day-to-day life.

About the inception of the Guild, their webpage notes that a number of elite writers of Pakistan arranged an “All Pakistan Writers’ Convention in January 1959,” attended by 212 writers from East and West Pakistan, and “with a unanimous vote founded the Pakistan Writers’ Guild” (*Pakistan Writers’ Guild* web n.p.). The Guild’s manifesto states its aim as the “sacred task of portraying truth, cultivating patriotic values, promoting international goodwill and cooperation and fostering better human relationship so that mankind may exist with greater comfort and dignity” (n.p.). The Guild established a publishing house in Karachi for the dissemination of literature in all the languages of the newly formed state, and the Urdu edition of Aqeel’s Punjabi folk tales was among the first of its publications. Although it was a collection of folk tales from Punjab, the social and political atmosphere surrounding the state at the time must have been an influence. The Guild’s objectives make the collection more significant, a contribution to literature’s function as an instrument of change, for nation

building, presenting truth, and cultivating patriotic values, as proclaimed in the Guild's manifesto.

Another significant political event that happened around this time was the declaration of Bangla (Bengali) as national language of Pakistan along with Urdu in 1956. This demand “for making Bengali one of the national languages of Pakistan,” claim Muhammad Qasim Sodhar and Samreen Samreen, “was considered a threat for ideology of Pakistan because unlike Urdu [,] Bengali was not only spoken by Muslims but non-Muslims as well” (52). On the other hand, East Pakistan's population was 44 million out of the total 69 million, and their mother tongue was Bangla (ibid 54). Aqeel's collection thus is his way of contributing to the national language of the country Urdu, which was supported by the majority of the population in the West Pakistan. The 2008 edition of Aqeel's collection was published by Oxford University Press in the wake of 9/11 and increased interest in Pakistani Anglophone literature. The preface of the 2008 edition of the collection says that UNESCO translated and published the Urdu edition *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan* in seven world languages, including English, German and Japanese, and “the well-known Pakistani journalist and writer (late) Ahmad Bashir rendered it into English” (vii) for this edition. It also notes that two “stories from the Urdu edition have also been translated into Japanese by Professor Asada Yutaka, and are part of the anthology, *Folk Tales of the World*, published in Japan in 1980” (vii). Three other stories from the collection were translated by a Japanese academic, Mr Teratani (vii).

3.3.2 Ahmad Bashir (Translator)

Ahmad Bashir died in 2004 from liver cancer (*Danka* web n.p.), and the Oxford University Press edition was published posthumously in 2008. He was born in Eminabad near Gujranwala (British India now Pakistan) on March 24, 1923. He gained his Bachelor of Arts degree from Srinagar and went to Bombay for a career in acting but soon

started writing for film magazines. He also gained training in film direction from Hollywood on a state-sponsored scholarship. After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, he settled permanently in Pakistan. Bashir worked for several newspapers in Pakistan and worked as sub-editor of the daily *Imroze*, introducing feature writing to the Urdu press (*Danka* n.p.). He also worked for the daily *Musawat* and the National Film Development Corporation (NAFDEC) during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government, but resigned after Zia-ul-Haq imposed martial law on 5 July 1977. During this period of martial law, Bashir was not allowed to write columns in newspapers. The publication of his book *Jo Milay thay Rastay mei* [Those Who Met on the Way] (1996) provoked the religious scholars of that time and a fatwa was issued against Bashir. The book is a collection of sketches of eminent literary and famed personalities of Pakistan, such as Kishwar Naheed, an acclaimed Urdu poet, Mumtaz Mufti, a Sitara-e-Imtiaz holding writer, and Qudratullah Shahab an eminent Urdu writer. Bashir openly describes their personalities without using any euphemisms, and perhaps this is what infuriated some religious scholars to issue the fatwa. His lack of favour was not permanent, however, and he was given a Pride of Performance award in 1994 by Farooq Leghari, then president of Pakistan.

It is unknown why Bahir was selected to translate Aqeel's collection, but it may be because of their similar journalistic backgrounds. There is also no information about why OUP selected Aqeel's collection to publish in English. Nonetheless, the significance of Bashir's role in the translation, like Temple's in Steel's collection, becomes apparent when both the Urdu and English editions are compared, revealing significant differences between the two.

3.3.3 Paratextual elements of both editions

In the preface to the 2008 English edition (different from that in the 1963 edition), Aqeel writes, “I had started working on these tales about forty years ago. This collection was my first venture in the field” (vii). He provides details not only about how he collected the tales, but also about the problems he faced in doing so:

I had to encounter many difficulties in the course of collecting these folk stories. I listened to stories told by old people from different parts of Punjab but the trouble was, apart from the central idea and the main characters, the same story told by different people had different versions.... Therefore, I reassembled the stories, restoring order to their plots, and when I had arranged them in what seemed to be in the best and most harmonious form, I wrote them down. It took me many years to do all of this. (2008 x)

The fact this project “took many years” suggests that Aqeel began collecting the stories soon after Partition, which means that the impact of the recently gained independence and the memories of Partition were still fresh. As discussed earlier, in the context of the (Guild) publishers’ nation-building objectives and their aim to promote linguistic solidarity, this work seems to be an effort on Aqeel’s part to add to the national literature of the country.

The “old people” who related these tales to Aqeel would have been part of the “united” India prior to Partition and must have had strong feelings about the very recent consequences of Partition. These people would have been as charged with patriotism as the collector of their tales and the resulting tales are more Islam inflected, as we shall see in the following chapter, and distinctively different from those collected by Flora Annie Steel in 1894.

Aqeel says, “As far as the language is concerned, I have kept it as simple as possible” (2008 x). His detailed description of how he collected and disseminated the tales makes it more complicated to analyse his work. As these tales are oral, there is no one original author,

and they depend largely on the memory and style of the raconteur. Aqeel's reference to "reassembling" and "ordering" of their plots is suggestive of the complex and, crucially, subjective role of the collector and translator of these folk tales. The "best and most harmonious" translation is of course a matter of personal choice and, as I will argue, a matter of ideological inclination too.

The 2008 English edition is supplemented by an "Introduction" by Professor Navid Shahzad, who claims that

[t]he fifteen stories in this volume are neither fairy tales, which are a largely feminine construct usually ending with the 'and they lived happily ever after' line, nor are they fables in the strict sense of the word since the fable chooses to end itself on a more sombre moral note. Relying on plot rather than description, these [stories] concern themselves with the adventures of largely one-dimensional characters such as the wise old man, the clever son or the patient princess; while borrowing heavily from each form to create fast paced narratives endowed with a rich earthy humour which is a distinctly Punjabi characteristic. (xv)

Shahzad's claim that these tales are not fairy tales ("which are a largely feminine construct") as they do not end on a happily-ever-after note seems to imply that fairy tales are made by women, and so are trivial/idealistic/romantic. A further implication is that it is men who collect folk tales and make them valuable by "ordering" and publishing them. The endings in almost all of the tales in Aqeel's collection are not typical 'fairy tale' endings, as Aqeel leaves something unfinished in each. This could be a deliberate attempt on Aqeel's part to make his tales appear more masculine or less feminine. I will discuss the endings further in the next chapter in comparison with Steel's collection.

Aqeel's collection has no visual aids, no sketches or illustrations for his readers. He has left it to his readers' imagination and knowledge of Punjabi society, especially in the Urdu edition. This is understandable because the audience for Aqeel's Urdu edition were solely Pakistani readers who, ostensibly, knew Punjab and its culture well enough not to need any visual aids to understand the tales. Although the English edition of the collection was for a wider global audience it, too, was published without any illustrations.

With little information available about Aqeel and his collection, my discussion of his work necessarily makes some assumptions. There may be different factors affecting his selection of the stories, and for not adding more tales to the collection. The political conditions were, as I have discussed, unsupportive for writers at the time of publication, due to the martial law of 1958. Aqeel's selection criteria may have been shaped by what was deemed politically and socially appropriate at the time. He may, perhaps, have wanted to leave some tales for his other collection(s) of Punjabi tales, mentioned in his Preface to the Urdu edition: "The Punjabi tales, that I have collected, are a lot in number, but the ones I have selected [to publish] are so much in number that it would not be possible to compile them in one book. Therefore, this collection is the first part of Punjabi folk tales" (11). He published only fifteen tales in this collection.

However, he did not publish any other collection of Punjabi folk tales, only a collection of tragic romances titled *Folk Romances of Pakistan* in 1997. An obvious possible reason preventing Aqeel from adding more tales to the collection could be a lack of finances. As the Guild was not a state-owned or a well-developed publishing house,⁵⁰ it was unlikely to have had the money to support a hefty, voluminous collection. The process of selection and deselection is entirely subjective, and the collector, the publishers and the socio-political

⁵⁰ "On 21 June 1961 UNESCO recognized it as a non-government organisation" (n.p. web: http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Pakistan_Writers_Guild)

context helped shape the collection. Aqeel admits to choosing some stories over others and to shaping them.

3.4 Analysis of the tales

The tales in Aqeel's collection, although fifteen in number, are diverse in form, ranging from fairy tales (with un-fairy tale endings) to fables and simple anecdotes. Consistent with his claim at the start of *Punjab Rung*, Aqeel appears to want to provide his readers with the richness of the oral treasures of Punjabi language, the "precious pearls" of Punjabi culture and heritage. Structurally, the tales in the Urdu collection are long with detailed and repetitive descriptions of the situations that give the tales a very oral texture, so much so that it often becomes hard to keep track of what happens in each. A tale may start from one point and go through different twists and turns to reach its ending and these pieces are disjointed so that removal of some elements, in some cases, would not affect the tale's outcome as such. This appears to make the tales more "oral" but prone to getting changed as these episodes are loosely connected. This kind of structure gives the tale-teller freedom to add or remove elements from the tales.

For example, one tale, "Prince Ruby," starts with an old couple searching for berries, only to find that one of the berries is a precious ruby. They give the ruby to the king, who the next day finds that the ruby has shapeshifted into a beautiful child. The king and queen adopt him as their child, and later marry him to their vazir's (minister's) daughter. One day an old woman comes to the palace and puts suspicions in the princess's mind about the prince's origin by saying, "He must be a demon by blood..." (38), and the princess starts insisting to know about the prince's origins. She compels him to tell her his truth by threatening to take her own life "by deadliest of poisons" (39). The prince, who tries to avoid replying by warning her that she will regret it, finally tells her that he is the son of the snake-king, and

after disclosing his true identity he shapeshifts into a snake and leaves the princess. Unhappy without the prince and not knowing what to do, the princess starts listening to tales every night from different hired storytellers. One night a man starts telling her a strange story, but to get more money he tells his tale in episodes over several nights, the same strategy that was employed by Scheherazade in *The Arabian Nights*. In the end his story becomes the way the princess finds her lost prince. She goes to the jungle in search of her prince and finally reunites with him and brings him back to the palace. All the tale's episodes are so detached that they could be easily relocated to another story and appear as if they belonged there. This loose-knit plot gives the tale an oral, fluid texture which is the distinguishing feature of this genre. The English edition trims these long details, keeping the main storyline same, and adds some concise and direct proverbs to convey meanings.⁵¹

Similar patterns occur in other stories, such as “Four Friends” (61-65) and “The Golden-Haired Princess” (68-75), where the princesses are tricked by old women in similar manners, and are kidnapped and taken to another king or prince who has fallen in love with the princess. In both these tales, the main plots are different but some parts of the tales are variants of each other. In “Prince Ruby” and “The Fan of Patience,” the princesses go in search of their princes in similar ways and when asked what they want in return for their services, they twice refuse any recompense. Questioned a third time, they ask for the prince as a reward.

The first tale in Aqeel's collection, “Dear as Salt,” is a variant of *King Lear*, which itself was an adaptation of an old folk tale. The tale begins with the same love-test, “Tell me my daughters, how dear am I to you?” To which the youngest daughter's response of “You are dear as salt to me” (1), hurts the king's ego. To punish his daughter for her insufficient

⁵¹ To explain this further, I have attached three sample tales in the Appendix which includes my own translation of “Dear as Salt,” “The Fan of Patience,” and “Princess Pomegranate” along with the English translation of “Dear as Salt” by Ahmad, and the original Urdu copy of “Meetha Namak” (“Sweet as Salt/Dear as Salt”).

love for him, the king orders his servants to find the ugliest leper in the country, and marries his daughter to him. Instead of complaining or resisting, the princess accepts her fate and tries to make the best of her situation. She is wise, intelligent and patient, and repeatedly called “wise and patient” in the English edition. She goes out to town and begs for food and feeds herself and her husband. She is a princess, but without skills or education, she is reduced to begging to survive. In all this she does not complain, nor does she beg for mercy from her proud father. Later, after finding the *Nau-lakha* necklace, she proves to her father the wisdom of her words, by inviting him to a feast where all the cuisine was sumptuous but without salt and the king was unable to eat anything because of the missing ingredient.

The tale emphasises the significance of marriage and the importance of having a husband and respecting the marital bond, even if he is a leper and imposed as a punishment for hurting a patriarch’s ego. It reflects the patriarchal mind-set of the society where a woman is considered unsafe on her own, and having a husband/male caretaker, even if crippled and totally dependent on the woman, is considered necessary. Thus, wherever the princess goes begging for food, she carries her husband on her head in a basket. Aqeel, as well as Bashir, appear to be acculturating their listeners/readers, male and female, to respect the sanctity of the marital bond even if the circumstances are abhorrent. The princess in this tale remains a dutiful and loving wife to her crippled husband and her patience is rewarded when he turns into a handsome prince.

In “The Fan of Patience,” the same message, to have patience, is given to women, as one day it will bear fruit and they will find their prince. In contrast with Steel’s independent princesses, the stories domesticate girls, turning them into homemakers. It is always girls who have to be patient and be rewarded at the end; none of the tales preaches this to men. The princess in “The Fan of Patience” not only has patience, she also produces gold and silver wherever she sets foot, and flowers fall from her lips when she speaks (implying she is very

soft-spoken and gentle). It is she who saves the kingdom by providing gold and silver bricks that help her father, the king, who had ordered her to be killed as soon as she was born for being a girl child. But if she did not possess these miraculous qualities, what then? Would she be worthless if she could not support her family by these bricks of gold and silver? Is it because she is now helping them financially that she has been given a chance to live? It is noteworthy that in these tales, girls are often found hidden in fruits and vegetation, or something bearing fruit, while princes may be found in a ruby or a fan. That is to say, girls are found in natural objects suggestive of fertility and reproduction, contrasting with princes who are found in made or crafted objects of material value.

In Steel's collection it was noticed that the punishments that are given to different characters for doing wrong are very brutal and graphic. The punishments in these tales are also very barbaric, with people threatening to cut someone's ears and nose if they fail to do a task (31), or "have [someone] crushed in the oil crusher" (63). However, contrary to Steel's collection, in only one tale the punishment is actually carried out, making the tales less gory and graphic.

In some of the tales, characters cross-dress in order to deceive someone. Significantly, men are always disguised as women when they must deceive someone or do something bad, and women dress up as men only to do something good. To an extent, this reinforces the stereotypes associated with different genders, women being deceivers and evildoers, men righteous and doing good deeds. For example, in "The Fan of Patience" the princess goes to look for her prince after his disappearance and treats his fatal wounds: "Disguised as a man, she went into the forest in search of her prince..." (2008 10). In contrast, in "The Stepbrother" when the elder stepbrother goes to take revenge on the four thugs who had been cruel to his younger brother, "he put on a woman's dress and went in the direction his brother had taken" (31). However, these examples also show the different roles men and women were

bound to perform. If a woman has to go out on her own, even if it is to help someone, she has to go as a man to appear strong and be able to travel alone.

3.4.1 The Punjabi Princesses in Aqeel's tales

Aqeel's Urdu edition's heroines are different from his English edition's princesses. My reading of both versions brings certain differences to light. The princess in the first tale, "Dear as Salt," is repeatedly described in the English edition as "wise and patient," but the Urdu edition uses the expression only once to show her wisdom and confidence in herself. Rather than begging for mercy from her father, the king, she gets to work and begins finding ways to survive and help her sick husband. The English edition portrays her as a patient princess who is happy with whatever comes her way: "The couple was then ordered to leave the city. They obeyed. The princess was wise and patient and she took to her wifely duties in real earnest" (1). In the Urdu version, "The princess was as patient as she was kind and intelligent. She thought, 'This is my fate so I must accept it.' She felt neither anxious nor discouraged. She had trust in God and began taking care of the leper" (16)

Unlike Steel's colonial era collection, these tales do not describe the girls by their golden or black hair. Only one princess has golden hair. After winning independence from the British, Punjabi people would not be unfamiliar with golden-haired women, as they had seen Anglo-Indian "memsahibs" (Roye xi). But if there were any stories of golden-haired princesses, Aqeel might not have wanted to present them, as that would be against the spirit of patriotism, and a reminder of British rule. The sole golden-haired princess gets her hair as a result of a magical pearl, when the merchant's son says to the pearl, "O pearl! My queen must be a gold haired princess"⁵² (1963 196) or, in Bashir's translation, "O Pearl, I want to

⁵² The word used in the title of the tale in Urdu version is Sunehre Baalo wali Shehzadi, which in English is translated as Golden-Haired Princess, but in the text the merchant's son asks the pearl for a princess who has

marry a princess with golden hair” (2008 71). In the Urdu edition the prince does not say golden, rather gold haired. The absence of golden-haired princesses clearly demarcates a post-Partition Pakistan, as opposed to the context of colonial India in which Steel is representing (and supporting) golden-haired princesses. Punjabi people in Aqeel’s collection are the heroes of their own tales.

Aqeel, we can conclude, does not describe the colour of his protagonists’ hair because the tales are Punjabi; the heroes and heroines will be Punjabi by default, and readers can assume the princesses have dark brown or black hair. Aqeel’s concept of beauty is more general, lacking in detail, and he avoids praising particular features, such as hair, or eyes, or cheeks. He always describes his (female) protagonists as being astoundingly beautiful, and sometimes the beholder faints upon seeing such beauty. But, he prefers not to go into more descriptive detail regarding clothing or looks, and leaves it to the reader’s imagination.

3.4.2 Arranged Marriage

Marriage is a central narrative strand in Aqeel’s tales, and is presented as being most appropriately decided by elders. This is not the case in Steel’s collection. Girls must show modesty and acquiesce to their parents’ decisions. In one instance, in “The Fan of Patience,” the princess falls in love with the prince and secretly meets him, and when he disappears she goes after him to find him. After finding him, she asks for his hand from his father, as a reward. This action seems bold, but the narrator has already indicated that the fan from which the prince came was brought by the king, the princess’s father. Thus, the partner was indirectly chosen by an elder—specifically, the patriarch of the family—suggesting paternal sanction of the union. The same happens in “The Wise Pigeon” (53-60), where the “little baby daughter” (53) of the king is engaged to the young prince. In Bashir’s translation, “[t]he

hair of gold (sona). The difference is the same as in English between gold and golden; one is noun and the other adjective.

match was settled more eagerly by the father of the girl because it has always been hard to find proper matches for girls, and fathers of marriageable girls understand this very well” (53); in contrast, the Urdu version merely says “[t]he king happily accepted the proposal” (148). Later in the tale the king dies and the prince and the queen have to escape from the kingdom to save their lives. The prince finds out about this engagement and goes looking for his fiancée, and after finding the princess he tells her what he and his mother have been through, and shows her their engagement ring. The princess also remembers that she was engaged to a prince who disappeared after his father’s death. She leaves her wedding celebrations in the middle of the night and elopes with the prince. It seems that the couple take a bold step in eloping, but all they are doing is fulfilling their elders’ wishes. Aqeel depicts a love-marriage where the couple make the decision to elope and marry, but he is also careful to show that they were engaged already by their families’ will and consent. He thus endorses the tradition of parental consent in such decisions, even if the elders have long passed away. The tales also endorse the younger generation’s respect for commitments made by their parents.

In Aqeel’s tales, boys also marry in accordance with their family elders’, and especially their fathers’, wishes. Out of fifteen tales, only in one tale, “Princess Pomegranate,” does the prince refuse to marry the girl of his father’s choice, and instead goes in search of Princess Pomegranate. He spends months in a pomegranate garden/orchard watering the plants. Finally, the caretaker of the garden, a mendicant, gives him the princess as a reward, hidden in a pomegranate fruit. He makes the prince promise to open it only when he has reached home, to ensure they meet for the first time in the presence of his elders, and that the wedding ceremony has the consent of his father and the blessings of his elders. In all Aqeel’s tales, couples marry with their elders’ permission—something that is still endorsed in Punjab to this day.

Compared to Steel's autonomous girls who independently make their own decisions about who they want to spend their life with, Aqeel and Bashir's Punjabi girls (and boys) are more submissive, modest, and compromising. He endorses modest women who follow what their parents—their father(s)—have decided for them. In the sole exception, “Princess Pomegranate” mentioned above, the youngest prince who refuses to marry the girl of his father's choice subsequently goes through many hardships to find his princess Pomegranate. He returns with the wrong girl and has to bear with her for a long time until his princess finds him. By highlighting the hardships that follow from rejecting elders' decisions, these tales instil the value of and promote society's norms and cultural values in young readers' minds.

3.4.3 Old men and women

In endorsing traditional cultural values, the tales promote respecting and caring for one's elders. Elders are also presented as the sources of the stories, suggesting respect for older people as possessors of wisdom and folklore. Through his tales, Aqeel ensures that Punjabi society's customs and traditions are upheld, and society is represented as close-knit, where elders are respected and young ones are loved and cared for.

Aqeel appears to have selected and shaped culturally appropriate tales suitable to his audience. As he claims to have “arranged [the tales] in what seemed to be in the best and most harmonious form” (x), it seems plausible that he may have added and removed parts of the tales in order to make them more socially appropriate, consistent with Islamic values and with the ideology of the new independent Muslim state, especially in his 1963 edition.

Aqeel, through his collection, is contributing to an image of Punjabi society as a nation that cares for its elders, respects them, and listens to their advice. Older people—both as tellers of tales, and as characters within the tales—are repositories of wisdom and experience, and help the younger generation to avoid making mistakes and to live harmoniously. In adding the Punjabi literature to the larger Urdu collection, Aqeel is trying to

avoid provincialism, which was one of the biggest problems after the Partition and which polarised the people of Pakistan (Yasmin Saika 297).

Aqeel's collection does not portray old people as essentially mean and evil. Instead, they are described with respect: "an elderly man, wise, grand in manner and with a beard one could trust" (20); "wise old man" (30). But the collection has only a few instances of helpful old women and no adjectives, either positive or negative, have been used to describe them. The woman who helps Princess Pomegranate after she is resurrected is just an old woman, not kind, or helpful. Overall, the older people are helpful characters in his Punjabi tales. One reason for this could be the sources of his tales. As mentioned in the preface, Aqeel collected his tales from old people: "I listened to the tales told by old people of different parts of Punjab" (2008 x; 1963 9). More importantly, Aqeel seems to be encouraging his readers to listen to elders' advice and to show them respect, which was, and still is, a very significant part of Muslim culture.

In contemporary Pakistani society, old people are not treated as being worthless, inefficient, or a burden; rather their presence is appreciated as a boon for the whole family and a blessing. Their wisdom and advice is fondly sought after and decisions are made only after consulting with the family elders. In Aqeel's "The Wise Pigeon," which takes the form of a fable, impresses upon its listeners and readers the importance of listening to the elder's advice: "Among them was an old pigeon, the wisest of them all..." (54). In "The Stepbrother," Aqeel tells of how "The older wife was wise" (28); and in "Princess Pomegranate" he describes, "An elderly man, wise, grand in manner and with a beard one could trust" (19).

3.4.4 Islamisation of the Punjabi tales

As discussed earlier, religion was one of the main factors that drove Partition, as a means of freeing the Muslims of India, and it also has an important place in Aqeel's version

of the tales. Crucially, the English translations of the tales are exaggeratedly Islamic, and repeatedly mention Allah and God. The phrase “As Allah would have it,” recurs throughout the English edition of the collection. The Urdu edition has Islamic elements as well, but they are not as exaggerated as in the 2008 edition.

In Pakistani and, more generally, Muslim culture, it is a very common practice to say *Inshallah* (God willing) or *Alhumdolillah* (Praise be to God/thanks to Allah). It would have been natural for the tale-tellers to use these phrases as sentence markers. Such inclusions may also have been a conscious effort on the part of Aqeel to Islamise these tales to make them suitable for the newly formed Muslim state. However the excessive introduction of these Islamic expressions by his translator, Bashir, often adding them where they were not used by Aqeel and specifically using the word Allah instead of God, makes the tales more conspicuously Islamised: “Allah’s profound mercy...” (2); “Allah knows best...” (3); “As Allah would have it...” (6); “Now Allah is wise...” (7); and many more such instances. These insertions and the evocation of the Muslim God, Allah, points to the transformation of Pakistan into an overtly radical Islamic state, that occurred under Zia’s regime (1977-1988), a decade after Aqeel published his Urdu edition. Zia’s primary slogan was “Nizam-e-Mustafa” (Lubna Kanwal 42) variously translated as “Islamic Rule”, “Law of Allah” or “System of the Prophet” and while in power he instituted a number of new laws and ordinances that centralised the significance of Islam in Pakistani politics. He constituted a *Shariat* Bench, formed a Council of Islamic Ideology and in 1979 issued *Hudood* Ordinance to enforce an Islamic punishment for several crimes (M. Dawood Mohammadi 2). The impact of Zia’s rule on all aspects of Pakistani life is widely acknowledged as ironically stated by the protagonist in Saba Imtiaz’s 2014 novel *Karachi, You’re Killing me!*: “If there is ever anything you can count on at Pakistani cultural events, it’s that Zia—dead for longer than most people can remember—can still be blamed for everything.” (26). It is likely that this impact on people

and their ideology carried through to many aspects of the cultural life of Pakistan, including its literature and the collation and translation of its folk tales. This may explain what I have called the “Islamisation” by Bashir of Aqeel’s edition.

3.4.5 Significance of storytelling

In some of Aqeel’s stories, the protagonists solve their problems through telling tales or listening to them. For example, in “The Fan of Patience,” the princess sets out to find her lost prince and, feeling tired and dejected, she sits under a tree. Divine help comes in the form of two birds, a mynah and a parrot. The mynah says to the parrot, “O parrot! Tell me some tale so that the time passes quickly” (1963 39), and the parrot tells her about the princess who was sitting under the tree and how she can help cure her prince by using their droppings. Through the tale the princess discovers the means to cure her prince and win him back. In “Prince Ruby,” the princess who finds herself sleepless after losing her prince, starts to listen to the tales that have never been told or heard, every night. One night, a man claims to know a very strange tale which has never been told or heard. Through the tale the princess finds out about her lost prince, and finally brings him back. Such instances, where tales help the protagonists find their way through hard times, imply that these are not mere tales but repositories of wisdom.

In some of the tales, a variety of animals and birds come to help in different ways. This may suggest the respect and importance given to animals in Hindu culture. Many of the animals are treated as gods, or Hindu gods and goddesses are associated with them. These animals include snakes, elephants, lions, and monkeys. Birds symbolise flight, thought, lightness, and the freedom to soar without boundaries. Parrots and mynahs appear in different stories to help lovers. Both these birds are believed to have the capacity to talk, although the proficiency given to them in the tales is exaggerated. Despite the Muslim perspective of these

tales, it is interesting that these Hindu elements have been kept intact, perhaps owing to the common Indian origin of the tales.

3.5 Differences between the English and Urdu edition

Although an English translation is available, and I used it as my primary text, I read the original (Urdu) edition of the collection to see the meanings that might have been lost in translation. My reading and translation of the Urdu text revealed certain significant differences between the two editions, and these reflect important differences between the original Urdu publication context (post-Partition/nation-building) and that of the later English publication (post 9/11). My translation principle was to keep the translations as literal as possible without adding any literary flourishes. I also retained Urdu words where there was no exact parallel in English.

In my comparative readings of the Urdu and English editions, it was noteworthy that the English version portrays women far more negatively. For example, in the Urdu version of “Princess Pomegranate,” the gardener’s daughter is a gardener herself, she is not the gardener’s daughter. In the Urdu version, the narrator introduces her in this way: “As Allah would have it, at that moment the *young female gardener* of the royal garden passed by...” (74; emphasis mine). This is quite different from Bashir’s English version: “As Allah would have it, the *gardener’s widowed* daughter, *an evil woman*, happened to pass that way...” (23; emphasis mine). Bashir, in his English translation, has made the independent woman, a gardener, into a widow, adding another stereotype to the tale by calling her “an evil woman.” He is reinforcing the stereotype that a widow brings bad luck and has an evil influence or is jealous of other people’s marital bliss. In some orthodox families, widows are not invited to

weddings or kept away from marriage rituals and ceremonies because of the superstitious belief that a woman whose husband has passed away brings bad luck.⁵³ The Urdu version is not biased towards the young and beautiful princess(es); neither does it add a negative attitude towards the young female gardener. The English translation, on the other hand, describes the young gardener harshly and judgementally as an evil woman.

The narrator(s) of the Urdu version does not add judgemental asides in the tales, but the translation does. The following examples demonstrate this. In the Urdu edition, when the Prince breaks open the pomegranate and the princess meets the gardener in the royal garden, “[s]he [the gardener girl] came and asked Princess Pomegranate, ‘who are you and what are you doing in the royal garden?’ She replied, ‘I am Princess Pomegranate, and the prince brought me here’” (“Princess Pomegranate” 74).⁵⁴ The English edition describes the incident differently: “As Allah would have it, the gardener’s widowed daughter, an evil woman, happened to pass that way, and saw the tender sight. She recognised the prince, and at once thought that the lovely little maid in the beautiful red dress was surely Princess Pomegranate, whom the prince had gone to seek” (23). The translator further adds apparently complimentary asides: “So she went to her and told her that the Prince would not recover unless she left him alone ... the princess was gullible, like all beautiful people are, and she agreed” (“Princess Pomegranate” 23). Addition of phrases like “As Allah would have it,” “gardener’s widowed daughter,” “an evil woman,” and “the princess was gullible like all beautiful people are” might seem merely flowery expressions on first reading, but when compared with the original, these changes add significant ideological meanings to the text.

⁵³ A Hindu superstition thought to have sapped into Muslim culture, not popular now.

⁵⁴ The text of the original Urdu tale: “Usne qareeb aa ker Anar Shahzadi se pucha: ‘Tum kaun ho aur shahi bagh mei kya lene aayi ho?’ Anar Shahzadi ne jawab dia: ‘Mai Anar shahzadi hon—iss tarah shahzada mjhe laya tha...’ (74).

In the story “The Stepbrother,” the Urdu original says (in my own translation),⁵⁵ “He reached a village, and went to ask for work at a rich man’s place” (94). The English translation of the same paragraph goes like this, “There he went to a rich man and offered to work for him. This rich man was cunning and mean, like many other rich men” (30). The translator not only promotes gendered stereotypes; he also generalises about “many other rich” people.

A comparison of passages from “Prince Ruby” in the Urdu and the English versions demonstrates that the English version is more sexist. A woodcutter in “Prince Ruby” picks berries from a shrub and luckily finds a ruby among them. The ruby is so bright that he keeps it in the house to use as a lamp in the dark, but one day his wife suggests giving it to the king. Aqeel’s Urdu edition says, “Days passed and one day the woodcutter’s wife said to him, ‘I think this berry is something precious, we are poor people, this precious thing has no use for us, take this to the king; he might reward you in return for such a precious gift.’ The woodcutter agreed to her suggestion” (Prince Ruby 111). The English translation of the tale describes the incident much more subjectively: “The woodcutter’s wife was excited, like all women are over something that is unusual, and she thought that the berry must be a very precious object, fit only for a king. So she suggested to her husband that he take it to the king and her husband agreed to do so” (36). Bashir has added his own subjective views, changing the meanings of the tales, with an eye to his 2008 audience, post-Zia era audience. The English version is replete with generalisation and judgement, often of sexist kind.

The English translation of “Fate versus Wisdom,” omits many details from the original Urdu version of the tale. These omissions make the tale very illogical, and affect its meaning. For example, the narrator of the Urdu tale maintains that the man who sets out on a

⁵⁵ “Chalte chalte who ek gaon mai pohanch gya aur ek ameer [admi] kay haan ja ker mulazmat kay liye pucha” (94).

journey to find his fortune is a Khatri—instead of Hindu as the English edition maintains—which is a caste; anyone Muslim or Hindu or Sikh can be a Khatri. Later in the Urdu version of the tale, there are some details that make the man a Muslim Khatri. The Khatri, while leaving his hometown, says to his father, “If you give me permission to go to another city, maybe Allah will create a way for me [to earn money]?”⁵⁶ (212). Aqeel also mentions, in the Urdu edition, a helpful “Khidr surat [like Khidr]”⁵⁷ old man in the tale who guides the Khatri to go and ask for help from the King. The English version skips this detail and the boy goes straight to the King’s court. In the court, the Urdu edition mentions the presence of some experienced merchants, who laugh at the proposition of the king giving the boy 10,000 rupees and oppose the king’s decision. The king gives the boy the amount he asked for, and two servants as well. The English version omits this detail, and at the end the merchants come and stay with the boy in his hut in the jungle and the boy tricks them by giving them simple dung cakes and later he demands from them to give him the dung-cakes with hidden pearls inside them. The reader feels that the boy is being cruel and greedy for no reason. But, if we read the details in the Urdu version about them making fun of him and not believing in him, his revenge seems justified. The Urdu version is logical and incidents are well connected; omissions in the English version make the tales seem illogical.

Bashir’s omission of some details that are included in the original Urdu version is puzzling, given he had the Urdu text to translate from. He also changes some details: for example, the swans in the Urdu version that bring pearls from the river appear as ducks in the English translation, and the Jat in the Urdu version of the tale becomes a peasant. Jats were traditionally associated with agriculture, but “peasant” is a simplification. Perhaps Bashir

⁵⁶ Urdu text: “Aap mujhe kisi dusre shehr jane ki ijazat dein. Ho sakta hy, Allah koi sabab bna de?” (212).

⁵⁷ An immortal prophet or an angel mentioned in the Quran who guides the righteous people when they are lost. Here it has been used as a simile for the old man because he is guiding the young man in right direction.

wished to avoid controversy and did not want the tales to point out any particular castes, which resulted in omission of particularities from the translation.

Through these tales, Aqeel (and Bashir) is careful to convey Punjabi ideals to his readers, and to depict an Islamic society. He represents a few religious minorities. In this collection of fifteen tales, he provides some space to the religious minorities of the country, who are represented by the white colour in the Pakistani flag. For example, in “Prince Ruby,” when the Prince shapeshifts from a man into a snake he introduces himself as “Raja Hari Tarang, the son of the king of snakes” (40). “Fate Versus Wisdom” (76-83) is a Hindu family’s story (2008 edition) which begins, “The youngest of the seven sons of a Hindu shopkeeper was the only one with some sense” (76). In the first example, the tale appears to be of Hindu origin, as Muslims do not believe in shapeshifting snakes; perhaps the narrator did not want to associate anything to do with snakes with a Muslim, and so he kept the Hindu details in the English translation of the tale.

Aqeel’s female characters are not entirely evil. His Urdu collection is more neutral, and does not try to blame any particular gender for wrongdoings, but the same cannot be said of the English edition. The tales create dependent female characters who are submissive and obedient, but when the need arises, they prove themselves strong. These women are courageous and wise, and Aqeel has used positive expressions to describe them in his Urdu edition. Bacchilega, in *Postmodern Fairy Tales*, contends that such tales “cannot be simply liberatory because within their specific community they also reinforce social norms” (7), and through the reader’s/audience’s internalization processes, these tales work as didactic social tools. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Aqeel’s project to add Punjabi tales to Urdu literature is a contribution to binding the nation together. The political crisis of the country since its inception and Martial laws added to the hardships of the state. Saika contends that

Ayub Khan's period (1958-1969) as president is very important because "it inaugurated the rise of the military, backed by its religion" (297). This was the period when the Pakistan Writers' Guild was formed (1959), which later published Aqeel's collection of Punjabi tales (1963).

If the political constraints were so strict during the publication of the collection that writers were careful even in their personal conversations, as discussed earlier, then writing a book about a province must have been a sensitive topic. Perhaps, that is why Aqeel seems to have kept his views neutral, and not touched upon sensitive issues. In a collection of tales for and from a patriarchal society (and religion), the collector seems to have targeted a female audience particularly. The translator of the English version, published in the post-9/11 era, has made the tales more conservative, I assume in order to satisfy the stereotypes embedded in his global audience's minds. The collector of the Urdu edition, without blaming any gender, advises women to be more patient and accommodating to make society happy and harmonious.

3.6 Conclusion

The tales in Aqeel's collection are simple and filled with patriotic feelings for his country as well as his beloved birthplace, Punjab. These tales contain earthy flavours of Punjab and its culture, with plentiful references to the religious beliefs of its people. The tales are overtly Islamic and the translator makes sure to mention Allah time and again. The Islamic inflections to the tales make the stories representative of the religious beliefs of the majority of the people of the newly formed democracy. In comparison with the Urdu original, the translation into English by Bashir has made the tales literary, at the risk of losing the orality and the rural flavours of the tales. It is understandable that one rule of translation is to not to translate too literally, as no two languages can communicate exactly the same meaning.

However, one would expect a translation to keep as close to the original as possible, and especially not to be at the expense of the original meaning. Bashir seems to have departed considerably from the original, and this became obvious when I read the Urdu version of the tales (1963) and did my own translation and compared it with English edition.

The two editions of the same Punjabi tales published for different audiences and in different times are markedly dissimilar, even though the translator of the English edition had the published Urdu original available. Both editions have designs on their readers that are related to the social, religious and political contexts of their respective eras. In the next chapter, I have compared the similar tales in Steel and Aqeel's collections and discussed the impact and causes of these changes. The chapter is a detailed discussion of the changes and impact of these changes on the tales, keeping in mind the intended audience of the collections.

Chapter Four: Twice upon a Time in the Land of Five Rivers: A Comparative Analysis of selected tales from Steel's *Tales of the Punjab* and Aqeel's *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*

In collected, published tales such as the ones I consider in this thesis, many subjective choices are made by the collector(s) and editor(s) that range from choosing a specific version of a tale to set in print, to the various choices to be made about diction, tone, descriptive language, and so on. Rarely is a listening audience implied, while the intended audience is most often a solitary, individual reader. None of these choices is ideologically neutral or politically innocent. A very significant aspect of both these collections is their translation from one language (source language)—Punjabi or Urdu—into target language. In the case of Steel the translation is from Punjabi into English, with Aqeel's collection, from Punjabi first into Urdu, and then from Urdu into English. Translation is a process that involves several steps until the work reaches its final shape. In order to convey the original meanings of a text as accurately as possible, it is helpful if the translator understands the nuances, cultural specificities of the source language and the layers of meanings of the narrative in context. My comparative analysis of the two selected Punjabi folk tale collections aims to show how the displacement and change effected by collectors' choices provides insights into the many cultural and historic differences between the collectors or transcribers of these tales and their intended audiences, and to suggest the impact these differences had on their representations. As Maria Tymoczko (2000) maintains that

Postcolonial writing and translation are both more explicit than other types of literary writing. At the same time, the two types of texts can show radical selectivity of their sources materials, a selectivity that generally has political or ideological motivation, as well as ideological consequences for author/translator. (148)

I have discussed the “selectivity” of the collectors in my respective chapters on Steel and Aqeel, suggesting what might have caused them to pick specific tales to publish and for what intended effect. In this respect, I have also discussed Steel’s collection as an Empire-building project and Aqeel’s Urdu collection as a step towards nation building. In the previous chapters, I have analysed each collection individually; in this chapter I will compare the collections, revealing their similarities and their significant differences, caused by the very act of translation and the translators’ imagined audiences. I will also discuss what I assume to be ideological assumptions they hold: Steel’s feminist (and colonial) concerns, Aqeel’s nationalistic and linguistic ones and the post-Zia era attitudes suggested in Bashir’s translation.

Folk tales contain the collective cultural memories of the society from which they originate and, when passed from one generation to another, accrue layers of communal meanings and values. There is no specific author of an oral folk tale. Folklorists present prose and poetic texts that are the product of many people’s imaginations over time. However, each oral tale-teller adapts tales in subsequent interactions, adding subjective perceptions and contextual elements in response to the situations in which they are telling tales. In this way, tales may become valuable historical and sociological records of contemporary changes in a community. This changes when the tales are collected and put in print, especially if by a cultural outsider. As I noted in Chapter 2, Ruth Bottigheimer’s observation that the processes of “writ[ing] down and collect[ing tales] strongly suggest[s] an act of appropriation, as Marxist critics would express it, a kind of intellectual piracy or theft from an unlettered teller by a literate author” (6). This suggests the way in which “pira[ted]” written tales freeze the organic process of oral adaptation through time. This observation is significant to my project because it suggests the ways in which a collection of tales might offer only a snapshot of the

assumptions and values held by the collectors at a specific time, and those of their intended audience. I have considered this point in my discussion of Steel and Aqeel and their motivations for these collections.

From the selection of the tales to their publication, there are certain underlying processes that collected tales go through before they are set in print. These steps include the collector listening to different versions of the tales, writing them down in the local language—Punjabi in this case—and then translating them into English. In this process, the narratives are drawn further away from their origin, not only metaphorically but literally as well. This textualisation often comes at another cost: the tales lose their original meanings and colour. As they pass through the stages that result in publication they lose their performative elements, the rise and fall, the amazement and amusement, the input of those who used to listen to these tales time and again but never grew tired of them, and the animated settings in which they were told. The resulting literature, which is not just textualised orality, is anything but the ‘original’ told to the collector. In the case of folklore, deciding what is original is already next to impossible. These narratives, after being published in books, become static, imprisoned in an unnatural habitat and a new medium. At the same time, however, they might capture a historical moment, depicting society and its beliefs at the time of capture. The folk tales then perform, I argue, a particular function depending on the political and ideological motivations of the collectors and the publishers.

4.1 Issues to do with Translation

Translation is clearly an important factor in the textualisation of the works discussed in this thesis. Eugene Nida and Charles Taber define translation as a process which “consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” (12). However, as the

equivocal word “closest” implies, this process can never be exact. Susan Elizabeth Ramirez says that “Translation, so fundamental to perspective and interpretation... is not easy, especially when members of one party consider the others inferiors and infidels—thus justifying the dismissal of their often religiously infused cultural practices” (306). She further points out that “another problem is coping with the dilemma of linguistic non-equivalencies” (307). These ideas are very relevant to the discussion of my thesis, because of the very different natures of the source language (Punjabi or Urdu) and target language (English). Both the collections have been translated into English from a local language, Punjabi, which has its own sentence structure, figurative expressions and idioms. For example, in Bashir’s English collection one of the punishments given or threatened to be given to the characters in trouble is to “throw you in an oil crusher” a literal translation of the expression “*Kolhu mei piswa du ga*”. Although the translation does justice to the literal meaning of the words it fails to create the image it would have created in the original language for the native Punjabi people who are familiar with oil presses and the use of them to make oil from nuts or seeds. The words “oil crusher” are likely to seem very absurd to a non-native reader from a different cultural milieu. It is clear that there are important issues relating to differing cultural context that are at stake in (literary) translation. As Karen Emmerich asserts, “translation doesn’t move an invariant semantic content across linguistic divides, like a freight train carrying a cargo of meaning to be unloaded on the far side of some clearly demarcated border” (4). Rather, she suggests, “[t]ranslation requires a complex set of interpretive decisions that are conditioned by the particular context in which a translator (or translators) are working” (4). As the preceding chapters suggest, it is the specificities of the “particular context[s]” within which Steel, Aqeel and Bahir undertook their collection and translation of Punjabi folk tales that I seek to emphasise.

My own experience of translating these tales for this thesis exemplifies this. When I worked on my own translation of Aqeel's Urdu collection into English, I felt the need to explain to my readers (my supervisors at that time) the significance of local expressions and culturally-significant objects with which they were unfamiliar. My role was not simply to translate words on a page, but to render their local meaning in ways that my (foreign) readers could understand. This would not be easy for someone who does not belong to the region from which the tales are drawn. I wanted to convey the same sense that the Urdu text was giving me, but finding the right translation was a challenging task. It is clear that expertise in the source language is only one aspect of translation. Intimate familiarity with local culture and traditions is equally important.

According to Allison Beeby Lonsdale there are three processes involved in translation: understanding, deverbalisation, and reformulation (44). Understanding what has been said in the text and what meanings it conveys is the first step of this process. The next step, deverbalisation, is the ability of the translator to understand the meanings of the text in its original context in order to be able to convey its underlying meanings. The last step is putting the text in the new language keeping in view that it conveys the original meanings and flavours. At times, the collectors of the tales and the translators do not share the same communicative situation, they can work at their own pace (Lonsdale 45), in this way they are separated from the original tale telling setting while finalising their translation. The importance of "understanding" is suggested in the example of the "oil crusher"; without adequate cultural historical and nuanced linguistic understanding it is extremely difficult for transcribers and translators to know what to retain or leave out, emphasise or adapt, when they "deverablise" and "reformulate". It is also important to note that the collectors of oral tales—who may also be translators, as in the case of Steel and Aqeel—rely on (inevitably limited) memory when transcribing and translating (at least in the time before it was possible

to make electronic recordings). This would be the case with these collections of Punjabi tales that went through several languages to reach their final shape in English. We can assume that their collectors made final changes to the translations according to what their own memory had retained and what they had understood from listening to the tales.

The oral source of these tales further complicates questions to do with translation. Emmerich asserts that “when it comes to translation we often resort to a rhetoric that suggests that the changes supposedly wrought by a translator are inflicted upon an otherwise stable source” (2). She makes this claim in relation to the often multiple versions of handwritten or printed texts that literary translators need to consider. However the same clearly applies (and is magnified) when considering translations of oral tales. In oral transmission, every raconteur, to make a story fit for the present audience, tends to add or delete some elements, but carefully enough to make the changes seem natural or imperceptible. However, in the case of written versions, where the changes are permanent and final, the personal preferences of collectors or editors play a big role. Collectors like Steel and Aqeel apparently listened to many versions of the tales they collected, but record just one version of each that *they* like better, or combine elements from several tellers’ version. The reasons for their final choices are rarely made explicit, but are often political and ideological. As Naithani puts it, “collection of folklore goes hand in hand with collectors’ socio-political ideologies” (*The Story-time* 11). She observes that the process of folklore collection involves a “conscious decision based on a reason that ‘motivates’ the author to initiate the act of collection” (11). The motivations behind the acts of collection and translation, on the part of Steel and Aqeel, and the translation of Bashir, can never be fully determined, but, as I have argued, careful consideration of their gendered and political “contexts” may offer valuable insights.

There are a number of differences evident in the collections I am considering, and also many differences between their collectors, as I have already indicated. Perhaps the most

obvious difference is the gender of the collectors and their apparent political leanings. Flora Annie Steel, who was residing in the Punjab with her husband, Henry Steel, a British civil servant, quite quickly learnt the local language which gave her a number of opportunities. Most importantly, it enabled her to claim first-hand knowledge of the ‘native’ culture, made her better able to share the “white (wo)man’s burden,” and to make proper use of her imperial gaze. Beginning in the 1880s, utilising her knowledge of the local language, she collected Punjabi tales from children, especially boys, when she went on field visits with her husband. However, despite her understanding of the literal meanings of Punjabi words, as befitted one in a position of authority over locals, her understanding of Punjabi culture was arguably less secure.

In the preface of her collection, Steel describes the sessions in which she ‘researched’ her collated tales in these words: “A carpet is spread under a tree in the vicinity of the spot which the magistrate has chosen for his *darbar*, but far enough away from bureaucracy to let the village idlers approach it should they feel so inclined” (1-2). This storytelling and collecting setting does not seem a very friendly environment; class difference between the collector and her storytellers is evident in not only the evocation of the magistrate (her husband) but also her dismissive description of her informants as “village idlers.” It is likely that the tale-tellers were not as open and free as they would have been in a local, communal setting, sharing tales among equals. Tale-tellers were aware of the collectors’ position and power in the colonial design of things and collectors knew how to use this power.

In contrast to Steel’s method of collecting, that of Aqeel, as described in the Preface to *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*, was different. Nonetheless, it appears his collection was no less motivated than Steel’s and was inspired by his *own* desire to increase the audience of his beloved Punjabi language and literature in the years after Partition. While he does not say much about what his tale-telling sessions involved in either of the editions of his tales, we are

told that he collected stories from old people of different areas of Punjab, and from different people of the same region in Punjab. Unlike the ostensibly scholarly Steel collection, replete with notes and other such authoritative contrivances, it seems Aqeel did not want to make any claims to scientificity or authenticity, as he kept his collection simple and without the scholarly apparatus of notes and analysis.

Aqeel's motivations can be assumed to be in part linguistic because Pakistan after partition faced another challenge where the people of different regions wanted their local language to be the national language such as the Bangla language movement, that resulted in Bangla and Urdu becoming the state languages of Pakistan in 1956 (Salman Al-Azami n. p.). Aqeel's translation of Punjabi tales into the Urdu in 1963 seems to play a part in such debates about what the national language should be.. The collection can be understood, in part, as the result of his desire to make the "imagined community" of Punjab a part of a bigger national community, "Pakistan", in which all members speak one language, Urdu.

Another point of difference between the two collections is that Steel's tale-tellers were, she claims, mostly young boys,⁵⁸ but Aqeel's were "old people from different parts of Punjab" (x). Aqeel does not specify the gender of his informants. Steel's informants came to her in an outside held *darbar*, where "the fancied approach of a *chuprasi*, the 'corrupt lictor' of India... cause[d] a stampede" (1); Aqeel actively sought out people to listen to their repertoire of tales. This raises the question whether the villagers who 'told' the tales to Steel would have told them in the same way when surrounded by their friends and family, in a natural tale-telling session. It seems safe to assume they would have been out of their comfort zone while telling the tales to Steel. The setting, the atmosphere, the social status and

⁵⁸ Three tales in the collection "The Jackal and the Iguana," "The Death and Burial of Poor Hen-Sparrow," and "Peasie and Beansie" are told by women.

background differences of the collector and the tale-teller surely influenced their telling, even before the translator's or collector's mediation of Steel.

The two storytelling settings that I can visualise through Steel's descriptions and, in Aqeel's case, my general knowledge of the Punjabi culture, contrast strongly. The former is very formal and official, where the 'coloniser-native' relationship is prominent (e.g. "*darbar*" [دربار, royal court]) where people have come "To see your honour" ("*ap ke darshan ae* [to see you]") (Steel 1) make apparent the authoritative status of the collector and the subordinate status of those whose stories she is collecting. These natives are in the magistrate's *darbar*, a very formal and unnatural setting. The second setting is one in which a young Punjabi man (Aqeel) goes to older people and asks to listen to their tales. This setting, presumably, would be more informal, and more respectful towards the tale-tellers, as they are Aqeel's seniors. Because of Aqeel's cultural background and lack of official status, it is unlikely that he could exercise any authority over them, beyond that which his education and literacy afforded. Thus the very collection of the tales in the two editions is immediately fraught in colonial and political ways.

Another key point of difference is the historical moment in which both the collections were collected and disseminated, drawn out in the previous chapters. Steel worked on her collection when folklore collection was politically motivated by British colonial administrators, and India was under British rule. As discussed, the motivations of these colonial administrators had to do with Empire-building. This may not have been Steel's overt intention when she began collecting tales, but later collaboration with Temple added a stronger political and scientific context to the collection, with the addition of notes that "should render it valuable to those who study Folklore on its scientific side" (Steel and Temple 3). The Occident's stereotypical representation of the 'Orient,' which Edward Said analysed in *Orientalism*, can be seen encoded in Steel's translations and compilation of folk

tales of the Punjab. Yet ironically, such stereotyping is what she says she aims to avoid as she declares in her Preface, “[this is not] a version orientalised to suit English tastes” (2).

Aqeel, on the other hand, collected his tales in the same landscape but at a later time, when historical events had changed the geographical and political situation completely. He purposefully collected the tales from Punjabi people, for Pakistani people, who had just won their independence—even if this cost many of them everything they had—from the British and Hindus. As a collector, Aqeel had to be mindful of the sentiments of the nation’s people, and to be sensitive to many other political aspects at play, such as 1958 martial law of Ayub Khan and linguistic issues between East Pakistan and West Pakistan, around the time of collection and publication. It is for these reasons I have claimed that Aqeel worked with the specific intent of nation-building, and saw translating the tales from Punjabi to Urdu as a service for the linguistic and communal strength of the new Islamic nation. This was particularly important at the time because many people in the provinces (such as Punjab) felt their local languages—and the cultures they embodied—were at risk of being lost due to the imposition of Urdu as the national language. It should also be noted that these efforts to develop the hegemony of Urdu language combined with many other socio-political reasons contributed to the partition of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971. However, for the purposes of my research, I focus on Urdu and Punjabi language here and Aqeel’s contribution in the form of translations from Punjabi to Urdu. Aqeel’s translation was also ideologically and politically complex in terms of language choice, even before the content of the tales is considered.

4.2 Historical background

The second edition of Steel’s collection, *Tales of the Punjab*, was endorsed by Richard C. Temple, a British civil servant and well-known folklore scholar, who added much

to the paratexts of both the editions. In the Preface to the collection, Steel and Temple (as co-author) prepare their English readers for what lies ahead, thus signalling that these are the tales of a people so illiterate and different that a polite English person would not be able to make sense of them without the experienced help of knowledgeable Orientalists (such as Steel and Temple themselves). By creating and highlighting these differences, the collectors are clearly asserting the superiority of the Centre against the margins, whose inhabitants “can neither read nor write” (v). The vocabulary used in the Preface reinforces stark binaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’: the centre is educated, well mannered, and literate while the margins are uneducated, ill mannered, and illiterate. As Said observed, the Oriental in these texts is represented as “irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’” (*Orientalism* 40). Steel’s preface clearly endorses a position now famously known as “the white man’s burden” (from the title of Kipling’s poem). Specifically, this is emphasised in terms of the responsibility of the colonisers to *educate* their colonial subjects. Steel’s declaration of her village informants, that they can “neither read nor write” (v), suggests a narrow understanding of Indian culture, and of literacy more generally, as Indians had been ruled through centuries by different dynasties and conquerors who brought with them new knowledge and new ways. Mughals, for example, introduced new reforms and education to the region in which Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit were popular languages. These were not uneducated or illiterate people. As Nancy L. Adams and Dennis M. Adams observe:

After 1765 when the East India Company became a political power in India, the Company began to feel it ought to do something for the natives, at least in carrying on the traditions of the former Hindu and Muslim rulers, who had encouraged learning and knowledge. Under the Moghul and Hindu kings, subsidies had been granted for education: first, to promote the religion and language of the ruler;

secondly, to provide trained men for important government posts; thirdly, to encourage learning for its own sake. (160)

Steel collected tales from people living in small villages who might not have bookish knowledge from her perspective, but whether they were Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims, they had their own kinds of knowledge which they obtained mostly through their religious books. It appears that British collectors deliberately collected stories from village folk, people with little formal education, in the interest of claiming access to unpolished, Indian authenticity—and yet, paradoxically, the collectors then went on to “polish” their tales. Their texts are used to re-present Indians (as illiterate and uneducated) without explaining to their new audience the social, cultural background of the collection, or the people from whom they were collected.

The British goals in educating their colonial subjects were, as originally articulated by Charles Grant, that “the spread of English would show the Indians how to reason; they would become acquainted with their own history. As a result it was assumed they would learn improved agricultural and technical skills, and of course, would learn the principles of Christianity” (qtd. Adams and Adams 162).⁵⁹ Historically the rulers of India had introduced educational reforms and funding for the people of India, but without the evangelism of the British. The official language of the subcontinent was Persian, and hardly anyone could understand, read or write, English. It has been argued that the British believed that educating ‘natives’ in English “would be an obvious means of assimilating the natives to their rulers ... rather than being able to read only what has been translated into native languages” (Adams and Adams 162).

⁵⁹ Grant was a missionary in India around 1792; he was a member of the Clapham Sect and wrote a long tract proclaiming the need for religious teaching in English to Indians (Adams and Adams 161).

In apparent accord with such ideas, Steel dismisses her informants for their illiteracy, and this tellingly assumes that English is the only measure of education (and perhaps intelligence). Arguably, she chose her tale-tellers, and guided them in which tales to tell, by asking “how many witches are there in the village ... [to] point the villagers’ mind in the direction required...” (vi). She then doctored the tales to meet her intended Western audience’s expectations.

In their first edition, *Wide-awake Stories*, Steel and Temple declare:

The bulk of the collection has been made by F. A. Steel, direct from the lips of the narrators, but some of the stories were similarly collected by R. C. Temple himself, and those about Raja Rasalu were translated by him from the original rough manuscript written down by a *patwari*, or village accountant, of Rawal Pindi district of the Panjab, for Mr. J. G. Delmerick, about 15 years ago. (*Wide-awake Stories* iii)

Of course, Temple’s method of tale collection would have been different to Steel’s. He understood the significance of the field as a science, and observed in the preface that “notes should render it valuable to those who study Folklore on its scientific side” (ix). He believed that folk tale collections from India would enhance the British influence over the natives and make intercourse with them easier. He collected tales as a Civil Service Administrator and his informants were his subordinates. Naithani observes:

As Cantonment Magistrate in Punjab, Temple’s status was that of a high representative of the British government of India...When he collected the tales of the people of Punjab, he had at his disposal official machinery, namely, European colleagues, Indian assistants, and the state authority to move these. The most important assistants were the munshis, or secretaries, translators, record keepers,

organizers, and the like. The munshis could perform many roles; they were literate, resourceful, and officially employed. (3)

Naithani later mentions Temple's method of calling "bards and other narrators of folktales" to "perform at his official residence" (4). She notes, "another of his methods was to travel to the countryside with his staff and ask the villagers to narrate tales" (4). This seems a very similar setting to that of Steel's, but there is a difference in status: Temple himself was a Civil Service officer. The power-gap was even wider here, and the storytelling setting more formal.

As noted in Chapter 2, Steel describes her way of getting Indian boys tell her tales in this way:

A general conversation started, enquiries are made by degrees as to how many witches there are in the village, or what cures they know for fever and the evil eye, &c... a little patient talk will generally lead to some remarks which start the villagers' minds in the direction *required*... (*Tales of the Punjab* vi; emphasis mine)

Steel's conversation-starter is interesting as witch-hunting was banned in India under the British rule. The hesitancy of the boys may relate to this, as divulging any information about witches to the memsahib might have got the boys in trouble with their own people. Apparently many Indians believed that witches were flourishing under the British rule because of the ban on witch hunting (Biswamoy Pati 26), so the choice by Steel to use this as an opening gambit for conversation, with children, was immediately loaded.

The age of Steel's tale-tellers may account for an interesting difference between the two collections. Steel's tales portray old women as bad, evil. Aqeel's tale-tellers, on the other hand, were old people, and his tales depict elders as very helpful and respectable. Another possible reason for the difference is the collectors' own leanings and inclinations. Steel guided and directed the initial conversation by asking "how many witches there are in the

village?” (2). It seems possible that, seeing her interest, her young tale-tellers came up with stories where evil old women were present—because witches are almost always old.

4.3 Size of the collections

Another prominent difference between the collections is their size. Steel’s collection is a collaborative work of two people and contains forty-three tales, of which three tales were collected by Temple. He also translated “The Adventures of Raja Rasalu.” Steel and Temple also had a helper, Bakhtawar, a *zamindar’s* daughter (1884 viii), who has completely disappeared from the later editions of the collection, and “a village accountant from Rawal Pindi,” mentioned in the Analysis of the tales at the end of the later editions of the collection (*Tales of the Punjab* 259), who collected the tales of Raja Rasalu. With Temple’s addition of “Notes to the Tales” (203) and “Survey of the Incidents in Modern Indian Aryan Folk-tales,” (267) the book is a voluminous collection.

Aqeel’s collection, on the other hand, is very short, containing only 15 stories, and he claims to be its sole collector. In the preface to the Urdu edition he mentions having collected a huge number of stories that required another collection and publication: “The tales that I have collected are huge in number, and those that I have selected for publication are also so many that they would not fit in one book. Thus consider this book part one of Punjabi folk tales” (Aqeel 1963 my translation 11). Yet his *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab* is a rather slight book. He does not mention why he chose these tales for the collection, but the process inevitably involved selection and de-selection, or as Rushdie puts it, a kind of censorship that prevents the telling of other tales (Rushdie 68).

Another difference between Steel’s and Aqeel’s collections is the inclusion (or not) of illustrations, notes and figures. Steel’s book has illustrations while Aqeel’s does not support the tales with any visual aids. One possible reason for this is that Steel may have wanted her

audience to see an exotic India, and sketching and drawing were very popular pastimes for colonists in that era. Figure 4 shows the book-cover of Steel's 1894 edition, by J. L. Kipling. It presents images of animals only, ignoring the human element of Punjabi society—and of the tales within. The first edition of Aqeel's collection was published in a time when Pakistan was going through decolonisation and in the midst of political crisis (martial law) after gaining independence in 1947. In the new democracy, lavish book production would not have been affordable, and this may explain Aqeel's comparatively plain book, devoid of notes and illustrations.

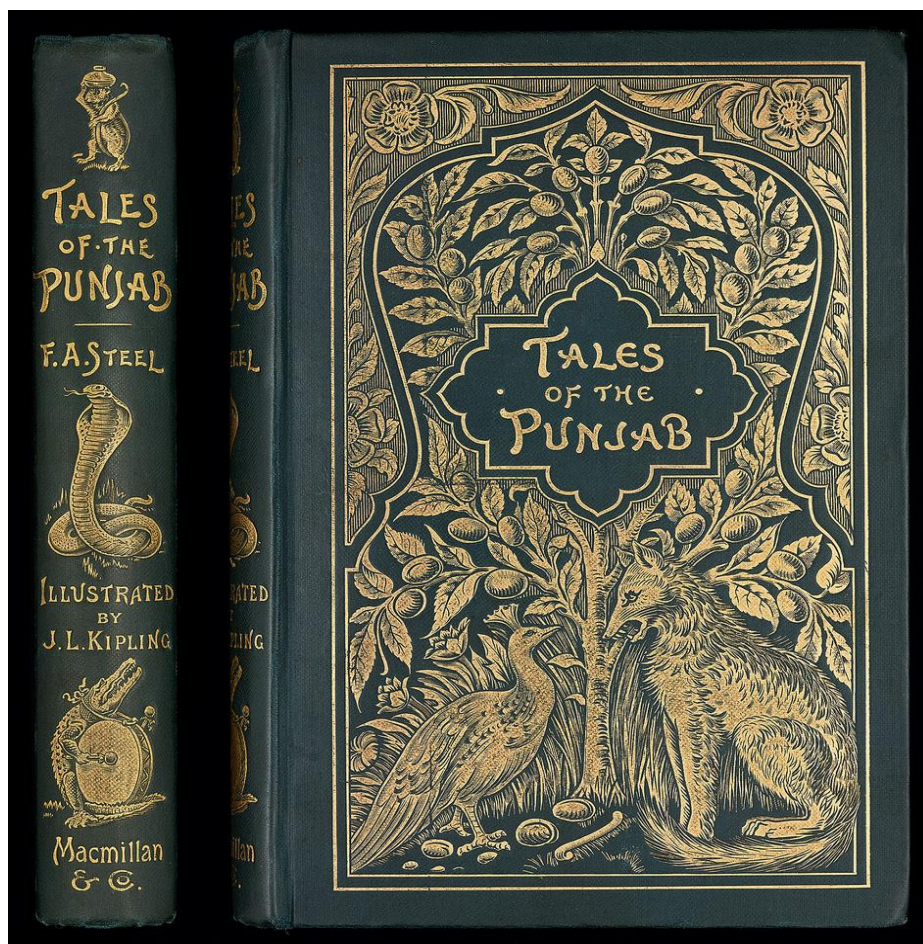


Fig. 4. J. Lockwood Kipling. Book Cover. *Tales of the Punjab*. 1894.

With this exotic cover, Steel (and Temple) were sure to attract the attention of their intended British audience, and arouse curiosity in them. It shows a peahen and a wolf under a tree, a

drum-beating crocodile, a rat walking with a pot on his head, and a snake, but no Punjabi people.

On the other hand, the title page of *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab* (Figure 5) features a painting of Hir-Ranjha—one of the popular tragic romances of Punjab—by Ustad Allah Bakhsh.⁶⁰

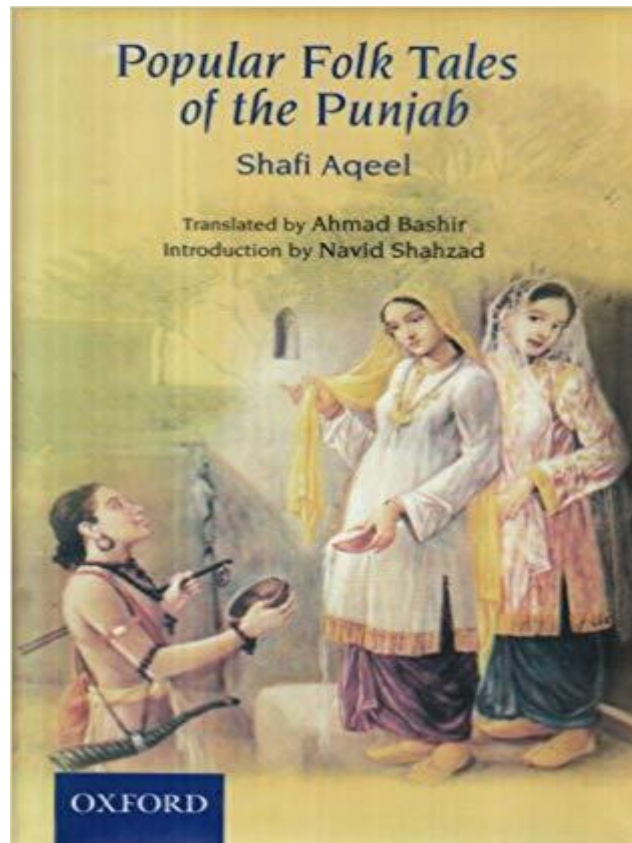


Fig. 5. Ustad Allah Bakhsh. “Hir-Ranjha.” Book Cover. *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*. 2008

Pakistani folk tales are not very popular or well-known internationally, but the folk tragic romances of the Punjab are famous worldwide as they have been sung in songs and

⁶⁰ Hir-Ranjha is also spelled as Heer-Ranjha. The painting is the depiction of the star-crossed lovers, Hir and Ranjha. The tale is amongst the four tragic romances of Punjab- Mirza-Sahiban, Sohni-Mahiwal, and Sassi-Punnun.

made into movies, and eulogised in poetry by Indian and Pakistani artists. In using the image from *Hir-Ranjha*, the book seeks to attract a wider audience for folk tales through their previous knowledge of the romance(s). This is misleading, however, as it is a folk tale collection and does not include any of the popular folk romances. The clothes worn by the people in the illustration are very traditional and evoke the image of a stereotypical Punjabi village.

4.4 Tales: Structure, Characters, Plots, Endings

In this part I will give a detailed comparative analysis of the similar tales (variants of the same tale) present in both Steel's and Aqeel's collections in order to suggest how the differences between collectors, and how and when they collected, might be reflected in the published tales. There are a number of similar stories in the collections: "Princess Pepperina" (Steel) and "Princess Pomegranate" (Aqeel); "The Ruby Prince" (Steel) and "Prince Ruby" (Aqeel); "Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends" (Steel) and "Four Friends" (Aqeel); "Bear's Bad Bargain" (Steel) and "A Bad Bargain" (Aqeel); "The Wonderful Ring" (Steel) and "The Golden Haired Princess" (Aqeel); and "Close Alliance" (Steel) and "Timid Tiger" (Aqeel).

While there are several overlapping details in terms of plot strands and characterisation in these similar tales in the two collections, the differences in each collectors' treatment of two very similar tales is significant for my discussion in this thesis: "The Ruby Prince" (Steel) and "Prince Ruby" (Aqeel); and "Princess Pepperina" (Steel) and "Princess Pomegranate" (Aqeel). In the discussion that follows, I will refer to the versions of these tales that appear in the republished unabridged edition of Steel's collection (reprinted 1973) and the English translation edition of Aqeel's collection (2008). I will supplement the latter with my own translations of Aqeel's original Urdu edition, *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan* (1963).

4.5 Variants of “Prince Ruby”

There is much in common between Steel’s and Aqeel’s versions of this tale. At the most basic level, the plot in both tales is very similar: a poor man (a “Brâhman,” hence Hindu, in Steel’s version, and a woodcutter in Aqeel’s) discovers a stone or a berry that turns out to be a highly valuable ruby. He offers the precious stone to the king who rewards him generously. The king gives the ruby to his queen for safekeeping, and from the stone emerges a prince. In Steel’s version, the ruby is locked in a box for safekeeping but when the box is opened, after twelve years, the ruby has disappeared, leaving a handsome young man in its place. The young man says, “I am Ruby Prince ... more than that you cannot know” (198). The king is enraged and sends the changeling out of the kingdom, where he proves his bravery and skill by saving a city from an ogre that is eating its young men. As a reward, the prime minister suggests that the king give the Ruby Prince his daughter in marriage and half his kingdom, which he does. In Aqeel’s version, the ruby turns into a beautiful baby boy who is adopted by the king as his “queen had no issue,” and is promised in marriage to the vizier’s daughter, born on the same day. The narrator tells us that, “as days of peace and happiness pass faster than days of grief, Prince Ruby soon grew into a handsome youth and the vizier’s daughter became a perfect beauty” (2008 37).

The young couples in both tales are blissfully in love and their only problem is the curiosity of the princess about her husband’s origins. In Steel’s version the “wilful bride” (200) demands, “If you love me, tell me of what race you are” (199). Aqeel’s narrator offers a similar but more dramatic account:

She threatened to kill herself with the deadliest of poisons if he did not tell her his caste. Now this is a very compelling device, always effective, and always certain to make a man weak. He promised to answer her question in the morning. (39)

In both versions, the prince disappears into a river as his wife watches, and turns (back) into a snake. Steel's prince turns into "a jewelled snake with a golden crown and ruby star" (200) but does not give his identity before disappearing. Aqeel's prince becomes a cobra who announces himself as "Raja Hari Tarang, the son of the king of snakes" (40), who had left home after quarrelling with his father. The remainders of both tales explain how the princess regains her prince, as I will discuss below.

Despite the similarities in plot, there are many differences in detail which are worthy of closer attention. To begin with, in Steel's collection, the tale begins with "a Brāhman" finding a ruby, firmly establishing the character as Hindu, while Aqeel just describes him as a "woodcutter [*lakar-haara*]." Aqeel's version seems more fitting for his original intended Pakistani (Muslim) audience. Steel's choice of "Brāhman" is an exoticising descriptor, likely to pique the interest of Western readers.⁶¹ The man in Steel's tale finds a shining stone just lying on the ground: "On picking it up, it turned out to be a small red stone..." (197). India has been associated with precious gems and stones, especially rubies (Andrew Marvell famously writes, in "To His Coy Mistress," of finding rubies "by the Indian Ganges' side"). Aqeel however proceeds differently, and in his tale the woodcutter, being poor and hungry, picks berries from a bush, and by lucky chance picks "the best, the reddest and fattest of all" (36). This turns out to be a precious ruby, which he and his wife decide they cannot keep as it is "fit only for a king" (36).

⁶¹ The British fascination with the Indian caste system has been well documented, as has the extent to which they used the caste system to more effectively rule India. See Sasha Riser-Kositsky, who writes of the significant influence of James Mill's *History of British India* (1817), "required reading for generations of newly minted East India Company officials," throughout the nineteenth century. Riser-Kositsky offers the following: "Mill unequivocally viewed the institution of caste as the single most important factor impeding India's 'social progress.' In the course of describing Indian Muslim society, he [Mill] praises its rejection of caste, 'an institution which stands a more effectual barrier against the welfare of human nature than any other institution in which the workings of caprice and selfishness have ever produced.' To Mill, Indian religion was then 'characterized by the overwhelming power of the Brahmins ...' Caste was a social system unfitting civilized society, promoting 'indolence, avarice, lack of cleanliness, venality and ignorance'" (34).

In Steel's version of the tale, the Prince emerges from the ruby after twelve years and he is driven from the palace, only to be welcomed back when he has proven his mettle. As a reward for his bravery the king's daughter is married to him. He wins the princess after risking his life, suggesting that if young men can be brave in the face of hardships, they can win a princess. The king and queen do not adopt him immediately, and do not trust him. The prince has to win their respect and the princess by proving himself.

Contrastingly, in Aqeel's version (as translated by Bashir), the king and queen find a child in place of the precious stone the very next day. They adopt him as their own child, thinking that he has been sent by God as an answer to their prayers because they are childless. Childless kings and queens in folklore often get sons as an answer to their prayers, as a male child can be an heir to the throne. The king and the queen are so blinded by their desire to have an heir that they do not question or wonder where the child has come from, or whom he belongs to and, being religious, they just assume he has been sent from God. This is in sharp contrast to Steel's version, where the question of the prince's origins is foregrounded from the start. In Steel's version it is also made clear that it is *women* who are deeply concerned about the prince's heritage, and that the princess is susceptible to gossip and issues of social standing:

But the young bride, much as she loved her gallant husband, was vexed because she knew not who he was, and because the other women in the palace twitted her with having married a stranger, a man from No-man's-land, whom none called brother.
(199)

In Aqeel's version, the princess only starts to think about her husband's "caste" when prompted to do so by an "old hag" (38), a witch, sent by the prince's grandfather in search of him. No one cares about his caste, as the tale is from an Islamic perspective and in Islam,

ideally, caste is not considered important, although in reality Punjabi Muslim society is still very particular about caste or surnames. The prince is raised from a new-born as the king's own son, while in Steel's version he appears from the ruby as a "handsome stripling" (198), and rather than being adopted, he is driven away from the palace.

In both tales, the princess is guided to her (snake-form) prince by a visiting outsider: Steel's princess by a "dancing-woman" (200), and Aqeel's (Bashir) by a taleteller, "a good old man, though a bit greedy" (42). The elderly taleteller draws out his telling of the tale of the prince's whereabouts over several nights (reminiscent of Scheherazade in *Arabian Nights*), receiving money after each instalment. The princess, in both tales, learns that her husband has returned to the snake kingdom where night after night he joins his grandfather, the snake king, to watch a procession of dancing and enjoy a feast. They enjoy the revelry in human form, but each dawn become snakes again. In both tales, the princess watches these nightly events and devises a plan to reclaim her husband. Aqeel and Bashir's snake-prince instructs his wife on how to trick his grandfather into promising her anything she wishes. She does so and the tale ends with this warning about female curiosity:

The princess returned home happily with her prince, handing over the charge of the kingdom to him, settled herself to becoming a good wife, which is never to be too inquisitive and never demanding to know the secrets of one's husband. (2008 46)

Steel's princess similarly tricks the snake-king into giving her the prince and the story concludes, "After that they lived very happily, and though the women still taunted her, the princess held her tongue, and never again asked her husband of what race he came" (201).

Another revealing difference between Steel's exotic Hindu version and Bashir's Islamic one is the trick used by princesses to impress the snake king. Steel's princess, acting on a suggestion from "a dancing woman, one of those who attend the women's festivals"

(200), dances to impress the king and asks for her beloved prince as a reward. Bashir's tale is in a Muslim context, where a respectable woman does not dance in front of men. Therefore, the princess goes with the old man—as he is old, he is safe to travel with—and the princess only proceeds upon her husband's suggestion and serves milk to the gathering in an honourable manner. She therefore wins the king's heart by doing a respectful *woman's* domestic work, and the king grants her wish as a reward. Steel's princess is bold and active, while Aqeel's princess is modest and passive. In Aqeel and Bashir's version, the ideal of a good, obedient wife is endorsed, consistent with Muslims' understanding of women belonging to home and home making. Steel's version, on the other hand, presents an exotic India where women dance to entertain, and to win the hearts of men.

Issues to do with “caste” and “race” are perhaps more interesting in these two tales than questions about representation of conventional gender roles – although, as noted above, both tales appear to endorse a number of assumptions about women: that, for instance, beautiful young women are nice and naïve, and old women are evil hags. While Steel does not use the word “caste” in her story, using the word “race” instead, she begins the story with a clear reference to the Hindu caste system in referring to the finder of the ruby as a “Brāhman,” and the moral of the tale, or one of them, seems to be warning against concerning oneself with a person's origins. The portrayal of women as gossipmongers and “wilful” (200) is noteworthy, too. One of the most striking aspects of Aqeel's version is his use of the word “caste” in conjunction with the decidedly Hindu name given to the snake-prince, Raja Hari Tarang. Snakes (or *naga* in Hindi) are held in high esteem in Hindu mythology, and a snake-worship festival, *Naga Panchami*, is celebrated each year.

A snake-king with a Hindu name, Raja Hari Tarang, is surely significant in a tale collected by a Muslim man, published by an Islamic press in a collection (as I have argued) aimed at promoting nation-building in the newly-formed Islamic Republic of Pakistan.⁶² Moreover, other characters in the tale are clearly identified as Muslim, for example the old tale-teller who asserts, “I depended on Allah’s guidance” (41). It is the princess’s curiosity about her (Hindu) husband’s caste that causes the young couple’s grief, and ultimately he forgoes his “caste” origins in order to take on a new (Muslim) identity. While Steel draws attention to questions of caste, perhaps to stress to her audience that, in Riser-Kositsky’s words, “caste was a social system unfitting civilized society,” (34) Aqeel appears to suggest that Hindu caste assumptions were inappropriate to the civilised Muslim society of the new Pakistan.

This overarching moral appears to be firmly asserted in the conclusion to Aqeel’s Urdu original collection: “The minister’s daughter started living happily with the prince after they came back. Never again did she ask him about his caste because now she had known his caste”⁶³ (1963 my own translation 130). Translator Ahmad Bashir’s 2008 English edition does considerable damage to the Urdu original by entirely omitting the references to “caste” in favour of a trite assertion about the role of a good wife: incapable of managing affairs herself, the princess “hand[ed] over the charge of the kingdom to [her husband]”; her focus thereafter was to be “a good wife, which is never to be too inquisitive and never demanding to know the secrets of one’s husband” (46). The original Urdu version of the tale, “*Laal Shahzada*,” does not include any such gendered advice. The princess is portrayed as intelligent, brave, stubborn and curious; after the prince disappears she takes charge of the

⁶² It was named the Dominion of Pakistan from 1947-1956 and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan from 1956 to present.

⁶³ “Vizir-zadi shahzaday kay sath hanshi khushi rehne lagi. Iskay baad usne kabhi Laal shahzaday se uski zat nahi puchi kyu’ki ab who iski zat jaan chuki thi” (1963 130 Original Urdu text).

kingdom: “she was made queen and she began running the kingdom” (119). The effect of Bashir’s many translation changes, such as the one mentioned above, is to portray the Punjab as a backward, restrictive culture, not least in its gender assumptions. It seems strange that although Bashir was translating for a 2008 audience his tales depict a conservative sexist Punjabi society, far less progressive, in gendered terms, than the one represented in Aqeel’s 1963 edition. One factor influencing these changes, I would argue, is that the collection, published by OUP Pakistan was most likely intended for a largely internal Pakistani readership, one still influenced by Zia’s islamisation efforts from 1977 to 1988. It could also be argued that Bashir was a product of this era in Pakistan’s history and sought to promote a version of “the real” Punjab in which certain (Zia-influenced) Islamic values with respect to gender held sway.

4.6 “Princess Pepperina” (Steel) and “Princess Pomegranate” (Aqeel)

Steel’s “Princess Pepperina” and Aqeel’s “Princess Pomegranate” are another pair of similar tales. The tales are alike in their basic plot structure, but there are certain notable differences in their form and content. These differences are suggestive of the cultural and social placement of the collectors as well as the audiences they aim to address. Before going any further in the comparative discussion, it would be useful to give plot summaries of both tales.

The princess in Steel’s “Princess Pepperina” lives in a pepper plant and is taken care of by a Jinn. A king, who happens to pass by, falls in love with her and takes her to his palace after marrying her with the Jinn’s permission. Soon after her arrival in the palace, the other women in the palace become jealous of the beautiful princess and plot against her. They kill her newborn son and frame Princess Pepperina for the murder, accusing her of being an ogress. The king instantly gives orders for his new wife to be killed. After her death, she

reappears in the form of vegetation, pools and a marble-walled garden. The king is very unhappy and unable to forget Pepperina; one day he happens to come to the marble-walled garden and there, after listening to the two birds who are discussing his hasty decision and misjudgement, he realises his mistake. Princess Pepperina is brought back to life and the couple live happily ever after in their marble-walled palace. The Jinn also joins them there.

Aqeel's Princess Pomegranate is protected in a pomegranate fruit, which grows in a pomegranate garden. A mendicant, who sleeps for six months and remains awake for six months, is the caretaker of the garden. A prince passes by the garden and enters to rest under the trees. He waters the plants, and as a reward the mendicant tells the prince he will give him whatever he wishes. The prince asks for Princess Pomegranate, and his wish is granted. He takes her protected inside a pomegranate fruit, which he is supposed to open only when he reaches home. However, he opens the fruit out of curiosity before he gets there. Upon seeing the stunningly beautiful princess stepping outside of it, the prince faints. The "gardener's widowed daughter" (23), who feels jealous on seeing this, tricks the beautiful princess into exchanging her dress with her and then throws her into a well and pretends to be the princess herself. However, after multiple attempts, the princess finds her way back to her prince and the jealous woman, who is now his wife, is thrown into the well.

In general, the stories in both versions of the tale are similar. Both portray beautiful, naïve, inexperienced girls who emerge from a fruit and nobody asks them where they come from or what their caste is, which was very important in the case of "Prince Ruby." Their astounding beauty is enough for them to be readily accepted as princesses and they win princes' hearts without any effort. Both are originally found within the four walls of a garden, which is guarded by a fatherly figure (the Jinn and the mendicant, respectively). Both the princesses appear to do nothing before marriage: Princess Pepperina comes out of a pepper plant and is discovered sitting beside it (109), while Princess Pomegranate only comes out of

the pomegranate to marry the prince. Both have to face and triumph over jealous women so that they can finally live happily-ever-after, and they instantly prove their moral worth through their innocent and beautiful appearance. In Steel's version, the king, who earlier had ordered that she be slain, still "could not help bewailing his beautiful bride" (112), and when the princess is resurrected, he promises not to distrust her ever again. In Aqeel's version, when the prince meets his bride on the night of their wedding, he instantly recognises her as Princess Pomegranate. He listens to all that she has gone through, believes her and gets rid of the "ugly" woman who has deceived him into marrying her.

Apart from these obvious similarities, both versions are replete with subtle differences, a process which Carl Wilhelm Sydow (1965) calls "oicotypification" (qtd. Dundes *The Folktale* 440)—whereby tales are altered to make them culturally appropriate for a given audience, or perhaps, as in Steel's case, to meet an audience's expectations. I will now turn to these differences and their connotations in both versions of the tale.

Some of the differences between the two versions are obvious and some are very subtle, but cumulatively they point to a particular meaning and flavour in each tale. The use of a pepper plant in Steel's story, for example, may suggest India's association with spices. It seems quite a strong image, because chillies and pepper are famous for their hot spicy taste, so it is an apt metaphor for Steel's Punjabi woman. The pomegranate, on the other hand, is a symbol of beauty and fertility in Pakistani Islamic culture, and many authors and poets have used the fruit as a metaphor to express the beauty of their beloved—referring to a pomegranate to describe the pink glow of the beloved's cheeks. Pomegranate is also often used to refer to the sexuality and chastity of young women. It appears that Steel has chosen the pepper plant to appeal to her audience's idea of the exotic East, while Aqeel has added the pomegranate for its symbolic associations and because it is considered one of the fruits of heaven, thus adding an Islamic flavour to the tale.

In Steel's version, the narrator refers to the "quiet, inoffensive Jinn" (109) who takes the princess into his custody. It is the princess herself who tells the Jinn that her name is Princess Pepperina, although she originated from an egg laid by a bulbul. The "good-natured" Jinn tries his best to keep her away from the "horrid world outside" (109), but when the time of his long slumber draws nearer he starts to worry about Pepperina: "what would become of his princess?" (110). The tale creates an image of a delicate, naïve, dependent and innocent girl who needs to be taken care of by a man. The protective measures can be seen from the very start: a high-walled garden, guarded by a Jinn, and a pepper plant "shaded by tall mango trees" (108). The addition of the Jinn, originally from Arabic mythology, again draws on an image commonly associated with the East, and "Orientals'" belief in supernatural. Here he is portrayed as an over-protective fatherly figure who shields his daughter from the world outside.

Princess Pomegranate, in contrast, is protected by a mendicant, a common character in Muslim Punjabi stories, also known as a dervish. She is hidden within a fruit but the garden is not high-walled, and is not properly taken care of, as it needs to be watered. Steel may have used a high-walled garden to create an image of a fairy-tale princess, like Rapunzel, who is locked up in a tower away from all the delights of the "horrid world" (Steel 109), in an attempt to contain her increasing maturity and sexuality. Thus tropes of Western fairy tales are added to the Eastern tale. The orchard in Aqeel's version of the tale, on the other hand, appears to have an entrance way, because there is no mention of the need to cross the walls. The princess is safely kept in a pomegranate fruit, which makes it almost impossible to find her without the mendicant's help. This image of being hidden in a pomegranate is suggestive of the concept of *purdah*, which Muslim women practice, and it might also refer to *zenana*, which is a part of a Muslim home allocated to women only. As noted earlier, pomegranates also symbolise fertility and sexuality, and the use of a protected

pomegranate, here, seems to refer to virginity and chastity. Purdah for Muslim women becomes obligatory when they have reached puberty.

The high-walled garden within which Princess Pepperina lives arouses the curiosity of passers-by, and a king one day “climbed over the wall and found the lovely Princess Pepperina seated by the pepper plant” (109). The princess is doing nothing, just “sitting” by the pepper plant, and the king appears to rescue her from this utter loneliness and boredom. The princess “cunningly” (109) convinces the Jinn to allow her to marry the king and the marriage “was performed in ever so great a hurry” (109). In Aqeel and Bashir’s version, by contrast, the unseen beauty of Princess Pomegranate is the talk of the town, and the prince, who has already fallen in love with the idea of her, comes in search of her. But the princess is hidden in a pomegranate fruit. This again has Pakistani ‘Muslim’ undertones, as traditionally a person meets their partner only after marriage.⁶⁴ Having any physical contact before marriage is out of the question; thus the protected virginity of Princess Pomegranate may be seen to reinforce normative Pakistani, Muslim cultural practices. The mendicant (the father of the bride) hands over the princess (hidden in a pomegranate fruit) to the prince, but only on the condition that he does not look at her until he has reached his palace. Aqeel and Bashir appear to endorse the cultural norm of accepting the partner in marriage without seeing her and making sure her chastity is preserved.⁶⁵ Similar ideological references are evident in the opening passages of the story, where the king, father of the prince in this story, decides to marry his seven sons into a household where there are seven daughters. Bashir’s narrator stresses that the sons accepted what their father had decided for them: “[The king] gave them

⁶⁴ Though Islam allows the couple to meet and get to know each other before marriage, in Pakistani culture it is considered disrespectful to demand to see the would-be partner before marriage.

⁶⁵ ‘Her’ not him, because, until recently, mostly in middle-class families, girls didn’t have a say in such matters at all, and if there was a proposal for a girl, the elders of the family decided the matter, secretly.

the happy news. The princes were obedient sons.... They bowed their heads in acceptance of their father's will ..." (19). In contrast, in Steel's version, Princess Pepperina met the king first, fell in love with him, and then wisely and "cunningly" persuaded the Jinn to marry her off to the handsome king. Steel reinforces the image of a confident and bold young woman at each step of the tale.

The exposition of both versions is also different. Steel's "Princess Pepperina" starts with the description of a pair of bulbuls (nightingales); the female bulbul wants to eat green pepper, which is out of season at the time, but the "obedient" male bulbul (108) flies miles in search of green pepper fruit.⁶⁶ This craving of the she-bulbul for a fruit that is out of season, seemingly, refers to a pregnant woman's cravings (for pickles). This is confirmed when she lays an egg later, and leaves it by the pepper plant. This is also a trope in Western folk tales: Rapunzel's mother's trespassing in the garden to satisfy her cravings or lust comes to mind. Aqeel's version, "Princess Pomegranate," begins with a king who has seven sons and who wants them to marry into a similar household, which means finding a king with seven daughters. For this purpose, he sends his emissary to find a suitable house with "equal virtue and magnificence" (19). The important task of match-making is handed over to "an elderly man, wise, grand in manner, and with a beard one could trust" (19), and the brides and the grooms have no say in the matter. The involvement of an "elderly" man is again a culturally significant aspect. In Pakistani Muslim culture, as a way of honouring the bride's family, a group of elders from a young man's family goes to ask for her hand. The princes are described as "obedient sons" (19), suggesting that not only daughters but sons also had to marry according to their father's will. The youngest prince, however, disagrees with his father's choice and refuses to marry an unseen girl, and the quest for the girl of his dreams

⁶⁶ "The Indian husband is generally hard-worked" (Steel, *Garden of Fidelity* 123).

proves a failure when he comes back with an “ugly” (24) bride (although he later ends up happily married to Princess Pomegranate). Again, this reinforces the narrator’s implicit point that it is best to follow what elders decide.

Although the princess in Steel’s version sits idly and waits for a rescuer, she is nonetheless bold and confident, and not only faces the intruders—the king and his Minister (109)—but advocates her case wisely and dexterously, and chooses her own partner. In Aqeel’s English version, however, the match is a blind bargain for both the prince and the princess, and we are told that she is “gullible, like all beautiful people are, and she agreed” with the “gardener’s widowed daughter” who cleverly threw her in the well (23). Steel’s version of the tale can thus be seen to represent a female protagonist who is capable of making decisions and who wisely deals with the events that occur, even initiating these in important ways. Bashir, on the other hand, endorses the image of a princess who is too naïve to make her own decisions, and is easily manipulated by the jealous woman.

Despite the ubiquity of jealous women in Steel’s version, the princess experiences a few months of happiness, due to a talisman that hangs around her neck. This talisman might also be seen as an element associated with the superstitious East, which Steel has used to ‘orientalise’ her version of the story. After the princess gives birth to the prince, the courtly women find a way to get rid of them both. The method employed here is described in gory and brutal detail; the wicked women act as witches, and kill the infant prince while the princess sleeps. The women then blame her for the gruesome act, claiming that she is an ogress. Given the apparent evidence, the king “could not deny she was an ogress” (111), and orders his wife to be slain without fully investigating the infant’s death. This might suggest an orientalised version of an Indian tendency to revenge as a means of responding to domestic crimes, rather than a more considered Western, legal approach via trial and punishment (one recalls that Steel’s husband was a British magistrate in India). The couple’s

love ends as suddenly as it had started. The story here becomes very violent, and appears to depict a savage, brutal society for Steel's English audience. In Aqeel and Bashir's version of the tale, the "ugly, jealous woman" pushes the princess into the well (23), a murder which is heartless yet not grisly. The use of a well to get rid of a rival also appears in a Qur'anic story about the prophet Joseph's life and his brothers' jealousy towards him, where the brothers deceive Joseph and push him into a well. Arguably the collector has added (or retained) certain details that make the story culturally suitable for his Punjabi (Pakistani) Muslim audience, just as Steel has done for her intended British readers. In both versions of the story, the executed princesses reappear in different forms to reclaim their love and prove their innocence. The princess in Steel's version takes the form of marble walls, climbers and pools, a reminder of the garden from where she had come to this "horrid world" (110); in Aqeel's version the princess takes many forms such as red flowers, green climbers, green flowers, and finally, hidden in a pomegranate fruit (26). A young boy finds her whose old mother adopts her as her daughter.

Both princesses find their paths back to their loves, but in very different ways. The king in Steel's version, revisiting the wild, comes across a "high white marble wall" (112), and once again climbs over it into a garden where he happens to listen to the birds discussing the fate of the unfortunate princess. "High white marble wall" is a repetition of the earlier image of the walled garden with the addition of marble, a stone extensively used in Mughal architecture, and helps reinforce the image of an extravagantly "magnificent palace" (112) for readers. The birds then discuss with each other how to bring the princess back to life. The king, who is all ears, does as covertly directed, and "the Princess Pepperina appears, smiling, more beautiful than ever" (112). The narrator tells us that the king "besought the princess to return home with him," saying he "would put all the traitors to death; but she refused" (112). The princess, who has previously proved her wisdom and independence, once again is shown

to make her own decisions, and the king agrees to remain with her, and they live happily ever after. This is an astonishingly positive affirmation of female decision-making and authority that runs counter to familiar representations of passive female protagonists in both Western and Eastern folk tales.

In Aqeel's version, Princess Pomegranate uses her expertise in needle-work to gain the attention of her prince, and sends him a sample through the old lady. This again suggests a Pakistani Islamic cultural practice, where it is considered immoral for a woman to propose marriage directly or even approach a stranger. The prince is very impressed by her work and thinks how beautiful the maker of such delicate pieces must be—leading to his proposal to her, once again, without even seeing her. The importance of household and home-making skills is endorsed here. The prince proposes marriage before divorcing his first wife, consistent with the practice of polygamy in Islam. On their wedding night the prince immediately recognizes Princess Pomegranate, and the princess tells him how the “ugly woman” (26) had tricked her. The prince throws the wicked woman (his first wife) into a well, and the couple live happily “for the rest of the prince's life” (27). This is a very strange ending, or rather it is not an ending at all, because the storyteller informs the readers or listeners that “Princess Pomegranate has vanished, but she is not dead.... And she is waiting for her [new] prince” (27). Throughout the tale, Aqeel endorses the image of a beautiful, dependent, chaste and over-protected girl as an ideal match for the prince. He also gives hope to young men that if they look for their Princess Pomegranate, she will be waiting for them, “protected” somewhere.

If we look at the gendered assumptions encoded in both the versions, we find on first glance the heroines in both the versions are not too different from Western fairy-tale princesses. The 1894 version, compiled and transcribed by a Christian woman, delineates a heroine who is shut away in a “high-walled” garden, waiting for her rescuer. However, she is

brave enough to face strangers and make independent decisions. As Shampa Roy argues in her dissertation, *Flora Annie Steel's Short Fictions* (2010) “the Indian women in Steel’s fictions are not essentialised as shadowy, long-suffering figures, silently surrendering to their cruel fates” (56). As I have suggested, this appears to be true of her portrayal of the protagonist in her version of this folk tale. Her heroine is not a naïve, dull and dependent woman, but one who can fight for her own rights and assert her own opinions. However, if Steel offers a somewhat progressive portrayal of Punjabi womanhood in her tale, she is far less progressive in the ways she depicts Punjabi (“Hindoo”) culture: local Indians are repeatedly described in ways that suggest they are inferior to the “Memsahib” who has undertaken the task of transcribing and translating their tales.

Contrasting with Steel’s version, Aqeel’s (Bashir’s) overtly Islamised tale depicts an innocent persecuted heroine as an ideal,⁶⁷ portraying a woman kept under extreme protection, who is so stunningly beautiful that the prince faints upon seeing her (23), and who is gullible “like all beautiful people are” (23, 24). On the other hand, the gardener’s “ugly” “widowed” daughter is portrayed as an epitome of evil, and throughout the narrative is not even once addressed as the prince’s wife, although this is her status (as she marries the prince after throwing the princess into the well, and pretends to be Princess Pomegranate herself). The narrator creates a stereotypical binary between good and evil women through physical beauty (or the lack of it).

These differences in plot and characterisation are reinforced by differences in narratorial style. Steel has refashioned the Punjabi tale and transformed it into something more like a Westernised literary one; as noted earlier, the princess has much in common with the familiar figure of Rapunzel. The incidents in the story are cohesive through exposition,

⁶⁷ See Bacchilega, “An Introduction to the ‘Innocent Persecuted Heroine’ Fairy Tale.”

with a carefully constructed beginning, middle and ending. The story seems to have lost its oral colours and a reader feels this distinctly, while reading and comparing it with Aqeel and Bashir's version. It seems that Steel has appropriated an "Indian" (Punjabi) tale and forced it into a pattern that might best suit her intended British reader's expectations. Bashir's version, on the other hand, clearly attempts to retain the oral form of the tale as much as possible, and keeps the language simple, as promised in his Preface (x). Periodically, his narrator interjects by speaking directly to his audience, thus making the narrative more interactive. His language is more proverbial and includes many phrases that serve to convey collective wisdom and cultural values and assumptions to his readers or listeners. For example, a character is described as having "a beard one could trust" (19), a very Islamic image, as beards are considered a sign of spiritual greatness and it is obligatory for a man with a beard to maintain its dignity and due respect. Thrice in the story the tale-teller exclaims, "[T]he princess was gullible, like all beautiful people are" (23, 23, 24), an assumption which is instilled through repetition. When the youngest prince refuses to marry the girl of his father's choice, the narrator inserts observations: "youth has no ears to hear, when the heart leads the way" (21), and "the youngest son is always dearest" (20). The narrator goes on to exclaim, "[M]ay the lord bless everybody with obedient sons" (19). Such examples contribute to the storyteller's emphasis on culturally significant aspects via the narratorial voice: those with beards are respectable and trustworthy; obedient sons and daughters listen to their father's (or elders') advice, and those who don't should not be rewarded; beauty and innocence are an ideal and desirable combination; ugliness is detestable and evil.

In contrast to Steel's apparently secular tale, Aqeel and Bashir's version contains many religious terms, referring to God or Allah in every other sentence: "[M]ay the Lord bless everybody" (19); "God has given me enough" (22); "O kind man of God" (22); "As Allah would have it" (23). Steel's version of the tale contains no such expressions, and there

are no generalizations or obviously didactic messages for her readers. However, symbolism and imagery are perhaps subtle indicators of Steel's Western, Christian perspective. The Jinn, in Steel's version, has a strange habit of sleeping for twelve consecutive years, and the number twelve is a significant number in Christianity (e.g. Christ's twelve disciples). On the other hand, Aqeel's version often repeats the number seven, a number which is very significant in Islam: it is believed in Islam that there are seven heavens; during Pilgrimage the pilgrims have to perform a number of Hajj rituals seven times; pilgrims have to walk around the holy Kaba seven times, and they have to run between Mount Safa and Mount Marwa seven times. Many more such examples could be provided.

As in many Western fairy tales marriage is most often the final destination for the protagonists: be it Cinderella or Rapunzel, happily ever after comes after getting married. Both Steel's and Aqeel's versions of the tale, however, portray the hardships that a newly wedded couple have to face to finally reach their happily ever after. The princesses die but reappear in the form of vegetation, and find their lost lovers after failed marriage. Princess Pepperina goes back to her high-walled garden, while Princess Pomegranate, after her prince's death, returns to a pomegranate fruit to be discovered again by another prince. Princess Pomegranate remains dependent on external forces, sometimes to prove her innocence and sometimes to contact her prince. The birds in Princess Pepperina's case are implied to be representatives of her own soul in the guise of "Sheldrake and its mate" (111). Aqeel's narrative, despite its loose conclusion, represents a male worldview, a patriarchal version of the tale endorsing normative, cultural and religious assumptions, while Steel's version, although it includes many Orientalist elements, portrays an independent and bold woman challenging the traditional values of her society.

Despite their many differences, both the stories represent a context where domestic and public spheres are separate, where women are protected from the external world as much

as possible, and where being beautiful means having the virtues of innocence, kindness and loyalty. Being ugly means being clever, a trickster, cunning, jealous, and dishonest. Both stories endorse the concept of beautiful physical appearance as an indicator of moral value. Those who are beautiful are sure to win the prince and those who are ugly deserve nothing but hatred. Through these narratives one can easily peep into the “high-walled gardens” of Punjabi society, where women are kept protected from the “horrid world outside”—although one peep appears to be Orientalist and complicatedly feminist, and the other appears to endorse Muslim-inflected and often patriarchal views. During the short spans which the heroines spend out of walls, unprotected, they face the calamity that their protectors have been trying to avert. These portrayals surely satisfied Steel’s audience’s expectations of the exotic Other (complicated by her feminist leanings), while they also reinforced, in Aqeel’s intended reader’s mind, the importance of the protection offered by the four walls of domestic life.

4.7 Themes

The themes that appear in both the collections are love, marriage, hunger, poverty, and class difference with subtle variations. The tales in Steel’s collection show Punjabi people as illiterate, superstitious, believing in fakirs and jinns, tricking and sometimes killing each other for material gains. The people ask for help from fakirs and other human beings, rather than ask God, showing them as heathens. Such representation in the tales justifies the British presence in the subcontinent and clarifies their position to their English readers. As quoted earlier, the colonised people were represented in published folklore as “extremely exotic, wild (not natural), generally cruel, superstitious, cunning (not intelligent), and certainly untouched by European civilization” (Naithani 112). Collecting tales, in Urdu, for and from a majority Muslim Pakistani society, Aqeel’s narrator himself excessively refers to

God or Allah. Punjabi people, in his tales, ask for blessings from the “holy men of God” (6), and appeal to or thank Allah repetitively.

Many Punjabi people believe in God, Hindu, Sikh or Muslim, but they have their own way of reaching to him or connecting with him, which is different from common Christian ones. Steel appears to have disregarded this, considering the British Protestant Christian way to be the norm. Steel has chosen to present multiple images of Punjabi people asking for help from non-divine beings: animals, fakirs, saints—not God. For example, in “Prince Lionheart and his Three Friends,” the king and the queen who have no children are visited by a fakir who helps them: “At last one day an old *fakir*, or devotee, coming to the palace, asked to see the Queen, and giving her some barleycorns, told her to eat them and cease weeping, for in nine months she would have a beautiful little son” (33). A similar thing happens in “The Son of Seven Mothers” (64), and “Prince Half-a-son” (189), where the king has no children and a holy *fakir* or *faqir* (189) comes and asks why he is sad, when he hears the reply, he says, ““Is that all? ... that is easily remedied. Here! Take this stick of mine and throw it twice into yonder mango tree. At the first throw five mangoes will fall, at the second two. So many sons you shall have, if you give each of your seven Queens a mango apiece”” (189). In contrast, both Aqeel and Bashir, although in varying degrees, construct a religious society which is very God- (Allah)-fearing and is mostly Islamic. The contrast with Steel illuminates the way in which Aqeel’s tales emphasise the Islamic religion of the people he portrays. Something that Bashir does even more overtly. It appears that Aqeel, and subsequently Bashir, seek to make the Punjabi tales more Pakistani and less Indian.

The theme of marriage is a common theme in many folk and fairy tales. The folk tales I am considering also often feature marriages between princes and princesses, but the way the marriages are settled is different in both the collections. The princesses and princes in Steel’s collection have their (greater) say in the decision about who they will marry. In contrast,

Aqeel's protagonists require the permission of their elders to marry. Although freedom of choice for females, in Steel's collection, is mostly limited to choosing a partner, they do whatever they can to get what they want to attain the man of their desire. In "The Son of Seven Mothers," the princess "declared she would only marry [a man] who was the son of seven mothers" (76), rather than someone with some better skills or education. Earlier in the story, we are told, "No sooner did the princess catch sight of [the boy who is son of seven mothers] than she blushed, and, turning to the king said, 'Dear father, this is my choice!'" (67). In some cases, when the situation does not seem hopeful, Steel's heroines just elope with their lovers, towards their happily-ever-after. In "Sir Buzz," the soldier's son and Princess Blossom "were ... convinced [in one night] they could no longer exist apart, they determined to fly together" (Steel 13). The tales include strong characters such as Bopoluchi in "Bopoluchi," an orphan who dreams of having a happy married life with a well-off man. Although she is tricked by a robber, the tale is about her escape and survival.

The girls in Aqeel's tales are beautiful, but their major strength is their patience or their character. They marry someone chosen by their elders and use their patience to achieve a happily-ever-after. In "Dear as Salt," the princess is married to a leper, as a punishment, without being given a chance to say anything. In Bashir's translation, the narrator repeats the phrase, "the princess was wise and patient" (1) six times, because she respects her father's evil decree and cares for her leper husband. Although the Urdu original does not reinforce any such ideal, it also focuses on the princess being good and kind to her husband: "She believed in Allah and began serving the leper" (16). The English edition says, "The princess ... took to her wifely duties in real earnest" (1). The second tale in Aqeel's collection is "The Fan of Patience" which is again about a princess who has patience and wins a beautiful prince. But unlike other princesses in the collection, the princess falls in love with the prince first, without her family's knowledge. She goes to find the prince when he disappears and

brings him back. Even in this case, although the tale apparently promotes the couple's choice and opinion in a decision to marry, Aqeel emphasises that it was the king who brought the fan from which the prince appeared in the first place. Even in this tale, it is elders who initiate the marriage.

In Aqeel's tales the female protagonists are strong in the sense that they can endure hardships and tests of time with patience, but most of the time couples have little or no say in the decisions of their marriage. As we saw in Aqeel's version of "Prince Ruby," the marriage is decided as soon as the couple is born, and without their consent. In "The Precious Handkerchief," permission is asked from the demons who had kidnapped and adopted the princess as their daughter: "Upon this, the princess brought out the young man from behind the curtain, to the joyful surprise of the two [old demons], who willingly agreed to take him for their son-in-law" (52). The Punjabi society portrayed in Aqeel's tales has strong cultural values. His young protagonists are very respectful to their elders and do not do anything without their permission. This remains reflective of many aspects of contemporary Pakistani Punjabi society, where older people maintain a considerable amount of power over the lives of the younger generation.

Both Steel and Aqeel advocate the benefits of a married life, but in Aqeel's case, the tale teller promotes the value of patience by repetition. Moreover, the tales seem to suggest that every couple goes through tough times at the beginning of their life together, but once the woman/girl/wife has been sufficiently patient and developed her stronghold, she can enjoy happiness for the rest of her life. Happily-ever-after comes but not immediately—rather, after some difficult times. However, the main aim of all this bravery (in Steel) and/or patience (in Aqeel) is homemaking: after marriage in Steel's tales, and after many hardships, before or after marriage, in Aqeel's.

4.8 Wise, kind old men and cunning, greedy old women, hags

Another difference between the two collections is in their portrayals of old people. This comes through particularly clearly when we compare two versions of the same story, “The Bear’s Bad Bargain” (Steel) and “A Bad Bargain” (Aqeel). In general, Steel’s old men are depicted as kind and helpful people, but her old women are almost always mean, tricksters, cunning, and/or witches. The terms used to describe them are also very derogatory and negative. In Steel’s “The Bear’s Bad Bargain”, both the old man and his old wife are equally involved in making a fool of the poor bear, in fact the old man is more actively engaged as he is the one who was supposed to get firewood but instead bribed the bear to do it for him. However, the narrator reserves a negative tone for the wife who is described using pejorative adjectives, “‘That wouldn’t matter much if we could get the wood,’ said the greedy old woman” (31) but the old man is described as “answer[ing] the woodman craftily” (30). The woman is greedy although she has done her part of the job—preparing a meal—and while the old man tricks the bear to do what was assigned to him, he is portrayed as acting on the impulses of fairness rather than greed. The same pattern follows throughout the collection, where old men are good and benevolent, even if crafty, like Sir Buzz, demon Jasdrul and Demon Safaid in “The Faithful Prince,” while old women are invariably evil and cunning with only their personal gain in mind.

In Aqeel’s collection, in contrast, old Punjabi people are almost always portrayed as helpful and Aqeel very rarely uses deprecating terminology to describe them. He tends to depict old men or women as helpful, loving people. In his version of “A Bad Bargain,” the main story and plot line is the same as in Steel. However, Aqeel’s version of the story is built in a way that creates sympathy for the old couple from the beginning: “Once upon a time there was an old couple who lived in a small village, alone and uncared for. They were near the end of their days and had therefore abandoned all hope for a better life and worked just

enough to fill their stomach” (89). The use of words like “alone and uncared for,” “near the end of their days,” and “abandoned all hope” invite the reader to sympathise with the old couple. Steel on the other hand introduces the couple in these words, “a very old woodman lived with his very old wife in a tiny hut...and the old wife, who was a grumbling, scolding old thing ... she took to giving her husband nothing but dry bread to eat ... till the poor old soul got quite thin” (29). Her contrasting views about old men and women are particularly apparent in this tale. However, the narrator in Aqeel’s tale does not make the kinds of judgements apparent in Steel, and in fact he ends his tale on a note about old people in general: “[O]ld people are wise, and wise people sometimes exploit simpletons” (91).

4.9 The “fairy tale” endings

Jack Zipes, in his Introduction to *Happily Ever After*, maintains, “We never abandon fairy tales” (1), and “to read a fairy tale is to follow the narrative path to happiness” (4). We are in part so attached to these narratives because of their happily ever after endings: in the “narrative path to happiness,” poetic justice prevails; evil gets what it deserves, and good comes out victorious. There are significant similarities, but also important differences in how these two collections of Punjabi folk tales conclude. Most notably, Steel’s tales, which describe the lives of a beautiful girl and a prince, always end on “they lived happily ever after.” After going through hardships and troubles of life, the protagonists finally reach their happy ending. At the end of all these tales, the hero gets a pretty bride as well as a kingdom while the girl marries a rich handsome man, usually a prince, and that always means the end of her adventures. Marriage is almost always a way of going upward in the social hierarchy, from poverty to riches, and if the couple is poor, as in “Sir Buzz” (Steel), the tale continues till they get richer.

In the Introduction to the English edition of Aqeel's collection, Navid Shahzad maintains that the stories in the collection are not "fairy tales, which are a largely feminine construct usually ending with the 'and they lived happily ever after' line..." (xv). Indeed, Aqeel has given his tales very different endings. Sometimes these endings are not the end at all, and the narrator hints that the story continues. In most of the tales, Aqeel provides a happily ever after but does not end his narrative there, adding a straightforward message at the end (as in the ending of "Prince Ruby" discussed earlier). In "Princess Pomegranate," the tale-teller narrates at the end, "The prince is now dead. Princess Pomegranate has vanished, but she is not dead. She is hiding herself in a big pomegranate somewhere in a pomegranate jungle, where an old mendicant keeps watch, in between long spells of slumber. And she is waiting for her prince" (27). "The Wise Pigeon" concludes, "After some time when the prince was settled as king, the wise old pigeon took leave of him so that he could be with his own kind in his last days. The pigeon advised all the other pigeons never to be late in returning home ..." (60). In the tale "Four Friends," Aqeel ends the story in a way that piques the reader's curiosity about the river where the prince and the princess live:

They say that his city still flourishes on the bank of a river in the Punjab. But the rivers change course and nobody can identify the river, because there are five rivers in the Punjab on whose banks many, many happy cities continue to flourish, fade away, and flourish again, while the wheel of time turns endlessly. (67)

Through this open-ended style, the narrator leaves his audience with an impression that the tale keeps going on, and also leaves a didactic message for his audience. His technique seems close to its oral origin and it is very different from Steel's, where tales usually conclude with happy unions between the lovers.

4.10 Conclusion

The role of literature in representing and contributing to socio-political and ideological change is crucial. Both Steel and Aqeel's collections (and Bashir's translation) are different in ways that reveal the different prevalent ideologies of the time in which they were collected and published and the motives of the collectors and translators of the tales. My analysis of the differences between the editions of Steel, Aqeel (and Bashir's translation of Aqeel) illuminates such change at work. It shows how these seemingly naïve tales can be used for different ends by different people in difficult historical and cultural situations. It also shows that the collections of Punjabi folk tales depict and absorb the socio-political and historical context of their time of publications.

My comparative analysis of the two selected Punjabi folk tale collections reveals different portrayals of Punjabi culture written (transcribed/translated) many decades apart. In the intervening period there were major political and religious upheavals, not least the division of Punjab into Indian and Pakistani regions. Most obviously, one version of the compared tale is written from an outsider's perspective and the other from an insider's. The former offers insight into a British, Christian woman's perspective on (Hindu) Punjabi culture during the late-colonial period, while the latter offers a perspective that seems to be clearly engaged in cultural nation-building from a male, Islamic perspective. While the collectors and translators of both collections claim to represent Punjabi society, as the titles of their collections suggest, their representations of gender roles and (religiously-inflected) cultural assumptions are very different. This comparison suggests the qualified value of applying Western scholarship with respect to the analysis of Pakistani folklore, as it has been translated into English—not least in the application of feminist analyses of the role of folklore in disseminating cultural stereotypes. Further work, however, needs to be done

regarding the value of Western approaches to folklore in the discussion of Eastern narratives, particularly in the context of religious and cultural differences.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Findings: Khattam-Shud

The title of my thesis, *Once Upon a Time in the Land of Five Rivers*, begins with the magical phrase “Once upon a time,” which appears at the start of many folk and fairy tales in English. The phrase translates into Urdu as “*ek dafa ka zikr hai.*” Western tales often conclude with “They lived happily ever after.” In Urdu, especially in an oral story telling session, a phrase that is often used after “happily ever after” at the end of a tale is “*Khattam-Shud*”: “The End.” Usually it signals the end of the storytelling session as well, indicating that it is too late for any more stories to be told and it is time to go to bed. In Salman Rushdie’s *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, the evil character Khattam-Shud is described as “the Arch-Enemy of all Stories”:

He is the Prince of Silence and the Foe of Speech. And because everything ends, because dreams end, stories end, life ends, at the finish of everything we use his name. ‘It’s finished,’ we tell one another, ‘it’s over. Khattam-Shud: The End’ (39).

When the titular character asks Khattam-Shud why he hates stories, he replies, “Stories make trouble.” He explains further, “The world is for Controlling ... [and] inside every single story ... there lies a world, a story-world, that I cannot Rule at all” (161).⁶⁸

If I recast my project as a storytelling session, it begins by introducing folklore as far more than mere entertainment. I take seriously, and employ as a founding premise, the widely accepted idea that tales originally told orally by/to “folk” often encode and reconfirm local normative assumptions (with respect to gender, class, religion, etc.). At the same time I acknowledge that some tales may sneakily challenge or even subvert such assumptions. This

⁶⁸ *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* was the first book Rushdie published after going into hiding following Ayatollah Khomeini’s placing a fatwah against him. It is widely understood as cautioning against censorship.

is why, as Khattam-Shud says, stories can “make trouble.” This “trouble” is not only *in* the stories; it also results from what readers do with them: how they are interpreted, what they are said to mean, and in what contexts. As a result, I endorse here, as I did at the start of this dissertation, Donald Haase’s suggestion that analyses of fairy tales (which I take as a subset of folk tales) need to pay due diligence to the “complexities of ... production and reception, sociohistorical contexts [and] cultural traditions” (ix-x).

I began my “story” with an account of how folk tale collection by colonisers in South Asia were part of a larger project of “ethnographic surveillance” (Crane and Johnston 2007 82): fixing local oral stories in print, secured by various appeals to scientific authority, facilitated control and rule of “natives.” The collection, annotation and dissemination of folklore became part of the larger “science” of anthropology. It is not by chance that this coincided with the great era of European colonial expansion around the globe. As I have argued, following the cues offered by many commentators, such collecting was part of a larger process aimed at securing evidence of the lesser civility of colonised natives—and so the greater civility of the colonisers. The social Darwinism that underpins the collection of “native” folk tales is evident in the assertion by R. C. Temple, a central figure in Indian folklore collection during the colonial era and key influence on the work of Flora Annie Steel, that it is the “lot” of the British to “govern, directly or indirectly the lives of members of nearly every variety of human races” (“Anthropology as Practical Science” 19). Colonial folklorists, then, were not only engaged in a project to “save and store orality for use in the future,” as “preserver[s] of that which the natives themselves could not preserve,” but also to “formulate handy definitions of the culture, history, and mentality of the people under consideration” (Naithani *The Story-time* 19-20).

My research focuses on folk tale collection in the South Asian subcontinent in the late colonial era, and after the formation of Pakistan. I have chosen to pay particular attention to the Punjab region—rendered in two when the colonisers finally departed in 1947. I have argued that the collection of folklore in this region, before and after partition, served quite divergent political motivations. Consideration of a central collector of Punjabi folk tales, Flora Annie Steel, occupies much of my early discussion. Steel, following the examples of other collectors like Mary Frere, Maive Stokes, and R. C. Temple, started collecting tales soon after her arrival in (northern) India to which she was taken as a young bride. Her soon-acquired knowledge of the local language proved helpful in this endeavour. However, like other colonial folklorists she ignored the cultural and religious tensions that either already existed in India or were aroused by the British colonisers via their “divide and rule” policy, which reached its conclusion in the partition of India and Pakistan. Shashi Tharoor argues that the British, after seeing “Hindu and Muslim soldiers rebelling together in 1857 and fighting side by side ... did not take long to conclude that dividing the two groups and pitting them against one another was the most effective way to ensure the unchallenged continuance of Empire” (101). Steel’s collection is clearly “Hindoo” in its focus and remarkably devoid of any suggestion of the Muslim aspect of the culture whose tales she collected.

After discussing the motivations and ideological work performed by the folk tales in the British colonised India, my “story” then moves to the time when the British left India after dividing it into two separate countries—India and Pakistan—in 1947. Another phase of folklore collection and dissemination began in Pakistan, following independence. This was spear-headed by Shafi Aqeel who published a collection of Punjabi folk tales in 1963, apparently after many years of collecting. I have argued that this collection was part of a larger project of nation building for the newly independent nation. Aqeel’s edition, translated from oral Punjabi into the new nation’s official language, Urdu, emphasises Muslim Pakistani

ideals. I was first alerted to Aqeel's collection when I read Ahmad Bashir's 2008 English translation of the work, *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*. My interest was piqued by the clear differences evident between tales in Bashir's edition and Steel's. However, I was aware that a simple comparison of the two would not be sufficient to make any substantial claims about the differences between Steel's and Aqeel's work. I needed to consider the "missing link" between them: Aqeel's Urdu publication. While I was undertaking research in Pakistan, a librarian at Government College University, Lahore, Muhammad Naeem, provided me with a copy of Aqeel's original Urdu version of the tales, *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan* (1963)—a collection that has almost disappeared from the annals of literary history, along with the author himself. This discovery has enabled me to offer a more complete comparative analysis of how folk tales of the Punjab have been collected at different historical moments, for different audiences and, in Aqeel's case, also modified by a different translator. This historical background is crucial, as partition changed not only the whole geography of the Punjab province but the composition of its population as well. While the tales collected by Aqeel make no reference to the savagery, brutality, and violence of Partition, I argue that his work is a direct engagement with the lived reality of Punjabi people at this time in history.

One of my central interests is the representation of gender in the various tale collections. This is not an arbitrary concern. As I have argued in my introduction, the representation of gendered roles in folk and fairy tales has been the focus of a great deal of recent scholarship into the genre(s). The extent to which gendered representations in folklore might reconfirm assumptions about female passivity and lack of agency or, in contrast, challenge such notions, has been extensively debated. This is particularly interesting when considering tales collected from the subcontinent in which female oppression (Hindu or Muslim) has been widely remarked upon in the West. It is for these reasons that I have highlighted the role of Temple—a male, imperialist, colonial (and coloniser) folklorist, in

considering Steel's collection. Steel's various publications of her collected, translated tales were subject to Temple's male scrutiny—even censorship—and the addition of his (rather redundant) scholarly apparatus. My comparative focus, however, has not only been on issues to do with gender representation, but also on depictions of Punjabi society more generally, and the use of exotic, conservative and/or religious elements, keeping in mind the political and sociohistorical background of the collectors and their publications.

With an eye on the changes introduced in each collection, I have paid particular attention to the comparative construction of different characters and how these might depict Punjabi society, seen through several different lenses. What changes have the collectors made in their representations of the tales (acknowledging that their original sources are forever lost)? Asking this has been in service of a larger question: how might each collection be seen as responsive to certain socio-political motivations, targeted at a specific audience in a particular historical moment? My comparative analysis of the two collections and their two editions has resulted in a key claim made in my thesis: that collectors and translators of (Punjabi) folk tales add their own socio-political and religious ideology, and political agendas of the time, to their work. Published tales pass through layers of filtering, mediation and polishing as various people change and adapt them—the oral tale-teller, the transcriber, collector, translator—and the subsequent editing and/or retranslation for a second edition. The collectors make decisions by deciding which tales to include in a collection; the translator, as in Aqeel's case, makes changes and emendations according to the intended audiences and time of publication; and publishers decide the market value of the work and choose to publish it. Collectors and translators make multiple decisions along the way, ones that are often “censoring,” to use Rushdie's term (introduced at the start of this thesis). These decisions involve choosing particular stories in the first place, then deciding which versions of the stories will be retained. They also involve translation assumptions (linguistic and

cultural) about what aspects of the tale should be emphasised. Anticipation of reading audiences is also crucial: Steel originally intended her *Wide-awake Stories* to be read by children but the second edition, with additions by Temple, was intended for a more scholarly, adult audience. Aqeel's Urdu collection, *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan*, was most likely intended for local readers in Pakistan but the English translation by Bashir was surely intended for western readers.

The difference in the backgrounds of the collections and the collectors was an important variable in my research. My analyses have been undertaken keeping in mind the gender of the collectors, their political views, and their relationship to Punjab (India, Pakistan). I have thus followed Donald Haase's proposition that the study of folklore should not only look at what is represented in tales but also at the production, reception, and the sociohistorical context in which these take place. While it is my hope that I have been able to show the effect of these external factors on the collection and dissemination of the folk tales and their meanings, I also appreciate my situated role as a reader of these collections.

The fluidity that allows oral tales to be adaptable according to the situation of an oral teller and his or her audience also makes them prone to changes in meanings when they are fixed in print. In the course of my research, patterns of imposition were observed in the tale collections and support my contentions that the collectors had different motivations while collecting these tales, and so presented a particular image of Punjab to their audience. Steel's tales help to depict a far off nation (India) as 'Other', a different exotic place that is not 'us.' In the process, her collection becomes like a political colonial weapon where different stakeholders exert their influence. At the same time, however, her tales offer challenging portrayals of female agency that cut against any simple notion of (Indian) women as mere objects in tales confirming male authority. Aqeel's tales appear to appeal to the new Pakistani

nation, on one platform, endorsing goodwill among the people together with reiterations of gendered behaviour that accord with Muslim ideals.

Without recourse to oral originals, it is impossible to claim which versions of the tales are more or less representative of those told by the people of the Punjab at the time they were first heard and collected. Orally disseminated folk tales have no specified author, after all. It is thus not possible to analyse how they have evolved through time until they were written down. Once written down and published, however, tales gain a certain representative authority, and the differences between various collections can be telling. One way of looking for the changes introduced in each collection was to consider the construction of different (and similar) characters in these tales, examining, for example, how gender is portrayed in each. My approach has thus been to closely analyse the portrayal of characters within each collection and then compare these between the different collections. I also undertook extensive research into the collectors' backgrounds, taking into account their genders and what I could learn about their political views, perspectives on and relationship to the Punjab (India, Pakistan). This research is presented in my second and third chapters on Steel's and Aqeel's collections respectively.

5.1 Steel's collection and inferences

In the past decade or so, considerable scholarly attention has been focused on Steel, so much so that she has come to overshadow her "mentor," Temple. The vast majority of critical work on the author, however, does not consider her role as a folk tale collector, with the notable exception of some discussion by Naithani in *The Story-time of the British Empire*. As Naithani notes, with respect to the folklorist more generally, "An important part of colonial folklore theory was sketching out the cultural life of the colonized subject for knowledge and information of the middle-class readers back at home" (79). While this is certainly true of

Steel and her collection, her role is complicated by her status as a white woman in India during the late colonial era. Anne McClintock claims that “white women were not hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting” (qtd. Hager Ben Driss and Hagen Ben Driss 6). I have argued that this “ambiguity” is evident in Steel’s collection. My analysis shows that Steel, consistent with her claim to be a feminist and a writer for young western children, gives her young female protagonists some agency and decision-making power, even to the extent of choosing their own life-partner. Many of her Punjabi heroines are bold enough to be the first to propose marriage, which is very unlikely in a Muslim society, even today. They are strong and resourceful in securing their man (or prince). At the same time, however, the tales include many orientalisng exotic elements, clearly establishing the characters as “others” to the (intended) western readers. In particular, the Preface and the Notes to the tales, largely contributed by Temple for “scientific” purposes, are replete with stereotypes and subjective views about the Indian people, as I have discussed.

My analysis of Steel’s folk tales reveals complicated views about the women in her stories. Her original oral sources, as discussed in earlier chapters, were young children, mostly boys, who might have impacted the portrayals as well, but it was Steel who gave the final shape and “literary sequence” to the tales. Her intended audience, at least initially, were also children: she addresses “the Little Reader” at the start. In keeping with a trend evident in many western folk tales, evil hags, crones, witches, and cunning old women are a major target of, and originators of, evil. Steel’s young, pretty girls have the same privileges as their western sisters in “Cinderella” or “Snow White” and are (potentially) thwarted by wicked and ugly old women. The commercial advantage of beauty is promoted in all the tales with a particular emphasis on golden-haired and fair princesses. This is particularly striking as in the Punjab the vast majority of local women have brown skin and dark hair.

There are many exotic elements in the tales, adding to their “authentic” Indian flavours: silks, precious gems, marble, fakirs, talking animals, superstitions and magic. In the Preface to the collection, which Steel wrote with Temple, the description of the “natives” is exaggerated and detailed: it’s as if they are describing some strange beings to the “untravelling English reader” (1), which, coming at the beginning of the collection, arouses the reader’s curiosity. From analysis of these para-texts, it becomes obvious that the collectors and the editor are creating and reinforcing the previously existing myth about the orient. There is also a detailed description of the hardships of living in this foreign land, alluding to the tough life that colonial administrators had in India: dark people, mud houses, spinning wheels, oil-fed wicks, bare-limbed village children, hot cloudless skies and treeless landscapes.

Historically, British men were considered South Asia’s folklorists. However, as Naithani argues persuasively, there were often native collaborators who worked alongside British collectors—although many of these have been silenced by being written out of literary history. Naithani argues that ‘[f]olklore collections cannot be defined only by what they contain. They must be defined also by what they do not contain’ (*The Story-time* 10). Not only is native scholarly input obfuscated in British folklore collections, the original oral tale-tellers are dismissed too, their “uncouth” and “vulgar” voices overwritten by a British narratorial voice. Colonial folkloristics thus reveal the race-related different power dynamics in the imperial scheme of things. They also reveal gender discrimination. In many cases, as is shown through the discussions in my study, the considerable work of collecting and translating tales was often done by Anglo-Indian women or native assistants, but the scholarly stamp and signatures of white men were required to make their work authoritative. In Steel’s case, the male sanction was added by Temple, in Frere’s case by her father Bartle Frere, and in Stokes’ case by her father Whitley Stokes. Because of the stereotypical division of gender roles in Victorian British society, the Folklore Society also did not give white

women the status of folklorists that was given to white men. What was the significance of these men's sanctions? The tales in themselves were part of a tug of war over the representation of the facts and the myths about Orientals. It appears that women collectors could not be trusted with the imperial duty of creating and reinforcing the myth about the 'natives' so the role of these Civil Service Officers was to give these tales a warrant.

5.2 Aqeel's collection and inferences:

The first edition of Aqeel's collection, *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan*, was published sixteen years after the Partition of Pakistan and India. I have argued that Aqeel collected, translated and wrote his collection of tales from a nationalist perspective soon after the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Aqeel, seventeen at the time of Partition, was an eyewitness to the gruesome aftermaths as he served in the National Guards with the Muslim League. His nationalist tale collection depicts Punjabi characters from, ostensibly, a Punjabi "insider" stance, but the Punjab he portrays is *Pakistani* and his characters are *Muslim* (in contrast to Steel's Hindu ones). The two editions of Aqeel's collection support my thesis about the politically motivated roles of collectors and translators by showing the variations and changes each collector and translator brings to the tales according to national and international political circumstances. I have argued that the Urdu edition of the collection, published in 1963, portrays most characters positively as exhibiting mutual goodwill and friendliness; inner goodness and kindness are the personal attributes that are rewarded. Aqeel, being a Muslim, male, Punjabi tale collector, has portrayed strong female characters, such as the Princess in "Dear as Salt," who expresses her views about the main patriarch of the family and earns his anger but does not bow to please his ego, or the princess in "Fan of Patience" who helps save her father's kingdom, the same father who had once ordered her killed as soon as she was born. The translator of the 2008 English edition of the same collection, however, has added striking sexist comments in the tales, particularly with respect to the

domestic status of women and their exemplary performance of “wifely duties,” praising them for being patient and, in “Prince Ruby,” teaching them a moral lesson to “never to be too inquisitive and demanding to know the secrets of one’s husband” (2008 46). As the English translation suggests it was intended for a wider, global audience, the translator, Bashir, may have made changes in order to make the tales fit the expectations of readers about a conservative Pakistani Muslim society. Aqeel’s first edition portrays a friendly, generally harmonious Punjabi society. The twenty-first century English edition presents a Punjabi society that is more gendered, conservative, and restrictive. While Aqeel’s Islamised tales contain many references to “God,” in Bashir’s translation the God that is repeatedly mentioned is “Allah.”

5.3 Comparisons between the collections

I understand that the collections were published nearly half a century apart and oral folk tales are susceptible to changes naturally – even the same tale teller cannot be expected to tell a story in the exact same way ever again. He or she might add or delete some information or highlight certain aspects depending on the audience or situation. My interest is in the final form that these tales acquired by being set on paper, and what aspects of the tales the respective collectors and translators considered worthy of retaining and emphasising. In their prefaces, both Steel and Aqeel acknowledge their ordering, structuring role as collectors and translators. Putting the tales in one definite form after “restoring order... to plots” and making decisions about what “seem[s] to be in the best and most harmonious form” (Aqeel x) is a kind of censorship. If this seems too loaded a word, it can surely be agreed that the choices made by collectors, editors and translators of folk tales are fundamentally driven by their ideological positioning and social and historical situatedness—and that of the readers they assume. This begs questions about the ‘translation’ of the tales from not only oral to written form but also from Punjabi/Hindi/Urdu to English (in their final form of publication,

for the editions in question), and the entire process of what might be called sanitisation-via-translation, with specific audiences in mind. There is a striking difference in the two collections between the language and syntax employed by both the collectors. Steel has used very literary, at times archaic, language, whereas Aqeel has used simple sentence structure and diction. Because of the repetitive and prolonged details of incidents, Aqeel's tales have retained more of their original orality.

Folk and fairy tales have been considered a “powerful medium of indoctrination” for children (Christine Shojaei Kawan 29), particularly with respect to issues of gender. Commenting on the “socializing power” of fairy tales, Donald Haase stresses that fairy tales “are primary site[s] for asserting *and subverting* ideologies of gender” (vii; my emphasis). In other words, they are not simply normative inscriptions but potentially challenging ones, too—and so it is with folklore more generally. As mentioned earlier, Steel's tales have double standards about women. Pretty and young women are good but old and ugly women are evil. In Aqeel's Urdu collection, female characters are strong, intelligent and wise. But in his English translation, patience is more appreciated in women and there is a clear emphasis on them belonging to home and housekeeping. In Steel's case, I have claimed, the tales were written in a way to satisfy the stereotypical images already present in her implied audience's (western, imperial) minds. Her female characters represent the typical existential bias, where beauty and youth are considered the coin and currency of success while ugliness and old age are synonymous with wickedness and evil. Through my discussion on folklore collection in India, I assert that Steel and Temple already had a stereotypical image in their mind of India and Indians, and the tales they selected and modified had to fit into that mould. The Preface instructs readers on how to read the “exotic” tales that follow and they are encouraged to enter the world of these tales through a certain doorway, with preconceived ideas and notions about India—that these people are illiterate, childish, using language that is “unpresentable to

ears polite” (v). Yet for the most part, the tales present a society in which most people behave politely and respectfully—although they are also capable of extremely cruel and bloodthirsty acts, such as killing a baby out of jealousy, or killing one’s own sons to get rid of a rival (mostly by women). In these tales we see kings asking for the hand of the princesses “in the most elegant language” (“Princess Pepperina” 109), or an ordinary “soldier’s son” talking to the princess “with the greatest politeness” (“Sir Buzz” 12), and even the animals have good manners and ask permission before harming other creatures (“The Bear’s Bad Bargain” 29). Thus the overall image of society, after Steel’s tweaking, is of a simple polite one where people (excluding old women) do not do great harm to each other but can trick each other for little gains. In most of the cases, women’s trickery involves attempt to win some handsome rich prince, while men are engaged in fighting battles with giants and monsters. Interestingly, no woman fights for a handsome but not wealthy man; even in “The Son of Seven Mothers” where the princess falls in love with a poor boy, he actually proves to be a rich prince at the end. Invariably, all tales lead to a happy married life, only after at least one member of the couple has attained wealth and riches. In some cases “happily ever after” is delayed by the intervention of jealous evil (and old or ugly) women, and these are also the sources of the cruellest and most heinous acts in the tales. But good prevails in the end and the pretty girl attains her goal in tale after tale: a wealthy, handsome prince.

In Aqeel’s Urdu collection, none of the genders or age groups is associated with or blamed for being evil. Unlike Steel’s, the collection does not include many tales of bloodshed and murder. In “Princess Pomegranate” the princess is killed after a jealous woman, the gardener, throws her into a well. But the killing is not portrayed in gory detail, as it is in many of Steel’s stories, and the princess is “reborn” at the end. Old women are most often presented as good, loving motherly figures, like the one in “Princess Pomegranate” who adopts the princess and takes care of her like her own daughter. Old men are positively

represented, too. Old people are thus given more respect and occupy honoured places in the society of the tales, as is the case in Pakistan in general and in Punjab as well. Characters tend to live in close-knit family systems, mostly in joint-families, further stressing respect for and importance of the older generation. While Aqeel's happy young women are generally pretty, it is their inner goodness and kindness that is stressed most often. His translator, though, makes some interesting changes, adding generalisations and stereotypical meanings to the tales. "The princess was gullible, like all beautiful people are" ("Princess Pomegranate" 23), the narrator in Bashir's edition exclaims several times, giving the impression that all beautiful people are innocent and that evil comes from ugly ones only, while reinforcing the stereotype of beauty without brains or not so worldly-wise pretty girls. Overall, as I have suggested, his tales reward women who are (or become) very submissive, are not inquisitive and are good housemakers. The desirability of these qualities is often reinforced in generalised claims made by the narrator, often near the end of the tales.

The society in Steel's tales is decidedly Hindu (depicted through the names of various characters and to Hindu castes) and reference to God (Muslim or Hindu) is almost non-existent. Fakirs and mendicants appear in the tales and are appealed to for assistance by characters, but no such appeals are made to God. These aspects point to the exotic oriental side of India as well, where people are superstitious and need to be introduced to (the Christian) God. Aqeel, on the other hand mentions God time and again in his tales. God is asked for guidance and thanked for his mercy, putting a decided religious stamp—Islam not Hinduism or Christianity—on the Punjab and, by extension, Pakistan (the land of pure people). This is most emphatic in the English translation of the tales, where Bashir has replaced the word "God" with "Allah" in almost all instances. Whereas in Steel's collection women are shown to actively choose their husbands, in Aqeel's collection marriage is an affair that is settled with the consent and approval of family elders, especially fathers. When

the youngest prince in “Princess Pomegranate” refuses to obey his father and marry, he endures great hardship in searching for the bride he wants and ends up with the gardener’s “ugly” widowed daughter. In these tales, girls can be married off to men a lot older than them, even if they are already married, and in this way appear to conform to the Muslim belief that men can have more than one wife.

Many of the pretty young girls in Bashir’s tales are protected from the “horrid world” and are kept hidden in a fruit or a garden awaiting rescue by a suitable (wealthy) man; marriage is the only way for them to live a life out of confinement. Even today in Pakistani (middle class) society young Muslim women are kept “hidden” in purdah because of the concept of modesty for women, and are prevented doing anything which might be considered too liberal and cause difficulties in their finding a suitable match. Once she gets married, she must spend her life living by the rules of the husband and his family. The submissive, quiet, naïve, but pretty girl is still the traditional heroine in the English version of the tales. After chastity, patience and modesty are regarded as some of the highest virtues for a woman in Muslim culture and the tales reconfirm this. However, while Aqeel shows this through the actions and speech of his characters, Bashir’s narrator tends to make heavy-handed statements about ideal womanhood.

My study of the folk tales and their comparison has found that these tales absorb the contemporary political and social aspects of a society, depending on various factors, and they in turn influence their readers and listeners. The message in these tales for young girls is different depending on the collector and the time of the collection. Steel’s young girls learn that they have to be pretty to find their happily-ever-after, and once they have found someone they have to take action to get that person. Aqeel’s Urdu collection (my translation) emphasises a girl’s modesty and her wisdom along with patience to be her best qualities,

while the English translation by Bashir preaches the benefits of patience and good looks. Some of these heroines are protected and made secure, like Princess Pomegranate, Princess Pepperina, Princess Aubergine; others, like the princess in “Dear as Salt,” are thrown out of the palace. All still remain patient. Ideal women in these folk tales endure and wait for things to change as a reward for patience. After going through many hardships their stature and value increases, they become more loveable, more attractive. Thus the narratives glorify inaction in women rather than advocating that they fight for their rights. Most of these tales start with the young men deciding to go off into the world to seek their fortune, but the girls are found hidden and protected in their homes.

5.4 Significance of the Study

Much work has been done on folklore internationally and there are now whole departments and journals dedicated to folklore research. However, in Pakistan it is still a nascent discipline which needs to be explored further and proper scholarship needs to be built on the genre. Why is there a lack of interest in the field and the preservation of tales that are fast fading away? My study is a first attempt at addressing the lack of work that has been done on Pakistani folklore. But it is just a beginning and there are many more regions, and collections in different languages, to be explored and documented. We need to develop a scholarship on the folk literature of the country and build theories and ideas specific to the region. As there is a dearth of such scholarship, I have consulted western sources for my research and my approach has also been influenced by the work of a new generation of Indian folklore scholars, including Sadhana Naithani and Kirin Narayan.

My work has focused on only two collections from the Punjab, but it is just a beginning and there are many more regions, and collections in different languages, to be explored and documented. Each Pakistani province is shaped by its own distinctive cultures

and traditions, and work needs to be done on folklore from the country as a whole. It is necessary to build databases and develop scholarship that can prove useful for future researchers in the field of folklore research in Pakistan. Working on the folklore of all Pakistan's provinces is a huge project that would best be done collaboratively. Research on folk tales is a multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary work, which includes history, anthropology, geography, ethnography and ethnology. It needs the input of many people and many voices. Folk tales tell a great deal about the people and culture from which they are derived and in a postcolonial and post-modern world, we risk losing these insights into Pakistani culture if we do not begin to record and research the nation's folklore. It needs to remain open and adaptive, refusing fixity and the finality of "authoritative" collections, especially by people from outside the nation.

One contribution that my research makes to the development of such a field of inquiry is in my collection of information about Aqeel and presentation of this on one platform. During my research on Aqeel I faced a number of challenges and one of the biggest was finding material and resources on him. The scarcity of biographical material on Aqeel made it difficult to make claims and assumptions about his political leanings and his life. There is certainly scope for future research on Aqeel, and, ideally, the writing of his biography. An author and journalist like Shafi Aqeel needs to be a part of Pakistan's literary and journalistic history. Just as Naithani's work uncovered the important role of "silenced" native folklore collaborators in India, there is scope and hope for the discovery of others, in Pakistan, like Aqeel: people who risk being lost to memory, despite their significant attempts to record and document the cultural life of the nation.

This is why I cannot conclude my story, this study, with "*Khattam-Shud*." Even if it is time to go to bed, for now, it is not "the end." There is so much more to listen to tomorrow.

Appendix 1: Translations of selected tales from Shafi Aqeel's *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan*

Translation Principles

Here I present two tales and the preface, translated into English from Shafi Aqeel's Urdu edition of *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan*, tales themselves translated from Punjabi. This is a representative sample of the translations I have made and am further developing of the 15 tales in Aqeel's 1963 text. This translation task was necessary in order to complete the critical analysis for the thesis: the different versions of the tales are discussed directly in Chapter 3, and inform the readings in Chapter 4. I have chosen these tales, "Sweet as Salt," "Fan of Patience", and "Princess Pomegranate" because they provide particular strong examples of the changes in tone and characterisation, I have highlighted in my discussion of Aqeel's collection in its various forms.

While translating Shafi Aqeel's Urdu collection of Punjabi tales, I have kept a number of things in mind.⁶⁹ The end goal of any translation is to convey meanings from one language to another, from original to target language. Firstly, I was doing the translation for a very specific purposes: so that I could explain how English edition is different in discrete ways from the original Urdu edition. For this reason, I stuck to literal translation as much as possible, and avoided making my translation too literary, which sometimes comes at the cost of losing local meanings and flavours. I also tried to translate culturally, as meanings change when they cross borders, so as to convey the original essence of the expressions I tried to translate the expressions in a way that conveyed the original meanings as they appeared in the original Urdu text. Secondly, I kept the phrases and expressions from the Urdu edition which

⁶⁹ Bassnett, Susan and Andre Lefevere. *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 1998.

were idiomatic or for other reasons were difficult to translate, and which I therefore thought it would be helpful to reference for those who can understand Urdu. These are presented in footnotes where appropriate. In this way, the Urdu reader will know what the real expression or idiom was that will help them understand the meanings in a better way. In addition, I have made some additional key observations about the text using footnotes. Each translation of Aqeel's Urdu text is followed by a list of bullet points noting key differences with the later English translation by Bashir. In order to allow a reader to easily compare editions for the purpose of this thesis, I have also provided one tale, "Dear as Salt", in triplicate here: in Aqeel's Urdu version as "Meetha Namak", in my translation into English from Aqeel's Urdu, and Bashir's translation of the same tale.

1. Sweet as Salt⁷⁰ (pp. 13-26)

“Sweet Salt” (Urdu title); “Dear as Salt” (English title)

Once a king ruled over a country. The king had seven daughters. One evening he called all his daughters and asked: “Tell me, how do you like me?”⁷¹ The eldest of his daughters replied, “To me you are like a sugar-cube.” The second daughter said, “You are like milk to me.” The third one said, “I like you like honey,” and the fourth replied, “I think you are like butter.” The fifth one said, “You seem like jaggery to me,” and the sixth daughter said, “You are like fine sugar to me.” When the youngest daughter’s turn to say something came, the king looked at her and asked, “Tell me, how do you like me.”

The young princess thought for a moment and replied, “You seem sweet like salt to me.” No sooner had she uttered these words than the king became infuriated and his eyes turned red with rage. He had been thinking that the little princess, like her sisters, would compare him to something sweet, but when she said “sweet as salt” he became angry and said, “I will show you sweet like salt.” He stood up and left in anger.

When the time came for his daughters to be married, the king ordered messengers to travel in all four directions of the kingdom. They were to find and bring to his court, “the ugliest man, and one who is a leper.” The courtiers were amazed at such orders but it was the king’s order which could not be ignored. No one had the courage to ask the king why he wanted an ugly leper. Men were sent to look into every nook and corner of the kingdom but despite much searching they were unable to find a leper. At last somewhere near the borders of the kingdom they found a very ugly leper, whose condition was very miserable and who

⁷⁰ Literal translation of Punjabi name, “mitha loon”

⁷¹ Batao, mai tumhe kaisa maloom hota hon?

seemed about to die. They immediately picked him up and took him to the court. Now everyone was waiting curiously to see what the king would do with the leper. The court was set and everybody took their seats according to their ranks. Then the king ordered, “My youngest daughter must be wedded off to this leper.”

The court fell silent when they heard the king’s order. They looked at each other in disbelief, wondering how a king’s daughter could be married to a leper. They could not believe their ears. The ministers tried to convince the king to change his mind but he was adamant. He said, “I will show what it is like to be sweet like salt.”

The king’s orders were obeyed; the youngest princess was married to the leper. Even the leper was bewildered and surprised. He pleaded with the king, “My lord, why are you putting diamond in iron? I will only live for couple of days, and I am a poor, ugly leper. Marry the princess to someone else.” But the king paid no heed and ordered the leper and the princess to be taken away from the city and be left in some wilderness. And it was done as he ordered—the princess and the leper were left in a desolate place in the jungle.

The princess was as patient as she was kind and intelligent. She thought, “This is my fate so I must accept it.” She felt neither anxious nor discouraged. She had trust in God and began taking care of the leper. The first day and night, she spent without any food or water. But the next day, she left her leper husband and went to a nearby city. The princess, who had once lived in a luxurious palace and played in silks, was now begging in the streets. She collected a few paisa and bought something to eat and with the remaining money bought a basket. She then returned to the leper.

Henceforth it became her routine to carry her leper husband, on her head, in the basket, and go begging in the city. Each day, whatever she collected was barely enough to

buy food for herself and her husband. As the evening fell, they would return to the jungle to spend the night and with whatever time she had available she would serve her husband.⁷²

One day her leper husband said to her, “Why do you take me with you everywhere? You should leave me behind in the jungle. Who will harm me?” The princess replied, “I cannot leave you alone, lest something happens to you. Now you are a part of my life, how can I leave you?” The leper insisted but she did not listen. Each day she took him with her and carried him back in the evening. But one day she felt really weak and tired and was unable to carry him on her head. When the leper saw this he said, “There is a pond nearby, leave me under a tree there, and go to the city. If I feel thirsty, I can drag myself to the pond and drink water.” He was insistent and eventually the princess agreed. She placed the basket under a tree near the pond and left for the city. As the leper lay quietly he noticed that when crows dived into the pond they emerged as swans. He was amazed and wondered whether the ponds water had magical powers. He even saw ill, featherless crows turn into swans after diving into the water. The leper thought perhaps he should bathe in the pond and God would listen to his prayers. But the question was, how would he reach the water? At first he thought he should wait for the princess to return so that she could help him take a bath. But then he began to worry that the water might lose its healing properties while he waited. Finally, he mustered up courage and managed to drag and roll himself to the water. He rolled into the pond but made sure to keep one finger of his right hand out of the water. When he surfaced, his amazement knew no bounds. His disease was gone and he was a handsome young man instead of a leper. He joyfully left the pond and sat on the bank waiting for the princess to return.

⁷² khawind ki khidmat kerti.

In the evening, when the princess came back from the city, she was worried to see a handsome young man instead of her leper husband. Perplexed, she looked around for her husband and saw the empty basket. She thought that the young man had killed her husband and thrown him into the pond. She began to cry and wail. When the young man saw this he came forward and asked, "O princess! Why do you cry so hard?" She said to him, "I left my leper husband here, but now he is nowhere."

The young man smiled and said, "I am your leper husband." "How could this be possible," the princess exclaimed. She could not believe it. So the young man told her his whole story and showed her his finger, which he had not dipped in the water. He then took the princess to the pond and dipped his finger in the water. No sooner had he done this that it was healed. Now the princess believed him and her joy knew no bounds. The young man told her that he also was a prince but his father disowned him when he got leprosy. This made the princess even happier and she said, "Your father disowned you because you contracted leprosy and my father married me off to a leper. Now they are nobody to us. We will live here and create our own life."

They built a hut outside the town and started living there. The prince went to the city daily to work but barely earned enough money. The princess was very wise and intelligent. She said to the prince, "Don't ever come back home empty-handed. Bring anything, even if it is apparently worthless." After working hard each day, the prince did as the princess suggested and made sure he returned with something he had found on the way home. Sometimes it would be firewood, sometimes a brick or something else. One day when the prince was coming back home, he forgot to bring anything. When he was almost at their hut he remembered that he had found nothing to bring home. He looked around but could not find anything and did not want to go home empty-handed. Looking around, he saw a dead

snake. He thought the princess had asked him to bring something or anything, so he decided to take the snake home. When the princess saw a dead snake in his hand, she took it and threw it on the roof of the hut.

As God will have it, at the same time in the king's palaces the queen was drying her hair on the roof. She had taken off her precious *nolakha* necklace⁷³ and put it nearby. Just then a kite came flying overhead and took the necklace. Carrying the necklace, the kite flew over the cottage on the outskirts of the city. Seeing the dead snake on the roof, the kite flew toward it and picked it up. As the kite did so, it dropped the precious necklace.

When the princess climbed onto the roof and found the necklace she was overjoyed. She told the prince he need not labour again. Instead, she gave him two beads from the necklace and instructed him to sell them to a jeweller the following day. The next day the prince did as the princess had said. He went to a jeweller in the city and sold the beads. The beads were very precious and he received a lot of money in return. It became the princess's daily routine to give two beads to the prince to sell. In this way slowly and steadily they sold the necklace and collected a huge amount of money. She then built a beautiful and grand palace at the same place where the king's servant's had left her and her leper husband. The dining room in that palace had seven entrance doors.

Following this she ordered royal clothing to be made for herself and her prince. She encouraged her husband to regularly attend the king's court. "Don't talk to anyone or say anything ever," she said. "If someday the king notices you, just say 'Your Honour, accept my invitation to visit our place.'" The prince did as the princess instructed. He began to go to the court daily and sat aside silently observing everything, without uttering a single word. The

⁷³ Worth nine lakhs – in other words an enormous amount.

king also noticed the silent young man who came each day and left without uttering a word or asking any questions. Nobody had ever heard him speak. At last the king himself approached him and said, “O young man, you daily attend my court and leave without saying anything. Who are you? Where do you live? Do you want to ask something of me?”

The prince had been waiting for this day and he replied, “My lord, I am one of your subjects and I want you to accept my invitation to dine at my place.” The king accepted his invitation and a day was appointed. When he returned home that day, he told the princess that the king had accepted their invitation. The princess was overjoyed upon hearing this and began to prepare for the royal feast.

On the appointed day the king, with his ministers and other royal members, arrived at the princess’s palace.⁷⁴ The prince welcomed the royal guests with honour and grace, and took them to the dining hall. The king was spellbound by the sophistication and luxury of the dining hall, likes of which he even had not seen in his own royal palaces. He was amazed by the cleanliness and order of things. When the king and his entourage were seated at the dining table the princess herself came to serve the feast, in beautiful glittering clothes. She had cooked seven dishes for the feast. Every time she brought a new dish for the king, she entered from a different door, wearing different clothes and makeup. In this way, the princess served seven different dishes, from seven different doors, in seven different dresses.

The king was confused. Seeing seven different girls bring in the dishes made him wonder whether the prince had seven wives. He whispered to his minister, “I think this prince has seven wives.” But the minister said, “My Lord, in my opinion this is the same girl who wears different clothes each time she enters.” The king did not believe him. How could she

⁷⁴ Interestingly, throughout the tale, the palace is referred to as “the princess’s palace.”

change her dresses so quickly? They were wondering about this when the prince asked them to begin the feast.

The king took a morsel and realized that the food was sweet. He tried another curry and found out that it was sweet too. One by one he tasted all seven dishes and all of them were sweet. He was worried and looking around he saw that everyone else at the table was worried as well. They could not understand what was going on but the royal etiquette would not let them complain or criticize because it would insult their host. But eating the meal without salt was also not possible. At last the king asked the prince, "Is there nothing savoury?" Before the prince could say anything the princess replied, "My Lord, we don't use salt here." This response made the king even more curious and he asked why this was so. The princess said, "My Lord, mere mention of salt makes fathers marry their daughters off to lepers, that's why we don't use salt." The king fell silent after listening to these words. He froze with the food still in his hands. Her words reminded him of something that had happened years ago. His daughter and the leper! He was rattled and quickly turned to look carefully at the princess. The princess realised the king was disturbed and she said, "My Lord, I am the same daughter whom you disowned and wedded to a leper because she had compared you to salt. And today you cannot eat even a single meal without it."

Hearing this, the king was ashamed of what he had done. He stepped forward and hugged his daughter and apologised for his mistake. It had been many years since they last met. The princess then told him the whole story about the prince. "This is the same leper you married me to," she said. The king was embarrassed and with his head bowed said apologetically, "I wish I was as sweet as salt." After this he brought the princess and prince to live in his own palaces. The prince's father was also informed. A grand celebration was

announced throughout the kingdom. As the king was now old, he handed over the kingdom to the prince and they lived all happily ever after.

Differences from Bashir edition

In Bashir's translated English edition:

- There are any more references to God/Allah "Only those who have experienced Allah's profound mercy can imagine her happiness." (2).
- People were generous in those days (1).
- Skipped the details that the princess was tired so the leper insisted on staying
- "The princess was wise and patient" not in the Urdu version.
- Princess is explicitly described as a good wife and in domestic terms, "took to her wifely duties in real earnest" (1) "and a good homemaker" (2).
- In Aqeel's Urdu edition, the princess is very dominant and controls what her husband does and eventually shames her father. Bashir's English translation skips some of the details of her agency.
- More 'oral' – plenty of repetition.

2. The Fan of Patience⁷⁵ (pp. 27-44)

Once upon a time in the olden days, a king ruled over a kingdom. He had six daughters but no son. This made him very sad. He wished that God would bless him with a son who could take charge of the kingdom and keep his name alive. But whenever he had a child it was a daughter and after six children he was still not blessed with a son. He prayed a lot, and even consulted *fakirs* and saints. He gave alms to the poor and needy but still his desire remained unfulfilled. So he ordered, “If the Queen gives birth to another daughter, she should be killed right away.”

Nobody could refuse to follow the King’s orders; he said to the midwife that if she did not do as he commanded she would be crushed alive in an oil crusher.⁷⁶ The midwife bowed her head and said, “Your wish is my command.” When the Queen came to know of this she was really worried. She was helpless, for who can change the will of Fate? She was also aware of the King’s anger and she knew that he would do whatever he had ordered. As the days drew nearer to when she would give birth, her anxiety increased. She was thinking of the consequences if she again gave birth to a daughter. And by the will of God,⁷⁷ this time as well she gave birth to a daughter. But the girl was so pretty that the midwife was dumbfounded by her beauty. She had never seen such beauty in all her life and could not make herself kill such a beautiful girl. But then she thought of what king had threatened to do if she did not obey him, “if I do not kill the girl I will be put in an oil crusher.” Thinking this, she strengthened her heart and raised her hand to kill the girl. As she did so, the girl giggled and as soon as she did that some flowers fell from her mouth. The midwife was astonished, as she had never seen such a strange thing before in her life. She showed the child to the Queen

⁷⁵ Sabr ka pankha

⁷⁶ Agar tum ne aisa na kiya toh tumhe kolhu mei zinda pilwa diya jaye ga.

⁷⁷ Khuda instead of Allah

and again flowers fell from her mouth when she smiled. Her maternal instincts awoke. She promised to give lots of money to the midwife if she would tell the king that she had killed the girl.

The midwife agreed to the plan and she dipped few pieces of cloth in a goat's blood and showed this to the king saying she had killed the girl. The Queen made arrangements for the girl to be taken into the basement of the palace and kept hidden there, where she was brought up under the midwife's care and protection. Nobody knew the truth of what had happened.

Days passed and the Princess started walking. As soon as she took her first step, the Queen and the midwife were astonished to see that a gold brick appeared under her right foot and a silver brick under her left foot, every step she took. And whenever she laughed flowers continued to appear. The Queen was delighted, but kept her happiness to herself. She not share this with anyone, lest the King heard about this and killed them both. She decided to wait for a good time to tell the King.

Time went by and the princess grew up, and started feeling lonely in the palace basement. One day she said to the Queen, "Mother! I feel lonely here, build a palace for me." The Queen did as she said and built a small palace for the princess, without the King's knowledge they. Maids were appointed to care for the princess and rewarded richly with jewels and gold to keep their silence. Several rooms were built to store the gold and silver bricks that appeared under the princess's steps.

As God would have it, the country was hit by a famine and the people in the kingdom were dying of hunger. The king spent his treasure buying food but a day came when the royal treasure ran out. The King was really worried, day and night. He needed money to run his

kingdom and he feared losing it. The Queen saw this and one night said to him, “For many days I have noticed your worry and sadness. May I dare ask what is bothering you so much?” At first the King refused to tell her but when the Queen insisted he told her what had happened and that the royal treasury was empty. There was no money to run the kingdom and without money their subjects might rebel. “This is why I am so worried,” he said. “I don’t know where to get more money.” Now the Queen was in a dilemma. She had plenty of gold and silver but could not tell him where it came from. After some thought she said, “My Lord! If you promise to spare my life I have something to tell you.” The King was astonished at this and wondered why she feared for her life. He agreed and commanded her to tell him what was going on. The Queen replied, “My Lord, I can help you and can give you countless bricks of gold and silver, but you must promise to spare my life.” The King could not believe that the Queen had enough money to save the kingdom. He promised not to kill her and demanded that she speak. “I have countless gold and silver bricks,” she said. “Gold and silver bricks?” he exclaimed, “Where did you get them?” The Queen told him, “My Lord, the youngest princess, whom you had ordered to be killed at birth—we did not kill her. Now when she walks gold and silver bricks appear at each of her footstep. And when she smiles flowers fall from her lips. I have kept all those bricks and they can help you now.”

The King found it hard to believe that such a thing was possible, so he asked the Queen, “How is this possible?” She said, “If you allow me to bring the Princess here, My Lord, you can see it for yourself.” So the princess was presented and the king saw for himself that what the Queen has said was true. When the princess walked gold and silver bricks appeared under her feet and when she smiled, while saying “Salam” to the king, flowers fell from her lips. The king was overjoyed when he saw this, but also very embarrassed because he had ordered the death of his daughter and she was now able to save his kingdom. He apologised to the Queen and the princess for his mistake.

The treasury was full again and the King began to love his youngest princess the most which made her other six sisters jealous. When the King saw this he built a separate palace for the youngest princess so that her sisters would not bother her. This did not reduce their jealousy; it only increased it. Once it happened that the King planned a journey to another country. He went to each daughter in turn and asked what gift he should bring her when he returned. Each one asked for something different. The king was short of time and was unable to visit the youngest princess himself. He sent a maid to ask her what she wanted as a souvenir, but the princess was saying her prayers. When the maid gave the King's message she replied, "Have patience." Now the maid was stupid and she believed the princess had asked for patience. When she returned to the King she said, "My Lord, the youngest princess asks that you bring her patience."

The king left for his journey and when he returned, after some time, he called his eldest daughters to him and gave them their presents. Then he pulled out a box and ordered a maid to deliver it to the youngest princess. "This is patience for the youngest princess!" he said. When she saw the box the princess was upset. Her sisters had all received fine presents, but for her there was just an empty box. She threw it in a corner. Many days passed and the princess totally forgot about the box. One day, as she sat in her palace, she felt very hot but there were no maids around. She stood up and began to search for a fan. She could not find one but upon seeing the discarded box, she decided to use its lid as a fan. When she opened the box she discovered a beautiful fan inside. Happily, she began to fan herself. As soon as she did so a very handsome young prince appeared in front of her. She had never seen such a good-looking young man in all her life. This strange incident scared her so much that she lost consciousness.

The prince sprinkled some water on the princess's face and tried to bring her back to senses. When she work up he said, "You don't need to be afraid of me. I am a prince and have come here because of this fan." He explained, "It is the fan of patience." Fear left the princess and the two began to talk to each other. After this it became their routine that the princess would take out the fan, move it once, and the prince would appear in the blink of an eye. They would talk for hours. When the prince had to leave the princess would touch the fan and the prince would disappear.

In this way they met daily and spoke for hours. Slowly and steadily they fell in love; their love grew and grew, and they could not bear to live apart. They tried to keep their love hidden, but it is hard to keep love secret for a long time. Many maids in the palace learned of the young couple's meetings and growing love. The rumours spread and soon reached the six older princesses. They were already jealous of their youngest sister and knowing that a handsome prince was captivated by her made them even more jealous. They began thinking of ways to separate the young couple and came up with a plan. They made many excuses to befriend her and win her confidence. The youngest princess thought maybe her sisters had finally begun to love her and she returned their friendship. One day when the elder sisters realised that the princess has started trusting them they asked, "Show us your prince. Let us see how beautiful he is."

The princess agreed on condition that they didn't tell anyone about it. The next day the sisters said to her, "We will make a bed for your prince." The youngest princess was overjoyed by her sisters' love for her. She didn't realise that behind their masks of love her sisters were her enemies. When they began making a bed for the prince they spread pieces of glass underneath on the mattress and covered them with a delicate bed sheet so they would remain unseen. "We have prepared the bed," they said. "Call your prince."

So the princess took the fan out of the box and as soon as she began to fan herself, the handsome prince appeared in the blink of an eye. When they saw the prince the older sisters' hearts began to beat faster. He was so handsome! This made them even more jealous. They spoke with him for a while and then invited him to rest on the bed they had prepared. When the prince lay down the pieces of glass pierced his body and he began bleeding all over. He disappeared.

When she touched the fan, the princess was surprised that the prince did not return. She realised he was injured and that her sisters had deceived her. She tried using the fan each day but he did not come. She became so sad that she stopped smiling and flowers stopped falling from her lips and no gold or silver brick appeared when she walked. No one could understand why; only her sisters knew what made her so sad. At last the princess said, "I will go and search for my prince myself and offer my apologies for my sisters' actions." The sisters tried to dissuade her. "You don't even know his country's name," they said, "How will you find him?" But the princess was adamant that she would find him and bring him back to her palace.

One night, disguised in a man's attire, she snuck out of the palace and went towards the jungle. She kept walking for days, and whenever she was hungry she would eat fruit from the trees and drink from the streams, and would keep moving. At last one day she became too tired to move and fell on the ground. As she lay there drowsing, a mynah and a parrot began to speak on a branch above her. "Tell me a story so that time will pass easily," said the mynah to the parrot. "Why don't you tell me something?" the parrot replied. Mynah said, "What can I say, I feel pity for this girl who is dozing off under this tree in manly clothes. She is a princess and because of her sisters' animosity she has been separated from her prince. Now she is looking for him." She continued, "While she is struggling here her prince

is lying wounded in his country.” “This is not something to worry about,” the parrot said. “If she takes our droppings, makes a powder and puts it on the Prince’s wounds he will become healthy again.” The mynah asked, “But how will she find him as she does not even know the way?” The parrot replied, “It is not difficult. She knows the Prince’s country name, and it is not far from here.⁷⁸ If she walks to the West from here, she will reach his city.”

The birds then flew away and as soon as they had done so the princess sat up. She had listened to everything they had to say. She picked up some the droppings from under the tree and immediately began travelling west. At last, after many days, she reached the prince’s city. Here she heard people saying that the Prince was badly injured. However those who came forward to treat him did so under a terrible condition: if they could not heal him they would be beheaded. Many herbal healers had suffered this fate. Wisely, the princess listened and gathered information before going to the palace. At last she went to the palace gates and struck the gong to announce her arrival. Royal guards arrived and took her to the king. She was still dressed in a man’s clothes so nobody knew she was a woman. The King asked “who are you and what do you want?” She replied, “Your Majesty! I am a physician and I want to treat the Prince.” The King replied dejectedly, “Many renowned physicians have been unable to do anything for him, why do you think you can help?” But the princess said, “Your Majesty! I will bring the prince to health, with the will of Allah.” The king agreed to let him try but warned, “If you do not cure him, you will be killed.” The Princess agreed to this condition and said, “I need one month to treat him. Take me to the prince.”

The royal servants took her to the prince and, dressed as a physician, she began treating him as the parrot had said. The prince did not recognise her because she was dressed

⁷⁸ This contradicts the earlier assertion that the princess did not know the name of the prince’s country. However, I have remained true to the original Urdu text.

like a man. In few days all of Prince's wounds were healed and he became hale and hearty again. When the King was informed of his son's recovery his joy knew no bounds and he ordered, "Bring that physician to my court, so that I can reward him." When the Princess appeared in a physician's robes the king said, "I am very happy with you, O physician. Ask whatever you want in return for this." She looked at the prince and said, "Your majesty! God and you have given me everything I want. The prince has recovered and I ask for nothing more." But the king insisted and said, "Ask for anything and it will be yours." The princess said the same again. Then the King said, "This is the third and last time I will ask you – what is it that you desire as a reward." She replied, "Give me your word, My Lord." So the king promised he would give her whatever she wanted for he was very happy. No that she had got his word she said, "If you want to give me something, give me the Prince?" The king had promised and he could not break his word. He was puzzled, as was the prince, about this strange request from the physician. The court was completely silent and the courtiers looked at each other in amazement. Realising that everyone was confused, the princess stepped forward and removed her manly garb. The king was dumbfounded when he saw the person everyone believed to be a physician was in fact a very beautiful princess. Even the prince could not believe his eyes. The princess said, "I cannot leave you in suspense any longer. I am a princess and I love the prince. I left my country because of him and have been through jungles in search of him. During my travels, resting a under a tree, I heard a parrot and mynah speak about how to heal the prince, and when they flew away, I did as they had said. I came here and treated him and now I am in front of you."

The King was overjoyed after listening to her story. He made the princess sit with him and immediately sent a messenger to her father. The prince and the princess got married. It has been centuries since this happened, but even today mynahs and parrots talk about the princess whenever they meet, but they still do not know whether she found her prince.

Differences between the two versions

- God and Fate vs Allah (one mention of Allah in original)
- King asks for forgiveness in original
- Visiting hours of prince – day vs night
- Original uses direct speech throughout – third person reportage in translation, no/little direct speech.
- Very different conclusions – original much more open-ended; less moralistic
- Translation adds English proverbs – “pin-drop silence”; “like dogs in a desert”; “golden heart” for mynah. She says “I was laughing because (11)” – adds a clear moral
- Translation more concise; loses repetition

3. Princess Pomegranate (pp. 61-88)

In olden times a kind-hearted king ruled over a kingdom. The king had seven sons, all of whom were grownup. The king wished for his sons to marry into a family which had seven daughters. This [story] is from the time when messengers [emissaries] used to go, find, and choose princes and princesses, and propose marriage to them. Thus, the king called for his messenger and said, “The princes should be betrothed into a family where there are seven daughters. I want all my sons to be married into the same family.” In response the messenger said, “Everything will be decided according to your Highness’s wish.” And he left.

The messenger travelled for days and nights, far away from his own kingdom. He wandered about in many countries and kingdoms, but could not find a household with seven daughters. It was necessary to fulfil the king’s condition and going back without finding a suitable family was next to impossible. The messenger was very disturbed by this situation and kept looking for many months, but in vain. He would go to one country and after being disappointed, move to the next.

One night, the messenger was staying in an inn. There was another traveller too, staying in the same room. When the night fell, they both started to talk about random things. The other traveller asked him, “Where are you from and where are you going?” When the messenger told him about his kingdom, the other man was amazed at the distance he had travelled, and asked, “Why you are so far away from your own country? Were you unable to find work in your country?” as he assumed that the messenger was in search of work or business. The messenger sighed and told him, “Not at all brother, I am not here in search of work or anything like that.” And then he said, “Actually, I am in big trouble.” The other man asked, “Tell me your problem, maybe I can be of some help.” The messenger said with a sigh, “No one can have a solution to my problem.” And he thought to himself, how could this

poor guy help me? But later a thought came up that sharing your problems makes you feel better, so he decided to share his troubles with the other man. And he said, “Brother, our king has seven sons, and he wants them to marry into a household where there are seven daughters. I am here to find such a match.” As he said this the other traveller happily grasped his hands. He exclaimed, “You have rid me of *my* troubles. I am in the same trouble. My king has seven daughters, and he wishes his daughters to marry into a family with seven sons.” The happy men shook hands with each other and thanked God, and discussed everything in detail. One told important things about the princes and the other about the princesses. After they discussed matters and gathered all the information about each other’s country and kings, they finalized a wedding date. It was decided that the seven princes would come on the same day to marry. The messengers then joyfully left for their own countries.

The king was overjoyed upon hearing the good news from the messenger who had found the perfect match for his sons as he had asked him to do. He gave him great amounts of money and jewels as a reward; after all he had done his job. He then announced the good news to the princes. Wedding bells were ringing in the palaces, and the king was very busy preparing things with his wazirs (ministers). But as the wedding day drew closer the youngest prince refused to get married. Everyone tried to convince him; his father tried his best, and his brothers also advised him. Even friends were asked to persuade him but to all of them he said, “I don’t want to get married now.” The king was very worried because the wedding day was drawing closer and the young prince was not ready to listen. His mother tried to prevail upon him but he stuck to his point, “I don’t want to get married now.” Eventually at the appointed time king travelled with his six oldest sons. “The seventh will marry later,” he said.

Now, when the princes returned with their wives they thought they should assign their wives the duty of convincing the prince. The six wives were aware that their youngest sister was unmarried. They began to think of ways to convince the young prince to marry their

sister. They finally decided to each invite the young prince for dinner and try to persuade him. The eldest sister-in-law was the first to invite the prince to her palace for a banquet. When he arrived she tried to convince him, but he said, "I don't want to get married." When the sister-in-law realised that she was unable to convince him she became infuriated and said tauntingly, "I will see you marry the Princess Pomegranate!" After listening to her bitter words the prince returned home. The next day he was invited to the second sister-in-law's palace. The same happened there, and he again said, "I don't want to get married." When he was leaving his sister in law said, "Let's see which Princess Pomegranate you will marry." All the four remaining sisters-in-law invited him for dinner, tried their best to convince him and helplessly said, "Let's see which Princess Pomegranate you marry."

Hearing the same thing again and again, the prince decided that he would only marry Princess Pomegranate and no one else. In his anger he went to the king and said, "Father, I need your permission to leave for a journey." The king was taken aback by such a sudden request and asked, "Where do you want to go?" The young prince told him, "All my sisters-in-law have taunted me by saying that they will see me marry Princess Pomegranate, so I am going in search of her." The king tried to dissuade him but the prince was stubborn and he said, "I will show them that I can marry Princess Pomegranate. If I cannot find her I will not return." The king knew that the prince was very stubborn and would not listen to him, but still he said, "Listen son! Many princes, before you, have tried to find Princess Pomegranate and nobody knows where they have gone. You had better give up this idea of going in search of her. It's a very difficult job to find her." The prince did not listen to him at all and said, "I will bring home Princess Pomegranate at all costs. You must give me permission." So the king finally gave him permission and the prince, after saying goodbye to his parents, went to see his sisters-in-law and told them that he would only return with Princess Pomegranate.

He left his city and started off toward the East in search of Princess Pomegranate. For many days and nights he continued walking, not bothering about day or night, and finally reached a far off jungle where he saw a garden. Not only was he tired from his long journey, he was feeling hungry and thirsty, so he decided to go to the garden to have some rest. It was a pomegranate orchard and there were countless pomegranate trees but all of them had dried up because of lack of water. He was wondering who could have planted this orchard in the middle of a jungle when he saw a little hut in a corner of the orchard. He peeped in the hut and saw a sage [Sadhu] resting there. He thought it better not to disturb the sage and helped himself to a few pomegranates to quench his hunger and thirst and then fell asleep under a tree.

When he woke up next morning he thought to himself, “Where will I go now? I have been wandering in forests and towns for days. I neither know about the Princess Pomegranate nor about where to go. Why not stay here for a few days.” Thus he stood up and took a trip around of the orchard; he looked into the hut and saw that the sage was still asleep. Then he saw a well [rehat] and decided to water the plants to kill time. This became his daily routine, as the sage was still asleep. He watered the plants, enjoyed the fruit from the trees and rested underneath their shade. He was surprised at the sage’s long sleep, and would go every day to see if he had woken up. It had been months since he came to the garden and the orchard which had appeared lifeless had become all green. The trees were full of blooming flowers and fresh fruits, with birds chirping in their branches.

One day, when the prince was still asleep, the sage woke up from his long and deep sleep. The sage had a habit of sleeping for six months and then remaining awake for six months, continuously. During the months when he slept his garden became barren and in the six months that he was awake, his garden flourished. But this time after his six months sleep, to his surprise, he found his garden full of life and greenery. He was wondering about this

miracle when the prince woke up and came to his hut. He knew it that it was him who had been watering the plants, but he asked him to make sure, and the prince said, “Yes, I have been watering the plants while you slept.” The sage was very happy and he asked the prince to ask for anything in return for his service. The prince said, “You and God have given me a lot⁷⁹, I don’t need anything.” The sage said, “Ask for anything my son.” The sage said the same again, and received the same reply. The sage then said, “This is third and the last time I will ask, do you want something in return?” The prince told him, “Respected old man⁸⁰, I am a king’s son, and yours and God’s blessings are in plenty. If you want to give me something give me Princess Pomegranate. I left my home in search of her only” The sage said, “You have asked for something that should be impossible. Many people have been looking for Princess Pomegranate and have lost their lives. But I have given you my word so your wish will be granted. First, however, you will have to stay here for few more days.” The prince agreed to do so.

After a few days the sage called the prince and said, “The time has come for your wish to be fulfilled.” He then gave the prince a ball and asked him to “throw it in the garden, where the ball stops, pluck the biggest fruit from that tree. Take the fruit and leave the orchard without looking towards me or behind. Princess Pomegranate will be in that fruit.” He then told him not to look back or open the fruit on his way home, as doing so would result in him losing the princess. The prince threw the ball and plucked the biggest pomegranate from the tree where the ball stopped. He then left the garden for his homeland.

The prince kept walking for days and nights without taking any rest. He just wanted to reach his kingdom. He was elated by his success and was thinking how he would face his

⁷⁹ “Aap ka dia, khuda ka dia sab kuch ha—mujhe kisi cheeze ki zarurat nahi.”

⁸⁰ “Baba ji”

sisters-in-law confidently and say to them, "See, I have found Princess Pomegranate." Months later he reached his country, and after crossing many villages and cities, he finally reached his city. When he crossed his royal garden he thought, "I have reached my city, why not open the pomegranate and see what is inside, lest the sage deceived me. If I opened the pomegranate in front of everybody at home, and found nothing inside, that would be very embarrassing. It is better to open the pomegranate here. If I find Princess Pomegranate I will inform the king with bands and drums, but if there is nothing inside, I will leave the country." The prince entered the royal garden and with trembling hands and a thumping heart broke open the fruit. As soon as he did so the Princess Pomegranate dressed in red, tumbled out of it. She was so beautiful that the prince could not bear it and fainted immediately. The princess sat by his side, rested his head on her lap and began waiting for him to regain his senses.

As God would have it, at that moment the young gardener of the royal garden passed by, and recognised the prince as soon as she saw him. She also knew that the girl would be Princess Pomegranate, in whose search the prince had gone. She came and asked the princess, "Who are you and what are you doing in the royal garden?"

She replied, "I am Princess Pomegranate, the prince brought me here but fainted when he saw me. Now I am waiting for him to regain his senses." The gardener girl was jealous of her beauty and her precious dress. She thought to herself, "the prince has not seen her clearly, so why don't I kill her and become Princess Pomegranate? This way I can become the prince's wife and enjoy a luxurious life." She said to Princess Pomegranate, "Come, let's take a round of the garden until the prince feels better." The princess refused at first but when the gardener girl kept insisting, she had to agree. The gardener girl took her for a tour of the garden, all the while thinking of the ways to get rid of her. Soon the princess felt thirsty and asked for water. The gardener girl took her toward a well in the corner of the garden and drew water for her from the well. After that she asked the princess, "Let's peep inside the

well and see who is more beautiful.” The princess giggled at the girl’s stupidity and thought, “What chance has this poor girl to compete with my beauty, I have competed with many fairies and princesses.” But just to make her feel good, she agreed. They both peeped inside the well, and the gardener girl said, “You are much prettier than me.” She paused for a moment and said, “Let’s exchange our clothes and then see who is more beautiful.” The princess agreed and gave the girl her beautiful dress. She put on the gardener girl’s dress and even in this old and worn out clothes, the princess looked beautiful. Her beauty and youthfulness even made the dress look beautiful. “Come, let’s peep in the well,” said the gardener girl. As soon as the Princess looked into the well, the gardener girl pushed her into it. She thought, “Now the prince will think I am Princess Pomegranate, because I am wearing her clothes”. She sat by the prince’s side and began waiting for his recovery. When the prince woke up, he thought she must be his Princess Pomegranate. But he was sure that the face he had seen when he fainted was nothing like this one. She wore the same dress, and the same jewels but not that bright skin and pretty face. He thought perhaps he had not followed the sage’s instruction and that was why the princess had changed. He was convinced his impatience was the cause.

He sent a message to his father to say that he had brought Princess Pomegranate, and asked him to come and meet them with due protocol. The king was very happy that the prince had returned alive and successful. His homecoming was celebrated in the whole city. Everyone was amazed at his success, but when they saw the girl they were dumb-founded as the girl the prince was introducing as the Princess Pomegranate was actually their gardener. They all looked at each other and decided not to say anything. The curiosity they had been feeling became joy and happiness, as they were enjoying the fact that their gardener had so cleverly deceived their prince.

Days went by and in the well where the gardener had thrown the princess there grew a red flower. The flower was so beautiful that whoever came to visit the garden was spellbound by its beauty. The flower had grown so tall that one could touch it but strangely, whenever someone tried to touch it the flower shrank back down, so that nobody could touch it. This strange flower soon became very popular, and even the gardener girl heard of it. As soon as she heard of it, she knew it could be no one else but Princess Pomegranate. When the prince came back home that evening, she pretended to look ill and upset. The prince inquired, "Why you are worried, tell me?" She said, "I have a severe headache, my head is about to explode." The prince asked, "What can I do to make you feel better?" She told him that the only thing that would cure her was if the flower in the royal garden's well was picked and mashed and rubbed on her forehead. "That is not an issue," said the Prince, "I will quickly go and get the flower." He went to the garden and extended his hand to pick the flower, and lo and behold, the flower which was untouchable to others, came dancing into the Prince's hands. Everybody was amazed at this sight and soon it became known to everyone in the country.

The prince returned with the flower and rubbed the flower on the gardener girl's forehead. But as soon as the flower touched her she really did get a severe headache, and she threw the flower into the garden at the back of the palace. After few days, where it fell there grew a succulent, edible plant in abundance, so much so that soon the garden was filled with it. The gardener girl saw and became curious. She wondered if the flower which she had thrown might be the reason for this vegetation. When the prince returned home in the evening, he found her lying gloomily on her bed and asked her, "What is the matter with you, tell me?" She said, "I have extreme abdominal pain." The prince asked, "What can cure you?" She said, "I cannot get better until the vegetation growing in the back garden is mowed." The prince announced in the city that whoever wanted to cook that saag [mustard leaf, spinach] growing in the backyard could take it. He even picked a bunch for himself and

asked the gardener girl to cook it for him. The gardener girl had been wishing that the prince would ask her to do something for him, so she started cooking for him happily. But as she placed the pan on the stove she heard, "Let the gardener girl's head be shaved."

The gardener girl became very worried she tried her best to stop the voice, but in vain. Trying to get rid of it, she threw the pan out of the window. Where it fell there grew colourful flowers and a pomegranate tree. The tree was soon loaded with pomegranates and among the fruits there was one very large pomegranate that was different from all the others. One day when the gardener girl was on the palace roof she saw the beautiful garden where she had thrown the pot of saag. She came back and pretended to be severely ill. When the prince came back and saw her, he asked, "What pains you, tell me?" "I have severe pain in my chest," she replied. The prince asked, "What will help you feel better?" "I won't feel better unless the flowers in the back garden are cut and thrown away," she replied. The prince said, "Not a big deal, I will do just that." He announced in the city that people were welcome to take the flowers and fruits from the garden, and in no time everything was wiped from the garden. Among the people who came there was a little boy, but when he arrived everything had been picked already. He tried to find something in the grass, and was lucky-hidden in the grass he found a big pomegranate fruit. He took it and happily went back to his home. The boy had an old mother who used to sew to feed her son. The old woman was delighted to see the plump pomegranate fruit, and put it aside to eat later as dinner. That evening the boy reminded his mother about the pomegranate, which she brought and broke open into pieces. They were astounded to see a very beautiful girl tumble out of the fruit. Both the mother and son were frightened of her because such a strange happening was unknown to them. Princess Pomegranate said, "Don't be scared of me, I will help you." She said to the old lady, "Consider me your own daughter." The old woman and the boy began to treat her like their own family member and the three lived happily together. None day, the princess asked the

old woman to buy some cloth and colourful threads from the market. The old woman did so using her savings. Princess Pomegranate cut and embroidered handkerchiefs from the cloth and gave them to the old woman to sell to the youngest prince. The old woman did just this. The prince was impressed when he saw the handkerchiefs, and rewarded the old woman with a good amount. She came back and narrated the whole episode to the princess.

It became their daily routine to send a beautifully embroidered handkerchief to the prince. The old lady became very rich. One day the prince thought how beautiful a woman who can make such beautiful pieces could be. So he asked the lady, “Who makes these handkerchiefs?” The old woman replied, “My lord, my daughter makes these.” The prince asked, “Is she married?” She replied, “No sir, she is not married yet.” The prince did not say anything, and the old woman returned and told everything to the princess. The princess knew her plan was working. When the old woman took a handkerchief to the prince the next day he asked, “Do you not want to marry your daughter to someone?” She replied, “I cannot say anything without discussing the matter with my daughter.” “I want to marry her,” said the prince and asked her to discuss the matter with her daughter. The old woman told the whole story to her daughter, who asked her to say in reply, “Young daughters are meant to be married off.” She went to the prince next day and told him these words. The prince was overjoyed. He asked for his father’s permission and a wedding day was fixed. The princess was very happy too and soon she got married and moved in with her beloved husband, the prince.

When the prince saw his new bride for the first time, he was spellbound. “Do you recognize me?” she asked. The prince was unable to speak so the princess said, “I am Princess Pomegranate.” The prince could not believe it, “Princess Pomegranate?” “Yes, I am the Princess Pomegranate,” assured the Princess. Still in disbelief the Prince asked, “But my first wife is Princess Pomegranate?” He could not believe what he was seeing, because he

thought his first wife was Princess Pomegranate, but looking at the beauty of this girl he wondered if he had seen her somewhere before. He had seen her for sure. Princess Pomegranate stepped forward and asked the prince to sit with her, holding his arm gently, told him the whole story and of all the hardships she had gone through to reach him. She told him how the gardener girl deceived her and threw her in the well, and herself pretended to be Princess Pomegranate. She also told him all the hardships she went through to meet him, sometimes as a flower and other time as a purslane plant and finally as a pomegranate fruit she took shelter in the old woman's house.⁸¹ The prince was overjoyed. He was happy to have finally found his Princess Pomegranate. He then immediately ordered that the gardener girl who faked being Princess Pomegranate be thrown into the well. He lived happily with his Princess.

Years passed and the prince died, and the Princess Pomegranate once more hid in some pomegranate. She is still hiding. Nobody knows which pomegranate fruit she is in as she waits for her handsome prince.

Differences from the English translation:

- The second emissary is described as “an elderly man, wise and grand in manner, and with a beard one could trust” (18).
- Gardener's widowed daughter, an evil woman
- Repetition of “princess was gullible like all beautiful people are” (22, 23)
- The gardener girl is called ugly, “he could have fainted at the sight of such ugliness” (24) repeatedly.

⁸¹ The word used is kulfa saag which in English is Purslane.

- The prince immediately recognised Princess Pomegranate, while in Urdu he takes a while to realise this, which seems more logical.
- The English version is concise compared to Urdu.

Appendix 2: Selections from Shafi Aqeel, "Meetha Namak" *Punjabi Lok Kahaniyan* (1963) and "Dear as Salt," *Popular Folk Tales of the Punjab*. Translated by Ahmad Bashir, OUP, 2008.

DEAR AS SALT

Once upon a time there lived a king who had seven daughters. One night he called them all to him and asked them 'Tell me my daughters, how dear am I to you?'

The oldest said, 'You are sweet like sugar to me, my father'.

The second likened him to milk, the third to honey, the fourth to butter, the fifth to jaggery and the sixth to candy. When her turn came, the seventh and youngest of them said, 'You are dear as salt to me, O King, my father'.

This enraged the king. He ordered the grand Vizir to produce in his court without delay the ugliest of all the lepers of the world. The ugliest leper of the world lived near the border of the country. He was brought before the king in no time.

The king gave orders that his youngest daughter be married to the man, since she was so fond of humble things that she compared her glorious father to salt. This was done. The leper could not understand it at all, nor could anybody else in the court. The couple was then ordered to leave the city. They obeyed. The princess was wise and patient and she took to her wifely duties in real earnest.

Next morning she went to beg for food, though she was a princess. People were generous in those days and in a few moments she had enough food for the day, as well as a big basket in which she hoped to carry her leper husband while she went begging.

One day her husband said that it was very troublesome for her to carry him on her head, so she could leave him in the jungle, near a pond while she went begging. The princess agreed and left him near a pond.

The leper sat there under an old banyan tree. Suddenly he noticed that some crows flew down cawing, took a dip in the dirty pond and when they came out of the pond

they had turned into silver ducks. The leper thought of taking a dip too. He dragged himself to the pond and with great difficulty, threw himself in the dirty water, keeping just one little finger out of the water and dry. As Allah would have it, lo and behold, he had turned into a handsome, healthy prince, with no trace of the disease on his person! This handsome prince sat down by the pond, waiting for his princess.

At nightfall, the princess returned and saw that the basket in which her sick husband used to rest was empty. Instead, a handsome prince with a broad smile on his face was waiting for her. She suspected that this prince had killed her husband and would now claim her hand. She began to weep and wail in agony.

The handsome prince told her that he was indeed her leper husband but she would not believe him. Then he told her the whole story and for proof showed her his little finger, which still had leprosy. The joy of the princess knew no bounds. Only those who have experienced Allah's profound mercy can imagine her happiness.

The prince told her that his father was a king too, but as luck would have it he contracted leprosy, so his father, the king, ordered him thrown into the forest. The princess replied that since both of them had been rejected by their fathers, they should make a home in the forest and enjoy life there.

Accordingly, they made a small hut in the forest around which they grew beautiful red roses, and in the surrounding trees singing birds made their nests. Now the prince started going to work for a living, while the princess attended to the household. She was wise and patient, and a good homemaker. She advised her prince husband never to return home empty handed. 'You should always bring something with you even if it is worthless and useless,' she told him. The prince did as she said.

One evening he forgot to bring back anything at all. He was approaching his hut when he suddenly thought of it, so he looked around and saw a dead snake. He picked up the snake and carried it home with him. Now a dead snake is a worthless and useless present, so the princess,

who was wise and patient, threw it on the roof of her hut.

Now let it be acknowledged that Allah knows best, and the princess had no idea that, exactly at that moment, the queen of a nearby kingdom, having taken a bath, was now drying her hair on the roof of her palace. Her precious gold necklace, worth nine hundred thousand gold pieces, was lying nearby. Its glitter attracted a kite which swooped down upon it and flew off with it before anyone could know. This kite flew into the jungle and per chance came upon the dead snake lying on the roof of the hut in which the wise and patient princess lived. A fair exchange of goods followed. The kite threw down the necklace and picked up the dead snake which was ample food for her youngsters.

Now, when the princess found this precious necklace, she was overjoyed. She told her prince that he did not need to work any more. They spent the night happily planning their future. When the day dawned, the princess took two gold beads from the necklace and gave them to her prince to sell in the market. The prince did as she bid him, and came back rich and laden with presents. From then on it became their daily practice to sell a precious gold bead from the necklace, and in a few days they had collected thousands of gold coins, and everything that money could buy.

The princess, who was wise and patient, built a magnificent palace at the spot where she, along with her leper husband, had been left by the servants of her father, the king. She made seven entrances to the dining room in the palace.

She advised her prince to attend the court of the king, her father, and cultivate his friendship, and the prince did so. One day, when the king was very kindly and pleasantly disposed, the prince invited him to dinner, at his palace. The king accepted his invitation. The princess was overjoyed and started preparing for a suitable feast.

On the appointed day, and according to the programme, the king arrived at the palace of the princess, his daughter, with great pomp and show and in the company of his

selected courtiers and ministers. She did not come out to receive him, as is proper for ladies of distinction and honour. The prince alone was at the gate to receive the king and his noblemen.

The dining hall was so elegantly furnished that it surprised even the king. He had never seen such good taste in his own palaces.

After the king and his noblemen had made themselves comfortable, the wise and patient princess, who had dressed up gorgeously for the occasion, brought food for them. She had prepared seven dishes and she brought each dish through a different door, changing her gorgeous dress and make-up each time. It appeared as though seven different women had brought in the food.

The king was intrigued. He whispered to his grand Vizir that his host, the prince, probably had seven wives. But the grand Vizir was not so sure.

When the dinner was all set out, the prince requested the king to start eating. The king ate the first morsel and found that it was sweet. He tried the second and the third dish, and all the others, but found that they were all sweet. It was impossible to go on eating. The king was perplexed. With some hesitation, he asked if he could get something salty. But the princess, who was wise and patient, cut in to say that in her house, salt was taboo, because after all, salt was a humble thing, and when it was mentioned, fathers wedded their daughters to the ugliest lepers of the world.

The king was taken aback. The morsel he was slowly and out of politeness carrying to his mouth fell from his hand. A forgotten event flashed back into his mind. He examined the princess' face closely. But before he could speak, the princess, his daughter, addressed him respectfully thus:

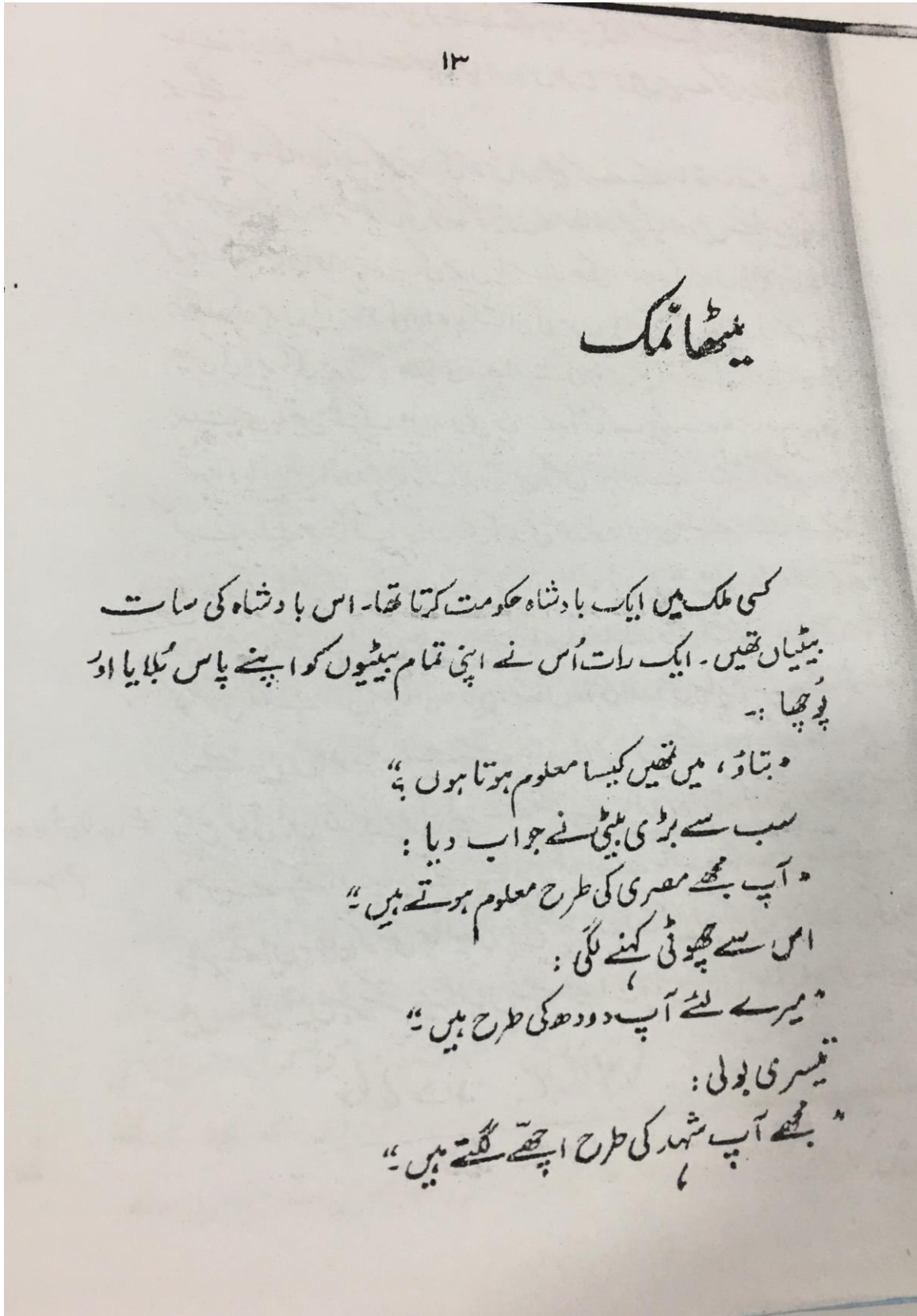
'Your Majesty, I am your daughter, whom you had married to the ugliest leper of the world, as a punishment for likening you, my father, to salt. And yet without salt you cannot take a single meal!'

The king was very sorry for the injustice he had done to his little princess. He took her in his arms, and kissed

her forehead with the fondness of a loving father, in all repentance.

The princess, who was wise and patient, told him the rest of her story and presented to him her husband, the handsome prince, who once used to be the ugliest leper of the world, The king was overjoyed. The father of the prince, king of a neighbouring country who had his leper son thrown away in the forest, was a friend of this king. He was informed of the health and glory of his son through reliable messengers, and all were united and lived happily ever after.

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⁸² Original Urdu version of the tale "Dear as Salt."

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چوتھی نے جواب دیا :
 "میں آپ کو مکھن کی طرح سمجھتی ہوں۔"
 پانچویں کہنے لگی :
 "مجھے آپ گڑ کی طرح معلوم ہوتے ہیں۔"
 اور چھٹی بیٹی نے عرض کیا :
 "آپ میرے لئے کھانڈ کی طرح ہیں۔"
 بڑی چھوڑکیوں کے جواب کے بعد جب سب سے چھوٹی بیٹی کی باری
 آئی تو بادشاہ نے اُس کی طرف دیکھا اور پوچھا :
 "بتاؤ، میں تمہیں کیسا معلوم ہوتا ہوں؟"
 چھوٹی شہزادی نے لمحہ بھر کے لئے سوچا اور پھر کہنے لگی :
 "آپ مجھے نمک کی طرح میٹھے لگتے ہیں!"
 اس کا اتنا کہنا تھا کہ یکایک بادشاہ کے ماتھے پر بل پرگٹے اور غصتہ
 سے اس کی آنکھیں سرخ ہو گئیں۔ اس کا خیال تھا کہ چھوٹی شہزادی بھی
 دوسری شہزادیوں کی طرح کسی چیز کا نام لے گی لیکن جب اُس نے نمک
 کی طرح میٹھا کہا تو اس کا چہرہ تہمتا اٹھا اور وہ غصتہ میں بولا :
 "اچھا! اب میں تمہیں نمک کی طرح میٹھا بن کے دکھاؤں گا"
 اور وہ غصتے میں اٹھ کر چلا گیا۔
 جب شہزادیوں کی شادی کا وقت آیا تو بادشاہ نے حکم دیا کہ :
 "چاروں طرف آدمی بھیج دیجئے جائیں اور ملک میں جو آدمی سب سے"

بے شکل اور کوڑھی ہو، اسے دربار میں حاضر کیا جائے!

بادشاہ کا یہ عجیب و غریب حکم سن کر درباری بہت متحیران ہوئے لیکن بادشاہ کا حکم نفاذ سے ٹالنا نہیں جاسکتا تھا۔ کسی میں اتنی ہمت نہیں تھی کہ وہ اس کی وجہ پوچھ سکتا۔ چنانچہ ملک بھر میں آدمی بلیغ دیئے گئے جنہوں نے ملکہ کے کونہ کونہ چھان مارا۔ بہت تلاش کیا گیا لیکن کوئی کوڑھی نظر نہ آیا۔ آخر ملک کی سرحد کے قریب درباری ملازموں نے دیکھا کہ وہاں ایک ایسا بے شکل کوڑھی پڑا تھا، جس کی حالت انتہائی خراب تھی اور جو مرنے کے قریب تھا۔ وہ فوراً اسے اٹھا کر لے آئے اور لا کر دربار میں حاضر کر دیا۔ اب ہر شخص اس بات کا منتظر تھا کہ دیکھیں بادشاہ اس کوڑھی کو کیا کرے گا؟ وہ دربار لگا۔ ہر شخص اپنے مرتبے کے مطابق اپنی جگہ پر بیٹھ گیا تو بادشاہ نے حکم دیا:

• اس کوڑھی کے ساتھ ہماری سب سے چھوٹی بیٹی کی شادی کر دی جائے

بادشاہ کا حکم سن کر دربار کا ہر شخص متحیران ہو گیا۔ ہر کوئی حیرانی سے ایک دوسرے کا منہ دیکھ رہا تھا۔ بادشاہ کی بیٹی اور کوڑھی کے ساتھ شادی کسی کو اپنے کانوں پر یقین نہیں آ رہا تھا۔ وزیروں نے بادشاہ کو بہتر سمجھایا مگر وہ اپنی ضد پر اڑا رہا۔

اس نے کہا:

• میں اسے تک کی طرح پیٹھابن کے دکھاؤں گا۔

وہی ہوا، جس کا بادشاہ نے حکم دیا تھا۔ سب سے چھوٹی شہزادی کو اس کوڑھی کے ساتھ بیاہ دیا گیا۔ وہ کوڑھی بھی اپنی جگہ بڑا پریشان اور حیران تھا۔

اُس نے ہاتھ باندھ کر بادشاہ کے حضور عرض کی :
 "جہاں پناہ! آپ میرا لوسے میں کیوں جڑ رہے ہیں۔ ہ میں ایک دو
 دن کا مہمان ہوں۔ کوڑھی ہوں، بادشکل ہوں، غریب ہوں۔ شہزادی
 کی شادی کہیں اور کیجئے۔"

لیکن بادشاہ نے اس کی ایک نہ سنی اور حکم دیا :
 "کوڑھی اور شہزادی کو شہر سے باہر لے جا کر چھوڑ دیا جائے!"
 اور یونہی کیا گیا۔ شہزادی اور کوڑھی کو شہر سے باہر لے جا کر جنگل میں
 ایک ویران جگہ پر چھوڑ دیا گیا۔

شہزادی عینی نیک اور زہین تھی اتنی ہی صبا بر بھی تھی۔ اُس نے سوچا، میری
 قسمت میں یہی کچھ تھا تو کوئی کیا کر سکتا ہے۔ وہ نہ تو گھبرائی اور نہ ہمت کا دمک
 ہاتھ سے چھوڑا۔ اُس نے اللہ پر بھروسہ کیا اور اس کوڑھی کی خدمت کرنا۔
 شروع کر دی۔

وہ دن تو شہزادی نے جوں توں کر کے گزارا۔ رات بھی اُس نے بھوکے پیاسے
 رہتالی۔ اور جب دوسری صبح ہوئی تو اپنے کوڑھی شوہر کو وہیں چھوڑ کر خود
 شہر گئی۔ محلوں میں پئی بڑھی اور ریشم میں کھلی شہزادی اب بھیک کے لئے
 لوگوں کے آگے ہاتھ پھیلا رہی تھی۔ اس نے بھیک مانگ کر کچھ پیسے جمع کئے
 لھنڈا بہت کھانے کو خریدیا اور باقی جو کچھ بچا اس سے ایک ٹوکرا خرید لیا۔
 اس کے بعد اس کا یہ روز کا معمول ہو گیا کہ وہ اپنے کوڑھی شوہر کو لڑ کرے
 میں ڈال کر سر پر اٹھالیتی اور شہر میں مانگنے چلی جاتی۔ دن بھر میں جو کچھ ملتا

روکھی سوکھی جو بن پرتا، خود کتی اور اپنے شوہر کو کھلاتی۔ اور شام ہوتی تو ٹوکرا اٹھائے واپس جنگلی میں اسی جگہ آجاتی جہاں پر گروہ رات گزارتے پیریت بھرنے کے لئے مانگ چکنے کے بعد جو وقت بچتا وہ اس میں اپنے خاوند کی خدمت کرتی۔

ایک روز شہزادی کے کوڑھی شوہر نے اس سے کہا:
 "متم مجھے سر پر کیوں اٹھائے اٹھائے پھرتی ہو۔ اس طرح تم تھک جاتی ہو۔ مجھے نہیں جنگلی میں چھوڑ جایا کرو۔ بھلا مجھے کون اٹھائے جلے گا؟"
 اس پر شہزادی بولی:

"ہو سکتا ہے میرے پیچھے تمہیں کوئی نقصان پہنچائے اس لئے میں تمہیں اکیلا چھوڑ کر نہیں جاتی۔ اب تمہیں سے میری زندگی وابستہ ہے۔ پھر بھلا تمہیں میں کیسے چھوڑ دوں۔"

کوڑھی نے بہت کہا، اتنا سمجھایا لیکن وہ نہ مانی۔ وہ روزانہ اسے اٹھا کر اپنے ساتھ لے جاتی اور پھر شام کو واپس لاتی۔ مگر ایک روز اس کی سمیت جو اب دسے گئی۔ اس روز وہ بہت تھکی ہوئی تھی۔ اس نے ٹوکرا اٹھایا مگر پھر باہر گئی یہ دیکھ کر کوڑھی نے پھر کہا:

"وہ دیکھو، فریب ہی جو ہر ہے۔ تم مجھے جو ہنر کے کنارے اس درخت کے نیچے رکھو، وارر اکیلی شہر پہلی جاؤ۔ اگر مجھے پیاس لگے گی تو میں خود گھسٹا کرو جو ہر میں سے پانی پی لوں گا۔"

جب کوڑھی نے بہت زیادہ اصرار کیا تو شہزادی اس کی بات مان گئی۔ اس

نے ٹوکرا آٹھ کمر جوہر کے کنارے کے قریب رکھ دیا اور خود شہر چلی گئی۔
 کوڑھی جوہر کے کنارے ٹوکرے میں خاموش بڑا تھا۔ اس نے دیکھا وہاں
 کوٹے آئے اور جوہر میں ہنسا کر سنس بن کے چلے جاتے۔ اسے بڑا تعجب ہوا۔
 جوہر کے پانی میں یہ کسری تاثر ہے۔ اس نے یہ بھی دیکھا کہ وہاں پر جوہر
 ہوئے اور بیمار کوٹے ہی آتے لیکن جب وہ جوہر کے پانی میں نہاتے تو
 خوب درت سنس بن کر اڑ جاتے۔ کوڑھی کے ہی میں آیا، وہ بھی جوہر میں نہاتے
 ہو سکتا ہے خدا اس کی بھی سن لے لیکن وہ چپتا کیسے ہے۔ اس نے سوچا،
 شہزادی آجائے تو اس سے کہہ کر نہاؤں گا مگر پھر خیال آیا، کہیں ایسا نہ ہو
 اس وقت تک پانی میں تاثر نہ رہے۔ آخر اس نے ہمت کی اور لڑھکتا
 کھٹکتا پانی تک پہنچ گیا اور پھر اس نے ایک کردٹ لے کر اپنے آپ کو پانی
 میں گرادیا۔ لیکن اس نے اپنے دائیں یا ٹھکی ایک انگلی پانی سے باہر نکلے
 رکھی۔ شوہر نے اس نے ڈبھی لگا کر اپنا سر پانی سے باہر نکالا تو اس کی جہرت کی
 کوئی انتہا نہ رہی۔ اس کا سارا کوڑھ جھیک ہو چکا تھا اور اب وہ ایک کوڑھی
 کی بجائے خوب درت نوجوان تھا۔ وہ خوشی خوشی جوہر سے باہر نکلا اور گناہے پر
 بیچ کر شہزادی کا انتہا کرنے لگا۔

شام کے وقت جب شہزادی شہر سے لوٹ کر آئی تو یہ دیکھ کر بڑی پریشان
 ہوئی کہ اس کے کوڑھی شوہر کی جگہ وہاں ایک حسین نوجوان بیٹھا ہوا تھا اس نے
 جیرانی سے ادھر ادھر دیکھا تو وہاں خالی ٹوکرا نظر آیا۔ وہ سمجھی شاید اس نوجوان
 نے میرے شوہر کو مار کر جوہر میں پھینک دیا ہے۔ اس لئے اس سے رونا پینا

م شروع کر دیا۔ اسے روتا دیکھ کر نوجوان آگے بڑھا اور پوچھا:
 ”اے شہزادی! تو اس بڑی طرح کیوں روتی ہے؟“
 شہزادی نے بتایا:

”یہاں میں اپنے کورٹھی خاوند کو ڈھونڈ رہی تھی لیکن اب وہ مجھے کہاں نظر نہیں
 آ رہا۔ میں اسی لئے روتی ہوں۔“

اس کی یہ بات سن کر نوجوان زور سے سانس اور پھر بولا:

”میں ہی تیرا کورٹھی خاوند ہوں۔“

یہ کیسے ہو سکتا ہے۔

بھلا شہزادی کو کیسے یقین آ سکتا تھا۔ آخر نوجوان نے اسے ساری بات
 بتائی اور پھر اپنے دائیں ہاتھ کی وہ انگلی دکھائی جو اس نے پانی میں ڈبکی رکھتے
 وقت باہر نکالے تھی۔ اس کے بعد وہ شہزادی کو بوہڑ کے پاس لے گیا اور
 اپنی وہ انگلی جو بوہڑ کے پانی میں ڈبو دی۔ انگلی کا پانی میں ڈبونا تھا کہ دیکھتے ہی دیکھتے
 وہ بھی خشک ہو گئی۔ اب شہزادی کو یقین آ گیا اور اس کی خوشی کا کوئی ٹھکانا نہ تھا
 نوجوان نے شہزادی کو بتایا کہ وہ بھی مسامتی ملک کا شہزادہ ہے۔ کورٹھی نے
 کی بوہڑ سے اس کے باپ نے اسے جنگل میں چھنکوا دیا تھا۔ یہ بات شہزادی کے
 اور بھی خوشی کا باعث تھی۔ اس نے کہا:

”تمھارے باپ نے کورٹھی ہونے کی وجہ سے تمہیں جنگل میں چھنکوا دیا اور

میرے باپ نے تمہیں کورٹھی دیکھ کر میری تم سے شادی کر دی۔ اب تمھارا

باپ تمھارا باپ نہیں اور میرا باپ میرا باپ نہیں۔ ہم دونوں یہیں رہیں گے۔“

اور ہمت کر کے اپنی زندگی بنائیں گے۔“

ان دونوں نے شہر سے باہر ایک چھوٹی سی جھونپڑی بنالی اور اس میں رہنے لگے۔ شہزادہ روزانہ شہر جاتا اور محنت مزدوری کر کے ٹھوڑا بہت کما لاتا۔ شہزادی بڑی عقلمند اور ذہین تھی۔ اس نے شہزادے سے کہا:

”تم شام کو گھر آتے وقت کبھی نہانی یا تختہ نہ آیا کرو، خواہ تمہیں کوئی بیکار چیز ہی کیوں نہ لانی پڑے۔“

شہزادی کے کہنے کے مطابق روزانہ شہزادہ جب محنت مزدوری کر کے شہر سے گھر لوٹتا تو راستہ سے کچھ نہ کچھ ضرور لے آتا۔ کبھی جلاسنے کے لئے ٹکڑیاں کبھی کوئی اینٹ، اور کبھی کوئی اور چیز۔ آتے ہیں جو بھی اسے ملتا وہ اسے اٹھا لاتا۔

ایک روز شام کو جب شہزادہ گھر لوٹ رہا تھا تو اتفاق سے کوئی چیز لانا بھول گیا۔ جب وہ اپنی جھونپڑی سے ٹھوڑے فاصلہ پر تھا تو اسے یاد آیا کہ آج وہ خالی یا تختہ گھر جا رہا ہے۔ اس نے ادھر ادھر دیکھا لیکن وہاں کچھ نظر نہ آیا۔ اور خالی یا تختہ گھر جانا بھی اس کے لئے مشکل تھا۔ اتنے میں قریب ہی اس نے دیکھا تو وہاں ایک مرا ہوا سانپ پڑا تھا۔ اس نے سوچا کہ شہزادی نے تو صرف یہ کہہ رکھا ہے کہ میں گھر خالی یا تختہ نہ آؤں جو بھی ملے آؤں، کسی ایک چیز کی تو شرط نہیں اس لئے یہی اٹھا لے جاتا ہوں، کہوں گا میں خالی یا تختہ نہیں آیا اور یہ سوچ کر شہزادہ وہ مرا ہوا سانپ اٹھا کر گھر لے آیا۔ جب شہزادی نے اس کے یا تختہ میں مرا ہوا سانپ دیکھا تو اس نے اسے

لے کر اپنی جھونپڑی کی چھت پر پھینک دیا۔ کرنا خدا کا ایسا جو کہ عین اس
 وقت دوسری طرف بادشاہ کے مہلوں کی چھت پر بلکہ نہا کر اپنے بال سکھا
 رہی تھی اور اس نے اپنا نو لکھا بار گلے سے اتار کر قریب ہی دکھا ہوا تھا۔
 اتنے میں ایک طرف سے ایک چیل اڑتی ہوئی آئی اور جھپک کر وہ ہار اٹھا
 لے گئی۔ وہی چیل اڑتی اڑتی شہر سے باہر ان کی جھونپڑی کی جانب اڑتی
 جو نہی اس کی نظر جھونپڑی کی چھت پر پڑے ہوئے مردہ سانپ پر پڑی۔
 اس نے پک کر اسے اٹھایا اور سانپ اٹھاتے میں اس کی چونچ میں
 پکڑا ہوا نو لکھا بار جھونپڑی کی چھت پر گر پڑا۔ ادھر شہزادی یونہی اپنی جھونپڑی
 کی چھت پر چڑھی تو آئے نو لکھا بار پڑا ہوا دیکھ کر حیران رہ گئی۔ اس نے خوشی
 خوشی بار اٹھایا اور آکر شہزادے کو بتا کر بولی :

”کل سے مزدوری کرنے کی ضرورت نہیں!“

اس کے بعد اس نے بار میں سے دو موتی نکال کر شہزادے کو دیئے
 اور کہا:

”کل جمع جا کر یہ موتی کسی جوہری کے پاس بیچ آنا۔“

دوسرے روز شہزادہ دونوں موتی لے کر شہر میں ایک جوہری کے پاس
 گیا اور انہیں بیچ دیا۔ موتی بہت قیمتی تھے۔ جوہری نے بہت سی دولت دی
 جو شہزادہ گھر لے آیا۔ اب شہزادی کا یہ روز کا معمول بن گیا تھا۔ وہ روزانہ ہار میں
 سے دو موتی نکال کر شہزادے کو دیتی اور وہ شہر میں جا کر انہیں بیچ آتا اس
 طرح ہولے ہولے انہوں نے نو لکھا بار بیچ کر لاکھوں روپے جمع کر لئے اور

جب ان کے پاس بہت ساری دولت جمع ہو گئی تو شہزادی نے اسی جگہ جہاں
اسے بادشاہ کے نوکر کوڑھی کے ساتھ بچھوڑے تھے۔ ایک خوبصورت ادا
عالی شان محل تعمیر کرایا۔ اس محل میں جو کھانے کا کمرہ تھا اس کے سات
دروازے رکھے گئے۔ اس کے بعد شہزادی نے اپنے اوزار شہزادے کے لئے
بہترین تباہی لباس تیار کر کے اور پھر شہزادے نے کہا:

”م روزانہ باقاعدگی کے ساتھ بادشاہ کے دربار میں جایا کرو۔ وہاں نہ
کسی سے بات کرنا اور نہ بولنا۔ چپکے بیٹھ کر چلے آیا کرنا۔ اگر کسی روز بادشاہ
تم سے پوچھے تو صرف اتنا کہنا کہ بادشاہ سلامت میرے ہاں دعوت قبول
کیجئے۔“

جس طرح شہزادی نے بتایا۔ شہزادے نے اسی طرح کیا۔ وہ روزانہ
باقاعدگی کے ساتھ بادشاہ کے دربار میں پہنچ جاتا اور خاموش ایک لطف ملیا
سب کچھ دیکھتا رہتا۔ نہ کسی سے بات کرتا اور نہ بولتا۔ بادشاہ بھی روز اسے دیکھتا
اور سوچتا۔ یہ نوجوان روزانہ آتا ہے اور چلا جاتا ہے۔ یہ نہ آج تک کسی سے
بولتا ہے اور نہ اس نے کوئی سوال کیا ہے۔ نہ کبھی کسی سے بات کی ہے اور
نہ کسی کو اس کی آواز سنائی دی ہے۔ آخر ایک روز بادشاہ نے خود ہی اس سے
پوچھا:

”اے نوجوان! تم روز دربار میں آتے ہو اور خاموش بیٹھ کر چلے جاتے ہو
تم کون ہے، کہاں رہتے ہو۔ اور اگر تمہارا کوئی سوال ہو تو بتاؤ۔“
شہزادہ تو خود ہی اس دن کے انتظار میں تھا۔ اس نے عرض کیا:

”حضور! میں آپ کی رعایا میں سے ہوں اور جیسا ہوتا ہوں کہ آپ میری دعوت
قبول کریں“

بادشاہ نے اس کی دعوت قبول کر لی اور دعوت کا دن بھی مقرر کر دیا۔
جب دربار برخواست ہوا تو شہزادے نے گھر جا کر شہزادی کو بتایا کہ بادشاہ
نے دعوت قبول کر لی ہے اور فلاں دن مقرر ہوا ہے۔ شہزادی نے سنا تو
بہت خوش ہوئی اور شاہی دعوت کی تیاریوں میں لگ گئی۔

مقررہ دن پر بادشاہ اپنے وزیروں اور خاص مصاحبوں کے ساتھ شہزادی
کے محل میں پہنچ گیا۔ شہزادے نے بڑی عورت اور احترام سے بادشاہ اور
وزیروں کا استقبال کیا اور پھر کھانے کے کمرے میں لے گیا۔ کھانے کے
کمرے کی آرائش دیکھ کر بادشاہ بہت حیران ہوا۔ اس قدر سلیقہ اور قرینہ تو
اس نے اپنے شاہی محلوں میں بھی نہیں دیکھا تھا۔

جب بادشاہ اپنے وزیروں اور مصاحبوں کے ساتھ دربار پر پہنچ گیا
تو شہزادی زرق برق لباس میں ملبوس بادشاہ کے لئے خود کھانا لائی۔ اس نے
دعوت کے لئے خاص طور پر سات کھانے پکائے تھے اور ہر کھانے
دروازے میں سے لے کر داخل ہوتی تھی اور جب نیا کھانا لاتی تو اس کے
ساتھ اپنا پہلا لباس بھی تبدیل کر کے آتی۔ وہ اپنا لباس اس طرح تبدیل کر کے
آتی تھی کہ اس کے ساتھ اس کے چہرے کی آرائش بھی بدل جاتی۔ اسی طرح
شہزادی نے سات لباس تبدیل کر کے باری باری ساتوں دروازوں میں سے
سات قسم کے کھانے لے کر بادشاہ کے آگے بجا دیئے۔ بادشاہ اپنی جگہ بٹھایا

تھا۔ وہ ہر کھانے کے ساتھ نئی لڑکی کو دیکھتا اور کچھ سوچ میں پڑ جاتا۔ ہر روز
میں سے ایک نئی لڑکی کھانے کو داخل ہوتی تھی۔ اُس نے آہستہ سے اپنے
وزیر کے کان میں کہا :

”میرا خیال ہے، اس شہزاد کے کی سات بیویاں ہیں ؟
لیکن وزیر کہنے لگا :

”بادشاہ سلامت! میری رائے میں تو یہ ایک ہی لڑکی ہے جو لبا کس
تبدیل کر کے آتی ہے ؟“

بادشاہ کو وزیر کی بات کا یقین نہیں آیا۔ اس نے کہا :
”یہ کیسے ہو سکتا ہے۔ اتنی بلدی وہ لباس کیسے تبدیل کر سکتی ہے ؟“
بادشاہ اور وزیر اسی کشش و پینچ میں پھنسے کہ اتنے میں شہزاد کے نئے پڑاؤ
سے کھانا شروع کرنے کی درخواست کی۔ بادشاہ نے ہاتھ بڑھا کر نوالہ دیا اور
جب نوالہ منہ میں رکھا تو پتہ چلا کہ یہ کھانا تو میٹھا ہے۔ اُس نے اپنا ہاتھ دوسرے
سالن کی طرف بڑھایا لیکن نوالہ منہ میں بیٹھ رہا۔ پتہ چلا کہ یہ بھی میٹھا ہے۔ یہ سب
اور چوتھے کھانے کو چکھا تو وہ بھی میٹھا تھا۔ اس طرح باری باری بادشاہ نے
سارے کھانے چکھے اور یہ دیکھ کر وہ بہت حیران ہوا کہ سب کے سب
کھانے میٹھے تھے۔ بڑا پریشان تھا۔ وزیروں اور مہما جیوں کی طرف دیکھا تو
وہ بھی اپنی جگہ پریشان بیٹھے ایک دوسرے کا منہ تک رہے تھے۔ کچھ سمجھ میں
نہیں آ رہا تھا کہ بات کیا ہے، کچھ کہہ بھی نہیں سکتے تھے کیونکہ یہ بات اُداسی
کے خلاف تھی اور اس میں میزبان کی توہین کا پہلو دکھانا تھا مگر ناسک سے بغیر

کھانا کھانا بھی تو ناممکن تھا۔ ہوں توں کر کے بادشاہ نے چند نواسے لئے اور
آخر اس سے نہ رہا گیا۔ اس نے شہزادے سے پوچھا:

”کیا کوئی نیکین چیز تیار نہیں کی گئی؟“
پیشتر اس کے کہ شہزادہ بادشاہ کی بات کا کوئی جواب دیتا، قریب کھڑی
شہزادی بول پڑی:

”بادشاہ سلامت! ہمارے ہاں نمک استعمال نہیں ہوتا!“
شہزادی کے جواب سے بادشاہ اور بھی حیران ہوا۔ اور پوچھنے لگا:

”وہ کیوں؟“

شہزادی نے جواب دیا:

”بہار پناہ! نمک کا نام لیتے سے باپ بیٹیوں کو کوڑھی کے ساتھ بیاہ
دیتے ہیں۔ اس لئے ہم نمک استعمال نہیں کرتے!“

شہزادی کا اتنا کہنا تھا کہ ایک ایک بادشاہ کا ہاتھ رگ گیا۔ اس کے ہاتھ کاٹوا
لائے بی میں رہ گیا۔ اسے برسوں پرانی کوئی بات یاد آگئی۔ اس کی بیٹی اور کوڑھی!
اس کا ذہن جیسے جھنجھٹا اٹھا۔ اس نے جلدی سے پلٹ کر شہزادی کو غور
سے دیکھا۔ شہزادی بادشاہ کی پریشانی کا سبب جان گئی تھی۔ اس نے کہا:

”بادشاہ سلامت! میں آپ کی فری بیٹی ہوں جیسے آپ نے نمک کی طرح
بیٹھا کہنے پر ایک کوڑھی سے بیاہ دیا تھا اور آج آپ ایک وقت کا کھانا نمک
کے بغیر نہیں کھا سکتے۔“

شہزادی کا جواب سن کر بادشاہ بہت تادم ہوا۔ اس نے جلدی سے

۲۶

بڑھ کر بیٹی کو گلے لگانا اور اپنی غلطی کی معافی مانگی۔ کئی برس کے بعد باپ اور بیٹی ملے بھتے۔ شہزادی نے شہزادے کے بارے میں پوری داستان سنائی اور بتایا:

”یہ وہی کوڑھی بیوہ جس کے ساتھ آپ نے میری شادی کی تھی۔“
بادشاہ بہت شرمندہ تھا۔ اُس نے سر جھکا کر کہا:
”کاش! میں نہک کی تاج میٹھا ہوتا!“

اس کے بعد بادشاہ شہزادی اور شہزادے کو اپنے ساتھ شاہی محلوں میں لے آیا۔ شہزادے کے باپ کو بھی خبر کی گئی اور پھر سارے ملک میں جشن کا حکم دیا گیا۔ بادشاہ بوڑھا بوچکا تھا۔ اُس نے سارا راج پاٹ شہزادے کے سپرد کر دیا اور سب راضی خوشی رہنے لگے۔

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