CONSTRUCTING NATIVE'S VISION AND NARRATIVE OF CITYSCAPE IN PUNJABI FOLKSONGS: AN UNRAVELING OF COLONIAL CITY DESIGN IN EAST AND WEST PUNJAB

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Abstract: The paper attempts to catch the cityscape, which was a colonial design up to 1947 and has been coloured with nostalgia in post-partition era. The oral folk songs produced, performed and sang during the colonial and contemporary time construct an image of city which is much founded on folk awareness of the city and citylife. The city often becomes a site of job where the husband is gone, becomes a distant land, becomes a land of fascination with gas lights and simply becomes a trivial word to aid the rhyming rhythm. This imaging of the city is neither completely realist nor romanticist; it floats like reality of the oral literatures – partially founded on material reality and partially on folk's interpretation.

Keywords: City In Literature, Colonialism, Post Colonialism, Punjabi Folklore, Punjabi Folksongs.

> . . . Our beginnings
> were rocky, we held hands,
> infrequently, and uneasily,
> like Def Col and Kotla,
> but then, in some years,
> often and more breezily,
> like Jangpura & Jangpura
> Extension.   - Akhil Katyal, *He was as arrogant as Chattarpur Farmhouse*

Introduction: Katyal has not given voice to the ever-so-noisy Metro stations of Delhi, they already have lexical existence in the consciousness of *Delhites*. The readers catch the flavor of Akhil Katyal's swift mentions of Chatarpur, Def col, Kotla, Jangpura, Najafgarh, Shalimar Bagh, Rajouri Garden and various other areas of Delhi and the acquired metaphor of *metro-stations;* which is an obvious architectural reality and an alternate-reality of the city's narrative. Katyal's mentioned metro stations are tangy and leave a tinge of flavor to devour; the geographical sites materialize into so much of what they mean to the *Delhites* or how they see them. Similarly, a Jhangi folk song materializes the modern urbaneness in verses " ਅੱਡੇ ਤੇ ਖਲੀ ਆਂ ਆ ਗਈ ਕੋਚ ਕਰਾਚੀ ਦੀ/ ਕਰ ਬਰਬਾਦ ਨਹੀਂ ਮੇਰੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਬਾਕੀ ਦੀ " (ਭੁੱਟਾ, 86) (I am at the platform and I can see that coach going to Karachi has arrived, Do not waste my life by going away.) A modern Reader unfailingly paints a nostalgic image of colonial railway station with busy *sahebs*, *naukars* and the *phirangis* running haphazard in the racially strained colonial Punjab. A modern human is dependent on the transportation and communication network of the city, so-much-so that anything rural is automatically assumed to be a space lacking swift communication channels. This assumption is not entirely incorrect, British approach of designing Delhi laid stress on communications "both between parts of the town and between Delhi and other towns along the Grand Trunk Road." (Nilsson, 47) This is only turning of the Raj to the inland trade routes from the major British constructed Sea ports of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The Railway reached the North-west Frontier in the latter phase of laying the Railway. Karachi, though a former harbor, was a product of English colonialism and expanded in middle 19th century. The railways and cotton boom during the North American civil war boosted commerce and turned Karachi into one of the most populated city of British India. (Nilsson,147) Karachi was primarily seen as a seaport by the by the British in 1850s, the rail in Punjab started from Karachi along the rivers Indus and Chenab halting at Multan and finally at Lahore. Multan and Lahore were already huge settlements turned prosperous on the GT road and Karachi was only conurbation to the GT route running through Rawalpindi – Islamabad. Obviously the folk are very well aware of *pind* (village) and *shehar* (city) and often what constitutes the making of the metropolis. The common trope of railway station reveals implicit urbaneness which is foreign and enters Punjabi ecology with the coming of the British, as used in the folk song –

ਝਾਂਮਾਂ____ ਝਾਂਮਾਂ ____ ਝਾਂਮਾਂ (Shaama ___ Shaama ___ Shaama)

ਰੇਲੇ ਚੜੁਦੇ ਨੂੰ (While he is about to climb the rail coach)

ਭੱਜ ਕੇ ਰੁਮਾਲ ਫੜੁਆਮਾਂ (I will run upto him to give the handkerchief)

ਰੋਨੀ ਆਂ ਕਰਮਾ ਨੂੰ (I bewail my *karamas)*

ਕਾਹਨੂੰ ਲੈ ਲਿਆਂ ਨੋਕਰ ਨਾਲ ਲਾਮਾਂ (why did I marry a government (British) servant)

ਚੜੁ ਗਿਆ ਰਾਤ ਦੀ ਗੱਡੀ (he got onto the train at night)

ਮੈ ਵਿੱਛੜੀ ਕੂੰਜ ਕੁਰਲਾਮਾ... (and left me in tears) (ਸਿੰਘ, 92)

Husbands' leaving to serve the government is a much regretted event of a Punjabi woman's life. In a song it which goes like:

ਨੋਕਰ ਨੇ ਤਾਂ ਚੱਕ ਲਿਆ ਬਿਸਤਰਾ (The British servant has packed his bedding)

ਮੋਢੇ ਧਰ ਲੀ ਲੋਈ (and has placed a shawl on his shoulder)

ਔਰਤ ਨੋਕਰ ਦੀ (A servant's wife)

ਬਹਿ ਕੇ ਪਲੰਘ ਤੇ ਰੋਈ (bewails sitting on the bed)

ਵੇਹਟੀ ਨੋਕਰ ਦੀ (A servant's wife)

ਰੰਡੀਆਂ ਬਰਾਬਰ ਹੋਈ ... (lives the life of a widow despite being married) (ਸਿੰਘ)

Punjabi folklore has recorded songs of women where their husbands leave for war. Dejected woman often desperately begs the husband to take her to the battleground with him; there are various songs that talk of the husband's stallion making way to the battleground, and various others talking of the courageous husband. However, the urban colonial woman feels no dignity and is a bit reluctant to marry a government servant. The heroism given to *dhol sipahi* (beloved soldier) is absent in songs where the husband is *naukar* . The British design of colonial urban Punjab is seen in the couplet "ਨੋਕਰ ਨੇ ਤਾਂ ਚੱਕ ਲਿਆ ਬਿਸਤਰਾ / ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਗੱਡੀ ਦੇ ਨੇੜੇ" (ਸਿੰਘ) (The government servant has packed his bedding, and has grown closer to the train.) The trains were made not only to facilitate trade, but also to facilitate policing. It was one of the fastest channels which was underused to transport crops during famines and abused to transport government troops to pacify unrest. The *naukar* and *gaddi* are words that are evoked together, run into each other and are co-dependent in colonial urban design.

The popular assertion claims that railway was designed to shorten the distance, but it was indeed a materialization of colonial mapping of Punjab. The first phase of Railway construction created a network of trunk routes, which undoubtedly were benefitting the trade, supplies and travel of the imperialists. Later the network spread to the smaller towns and settlements and turned into a giant web. The contrast could be seen in the imaging of distance in the songs shared, A *Jhangi* folksong has numerous stanzas with the trope of 'ਮੈਂ ਏਥੇ ਤੇ ਢੋਲ ਮੁਲਤਾਨ ਰੈ/ ਖੁਸ਼ਾਬ ਰੈ/ ਝੰਗ ਵੇ/ ਗੋਜਰੇ" (ਭੁੱਟਾ, 107) (Here I am and my husband is in Multan/khushaab/Jhang/Gojra) reflecting distance in matrimony which has been created with the imperial work culture, lifestyle and commutation through railway. The Railway stations became centre to measure distances between places and also a catalyst to urbanize the land, for wherever railway went it created and brought urbanization. Vision to see the distance and demarcate spaces is not rail dependent in the former folk songs as it can be seen in:

ਹਰ ਵੇ ਬਾਬਲਾ ਹਰ ਵੇ (listen father)

ਮੇਰਾ ਮਾਝੇ ਸਾਕ ਨਾ ਕਰ ਵੇ (do not fix my marriage in *maajha*)

ਮਾਝੇ ਦੇ ਜੱਟ ਬੁਰੇ ਸੁਣੀਦੇ... (I heard the men of *maajha* are not good.)

This brings out the formative geographical distribution of Punjab, which is majorly divided into three areas of *Majha, Malwa* and *Duaba. Majha* is the area stretching from the bank of Beas up-to Jhelum, *Malwa* is located in proximity to the Malwa plateau to the south of Satluj River and *Doaba* is the land between Beas and Satluj. This, a fairly natural segregation of land areas reflects the absence of colonial designing of the Punjab's landscape and also its produce of urban vis-à-vis rural. The gap between rich and the poor was present in the Mughal cities but the gap grew drastically and glaring image of poverty became a sight in colonial cities. (Nilsson) A

faint recognition of fear of settling at a great distance, that could be sensed in the above given folksong, was soon substituted by charismatic ideal of distance as often the train would lead to a city which was no less than a 'palace of dreams'. Before progressing into the imaging of cities in folksongs, the readers can see an addition to the landmarks in Punjab's landscape. There are numerous songs which are located around the rivers of Punjab as evoking river(s) is almost natural due to the landscape and the folktales and narratives have also given a character to rivers and brooks. Often a river bank becomes a place to enjoy in the company of beloved or auspicious sight for

asceticism. River Chenab becomes a manifestation of romantic pathos while Ravi is evoked as an ever costuming river as in a song "ਬਲੋਚ ਜ਼ਾਲਮਾਂ ਰਾਵੀ ਪਈ ਵਹਿੰਦੀ ਓਏ/ ਜੁਦਾਈ ਤੇਰੀ ਅਹਿ ਜ਼ਿੰਦੜੀ ਪਾਲ ਨਾ ਸਹਿੰਦੀ ਓਏ" (Cruel camel-master river Ravi is flowing, and this life cannot stand this partition even for a second.) There is a similar mention of innumerable *dariyas* (streams) and *nehars* going "ਲੰਮੀਆਂ ਨਹਿਰਾਂ ਉੱਤੇ ਬਹਾਰਾਂ ਰੁੱਖਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ /

ਨਾ ਬਿਠਾਸੇ ਨਾ ਕਿਤਾਸੇ ਦੁਖਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ" (ਭੁੱਟਾ, 64-65) (There is shade of spring trees on the flowing streams, neither did you make me sit nor did you share the woes of your life with me.) Another landscape site to be as frequently evoked as the rivers and streams of Punjab are the railway stations of Punjab. Some songs mentioning the stations are:

<div align="center">

ਤਾਵੇ___ਤਾਵੇ ____ਤਾਵੇ (Taave, Taave, Taave)

ਲੁਧਿਆਏ ਟੇਸ਼ਣ ਤੇ (At Ludhiana station)

ਮੇਰਾ ਜੀਜਾ ਰਫਲ ਚਲਾਵੇ... (My brother-in-law fired a rifle) (ਸਿੰਘ, 209)

</div>

Or,

<div align="center">

ਸਟੇਸ਼ਨ ਝੰਗ ਵਾਲਾ, (The station of Jhang)

ਹਿਕ ਮੇਰੀ ਵਾਂਗ ਭੰਨੀ, (my bangle is cracked)

ਦੂਹਾ ਸ਼ੀਸ਼ਾ ਰੰਗਵਾਲਾ| (the mirror is coloured) (ਰਾਜਪਾਲ, 80)

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Various such songs, which often do not mention the names of the stations also somehow exhibit the presence of the modern in the ecology of Punjab. Jhang and Ludhiana are obvious urban centers where "ਦੁਨੀਆ ਚੜ੍ਹੇ ਹਜ਼ਾਰਾਂ" (ਸਿੰਘ) (people climb the trains in thousands). These urban centers exude themselves in consumerist products. The economical gap and privileged prosperity of the cities is seen in the songs like:

<div align="center">

ਬਾਜ਼ਾਰ ਵਿਕਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਪਰਾਂਦੀਆਂ (They sold hair-tassels at bazaar)

ਮਹਿੰਗੀਆਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਲਾਹੌਰੋਂ ਆਉਂਦੀਆਂ (expensive bangles are bought from Lahore) (ਭੁੱਟਾ)

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Emergent modernity is a product of the created urban class which chooses not only the products but also the language. This contrast is narrated in the songs:

<div align="center">

ਪਿੰਡਾਂ ਦੇ ਮੁੰਡੇ ਚਾਦਰਾ ਬੰਨੂ ਦੇ (Men in villages wear *chadra*)

ਡੱਬੀ ਨਾਲ ਡੱਬੀ ਮਿਲਾ ਕੇ (putting the pattern in symmetry)

ਸ਼ਹਿਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਮੁੰਡੇ ਪਾਉਂਦੇ ਪੈਂਟਾ (Men in cities wear trousers)

ਹੂਕ ਨਾਲ ਹੂਕ ਮਿਲਾ ਕੇ... (Fixing the hooks in symmetry)

</div>

The songs extend the image of a modern urban man and woman where the colonized populous unknowingly aspires for products popularized in the urban centers operated by the British; It is a cultural byproduct since the "imported manufactured goods could be found in the market". (Brar) The various items that are mentioned in songs are wrist watch, sandals, fruits, rings, studds, coats and other clothing products. However, One of the most mischievous items in the huge category of urban products is cigarette, which is mentioned in a Jhangi and Malwai Folksong.

<div align="center">

ਮੇਰਿਆ ਵੇ ਮਾਹੀਆ, ਸਿਗਰਟ ਨਾ ਪੀਤਾ ਕਰ (dear beloved, do not smoke 'cigrat')

ਕਮਲਾ ਹੋ ਜਾਸੇਂ, ਬਹੁ ਯਾਦ ਨਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਕਰ (you will go mad, do not miss me so.)

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And,

<div align="center">

ਸਿਲਗਟ ਸਿਲਗਟ ਕਰਦੈਂ ਮੁੰਡਿਆ ('cilgat', 'cilgat' you keep on saying)

ਇਹ ਸਿਲਗਟ ਦਾ ਕਾਰਾ (see what 'cilgat' has done)

ਬੁੱਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਤੂੰ ਲਿਸ਼ਕ ਗ੍ਰਮਾਂ ਲਈ   (you have lost the sheen of your lips)

ਦੰਦਾਂ ਦਾ ਚਮਕਾਰਾ (and the shine of your teeth)

ਤੇਰੀ ਸਿਲਗਟ ਨੇ (your 'cilgat')

ਘਰ ਤਾਂ ਫੂੰਕ ਤਾ ਸਾਰਾ | (has burnt the whole household)

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The inclusion of cigarette obviously tells of the stronghold of tobacco consumption method introduced by the British. The dialect influenced articulation of "cigarette" is interiorizing of the foreign language and accommodation of foreign man.

The trope of "ਜਾਕਟ ਲਿਆ ਮਿੱਤਰਾ / ਮੈਂ ਕੁੜਤੀ ਹੇਠ ਦੀ ਪਾਮਾਂ" (ਸਿੰਧ) (get me jacket, I will wear it over my *kurti*) narrates the magnificent tale of husband going to the urban centers *"shehar"* and getting the English piece

of clothing. In various languages and dialects of Punjabi *Shehar* had acquired a very close meaning to bazaar. One interesting lexical substitution in seen in a song:

ਨੀ ਰਿੰਗ ਵਾਲੀਏ (The one who is wearing a ring)

ਨੀ ਸਟੱਡ ਵਾਲੀਏ (The one who is wearing a stud)

ਤੈਨੂੰ ਨੱਚਣਾ ਨਾ ਆਵੇ (you do not know how to dance)

ਭੈੜੇ ਕੱਦ ਵਾਲੀਏ …. (the one short in height)

The ring and stud are addition and substitution to traditional ornaments that find place and mention in folksongs. *Mashli, Banka, kaante* or as in the song "ਸੁਣ ਨੀ ਕੁੜੀਏ ਕੰਠੀ ਆਲੀਏ/ ਕੰਠੀ ਨਾ ਚਮਕਾਈਏ…" which talks of *kanth* and the wearer who flaunts it. Punjabi woman's ornamentation was sacrificed after the coming of the British. The colonizers found Punjabi woman's face to be too-decked up and categorization of native ornamentation as barbaric lead to loss (and

substitution) of various face ornaments to anglicized ornamentation.

Beyond clothing and altering identities there can be seen emerging modernity which rests completely on urbanity induced by the Industrial revolution of the west. A Jhangi folksong rests on description of the car – its exterior, interior and prestige attached with ownership.

ਮੇਰੇ ਮਾਹੀ ਦੀ ਸੋਹਣੀ ਕਾਰ, (my beloved's magnificent car)

ਗਲਿਓਂ ਲੰਘ ਗਈ ਹੈ (just passed from the street)

ਨਹੀਂ ਰੋਕੀ ਨਾਜਣ ਯਾਰ (my proud beloved did not stop the car)

ਗਲਿਓਂ ਲੰਘ ਗਈ ਹੈ (it just passed from the street)

ਤੇਰੀ ਕਾਰ ਦਾ ਰੰਗ ਨਸਵਾਰੀ (your car is brown in colour)

ਪਈ ਵਹਿੰਦੀ ਖ਼ਲਕਤ ਸਾਰੀ (There is crowd gathered to see your car)

ਮੇਰੀ ਮਾਹੀ ਦੀ … (my beloved's car…)

ਤੇਰੀ ਕਾਰ ਦੀਆਂ ਸੋਹਣੀਆਂ ਸੀਟਾਂ (your car has beautiful seats)

ਮੈਂ ਮਲਿਆਂ ਢੋਲ ਮਸੀਤਾਂ (I went to the mosque to wish for your success)

ਮੇਰੇ ਮਾਹੀ ਦੀ …

The song goes on to praise the headlights, the noise of engine and mere existence of the motorcar. Modern technology also participates in the songs through images of bulbs, tube lights etc. but charisma attached to hotels, roads, cinema and enthusiasm to experience the cityscape is almost phenomenal. The song "ਪੱਕਿਆਂ ਸੜਕਾਂ ਝੂਠਾ ਲੈਣਾ ਕੋਚਾਂ ਦਾ / ਬੰਦਰਾਂ ਤੇਰੀਆਂ ਵੇ ਮਿਹਣਾ ਸਾਰੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਦਾ… " (Concrete roads and riding the

train coaches / you hate me as much as the world detests me) describes the zeal to enjoy the roads and trains of the city. To seal it all the famous clock tower(s) built by the British in almost all urban centers created by them completed the Urban landscape. A Jhangi folksong mentions Lyallpur in a way:

ਲਾਇਲਪੁਰ ਜਾਵਾਂ ਲੰਘਾਂ ਘੰਟੇ ਘਰ ਕੋਲੋਂ (I would go to Lyallpur and cross the clock tower)

ਢੋਲ ਖੜਾਇਆ ਪੁੱਛਣਾ ਪੈ ਗਿਆ ਹਰ ਕੋਲੋਂ… (beloved was waiting for me standing but I had to ask everybody for the directions.)

Clock tower(s) in these urban settlements are landmarks and commercial centers which remained a hegemonic presence in the British designed modernity. Architecture of Lyallpur was specifically intricate as the clock tower was center to eight bazaars starting from the tower. It would appropriately fall into the British pattern of urbanization that Rail bazaar starting from the tower

led straight to the station, another Kachaeri lane contained courts of Jhang, chiniot and other areas. Lastly in the words of a citizen of colonial Lyallpur all the narrations of folk songs come to life asserting that indeed folk songs are alternate reality to the colonial reality - an imagined reality to innate reality – and a sort of memoir of the folk. He says:

That was the unique thing about Lyallpur. Most of the settlers to this new township came from other older places like Jhang (my father's place),Sargodha (my mother's place) Multan, Shikarpur, etc., and were all educated, liberal, modern people. Like the new City of Lyallpur, which at that time was considered the most modern and planned township. And truly it was. I have no qualms in acknowledging the positive influence of British. (Sethi)

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