

EXPLORING FEMALE AGENCY IN *SUR SUHNI* AND *SUR MARUI* OF SHAH LATIF BHITTAI

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Abstract:

The study aims to learn about the role of female agency in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. Two Surs (Chapters) of Shah Latif Sur Suhni and Sur Marui from his Shah Jo Risalo will be investigated. Both the Surs offer extensive and deep perspectives on the picture of women and they demonstrate the women's independence on socio-cultural environment of the traditionally male dominated values in Sindh. The charismatic characters of Suhni and Marui are not only the characters of bravery, patriotism, resistance and resilience but they also defy conventional gender roles and exercise their agency and identity. Understanding these women through a close reading of Latif's poetry reveals how Latif transcends romanticism and depicts women's strength, courage, and female agency. This paper compares and analyzes these two Surs against the backdrop of indigenous poetic outlook and feminist theory, going beyond simply celebrating the spiritual and traditional aspects of love and devotion, and making a considered critique of society's restrictions and limitations on female autonomy. The study demonstrates Shah Latif's proper understanding of gender and his progressive vision and approach to women's agency and appropriate roles in society from Sur Suhni and Sur Marui.

Keywords: Shah Latif, Sur Suhni, Sur Marui, Female Agency, Feminism

Introduction

This research study aims to explore the representation of female agency in the verses of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai meticulously woven. Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai is one of most prominent poets philosophers of Sindh who in his magnum opus Shah Jo Risalo has sung the greatness of female characters and celebrated and started the way of Feminism in Sindh even before the first wave of feminism in the western academia. There are six female protagonists in his Risalo, representing and symbolizing love, patriotism, bravery, courage, determination, wit and strong will, as they are all included in their characteristics (Khamisani, 2012). Suhni is a symbol of courage and love and Marvi is a symbol of resistance and patriotism among his six heroines. Of the 30 Surs (Chapters) of Shah Jo Risalo, the two Surs selected in this study (Sur Suhni and Sur Marui) have emerged as the most important in Shah's expression of female agency, bravery, courage, resistance and challenge to the male dominated patriarchal norms. Through the lenses of Feminist Theory, this study explores the courage and resilience of Marui and Sasui as expressed by Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai in his poetry which was composed in 18th century but still hold fame and reverence in Sindhi literature.

Shah Latif has been called a great scholars, original thinker, astute observer, a holy mystic sent, a philosopher and above all an illustrious poet of multiple dimensions by Agha (2016) who was born in Hala Haveli of present day Sindh in 1689. In his commentary on Sur Suhni of Shah Latif Agha (2016), he discusses the poetical brilliance of Shah Latif as he uses the power of imagery and poetical devices to depict the difficulties of Suhni in reaching out to her beloved Mehar. Syed (1984) commends Marui for her patriotism and courage to stand firm to her soil and her people in spite of all that the world had to offer and takes the bold step of declining all the offers extended to her by Umar the then King of her area. Sur Suhni and Sur Marui are not merely the tales of romance but they are the narratives of disobedience against the dominance of brutalities in the society. Suphnia, seeking love, challenges the strictures of patriarchy which limit her desires and choices. The original text written in Sindhi by Shah Latif presented here along with English translation shows an unambiguous portrayal of control and power exercised by Suhni despite her realization of all the challenges, difficulties and the fatal consequences.

She exercises defiance and resilience against the patriarchal norms which controlled the bodies and emotions of women.

Likewise Marui also uses the defiance and resolve alike. Marui is abducted, imprisoned in the palace and does not enjoy these luxuries that the powerful King has bestowed on her and is steadfast and loyal to her homeland and her kin (Syed, 1984). This is her way of asserting her agency when she can, and of resisting the lure of money and remaining true to herself. The study aims to analyze the intricate dynamics of female empowerment and agency that Shah Latif Bhattai elucidates, in his poetry with reference to gender specific roles within socio-cultural and political backdrop of his time. This study uses a theoretical lens of Intersectional Feminism to critically examine the intersections of women's lives as they are negotiated in their experiences and practices, focusing on the intersections of race/ethnicity, gender and class. It thus offers a revisionist interpretation of these stories that questions the traditional interpretations.

The poetry of Shah Latif Bhattai beams with the cultural and social sharing in 18th century Sindh. But it transcends that age as well, through a delicate and nuanced portrait of female heroines who manage to escape from the matrix of what has been imposed upon them. The characters Suhni and Marui depicted on these Surs could be read as mythological or legendary characters and can even be approximated as symbolic characters. Both the characters abstract and sum up the ascending strength of woman in the act of doing things for themselves, despite the limitations of society.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in the fact that it contributes to the discussion on Feminist literary criticism in indigenous literature especially in the context of Sindh and South Asia. This research employs the Intersectional Feminist lens while analyzing Sur Suhni and Sur Marui of Shah Latif and thus infuses in these narratives the elements of female agency, autonomy and resistance along with their traditional celebrations of love and patriotism. This research breaks open much more expedient images of women in the literary canon, urging us to transcend easy models and to think about the relationships between different identities (such as race, or colonialism) as they are historically developed. This study also aims to highlight the continuity of Shah Latif Bhattai's poetic narrations with the present day feminist philosophy.

Literature Review

Shah Latif is the main pillar of Sindh literature and is considered the greatest poet of Sindhi language. His seminal work entitled as Shah Jo Risalo is full of thought provoking verses expressing human feelings and wisdom (Joyo, 2013). Academicians such as Schimmel (1976) and Baloch (1983) provide extensive and detailed information and full-biography of Shah Latif and the cultural and historical backgrounds of his poetry. But there is a lack of scholarship and enough research that exclusively deals with the feminist aspects of Latif's poetry. In Bhattai's poems, the ethical and spiritual aspect is analysed but no mention is made if his poetry contains the stories of the strong women with agency. This paper however aims to fill this gap by focusing on the feminist reading of Sur Suhni and Sur Marui. But Syed (1988) has conducted her PhD on the Feminist elements in the poetry of Shah Latif and says that instead of being traditional or conventional women, Shah Latif's heroines are the bravest symbols of the agency of women are who challenging the patriarchal notion.

The characters of Suhni and Marui have been studied in detail in various literary analyses, and their portrayal as symbols of love, loyalty, and spiritual devotion is emphasized. Readings of these Surs by Syed (1984) and Khuhro (2003) bring to focus the moral and spiritual values of these Surs. Furthermore, Khuhro 2003 gives a preliminary look to Bhattai's depiction of the female characters and argues that these characters refer to a defiant attitude towards the restrictions of the patriarchy.

Shaikh and Rubina (2021) in their study mentioned that feminism is described as a political, social and literary theory that discusses the relationship of men and women. It also promotes the cause of female voice in the field of Sindhi Literature.

Soomro (2019) describing Shah Latif as the greatest poet of Sindh writes that Latif infuses in his poetry human feelings and emotions and in his Sur Marui depicts the spirit of patriotism. In this Sur Latif describes Marui's love for her land and people and praises her strong will, determination and courage.

Memon (2001) in her book comments that Shah through his poetic excellence presents his female characters as the icons of courage and resilience. All of his leading female characters demonstrate female agency and challenge the norms of practice of their time. Marui is a true believer of patriotism, Suhni defies the norms of patriarchy, Sasui is a symbol of bravery, Nuri is a symbol of humility and Leila is the symbol of materialism.

Feminist literary criticism examines the male writers' depiction of women in their literature and traces the development in the depiction of women that supports, breaks down or conforms to the traditional conventions. Pivotal works such as *The Madwoman in the Attic* by Gilbert and Gubar (1979), and *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler (1990) have defined feminist modes of literary criticism focusing on how patriarchal narratives limit female characters.

Feminist writers like Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (1989) have emphasized that colonial/postcolonial discourses intervene in the depictions of women in literary works in the South Asian context. All these writings reveal the significance of these loci and attitudes in the socio-cultural and historical circumstances that shape those literary products.

These discussions have been extended by scholars such as Das and Menon (1999) who have explored the possibilities of a feminist retelling of the oral narratives, folklores, or epics of South Asia. They demand that female voices and perspectives are reintroduced and restored into play, in ways that result in more nuanced and complex appreciation of agency and resistance to be developed in the process.

This research uses an Intersectional Feminist lens, which is unique in its attempts to interpret the Sur Marui and Sur Suhni and analyze it with respect to the culture of Sindh. It explores how Bhattai's portrayal of these characters can be deemed as subverting and challenging factors in the conventional patriarchal norms.

Intersectional Feminism, by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) highlights the significance of comprehending how various aspects of identity and social hierarchy intersect to influence experiences of both oppressed and the privileged women. This study's focus will be largely facilitated by the lens of Intersectional Feminism, which considers the gender, social class, and cultural identities of Suhni and Marui to be at play in their representation and exercise of agency and action in the narratives.

The studies of culture, particularly around South Asian cultures, also include the study of the function of folklore and traditional stories as spaces of cultural memory and resistance. Can the Subaltern Speak? is an examination by academics like Spivak (1988) of how the speech of subordinate voices are exhibited or silenced in both colonial and indigenous accounts. This perspective is particularly relevant to understanding the meaning of resistance and autonomy within the stories of Suhni and Marui of the writer, Shah Latif, who may be viewed as a disenfranchised person in their socio-cultural context.

Research Methodology

This study follows the qualitative method of the research while using the close reading as technique of textual analysis. The research meticulously endeavours to scrutinize the primary texts of Sur Suhni and Sur Marui in Sindhi language collating with their English translation. The analysis will focus on characterization, narrative style and symbols and the themes of female agency used in the texts.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical approach used in this study is Intersectional Feminism, a term which was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectional Feminism looks at how other systems (race, gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) intersect with each other and how they produce certain forms of the discriminations that people face in the prejudiced and privileged parts of the society. The present study attempts to bring them to the fore in the context of their gender, cultural identity and socio-political status from the perspective of the author Shah Latif Bhattai in the context of Suhni and Marui. Thus the current study helps the readers to understand the impact of intersectionality on agency behaviors, decisions; as well representations of women within cultural and literary symbols.

Analysis and Discussion

Female Agency in Sur Marui

The fate is a formidable bondage as it can't be averted. Otherwise, who would have agreed and accepted to come and stay in this fortress? It is obvious that it was written in the preserved tablets (of Fate) that is why I have ended up here in this place. However, my mind and body nay, even my very breath, know no peace and tranquility without the herdsman and my kinsmen. They cannot be reconciled to anyone else except them. O King! Pray be kind to me so that I may see again and be united to my kith and kin (Shah Latif, Sur Marui, p.530)

At another place, Shah Latif says in the same Sur:

The desert women (of Thar) never put on the garments of silk. They feel comfortable in rough blankets, bearing prints of wax seal and in ordinary suits and the costly shawls can't please them. The rough items made of wool are more loved and appreciated by them than the brocade or silken cloth. O Soomra! I too like the rough blanket of my home more than the saffron coloured royal cloth which you offer to me. I feel ashamed to discard the legacy from my forefathers (Shah Latif, Sur Marui, p.545)

In these lines, Shah Latif depicts the strong message of Female agency and resistance on the part of Marui who exhibits greater love, respect and care for her people and their legacy. She dislikes and rejects the royal clothes made of silk and in comparison to them loves and prefers her rough and simple garments. In this exercise of agency Marui includes all her desert women ie the women of Thar from where did she belong. She has refused the king's offers and stands as a symbol of integrity, who refuses the social expectation. Marui shows us the group courage and agency of Sindhi women who are proponents of heritage and heritage assets. The rough blanket in place of the saffron cloth and royal gifts symbolizes her independence, defies the temptation of materialism, and celebrates her cultural heritage and legacy. Marui's resistance in this action is a testament to her love and remembrance of her childhood, and the sense of vividly rejecting the outside pressures.

In a simple blanket I was wedded to my beloved and on my wrist he tied a thread which is valuable like gold to me. O Soomra! Under these circumstances (when I am that much in love with my people and their belongings) how do you expect me to put on your silken royal garments? (Shah Latif, Sur Marui, p.546).

In these lines, Marui's dedication is evident to her cherished lover. The thread tied on her wrist is more valuable than gold bangles is what she is clear about. She loves her plain belongings more than any luxurious and soft cloths. In these lines, Shah Latif is affirming her disavowal of materialistic bonds and her embrace of emotional and spiritual connections. This is a statement of the agency of the female, who is actively rejecting society's superficial values and values, as she chooses to respect her personal associations and loyalty to her land and people. Her refusal of the silk dress represents a rejection of the outside authorities to give her an

identity based on outer features. This also means that she has her own independence and commitment to what is important to her in her life.

My relatives don't barter kinsmen for gold, it is not conventional with them. I would not commit anything, which is odious to these conventions of my people for the sake of my liberty, while I am incarcerated here in Umerkot. Since I love my humble sheds and huts, I would not exchange them with the lofty royal buildings (Shah Latif, Sur Marui, p.546).

In this stanza from Sur Marui (Marui's poem) by Shah Latif, Marui affirms her unwavering loyalty to the values and traditions of her community. She spurns all the ideas of swapping her family or tradition for money or self-interest. Despite being imprisoned in Umerkot, Marui never turns a blind eye to her principles even to free herself from the chains. In this, she demonstrates her profound belongingness to her people, her land and shows considerable resistance to external pressure. Her affection for the simple little house, in spite of the lure of the King's wealth, represents her autonomy in her choices of what is important: her roots, her identity and her integrity. In this case, the gesture of female resistance is a strong one, with Marui asserting her independence with a focus on her cultural and familial ties that she values more highly than the power or the external luxury.

We wear black artificial and mock bangles (often of the threads), because to us gold is a precursor of grief. In the company of friends, poverty is always welcome. In fact I (Marui) relish the consequential starvation as something pleasant (Shah Latif, Sur Marui, p.546).

On the lines of Sur Marui, Marui has rejected material wealth by wearing black imitation bangles instead of gold bangles. She also connects gold with sadness and sadness. This decision of Marui reflects her conscious embrace of simplicity and poverty of her people. This further exemplifies Marui's defiance of the social norms, as she enjoys and derives meaning from enduring hardships. This is one way of demonstrating female agency, as Marui has decided that her relationships and emotional satisfaction are more worthwhile than her possessions. She also uses her independence to set her own values, and to defy pressure to conform to society's norms.

Oh Umar! How can persons with imperfections wear white clothes, particularly when their male members in the desert (Thar) face taunts and derisions? O Soomra! How can they be deemed chaste who show disloyalty to their consorts? (Shah Latif, Sur Marui, p.547).

In these lines from Sur Marui Marui asks: What of those who look good, but are tainted in their hearts? Their misdeed is to be disloyal. The following couplets are a criticism of people who pretend something is innocent while it is not, and they are tricking their own family. They indulge in this hypocrisy because they are unable face the societal judgments and pressures. Through these lines Marui invokes the female agency and resistance as she boldly challenges the societal norms and pressures. Marui's action of exposing and condemning this hypocrisy is a rejection of the superficial values of the society. This stance of Marui empowers women to reject false pretenses of the society.

(In the Palace) How can I sleep in quilts when my consort lives in wilderness and in hardships? Fie on your syrup and sweet drinks! O Soomra! I would rather prefer thirst in the company of my relatives (Shah Latif, Sur Marui, p.547).

In these lines, Marui while exercising her agency, rejects the luxuries and comforts of the King Omar offered to her and she makes it clear that for her the wilderness of desert, the poverty of her people and ways of her forefathers are more dear and respectable/ acceptable to her.

If I die here while longing for my native land, and while remembering it, O Soomra! King kindly allow that my grave be made near to those of my kinsmen. Let the incense of creepers of my parental place be offered at the time and place of my funeral and burial.

If my corpse is transported to Malir, I would get re-enlivened after death (Shah Latif, Sur Marui, p.561).

This verse in Sur Marui depicts Marui with this intense desire to go back home even after her death. She implores Umar, the Soomra King that she be buried near her kinsmen so that the incense from her native land may offer fragrance to her burial place. This signifies a strong attachment of Marui to her cultural and familial identity. Both lines have significant female agency and resistance from Marui. The strong yearning of Marui to be close to her land and her people is a form of resistance to those who want to separate her from her land and people. So she keeps her identity and she doesn't let external conditions and social norms restrict her.

Well spent were the days that I passed in detention. During that period, I wept profusely on the mansion-roof. As I yearned for union with the beloved, my materialist thoughts were purged in the wake thereof. My love purified and cleansed the chains of materialism that I was imprisoned with (Shah Latif, Sur Marui, p. 583).

These lines are Marui talking about her courage and strength that she was not afraid of being imprisoned and being taken captive, but on the contrary, she talks of those days as her best days. Determination and strength she added, she did not fall to the temptation of royal goodies and gifts but rather was attached with her people, her land. It is clear that even captivity and imprisonment could not bring him down or make him surrender before the strong norms.

I claim the dwellers of the desert as mine, whatever and whoever they are,. My friends in Malir (My native land) now pick gourds in plenty. At present my only solicitude is "when would you pull down this fortress?" (Shah Latif, Sur Marui, p.586).

Marui's attachment to her people is undeniable, meaning that she is very attached to her people and has a high level of loyalty to them. She wishes for the fortress in which she was held captive to be pulled down and her desire for its destruction can be interpreted as her wish for liberation even through death. These lines demonstrate female agency and resistance in a number of ways. First, Marui's strong assertion about her rights of belonging to and standing with her family members in the desert, indicates that she has chosen to belong to and stand by her people. She also offers resistance which is evident in her rejection of the life imposed on her. She longs for the time when this "prison" will end, resists those who would control or define her, asserts her autonomy over her life and her identity—whether that be by wishing for her death.

In the following stanza from Sur Marui Marui shows her agency and strength, and her determination. She makes it clear that she will never perform any unholy act to defame her people even though she face any terrible torture.

Even if you were to tear off my skin and apply salt to my limbs, I shall not succumb to you. In fact such an unworthy act has never been even performed by any of my family members. So long there do I live, I shall not forsake my love for the herdsman or disown them (Shah Latif, Sur Marui, p.588).

Female Agency in Sur Suhni

Suhni is another courageous and brave heroine of Shah Latif who freely exercises her agency and boldly defy the societal norms. She subverts and challenges the taboos patriarchal conventions. For the sake of her beloved Mehar, she swims across the river and neither fears the vortex, eddies and cold currents nor she worries about the social constraints and restrictions imposed upon women.

There is nothing more reliable than a heart teeming with love on a celestial journey. The pseudo lovers merely stand on the bank of river and look for a raft. The true lovers who swim without a raft, find the river merely a small stream. Love and yearning for the

beloved are the sure raft for lovers like Suhni. Eddies don't deter those who remember the beloved Mehar (Shah Latif, Sur Suhni, p.965).

These verses from *Sur Suhni* emphasize the power of genuine love and devotion, particularly in the face of challenges. Suhni's case, as presented in these verses, is a powerful example of female agency. Despite the risks, challenges and societal constraints, she chooses to cross the river meet her beloved. Suhni's decision to swim across the river without external aid characterizes her autonomy and active agency. She does not rely on others but trusts in her love and internal strength to guide her. These lines highlight the courage and resilience that Suhni embodies. Her readiness to face the challenges reflects her empowerment and her determination to live her life on her terms. Thus she defies the traditional gender roles and becomes an active advocate and champion of female agency.

Verily, it is the job for those keen on achieving a particular end, fearlessly enter the deep waters. Dam, (the husband of Suhni) chided and taunted her many times a day (for her amour). On the altar of love she had sacrificed her intellect, discretion and shyness (Shah Latif, Sur Suhni, p.972).

In these verses on Sur Suhni, the intensity of commitment and courage is discussed when dealing with social pressures, internal conflicts and difficulties. The narrative of Suhni is a strong metaphor for the struggle between the expectations of society and the desires of individuals, especially women, in terms of agency.

Suhni's determination and courage, as reflected in these verses, is a powerful description of female agency. Her husband Dam, a symbol and a challenge to her love, is a pressure in her life, but she still chooses to follow her love, despite the many pressures. She does so at the expense of going against the grain of society and giving up upon her own qualities which are held valuable in women of the eastern societies. The readiness to "precipitately enter deep waters" represents Suhni's rejection of the constraining possibilities of society. She takes the liberty to seek her love Mehar, thereby rejecting the roles that she ought to be playing as a wife, thus showing her autonomy.

On an extremely cold nights while rain heavily pours, Suhni enters the fast flowing river. Let us go and enquire her about her courage as she knows well about love. The fact is that she is constantly day and night absorbed in remembering her beloved (Shah Latif, Sur Suhni, p.975).

Suhni is empowered and she takes action, sacrificing her 'intelligence, discretion and shyness' is a verse that suggests that she is willing to do so. Her husband's taunting is a reflection on the patriarchal culture of control over women's bodies and decisions in Eastern cultures. Although Suhni is reprimanded and chided every day, she resists, illustrating her strength and will to live a dignified life. In Shah Latif's rendition, Suhni becomes a character with a tremendous agency. She may be breaking with conventional ideas of female virtue and propriety, and declaring her right to love and to assert herself even when facing external and internal opposition.

The bravery, courage and strength of Suhni who plunges into the deep waters on the cold frosty nights is reflected in this stanza. She is not afraid of the nature's challenges and pursues her beloved and destination with diligence and sincerity.

The next two stanzas are the conversations between the poet and Suhni. In the first stanza Latif asks her that while she is in love with Mehar, why she don't stay with him. Why does she make it to go across the river every night? In response, Suhni makes an excellent comment, which is a sign of her female agency, self-respect and dignity.

Shah asks Suhni:

O Suhni! Let you end your life at Mehar's. You should under no circumstances withdraw or return from him. Do not show to Dam adornments you have done for Sahar (Shah Latif, Sur Suhni, p.1016).

Suhni replies:

If only Mehar were to tell me once "O Suhni! Do not go back (to Dam)", I would stay at my friend's abode for (the rest of) my life. I would not put on again the dyed (or glamorous) apparel (Shah Latif, Sur Suhni, p.1017).

Here in this reply, Suhni shows her heartfelt longing for her beloved Mehar. She displays her willingness to give up her social duties and be with him, but only if it's Mehar's request. It is obvious that she would not stay with Mehar if he were not asked by her. In this case as a conscious, well aware and self-esteemed woman she exercises her agency and even shows her ego. These verses depict Suhni's dilemma of what she must do for society and what she wants to do for herself. She is willing to stay with Mehar but condition is that Mehar asks her so. On the other hand she also subtly expresses her readiness to discard her married life and social constraints. Both the cases underscore her yearning for autonomy and self-determination. Suhni's willingness to abandon her husband when he asks her to, reveals her agency with regards to her life choices. While constrained by society and marital responsibilities, she imagines breaking free from all these limitations to exercise her agency.

Shah Latif warns Suhni:

O Suhni! Enter not into the river tonight as it is swollen due to high flood. On a dark night what business have you with eddies? Beware! Lest Dam (Your husband) may awake and enquire about your whereabouts from the neighboring women (Shah Latif, Sur Suhni, p.1024).

Suhni as an icon of female agency replies the poet in this way:

Even if Dam (my husband) were to enquire from my neighboring women, what will he do to me? Those who have a purpose to serve, have interest in eddies on even dark night. For my beloved Mehar, I'll sacrifice my bones and even this skin (Shah Latif, Sur Suhni, p.1024).

This time, the poet gives another dialogue with Suhni. In this dialogue poet face the challenges and consequences of breaking the norms and conventions of the society and family before Suhni. In her response, Suhni asserts her female agency and informs us of all the dangers, threats and consequences. But she will do everything in her power to follow her passion. This shows that Suhni didn't have a lack of knowledge and she was not random impulsive in her choices. She was a calculating, aware and ready to go to any lengths character.

In these lines Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai captures Suhni's fearless resolve and strong commitment to her love for Mehar. She even gets ready to subvert and thwart all the societal and internal challenges she faces. Her response reflects her defiance of social norms and her willingness to make extreme sacrifices. These lines vividly illustrate Suhni's profound sense of agency. She takes her own decisions and is not afraid of any consequences. She utters her courage and clearly tells that for the sake of her beloved and her own life she can defy the societal norms

and all the prevailing taboos. Suhni's willingness to face the "eddies on a dark night" denotes her courage and determination to pursue her love, even in the face of danger. This demonstrates her strong sense of agency, as she actively chooses to confront challenges rather than be passively controlled by circumstances.

In the portrayal of Shah Latif, Suhni emerges as a symbol of female agency, embodying strength, courage, and independence. Through her actions, she challenges the traditional gender roles and societal expectations. This demonstrates the power of love to inspire women to take control of their own destinies.

Conclusion

This study offers a complete picture of the agency of the female character in these iconic Surs and contextualises it with the broader framework of the Sindhi literature and cultural history. The use of Intersectional Feminist lens in this study allows for a glimpse into the complexities of women's representation as those who defy and defy against the limitations imposed by patriarchal society. Suhni and Marui are icons of agency for the women, and defy the reductionist and simplistic view of their agency. In the struggle for love, both Suhni and Marui defy social norms and both act with a strong sense of personal integrity and autonomy in their roles as women, challenging traditional male roles.

The study bears witness to the intersecting identities of the two heroines – Suhni and Marui – of their social class, gender and culture and how this influences their experiences and actions. Through the analysis it is found that agency is not only a reaction to gender oppression, but also affected by the cultural and socio-political surrounding of these women characters. The cultural symbolism is much emphasized in the verses of Sur Suhni and Sur Marui, as these verses are beyond the personal stories and represent the cultural values. These women are presented as symbols of love, loyalty and resistance, a criticism of the social norms of Latif's time. They also provide an evergreen reflection of the universal quest for women's independence even today. The present study is also a part of the continuous indigenous endeavour of the reinterpretation of our classical texts from the feminist perspective. This kind of reading of Shah Latif's poetry challenges the conventional reading of his poetry which has neglected the feminist potential of the verses. It proves how the poetry of Latif can be retrieved as the space for women empowerment.

To summarise the findings of this study, Sur Suhni and Sur Marui are not simply romantic allegories, but powerful narratives which unearth the complexities of female agency in a male dominated society. The research highlights the impact of Latif's poetry, which continues to resonate and challenge the notions of gender, culture, and resistance in the context of Sindhi literature and society.

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