

Representation of Women in Pakistani Folk Tales: A Feministic Perspective



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Abstract: *The present research paper discusses and analyzes the modules of humanity and its ethos. This study investigated human instincts like myths, cultures, passions and hybridization from a cultural and feministic paradigm. In this study, the terminology "feminism" is used to describe civilization in its entirety. Culture is important aspect of human society. It is diverse and heterogeneous element of human lives. Gender roles and culture are closely related, such as cultural norms, values shape traditions and expectations. This research has significant goals, all of which are based on the feministic and cultural viewpoint. The first goal is to comprehend the humanistic emotions and fusion of cultures. The second goal is to observe the universe through the eyes of feminism, and the third goal is to investigate multiculturalism and transculturation in folk tales like Heer Ranjha, Sassi Punnu, Mirza Sahiban and Sohni Mahiwal. The qualitative method is chosen for this research to acquire secondary information from associated domains to fulfill these goals. This study uses three methods to do the investigation. The first step in this research is to read the stories closely to understand the direction of feminism and culture. The analysis of terminologies involved in feminism and their connections to humanity, and cultural modification is the second step. The study of final phase is to write findings, which include a review of the interpretation. This research yielded three conclusions. To begin with the women recognition in different culture. The secondary is about sacrifices, emotions, financial toxicity and societal conflicts faced by female characters present in story. Finally, this research shows that it is a prerequisite of women to take responsibility for matters that men do not. Additionally, girls and women are subjected to higher strain. They are not allowed to take their decisions by their own.*

Keywords: Bourgeois feminism; Class struggle; Gender roles; Ethos; Emancipation

Introduction

Folktales, also known as traditional narratives, are fables that are mostly transmitted orally across decades. Folktales are meant to both inform and amuse. They frequently discuss virtue against wickedness and impart valuable messages. Fairy stories, fables, mischievous

narratives, and representations are the four main categories of folktales. The four categories frequently coincide. Folktales are narratives that have been passed to generations through the ages, sometimes for millennia. Originally, they were imparted verbally rather than in writing. Folktales converse in common vernacular. They were meant for regular folks. A dynamic

collection of societal manifestations, folklore has proven to be a rich source for investigating gendered views. Societies use it as an opportunity for depicting their standards, positions and gendered conventions, and it gives sociologists important perspective into the fundamental social frameworks of both historical and modern cultures (Dundes, 1980).

Folklore, which has its roots in customs and traditional conventions, typically reflects how women are treated in society. There are several ways to determine this hierarchy, notably but not restricted. They frequently highlight social norms by portraying male heroes as heroic explorers and female characters as caring individuals or helpers in need. Men are emphasized in aggressive, authoritative positions, while women are frequently portrayed in stereotypically feminine characters. These frequently feature biased involvement, highlighting the distinctions and roles assigned to each sex (Glassie, 1995). The colorful and varied tradition of Punjab, a place renowned for its abundant history and zeal for adventure. It is a magical fusion of customs, ceremonies, and tales. The traditional stories of Punjabi culture hold great relevance when exploring its fundamental aspects. These stories are more than just stories; they are priceless gems that provide deep glimpses into Punjab's spirit. These legends are discussed and appreciated through the generations. They provide an insight into the customs, attitudes, and convictions of the Punjabi community (Basit, 2023).

The description of male and female gender in the legendary tales is also an umbrella issue across social, psychological, emotional, and financial perspectives. The condition in which one is male or female is the definition of gender. Rather than biological distinctions, this divide is founded on social and cultural ones. The perspective of a man or a woman in the community is hence known as gender ideology or gender role. According to Karoska (2007), beliefs on the proper position, duty, and privileges of men and women in a community are referred to as gender role ideology and gender identity. Numerous academics have been conducting study in this area for the past few generations. Their primary

goal is to draw attention to the inequality and gender inequalities that are present throughout human literary and oral traditions. According to Meis (2007), "sexual orientation status maturation and indoctrination" are significantly impacted by the uneven depiction of gender roles and beliefs in literature. According to conventional gender roles ideals, men should be the earners and women should take care of the home and family (Legge & Misra, 1998). Women were obliged to act in ways that were required of them—loyalty, subservience, and obedience (ONeill, 2012). According to Niekerk (2009), a nice woman in classic fairy tales is one who submits to her hero and waits for him to save her, whereas a powerful woman is frequently shown as a hideous and wicked character.

However, women have been aware of their rights, and how to raise their voices to protect those rights since 1980s. These days, women are speaking up about gender issues and advocating for their rights. In a story, a clever ploy and intelligence have taught the female character, Shahrezade, to struggle for the recognition of women's fundamental rights. Her husband's perception of women has been altered; he used to think of them as impure and impious. In informal settings, humans used narratives to share their expertise and insights. As humans have evolved the ability to speak, they have begun to construct narratives. As human affairs are full of tensions, fairy tales frequently start with dispute. Through interaction, man attempts to find solutions to his contradictory needs and issues (Zipes, 2011). It is common knowledge that fairy tales are stories with elves, beasts, occult practices monarchs, queens, supernatural, and entrancing spells. A story that offers what someone has wished for and dreamed for is called a fairy tale, according to Sawyer (2011). The way gender ideology is portrayed in children's books and fairytales has grown in importance. According to feminists, fairytales generate gender portrayal through a "dominant rhetoric" (Bacchillega, 1999).

The framework of a community is significantly gender-specific, which means that the "natural" distinction between male and female, and the

assignment of different characteristics to each, underpins organizational frameworks ranging from the family to the occupational framework, the split between public and private, utilization of authority, and so on. Patriarchy refers to a collection of institutional institutions (such as property rights, access to positions of authority, and income sources) that are predicated on the notion that men and women are inherently different and unequal.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

The current study examines the way in which patriarchal gender roles are both upheld and to challenge by folktales, with a focus on the representation of female protagonists. It exposes latent narratives of female incarnation, gender norms, and class struggle interaction viewed through a feminist perspective. The representation of female characters like Heer, Sahiban, Sassi and Sohni from distinct folktales explores theme of love, role of women in society, power and control, and concept of ethos through feminist critique.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1- How do the Pakistani folk tales portray power dynamics and social hierarchy, and what message do they convey about social status and class?
- 2- What role do female characters play in shaping social changes in folktales like Heer Ranjha, Sassi Punnu, Mirza Sahiban and Sohni Mahiwal?
- 3- How do the female folktale protagonists like Heer and Sohni reconcile the limitations of their social and ethnic circumstances with their identities and desires?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The present research has significant role in cultural studies, education and understanding of gender and power dynamics. The following study analyzes female characters, which challenges dominant patriarchal norms and stereotypes, also highlighting female agency, resistance, empowerment in folktales. It also offers intersectional perspective on gender,

culture and power. Gender is seen to be the core element that drives human understanding, and dominance is thought to be the greatest essential component behind human conduct. Power and gender are closely linked and cause disparities in society. According to the theory of gender and power, culture and learning over an extended period create gender disparity.

2. Literature Review

Many authors and academics have explored the issue of love using gender-specific ideologies as the foundation for their writings. Butler (2007) rejects the conventional understanding of patriarchy and their sexual orientation, viewing it as a generic term encompassing a collection of philosophies or initiatives to secure social, cultural, and political privileges that are equitable for women. She opposes conventional classifications of men and women, viewing gendered being a variable that changes and adapts according on the capacities that are played. According to Tannen (1994), gender variations are explanatory experiences intended to improve psychological bonding. Her research indicates that American women are more explicit than males, while men are more subservient due to fragility or an abundance of assurance. Working from a feminist viewpoint, Lazar (2007) investigated sexual orientation, authority, and ideology in discussion, viewing it through the prism of disparity and how to manifests itself in various organizational, societal, and spatial settings. Aside from this, she saw gender as an intellectual construct that revolves around dominance and subjugation that separates individuals into two categories: men and women. By placing every protagonist in connection to the other characters and using feminism and the Oedipus complex as lenses, Bachtarzi (2010) examines human relations in Lawrence's *"Sons and Lovers"* to document her stance toward the reasons why interactions between individuals' breakdown. Cherland (2008) employs a feminist poststructuralist approach to examine gender dynamics in the Harry Potter series.

According to Mills (1995), men and women are intellectually positioned in socio-cultural situations by the language patterns used to

demonstrate relationships of authority and dogma. They could be limited to a specific socioeconomic context or they might relate to tackle worldwide and broad issues (Mehboob, 2015). Feminist narrative analysis has emerged as a key analytical technique for feminist literature. These pieces of literature have inspired this investigation to illuminate the feminist perspective in the folktale *Heer Ranjha* and have substantially contributed to its comprehension of it. Various academics have approached traditional tales from different perspectives, and the gender-specific orientation used in this investigation is one of those aspects. A few fundamental tenets of feminism theory will be examined in the study, such as the interactions of power prevailing between men and women, their respective positions, and the positions that they play simultaneously. By adding investigations of the elements, this research offers perceptive consequences for these feminism-based characteristics.

According to Bettelheing (1976), some individuals believe that telling children fairy tales is not a good idea because they do not portray a "truthful" depiction of society. However, fairy tales are thought to be the truest and clearest manifestation of the communal subliminal psychological procedure, according to Louise (1996). Youngsters learn about social norms of their environment through reading fairytales. Since fairy tales can also be viewed as a "child's first contact to gender identity," it is important to represent the characters with realism (Kukendal & Sturm, 2007). More than any other lesson, fairy tales have a profound psychological impact on children. According to Kukendal and Sturm (2007), a straightforward gender role reversal in a fairy tale will result in a "fractured fairy tale" rather than a feminist one. Therefore, it is imperative that the gender be portrayed positively. A story that is genuinely feminist is one in which the protagonist is strong regardless of gender. Gender ideology can be effectively understood through literature. Since the 20th century, numerous researchers have focused on how gender roles are portrayed in literature. It has significantly altered the conventional and stereotyped ways of seeing

things in many different countries. These stereotypes regarding gender roles and the equality of women persist in many developing nations. Literature, according to Tsao (2008), is one of the strongholds that perpetuates gender misconceptions," greatly influencing how children form their identities and behave.

Feminism is a movement that calls for women to have equal rights. It seeks to recognize women as equal and creative providers of values. Furthermore, some radical feminists claim that gynocriticism is appropriate because female writers cannot be fairly assessed by male critics. Modern Western writers like Virginia Woolf and Henrik Johan Ibsen helped bring the feminist movement even more attention. Two of the earliest works to establish a feminist consciousness were Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) and Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1953) contributed to this awareness, and other notable women writers who explored new avenues for feminism including Julia Kristeva, and Helene Cixous.

Gender is a topic that crosses over into society, law, politics, and culture, and it is commonly discussed in conjunction with other characteristics of identity and social status, such as class, ethnicity, age, and physical ability. Gender is an essential topic in a variety of social and political disputes, and its impact varies depending on the cultural setting. Gender is a 'heavy' word: politicians and public people frequently use it negatively, such as when alluding to 'gender police' or beliefs that 'threaten young'. These are some examples of how gender can be misinterpreted and politicized. Gender expression can fluctuate from day to day or in different contexts, but most people can pinpoint a range on the scale where they feel most at ease. Some people are more open to different forms of gender expression than others are. Gender may appear to be a complex concept, but if the biological determinism that underpins ordinary thinking about distinctions between men and women is addressed, gender becomes easier to understand.

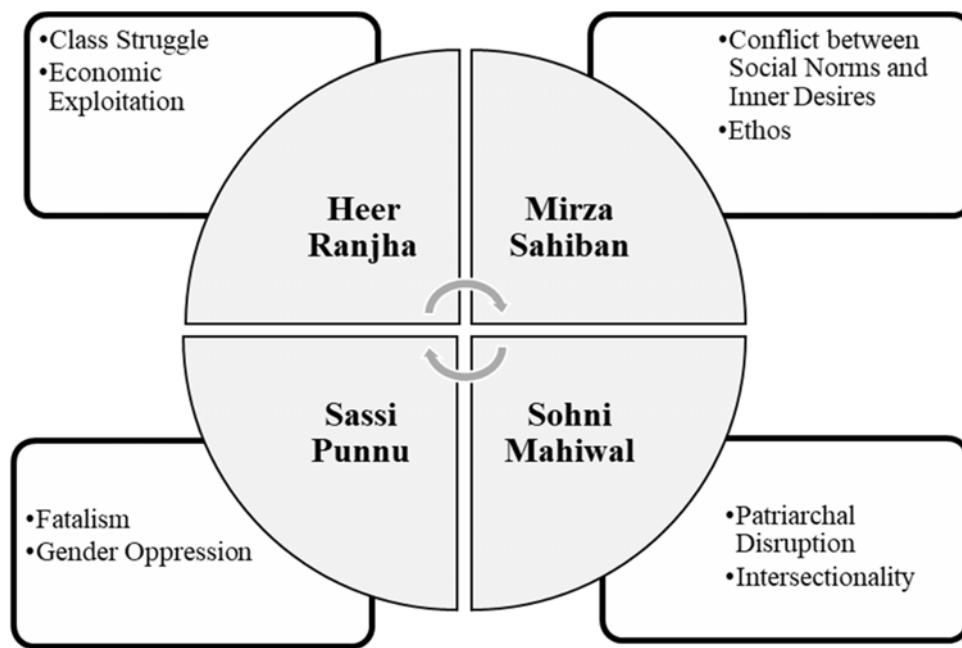


Figure 1. Gender themes

Understanding that Marx saw the main socioeconomic groups as the driving force behind shifts in the framework of society and how to organize itself in connection to these groups is crucial. There was not agreement or balance in his premises. Within the framework of the world, struggle and divisions were not aberrant features; rather, they were essential components upholding the framework of society. The very foundation was a product of and a component of the class conflict. His perspective on modern (nineteenth-century) society was conflicted. Marx's notion of class is essential to comprehending him. A class is identified by its asset status. A person who possesses such ownership has the authority to keep others off the property or utilize it for their own needs. Therefore, property, not rank or revenue, determines class (Marx, 1847).

Transmission as well as consumption, which in turn eventually replicate social relationships of production, dictate these. Bourgeois property defines the societal framework for capitalist economy. Thus, class is a regulated and philosophical link between people. Karl Marx is credited with developing the most important theory of exploitation in history. According to Marx, laborers in a capitalist system are

victimized when they must exchange their time and effort for a price below the full worth of the goods they generate. Nevertheless, according to Marx, exploitation was a feature of all socioeconomic society, not only capitalism. In fact, the most obvious example of the exploitative character of class relations is seen in traditional cultures rather than capitalism.

Class desire is the catalyst behind the transformation of dormant social solidarity into a class struggle. People develop comparable behaviors because of similar class circumstances. They grow to rely on one another, form a community, and have common interests connected to a profit or wage. Classes arise from this shared interest, and people become members of a class only when their interests force them to fight against members of the opposing class (Zwolinski, 2012). Under feudalism, enslaved employ a portion of their work force for the feudal lord's gain and a portion for their own. On the other hand, laborers under slavery seem to work solely for the advantage of their owners, even when in practice some of their labor is used to support themselves. Additionally, it appears that under capitalism, employees only work for their own gain, giving their time to capitalists as independent, autonomous agents (Cohen, 1978). The term "economic exploitation" describes the

practice of using people's labor or resources for profit-maximizing purposes without offering them just remuneration or benefits. When colonizers take resources from colonized areas while paying poor salaries and abusing native labor, this can happen in colonial circumstances (Ferguson, 2018).

A prominent subject of Mansfield's writings is the female identity and how it was realized in early 20th-century society. Her protagonists, who are mostly female, are helpless against an oppressive society that forbids them from being who they really are and forces them to conform to predetermined gendered norms. Mansfield can dive deeply into the lives of her female protagonists, revealing the internal conflicts and problems women confront as they traverse the complexity of gender roles and societal standards. Women's lives are significantly shaped by the interplay of socioeconomic status, gender, and financial structures, as is clear when Mansfield's writings are examined through the prism of Marxist feminist literary theory. This interpretive paradigm facilitates an increased awareness of the ways in which Mansfield's writings portray the class struggle and authoritarian relations between the ruling class and the working class, while also challenging the fundamental principles of capitalism and patriarchal dominance frameworks. Furthermore, the Marxist viewpoint offers a useful instrument for analyzing the ways in which Mansfield's writings portray the mistreatment of women and the ways in which class and gender disparities feed off one another through the intersection of repressive societal standards and powerful mechanisms (Ullah, Saif & Alam, 2023).

Culture is the way that people live their lives, and it is made up of both material and ideological elements. Culture is developed from rigid thought and behavioral patterns, such as norms, values, beliefs, and the laws governing politics, the economy, and so forth. Culture is transmitted orally and through learning from one generation to the next; it is not inherited biologically (Decorse & Raymond, 1992). Every culture is unique and has its own set of morals. It emerged from the multitude of individuals

who resided there and shared their possessions and feelings, and not from a single man (Maswan, 1977). A culture is an amalgam of customs, beliefs, and values passed down orally from one era to the next. One of the first artistic traditions in every civilization is oral tradition, which spreads rules, values, and beliefs via conversation. Oral communication is preferred by two thirds of the world's population (Kalim, 1978). Each culture has its own set of customs and values, and Pakistani culture is a blend of many cultures. It is greatly influenced by the cultures of its surrounding regions, which include India, the Arab World, Iran, and Central Asia. Pakistan has a deep historical and cultural heritage. The Indus civilization, which was a synthesis of Islamic, Persian, and Indo-Greek cultures, originated in what is now Pakistan. All these cultures have elements in Pakistani folklore. British rural communities in Pakistan were the ones who initially gathered and began the collection of folklore (Report of SARRC Tourism of Pakistan, 2010). Due to cultural differences, languages other than English are spoken in Pakistan. Every language used in Pakistan has its own distinctive collection of proverbs, stories, poetry, and songs that are connected to the country's cultural norms and values (Ultey, 1968).

According to this line of reasoning, humanity's autonomy is eliminated by Marxism. Marxism is portrayed as a mechanistic, emotionless ideology that does not recognize awareness or individuality. Rather, people are only captives of the inflexible rules of fate. These comments expose a partiality and an incapacity to comprehend that contradictions complement one another rather than existing in isolation. The critics of Marxism believe that fate is either entirely structured (as it appears that Marxists believe) or utterly arbitrary and entirely unknown. There is a book in which each decade is granted absolute liberty. There are two points of perspective that are put forward: voluntarism on the one hand, and fatalism on the other. Both are incorrect. In the 18th century, the concept of absolute determinism, sometimes known as fatalism, emerged. It was a philosophical advance at the time, a component of an effort to comprehend

society through science (Morley, 2023).

Like attempting to split the two halves of a single coin, these opposing edges have been cleaved and carried to an extent. Materialists are Marxists. As living creatures, people represent their tangible realities through their concepts. In the end, their aspirations and feelings stem from their financial requirements. Marx, who is renowned for asserting that "The past does nothing at all, it contains no enormous resources, and it engages no conflicts," criticized this mistake (Morley, 2023). History is not, in a sense, an individual split, utilizing man to attain its own goals; history is nothing more than the process of man achieving his goals. It is man, actual, live man, who does all that, who acquires and battles. Postmodernists perceive Marxism as racist or fascist. They contend that because western civilization is more developed than others. It means that the west ethically preferable to other societies and has the authority to rule over others. Nevertheless, Marxists are fierce opponents of imperialism. This accurately captures the understanding that everything that exists is interrelated and governed by principles. However, it is also overly straightforward. It approaches causality as if it were straightforward, meaning that each principle manifests itself independently of the others and that every occurrence can only be attributed by one prior incident. Each instance is the result of an endless number of variables, which communicate with one another to create a chain reaction of effect. Regulations are driven in multiple manners, determined by situations and by how they operate of other norms; they cannot convey themselves immediately or precisely. There is a common misconception that Marx either completely disapproved of integrity or that his remarks regarding decency and integrity are, at most, illogical. These assertions seem plausible on the surface. He could, for example, contend that the conflict between capitalists and laborers "cracked the framework for all ethical behavior, whether the ethics of frugality or of happiness" yet he condemned the "vampire-like" aspects of capitalism using ethical rhetoric (Blackledge, 2008).

The community of employee conflicts against

their oppression to serve as the foundation for Marx's revolutionary morals. He maintained that these conflicts both highlight the constraints on liberty in a capitalist society and foster cooperative values that go transcend liberal ethical theories. Hobbes believed that the need for survival is at the core of the human condition. Based on this scientific foundation, he deduces that under a scenario characterized by material limitation, humanity will inevitably clash with one another over materials, leading to "a conflict of all against all." He contends that ideas like right and wrong in this situation have to do with the necessity of preserving oneself. As a result, what is proper is determined by an individual's strength (Hobbes, 1998).

Marx draws attention to a major issue with this strategy. He states, "in a way does the individual...appear as reliant, as a component of an entire whole," the further back in time one examines. Familiar as well as tribal divisions served as a medium for the person's concept of self throughout antiquity and into pre-capitalist methods of labor. On the other hand, social interactions between individuals only "address each person as merely tools towards his personal motives, as exterior inevitability" with the emergence of capitalism. The primary goals of communist laborers' meetings include deception, training, etc. However, they also develop a new desire—the urge for the community, and what was once an instrument has now turned into an objective. The most remarkable examples of this practical evolution are found in the assemblies of French communist laborers. Social bonds are no longer formed by activities like consuming food and drink and smoking. For them, it is sufficient to have organization, incorporation, and discourse, all of which aim to better society. The expression "solidarity of humanity" is not hyperbole; rather, it is a fact, and the noble nature of humanity is evident in their weathered, workaday forms. By organizing and participating in strikes and middle class democratic individuals, employees establish structures that enable them to transform themselves. Collaborating inside these establishments develops into a daily routine that

fosters a sense of unity within the workforce and assumes the necessity of unity. The resulting promotion of qualities or interpersonal characteristics is in stark contrast to the individualistic competition of the capitalist economy (Wood, 2005).

Gramsci (1977) presented a contention along a comparable trajectory. Marx stated that "the academic basis for an ethical behavior that transcends historical consumerism is to be looked for, in the declaration that 'society cannot create for itself obligations that require circumstances for their fulfillment do not already reside,'" referring to a passage from his preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. In the presence of these circumstances, "the resolution of the obligations" emerges "responsibility," and "will" emerges independent." According to Michael Löwy, at its core, what is at stake here is a whole humanistic engagement—practical-critical effort in which philosophy is already subversive conduct and methodology is laden with conceptual significance—rather than even an understanding that is "associated with" or "supported by" an action (Löwy, 2003). Cooperative labor conflicts serve as the tangible symbol of collaboration that is both the foundation and the objective of communism, as well as a method of exposing and validating the denunciation of oppression and estrangement. Marxism is anchored in these collaborative conflicts among workers against detachment and serves as both an explanation of capitalism's processes and a critique of it, whereas contemporary normative thought reflects the detached condition under capitalism.

That feminism is incredible. If feminist theory adequately confronts hierarchical expertise, it must always operate in two distinct directions. It should rather take part in an endeavor that may characterize as adverse or reactionary, questioning or condemning the societal, political, and ideological relationships that are presently in place. Feminist theory is unsecured within and irrelevant to the socio-theoretical norms in the absence of this adverse or anti-sexist purpose. It runs the potential of perpetuating historical issues, particularly

hierarchical presumptions, without acknowledging them for what they are. However, if it stays just critical or receptive, it eventually validates the notions it seeks to transcend. It must stay on the territory it is trying to challenge (Joys, 2013).

A patriarchal societal structure is one in which men prevail in positions of administrative direction, ethical power, societal access, and property ownership. Certain hierarchical civilizations are also ancestral, which means that only men may acquire land and titles (Disrupting Patriarchy, 2020). Several facets of societal life are impacted by gender roles, such as acquaintances, employment, social norms, familial relationships, and education. Its existence has the potential to cause gender-based violence and inequity. The concept of patriarchal transcends and transcends all boundaries, social class, ethnicity, and more. It is not exclusive to any one set of people. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders defines gender dysphoria, formerly known as gender identity disorder, as a "described contradiction between their lived or manifested sexuality and the one they received at infancy." When associating with the inflexible, conventional social dichotomy of male or female positions, people who feel this conflict are unable to pinpoint with their gender identity, which may lead to interpersonal condemnation. In addition, this may cause problems in relationships with friends, family, and peers. It can also end up in disputes among individuals, social rejection, manifestations of stress and depressive disorders, drug implement problems, low confidence and an adverse feeling of wellbeing, as well as a higher possibility of self-injurious and committing suicide thoughts (Marwaha, 2023).

3. Research Methodology

Research methodology discusses the framework of this present work. It includes the following points i.e. research design (what type of method is followed in present research), population framework and sample study (what sample is chosen by researcher). Furthermore, this explains about data collection tools, sources, and their validity. The most important part of this

chapter is 'framework of analysis' through which the whole study is designed and explained. In framework of analysis, a model of categories is present that is divided into sub-categories and through this framework; data is analyzed with the help of primary and secondary data. This also defines all categories. The last part of the study is telling about delimitations of the study.

3.1 Research Design

The present study shows the 'interface' that links all the categories. A structure uses to explore all-important points. This study addresses research questions with valid justification. The present study uses explanatory method. Explanatory research studies problem, which is not well researched before. This type of research focuses on strategy and choice of subjects. Moreover, the present study is a qualitative exploration. The assessment has three estimations. The substance of stories gives the essential tendency. Second tendency gives to the masterful theory

feminism and third offers to fundamental considerations of other. The research work explores the following themes like feministic embodiment, cross culturalism, gender roles, and ethos.

3.2 Population and Sampling

In research jargon, the population is clarified as a substantial collection of students, instructors, objects, and so on who reflect similar traits, which arouse an expert's concern. The inherent qualities of clusters distinguish individuals from other people, educational institutions, items, and so forth. The population for present work are folk tales. A sample is specified as a smaller amount of data that an investigator selects from a broad demographic using a pre-determined selection process. Test units, examining components, and sensations are used to describe these constituents. Constructing a sampling is a fantastic way to get started with exploration. The sample for present research is given below:

Table 1. Sample description

No	Name of Stories	Writer	Publishers
1	Heer-Ranjha	Sayyed Waris Shah	Harman Publishing House, New Delhi • Tajinder Singh Bhatia (1883)
2	Sassi-Punnu	Shah Abdullah Bhatti	Tajindersingh Bhatia (1902)
3	Mirza Sahiban	Batta Singh Bhatti & Hafiz Barkhurdar	Lok Virsa Ishaat Ghar (1984)
4	Sohni Mahiwal	Sayyed Fazal Shah	Shaikh Mohammad Ashraf Tajir Kutub Kashmiri Bazar, Lahore (1923)

3.3 Data Collection Tools and Sources

Data is collected by qualitative research method. The present work has different new ideas. It explores gender roles, cross culturalism, transculturation, sacrifice, love, pain, etc. through explanatory design. This study is explanatory in nature and different articles, critical analysis, observations and categories are the source of data collection as well as tools of data collection. Other tools are literary books and journals. There is no questionnaire in this study.

3.4 Data Collection Tools Validation

Throughout qualitative study, validity cites to the "suitability" of devices, practices, data and findings. Irrespectively of how much the research dilemma is correct and reliable, the methodology chosen is appropriate for answering the research dilemma, the design is valuable and mentionable for the approach, sampling and data analysis are appropriate, and finally, the solution and setting's findings and goals are important. The evaluation may originate with the ideology and ontology of the

topic under consideration. Such illustration as the concept of "participant" is distinguished within liberal and affirmative experts due to differing theoretical approaches: Constructive experts initially assumed the "single" occurs original adjacent with the next with whatever participant's design, however liberal counselors believe "single" is an outcome of spiritual consciousness and cultural engagement.

Data validations are registers worked with a review that permit researcher to control what information is submitted. The most fundamental information approval is distinctive inquiry types. These are straightforward methods to guarantee that information for each question must be submitted in one normalized format. Use obligatory inquiries for fields that researcher totally needs for investigation. Simply be certain that each respondent will comprehend the inquiry and realize the answer. Mandatory questions are useful claiming they ensure that each respondent presents the most basic information.

3.5 Framework of Analysis

Data Analysis is the interaction of carefully use precise and consistent ways to show and represent, collect and summarize, and evaluate data. Various optimization frameworks "provide a means of extracting intuitive interpretations using data and distinguishing the indicator (the marvel of concern) from the noise (observable shifts) included in the data," according to Shamoo and Resnik (2003). As per LeCompte and Schensul (2006), analysts use a pattern

called research data analysis to reduce facts to a story and decode it to find insights. The data analysis aids in breaking down a large set of records into smaller chunks, and that is a good thing. By using explanatory research design and qualitative method, gender roles, societal conflicts, patriarchal disruption, gender oppression and class struggle have been explored and investigated at different aspects.

Qualitative research is an understanding connection based on obvious and scientific inquiry patterns, which investigates a societal, or humanity concern. The expert constructs a detailed, complete narrative, deconstructs language, analyzes specific viewpoints on testimony, and conducts the inquiry in a typical context (Creswell, 1998). Firstly, data is read and understand. Then, the researcher analyzes data in term of qualitatively research method by using specific framework of analysis. This framework is divided into various categories and these categories are further divided into sub categories. These all categories are analyzed with help of text and through this present research develop the required outcomes. Content analysis is used and analyzed. The theory that researcher used in this present work is 'feminism'. This theory relates human's relations with culture and place of women in society. It explores gender roles, radical and Marxist feminism and ethos in folk tales. The following categories that researcher finds during present study, and these categories are further explained and discussed.

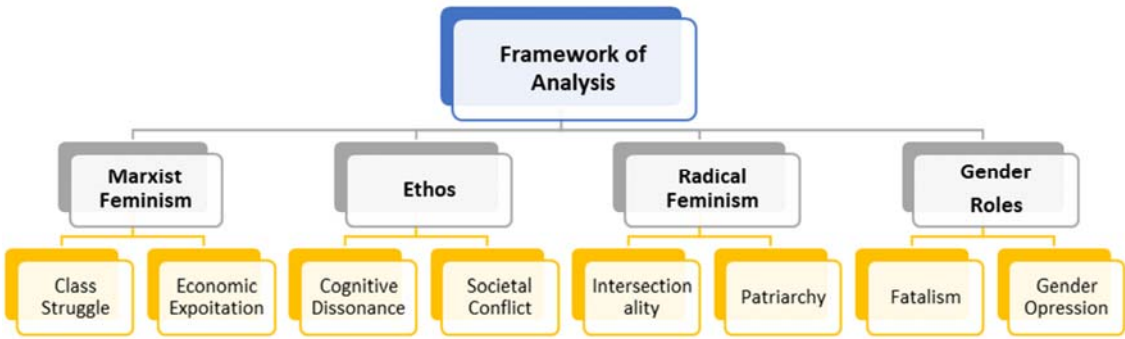


Figure 2. Framework of analysis

3.5.1 Marxist feminism

This kind of feminism is grounded in the

interpretations of Marxism put out by Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx during the 1800s. Marx gave an example of how worker exploitation allowed capitalism to flourish. To demonstrate how a group manipulates another to generate items, social classes were defined. Individuals belonging to the wealthy strata are referred to as bourgeois, while those from lower social classes are called the working class since they work for the bourgeoisie (Marx & Engels, 1848).

Marxist feminists believe that the root cause of women's oppression is racial prejudice not sexism. They claim that women are abused into account of a capitalist society and examine how gender norms shape production in capitalism. Marxist feminists' central tenet is that capitalism exclusively is responsible for the creation of the conventional nuclear household. They contend that the conventional housewife, who stays at home to take care of household duties without receiving compensation, is a symbol of capitalism (Evans, 2024). Marxist feminists contend that although the capitalist framework oppresses the working class, the nuclear family and capitalism simultaneously exploit women. The creation of a society without distinction in which members of the high and lower strata are accommodated similarly was the main goal of Marxist feminist theory. Women were not granted the same privileges and were viewed as inferior to men at that period.

Waris Shah wrote the famous Punjabi folktale "*Tale Heer Ranjha*" in the eighteenth century. It narrates the tale of Heer and Ranjha, two lovers from disparate socioeconomic origins who encounter several challenges because of cultural expectations and show themes of social conflict, gender oppression, and financial disparity. In "*Heer Ranjha*," the main characters are from distinct socioeconomic classes. Heer comes from a wealthy family, while Ranjha is an impoverished cowherd. Class disparities impede their relationship in addition to resistance from their families. This is consistent with Marxist feminism's belief that comprehending socioeconomic struggles—including gender-related ones—requires an awareness of financial disparity.

3.5.2 Ethos

In literature and culture, ethos acts as an optic through which ethical standards, principles, and convictions are seen and communicated. It influences character development, conceptual investigation, and story validity in literature, while it defines communal identity and social standards in culture. Ethos is used in both fields to provide a more profound comprehension of social systems, moral dilemmas, and human behavior. Mirza and Sahiban grapple with the norms of society that shape their actions and decisions. The conventions that place a higher priority on family honor than on subjective satisfaction obstruct their passionate relationship, highlighting the tension between traditional standards and individual preferences. Because she is a woman, Sahiban is subject to especially restrictive obligations. Her obligations to her family and her interactions with males primarily determine her position in society, which reflects a cultural system that restricts her freedom and choice. These patriarchal conventions are questioned, and the normative status quo is upset by Mirza and Sahiban's romance. The eventual tragedy—a treachery, grief, and death—that strikes Mirza and Sahiban emphasizes the heavy cost they have to pay for not living up to social norms. This result illustrates the unpleasant fact that in a community with tight rules, individual preferences frequently have dire consequences.

3.5.3 Radical Feminism

As a category of feminism that aims to tackle the underlying reasons of gender inequality—which it sees as being strongly rooted in societal structures—radical feminism first appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Radical feminists support major cultural shifts to demolish patriarchy, contending that it is the primary cause of gender inequality. Kimberlé Crenshaw created the idea of intersectionality in the late 1980s. It alludes to the notion that different societal stratum factors—like sexual orientation, gender, class, color, and other identification markers—intersect and work together to create intricate webs of advantages and oppression. The concept of intersectionality highlights numerous manners in which individuals endure

inequality and discrimination, making it impossible to comprehend by looking at each dimension of identity separately.

The narrative of Sohni Mahiwal centers on Sohni, a potter's daughter, and her romantic relationship with Bukharan merchant Izzat Baig. Despite their affection, Sohni is forced into a forced marriage with another man by family persuasion and society conventions. She uses a clay vessel to traverse the river and proceeds to meet Mahiwal, her beloved. However, one evening, Sohni submerges in the water while attempting to reach Mahiwal after her sister-in-law substitutes the baked pot with an unbaked one. The expectations of patriarchy severely limit Sohni's existence. It is believed that her love for Mahiwal violates social norms, and her compelled marriage illustrates an absence of freedom women had in selecting their own spouses. By using an intersectional lens, one can observe how gender-based oppression significantly contributes to her unfortunate outcome

3.5.4 Gender Roles

In the world, gender roles refer to the ways in which people need to perform, communicate, appear, cultivate, and behave according to the sex to which they have been ascribed. Males are typically required to exhibit traits like power, dominance, and rivalry, and to show minimal emotions and tenderness, particularly toward other males, to be considered manly. People experience gender-role pressure (or disparity) when they believe they are not conforming to the expected gender role. While gender roles change throughout duration, conventional and stereotyped ideas of masculinity and femininity continue to influence society. Gender roles have the power to stifle people's opportunities and preferences because of their gender, which reinforces the disparity between sexes. As in the given context, the female protagonists are restricted by some social norms, familial values and status. Like Sahiban sacrificed her love over her family reputation; Heer and Sohni forced by her families for unwanted marriages and as they opposed rules and norms of society they led to some tragic endings by their own families. Sohni became victim of her sisters-in-law deceive.

Sometimes women are cursed by their own fate too like Sassi.

3.6 Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations are decisions made by the researcher, which ought to be referenced. They depict the limits that researcher has set for the investigation. Delimitations are characterized as mostly worried about the extent of the investigation. Delimitations portray the extent of the examination or set up boundaries. Delimitations likewise keep researcher from expressing his/her discoveries are generalizable to the entire populace. Delimitations are purposeful limitations to a researcher's investigation contrasted with constraints, which have natural limitations to procedure. The present study is conducted in the light of the folk tales that is mentioned below

1- The study is delimited to some Pakistani folk tales like Heer Ranjha, Sassi Punnu, Mirza Sahiban, and Sohni Mahiwal.

2- There are multifaceted themes in the selected stories but for the present study, research is only related to gender roles, class struggle, economic exploitation, societal conflicts, gender oppression and ethos.

4 Analysis and Discussions

"Folklore" is a term with multiple meanings. "Folk" refers to the ordinary people, while "lore" is a set of beliefs or customs. Folklore, then, is the custom of ordinary individuals and a means of expressing knowledge (Ultey, 1968). Oral tradition regards folklore as the primary source of knowledge that is passed down through the generations. The entire manner of life in that specific culture that allows people to integrate into it is included in folklore and folk life (Hassan, 1995). According to Quddus (1992), Punjabi is the traditional language of Punjab, Pakistan, and has been spoken there since the middle ages. A brief verse by Baba Farid Shakar Ganj, dating back to the 13th century, is the earliest known written example of Punjabi language. Peeloo, a poet who wrote Mirza Sahiban, made a significant literary contribution to Punjabi literature by the sixteenth century. Punjab is where folklore is most prevalent in

Pakistan (Quddus, 1992).

According to Quddus (1992) research, folklore is an important means of expressing culture. It is via folklore that norms, traditions, and values are passed down from one region or generation to the next. The main characteristics of a culture are depicted in folklore, which also aids in exposing any culture within a certain community by highlighting the customs of that culture, subculture, or group (Quddus, 1992). The lively and unique traditions of Punjab, a region well-known for its extensive past and spirit of exploration. It is a mystical synthesis of stories, rituals, and traditions. When examining the core elements of Punjabi culture, the folktales have a lot to say. These tales are precious jewels that offer profound insights into Punjab's soul; they are more than just stories. They offer an understanding of the Punjabi community's traditions, mindsets, and beliefs. Gender roles are constantly shifting ideas that are subject to change throughout time and are socially and culturally formed. The rights, obligations, standards, and interpersonal interactions of men and women are referred to as gender roles. Examining the status of men and women in a culture makes sense when considering the concept of gender. The process of socialization, which involves learning, accepting, and internalizing the values, norms, beliefs, wisdom, philosophy, conventions, abilities, and practices of the community, leads to the social construction of gender (Njau, 1994).

4.1. The Legendary Heer-Ranjha: A Tale of Love and Sacrifice

It is impossible to talk about Punjabi folktales without bringing up "Heer-Ranjha." Renowned Punjabi poet Waris Shah's magnificent love story spans both distance and culture. Beautiful rural maiden Heer and charming traveling singer Ranjha fall madly in love. Their love story is not just about love but also about perseverance, questioning family customs, and breaking social boundaries. Their unbroken tie represents the Punjabi people's tenacity, loyalty, and resolve. The story of Heer-Ranjha embodies Punjab's unwavering spirit, devotion, and selflessness (Basit, 2023). The main character, Ranjha,

endures the constraints to advance human relationships and ultimately create complete gender equality. The gender roles of the past are reversed, showing women to be more versatile than males. With this portrayal, the speaker (Waris Shah) conveys his conviction that no lasting love relationship is conceivable in an unequal society because love is a decision taken based on liberation, independent of the dominant societal norms. The oppressive socioeconomic arrangements justify the essential significance of this romantic rhetoric. In addition to exuding a passionate aura, Heer adamantly rejects the patriarchy and accepts her fate in accordance with her clan's financial requirements. Fairy tales like Sassi-Punno, Laila Majnu, and Shiren-Farhad, to mention just a few, have been extensively loved in the Subcontinent through their multiple models and adaptations. The Chenab River flows through Punjab for centuries, and Heer-Ranjha is one of the stories that tells of the melodies of devotion and tenderness that its enraged vibrations recount. Even though it is partially imaginary and partially genuine, rural people's thoughts are nonetheless captured by it that they voluntarily suspend faith. There has been numerous telling of this tale over the years, but Waris Shah's 1766 literary opera is the one that has endured the longest. Some of the characters in the Heer were originally from a mixed socio-religious background; with time, though, the narrative began to emphasize Islam increasingly. This is the tale of Heer and Ranjha, two legendary lovers. It describes how Ranjha, driven by his envious sisters-in-law to leave his hometown and his ancestry, develops in love with Heer right away (Faiz, 2021). Waris Shah's portrayal of the figure Heer is an excellent literary resource that paints a realistic image of patriarchal civilization in which the perspective of the time-honored woman reflects her inner conflict. In an analogous manner, the main character is seen to have given up on disparities in gender and social exclusion. The speaker sheds insight on the prevalent societal problems of the day, including contradictory morals, class tensions, and hypocrisies. The heroine is a representation of self-proclaimed liberty who battles the oppressive constraints of hierarchical

conventions.

You eat the bread of idleness and drink two men's share of butter and milk. Verily you were your father's darling but the very shame of your mother. You are the only blot on our family.

These are the remarks made to Ranjha by the brides of his siblings. Ranjha stays apart from them even though their husbands labored diligently all day in the crops. Although he was his father's favorite child these women have expressed their jealousy of him since his father's passing. They had a crafty and envious temperament, caring more about worldly possessions than interpersonal relationships. They plotted with the assistance of their husbands and paid Qazi an incentive to divide the territory. The basis of the bond between men and women was worldly ideals instead of heredity. The subsequent discourse highlights the dynamic between men and women, as Ranjha responds to the behavior of his brother's wives. Therefore, women, not men, hold the authority.

"You black-faced rogue, why have you deified my couch? Whom have you allowed to sleep on my bed? Have you no respect for me or fear of God that you have done this thing?"

Heer addresses Luddan in these remarks after discovering that Ranjha was dozing off on her couch when she and her female companions visited her garden. She hadn't anticipated anyone to even approach her bed because she was Chuchak Sial's, the feudal chief's most gorgeous, spoiled, and arrogant daughter. She then lashes out at Luddan, calling him "black faced rough" in a fit of rage. This is indicative of the fact that women at the period were extremely proud of their prosperity, social standing, and authority in the community, and as a result, she warned Luddan that if he disobeyed her, God would punish him.

4.2. The Epic of Mirza Sahiban: A Tale of Heroic Love

Like Heer-Ranjha and Sohni-Mahiwal, who are purported to be the legendary and well-known romantic characters of Punjab, the legend of Mirza-Sahiban has touched the emotions of

countless Punjabis for generations. But unlike Sohni and Heer, the tragic romance that took place in Sandal Bar, one of the four bars (geographical regions) of western Punjab, was the subject of discussion around the character of Sahiban, who was regarded as one of the best works of Punjabi literature. The fatal passion is credited to Pulu, a Punjabi poet from Dhun Chakwal who lived in the 16th and 17th centuries. Later, the story was expanded upon by Hafiz Barkhurdar, a 17th-century Sufi Jat poet from Takhat Hazara, Sargodha. For more than four centuries, countless Punjabi poets and storytellers have been constructing and reworking the tale in their own unique ways. Most of them have accused Sahiba of being disloyal in the sense that, whether knowingly or unknowingly, she chose to side with her brothers at a crucial juncture, which led to Mirza's murder at the hands of her clan. Most people agree that a Punjabi folk singer can only be considered an authority on *gaiki* [singing] if they have mastered the words to Mirza-Sahiban. Thus, every singer from east and west Punjab, including Alam Lohar, Gurmit Bawa, Shaukat Ali, Kuldip Manak, and others, joyfully sung the story, praising Mirza and denouncing Sahiban. Legend has it that Mirza and his mare "Bakki" are the protagonists of the love tale, and Sahiban is to blame for his beloved's shots being broken when she saw her brothers approaching them in the jungle after they had escaped from her home in the Jhang Punjabi village of Kheiwā. Mirza fell asleep from exhaustion after the long run.

"Mirza Sahiban" is an additional fable. It is a magnificent representation of respect, love, and bravery, which are important in Punjabi culture. The embodiment of bravery and love remain Mirza, a fearless warrior, and Sahiban, a stunning rural girl. The recurring subject of this novel is self-sacrifice in the face of family honor and society obligations. The bravery of Mirza, his devotion to Sahiban, and her heartbreaking choice to cut Mirza's horse's ties. It conveys a great deal about the value of fidelity and respect in Punjabi culture. Since the beginning of time, women in this region have been powerful, frank, and brave. They have disregarded social expectations and limitations to become

independent heroes whose stories are passed down through the generations. The tale of Sahiban, who bravely and publicly disobeyed her family and convention to pursue her love for Mirza, is one of these tragic heroines. It is because civilizations have long victimized women for their treachery, weakness, and other shortcomings, according to well-known Punjabi researcher and writer Iqbal Qaisar of Kasur. But over the past few decades, he claimed, the story has evolved, and Sahiban's position as a woman is now viewed in a different light.

Through the perspective of ethos, a popular disastrous romance from Punjabi folklore, Mirza Sahiban, can be analyzed, with an emphasis on issues relating to societal interruption and the struggle between inner impulses and societal conventions. In this regard, ethos refers to the narrative's and its protagonists' trustworthiness, personalities, and societal standards. Punjabi culture's hierarchical rules and conventional social standards provide a setting for the story of Mirza Sahiban. The ethos of the protagonists' era, which prioritizes societal standing, family honor, and normative gender roles, has an impact on them.

Mirza and Sahiban grapple with the norms of society that shape their actions and decisions. The conventions that place a higher priority on family honor than on subjective satisfaction obstruct their passionate relationship, highlighting the tension between traditional standards and individual preferences. Because she is a woman, Sahiban is subjected to especially restrictive obligations. Her obligations to her family and her interactions with males primarily determine her position in society, which reflects a cultural system that restricts her freedom and choice. These patriarchal conventions are questioned, and the normative status quo is upset by Mirza and Sahiban's romance. The eventual tragedy—a treachery, grief, and death—that strikes Mirza and Sahiban emphasizes the heavy cost they must pay for not living up to social norms. This result illustrates the unpleasant fact that in a community with tight rules, individual preferences frequently have dire consequences.

4.3. Folklore of Sassi-Punnu: A Tale of Tragic Love

Sassi and Punnu are the subject of an adorable romance in Balochi and Sindhi folklore. Sassi was born into a powerful raja family that dominated the regions of Bhambour. When Sassi was born, she was given the name Sassi, which means moon, since they thought she was as pure and lovely as the moon. She appeared like a gorgeous butterfly from wealthy civilization. A skilled astrologer warned the raja that their only daughter is going to cause dishonor to their prestige. Unfortunately, poor parents had no other option. They concluded Sassi couldn't stay there. Mother could not let Raja kill Sassi, so they placed their beautiful daughter in a basket and sent it down the Indus River. Before laying her in the basket, Sassi's mother wrapped a prayer taweez around her daughter's neck for safety.

A poor washer man was washing clothes by a stream. This impoverished washer man had a wife but was unable to produce a child. They had prayed for years, but in nothing. While washing the last of the clothing in his pack, the washer man noticed something peculiar drifting in the river. He observed as it was captured in some shrubs. It was a basket. He lifted it out of the river and discovered the most beautiful baby girl he ever witnessed. Sassi was the first name he mentioned. However, Sassi could not face the thought of leaving the poor old washer man and his wife, who had brought up her all these years. Nonetheless, the raja worked tirelessly to woo her back. One day, Raja accompanied Sassi to a beautiful park. As she investigated the backyard, she came across a stunning picture of a young man. She fell in love with his towering posture and aristocratic features. She needed to get acquainted with this man. Word spread quickly. The man in the painting heard that this gorgeous woman wanted to get acquainted with him, so he transformed himself as Prince Punnu and costumed as an art seller to encounter Sassi. They struck in affection and their relationship blossomed.

Sassi proceeded her existence as a washer man's daughter, anything else. Punnu was unaware of her prior and refused to reveal it. To him, she

was a washer man's daughter, and to her, he was just an art dealer. When Punnu arrived to inquire for Sassi's hand in marriage, he only knew who to approach: the washer man and his wife. The washer man understood the value of a modest husband, be he a royal or a peasant. He determined to put Prince Punnu to the assessments, telling him that if he could wash effectively a shirt, he could marry his daughter. Punnu, who had never cleaned a single piece of clothes, struggled to wash his shirt in the river against the stones like a washer man. The clothing came back ripped. The prince gave vast sums of gold coins as compensation for his unsuccessful effort, and the washer man reluctantly accepted it, realizing that his daughter's heart would only be content with Punnu. It was time for Sassi to seek consent from Punnu's family. Punnu decided to talk to his parents. However, when Punnu asked his parents about Sassi, they absolutely rejected because she was the daughter of a washer man. A prince could never marry the daughter of a poor man who earns a living by washing another people's clothing. Punnu would not be convinced. His heart was intent on Sassi.

Punnu declined to wed any girls other than Sassi. Punnu's family eventually agreed to act like that a marriage will take place. Punnu's brothers planned to celebrate by taking him out drinking the night before the wedding. His brothers brought him a huge bottle to drink from. Punnu drank until he dropped out. Then Punnu's brothers moved him away from the marriage ceremony festivities to another hamlet. Punnu was in an alternate state of mindset and location; hence the wedding could not take place. Sassi received the tragic news on her wedding night, as she was getting ready for the ceremony. Sassi rushed across the barren dunes toward the town, still dressed in her wedding gown, terrified of what would happen to Punnu. She noticed a shepherd requesting for water. The shepherd saw how lovely she was and seized her; she called out to the universe for rescue. Sassi pleaded to God for assistance to rescue her from the demonic shepherd, and the earth devoured her. Meanwhile, Punnu had recovered consciousness in the community where he had

been transported. When he learned his family had dumped him, he fled throughout the desert, just as Sassi did, shouting out his love's name. The earth unexpectedly gobbled up Punnu after pleading with the heavens. Sassi and Punnu's souls will be united for all time.

Sassi Punnu's terrible story is incomplete without the enchantment. An elderly woman whom he was unable to assist during his journey cursed Punnu. The curse stated that Punnu would never be competent to find Sassi again, and that his pursuit for her would result in his death. The curse was a crucial shifting moment in the drama, resulting in the terrible end of Sassi Punnu's love story. After Punnu was cursed, he devoted every moment of his existence looking for Sassi. He wandered through several locations and encountered many individuals, but he could not find her. He passed away from weariness and despair. Sassi, on the other hand, died from heartache while praying for Punnu to arrive back. The curse damaged not just Sassi and Punnu's life, but also the entire village. The curse came to symbolize the authority of inevitability and fortune. The timeless story of tragic love, "Sassi-Punnu," evokes strong emotions. Beautiful princess Sassi and gorgeous prince Punnu fall in love. Nevertheless, there are many ups and downs in their love tale. This tale emphasizes the idea that genuine love is resilient and can overcome any challenge. The story of Sassi-Punnu highlights Punjabi culture's conviction in the immortal strength of passion and sentiments.

4.4. Sohni Mahiwal: A Tale of Desire and Power

As the Chenab's ravenous tides beat on Sohni, she clings to her *matka* (earthen pot), expecting to be devoured. Her final hope is the *matka*. That is the situation's absurdity. When her sister-in-law learned that she was meeting her sweetheart, Mahiwal, every day across the Chenab, she had her usual *matka* replaced with a partially baked one that would disintegrate in water. Sohni would swim across the river with the *matka*. She became aware that the *matka* was vanishing halfway through. Sohni realized that the Chenab, the river of love, was beyond reach at this point. The *matka*, Sohni's passing, and

Mahiwal waiting for her on the other side of the river have all taken on special meaning in Islamic mysticism. The half-baked matka that killed Sohni was forced to stand for not being ready before setting off on a spiritual quest. It is said that someone who is not ready for the biggest challenge won't be able to withstand the turbulent spiritual waters. The matka has also come to represent a fraudulent guru who, rather than guiding a follower through a turbulent spiritual journey, brings misfortune onto the pursuer. The only person who can lead someone across the river is a genuine guru, a matka who is prepared.

Mahiwal, who is seated across the river, witnesses his beloved drowning, but he is powerless to stop it. Mahiwal, in Sufi poetry, is a god. Sohni, who is caught in a river and seeing her beloved for the final time, symbolizes the intense desire that an adherent must be united with heavenly essence. However, death itself takes on a certain importance. It stands for the complete unity of a worshipper and his deity. Mahiwal waits for Sohni on the other side of the river, but he waits for his true love even after death. The moving love tale "Sohni-Mahiwal" emphasizes the idea of unrequited affection. Despite coming from distinct families, Mahiwal, a trader, and Sohni, the daughter of a potter, fell in love. Their narrative highlights the fervor and resolve to defy social expectations in the name of love. "Sohni-Mahiwal" offers an illustration of the historical and social constraints that have molded Punjabi culture as well as people's ability to persevere in the face of hardship.

Initially, first read the classic folk legend of Sohni-Mahiwal, was drawn to the gender roles more than the supernatural symbolisms. Every day, Sohni, not Mahiwal, crossed the Chenab to meet him. This is not an easy task. During its peak, the river can be up to 200 yards wide. Sohni would swim across the river with an earthen pot every day only to spend time with her loved one. Meanwhile, Mahiwal would spend the entire day across the river, waiting for his sweetheart. The story challenges traditional gender norms, as portrayed in Western children's stories such as Snow White and Sleeping Beauty. Here, the female protagonist is not

rescued by her prince charming. Her allure lies not only in her beauty, which would stun the prince, but also in the fact that she asserts her agency. Every day, a woman risks her life by swimming across the great river of Punjab. Their mindset toward the legality of marriage is likewise very different from how it depicted in Western children's literature. For Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, and Cinderella, marriage signifies the culmination of the narrative - happily ever after. Marriage, in this folk fable, is just another event that holds little significance. Sohni is married against her will, although Mahiwal is her true love. Marriage is no longer considered sacrosanct, as it once was, but rather a meaningless institution if not founded on love. Every day, Sohni breaches this hallowed institution by yearning for a union with her real love, to whom she is not legally married.

Sohni Mahiwal's story addresses a variety of issues, including love and commitment, social class and tradition, and individualism and independence. Sohni and Mahiwal's love is portrayed as pure and altruistic, transcending class and society. However, their love is viewed as a danger to the societal order, prompting animosity and bloodshed. The story also emphasizes the contradiction between tradition and individual choice, notably in terms of gender roles. Sohni is portrayed as a woman who rejects established conventions and expectations, preferring to follow her heart rather than comply to societal standards. However, her disobedience ends in tragedy, demonstrating the perils of defying social standards. Sohni Mahiwal's story incorporates a variety of symbolic elements, including rivers and water, clothing and personal items, and animals. Rivers and water are used to represent love, passion, danger, and death. Clothing and personal items are also used to convey the characters' feelings and identities, with Sohni's scarlet dupatta and Mahiwal's flute being famous symbols of their relationship.

Sohni Mahiwal's story is fundamental to Pakistani literature and culture, and it has helped shape the region's identity. It has been transformed into various films, television dramas, and other works of art, and it continues to inspire contemporary artists and authors. The

narrative has also been regarded as an argument on contemporaneous societal and cultural issues, notably those concerning gender and class.

5. Justification of the Research Questions

5.1. How do the Pakistani folk tales portray power dynamics and social hierarchy, and what message do they convey about social status and class?

Marxist feminism examines the ways in which capitalism and personal asset possession by individuals oppress women. Marxist feminists argue that women's labor is mostly underpaid in capitalist systems, and that the only way to free them is to overthrow these structures. Marxist feminists believe that the underlying reason for women's oppression is class discrimination, not sexism. They contend that women are abused into consideration of a capitalist society and examine how gender norms shape productivity in capitalism. Marxist feminists can be utilized to investigate how the economic system is gendered in the final phases of capitalism and how social replication of individuals and organizations extends capitalism, even though some Marxist concepts may not be as pertinent today (Armstrong, 2020). Her family, particularly her father, heavily influences Heer's life and choices. This is an example of patriarchal dominance, in which male power limits the opportunities accessible to women. Marxist feminism studies how patriarchy sustains capitalist systems; in this story, Heer's subjugation to her femininity and her family's power can be interpreted as an instance of this kind of oppression. The story demonstrates how social status and interpersonal connections are impacted by financial constraints. Marxist feminism places a high priority on the management of women's affairs and decisions above finances, which is exemplified by Heer's forced marriage to another man owing to financial agreements. Tragic events culminate in the story's denouement. The couple's attempt to get back together is unsuccessful, and ultimately, Heer and Ranjha pass very tragically. It is believed that the limitations placed on them by their families and society led to their demise.

The intricate relationship between societal rank

and status within the region's historical environment is reflected in the diverse and numerous depictions of dominance interactions and societal strata found in Pakistani folk tales. These stories may solidify current structures and offer assessments of them, emphasizing ethical lessons, societal standards, and ethnic standards. Furthermore, stories from Pakistan, such as Heer Ranjha, Sassi Punnu, Sohni Mahiwal, and Mirza Sahiban, hold tremendous historical relevance and provide valuable understanding of the ruling structures and hierarchical dominance seen in South Asian societies. The complicated dynamics of societal rank and class in specific eras are reflected in these stories' frequent exploration of subjects of affection, loyalty, and societal limitations.

The narrative of Sohni Mahiwal centers on Sohni, a poor woman, and Mahiwal, a prosperous trader. This narrative, in contrast to others, illustrates how social position can change while a person is in affection. The difficulties between individual preferences and social standards are reflected in Sohni's love for Mahiwal and their battle against cultural condemnation. The story is driven by Sohni's affection and tenacity despite Mahiwal's wealth, opposing the idea that a person's or their love's worth is determined by their social standing. Sohni Mahiwal emphasizes how individual choice and affection can occasionally overcome social class to stand for the overcoming of social barriers. The characters of Mirza Sahiban are Sahiban, a member of the upper class, and Mirza, a young man from an inferior class. The narrative emphasizes the profound tension that exists between one's own aspirations and those of society. The strong societal stratification and resistance from Sahiban's family prevent her from loving Mirza. Because Mirza and Sahiban's terrible ending mirrors the tough facts encountered by people who reject the existing socioeconomic order, the story illustrates the serious ramifications of breaking societal standards. The disastrous results of attempting to break down social barriers and the devastating force of prejudice based on class are both highlighted in the novel. The strict social order that causes pain for both individuals and society

is criticized.

5.2. What role do female characters play in shaping social changes in folktales like *Heer Ranjha*, *Sassi Punnu*, *Mirza Sahiban* and *Sohni Mahiwal*?

Western culture has changed because of the feminist movement, incorporating the right of women to vote, expanded opportunities for learning, salary parity with men, the ability to file for divorce, and the freedom to make choices for themselves. Radical feminists aimed to fundamentally alter society by addressing the causes of oppression. They perceived the source as the subjugation of women in a patriarchal system ruled by men. Socialist feminists more frequently described gender-based oppression as a single aspect of the resistance (Napikoski, 2023). Female characters have a crucial role in confronting and reshaping cultural standards and structures in the folktales *Sohni Mahiwal*, *Sassi Punnu*, *Mirza Sahiban*, and *Heer Ranjha*. Their behaviors can be understood as expressions of opposition to deeply ingrained societal norms, and their livelihoods typically emphasize the conflict between individualistic objectives and society obligations. *Heer*, the female lead of the narrative *Heer Ranjha*, for instance, plays a significant role in rejecting the strict socioeconomic and status limits of her era. She opposes the expectations of her family and society by falling in love with *Ranjha*, a guy of inferior standing. *Heer* makes the tragic decision to follow her passion despite coming from a wealthy family. *Heer's* disobedience to cultural conventions highlights how severe socioeconomic divisions and repressive cultural obligations may be. Her narrative challenges the inflexible systems that put human fulfillment and passionate love behind status and dignity. The story argues for an overhaul of cultural ideals that place prestige above individual happiness through her tragic fate.

In story *Mirza Sahiban*, *Sahiban's* affection for *Mirza*, a man from an inferior socioeconomic stratum, challenges community-based biases and parental standards, which plays a vital role in the plot. Despite social pressures, her love for *Mirza* represents her defiance of social and cultural distinctions. The terrible outcome of

Sahiban's story highlights the dire repercussions of trying to overcome societal obstacles. Her narrative highlights the social and intimate difficulties encountered by people who defy these limitations, criticizing the strict social hierarchy and the forces that uphold it. Her acts highlight the requirement for social change and call into dispute the justice of discrimination based on rank.

The narrative of *Sohni Mahiwal* centers on *Sohni*, a potter's daughter, and her romantic relationship with Bukharan merchant *Izzat Baig*. Despite their affection, *Sohni* is forced into a forced marriage with another man by family persuasion and society conventions. She uses a clay vessel to traverse the river and proceeds to meet *Mahiwal*, her beloved. But one evening, *Sohni* submerges in the water while attempting to reach *Mahiwal* after her sister-in-law substitutes the baked pot with an unbaked one. The expectations of patriarchy severely limit *Sohni's* existence. It is believed that her love for *Mahiwal* violates social norms, and her compelled marriage illustrates an absence of freedom women had in selecting their own spouses. By using an intersectional lens, one can observe how gender-based oppression significantly contributes to her unfortunate outcome. By using an intersectional perspective, *Sohni Mahiwal* becomes more than just a tale of two people who fall in love; it is an epic tale that is molded by the intricate relationships between race, social strata, societal norms, and social obligations. These intersecting identities and societal systems weave an oppressive entanglement that finally brings *Sohni* and *Mahiwal's* sad ending.

5.3. How do the female folktale protagonists like *Heer* and *Sohni* reconcile the limitations of their social and ethnic circumstances with their identities and desires?

South Asian folklore's *Heer* and *Sohni*, two strong female characters, are embodiments of tragedy, affection, and revolt. They negotiate the limitations imposed by their societal and racial context through actions that simultaneously subvert and imitate the prevailing societal standards. The folktale "*Heer Ranjha*" tells

about Heer's intense love for Ranjha. Her intense love, which violates societal conventions, shapes who she is. She exhibits an acute awareness of liberty by pursuing her love despite her family's disapproval. She comes from an affluent, upper-class family; thus, it is considered a transgression of societal and cultural norms for her to be in love with a man of lesser rank like Ranjha. Her family is putting a lot of pressure on her to wed the man they want. Heer first complies with her family's demands to negotiate her identity and wants with her situation, but her heart still belongs to Ranjha. In the end, her untimely demise alongside Ranjha is her last act of rebellion against the social norms that attempted to govern her.

Another female character from the folktale "Sohni Mahiwal" is Sohni, a potter's daughter whose persona is largely shaped by her affection for Mahiwal, a merchant from a distinct cultural tribe. She swims across a river employing a vessel made of clay every night, risking her life to reach him because she is so in love. She is ensnared by social norms, just as Heer. Despite being forced into marriage against her choice, she continues to see Mahiwal in covertly since she can't let go of her love for him. It is terrible that Sohni has come to terms with her situation. In the process of attempting to across the water to reach Mahiwal, she submerges when her sister-in-law switches her pottery vessel with an unbaked one. Her demise is the highest gesture of selflessness in the name of affection, one that knows no bounds by socioeconomic or cultural boundaries. Sohni and Heer both oppose the inflexible rules that their respective households and communities enforced. Their love is a type of defiance against the expectations placed on them by society regarding who they may wed and how women should act. The terrible conclusions to these tales bring forth the stark truths of the racial and societal limitations that women must contend with. Though repressed in existence, their personalities and ambitions appear to find some sort of success in mortality, as their narratives have been memorialized as emblems of unwavering love.

6. Conclusion

The present research explores feminist elements into Pakistani folktales including female characters such as Heer, Sassi, Sahiban, and Sohni that demonstrates a nuanced dynamic between liberation and restriction, mirroring wider societal perspectives on women. These tales, which are steeped in societal legacy, provide a prism through which to look at gender roles and the demands society places on women. This present study viewed via a feminist lens, these folktales simultaneously illustrate the two distinct aspects of the experiences of the female protagonists, emphasizing both their resiliency and the structural limitations placed upon them. Even though these women show incredible fortitude and power, their narratives also serve as sobering reminders of the restrictions put on female liberty and the severe consequences associated with challenging social norms.

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