

Saif Al-Muluk of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh (1836-1906): Subalternity and Social Critique

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ABSTRACT

The poetry of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh has a special focus on common man. Social critique is a mode of criticism that is directed towards a society touching the contours of subaltern approach. This approach represents the common aspirations and present in abundance in Saif Al-Muluk of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh. Hence, Saif Al-Muluk is a unique example of an alternate source of history, representing neglected aspects and strata, upholding subalternity and has been written in the language of subalterns. The present paper attempts to explore the meaning of social critique and subalternity, the approach of Sufis regarding people and the authorities and the aspects of lives of common man as depicted by Mian Muhammad Bakhsh in his Saif Al-Muluk. It also seeks to enquire the causes behind the rapid popularity of Sufis among the masses. In addition, it investigates the relationship of the author with the various political authorities

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of his era and the representation of common folks in Saif-al-Muluk.

Introduction

The story of *Saif al-Muluk* is an ageless story which existed beyond borders and boundaries. As in the story, the hero is an Egyptian prince, but the tale has Persian roots. The story is a blend of romance and fantastic adventures as well as royal figures of jinni and peris (fairies). It follows the typical three-part format of most such stories, in which each segment moves from the hero's conception, youth through his years of adventure to his ultimate union with his beloved. But, as a stand-alone tale, it has a vibrant history of at least 500 years in the eastern Islamic region of Central and South Asia, which historically has been dominated by Persian literary culture.¹

As the story suggests, both oral as well as printed storytelling were valued in Persian literary culture. While oral histories from earlier eras are naturally not preserved, the numerous manuscript versions of the Persian "Story of *Sayf al-Muluk*" or *Qissa-yi-Sayf al-Muluk* that survived from the 17th to the 19th Centuries give an excellent idea of the art of the professional story-teller, or *qissa-khwan* [Persian: Story Teller]. The fact that at least eight of these manuscripts, most of the Indian origin, are still in existence in British libraries alone attests to the tale's enduring appeal in South Asia; to both elite and general audience. Although they differ in specifics, these renditions have in common the traditional elements of the *qissa* genre, including the way the story is told and the meticulous preservation of the narrators' anonymity.²

The popularity of the *qissa* in the Persian literature and the considerably greater prominence given to another form, the narrative poem in rhymed hemistiches known as *mathnawi*,

1 Christopher Shackle, "The Story of Sayf Al-Mulūk in South Asia," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 17, no. 2 (2007): 115, 118.

2 Shackle, "The Story of Sayf Al-Mulūk in South Asia," 119.

is essential to understanding the history of the story in India. Later poets followed these as model as they attempted to transform the narrative resource of the *qissa*. It remained always relevant but not well-regarded by critics, into *mathnawi* poetry that may earn their creators a respectable reputation. Hard to trace the origin, the Sayf al-Muluk's narrative became well-known in India. Yet, the survival of a *Sayf al-Muluk mathnawi* by the Central Asian poet Majlisi from the first half of the 16th Century offers a potential clue. Different versions and venularization of the story have its history in different pioneering versions and different languages of South Asia, these include Ghawwasi's Dakani Urdu 1625, Sindhi 1760, Bengali 1828, Siraeki 1871, Balochi 1880s and Pashto adaptations of 1892.³

Apparently, the tale is about the journey of love between a man and a fairy, but it reveals many aspects of ethical, religious and spiritual knowledge weaved layer by layer⁴ during the narration of the story. Outer layer of the story is about unnatural beings and looks like unreal and far from the realities of the world⁵ but it is not an imaginary story—it is allegorical. The inner layers show us that it is well rooted in history as Mian Muhammad Bakhsh had read it in Persian and gave many references.⁶ The main idea of the story is taken from the "Arabian Nights" or *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah* i.e. One Thousand and One Nights. In *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah* this story starts from the 758th night and ends at 778th night.⁷ The total number of verses in *Saif al-Muluk* compiled by Mian Muhammad Bakhsh is 9248.⁸

3 Shackle, "The Story of Sayf Al-Mulūk in South Asia," 120.

4 Shackle, "The Story of Sayf Al-Mulūk in South Asia," 128.

5 Muhammad Ashraf Chaudhri, *Sufi Poets of the Punjab (Pakistan)* (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 2009), 173.

6 Saeed Ahmed, *Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*.

7 Ahmed, *Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*.

8 Ahmed, *Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 19.

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh completed this book in 1863 at the age of 33 and the processes of editing, printing and publishing took almost seven years. At that time the printing press had been installed at least every big city of the Punjab, but the main market of printing press was Lahore. Mian Muhammad Bakhsh remained there for three months in the house of Molvi Abdullah and proof-read the book by himself. But this very book is not available now. The oldest version can be traced is the book published from Lahore by Mian Muhammad Bakhsh in 1869, recently traced from London and reprinted in Pakistan by Saeed Ahmed in 2017.⁹ Mian Muhammad Bakhsh personally went and stayed at Lahore supervising all the procedures of publishing of *Saif al-Muluk*. As he says:

شہر لاہور مبارک اندر صحت کہتی بہ کے
مولوی عبداللہ جی دے خانے اندر رہ کے
پشت بہ پشت بزرگ ہوئے جیوں ایہ گھر وڈا قدیمی
اسان غریبوں کرن تواضع بولن نال حلیمی!

[Punjabi: I proofread this epic in the sacred city of Lahore at Molvi Abdullah's place. He inherited sainthood and a house quite ancient; still they show humility it should be now mentioned]

The Sufis predominantly adopted pro-people approach of interaction with authorities to benefit general populace¹⁰ and propagated their views through diverse methods, practices, rituals and literary genres. John O. Voll described Sufi textual literatures produced in, "all over the Muslim world in the 17th and 18th Centuries, and that the predominant

9 Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk Wa Badi Ul Jamal* [Urdu: *Saif Al-Muluk and Badi Ul Jamal*], First Edition Reprinted (Islamabad: Saeed Ahmed, 2017). See, preface by Saeed Ahmed, n.d.

10 Tanvir Anjum, *Chishti Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi 1190-1400: From Restrained Indifference to Calculated Defiance* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21.

literary genre in all the vernacular literatures was the mystical verse.”¹¹

Saif al-Muluk contains elements of subalternity and social critique (like other sufi poetry) in which Mian Muhammad Bakhsh pointed out numerous aspects of society those were flawed and detrimental for common people. A critique is critical analysis of existing social situations. Criticism appears to assume some standard or benchmark of critique. For example, in social critique one could set the social standards as a yardstick to evaluate the deeds, activities and actions of a person, social groups or organizations.¹² The poetry of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh is an example of social critique. He pointed out the deficiencies, injustices, lack of love among people in society, greed, materialism, etc. i.e. exploitation of common people in all fields in society. The school of subaltern¹³ historiography progressed in later half of the 20th Century propounded by Ranajit Guha who took the term subaltern from Antonio Gramsci's writings.¹⁴ Ranajit Guha defined the concept of subalternity as the opposite of elitism i.e. the common masses.¹⁵

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, a Sufi poet, belonged to the family of Saints of *Qadiriya Silsilah*¹⁶ 1830-1905. He had an

11 John O. Voll, "Neo-Sufism: Reconsidered Again," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 42, no. 2/3 (2008): 328.

12 Qamar Abbas, "Social Critique in Bulleh Shah's Poetry and its Contemporary Relevance," (Islamabad: M.Phil. Thesis, Quaid-i-Azam University, 2014), 7.

13 Jamsheed K. Choksy, "Subaltern," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Macmillan Reference USA, 2008),190.

14 Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian writer and a political activist his *Prison Notebooks* brought him unparalleled popularity. For details, see Naila Pervaiz, "The Subaltern School of Historiography," *Pakistan Journal of History & Culture* 38, no. 2 (2017): 26.

15 Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New Divan, 2019), 44. The elaboration of concept can be seen in Ranajit Guha's, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of India," in *Subaltern Studies* I, ed., Ranajit Guha, 1981, 37-44.

16 Ahmed, Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh,18.

innate fondness for poetry since childhood.¹⁷ His family had a bloodline with Pira Shah Ghazi, also known as Damri Wala, a well-known saint of the Qadiri Sufis. Khwaja Din Muhammad, the great-grandfather of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, was adopted by Damri Wala. His father, Mian Shams-ud-din Qadri, served as the Pir (spiritual successor) at Damri Wala's mausoleum. He belonged to the Gujar caste's Paswal clan. Early education of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh was instructed at home. Eventually he enrolled with his older brother in Hafiz Muhammad Ali's seminary in Samwal. He received education in a variety of fields including Tafseer, fiqh, logic, Ahadith, etc.¹⁸

He submitted himself to a Kashmiri Sheikh Ahmad Wali who resided in Srinagar for spiritual guidance. Transport was not available to travel to the seminary of Sheikh Ahmad Wali and he had to travel on foot. As a sign of respect, Mian Muhammad was given a turban. He received advice from Sheikh Ahmad, who also urged him to return. The Diwan of State Hashmat Roy in Srinagar gave him a warm welcome and showed him a great deal of respect. After leaving Srinagar, he constructed a straw hut at Khari Shareef, where he spent the next 14 years doing mystic rites. He concentrated on reading, writing, travelling and acquiring spiritual understanding while leading a life of celibacy.¹⁹ Although, he wrote almost one and a half dozens of books, but *Saif al-Muluk* took him to the zenith²⁰ of popularity. It is

17 Abu-al-Masood Muhammad Khalil Saqib, *Mian Muhammad Bakhsh: Ak Afaaqi Shair* [Urdu: Mian Muhammad Bakhsh: A Universal Poet] (Jhelum: Chaudhary Brothers, 1998), 29.

18 Muhammad Haqeeq, "Social Critique in Mian Muhammad Bakhsh's Saif Al-Muluk: An Analysis" (Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, 2016), 68-69.

19 Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, ed., Mehboob Ali Preshan, (Lahore: Hameed Book Depot, 1993), 513.

20 In the words of Christopher Shackle, "While well-known local legends like the romance of Hir and Ranjha inspired a great many Nineteenth Century Punjabi poems which tried to vie with Warith Shah's version of 1766, the later publishing history of the *Saif al-Muluk* story in the Punjabi language is dominated by one classic version only, which can fairly claim to be a masterpiece of all the many poems to which the tale gave rise." For details,

as popular in Pothohar as *Heer* of Waris Shahin the Punjab, and poetry of Khawaja Farid in Multan. This popularity is not restricted to the Punjab alone but also in the entire world.

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, being a selfless person, was not interested to keep his association with the elite.²¹ He was sympathetic to the common folks and liked to be the part of them. "Mian Muhammad Bakhsh was a social person," highlighting that facet of Muhammad Bakhsh's personality, Zubair Ahmed Qazi writes that, "he was not only a Sufi, a *zahid* and a pious man, but also a lover of the masses."²²

The intentions of writing this story may be various but the main cause was the message, the lesson of life; a continuous struggle. Connecting to the prevailing conditions of Kashmir is specifically and Muslims of the era generally, Sughra Sadaf points out the philosophy of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh quoting his verses as: "he has given not only the lesson of hope but also of struggle and upheld that man should always try to change the fate through adoption of tact."²³ As he said:

قصہ سیف ملوکے والا اس کلرن بن کہنل²⁴
 طلب ہمت کر کے چلے روانہ رکھے بہنل²⁵

see, Shackle, "The Story of Sayf Al-Mulūk in South Asia," 125.

- 21 He abstained not only keeping association with the higher ups but also avoided that depiction by someone else. He had sued against Jodh Singh-Sannat Singh publishers of Lahore on account of publishing his sketch in which he had been shown as presenting a book to Maharaja of Kashmir. For more on this (against taking favours from authorities) see, Hameed Ullah Shah Hashmi, *Punjabi Zuban-o-Adab* (Karachi: Anjuman-e-Taraqi-Urdu, 1988), 204.
- 22 Zubair Ahmed Qazi, "Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh Horan Dian Un-Chupian Si-Harfian, [Punjabi: Unpublished triplets of Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh]" *Khoj* 24, no. 1 (2001): 13.
- 23 Sughra Sadaf, *Falsafa-a-Ishaq: Mian Muhammad Bakhsh Ki Safar-UI-Ishaq Ka Khasusi Mutalla* [Urdu: Philosophy of Love: A Special Study of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh's Journey of Love] (Lahore: Al-Fasil Nashran Kutab, 2015), 316.
- 24 All the verses quoted here are taken from that version of *Saif Al-Muluk* which has been published by Hameed Book Depot Lahore. After the

[Punjabi: Saif Al Muluk has solid purpose/
it is to inspire and motivate the ideal.]²⁶

On another place, he said: "The whole object of the story is composed in one verse that whosoever seeks finds but love demands its price. It is not without any price at all. One has to suffer and pay the price to get something."²⁷ He had a multifarious personality which contains a prolific writer,²⁸ a literary critic, a psychoanalyst, a botanist, a storyteller, a social critic, a Sufi as well as a man of action.²⁹

The Tyrant Regimes and Conditions of Subalterns

The story of *Saif al-Muluk* by Mian Muhammad Bakhsh ultimately fulfilled another purpose i.e. history through literature. The critique³⁰ on kings and people of higher

comparison of about all the versions available in market, this copy seems to be more near to the original version that had been printed by Mian Muhammad Bakhsh himself in 1869 and reprinted by Saeed Ahmed in 2017. For a detailed discussion on different versions and their authenticity see, Haqeeq, "Social Critique in Mian Muhammad Bakhsh's Saif Al-Muluk," 22-34. See also, Sibat-ul-Hassan Zaigham, "Saif Al-Muluk Da Matan," in *Sanjeh Adab Di* [Punjabi: Sharing of Literature], ed. Mian Zafar Maqbool, (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Bashir and Sons, n.d.), 47-52.

- 25 Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, Saif Al-Muluk (Lahore: Hameed Book Depot, 1993), 43.
- 26 Most of the translated verses of *Saif al-Muluk* are taken from Saeed Ahmed's translations in booklet forms of the selections from *Saif al-Muluk*. The translations of verses which do not contain reference have been translated by the author.
- 27 Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom* (Rawalpindi: Adnan Books, 2004), 158.
- 28 By describing the intellectual eminence of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, M. Ashraf Chaudhri wrote, "Unlike many Sufis, he was a very scholarly person" and named about his 17 books. For details, see Chaudhri, *Sufi Poets of the Punjab* (Pakistan), 171.
- 29 Mian Muhammad Bakhsh knew well the art of wrestling. He had friendship with a wrestler named Kala. So, he used to practice wrestling in the *Akhara* (wrestling ring) of Kala. For more on hidden aspects like that of the life of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, see, Qazi, "Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh Horan Dian Un-Chupian Si-Harfian," 21.
- 30 Tim Dant, "Critical Social Theory: Culture, Society and Critique," 2003, 1-

authority by Mian Muhammad Bakhsh is the most vigorous and effective one as it covers almost all the features of inflictions on the masses. This criticism does have a historical context and background. Historically, Ranjit Singh occupied Kashmir in 1819 and the residents of the valley had to face severe cruelties from the governors. Afterwards, the East India Company sold Kashmir in the year 1846³¹ to Ghulab Singh Dogra against only 7500000 Nanik Shahi Rupees.³² This spearheaded towards a new era of inflictions:

The founding of the Dogra Raj in Kashmir, in 1846, brought with number of policies and practices that proved detrimental to the interests of the masses, in general, and the producing class, in particular. Apart from a regressive taxation policy, begār or forced-cum-unpaid labour was one of the most notorious systems of oppression that the Dogra rulers imposed on Kashmiris. The system of forced labour worked well in the backdrop of Dogras' assertion of "ownership" over Kashmir and its inhabitants, which conferred a status of slaves on the subjects of the state, thus justifying the use of peasants at any time and in any manner the State wanted to. The incidence of begār and the punishment meted out to the peasants on refusal to oblige was enough to degrade their morale.³³

There were numerous instances of official oppression. In addition to levying taxes over and beyond the State's legal share, the officials also upheld other sorts of forced labour. They created *begaar* [Urdu: forced labour with least payments] and confiscated property of the lower classes without paying them. Often, the tyrant regime established villages using unpaid labour build structures and cultivate

176, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446217535>.

- 31 On conclusion of the second Anglo-Sikh War, which took place several years after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Gulab Singh played an effective role bringing about the treaty between the British and the Sikhs. For his services, Gulab Singh received Kashmir from British under the treaty of Amritsar March 1846. For details, see, Lal, "Nature of Land Revenue System under the Dogras in Kashmir 1846-1885," 506.
- 32 Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy 1846-1990*, (Hertfordshire: Roxford Books, 1991), 8.
- 33 Suhail-ul-Rehman Lone, "Begār (Forced Labour) in Kashmir During the Dogra Period (1846-1947 A. D.)," *Indian History Congress*, Vol. 73 (2012), 861, 863, 867.

wastelands. Using peasants as labourers and carriers was thus the most obvious manifestation of *begaar* along with financial extortion.³⁴

... [D]uring the Dogra rule the economic structure was feudal in character where Maharaja was the sole claimant of land and landlords with some rights represent state in their estates granted and the peasant was deprived from the basic right to land till at least 1933. He was exploited everywhere and lived a life of destitute and hardships which kept him backward economically, socially and educationally as well.³⁵

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh had a gaze of an analyst on the contemporary society. He had taken a plunge into the minds and hearts of the people like a psycho-analyst, dig out the causes of their miseries, and offered them solutions.³⁶ He titled the authorities as '*Bashik Naag*', '*Sangsar*', '*Shutrsar*', '*Bozangi*', etc., to criticize and reveal their cruelties.³⁷ He skilfully described the plight of people in the following lines:

ہاشک ناگ آسمانساں پر غصیوں کنڈل مارے
آدمیاں نوں ٹنگن کارن چھلی نت کھلارے

[Punjabi: What you get while committing
these grave sins / where would you take
(the money) grabbed from the poor?]

کنڈل گپت کیتا اس قیدی کس راہو ں نس جاینے
ہر دم فکرا ساڈے لگا کر دا کھاینے کھاینے

34 Lone, "Begār (Forced Labour) in Kashmir During the Dogra Period," 862.

35 Showkat Ahmad Naik, "Landlords, Peasants and the Dogra Rule in Kashmir," *Indian History Congress*, Vol. 73 (2012), 791.

36 Laeeq Baberi, "Mian Muhammad Di Saif Vich Bandy Da Muhandra," [Punjabi: Human Sketch in the Poetry of Mian Muhammad] in *Sanjh Vichaar*, ed., Saeed Bhutta (Lahore: A. H. Publishers, 1997), 688-689.

37 Hameed Ullah Shah Hashmi, *Punjabi Zuban-o-Adab*, [Punjabi: Punjabi Language and Literature] (Karachi: Anjuman-e-Taraqi-a-Urdu, 1988), 67.

[Punjabi: A snake –like sky (king) coil and recoils in fury / always ready to bite us (it leaves no one from its poisonous bite)]

ڈنگ اس دے تھیں کوئی نہ خلی ہر اک نوں بس دہائی
سیکڑیل وچ اکس کسے کسے پر رحم نہیں اس بھائی

[Punjabi: This worry perpetrates every moment every one wait and no one isspared / It (snake) takes pity on none]

ظلم ایڈے تھیں کوئی نہ چھٹا ہر اک نوں پھٹ کیتوس
زخم گھنے تے مرہم نہ کوئی ناننہ پٹی سیتوس

[Punjabi: Dictators are cruel, cruelty do they show / they cut those head who cannot bow]

دم دم فکر غماں وچ مرینے کر خفگی دل تنگوں
کیکر بوگ بچا اسادا ظالم شیر پلنگوں³⁸

[Punjabi: We fear that doeth tear / a cruel lion, on us doeth jeer]

This portrayal is impossible for a person not having empathy towards the forgotten sections of society. He not only felt the pain and miseries³⁹ of the people of Kashmir—suffering under continuous tyrannical regimes—but also perceived it as it was going on him. Mian Muhammad unambiguously interpreted the brutality of the tyrant regime of Raja of Kashmir who kept wreaking havoc on bodies and minds of the innocent people.⁴⁰ The usage of different metaphors by

38 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 483.

39 By purchasing of Kashmir in just half million-pound sterling, Gulab Singh had thought that all the population of valley is like his chattels. "Some of his opponents he caused to be flayed alive, one of his favorite punishments," elaborates Alastair Lamb. For more on it, see Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy* 1846-1990, 8.

40 Hameed Ullah Shah Hashmi, Arif-e-Khari Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh [Urdu: Mystic of Khari: Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh] (Jhelum:

him elaborates the actual situation of people as he declares 'Naag'(Snake) and 'Asman' (Sky) as a multipurpose nomenclature that "one serves the all"—covering the whole situation. It shows the absolutism, of being authoritative regime of Raja who had overpowered the innocent common folks not on the bodies but also consciences and souls of the people like sky, venomous and lethal like snake which is not sparing anyone from his poison and sucking their blood without any distinction.⁴¹

بادشاہاں نوں پچھ بوے گی مظلوماں دے حالوں
کھسی رب وڈیا تینوں دے عزت اقبالوں

[Punjabi: Kings (Rulers and Bosses) will be answerable for their treatment of the tyrannized. God will say: 'You were elevated by granting you honourable positions']⁴²

توٹاٹھا ایہ لسے کیتے تیرا شان ودھایا
کیوں تده انصاف نہ کیتا بطل حق رلایا⁴³
لسے اتے زور لگانوں کم نہ زور اور دا!
مویاں ہویاں نوں پھر کی ماریں بے انصافا مردا⁴⁴

[Punjabi: You were given power and glory and they (your subjects) were made powerless. Why did not you dispense justice? Why did you mingle wrong with right?]

Bookcorner, 2013), 66.

41 Hashmi, *Punjabi Zuban-o-Adab*, 206.

42 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 140.

43 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 370.

44 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 353.

It is unmanly to oppress the down-trodden / an unjustly cruel person inflicts his cruelty on the helpless]⁴⁵

After criticizing the men in authority, he admonishes the king from the Almighty. He condemns the autocratic powers of that Raja and warns him saying that these powers are transitory in nature and bestowed by God and can be taken back as well. Whatever the powers he would enjoy, ultimately, he has to face the consequences:

ظالم دا تده زور نہ بہنیاں دس سزا قہر دی
لسے دا اہر لا چھٹیوںی کر کے عجب نا مردی⁴⁶

[Punjabi: You did not crush the power of a wicked person by awarding him befitting punishment. You showed unmanliness by failing to patronize the weak]⁴⁷

Kashmiri masses were subjected to face undue taxation,⁴⁸ exploitative tactics and ridiculous punishments. Hameed Ullah Shah Hashmi, while explaining the conditions of the common people wrote, “the ridiculous and queer taxes like hearth tax, window tax, house tax was levied, the mosques were locked, religious liberties were banned and the social harmony was disturbed. The Muslims were burnt alive on the cow-slaughter issue.”⁴⁹ Moreover, “the magnitude of taxation was such that even sometimes the actual village assets fell short of fulfilling their revenue liabilities. The liabilities were

45 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 142.

46 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 370.

47 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 142.

48 The State demand at the time consisted of one half of the produce. In addition to this, peasant had to pay about sixteen percent of the produce as Traḳee and Abwabs. The total demand amounted to 2/3 of the produce and 1/3 was left with the peasant. For details, see, Ratan Lal and Ratan Lal Hangloo, “Nature of Land Revenue System under the Dogras in Kashmir 1846-1885,” *Indian History Congress*, Vol. 43 (1982), 501.

49 Hashmi, *Arif-e-Khari Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 106.

met from other assets than those of crops. Sheep were sold, blankets were sent to the city and villagers tried to reach money by selling wood and grass and carrying loads.”⁵⁰

برف غماندی سڑ سوکا یا سبز ہ رنگ رنگیلا
ککر پونے محّد پانی جھاگ بجر دا بیلا
سرو آزاد کھلوتا قیدی ارغوان رت پیندا
سنیل کیوں حیران پریشان لالے داغ سنیندا⁵¹

[Punjabi: Frost of sorrows withers many flowers red
/ Separation pinches, and makes us dead
Birch though stands straight and still / Snow
does bend it though not kill]

ننگی شاخ کنگال بیجاری لوٹی جویں سپاہی
کھڑ کھڑ کردے پت محمدؐ چلے وطن چھڈ راہی⁵²

[Punjabi: Kings guard do cruelty display /
autumn it is in the month of May]

The *Dogra* rulers tried to extract money and applied another series of new taxes on the already hand to mouth masses. If these taxes were not paid, the regime ruthlessly punished the masses without any discrimination. Mian Muhammad Bakhsh was an eyewitness of these tumultuous and unfortunate times when the bargaining of his innocent countrymen took place. The references of the descriptions can be traced from his poetry he has given on several occasions.⁵³ When an official of the Raja ousted a disciple of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh from the job, he confronted this act in following verses:

50 Naik, "Landlords, Peasants and the Dogra Rule in Kashmir," 787.

51 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 484.

52 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 484.

53 Ayesha Rehman, "Saif Al-Muluk Ty Saiful Nama Da Taqabli Mutalia" (University of the Punjab, n.d.), 256.

مان نہ کرنیے راجیا سدا نہ کر میں راج
 کوئی دن ظلم کمانیکے اوڑک کہاسیں بھاج
 سن لے عرض غریب دی نہ کر ایڈ مزاج
 نوکر رکھ مجھدا اج اسیں محتاج

[Punjabi: "O arrogant Raja, your sway will soon decay / if you keep oppressing, you will have to pay listen to this poor don't show him attitude / Employ him Muhammad, poverty is his attribute.]

He challenged not only his autocracy but also the pride and reminded him of the momentary trait of his authority. He criticized on their arrogance and brutality on the naive people and warned him about the karma⁵⁴ that would boomerang on him in lieu of his inflictions. Additionally, he tried to uplift the spirits of his fellow beings through different stories and prayed from God to bestow the inhabitants such a lion heart that they end that yoke of slavery.

رحمت دا مینہ پا خدایا باغ سکا کر پریا
 بوٹا اس امید میری دا کر دے میوے بھریا⁵⁵

[Punjabi: O God! Send showers of blessings and turn my drought-stricken garden green. Let my plant of hope (aspiration) be laden with fruit]⁵⁶

In that process of giving hope to them, he did not detach himself like common poets who are not men of action generally; instead, he proved his commitment of standing with them through thick and thin. He has given voice to the people whose voice had been suppressed with iron hands. He tried to give a moral lesson to people of power and

54 In Buddhism and Hinduism, the sum of somebody's good and bad actions in one of their lives, believed to decide what will happen to them in the next life.

55 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 5.

56 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 13.

showed them that to rule the powerless with brutality is not an act of bravery but cowardice.

ایسے پاپ کماؤں وچوں کی تئیںوں ہتھ لگدا
کی لیجا میں دنیا اتوں پھریں غریبوں ٹھگدا⁵⁷

[Punjabi: What do you gain by committing such sins? What will you take from this world by cheating the poor?]⁵⁸

مظلوماں دا ہتھ پکڑے جے کر عدل شایانہ
روز حشر دے شاہ پوچھیں کرےیں کے بہانہ
بس میرا کچھ وس نہ چلدا کے تسلا کھوینا
لسے دا کے زور محمد نس جانا یا رونا⁵⁹

[Punjabi: The hungry should be fed, the helpless should be dealt/or on dooms day, your pride before God will melt. I can't impose; for I do power lack / the submissive always turn their back.]

Critique on Inaction and Timidity

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh was a man of action and was against inaction. Like a true surgeon of the subconscious of masses, he diagnosed the mentality of enslavement and focused on the solutions and admonished them that life is a continuous struggle.⁶⁰ The constant subjugation, repressive tactics and the undue system of taxation had captured the minds of the common man. Their minds cannot think other than petty issues of making both ends meet on daily basis. People had lost hope due to prevailing situations ultimately snatching their abilities to act. The pessimism had clenched their souls and they had become habitual of waiting for

57 Bakhsh, Saif Al-Muluk, 353.

58 Ahmed, Great Sufi Wisdom, 138.

59 Bakhsh, Saif Al-Muluk, 305.

60 Ahmed, *Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 56.

someone who will come, fight for them, and end their miseries. Their abilities to act were rotten, so Mian Muhammad Bakhsh tried to encourage them to take the charge and leave idleness.⁶¹

عورت کتنسی تابیں لاسی کڑتا ستہن سلاری
مرد کیے گا سویو کہیتی جس دا بیج کھلاری⁶²

[Punjabi: Women does earn from domestic chores / man does earn by ploughing land's pores]

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh's criticized an idle person in such a way that he termed him "unmanly."⁶³ He understood the actual cause of their fears to act and tried to eradicate that fear from their minds.

مردا ہمت بار نہ مولے مت کوئی کہے نمردا
ہمت نال لگے جس لوڑے پائے بابجہ نہ مردا

[Punjabi: O Man of courage! Never lose your heart, as none could call you a coward (a poor-spirited person). Only with strong will and commitment can you find whatever you seek.]⁶⁴

He even gave the example of the beggars to whom people consider very idle, but he also had to move for attaining of his food.

جھل جھل بار نہ باریں ہمت بک دن پھر سی پاسا
بھکھا منگن چڑے محمد اوڑک بھردا کلسا

61 Sadaf, *Falsafa-a-Ishaq*, 71.

62 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 75.

63 Sadaf, *Falsafa-a-Ishaq*, 144.

64 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 45.

[Punjabi: Leave disappointment, wheel of fortune will turn / Strive hard, you will have your fill at your turn]

لوڑن والا ربیا نہ خالی، لوڑ کیتی جس سچی
لوڑ لہندا جو مڑ آیا، لوڑ اوبدی گن کچی⁶⁵

[Punjabi: A true seeker (searcher) will never remain empty handed. His seeking were fake who returned empty handed.]⁶⁶

He urged them to strive hard and always keep the light of hope and offered them the message that no one remembers the difficulties of the path after getting success. He criticized the people on their timidity and idleness, who overlook the damages inflicted upon the cruel authorities. He said an enemy should not be forgotten in the time of peace because luck does not favour the timid. The vigilant canal ways keep their freedom intact. As he elaborates: "Do not feel at ease even when the enemy has gone or is dead. Even if the fang of a dead snake pricks you, you may die of pain."⁶⁷

Criticism on Pessimistic Outlook

Pessimism is a disorder in ones thought process that makes inner of a person hollow. The sufferer of this remains in fear of losing, adopts idleness and lacks initiative. '*Saif al-Muluk*' is full of wisdom and contains many useful messages for people. Mian Muhammad Bakhsh not only criticizes but also tells the fellowmen to take certain steps to get salvation.⁶⁸ He explores the mechanisms of pessimism a cause of many shortcomings, embedded within human beings and motivates them to muster up courage for the fulfilment of their goals.⁶⁹

65 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 25.

66 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 127.

67 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 134.

68 Chaudhri, *Sufi Poets of the Punjab* (Pakistan), 177.

69 Chaudhri, *Sufi Poets of the Punjab* (Pakistan), 55.

لا امید نہ بسڑ جائیں کرن دنین کوئی چارا
مت رب پاک سبب بنائے میلے یار پیارا

[Punjabi: Don't be hopeless do your best /
you may find your friend and rest]

ڈھونٹش والے مژن نہ خالی خود حضرت فرماوے
ویکھان سیف الملوکے ولوں جو لوڑے سو پاوے⁷⁰

[Punjabi: The seekers never return empty
handed, says *Hazrat*. Look at Saif al-Muluk,
he gets whatever he seeks.]⁷¹

Critique on Lacking Sympathy for the Oppressed

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh knew that the social upheavals made the hearts of the people unsympathetic. A sensitive heart can judge the depth of the feelings of a person especially a person in pain.

نکھینے دی گل دکھیا سن دا، قیمت قریچھانے
کے دکھیا جو دکھینے آگے نسه نہیں وبانی

[Punjabi: A grieved person listens to a
grieved one and a joyful person listens to
the happy man. As the grieved sobs, the
joyful feels perturbed.]⁷²

جیوں نکھینے نوں نکھیا مل کے بنجوں بھرہر روندنا
سکھینے تائیں تک کے سکھیا ایسا خُس نہ بوندنا⁷³

[Punjabi: The grieved one meets another
grieved person and cries with eyes full of
tears, but the joyful person does not feel

70 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 65.

71 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 59.

72 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 79.

73 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 147.

pleasure meeting another joyful person. A rich person feels jealous of another rich person whereas the grieved person shares the grief of others.]⁷⁴

Moreover, he criticized the prosperous strata of society that they are usually jealous to one another; however, the suffered people feel empathy for the people in trouble. He is working to bring unity among the down-trodden and urged them to feel the miseries of their fellows.

Criticism on Lack of Literary and Artistic Taste

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh was also a literary critic, presenting literary criticism on poetry from Baba Farid to his contemporary writers.⁷⁵ He had a different philosophy regarding art and craft of writing literature to contemporary poets and artists. He was a mystic with right-mindedness who not only knew the poetic world but also felt it by externalizing and absorbing its very essence and finally personified the local habitat through the medium of words.⁷⁶

It is beyond doubt that there are certain circumstances, situations and conditions-environment that led a man to be an artist. But every writer has different personal worldview that may be called motivation, background of composing something or the actual cause of any writing. This motivational force could be Nature with all its phenomenal beauty or the claustrophobic atmosphere taking someone into the veil of dismay or even it could be the pain. That pain surrounds the writer in everyday situations, his soul and takes the essence of life. He not only feels but absorbs countless shades of pain through his tender heart. These shades of pain are; the pangs that the starved feel when their children have nothing to eat, the pain of a lonely person who is disdained by everyone, the cravings that separated

74 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 89.

75 K. S. Narang, *History of the Punjab: 1500-1858* (New Delhi: U.C. Kapur and Sons, 1969), 183.

76 Hashmi, *Arif-e-Khari Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 175.

lovers feel for beloveds and the pain that someone experience when his faith is shaken. The apogee of a poet's poetic craftsmanship, according to Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, is the pain of the artist reflects in his verses in such a way that everyone feels the pain of his own self.

سخن بہلا جو دردوں بہریا بن دردوں کچھ نابیں
نژان کماداں فری رپودا کیا کتے کیا کابیں!⁷⁷

[Punjabi: "Poetry is not poetry if pain it does
lack/ Sugarcane are reed, without sugar.]

His insistence on getting the perfection in the art through imparting pain was genuine.⁷⁸ He knew very well if someone tries to write tragedy by guessing feelings will ultimately end up in failure. He said that one must go through the perceptive feelings of that very pain for the expression of emotions of pain if he did not go through the actual pain.⁷⁹ He believed that one can explain the emotions if he portrays this very pain in best possible and imaginable style through which he had gone through. As Hameed Ullah Shah reveals, "During the description of fictional story of *Saif al-Muluk*, he returns to his actual tale which is hidden inside his heart."⁸⁰

قصے پور کسے دے اندر دہانے کچھ ہوں
بن بیڑاں تائیراں نابیں بے بیڑے کنرووں⁸¹

[Punjabi: Poets reflect their own pain when
do they write without pain / just words in
their poetry, fight.]

77 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 27.

78 Syed Khawar Hussain Qadri, *Seerat-e-Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh* [Urdu: Biography of Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh], (Lahore: Maktaba-e-Siraj-e-Munir, 2012), 80.

79 Hashmi, *Arif-e-Khari Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 75.

80 Hashmi, *Arif-e-Khari Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 80.

81 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 27.

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh gave primacy to pain and the spontaneity⁸² that leads to write a literary piece or poetic works—the standard which he followed lifted his *Safar-ul-Ishaq* to the level of classics.⁸³ William Wordsworth, one of the renowned English romantic poets defined poetry as an “overflow of powerful emotions.”⁸⁴ He had the view that a person having no pain, of any sort, in his heart could not compose better verses and actually, “his personal pain is reflected in the narration of the story of *Saif al-Muluk*” says Sharif Kunjahi.⁸⁵ This view goes near to modern theorists’ view that put forward about writing that a writer cannot write anything without having experience.

درد لگے تانبائے نکلے کوئی کوئی ربنده جرے
دلبر اپنے دی گل کیجیے اوراں نونمنہ دھرے

[Punjabi: A few could help sighing when pain does
shake / for one talks of beloved when references
make]

جو شاعر بے بیڑا ہووے سخن اوہدے بھی رکھے
بے بیڑے تھیں شعر نہ بو نداگ بن دھوں نہ کہ دھکھے⁸⁶

[Punjabi: If a poet has no sense of sorrow
(wishful feelings for others), his verses are
also shallow (without depth or passion).
Poetry without sorrow is not possible just as
fire does not burn without smoke.]⁸⁷

82 Saqib, *Mian Muhammad Bakhsh: Ak Afaaqi Shair*, 72.

83 Sharif Kunjahi, “Mian Muhammad Bakhsh Sahb” in *Jhaatan*, ed. Saeed Bhutta (Lahore: Saanjh, 1997), 114. See Also Maula Bakhsh Kushta, *Punjabi Shaieran Da Tazkira* [Punjabi: Tribute to Punjabi Poets] (Lahore: Anjaman-a-Taraqi-a-Adab, 1960), 198.

84 William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967, 2013), 13
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203823613>,

85 Kunjahi, “Mian Muhammad Bakhsh Sahb,” 683-684.

86 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 27.

87 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 48.

The Punjabi word '*Rukha*' has broad variety of meanings. It implies that a dry and monotonous, uninteresting, useless, and dull. Mian Muhammad Bakhsh has allocated this label to the poets who lack feel and depth. The point of difference came when he advises these poets to refrain from wasting time if they could not produce poetry that casts a magical effect upon readers. These poets, by one way or the other, attain popularity but did not have the qualities of a real poet. They produce commercialized art get some reputation and benefits but could not attain immortality- no rack value.⁸⁸ The given lines better clarify the given situation:

آگ بن دھواں نہ دھکھے

“[Punjabi: Smoke is caused only due to fire.]⁸⁹

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh was adherent of *ikhlas* [Urdu: sincerity] in each and every sphere of life.⁹⁰ Similarly, he adheres to the level of producing the art which generate in someone's aesthetics feeling him the same. The so-called artist fails at the starting point when he follows either trial and error trick for getting precision in his craft or uses supposition for conceiving someone else's sentiments.

درد متناں دے سخن محمد دین گواہی حالوں
جس پلے پُہل بدھے بوون آوے بُو رومالوں⁹¹

[Punjabi: “The words of compassionate people stand witness to their personality. The handkerchief filled with flowers emits fragrance only.”]⁹²

88 Qadri, *Seerat-e-Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 101.

89 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 48.

90 Hashmi, *Arif-e-Khari Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 189.

91 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 27.

92 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 49.

Moreover, he criticizes the poets who try to get motivation from the other poets. He termed their art as the jugglers (*Doom*),⁹³ who use their art to praise people of higher status. To Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, the art of poetry is sacred and divine, the jugglers, clowns and verifiers cannot produce the real art of poetry-the poetry which is sublime and transcendental.⁹⁴ He spitefully condemns the courtier poets who are professionals and their art is for the trivial purpose-it lacks the essence and beauty of a true art. The focus of a poet should be to serve the humanity, to illuminate the minds of common folk and to educate the simpletons.⁹⁵

In fact, it would be quite appropriate to say that poetry is not everyone's cup of tea as a poet's eyes see which everyone cannot see, as Shakespeare puts in, "frenzy rolling doth glance from heaven to earth and earth to heaven."⁹⁶ As poetry is in essence a divine thing, it is revealed in a proper rhyme, rhythm, manner and sequence. The versifiers play with the words and could easily be recognized due to the artificiality, superficiality, pomp and show. The playing with words by shaping them in order and giving them specific rhythm is not poetry but versification. In fact, Mian Muhammad Bakhsh is trying to suggest the versifiers to leave the arena of poetry; it is not a real poetry, it lacks feelings. As he felt vastness of experience as the basics for the writer, so he admonishes the rhymesters who yearn after the bubble repute of being a poet to leave poetry.⁹⁷ The following verse of him clearly separates the two; the true poet and a sheer versifier:

ردی دریفوں نام نہ جانن قافیوں بدھ نہ کائی
وزن برابریں تشدا جڑا صنعت رسم نہ بھائی

93 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 27.

94 Hashmi, *Punjabi Zuban-o-Adab*, 76.

95 Qadri, *Seerat-e-Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 103.

96 Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, 35.

97 Qadri, *Seerat-e-Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 102.

[Punjabi: Men with no knowledge of prosody or rhythm (of poetry) / have no poetry but versification.]

ویکھ وویکھی بیت بناون شعروں خبر نہ پاون
ایس طرح تے صفتل سٹھاں بہتے توم بناون⁹⁸

[Punjabi: Amateurs can't feed the art; for they just couplets versify / Jesters do then verses make with the meter, rhyme and cry.]

Moreover, Mian Muhammad Bakhsh condemns the so-called poets, who utilize pompous and flowery language to show their scholarly snobbery through which they try to prove them higher from the common masses. But such work of art is nothing but showing off and that may not touch the hearts instead it takes the writer away from the reader. The sole criteria according to Mian Muhammad Bakhsh should be creating impact and bringing change in the lives and mentality of the common man. The philosophical minded authors can formulate heaps of words of philosophies through the power of their knowledge but they cannot be mentors of the people if they try to make their poetry uninspiring by use of these artificial means. The talented poets, on the other hand, can create stanzas that move so many stone-hearted people.⁹⁹

پک علم دے زورون کردے اوہ بھی ظاہر دسدا
جس پر بوئے عطا الہی سخن نہ چھپدا تیں دا¹⁰⁰

[Punjabi: The artificiality of poetic craftsmanship cannot be concealed / whereas God-gifted inspiration (in poetry) cannot go unobserved.]

98 Bakhsh, Saif Al-Muluk, 27.

99 Chaudhry, Sufi Poets of the Punjab(Pakistan).

100 Bakhsh, Saif Al-Muluk, 27.

In a society, there is an abundance of non-aesthete and ignorant people who neither can understand the essence nor can estimate the true value of a literary piece. These ignorant can rank a superficial work and an amateur effort high and overlook a classic piece. A classic can be gauged by a person having literary sense just like pearly can check the worth of a pearl.¹⁰¹ The following verse elaborates this,

دانش مند پچھان کریندے عامان سار نہ بہائی
الکڑ ہارے لین بازاروں جو سستی مٹھائی¹⁰²

[Punjabi: Men of vision can distinguish between good and bad, ordinary men have no such vision as they have just focused on their worldly wishes. Woodcutters buy cheap sweet from the bazaar.]¹⁰³

By saying *amman saar*, he reveals the typical nature of amman with average mentality and intellect. These people think from their stomachs and do not remember the actual purpose of their creation. The chaotic conditions made people to think in terms of their survival- the futile consumption of their abilities on the petty issue of life. Discussing matters of literary taste and sense is like casting pearls before swine.¹⁰⁴ But it does not mean that *Saif al Muluk* was written for chosen few of the society. A classic piece of literature should cover a huge range of audience. It should contain different layers and shades of meanings covering every aspect of life, every class of society, the content should be embedded in such a way that outer layer should be for the commoners and the innermost philosophical layers should be for the intellectuals. Mian Muhammad Bakhsh masterfully inserted these layers for people of each intelligence level in a manner that from the

101 Ahmed, *Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 68.

102 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 27.

103 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 50-51.

104 Ahmed, *Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhsh*, 70.

average mentality to the professionals all can appreciate its worth.¹⁰⁵ He puts in the given verse:

بات مجازی رمز حقائق ون وناں دی کاتھی
سفرالعشق کتاب بنائی سیف چھپی وجہ لائھی¹⁰⁶

[Punjabi: The secret of the 'Real' has been (clothed under that of the Temporal'. In this book titled *Saif Al-Muluk (Safar ul-Ishq)*, that I have written, there is as word hidden under the stick (it is an allegory).]¹⁰⁷

Unlike the snobbish poets who show their pompous language his poetry enriches the mental capacities of common readers through simple yet interesting way and nourishes the intellectuals' minds with greatest ideas by activating their curiosity. The philosophy of universal brotherhood leads him to not discriminate between the intellectuals and the people having low mental capabilities. That his treatment to the commoners and the intellectuals alike made him and *Saif al Muluk* popular in society on such a great pinnacle that its most of the verses have achieved a level of proverb.¹⁰⁸

Criticism on Impatience

Man is eager in nature and his greed for quick results always compels him to be impatient. This impatience induces him to forget that there is a specific time for its completion. Mian Muhammad Bakhsh refers quick fixes to the 'Satan' while works done in relaxation contain God's will.

صبر کریں نامید نہ ہوویں لیسیں اجر جنابوں
مٹھے کم بوون رحمانی بہتر کر شتابوں

105 Sadaf, *Falsafa-a-Ishaq*, 58.

106 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 27.

107 Chaudhry, *Sufi Poets of the Punjab* (Pakistan), 175.

108 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 512.

[Punjabi: Be patient and never lose hope. You will get your reward from God. Deeds done discretely (apparently slowly without a fuss) and with patience are Divine and they are better than works done in an irrational hurry.]¹⁰⁹

The hasty and self-indulgent people are usually enthusiastic in nature who want rapid fulfilment of their dreams. These lines of *Saif Al-Muluk* are gems of wisdom having critique for the enthusiastic person:

بیٹھ نچلا کر خوشحالی چھڈ ایہ جھورا من دا
تھنڈا لوہا کھیاں بٹیا کونی ہتھیار نہ بن دا¹¹⁰

[Punjabi: Be calm, leave anxiety of your heart, wait / strike when the iron is hot]

Mian Sahib in a non-conventional manner advises the impatient to forget the short cuts.

Critique on Social Vices

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh severely criticized on people having tendencies of social vices of any sort because he considers these as the main cause behind the chaos on society. He warned his readers about the inherent fault of evil-natured person:

دنیا ڈاڈی دوتی دشمن دکھی لوک فسادی
چچی دا چا کان بنون ہتھوں کجہ زیادتی¹¹¹

[Punjabi: The world is a severe enemy of humanity (here world means worldly men/women who indulge in worldly pleasures and follow the worldly wishes blindly. They become the severe enemies of each other.) They are full of jealousy. They

109 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 140.

110 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 65.

111 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 222.

make crow out of a tiny finger and overstate the affairs. They make mountain out of a molehill.]¹¹²

He criticized the liars stating that a liar is punished through the misfortune he himself brings on him that people lose faith on him. Lying is the mother of all vices. If someone wants to control vices in him, he should avoid lying.¹¹³ He said:

کوڑے بندے رب نہ بھلون یمن زبا ن نہ ریندا
گل بودی کوئی مندا نا بین سب جگ جھوٹا کہندا¹¹⁴

[Punjabi: God does not like liars because their tongues lose blessings. No one believes in what he (who tells lie) says and all call him a liar.]¹¹⁵

A person initiates lying from a single lie but traps himself in a vicious cycle of unending loop that never ends because he must tell a series of lies in order to conceal an initial lie. Actually, a liar adopts this in a specific situation, and it may give it some benefits initially but in the long run it makes him habitual because he considers lying as saviour. It distorts the image of the personality of a liar, and he gets the tag of an unfaithful. After losing the faith and trust of people that person becomes socially undesirable.¹¹⁶

بے اعتبار خوار جگت تے کوڑا لاون والا
کیہ لاجر کراں میں جھوٹے خوشامد لالہ¹¹⁷

[Punjabi: The liar gets nothing but mistrust / I won't get anything from flatteries just.]

112 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 106.

113 Sadaf, *Falsafa-a-Ishaq*, 159.

114 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 159.

115 Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom*, 92.

116 Chaudhri, *Sufi Poets of the Punjab (Pakistan)*, 178.

117 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 159.

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh considers that the fame and character of a man should be genuine. If a person gets a reputation of a cheater in the eyes of fellow men he loses not only their trust but also creates duplicity in his character. This duplicity leads to another problem that distorts the mirror of one's personality i.e. hypocrisy. A hypocrite has double standards he chooses for himself a far better thing and has no interest for the others. A Sufi neither has double standards nor does he tolerate them. Mian Muhammad Bakhsh criticizes the hypocrite in following piece of wisdom:

بہیٹاں وانگ حلیم نکھوئیں نیت دے بہگیاڑا
 مثل فرشتے صورت نسے باطن دیواواڑا
 سچوں کوڑ نکھیزن نہیں تہمت لان شتابی
 پاک پلید پریت نہ لوڑن جوڑن چا خرابی¹¹⁸

[Punjabi: You are Satan's pet you will've our loathing / as you appear wolf in sheep's clothing. People do stigmatize what to them appear / they know not right and wrong nor from God do they fear].

Conclusion

The poetry of Sufi poets is pro-people and against the approaches of elite. They wrote selfless, neutral and people-oriented literature which ultimately influenced the masses. Their critique on different aspects of society was to eliminate miseries and add comfort in the lives of public. They not only served, urged for action and helped the subalterns but also represented as we can observe in *Saif-Al-Muluk* of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh.

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh adopted the tool of social critique to not only guide the fellow countrymen but also criticize the wrong steps of authorities which were detrimental for the subalterns. On the one hand, his critique was directed towards the common people and on the other hand he was sympathetic to them. This apparent contradiction was

118 Bakhsh, *Saif Al-Muluk*, 347.

actually due to his sympathies for the people he didnot want to see them unsuccessful in not only this life but also afterlife. So, he criticized on the actions which are the part and parcal of the bad characters and will lead them to hell. Moreover, these acts are injurious for the society, the social wellbeing of the subalterns and the social structures in general. This touches the field of subaltern studies as it is pro-people and takes the interest into the problems of the masses. Thus, the works of Sufis generally and Mian Muhammad Bakhsh specifically can be inducted into the field of subaltern studies. And by exploring these sources we can get the better picture of the prevailing situations those were left out by statist discourse and normative writtings of the historians.