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## **Punjabi Folk Songs and Stories behind Old Cities of Multan and Lahore**

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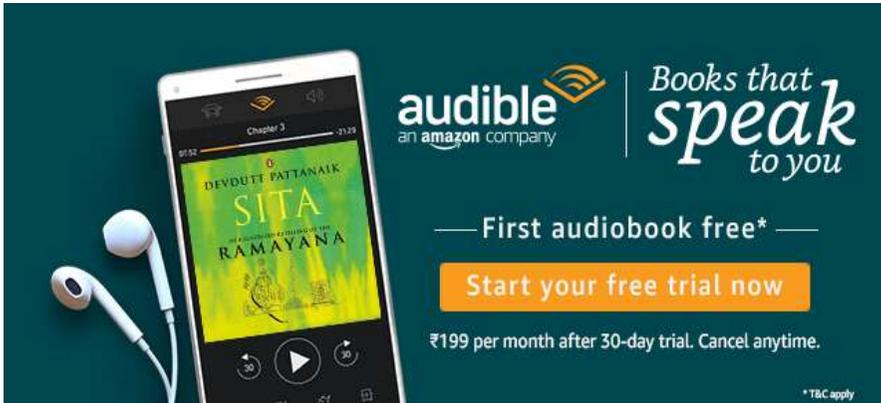
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### **Abstract**

The paper looks into how city of Multan and Lahore became part of tropes that run in Punjabi Folk songs. It looks at the relationship of cities and its people and how these spatial outlooks are manifested in a community's folk lore.

### **Keywords**

Punjabi Folk Songs, Indian-subcontinent Cities, Post-colonial literature, Punjabi folk lore.



## **Punjabi Folk Songs and Stories behind Old Cities of Multan and Lahore by Armeen Kaur Ahuja**

Multan chooses its identity through what it is not; part of West Punjab Multan is a province which sees itself independent of Punjab and *Punjabiyyat*. Articulating their identity and language as Multani the people of Multan assert recognition for their distinctive identity and culture. Southern region of West Punjab has presently become a site of lingual conflict whereby Saraiki speaking populace is demanding not only recognition of the language independent of Punjabi but also land- proposed to be Saraikistan- independent of Punjab province and other regions of Pakistan. This city settled on the eastern bank of river Chenab has remained pivotal in all ages. 11<sup>th</sup> century saw the city of Multan as a superior trading city, preferable than Lahore. The merit was its location, settled on the bank of Chenab Multan is site where three rivers- Jhelum, Chenab and Ravi meet and flow towards the south eventually joining river Indus. Additionally, river Satluj is also to the east of Multan and there is a probability that Ghaggar might have also had its course not very far from Multan. This obviously made Multan a major commercial city in days of sea trade with Persia and Central Asia. 11<sup>th</sup> century also witnessed Mahmud Ghazni's invasion in Multan, and the city's future remained troubled in coming centuries when it

faced attacks from central Asian Mongols. Punjab remained tumultuous in this age when Beas functioned as the frontier for Delhi Sultanate (Mongols were invading via East Punjab) and West Punjab saw shrinking population and upheavals. The Sultanate era also saw rise of Islam in West Punjab's areas like Lahore and Multan, which chiefly sprung from effort to resist the Mongols.

*"A 'Hindu' was willing to embrace Islam after he found no Hindu raja around him able to organize resistance against the Mongols, whereas Delhi's Sultan and his functionaries in Multan, Dipalpur and Lahore often attempted to do so."  
(Gandhi, 30)*

By 16<sup>th</sup> century Mughal sultanate had deepened its roots and stay in Punjab. While Lahore became Kabul's trading partner, Multan chiefly did its trade with Qandahar. Dipalpur was a city settled half-way between Multan and Lahore; thus joining the two most important trade centres. Lahore and Multan had grown at same pace and had fallen together in 11<sup>th</sup> century due to invasion of Mahmud who attacked Multan in 1006 and Lahore in 1021 making the latter his capital. Akbar's reign was divided into Delhi *subah*, Multan *subah* and Lahore *subah*. Multan included areas of Sindh and Lahore was expansive central area of Punjab. This empire that stretched up to Kabul and Qandahar in north-west saw peace in Punjab, though not without revolts. Sandal Bar mentioned in earlier chapter was harbour to Dulla Bhatti a celebrated folk hero who rebelled against Akbar.

*It was all commotion and clamour in Lahore, (ਧੁਮਾਂ ਪੈ ਗਿਆਂ  
ਲਾਹੌਰ ਵਿਚ ਸਾਰੇ)  
When Laddi gave birth to Dulla, (ਲੱਦੀ ਨੇ ਜਦੋਂ ਦੁੱਲਾ ਜੰਮਿਆ)  
God your design is unmatched, (ਮੇਲਾ ਤੇਰੇ ਰੰਗ ਨਜਾਰੇ)  
everyone talks of him in the villages, (ਪਿੰਡਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਹੁੰਦੀਆਂ)*

The song narrates family details of Abdullah Bhatti and his eventful clash with Akbar. Interestingly however the song begins with mentioning the news of Dulla's birth reaching the seat of Mughal Empire in Lahore. Lahore is an obvious metonymy to denote the

sultanate and while the song moves in chronology from his birth to revolt, it on the onset notoriously mentions that news of Dulla Bhatti's birth, 130 kms away from Lahore, had reached and was *celebrated* in Lahore. The song is naturally born after 1599 (year of his death) and during the time when his figure had become a hero among the folk. These songs generally celebrate Bhatti's altruism through robbing the Mughal army battalions and other rich in order to distribute the looted wealth among peasants and needy; and cleverly records the chase-and-run dialogue of Sandal bar and Lahore – which went on for fifteen years until Dulla was captured and executed in Lahore. Bhatti's revolt was, among various other things, against taxes and to assert independent rights on his land.

An advertisement for Amazon Prime membership. It features a blue background with a white starburst on the left containing the text 'PRIME AT ₹ 999 PER YEAR\*'. In the center, the 'amazon prime' logo is displayed in white and blue. Below the logo, three benefits are listed in stylized, bubbly fonts: 'Original Shows', '1-day delivery\*', and 'Ad-free Music'. A yellow 'Join now' button is positioned at the bottom center. In the bottom right corner, the text '\*T&C Apply' is visible.

Lahore's exuberant and pompous Mughal sultanate has been variously recorded in history. A Portuguese Jesuit, who visited Lahore during Akbar's reign believed the city to be one of biggest cities in terms of size and wealth in Asia and Europe, and second to none. Around this time (initial centuries of Mughal sultanate) a conscious difference between Multani and Lahori as variant dialects was present. A sufi saint poet Baba Farid was celebrated and revered throughout Punjab, but his dialect was called Multani in Lahore where Guru Nanak, a sufi saint poet of fifteenth century also became a revered poet of Punjabi dialect which is often called Lahori. These two ancient trade centres are both located on the river banks which

make for an obvious trading post, but Al Biruni's *Kitab-al-Hind* (Eleventh century) mentions Multan as an ancient pilgrimage centre and Lahore a place with many forts. These old and major inland cities of Multan, Lahore and Delhi of pre-sultanate era had emerged as progressive haunts of commerce for foreign trade. The magnificence of these cities is that they never got dissolved or ruined despite being centres of attacks for invaders. *Tuzk-e-Baburi* records the pattern of emergence and dying of cities in Hindustan, which was rather bewildering to Babur's historiographer.

*In Hindustan, towns are depopulated and set up in a moment. If the people of a large town; one inhabited for years even, flee from it, they do so in such a way that not a sign or trace of them remains in a day and a half. On the other hand, if they fix their eyes on a place in which to settle, they need not dig water-courses at all as the population is unlimited and swarms in. They make tanks or dig a well; they need not build houses or set up walls. Grass abounds, wood is unlimited, huts are made, and straight away there is a town.<sup>1</sup>*

Seventeenth century and drying of Ghaggar lead to progress of Lahore over Multan, Lahore *subah* contained 28,000 villages in contrast to 10,000 villages of Multan at the end of the century. Lahore was shook during eighteenth century when Punjab developed into an origin to the rebelling Sikh movement. The philosophical school of Sikhism started by Nanak had gained combative character through series of conflicts with tyranny of Mughal Empire. Eighteenth century witnessed fall of the Mughal Empire that shook Lahore and saw rise of what would be eventually called Sikh Empire. However, this transition was not smooth; Waris Shah's couplet has been used elsewhere to denote a lawless anarchy that prevailed in mid-eighteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Grewal, Reeta. "Urban Patterns in the Punjab Region since the Protohistoric Times". *Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol. 20, p. 282.

*“In 1716, a Zamindar named Qatil in Gujrat pargana in the Chej doab mobilized fellow zamindars, built a fortress, and revolted, preventing the realisation of revenue by imperial officers. Further to the west, Awan zamindars in the Sindh Sagar doab refused to pay revenue, which was also withheld in Sialkot pargana in the Rechana doab. Other Zamindars in the Bari doab used the absence of authority to rob villages; and the road from Lahore to Multan became vulnerable to rebelling landlords.” (Gandhi, 70)*

Individual small principalities or *riyasats* were beginning to get formed. Sikh principalities were born this way until Ranjit Singh consolidated them to form a united empire. However the mention of Lahore Multan road demands attention because the road was obviously a form of trade route which must have been used by mercantile classes that became targets in the disturbed eighteenth century. A folk trope uses road to Multan which in itself has become a trope that is used in various *tappe* to create rhyme.

*Long live my sweetheart, (ਛੱਲਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਜੀਵੇ ਢੇਲਾ)*

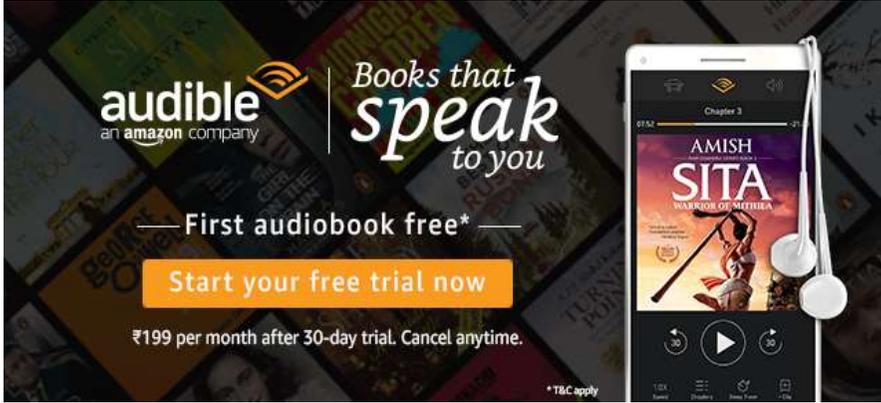
*The road goes to Multan, (ਮੁਲਤਾਨ ਨੂੰ ਰਾਹ ਜਾਂਦਾ)*

*Death doesn't terrify, (ਡਰ ਮੌਤ ਦਾ ਨਾ ਬਣਦਾ)*

*The pain of separation kills me, (ਘਮ ਸੱਜਣਾ ਦਾ ਖਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ)*

Roads to Multan could have been from anywhere but roads were primarily a channel to link various inland trade centres that had grown during sultanate. Agra was former capital of the Mughal Empire, It was later shifted to Lahore, but nonetheless sultanate was an empire which had annexed to the east and had created roadways that connected the empire. Bulleh Shah of Kasur was a witness of upheavals in and around Lahore, his poetry is a recorded commentary on tyranny of Aurangzeb, altruistic protests of Sikh leaders and *gurus* along violent offshoots of Sikh rebellions – and to him “Punjab had gone to the dogs” (Gandhi, 81). Lahore that is seen in the songs is never captured in its fall. Though its history of

grandeur and fall has been equally massive, Lahore of the songs is always a commercial place, booming with life.



About to meet my darling but the bangles in my wrist got entangled with the watch (ਮਾਹੀ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਲਣ ਲੱਗੀ ਘੜੀ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਵੰਗਾਂ ਅੜੀਆਂ)

I am sure there is car coming, (ਕੋਈ ਪਕੀ ਤੇ ਆ ਗਈ ਕਾਰ ਹੈ)  
A thousand is spent on bangles, (ਵੰਗਾਂ ਤੇ ਲਗਦਾ ਇਕੋ ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਹੈ)  
About to meet my darling but the bangles in my wrist got entangled with the watch (ਮਾਹੀ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਲਣ ਲੱਗੀ ਘੜੀ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਵੰਗਾਂ ਅੜੀਆਂ)

Some shop was selling paara, (ਕੋਈ ਹੱਟੀ ਤੇ ਵਿਕਦਾ ਪਾਰਾ)  
Five hundred were spent on bangles, (ਵੰਗਾਂ ਤੇ ਲੱਗਦਾ ਪੰਜ ਸੌ ਸਾਰਾ)

About to meet my darling but the bangles in my wrist got entangled with the watch (ਮਾਹੀ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਲਣ ਲੱਗੀ ਘੜੀ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਵੰਗਾਂ ਅੜੀਆਂ)

A request of sister-in-law, (ਕੋਈ ਮਿੰਨਤ ਕਰੋਂਦੀ ਸਾਲੀ)  
Forty rupees were spent on bangles, (ਵੰਗਾਂ ਤੇ ਲਗਦਾ ਰੁਪਈਆ ਚਾਲੀ)

About to meet my darling but the bangles in my wrist got entangled with the watch (ਮਾਹੀ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਲਣ ਲੱਗੀ ਘੜੀ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਵੰਗਾਂ ਅੜੀਆਂ)

*I am sure there are some cars coming, (ਕੋਈ ਪਕੀ ਤਾਂ ਆ  
ਗਈਆਂ ਕਾਰਾਂ)*  
*Twelve rupees are spent on bangles, (ਵੰਗਾਂ ਤੇ ਲੱਗਦੇ ਰੁਪਈਏ  
ਬਾਰਾਂ)*  
*About to meet my darling but the bangles in my wrist got  
entangled with the watch (ਮਾਹੀ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਲਣ ਲੱਗੀ ਘੜੀ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਵੰਗਾਂ  
ਅੜੀਆਂ)*

*Ink is sold in the bazaar, (ਬਜ਼ਾਰ ਵਿਕਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਸ਼ਾਹੀਆਂ)*  
*My darling gifted me black bangles, (ਕਾਲੀਆਂ ਵੰਗਾਂ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਢੋਲ  
ਚੜ੍ਹਾਈਆਂ)*  
*About to meet my darling but the bangles in my wrist got  
entangled with the watch (ਮਾਹੀ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਲਣ ਲੱਗੀ ਘੜੀ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਵੰਗਾਂ  
ਅੜੀਆਂ)*

*Paraandi is sold in bazaar, (ਬਜ਼ਾਰ ਵਿਕਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਪਰਾਂਦੀਆਂ)*  
*Expensive bangles are bought from Lahore, (ਮਹਿੰਗੇ ਵੰਗਾਂ  
ਲਾਹੌਰੋਂ ਆਂਦੀਆਂ)*  
*About to meet my darling but the bangles in my wrist got  
entangled with the watch (ਮਾਹੀ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਲਣ ਲੱਗੀ ਘੜੀ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਵੰਗਾਂ  
ਅੜੀਆਂ)*

*My hands are adorned with gold, (ਰੱਖੀਂ ਸੋਨੇ ਦਾ ਨਗ ਵੇ)*  
*When I'll wear the bangles the world will be jealous, (ਪੈਸਾਂ  
ਵੰਗਾਂ ਤੇ ਸੜਸੀ ਜਗ ਵੇ)*  
*About to meet my darling but the bangles in my wrist got  
entangled with the watch (ਮਾਹੀ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਲਣ ਲੱਗੀ ਘੜੀ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਵੰਗਾਂ  
ਅੜੀਆਂ)*

Eighteenth century Lahore was also the site of invasion by Abdali, besieged for four months by Abdali in 1751 Lahore saw peace in around 1760s when various Sikh *misl*s had established themselves and Lahore had come under the very dominant Bhangi *misl* with some portion under the rule of Nakkai *misl*. The city was no more the centre of trade and focus had shifted to holy city of Amritsar. Emergence of Amritsar will be later discussed but while Amritsar rose as a trade centre, Lahore had diminished by the end of eighteenth century.

Multan in contrast was another story and kingdom. Abdali launched raids and attacks in Punjab till the very end of his life. Some last attacks were in 1764-65, 1766-67, 1767-78 and 1769-70 before he died in 1772. Multan remained under governor appointed by Abdali and the locals resisted and rebelled from time-to-time for local rule against Abdali's and Sikh's attempts to control and conquer the region. Multan was chiefly peaceful from 1548 to 1748 and was absorbed into Afghanistan's political sphere after 1752 following Abdali's invasion. Multan was invaded by large group of Sikh army in 1802 which resulted in shaking off of its revenue distribution set-up with Kabul and led to a political understanding between Multan and Ranjit Singh. In 1811 Multan was once again the desired target that had to be coerced by Ranjit Singh, but to no avail. Finally this major trading city, famous for shrines and mosques and ancient sun temple was conquered by Ranjit Singh in 1818. Ranjit Singh gave governorship to Sawan Mal and tightened his control over Multan and ruled it through "strictest business principles". (Gandhi, 151) Interestingly Multan too lost its former position under Sikh rule with rise of Amritsar and other new cities that were emerging in East Punjab, mostly the old centres remained massive and prestigious but ignored.

*Your turban/scarf is beautifully coloured dear, (ਤੇਰੀ ਚੁੰਨੀ ਦਾ ਸੋਹਣਾ ਰੰਗ ਮਾਰੀਆ)*

*May God double the colours dearest. (ਅੱਲਾ ਲਾਏ ਨੀ ਦੋੜੇ ਰੰਗ ਮਾਰੀਆ)*

*This turban/scarf is from Multan (ਇਹ ਚੁੰਨੀ ਮੁਲਤਾਨੋਂ ਆਏ)*

*Me and my dear matched each other's rhythm (ਢੋਲੇ ਤੇ ਮੈਂ ਸਾਜ ਰਲਾਏ)*

*I like the way you walk dear, (ਤੇਰਾ ਟੁਰਨਾ ਹੈ ਪਸੰਦ ਮਾਰੀਆ)*

*Your turban/scarf is beautifully coloured dear, (ਤੇਰੀ ਚੁੰਨੀ ਦਾ ਸੋਹਣਾ ਰੰਗ ਮਾਰੀਆ)*

*May God double the colours dearest. (ਅੱਲਾ ਲਾਏ ਨੀ ਦੋੜੇ ਰੰਗ ਮਾਰੀਆ)*

*This turban/scarf has seven coloured boxes, (ਇਹ ਚੁੰਨੀ ਤੇਰੀ  
ਸੱਤ ਰੰਗ ਡੱਬਿਆਂ)*

*My dear betrayed me, (ਮਾਹੀ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਠੱਗੀਆਂ)*

*Do not break my heart's support, (ਵੇ ਦਿਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਟੇਕ ਨਾ ਭੰਨ  
ਮਾਹੀਆ)*

*Your turban/scarf is beautifully coloured dear, (ਤੇਰੀ ਚੁੰਨੀ ਦਾ  
ਸੋਹਣਾ ਰੰਗ ਮਾਹੀਆ)*

*May God double the colours dearest. (ਅੱਲਾ ਲਾਏ ਨੀ ਦੋੜੇ ਰੰਗ  
ਮਾਹੀਆ)*

*Turban/scarf is put for drying in the Sun, (ਇਹ ਚੁੰਨੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਧੁੱਪ ਤੇ  
ਸੁੱਕਦੀ)*

*My dearest's sight is so overwhelming, (ਮਾਹੀ ਮੇਰੇ ਦੀ ਦੀਦ ਨਾ  
ਚੁਕਦੀ)*

*The gold necklace shines, (ਗੱਲ ਚਮਕੇ ਸੋਨੇ ਦਾ ਗੁਲਬੰਦ ਮਾਹੀਆ)*

*Your turban/scarf is beautifully coloured dear, (ਤੇਰੀ ਚੁੰਨੀ ਦਾ  
ਸੋਹਣਾ ਰੰਗ ਮਾਹੀਆ)*

*May God double the colours dearest. (ਅੱਲਾ ਲਾਏ ਨੀ ਦੋੜੇ ਰੰਗ  
ਮਾਹੀਆ)*

Multan was a fabric producer and manufacturer as recorded in Mughal annals. Formerly called Multan Subah, the city after putting resistance to British fell to their administration like whole of the nation and turned into Multan division with districts of Jhang, Dera Ghazi Khan, Mianwali and some other portions in south-western Punjab. Shah Mohammad, a poet historian of Sikh Kingdom records fall of Multan, he writes “How in the midst of Musalmans and Hindus, living happily together/Had a scourge of sorts [i.e. the British] descended from nowhere?” (Gandhi, 182) Commonly referred to as *teeji jaat* (third caste) by various Punjabi poets the Britishers remained foreign invading community to many. Beginning from murder/assassination of British sent official, Vans Agnew, who came to take charge of Multan from Diwan Mulraj and was consequently killed in no time; the resistance grew openly into a rebellion which led to second Anglo-Sikh war and final rise of British forces in 1848. Writing about Multan division *Imperial*

*Gazetteer* mentions the city to be the sole region of importance commercially in comparison to other regions of the division. (18: 22) It remained a centre of wool and silk fabric, enamelled silver, glazed pottery, ornamental vases and similar craft. 19<sup>th</sup> century Multan was growing as enamelling industry while the carpets and silk production was falling as Amritsar had grown into a city for finest silk, cotton and fabric production. Enamelling as a process began for tiles used in architecture and tiles were an ornament used primarily in Arabic-Turkish architecture, later Multan too had become a sight famous for mosques and architecture.



Multan and Lahore are cities that have been woven into tropes and refrains that occur in variety of genres of folk songs. *Dhur Multano ayia...* (Came all the way from Multan) is a trope that is fused with various other lines to construct songs. A popular song and trope of *Dhur Multano aai* is-

*A stallion came all the way from Multan o brother, (ਧੁਰ  
ਮੁਲਤਾਨੋ ਘੋੜੀ ਆਈ ਵੀਰ)*

*Who wanted it and who got it, sisters? (ਕਿਨ ਮੰਗੀ ਕਿਨ ਮੰਗਾਈ  
ਭੈਣੋਂ)*

*Grandson asked for it grandfather got it brother, (ਪੋਤੇ ਮੰਗੀ  
ਬਾਬੇ ਮੰਗਾਈ ਵੀਰ),*

*What is the price of this stallion sisters, (ਇਸ ਘੋੜੀ ਦਾ ਕੀ ਆ  
ਮੁੱਲ ਭੈਣੋਂ)*

*One lakh and fifteen thousand brother (ਇੱਕ ਲੱਖ ਆ ਡੇਢ ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਵੀਰਾ)*

*Lakh will be given by grandfather sisters (ਲੱਖ ਦਏਗਾ ਲਾੜੇ ਦਾ ਬਾਬਾ ਭੈਣੀਂ)*

Arabian horses were sold in Multan, an urbanized centre of Akbar's Punjab. (Gandhi, 34) But another song using the trope surfaces the militant importance of Multan.

*Letters have arrived all the way from Multan friends (ਧੁਰ ਮੁਲਤਾਨੇ ਚਿੱਠੀਆਂ ਆਈਆਂ ਸਈਓ)*

*Now who among my people will be the (British employed) servant (ਹੁਣ ਮੇਰੇ ਕਿਨ ਕਿਨ ਜੀ ਨੌਕਰ ਜਾਣਾ)*

*Father-in-law had been sent (into service) his brother too had been sent (ਸਹੁਰਾ ਵੀ ਘਲਦੀ ਪਤਾਓਰਾ ਵੀ ਘਲਦੀ ਸਈਓ)*

*I am not going to send my son (ਮੈਂ ਨਾ ਘਲਦੀ ਜੀ ਲਾਲ ਆਵਣਾ)*

*My mother-in-law quarrels and her sister-in-law too, friends (ਸਸ ਵੀ ਲੜਦੀ ਪਤੀਸ ਵੀ ਲੜੇ ਸਈਓ)*

*Whose sons have been sent (ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਘਲੇ ਨੀ ਲਾਲ ਪਰਾਏ)*

*Father-in-law was sent so was his brother, friends (ਸਹੁਰਾ ਵੀ ਆਇਆ ਪਤਾਓਰਾ ਵੀ ਆਇਆ ਸਈਓ)*

*Now it is my son's turn (ਹੁਣ ਮੇਰੇ ਆ ਗਈ ਨੀ ਲਾਲ ਦੀ ਵਾਰੀ)*

*My mother-in-law and her sister-in-law laugh, friends (ਸਸ ਵੀ ਹੱਸਦੀ ਪਤੀਸ ਵੀ ਹਸੇ ਸਈਓ)*

*I walk about dispirited (ਮੈਂ ਤਾਂ ਫਿਰਦੀ ਨੀ ਨਿੱਮੋਝਾਣੀ)*

*My older brother-in-law and younger brother-in-law were sent, friends (ਜੇਠ ਵੀ ਘਲਦੀ ਛੋਟਾ ਦਿਓਰ ਵੀ ਘਲਾਂ ਸਈਓ)*

*I won't send my son (ਮੈਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਘਲਦੀ ਨੀ ਲਾਲ ਅਵਣਾ)*

*My elder and younger sister-in-laws quarrel, friends (ਜੇਠਾਣੀ ਵੀ ਲੜਦੀ ਦਰਾਣੀ ਲੜੇ ਸਈਓ)*

*Who sent their sons (ਜਿਹਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਘਲੇ ਨੀ ਲਾਲ ਪਰਾਏ)*

*My elder brother-in-law was sent and so was younger, friends (ਜੇਠ ਵੀ ਆਇਆ ਛੋਟਾ ਦਿਓਰ ਵੀ ਆਇਆ ਸਈਓ)*

*Now it is my son's turn (ਹੁਣ ਮੇਰੇ ਆ ਗਈ ਲਾਲ ਦੀ ਵਾਰੀ)*

*My elder and younger sister-in-laws laugh, friends (ਜੇਠਾਣੀ ਵੀ ਹੱਸਦੀ ਦਰਾਣੀ ਵੀ ਹਸੇ ਸਈਓ)*

*I walk about dispirited (ਮੈਂ ਫਿਰਦੀ ਨਿੱਮੋਝਾਣੀ)*

*He came inside and wore his uniform, friends (ਅੰਦਰ ਵੜਿਆ)*

ਨੀ ਬਰਦੀ ਕੱਸੀ ਸਈਓ

And now he looks like a soldier (ਹੁਣ ਮੇਰਾ ਲੱਗਦਾ ਨੀ ਢੇਲ ਸਿਪਾਹੀ)  
Blue stallion and red shawl, friends (ਨੀਲਾ ਘੋੜਾ ਤੇ ਲਾਲ ਦੁਸ਼ਾਲਾ  
ਸਈਓ)

It's my son's turn, if anybody volunteers (ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਨੀ ਲਾਲ  
ਦੀ ਵਾਰੀ)

To go and pray for my son and donate 5 rupees (ਪੰਜ ਰੁਪਈਏ  
ਮੱਥੇ ਦਾ ਟਿੱਕਾ ਸਈਓ)

And send back my going son (ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਲਾਲ ਹੂੰ ਮੇੜੇ)

John Lawrence, Chief of British Punjab detested Sikh army and their cause, it was naturally so after the Anglo-Sikh battles, he accepts that-

*"We (British) began the [military] campaign [against the Sikhs] . . . by despising our foes; but we had hardly begun it before we learned to respect them, and to find that they were the bravest, the most determined, and the most formidable whom we had ever met in India." (Gandhi, 195)*



The image is a promotional banner for Amazon Prime. It features a light blue background. On the left, there is a white starburst shape containing the text 'PRIME AT ₹ 999 PER YEAR\*'. In the center, the 'amazon prime' logo is displayed in white on a dark blue rectangular background. Below the logo, three key benefits are highlighted in white text with blue outlines: 'Original Shows', '1-day delivery\*', and 'Ad-free Music'. At the bottom center, there is a yellow button with the text 'Join now'. In the bottom right corner, the text '\*T&C Apply' is visible.

In 1857 Punjab had 36,000 native sepoy and Punjab Irregular forces (PIF) contained 14,000 men mainly of Pashtun and Punjabi origin. While native sepoy outnumbered British in most places it was chiefly true of Rawalpindi, Lahore, Ferozepur, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and primarily of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Sialkot, Jhelum and Multan. After 1857 the British had begun designing the land

with fresh determined enthusiasm to favour and regulate governance. In such times architecture was directly influenced and civil engineers were busy constructing and joining roads and imperial institutions. Some of the notorious sections were the ‘Civil Lines’ and cantonment areas generally known as ‘Cantt’. Growth of cities was a project based on this; Amritsar, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan and Ludhiana had tree lined Civil Lines which housed immediate Indian juniors in service of the British while cantonments lodged their soldiers and officers. Late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw increase in cities in which Lahore and Amritsar were most highly populated and Multan grew along other new cities of Ambala, Sialkot, Jalandhar and Ludhiana. Architectural ruins and modifications of Lahore also find their place in Folk Songs.

Lahore, which was ruined by raids and attacks by Nadir Shah was made the capital by Ranjit Singh and hence received preservation which was due, though unlike Amritsar it was not rebuilt. Previously the ruins of Lahore were rebuilt by the Mughals. Lahore’s architectural splendour is fossilized in the folk trope of *ucha buraj Lahore da* which translates to ‘high minarets of Lahore’ pointing to the splendour of Mughal architecture. Lahore division had six districts under it namely, Amritsar, Montgomery, Gurdaspur, Sialkot, Gujranwala and Lahore. A trope uses Ravi river alongside Lahore’s minaret - *ucha buraj Lahore da/heth Ravi dariya* or Tall minaret of Lahore/and beneath flows river Ravi (Lahore is a city on bank of Ravi) and variously this trope line is combined and used in various other ways. Though the present given couplet forms a landscape through the lines but it is not often the case and the trope line runs in various combinations. A song that uses this trope to construct landscape goes like –

*Tall minaret of Lahore, (ਉਚਾ ਬੁਰਜ ਲਾਹੌਰ ਦਾ)*  
*Is such so, you beautiful, (ਨੀ ਐਸਾਂ ਗੋਰੀਏ)*  
*The river flows beneath it, (ਉਹਦੇ ਹੇਠ ਵਗੇ ਦਰਿਆ)*  
*And people bath there, (ਮੱਲ ਮੱਲ ਨੁਾਵਣ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ)*

*It is so, you beautiful, (ਨੀ ਐਸਾਂ ਗੋਰੀਏ)*  
*And they chant God's name. (ਉਹ ਜਪਣ ਗੁਰਾਂ ਦਾ ਨਾਂ)*

*White ear of sorghum, (ਚਿੱਟਾ ਦੁੰਬ ਜੁਆਰ ਦਾ)*  
*O saint, o soldier, (ਵੇ ਜੋਗੀਆ, ਰਾਵਲਾ ਵੇ)*  
*Illiterates churn and eat it, (ਉਹ ਤਾਂ ਕੁੱਟ ਕੁੱਟ ਖਾਣ ਗਵਾਰ)*  
*Digging the well in veranda, (ਵਿਹੜੇ ਖੁਰੀ ਲਾਮਦਾ)*  
*It is so, you beautiful, (ਨੀ ਐਸਾਂ ਗੋਰੀਏ)*  
*Come on the pretext of taking bath. (ਤੂੰ ਤਾਂ ਨੁਵਾਣ ਦੇ ਪੱਜ ਆ)*

Another song using the trope is -

*Tall minaret of Lahore, (ਉਚਾ ਬੁਰਜ ਲਾਹੌਰ ਦਾ)*  
*And the oven is hot below, (ਕੋਈ ਹੇਠ ਤਪੇ ਤੰਦੂਰ ਵੇ)*  
*O friend, oven is hot below. (ਬੇਲੀਆ ਵੇ ਕੋਈ ਹੇਠ ਤਪੇ ਤੰਦੂਰ ਵੇ)*  
*I count the breads putting into oven, (ਗਿਣਿ ਗਿਣਿ ਲਾਹਮਾ ਰੋਟੀਆਂ)*  
*And I prepare the whole batch, (ਵੇ ਕੋਈ ਭਰ ਭਰ ਲਾਹਮਾ ਪੁਰ ਮਾਰੀਆ)*  
*O friend, I prepare the whole batch. (ਬੇਲੀਆ ਵੇ ਕੋਈ ਭਰ ਭਰ ਲਾਹਮਾ ਪੁਰ ਵੇ)*

The *buraj* does not add to the landscape of the song, while in the first song the trope does create a background of the scene, against which the song is a narration but the second song uses the trope much for its prepositional brilliance to create an image of above-and-below. *Buraj* is an architectural nuance that has expanded its meanings. The trope of *buraj* is not limited to literal meanings of minaret it is expanded to define any large and high architectural structure, even comprising of buildings. The trope used as *ucha buraj Lahore da/te main khadi sukawan kes* meaning ‘high wall/minaret/bridge of Lahore/I am standing drying my hair’ takes away all the scenic and prepositional understanding of the trope and uses it as a ready-made folk trope to be coupled with the rhyme. Surinder Kochhar tells that this song by Surinder Shinda set a trend where West Punjab began booming with the use of the trope as a stock trope, using it in combination like *ucha buraj Lahore da/jithe balde char chirag* (tall minaret of Lahore/where four lamps are lit) which was novel and different from what the *ucha buraj* literally

denotes and how it could be used.<sup>2</sup> Surinder Kochhar also draws historical lineage of the nameless *ucha buraj* and reveals it to be Saman Buraj in Shahi Quila of Lahore which was established by Akbar in 17<sup>th</sup> century. It passed from Akbar to Shahjahan, who used it as his residence and was attacked and taken by Abdali who used it as his *darbar*. Ranjit Singh repaired Shahi Quila and constructed Sheesh Mahal, which were used both for personal and administrative purposes until coming of the British who used it to lock and cage Queen Jindan. So the expanding symbol of *ucha buraj* is actually Saman Buraj of Shahi Quila but has become a denotation for Mughal architectural buildings and a rhyming trope. This absurdity of extensions and variations that *buraj* denotes does not take away the meaning of the popular pairing of *buraj* and Lahore.



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The accepted meanings of *buraj* are a minaret, a large Mughal building or bastion of fort; and Lahore has all of it. It was the tumultuous political seat for various rulers from British, Sikh, Mughal, Sultanate, Ghaznavid and Hindu. Mahmud Ghazni while coming from Kannauj ordered a minaret to be constructed at Lahore. Construction of *minars* was a political practice of most Turk-Afghan rulers as a sign to establish their victory at the conquered

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<sup>2</sup> Kochhar, Surinder. “*ucha buraj* Lahore da bania lahorian lai bujharat; sikh itihās naḷ vishesh sambhand rehae Lahore de uche buraj da”. *Ajit*, 23 March 2017, [beta.ajitjalandhar.com/news/20170323/2/1708825.cms#sthash.bBhNmnSi.dpbs](http://beta.ajitjalandhar.com/news/20170323/2/1708825.cms#sthash.bBhNmnSi.dpbs)

site. A similar practice is seen in Sikh rules as well where they established the *Nishan Sahib*, a tall pole to root their victory, but these were not as lavish and overstated as sultanate minarets. This practice only died with the coming of British Raj, once again confirming that the folk trope is solely rooted in city's landscape during the time of sultanate. A probability that the song could have emerged in Mughal era can be speculated through the presence of very famous fortress of Lahore. Attributed to Akbar the fortress was in ruins when Akbar came to Lahore. The old mud fort of Lodhi Empire was rebuild with solid masonry sometime before 1585.<sup>3</sup> Forts become important because they are sole proofs of political position that the city might have held. It is built by most ruling dynasties and the location of the fort is an index to the political position of the city. Lahore obviously has remained a locus of politics—this walled city which was hard to break-in had an entrance through Shahdara, meaning royal entrance. At present city on the western bank of Ravi the city is old with monument of Akbar Serai and presence of a *serai* or rest house for the travellers is an obvious indication of travel route, lying to the west these sites indicate that the inroad that would have connected Turkey and other central Asia with India. The walled city is across the river on the eastern bank of Ravi thus making bridge a mandatory piece joining Shahdara and Lahore and similarly various other regions to the west of Ravi to Lahore.

During the British Raj construction and designing in Lahore began with fresh impetus in around 1880s. Ganga Ram and later Sir Ganga Ram was the chosen civil engineer for this task. He is responsible for many of the landmark buildings of the city and its extension called Model Town. Some major buildings to his credit are Lahore's museum, Post Office, Mayo School of Arts, Aitchison College and Ganga Ram Hospital, which was later replicated in Delhi. Rudyard

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<sup>3</sup> Hasan, Shaikh Khurshid. *Historical forts in Pakistan*. NIHCR publication, Islamabad, Pakistan. 2005, p. 41.

Kipling called Lahore his ‘mistress and most true love’. (Gandhi, 255) While the fortress seemed inevitable military base to rulers up to 19<sup>th</sup> century the British titles and honours were enough to display grandeur and valour of its prowess.

*Charioteer, stop a while, (ਟਾਂਗੇ ਵਾਲਿਆ! ਜਰਾ ਰੋਕ ਲੈ)*  
*Where are you taking my beloved? (ਦੱਸ ਕਿਥੇ ਲੈ ਚਲਿਆ ਏਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਯਾਰ ਨੂੰ)*

*Your chariot has a footrest, (ਤੇਰੇ ਟਾਂਗੇ ਦਾ ਪਾਇਦਾਨ ਹੈ)*  
*my beloved is the captain of Lahore, (ਲਾਹੌਰ ਦਾ ਮਾਰੀ ਕਪਤਾਨ ਹੈ)*

*My life is in your (beloved's) body, (ਤੇਰੇ ਬੁੱਤ ਵਿਚ ਮੇਰੀ ਜਾਨ ਹੈ)*  
*Charioteer, stop a while, (ਟਾਂਗੇ ਵਾਲਿਆ! ਜਰਾ ਰੋਕ ਲੈ)*  
*Where are you taking my beloved? (ਦੱਸ ਕਿਥੇ ਲੈ ਚਲਿਆ ਏਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਯਾਰ ਨੂੰ)*

*Your chariot has headlights, (ਤੇਰੇ ਟਾਂਗੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਦੋ ਬਤੀਆਂ)*  
*It has been a centuries since I met you, (ਸਾਨੂੰ ਮਿਲੀਆਂ ਹੋ ਗਈਆਂ ਸਦੀਆਂ)*  
*that's why my eyes have been tearful, (ਅੱਖੀਂ ਹੁਣ ਤਾਈਂ ਰੋਂਦਿਆਂ ਵਦੀਆਂ)*

*Charioteer, stop a while, (ਟਾਂਗੇ ਵਾਲਿਆ! ਜਰਾ ਰੋਕ ਲੈ)*  
*Where are you taking my beloved? (ਦੱਸ ਕਿਥੇ ਲੈ ਚਲਿਆ ਏਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਯਾਰ ਨੂੰ)*

*Your chariot is painted red, (ਤੇਰੇ ਟਾਂਗੇ ਦਾ ਰੰਗ ਲਾਲ ਹੈ)*  
*two-three years passed very well, (ਚੰਗੇ ਗੁਜਰੇ ਦੋ-ਤਰਾਏ ਸਾਲ ਹੈ)*  
*I am devastated now, as I was before meeting you, (ਅਸੀਂ ਉਜੜ ਗਏ ਹਾਂ, ਪਹਿਲੇ ਹਾਲ ਹੈ)*  
*Charioteer, stop a while, (ਟਾਂਗੇ ਵਾਲਿਆ! ਜਰਾ ਰੋਕ ਲੈ)*  
*Where are you taking my beloved? (ਦੱਸ ਕਿਥੇ ਲੈ ਚਲਿਆ ਏਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਯਾਰ ਨੂੰ)*

Lahore's Captaincy brings the honour and grandeur associated with British military design and related posts. In contrast to British grandeur Mughal architecture and Indian ethos of construction were not singularly militant, commercial or leisure oriented. While

mosques, temples and gurudwaras are explicitly spiritual constructions but pre-British Punjab was also a dialogic place where *goshtis*, discussions and discourse on spirituality was part of culture. Theology as practice was not only part of court and worship places but was part of everyday place and space. A spiritual *guru*, *nath*, *jogi*, *peer* or *fakeer* could visit any place and people would come to him to discuss and flourish ideas on spiritual matter and the place would soon turn into a public congregation. Lahore's Dabbi Bazaar in around 16<sup>th</sup> century was a busy famous bazaar. Guru Arjan, the fifth Sikh guru from the school of Nanak and Sufi ambulatory saints visited Dabbi bazaar in 16<sup>th</sup> century on request of his followers. It is recorded that philosophers and scholars of all religions came to meet and exchange ideas with the guru. Guru Arjan wanted to construct a *baoli* there for the use of all classes and castes. Bhai Chajju Bhagat and a Pathan were the followers who volunteered to fund the construction of Baoli, it is also noted that the governor of Lahore Wazir Khan was so impressed by Guru's piety that he offered to excavate the *baoli* at his own expense. Now known as Gurudwara Baoli Sahib this monument is in central Lahore surrounded by various Mughal constructed bazaars. Located in the centre of Lahore it has Laha Bazaar, adjacent to Dabbi Bazaar, Kesara bazaar and Kashmiri Bazaar all of which were once among chief commercial consumer spaces. Among these Dabbi Bazaar in 20<sup>th</sup> century had become a hub of Muslim owned bookshops, with a few shops of Kashmiri *pandits* selling wool fabrics and shawls.<sup>4</sup> Abdullah Malik's memoir mentions the reception of Jawaharlal Nehru in Lahore, He was received by crowd at Lahore station and was put on a white horse and went around the city "in a grand procession along Circular Road and into the old city through Dehli Darwaza, Chowk Wazir Khan, Kashmiri Bazaar, Sunehri Masjid, Dabbi Bazaar, Bowli Bazaar, and then into Anarkali via Rang Mahal and Machhi

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<sup>4</sup> Hameed, Abdul. "Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims in pre-1947 Lahore". *Life back then, India of the past*, 2007, par. 7 [www.indiaofthepast.org/contribute-memories/read-contributions/life-back-then/355-hindus-sikhs-and-muslims-in-pre-1947-lahore](http://www.indiaofthepast.org/contribute-memories/read-contributions/life-back-then/355-hindus-sikhs-and-muslims-in-pre-1947-lahore)

Hatta.”<sup>5</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> May 1927 was an unfortunate day of riot which occurred between Sikhs and Muslims. A Sikh girl was insulted in Dabbi Bazaar and this developed into a Muslim-Sikh riot which killed around twenty-seven people and three hundred were wounded. A series of such events happened and developed into Multan riot in July when *Rath* and Muharram processions clashed causing death of three and injury on both sides. Politically influential and a city with stronghold of not only Mughals but also of British; Dabbi Bazaar is only a reflection of the vastness that Lahore was.



The image is an Amazon Prime advertisement banner. It features a blue background with a white starburst on the left containing the text 'PRIME AT ₹ 999 PER YEAR\*'. In the center, the 'amazon prime' logo is displayed in white on a dark blue rectangular background. Below the logo, three benefits are listed in large, stylized, blue-outlined text: 'Original Shows', '1-day delivery\*', and 'Ad-free Music'. A yellow 'Join now' button is positioned at the bottom center. In the bottom right corner, the text '\*T&C Apply' is visible.

Meet me at Dabbi Bazaar dear, (ਡੱਬੀ ਬਜ਼ਾਰ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਮਿਲ ਮਾਰੀਆ)  
In lights of gaslights. (ਗੈਸਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਚਾਨਣੀਆਂ)

Get me bellies dear, (ਖੁੱਸਾ ਮੰਗਾ ਦੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਮਾਰੀਆ)  
Brahmin girls wear heels, (ਲਿਫਟੀਆਂ ਪੈਂਦੀਆਂ ਬਾਹਮਣੀਆਂ)  
Meet me at Dabbi Bazaar dear, (ਡੱਬੀ ਬਜ਼ਾਰ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਮਿਲ ਮਾਰੀਆ)  
In lights of gaslights. (ਗੈਸਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਚਾਨਣੀਆਂ)

Get me a tikka made dear, (ਟਿੱਕਾ ਘੜਾ ਦੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਮਾਰੀਆ)  
Brahmin girls wear anklets, (ਹੱਸੀਆਂ ਪੈਂਦੀਆਂ ਬਾਹਮਣੀਆਂ)  
Meet me at Dabbi Bazaar dear, (ਡੱਬੀ ਬਜ਼ਾਰ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਮਿਲ ਮਾਰੀਆ)  
In lights of gaslights. (ਗੈਸਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਚਾਨਣੀਆਂ)

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<sup>5</sup> Rumi, Raza. “Lahore’s Kucha Kakezian”. *Lahorenama, Laorenama.wordpress*, 30 May 2008, par. 7, [lahorenama.wordpress.com/2008/05/30/lahores-kucha-kakezian/#more-149](http://lahorenama.wordpress.com/2008/05/30/lahores-kucha-kakezian/#more-149).

*Get me a bracelet made dear, (ਕੰਗਣ ਘੜਾ ਦੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਮਾਹੀਆ)*  
*Brahmin girls wear bangles, (ਵੰਗਾਂ ਪੈਂਦੀਆਂ ਬਾਹਮਣੀਆਂ)*  
*Meet me at Dabbi Bazaar dear, (ਡੱਬੀ ਬਜ਼ਾਰ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਮਿਲ ਮਾਹੀਆ)*  
*In lights of gaslights. (ਗੈਸਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਚਾਨਣੀਆਂ)*

*As I stepped out wearing them, (ਅੰਦਰੋਂ ਪਾ ਕੇ ਬਾਹਰ ਨਿਕਲੀ)*  
*All my neighbours itched of jealousy, (ਸੜਦੀਆਂ ਅਵਾਫ਼*  
*ਗਵਾਢਣੀਆਂ)*

*Meet me at Dabbi Bazaar dear, (ਡੱਬੀ ਬਜ਼ਾਰ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਮਿਲ ਮਾਹੀਆ)*  
*In lights of gaslights. (ਗੈਸਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਚਾਨਣੀਆਂ)*

The refrain of the song celebrates modern Dabbi Bazaar which has been lit with gaslights. Calling the light of the gaslights ‘moonlight’ shows a new face of commerce wherein the market stays open for longer hours in night due to coming of gaslights. Mention of ‘lifthiyan’ is also a modern sign, a fashion product that came with imperialism heels are contrasted with the ordinary Punjabi footwear khussa. Changing with the times, Dabbi bazaar of this song records the modern space and perception of the place among the folk. It is a reflection of dialogue of centuries wherein the 16<sup>th</sup> century constructed bazaar comes to life along 29<sup>th</sup> century bazaar.

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## Armeen Kaur Ahuja

Armeen is serving as Assistant Professor (Ad Hoc) in SGTB Khalsa College, Du in Department of English. Her M. Phil. Dissertation has focused on politics of Space in Punjabi Folk lore. Her area of interest is physical and metaphysical operation of space in articulation of cognition.

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An advertisement for Audible, an Amazon company. The background is a collage of book covers. On the left, the Audible logo is displayed with the tagline 'Books that speak to you'. Below this, it says 'First audiobook free\*' and 'Start your free trial now' in a yellow button. At the bottom left, it states '₹199 per month after 30-day trial. Cancel anytime.' and '\*T&amp;C apply'. On the right, a smartphone displays the audiobook cover for 'AMISH SITA: WARRIOR OF MITHILA' with a play button and navigation controls. A pair of white headphones is draped over the phone.

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