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Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai & Status of Women: Status of Women in Shah Jo Risalo; an Idealized Portrayal of Sassui in Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's Sur Sassui Aburi

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Abstract

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's depiction of Sassui in his poetry serves as a powerful call to women in Sindh in particular and the rest of Latif's audience, in general, to break free from societal constraints. Sassui's tragic love story symbolizes the struggles faced by women in pursuit of true love, yet her unwavering determination, faith, and loyalty remain unshaken. This research focuses on the portrayal of Sassui in eleven Dastans from Sur Sassui Aburi, translated by Sheikh Ayaz. Shah Latif's representation of Sassui across five Sur of Shah Jo Risalo inspired women across the subcontinent, particularly in Sindh. Through qualitative thematic analysis, this study explores Shah Latif's efforts to amplify Sassui's voice beyond his era, showcasing his feminist perspective and vision. It aims to inspire contemporary Pakistani women to stand up against the regimented norms and defy the social, psychological, and legal barriers that restrict their liberties and will.

Keywords: Wave of Feminism in Southern Areas of Pakistan, Feminism in the Sindh of Sub-Continent, Seven Queens of Sindh, Sassui Punhun, Women Empowerment in Kalhora Dynasty, Feminist Discourse in Contemporary Pakistan.

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Title

Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai & Status of Women: Status of Women in Shah Jo Risalo; an Idealized Portrayal of Sassui in Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai's Sur Sassui Aburi

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Abstract

Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai's depiction of Sassui in his poetry serves as a powerful call to women in Sindh in particular and the rest of Latif's audience, in general, to break free from societal constraints. Sassui's tragic love story symbolizes the struggles faced by women in pursuit of true love, yet her unwavering determination, faith, and loyalty remain unshaken. This research focuses on the portrayal of Sassui in eleven Dastans from Sur Sassui Aburi, translated by Sheikh Ayaz. Shah Latif's representation of Sassui across five Sur of Shah Jo Risalo inspired women across the subcontinent, particularly in Sindh. Through qualitative thematic analysis, this study explores Shah Latif's efforts to amplify Sassui's voice beyond his era, showcasing his feminist perspective and vision. It aims to inspire contemporary Pakistani women to stand up against the regimented norms and defy the social, psychological, and legal barriers that restrict their liberties and will.

Keywords:

[University Teachers](#)
[Professional Ethics](#)
[Students](#)
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Introduction

Shah Abdul Latif is an eminent and renowned poet of Sindh. He has largely contributed to Sindhi poetry and literature. His poetry was compiled by his admirers in the form of *Wai* and *Bayt* in his lifetime as well as after his death. The subjects of his poetry span from politics to religion, Mysticism, Sufism, philosophy, women, etc. He is also called a feminist poet. He has invoked the folklores of Sindh,

Balochistan, Punjab, and Rajasthan and portrayed the seven women as heroines in his poetic work Shah-jo-Risalo. The seven Queens in Latif's poetry, *Umar Marvi*, *Momal Rano*, *Sadia Sarmad*, *Sohni Mehar*, *Noori Jam Tamachi*, *Lilan Chanesar*, *Sassui Punhun*, and *Sorath Rai Diyach* are celebrated in Sindh as a symbol of courage, honesty, great resolve, piety, loyalty, integrity, and determination. Shah Latif has written Five chapters (Surs) only on the tragic love



story of Sassui Punhun. Those Chapters are Sur Sassui Aburi, Sur Maazuri, Sur Desi, Sur Kohyari, and Sur Husaini. This study intends to analyze the portrayal of Sassui in Shah Abdul Latif's poetry. To be more specific, what aspects of Sassui's life are highlighted in eleven Dastans of Sur Sassui Aburi in Risalo of the Shah translated by Sheikh Ayaz, and what message Shah intends to give to his readers?

Historical Backdrop

In the subcontinent, which is now known as India and Pakistan, there were two cultural units, Hindh and Sindh (Brohi, 1982). Sindh was named after the river Sindhu, the people settled along the bank of river Sindhu and the rivers joining it because of water facilities. Where there is water, there is life. The other rivers joining the river Sindhu are the five rivers of Punjab and the river Sarasvati. All these seven rivers combine to form *Sapat Sindhu* means the seven rivers. The old name of Sindhu was changed by the Persians to Hindu (Chand, 1966). It can be concluded that the Hindh or Hindustan was named after Sindh.

Alexander the Great was accompanied by some historians when he came to Hindustan. Those historians called the people living in the valley of Sindh 'Sindhu', but they pronounced it Indo and called the river Indus. They called the whole region Indica and Indicos. Later on, the Latin speakers changed Indos to Indus and called it Hindustan India (Chand, 1957).

The unique cultural background of India goes back to 2500 BC or even before that, this cultural background is given by Indus Civilization (Dunslp, 1984). Almost all the primitive civilizations of the world developed in the valleys of rivers (Sidiqui, 1979). The river Nile, Dejla, Faraat, and the civilizations Qaroon are an example of that.

In the valley of river Sindh, relics of a great civilization have been found. This is called the Indus Valley civilization. The first reference to Sindh is present in Rig-Veda (the compilation of divine texts of Hindu mat), Sindh has been portrayed as independent and prosperous. It was written after one thousand years of the period of Mohenjo-Daro. The following translation of some verses illustrates it:

Eternal, flowing Sindhu
Strong, mighty Sindhu
From countries and plains
Carrying a huge spectrum of water
Glittering, shining, flowing
Like a roan, beautiful and attractive
Sindh, abundant in roans
And is wealthy and chariots and attires
This country is made up of gold, the wealthy
Owns great nature
Its grass is fascinating
Its leather is wonderful

Not to mention the taste of its sweet drinks (Jafri, 1979).

The second reference to Sindh is present in Mahabharat. "Jayadarth kind of the Sindhu's, who is also referred to as Sovir Rajah, saw Draupadi at her Svamvara, subsequently took accession to intrude on her when the Pandavas were out hunting and carried her off" (Lambrick, 1980).

Women were considered sacred in Sindh at the time of Mohenjo-Daro and before that, women of great character were worshipped by making statues of them. One piece of art has been discovered: "...which is of the famous dancing girl's figure dwelling in Mohenjo-Daro. It shows her right hand resting on the hip, the left arm is covered fully with bangles and bracelets which are loosely hanging downwards over the bent of the left leg. A three-pearled necklace is draped on the breasts. She has a braided hairstyle and the head is leaned back in a rhythmic pose" (Nautiyal).

Dr. Moorti Prakash says, that despite being a strength and beauty for the inhabitants of Hindh, the women have always been getting unfair treatment. However, some examples of love, honour, and motherhood are found in Mahabharat. The women of Bharat have shown resolve despite unfair treatment by the male members. Women encouraged the men whenever they needed encouragement to do an uphill task (Prakash, 1980).

In the times of Vedas, men played a great social role, but the women were not irrelevant. Women were respected at home and in society. Women would

play an equal role as compared to men. They would take part in rituals and stand with men shoulder to shoulder. Their participation shows that they also acquired education (Naqvi, 1972).

Another example from Mahabharat shows the character of women. The Pando King execrated to go to his wives, but he wanted to have babies. He asked his wife Kunti to have a child with another man. She refused but the king told her that there was nothing wrong with it. People before that period had also been practising it (Thomas, 1972).

In ancient times women were not imprisoned in homes and were not dependent on husbands and relatives. They were free human beings and were not confined to their husbands but not considered infidels. Nobody considered them bad because it was a custom at that time. The present customs were established later.

An incident is quoted in this regard. Adalka Sweta Keto once found her mother with a guest in a room and he objected. Upon that, his father told him that it was a custom. He felt that it must be stopped and made a law. Durga Tamas made that law strong because of some harsh personal experience. He was blind by birth and he got a beautiful wife. She used to go to other men to get some money to feed his husband and children. She was notorious and disliked her status. She told her husband that she would not go to other men for money. Her husband rebuked her and imprisoned her in a room. At last, she threw her husband in a pool of water with the help of her children, but he escaped. He then made a law to punish women (Thomas, 1972).

With time, people stressed the loyalty of women to their husbands, and their subservience to husbands was considered mandatory. As a result of that, the women ignored the other professions and their social life contracted (Naqvi, 1972).

The story of the women of Indo-Arian is very tragic. They lost the life of love and liberty, even they had to die upon the death of their husbands. The ritual of Sati began from there and longed for centuries. Now it has been banned. In the time of the British, women's education became better. Many an effort

were made to make the lives of women better. Child marriage and the ritual of Sati came to an end. Widows were allowed to remarriage. Prostitution was recognized as evil and equality of sexes in politics was accepted (Thomas, 1972).

After 1947, women took part in every walk of life, but it was restricted in Sindh. The old rituals of Hindus came to an end, but the Muslims adopted the rituals of Hindus and Arabs. They felt proud of them and called it their culture. The rights of women were curbed. Tough, not old, now a change is happening. Women are participating in every profession, if the women of Sindh are given more opportunities, they can surely make a difference.

Optimism is the quality of the Sindhi culture; as Shah Latif said, keep working matter it is winter or summer (Hussain, 1996). That is why Shah Latif has romanticized and glamourized the character of Sassui to convey a strong message which still inspires the women in Sindh and also the larger audience of Latif. The tragic love story of Sassui Punhun narrates the plight of women while achieving true love Sassui suffered morally, physically, and mentally but still, it didn't shake her determination, love faith, sincerity, and loyalty.

Purpose of the Research

Despite the difficult terrain women have to pass through and the tests and tribulations they have to face, women's courage and resolve are unmatched. But the role of women in every walk of life is neglected and overlooked. Latif legitimized their contributions and sacrifices by portraying them as a symbol of love courage and determination in his poetry. His simple language has become a source of great learning for the laymen. This study aims to discuss Shah's message about Sassui remaining determinant no matter what, still inspires the women of Sindh and the subcontinent at large. This debate is missing from the academic literature which this study intends to analyze and add to the academic literature from this angle of the study.

Problem Statement

Women have been subjugated and persecuted since the Patriarchy has prevailed. They have been contributing almost in every walk of life more than man does. Their role is often neglected and overlooked. Shah Abdul Latif through his poetry has given a royal status to the Seven Heroines. He has narrated what they have been through and paid homage to their courage and determination. This study intends to add to the academic literature on this topic by analyzing the themes of eleven *Dastans* of Sur Sassui Aburi in his *Shah Jo Risalo*.

Research Question

The main research question is what is an idealized view of Sassui in eleven *Dastans* of Sur Sassui Aburi in Shah Jo Risalo that later on inspired the women of Sindh in particular and the women of the subcontinent in general?

Supplementary Question

What is Shah Abdul Latif's message about Sassui?

What is Shah's idealized view of Sassui about?

How does this view of Sassui fit into the larger feminist discourse in Pakistan?

Significance of the study

The available literature on the topic largely talks about the political message that Shah's poetry conveys. The tragic stories of love have largely been interpreted as a 'love story' but the larger message they convey about the role of women is overlooked. This study is significant because it intends to contribute to this missing gap by analyzing the themes of eleven *Dastans* in Latif's poetry on Sassui and how it fits into the feminist discourses in Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework: Paradigm

I have chosen the Interpretivist paradigm for my research paper. So, its philosophical ontology is such that reality is fluid and socially constructed which is why reality is not single but rather there are multiple realities. It does not subsist contrary to human elucidation, but rather an interpretivist paradigm

describes reality as relative, under the situation in which it is applied.

I have specified the paradigm of Interpretivism for my research write-up because women's sufferings are constructed by society socially and it differs from country to country and society to society. Moreover, women's loyalty, courage, and determination are also relative. Many people in Sindh may revitalize it but some others may absolutely abandon it. Also, some may take Shah's portrayal of women in his poetry as political while others may take it as simply societal. My focus would be on the larger picture as to how he idealized the women in his poetry and praised them in their every form and mould.

The philosophical epistemology of the interpretivist framework explores that there are non-objectivity and non-dualism. Both researcher and object tend to have an interdependent relationship. The researcher (I) being a woman cannot study the object (the poetic work of Shah Abdul Latif on women) without persuading it or being affected after going through the mystical work of Latif on women.

The methodology of the interpretivist worldview suggests that the data collection technique of qualitative research is used to provide detailed information about the status of women specifically the status of Sassui in Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's work.

Research Type

I have used the descriptive and explanatory type of research to describe and explain those qualities of Sassui like love, care, sincerity, courage, resolve, determination, longing, loyalty, and faith which will encourage the courageous women of Sindh to stand against violations of their rights by getting motivation, stimulation, and inspiration from Sassui.

Deductive Research

In contemporary academic literature, there are so many contended theories available on feminism which is why I have selected deductive research to go from general to particular in providing a framework for the theory and test the codes and patterns from the

Structuralist and post-structuralist schools of thought to explain which theory suited best for my research.

Modern Feminist Theories

Structuralist and Post-Structuralist debates on feminism are considered to be the main debates on Feminism. The Structuralist school of thought suggests that the issues of women can be resolved within the confines of existing structures. Whereas, according to the Post-Structuralist school of thought, the present structures of the society are repressive, counter-protective, and restrict the liberties of women. So, the existing structures have to be broken and changed. To analyze the problem under study, I have studied theorist Lila Abu-Lughod (from the Post-Structuralist school of thought).

By doing an anthropological study in Arab society, Lila Abu-Lughod got an insight and she contends that the Western definitions of the Eastern culture stigmatize some cultural practices which are very complex and their complexity must be understood. 'Honor' is a controversial concept. Women are not merely the receptors of the honour of a family but also take part in shaping and reshaping the norms and culture of a society. Gender inequality does not exist in Eastern societies but it does not account for the denial of women's agency. They perform their agency in defining their role in society. Abu-Lughod critiques the liberals who consider sexual freedom and personal liberties as the only human values. Such kind of liberal understanding obscures the fact that capitalism has made women an object. Women's persecution and gender inequality are not the characteristics of the East only. The institutions of the modern States perpetuate oppressive norms. For Instance, Israel occupied Palestine and that occupation sedimented the patriarchal norms in the Palestinian society (Lughod, [2011](#)).

After examining the up above theoretical discussion, I prospect that the motive of a theoretical framework is to conclusively escort the research. Relying upon my research findings, I am here to proclaim the equivalence found in Lila Abu-Lughod and Shah Latif's work. Both consider women as

someone who should be free from cultural fetters and the very word "Honor" should not be imposed only on them. Women should have their own agency free from the patriarchal clutches and cultural norms so that they live their lives according to their own wishes, desires, and inclinations. She should defy the stigmas attached to love affairs. She should not only challenge those social restrictions but also need to pose a question on the loyalty of men to women.

Research Methodology: Research Technique

I am applying the research technique of "Case Study" to study and produce a comprehensive, and diversified understanding of the multiplex problem of societal barriers created for women in the particular case of the eleven Dastans of Sur Sassui Aburi in Shah Jo Risalo. I am using the Case Study of Sassui to pinpoint the indispensable qualities of Sassui to encourage the subjugated women of Sindh in particular and of Pakistan in general.

Data Collection

My data collection includes both primary as well as secondary sources. I have collected secondary research data using the primary source of Shah Latif's poetry i.e. *Shah Jo Risalo*. I have also collected secondary research data using secondary sources such as newspaper articles, and reports in print and electronic media (local newspapers of Sindh and Dawn, etc.), books, research papers and journals, and documents from websites, etc available on the topic. I have sought help from my instructor of the course who is an expert on Sindhi literature. Besides, for a theoretical understanding, I have read Fehmida Hussain, Afia Zia, Saba Mahmood, and Lila Abu-Lughod.

Language

I have gone through the original *Shah Jo Risalo* written in Sindhi language and also the other edition which was written in the Urdu language to collect my primary data to grasp the true understanding of what exactly Shah wants to convey. I then translated it into the English language for my research paper. Also, I have read a lot of material for my paper in the English

Language too. So overall I have gone through three languages for writing this paper.

Qualitative Content Analysis

I have chosen the "Qualitative Content Analysis" method for analyzing my research data because it has comprehensively narrated the explanation of a text and recognized patterns in the text. Then the text was marked with codes, which were then orderly scheduled into categories and subcategories and lastly associated with themes (Schreier, [2012](#)). The demonstration and elucidation of themes then helped me in answering my research questions. The reason for choosing the qualitative method is, that the thematic analysis of Latif's poetry on women cannot be quantified.

Literature Review

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai is a great Poet of Sindh due to his large contribution to the Sindhi language and literature. He was born in 1689 and died in 1752. He lived for 63 years. This era is considered an era of political turmoil and tribulations for Sindh particularly and for the subcontinent generally. Though Latif had an elite background he never subscribed to that ideology and lifestyle. Instead, he became a voice of the persecuted and subjugated classes. He depicted the social and political circumstances of that particular time in his poetry which has now become a source of knowledge for us. Latif throughout his life never collaborated or favoured the rulers and wrote for the toiling masses. Due to his progressive and egalitarian views and writings, the kalhoras dynasty of that time was against him and tried to kill him (Fatimi, 2002).

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai was a man of emotions, he fell in love with a girl and wanted to marry her but that could not happen. She belonged to the Arghun family and her father did not agree to the proposal (Sayyid, [1996](#)). Latif was disappointed and joined the nomadic community (Jogis and Sanyasis) by leaving his home. As a wandering falcon, he moved from one place to another and discovered the life of different people and their miseries. He admired the nomadic community for their monotheistic religious beliefs. In his poetic work *Shah-jo-Risalo*, he narrated his travels

along with Hindu hermits. In one of the chapters (Sur) titled *Ramkali*, he admires the nomadic community as:

Their practising great self-denial has made them un-selfish

They want to be united with God

These are the nihilist people

I don't want to live without them (Sorley, [1966](#))

After the decline of the Mughal Empire, Sindh was ruled by Kalhoras, foreign invasions, and their internal politics pushed Sindh to the brink of civil war. In those circumstances, Latif called the people to protest and struggle. He wrote several chapters (Sur) calling the people of Sindh to be united.

However, to be more relevant I will depart from here and focus on the portrayal of Sassui in Latif's poetry. He has written five chapters and eleven Dastans on Sassui who fell in love with Punhun. She was very faithful but Punhun was an unfaithful lover. He left her while she was asleep, and she moved from place to place in search of him. Latif admires her resolve, firmness, and determination to reach her destination (Punhun). He says:

Sassui, strive hard to reach out to Punhun instead of sitting idle

Don't be afraid of tough and rugged mountains

They are not a hurdle that will be helpful in navigation

If you get tired from walking on foot

To reach your destination

Don't stop even crawl (Bhittai, Sassui Aburi, [1961](#)).

Narrating her predicament, he says:

A lot of thorns have wounded my feet and my fingers are as hard as steel that cannot bend. Though I am injured and unable to move I will keep walking towards the destination.

In one of the chapters Sur Desi, Latif argues about the strong will. He says, if we have courage and determination, we can reach the destination no matter how tough the terrain is. He depicts her courage as:

I do not care about these mountains.

They cannot intercept my way to Punhun.

I can pass through many of the mountains.

My love is stronger than these mountains. (Bhittai, Sur Desi, [1961](#)).

In Sur Hussaini, Latif asks her:

Don't be afraid of harsh weather

Don't rest and continue walking

Don't waste your time

If you do so

The wickedness will unroll all around

And you will be unable to search the

Footprints of Punhun. (Bhittai, Hussaini, 1961).

In Maazuri, Latif portrays Sassui as helpless and advises her:

The girl who pays much attention to ornaments

It is all in vain

Only the wait for the beloved is true

She remains deprived like Leela

Preferred jewels over her love

He adds:

I regret that I could not find my love

I am about to die

Yet my love has not come

I have been looking for him for years

Now death has come to me

Latif has portrayed Sassui as a faithful and firm lady. He legitimizes her role by making it an integral part of his poetic work. He says no matter how harsh the conditions would be Sassui stayed there until her death and the unfaithful Punhun didn't return. It depicts the role of a woman in a relationship who is very often portrayed as unfaithful but for Latif women are more faithful than men. In Sassui Hussaini, Latif metaphorically equates the sufferings of Sassui to the grandson of Prophet Mohammad, Hussain in the battle of Karbala. He says:

I plead to you sun

Don't add to my tribulations

Don't set soon

Let me see the footprints

Of my beloved Punhun

Before I died in these mountains

My sweet sorrow, do not go away

As my beloved did

There is no one I can share

My heart feelings, except you. (Bhittai, Hussaini, 1961)

Latif has used folklores of Sind, Punjab, and Balochistan to highlight the plight of women and admires their character and contribution to the life of a man and society at large. By depicting them as heroines, he has glorified and romanticized their role further and spread this message to the laymen. For example, he has admired the role of Sohni in *Sur Sohni*, who has defied the prevailing customs. In *Sur Kamood*, he portrays Noori as a complacent and submissive woman. A king named Tamachi marries her despite her low caste because he is impressed by her behavior.

Noori utilizes her privileged position to change the fate of her caste. In *Sur Maruni* he has depicted Maruni as a patriot and a woman of great courage who even refused the king's proposal for marriage. (Reporter, [2012](#))

In *Sur Rano* and *Leela Chanesar*, he portrays Momal and Leela as two women of arrogance. They lost their husband because of their ego and reckless attitude. But when they realized their mistakes, they strived hard to patch up with their husbands. Latif has made women a part of his discourse, he sometimes addresses them directly and admires their courage. (Aman, 22. December. [2018](#))

In *Sohni* Latif has admired the courage of Sohni as:

Current travels with a certain speed

Rivers also have a speed

But love is swifter

The people who don't want ineptness

Are deeply entrenched in thought

Sohni passes through the flood with a jar of clay

Let's go to her and ask

What is the true way of love?

Her thoughts would stay

From Sahar to the night (Bhittai, Sohni, 1961).

Latif has portrayed Sohni as a symbol of courage who has left aside the dangers of flood and passed through it only to meet his love. Though she married a man without her consent, still she used to meet her beloved by crossing a river through a pot made up of clay. But one night her sister-in-law replaces the clay-made pot with an unbaked clay which becomes a cause of her death while crossing the river (Sengar, 2020).

GM Sayyid in his book titled 'Shah Latif and his Message' takes all these symbols as political. He portrays Sassui as an oppressed people and Punhun is a determined and national leader.

(Sayyid, 1996) Similarly, he portrays Sassui in Sur Hussaini as a political tribulations and asks the people of Sindh to be united.

But using these pure symbols of love and exploitation of women based on gender and a disregard for their role as a woman is not justified. These symbols must be taken as simple as the message they convey. He is known as the feminist poet and the simple message he has conveyed through his poetry to the laymen speaks louder. However, the external political circumstances at that time have impacted the thoughts of Shah Latif but he has depicted it in other verses.

Data Analysis

The poets have had a specific lens to see the world around them. They write whatever they see and like, at times very close to nature and sometimes an exaggeration. What a layman ignores the poet makes it attractive. Poetry must not be judged according to some ideology or principles of logic. Poetry is beyond that. Shah Latif's poetry is beautiful, lucid, and easy to read. However, the present Sur under analysis is Sur Sassui Aburi, which has the following eleven Dastans explaining the qualities, characteristics, traits, and attributes of Sassui.

First Dastan: Love, Care, and Sincerity

In the first Dastan, Latif comments on the love, care, and sincerity of Sassui:

Take me to my love and peace

There is my destiny

Where is my Punhun? Where he is

He is the hope of my life

He is the peace of my heart and soul

When Sassui woke up and couldn't find Punhun around, with a great sigh she longed for him and asked nature too to take her to him. She pleads that he is the only hope of her life and he is the peace of her mind and soul. She says what a way to reason, no one dies right about getting to the destination but the trials and tribulations in love are very strange. Though I am thirsty, I want to have a glass of water but by your hand, Shah Latif says, Sassui had been through a lot yet she remained firm. Punhun is very dear to her, she looked for him in the forest and listened to the poor Sassui, her grief must be heard.

Second Dastan: Indifferent Punhun

In the second Dastan, Latif says that Sassui had been meeting with Punhun, but she couldn't get him, he was indifferent and selfish.

Though Sassui has a desire to meet him

She has to be humble

One who is full of love

Couldn't understand the disloyalty

Love is the superior

Love is itself complicated

Third Dastan: Courage, Resolve, and Determination

In the third Dastan, Latif advises Sassui to be courageous and humble while passing through the high mountains don't reveal your pain and anguish. Don't cry and keep your tribulations a secret. Don't care about pain, peace is not your destiny but tests. Latif pays tribute to Sassui for her love and loyalty. She remained firm and determined despite the selfishness of Punhun who left her while she was asleep. She looked for him everywhere, passed through jungle and mountains yet she showed resolve and courage.

Your beloved lies in your heart

Why are you going to the jungle?
You won't find him
Why are you swallowing the bait?
Latif, he doesn't deserve sincerity
He is immersed in worldly matters

Though she couldn't find him, she won't listen to anyone, she is led by her heart and does not mind. I am afraid she will lose her way and become a story of the Past. She will not agree to leave and continue her journey. Love is her only way.

Fourth Dastan: Love Affairs

In the fourth Dastan, Latif comments on the love affairs:

This result of lust is attractive
Hundreds of people failed in the way
But yeah, whose mentor is love
Their destiny is the first step for them
And he portrays Sassui as,

Only she will stand by me, she doesn't consider her life her own, go back my fellows, the way to Ketch is not easy. She says I don't want peace; I have left makeup and jewellery and have become a nomad for him. Without you my heart is wrenching my Punhun, may you remember the promises you have made to me. Latif advises Sassui not to sleep because she will lose the way and the love affairs are very complicated.

I have tears in my eyes and boils in my feet
My heart is wrenching
But I don't have any complaint with you
Whatever tribulations you want me into
I will not be disappointed
You are my hope

Fifth Dastan: Longing, Loyalty, and Faith

The convoy has left but Sassui is distrustful of any rationale, she asks her fellow women not to advise her. She will not get back; she will go through whatever comes her way and dares to be trialled. Her immense love for Punhun is beyond everything.

In the fifth Dastan Latif describes the Sassui's courage as She knows about destiny, though there is no way She knows that her sacrifices will be in vain on her one side is Ketch and on the other is Banbhor

But she has a huge courage

In the deserts and mountains, she can't find him

Yet she knows the Punhun's place

She says that she doesn't care about destiny now

And she doesn't care about rewards or punishments

When love trumps everything, one doesn't care about the rationale and worldly affairs. Sassui has become clear about her destiny and continues her journey. She has become Punhun, she has adapted to loneliness. Shame and stigmas don't matter now, people mock her, but her beloved has seeped into her veins. Sassui defied the social and cultural norms of that time, she didn't care about what people said and continued her love and sincerity to Punhun. She says:

I am curious about Punhun day and night
My love is my way
My every wish is your trust
His first glimpse had my liking for him
I didn't think much my fellows
I don't know why I fell in love with him

Sassui longs for Punhun while recalling the days passed with him. She sometimes rebukes herself for falling asleep. She would have been with him had she not been asleep that night. She is determined to get him no matter what comes her way. Sassui is the symbol of love, care, sincerity, and courage for the women of that time and even inspires the women of today. Her character in the poetry of Shah Latif shows her resolve and courage in the specific context of that society. Sassui went beyond the norms by defying the stigmas attached to love affairs. She not only challenged those social restrictions but also posed a question on the loyalty of men to women.

Sixth Dastan: Determination as a Reoccurring Theme

In the Sixth Dastan Latif says

Ask the kiln-hearted mountain
 My beloved is Aryan
 Why you stare at me
 I am weak

Sassui asks the mountain if her beloved is Aryan and doesn't stare at her because she is humble and weak. The only grief of departing from my beloved is enough to make me weak so do not stare at me.

Seventh Dastan: The Edge of Life and Death

When Azrael came to Sassui while she was asleep

He was there to take her to the heavens
 But she was expecting that was a message from Punhun

She readily asked
 When Azrael came to her
 Speak my confidants
 Are you accompanying Punhun?

In the seventh Dastan, Sassui asked the Angels who were there to take her to the heavens if Punhun was also with them. Her love and determination were even stronger when she was on the edge of life and death.

Eight Dastan: The Eternal Peace

In the eighth Dastan, Latif advised Sassui that what she was looking for would be hers one day. Her courage and determination will defeat the tests and tribulations. Latif commented:

Every destination in the way of love
 Are a mirage and delusion
 Permanent restlessness is your guide
 You are not looking for peace
 Sayed, ask someone to tell Sassui
 Love is not a cry in the wilderness
 Her determination became fruitful
 Her grief has become settled
 She passed through tribulations safe and sound

She got eternal peace and now she rests in peace

Ninth Dastan: Desire for Meeting

Latif says that despite all those hardships Sassui could not find Punhun. She didn't care about tribulations and longed for him. Latif admires her courage as;

Tell me the desire to meet the beloved
 Have you seen such a being?
 Latif heads off to her

She didn't lose hope despite inching towards death

Tenth & Eleventh Dastan: Sincerity, Patience, Pain, Destination

Sassui asks Punhun if she is still sincere to him and acknowledges her fault and sighs in deep sorrow. I have broken up with all the relationships with society and left my place to see you. Please come back, whatever comes my way I will come to you.

My Punhun, when I came to Winder
 I thought I had found a way to you
 Dense forest everywhere
 A test of my patience
 Punhun's brothers should not have come
 They came with bad intentions
 They cheated me
 I have an eternal pain

But I am happy for you despite being in the Jungle

I have accepted your departure
 My Punhun, I have no objection
 If it is better for me
 I have heard of some men come with camels
 I took a rest in this valley
 But I concealed it
 Latif, where one can find those who
 Themselves are torchbearers
 They are themselves the destination

They cannot be betrayed and don't have any fear of mistreatment (Latif, [1986](#)).

Statement of Limitations

Due to time constraints, extensive fieldwork cannot be done, and I have to rely on secondary resources,

but this would be sufficient to answer the research question.

I divulge that this research paper may have undeniable limitations. For instance, owing to time restraints, I was unable to do fieldwork which is why I had to rely on secondary resources, but this procedure of qualitative thematic content analysis was sufficient to answer the main research question. The pandemic of covid-19 also contributed towards a limitation of this study by restricting my mobility. It also impeded the accessibility of participants of research for the interview.

Discussion & Conclusion

By using the secondary resources, books, articles, journal articles, and literary debates on the topic of the research this study concluded that the analysis of the above-discussed themes and reoccurring themes in Sur Sassui Aburi suggest that the women in Sur Sassui Aburi have been portrayed as a symbol of courage, love, sincerity, care and great resolve. Society has always been unfair to women. But the women have been defying the established norms and breaking the stigmas. The very first barrier they cross is the barrier of arranged relationships. Sassui broke that psychological and social barrier when she had a liking for Punhun who was not from the place Sassui was living in. Then she goes against the norms by looking for Punhun when he leaves her asleep. His brothers gave Punhun a spiked drink and picked him up while Sassui was asleep. She looked for him but couldn't find him. So, she resorted to going after the caravan. Her

fellow women and society critiqued her and advised her not to go after Punhun. But she didn't agree and accepted the hardships. She had been looking for Punhun till her death. Latif has paid tribute to her for her courage, love, determination, and sincerity. This is the reason why the character of Sassui still inspires the women of the world. It urges women to stand up against the regimented norms and defy the social, psychological, and legal barriers that restrict their liberties and limit their will. Shah Latif has amplified the voice of Sassui to the world beyond his age. The beautiful portrayal of Sassui's character in Shah's poetry (Sur Sassui Aburi) shows that he was truly a feminist poet. His intellect and vision are reflected in his poetry.

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