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Research Paper

Call of the Folklore as Lok-Dharmita: Towards A Public of 'The Otherwise' Reading Gurmeet Karyalvi's "Sarangi di Maut"

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reads Gurmeet Karyalvi's short story "Sarangi di Maut" as a folk meditation on lok-dharmita—the moral vision alive in everyday art—and as a call to a "public of the otherwise," where the disenfranchised voices seek dignity beyond market and state. The story of Piru, the sarangi player, turns personal suffering into collective remembrance, questioning dominant ideas of progress and value. Through its soundscape of sarangi and algoza, the story revives the ethical and emotional life of the folk as a counter-public grounded in devotion, resistance, and shared care. The first aim of the study is to show how singing preserves lived memory, witnessing histories of pain and endurance. The second is to explore how folk performance moves between sacred labor and commodified art, revealing the moral tension between ibādat and exchange. The third is to read Piru's refusal as an image of ethical autonomy—the folk artist's right to exist otherwise in a world dominated by money and commoditization. Karyalvi's work thus reimagines folklore not as nostalgia but as a living ethics of being, where the sarangi's death marks both an ending and an awakening—a moral sound rising for the silenced folk.

Keywords: *Folklore, Punjabi Oral Tradition, Devotion and Resistance, Art and Ethics, Folk-Pedagogy*

This book chapter, *Call of the Folklore*[1] *as Lok-dharmita*[2]*: Towards a Public of 'the Otherwise'*, explores Gurmeet Karyalvi[3]'s *"*Sarangi di Maut*"*** as a crucial text for understanding the moral and aesthetic imagination of Punjabi folk culture. The study views the story not merely as fiction but as a philosophical reflection on the survival of sacred art in a world dominated by commerce and control. It begins from the conviction that folk traditions are not dead artifacts but living ethical worlds—repositories of memory, devotion, and defiance. Through the character of Piru, the sarangi player, Karyalvi constructs a moral universe where art, faith, and rebellion coexist. His defiance before feudal authority and the market transforms music into a prayer of resistance. The story reveals how *lok-dharmita*—the moral force of the folk—functions as a distinct kind of public sphere, one that resists domination and reclaims dignity through performance and remembrance. This fictional world

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**All textual citations are taken from *Sarangi di Maut* by Gurmeet Karyalvi, published in *Sarangi di Maut Ate Hor Kahania* (Bergari, Faridkot: People's Forum, 2019). All English quotations are translated by me from the original Punjabi.
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shows that the folk is not merely cultural residue but a space of emancipation, where art remains a form of worship and sound becomes a language of conscience.

Methodologically, this study draws on cultural theory, folklore studies, and decolonial aesthetics to interpret *"Sarangi di Maut"* as both text and testimony. The analysis blends close reading with a philosophical engagement with ethics and orality, highlighting how performance becomes an act of knowing. The chapter examines how oral rhythms, repetitions, and silences preserve the moral energy of folk expression even as modernity threatens to mute it. It adopts a diagnostic outlook that situates Karyalvi's story within the market-driven, ideologically consumerist cultures of the present, where devotionality itself risks commodification. Implicitly, drawing upon theorists such as Raymond Williams and Ngugi wa Thiong'o[4], the study treats folklore as a site of critical knowledge. Ngũgĩ's reflections on cultural decolonization—particularly his call to reclaim "the language of our real life," where speech, art, and resistance are inseparable—illuminate this chapter's understanding of oral traditions as epistemic defiance (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*, pp.1-3). At the same time, "the narrative embodies what Williams calls a "*structure of feeling"*[5]—a collective moral rhythm that resists commodification while sustaining everyday cultural life" (Raymond Williams, pp.128–35). This synthesis of theory and text allows the story to be read not only as cultural representation but also as ethical revelation—an event of resistance spoken through the idiom of music.

The central research questions arise from this intersection of aesthetics, ethics, and power. How does *"Sarangi di Maut"* turn devotional performance into a critique of commodification? In what ways does Piru's moral defiance create a counter-public grounded in *lok-dharmita* rather than in institutional authority? How do sound, silence, and inheritance become forms of survival in a changing social order? By pursuing these questions, the study identifies a key research gap: while much attention has been given to folklore as cultural heritage, little has been done to examine its moral and political agency within modern Punjabi literature. This paper seeks to fill that gap by interpreting Karyalvi's story as a living archive of ethical resistance. It approaches the folk not as a nostalgic remnant but as a transformative pedagogy—what may be called a "pedagogy of resistance"[6]—where remembering itself becomes a moral act and artistic creation becomes a struggle for truth.

The significance of this study lies in its reimagining of the folk as a moral public. Karyalvi's story speaks to a world where the song of devotion must wrestle with the noise of the marketplace. Piru's crushed fingers, Qadri's betrayal, and the echoing algoza together create a moral harmony of suffering and survival. The silence of the sarangi becomes not absence but testimony, a sound that endures within memory and conscience. Through this, the study reveals *lok-dharmita* as a living principle of justice—a rhythm of being that persists against power. The study thus contributes to a larger conversation on how art sustains the ethical life of a community, how performance becomes prayer, and how cultural memory survives as resistance. In this fragile yet luminous continuity, Karyalvi's text shows that the call of the folk is not merely an echo from the past but a living reminder that truth still speaks—in the resonance of a note, the silence of a sarangi, and the enduring pulse of *lok-dharmita*.

Prayer and the Market: The Ethical Rupture of Folk Art

Gurmeet Karyalvi's *Sarangi di Maut* is a tender yet defiant meditation on devotion, dignity, and the destruction of faith in the face of power. The story does not merely recount the fall of a musician; it reimagines the moral universe of folk art, where music is not entertainment but

invocation. The village becomes a shrine of oral imagination, where song is prayer and the sarangi is scripture. In this world, Piru, the sarangi player, lives like a monk of melody. His fingers do not touch the strings for fame or profit but for remembrance. Before each performance, he begins with a prayer that binds earth and sky, body and spirit, into one breath of humility and faith:

"Pahli bandna us Akaal taain,
sooraj chand dharti jeehne saaz ditti.
Dooji bandna maata te pita taain,
deen-duniyaan si jeehne vikhaal ditti.
Teeji bandna guru de charan valle,
moya hoi'an nu jeevan di jaach dassi.
Hath jod ke vandna khalak agge,
jisde pyaar ne daas di laaj rakhki." (p. 38)
First, I bow before the Eternal One,
Who created the sun, the moon, and the earth.
Second, I bow before my mother and father,
Who revealed to me the ways of life and faith.
Third, I bow before the feet of the Guru,
Who taught the art of living to those dead in spirit.
With folded hands, I bow before humanity,
Whose love has preserved this servant's honour.

This invocation, sung before every gathering, is more than ritual—it is philosophy. It defines Piru's world where the act of singing is a moral choice, and where art remains accountable to the divine. His sarangi, polished daily like a relic, carries the weight of his ancestors' breath. In his hands, music is an offering, not a performance. The strings vibrate with memory; the bow moves like a prayer wheel. Karyalvi turns Piru into a custodian of a vanishing ethic, where the artist's worth lies not in acclaim but in his refusal to betray meaning. The rural fair, where the feudal Sardar's order shatters this sacredness, becomes the battlefield between worship and spectacle.

Piru embodies what can be called the '*affect of music'*[7]. His singing is not mere performance but a spiritual act — an *ibaadat* — through which he seeks communion with the divine order. The resonance of his music is not only heard but felt; it moves like prayer through the air. His art does not separate the sacred from the aesthetic; both live within the same breath. In rejecting the song of *Mirza,* he refuses to reduce art to entertainment or passion to vulgarity. For Piru, music is the echo of the soul's truth, not a trade to be sold in the market of fame and desire. This resistance to commercialization marks Piru's moral distinction. He rejects money not out of ascetic disdain but because it contaminates the sanctity of expression. To him, the authenticity of art lies in its purpose—to elevate, not to please. His refusal to sing for profit reflects an ethics of creation that privileges authenticity over applause and devotion over demand. Piru thus emerges as a luminous figure whose life fuses the sacred and the aesthetic, reminding us that folk art is not a possession but a pilgrimage of the soul. When the feudal Sardar commands Piru to sing *Mirza,* the order violates not only artistic freedom but also the moral code that sustains his being. Piru's defiance is quiet yet absolute.

"Piru saaf suthra gaun gaaunda si. Ise karke oh Mirza sunaaun ton inkaar kar diya karda si. Oh Mirze nu sachcha aashiq nahin si samjhda. Piru kehnda si ke Mirze ne ishq haqiqi nu ishq mizaaji vich tabdeel karke paak muhabbat nu sada laii daagi kar ditta si." (p. 40)

"Piru sang songs that were pure and refined. That is why he refused to perform 'Mirza.' He did not consider Mirza a true lover. Piru used to say that Mirza had turned divine love (Ishq-e-Haqiqi) into worldly passion (Ishq-e-Majazi), and in doing so, he had stained pure love forever."

Piru's moral resistance grows from his understanding that creation must remain free of corruption. He would often say, "Main paisa nahin kamauna, fir Mirza kyon gawan? Paisa kamauna vi kis laii? Paisa taan badmaashan te luchiyan kol vi vaadhu hunda. Eh Piru nahin paise khaatar gand-mand gaa sakda. Gaun taan ikk ibaadat ai. Bhalla ibaadat ton vi kuch kamaiaa ja sakda?" (p. 40) — words that turn art into ethics. *"I do not wish to earn money—then why should I sing Mirza? Why earn money at all? Even rogues and scoundrels have plenty of it. This Piru cannot sing filth for the sake of money. Singing is a form of worship. How can one profit from worship?"* In those lines, art becomes prayer, and refusal becomes its purest note of devotion. Piru's music flows not from ambition but from surrender.

Symbolically, Piru's sarangi becomes an extension of his inner being—a vessel of genuineness and conscience. It is the embodiment of an era when the artist's life and art were one continuous gesture of faith. When Karyalvi writes that "it was not Piru's death, but the death of the sarangi," he mourns the passing of that unity. The sarangi's silence echoes the moral decay of a world where art loses its soul to materialism. Piru stands as a moral-musical archetype—the artist as saint—whose art is not performance but prayer, an act of self-purification preserving the spiritual integrity of both the artist and his creation. Through him, Karyalvi writes the obituary of sincerity in an age of spectacle.

When the Sardar hurls money, Piru flings the currency notes back, reclaiming his dignity from the dust of insult. The saint's embrace turns his defiance into grace — rebellion made sacred. Yet courage always carries a price. The Sardar's revenge arrives through the police, who crush Piru's hands, silencing his music. The melody that once rose like prayer now breaks into pain, but the silence that follows holds its own music — one of faith, endurance, and quiet strength. His broken hands become symbols of what cannot be owned: the spirit of art that survives even in suffering. In that silence, his song continues, unseen yet eternal.

This moral universe collapses in the next generation. Qadri, Piru's son, inherits his father's fingers but not his vow. His hands move with the same effortless grace— "Kaadri de hath bilkul Piru vang sarangi te challde san" (p. 46)—yet the spirit of devotion has vanished. When the son of the feudal Sardar requests the song *Mirza*, Qadri complies:

"Chardhe Mirze Khan nu vanjhal ditta matt
Bhatth rannāṁ dī dosti, khurīṁ jināṁ dī matt
Pehlaṁ hass-hass lāuṁdīāṁ yārīāṁ,
Pichhoṁ ro-ro dindīāṁ dass.
Lathī hath na āuṁdī o jatt Mirziyā,
Kade dānishmandāṁ dī patt o bholiyā." (p. 48)
The rising Mirza Khan was confused by fate;
The Bhatti women's friendship—sharp and shrewd their wit.
At first, they laugh and form bonds of love,
But later, they weep and reveal the truth.
You slipped away from their grasp, O proud Jatt Mirza;
When will you learn the wisdom of the wise, O innocent one?

This act repeats history but empties it of its soul. The *sarangi* that once sanctified rebellion now merely decorates obedience. The father's silence meets the son's submission, and the lineage of devotion breaks. The story laments not only the artist's fall but also the fading of moral continuity—the slow erosion of a world where art once embodied truth.

Through Piru, Karyalvi restores the human soul to folk art. The story captures the fragility of devotion in a time when markets replace meaning. Every musical note Piru once played becomes a fragment of memory—a whisper of an ethical world that refuses to vanish. His broken fingers, the saint's embrace, the flung currency notes, and the humble prayer all remain suspended between the sacred and the profane, between reverence and ruin. *Sarangi di Maut* listens to the silence left when the prayer is sold and the market applauds—a silence that still trembles with the moral breath of Piru's sarangi.

Resonant Cultural Memory and the Afterlife of Folk Art

The story turns memory into a shared landscape where sound, silence, and loss breathe together. The village does not exist only in its houses or fields but in the rhythm of collective remembrance. Under the moon, the algoza cuts through the night, awakening presences that time had muted. The sleepless narrator listens as the wind carries the echo of the past. His father's voice binds memory to space, while the empty wells and silent courtyards reflect a fading communal spirit. Yet the melody survives like breath in dry air, a "residual echo" that resists forgetting. When the father murmurs that the music belongs to Haripuria Ralla, the last of Piru's companions, sound becomes memory itself. The act of listening turns into an act of care, binding generations through shared remembrance. The village, through this nocturnal song, becomes not a place but a living archive of faith, grief, and belonging.

In this world, art carries the weight of community. Piru, Haripuria Ralla, and Allah Ditta were not performers but custodians of a moral order. Their music created sacred spaces at fairs and shrines, where devotion replaced hierarchy. Piru's sarangi was a vessel of faith, his songs act of gratitude—each performance linking the divine, the social, and the everyday. His art gathered people across caste and class, turning song into a public trust. Folk ballads like *Kaulan Shahni*[8] and *Roop Basant*[9] preserved memory through repetition, shaping an ethical world resistant to greed and power. Piru's refusal to sing *Mirza* was not rebellion for its own sake but a defense of moral order. His defiance of the feudal Sardar marked the tension between heritage and exploitation, between faith and market. Folk art here stands as a moral common, owned not by individuals but by the community that listens, remembers, and participates in its renewal.

Through the figure of Piru, the story imagines folk tradition as the conscience of the collective. His songs were not only act of devotion but also of courage and social vision. "He had first sung the *Ballad of Banda Bahadur*[10], and later the ballads of Dulla Bhatti[11] and Shaheed Bhagat Singh" ("aitakīṁ usne sab toṁ pahlāṁ Banda Bahadur dī vār suṇāī sī. Dullā Bhattī te Shahīd Bhagat Singh dīāṁ vārāṁ vī suṇāīāṁ san"; p. 46). In these songs, the hero became a symbol of resistance, and performance became public service. Piru's voice carried the collective memory of struggle, celebrating those who fought for justice and dignity. His art reached beyond entertainment—it reminded the people of courage, unity, and the dignity of the oppressed. When his son Qadri sings, the villagers whisper, "A voice just like the father's," but imitation cannot revive conviction. The fairs that once joined prayer and protest now echo applause. Yet the melody endures, trembling with loss and hope. In its fragile persistence,

Sarangi di Maut speaks of how folk art sustains the moral breath of a people, keeping alive their courage, their memory, and their sense of shared humanity.

Pedagogy of the Folklore

The folklore teaches by remembering. It carries the rhythm of soil, wind, and pulse. Gurmeet Karyalvi's *"Sarangi di Maut"* is born from that rhythm. Its pedagogy lies not in instruction but in inheritance — what the ear learns from the wind and what the hand remembers from loss. The oral and the written hold a fragile conversation here. Piru's sarangi becomes the bridge. Its sound gathers a public where literacy fails — a public of "the otherwise." The night listens as much as it teaches. "If the dogs do not bark, who dares to disturb the silence?" (p. 35) whispers the narrator, marking the death of sound as the death of community. The story's pedagogy lies in reviving that community through resonance, through the echo of *lokai* — the people's way of knowing. In a world where culture is measured by cost, the folk becomes a quiet refusal. It offers value without price, inheritance without property.

The conflict in *"Sarangi di Maut"* is not only between the singer and the oppressor but between two forms of art—*lok-dharmita* and modernity's commodified muse. Piru resists turning his worship into wage. He refuses to sing *Mirza*, because "singing is *ibādat*, not trade" (p. 40). This refusal becomes the text's most radical pedagogy. It reclaims the sacred frontier of culture from the marketplace. The story dramatizes what Raymond Williams, in *Culture and Society*, called culture as "a whole way of life**"** (1958, p. 18)—a living practice that grows out of common experience rather than standing apart from it. Piru's defiance does not arise from politics but from ethics; it is the stubborn survival of moral sound in a noisy economy. His beaten hands, no longer able to play, become metaphors for the mutilation of oral tradition by modern power. Yet his music returns, reappearing in the *algoza's* midnight cry, reminding us that the folk cannot die—it migrates from voice to echo, from human to spirit, from resistance to pedagogy.

To read this story as a form of pedagogy is to see how 'folk culture'[12] preserves the idea of justice through emotion and shared feeling. The oral becomes the school of empathy, the *sarangi* its text, the singer its teacher. As Ray Browne once wrote, "*Popular culture is the everyday world around us… our total life picture*" (qtd. in *The Cultural Politics of Contemporary Hollywood Film*, p. 75). The story translates that world into a moral landscape—one where sound itself is conscience. Piru's defiance teaches the oppressed to hear differently, to find belonging in voice rather than power. His inheritance is not wealth but memory, not monument but music. Folk pedagogy thus rebuilds what capitalism erases: relation, rhythm, and repair. It invites a public formed through listening, not consumption. It insists that culture lives not in museums or markets but in the trembling note that carries courage across generations. When, after Piru's death, the *algoza's* cry rises again in the night, it is as if the river of folk breathes once more—this is the people's voice, the one that never dies.

CONCLUSION

The story of *"Sarangi di Maut"* ends where sound becomes silence, but that silence continues to speak. This chapter has tried to listen to that voice — the moral resonance of *lok-dharmita*, the ethical strength of the folk. The story unfolds within the dialectic of sound and silence, memory and power. The sarangi's disappearance does not signify defeat; it marks the transformation of art from performance to presence, from the public fair to the private ache of survival. Piru's martyrdom for art becomes the symbol of a folk ethic where *kalā* resists

commodification. The narrative dramatizes how art, once born in community faith, becomes the conscience of the oppressed. Even when the instrument falls quiet, its echo persists through the algoza, through memory, through the listener who inherits the moral rhythm of resistance. The story, therefore, renders music not as ornament but as ontology — the sound of truth breathing in the ruins of power.

Piru's life and music invite us to rethink the emancipatory role of folk art as a living language of justice. In his defiance, devotion becomes a mode of critique. His sarangi is not an artifact but a moral instrument that exposes the violence of commodification and the betrayal of sacred labour. Through his wounded hands, Karyalvi reveals how art, when rooted in faith, turns resistance into prayer. The study thus reads Piru not merely as a victim but as a teacher of truth, a symbol of the transformative power of folk imagination. His self-cultivation through music embodies an alternative humanism that stands against market values and ideological control.

The study also shows that folk music is not merely a cultural artefact but a public voice — a *lok-sabha* of the otherwise. In the song of the sarangi, devotion, memory, and rebellion meet to form a moral community that resists domination. Piru's refusal to sing for money becomes a political act, reclaiming art as worship and restoring dignity to creative labour. His silence, like the pause in a melody, holds more meaning than the loudness of the marketplace. By contrasting Piru's purity with Qadri's submission, the story mirrors the present condition of art under consumerism. The folk here becomes diagnostic[13] — revealing how the spiritual and aesthetic energies of a people are drained when beauty is sold. Yet, even within this decay, the algoza's faint cry keeps alive the possibility of renewal. It reminds us that the public sphere of the folk is not institutional but ethical, built through remembrance, sharing, and moral rhythm.

At the same time, Karyalvi's story reinforces an absolute binary between the underclass that owns the soul of folklore and the feudal elite that consumes without understanding it. Folklore here becomes the exclusive property of the oppressed, its moral authority derived from deprivation. While this dichotomy grants the folk a redemptive ethical power, it also restricts the transformative capacity of art to the margins. The feudal *sardar* remains irredeemable, untouched by the moral education that Piru's music embodies. Thus, folklore functions as a weapon of resistance rather than a bridge of understanding — its subversive energy confined to the oppressed rather than reshaping the social order. The story, in this sense, reveals both the strength and the limitation of *lok-dharmita*: it sanctifies resistance but cannot dissolve hierarchy.

In conclusion, the study, however, affirms that Karyalvi's *"Sarangi di Maut"* is not simply a story about the end of an instrument but a meditation on the endurance of conscience. The call of the folk, as *lok-dharmita*, still echoes through the broken strings and silenced voices. It offers a critique of our market-driven, ideologically saturated cultures of devotion and invites readers to recover the moral pulse of art. Through its transformative aesthetics, the story turns pain into pedagogy, memory into defiance, and music into philosophy. Piru's art teaches that true emancipation lies in preserving the sanctity of one's calling even amid oppression. His sarangi, now silent, continues to sing — of faith, dignity, and the timeless struggle to remain human in a world that forgets how to listen.

Extended-notes

1. Folklore refers to traditional knowledge and practice encompassing the cultural expressions, customs, and creative wisdom of ordinary people. The term combines "folk," meaning common people, and "lore," meaning their cultural learning expressed through songs, tales, customs, and dances. As part of the vernacular tradition, folklore signifies intergenerational transmission and the continuity of localized culture. It embodies shared wisdom while raising important cultural and psychological questions, carrying both aesthetic and political significance. As a form of cultural literacy, folklore reflects what the German philosopher Gottfried Herder described as the "spirit of the people"—a harmony between humans and nature, rooted in the spirituality and artistry of peasant life. In the postmodern and digital age, the concept of folklore has expanded to include popular culture, adapting traditional forms to new media and technologies. Within the context of post-industrial society, it has further evolved into mass culture, marking a transformation from oral, community-based traditions to globalized, mediated forms of collective expression (An adaptation from Bronner's *Folklore: The Basics*, pp. 1–2, 14).
2. The term *Lok-dharmita* signifies the moral and spiritual essence embedded in the everyday life of the folk. It reflects the ethical rhythm of the community—an unwritten code of sincerity, compassion, and devotion that governs artistic and social conduct. Through the story of Piru, the sarangi player, Karyalvi portrays how folk art becomes an embodiment of this lok-dharmita: it is not merely performance but a sacred duty that sustains the moral balance of collective life. Piru's steadfast commitment to his music, even amid neglect and commercialization, symbolizes the ethical resistance of the lok (people) against forces that erode sincerity and shared humanity. Thus, *lok-dharmita* in this story becomes both a spiritual compass and a cultural ethic—linking art to the integrity, dignity, and moral imagination of the folk world.
3. Gurmeet Karyalvi (b. 1968) is a powerful voice in the Punjabi public sphere who transformed fiction into a medium of moral reflection and social awakening. His stories bring to life the struggles and dignity of marginalized communities—workers, artists, and folk performers—turning their private pain into collective memory. Karyalvi's intervention lies in infusing Punjabi literature with *lok-dharmita*—an ethical consciousness rooted in the moral vision of the folk. Through works like *Aatu Khoji*, *Tũ Jāh Daddy*, and *Sārangī dī Maut*, he redefined the Punjabi short story as a site of resistance, empathy, and remembrance. In doing so, he elevated storytelling beyond market aesthetics, envisioning it as a space where art, suffering, and devotion converge to reclaim the human spirit.
4. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, in *Decolonizing the Mind*, gives a strong way to study *Sarangi di Maut* as a folk text. He speaks of two living forces — the imperialist tradition that imitates and controls, and the resistance tradition that keeps alive the people's true spirit. This idea helps us see *Sarangi di Maut* not just as a story, but as a voice of resistance. Piru, the sarangi player, stands with the working people who defend their art, memory, and dignity against power. His broken sarangi becomes a symbol of cultural survival. Like Ngũgĩ's model, the story celebrates the folk as keepers of truth and freedom. It reminds us that every small act of song, protest, or love becomes part of a larger struggle for justice. Through this lens, *Sarangi di Maut* feels deeply human — a cry for respect, rooted in the people's pain, strength, and hope.
5. Structure of Feeling refers to Raymond Williams's idea of a shared emotional and cultural atmosphere within a society at a given time. It captures how people *feel* their

historical moment—an unspoken collective sensibility that precedes formal ideologies, shaping art, literature, and social consciousness.

6. Pedagogy of Resistance emphasizes teaching as a form of liberation. Inspired by Paulo Freire, it encourages learners to question authority, challenge inequality, and transform society through critical thinking and dialogue—turning education into a process of awakening and empowerment.
7. Affect of Music highlights the emotional and physical power of sound to move individuals and communities. Music stirs memory, shapes moods, and creates shared feelings, transforming personal emotions into collective experiences that connect people across time, space, and culture.
8. Kaulan Shahni, a prominent female folk character, symbolizes the emotional and moral core of Punjabi folk imagination. Through her association with Raja Rasalu, she represents themes of love, loyalty, and social conflict. Her story, sung in qissas, preserves regional history, women's voices, and Punjab's oral narrative heritage.
9. Roop Basant embodies the timeless values of sacrifice, virtue, and divine justice in Indian folklore. Through Roop's righteousness and Basant's selfless devotion, the folktale celebrates moral integrity and brotherly love, reflecting the spiritual truth that goodness and duty ultimately triumph over adversity.
10. Banda Bahadur's rise marked a turning point in Punjab's history. Transforming from the ascetic Madho Das to a fearless Sikh commander under Guru Gobind Singh's guidance, he led the first organized revolt against Mughal tyranny. By establishing Sikh rule in Punjab, he turned faith into political power and inspired a lasting vision of justice, equality, and self-rule that laid the foundation for the later Sikh Empire.
11. Dulla Bhatti stands as a timeless symbol of defiance and justice in Punjabi folklore. Revered as the "Robin Hood of Punjab," he rebelled against Mughal oppression, protected the helpless, and upheld social dignity. His heroic deeds, immortalized through the Lohri festival and the song *"Sundri Mundriye,"* celebrate courage, compassion, and the spirit of resistance that continues to inspire generations.
12. Folk, Popular, and Mass Culture represent interconnected layers of human creativity and communication**.** Folk Culture arises from the lived traditions, songs, stories, and crafts of ordinary people, transmitted orally through generations and reflecting their labor, faith, and local identity. Popular Culture evolves as these traditions interact with modern media and commercial forms—films, songs, and television—expressing shared emotions, social tensions, and aspirations while retaining traces of folk creativity. Mass Culture, in turn, industrializes and standardizes these expressions for global consumption, prioritizing profit and conformity but also shaping collective consciousness. Together, they reveal the continuum between grassroots expression, mediated experience, and global cultural production.
13. Diagnostic approaches in cultural and literary analysis identify underlying social or psychological conditions in texts. The term suggests reading symptoms—of conflict, repression, or ideology—to uncover hidden meanings and reveal how literature reflects the deeper structures of its time.

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