

THE ADVENTURES OF HIR AND RANJHA

Recounted in Panjabi by Waris Shah

And translated into English by

Charles Frederick Usborne, 1874 - 1919

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INVOCATION

PRAISE be to God who made love the foundation of the world; God Himself was the first lover for He loved the Prophet Muhammad. Praise be to the Prophet whom God hath raised from the dust of the earth to great dignity. God hath cleansed him from the sins of the world. When the Almighty desired his presence He sent a swift steed to bear him to Heaven and gave him Gabriel, chief of the Angels, to be his messenger. Verily the power of the Prophet is great, whereby he broke the Moon in twain with his finger. To the four friends of the Prophet also be praise, even to Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali. They are like unto four jewels sparkling on the hand of the Prophet. Each outshineth the other in beauty?

Let us also praise the holiness of Pirs;² without the help of holy men our boat cannot reach the shore. Praise to score out even the writing of the Pen of Destiny.⁸ Praise also to the beloved Pir Chishti Shakarganj. When Shakarganj made his abode at Pakpattan, the Punjab was delivered of all its troubles.⁴

In truth it is meet and proper to praise God and invoke the help of Saints and Prophets before essaying this story of Love. My friends came to me and said, 'Write for us afresh the forgotten story of the Love of Hir.' So we have written it right cunningly and plucked a new rose in the Garden of Poetry. Even as a sweet smell cometh out of musk so is the fragrance of love distilled from the beauty of our verse. We have bridled the steed of genius, set Love on his back, and let him loose on the field.

Notes

1. This is the traditional invocation used by Sunni Muslims.
2. 'Pir' is a person who is regarded as a spiritual leader. The disciples and followers of a Pir are known as Murids'. Literally the word 'Pir' means an old man. 'Mohiuddin' means one who revives religion, and is the popular title of Sayyid Abdul Qadir Gilani, the chief saint of the Qadiriyya Sect of the Sufis. The Shakarganj of Pakpattan mentioned here belonged to The Chishtiyya Sect. It is not unusual for a person to owe allegiance to more than one sect of the Sufis. This is the case with Waris Shah.
3. This is not what Omar Khayyam has to say about the Moving Finger of Destiny! See also Chapter 19, note 7.

4 Much as one would like to agree with Waris Shah this is not historically correct. The Punjab has had plenty of troubles even after Baba Farid honoured it by making it his home and his place of burial!

CHAPTER 1

Ranjha quarrels with his brothers and their wives and leaves his home in Takht Hazara

TAKHT HAZARA¹ is a pleasant place on the banks of the river Chenab. There streams are flowing and gardens smiling. It is a Paradise on earth. It is the abode of the Ranjhas² who live there in proud luxury. Their young men are heedless and handsome and care naught at all for any man. They lord it with earrings in their ears and new shawls over their shoulders. They are proud of their beauty and each one out-rivals the other in his glory.

Mauju³ Chaudhri⁴ was chief land owner in the village. He had eight sons and two daughters. He lived in wealth and happiness with his family, esteemed by his brethren and honoured by all. Of all his sons Ranjha was the most beloved of his father; and as his father loved him, so his brethren hated him. For fear of their father they would not wound him openly but their secret taunts pierced his heart, even as snakes strike sleeping men in the dark.

Now it came to pass on the Night of Nights⁵ that the leaves of the Tree of Life were shaken and by the decree of God, Mauju died. And Ranjha's brothers and their wives redoubled their taunts, saying, 'You eat the bread of idleness and drink two men's share of buttermilk.'⁶ And they meditated in their hearts some device by which they might be rid of him.

So they sent for the Qazi⁷ and the assembly of the elders to measure the family land. They gave bribes to the Qazi and thus the good land was given to the brothers and the barren and inhospitable land was given to Ranjha: and Ranjha's enemies flapped their arms exultantly and said, 'Now Ranjha's brethren have entangled him in a net.' And they jeered at the Jat, saying, 'How can a man plough who wears long hair and anoints his head with curds?'⁸ What woman will marry such a ne'er-do-well? And his brothers jeered saying, 'He

wears a looking-glass⁹ on his thumb like a woman. He plays on the flute all day and sings all night. Let the boy quarrel about the land if he so wills. His strength will not avail against us who are many.

So Ranjha, heavy at heart, took out his yoke of oxen to the field to plough; but his soul was sad within him, and the sun smote him sore. And being tired of ploughing, when, he came to a shady place, he took the yoke pegs out from the yoke and lay down to rest. And Sahiba, his brother's wife, brought him food. Arid he told of his sorrows to Sahiba, his brother's wife:

'Sister, I do not like this ploughing; the soil is hard, my hands are blistered and my feet are exceedingly sore. The good days when my father was alive are alas! gone and now evil days have fallen upon me.'

And Sahiba replied tauntingly, 'Verily you were your father's darling but the very shame of your mother.'

Whereupon Ranjha's anger was hot within him and he replied, 'It is truly written in the Holy Qur'an: "Women are ever deceivers."¹⁰ Did not women befool Raja Bhoj,¹¹ put a bit in his mouth and drive him like a donkey round the palace? Did not women destroy the Kauros and Pan-dos?¹² Did not a woman kill Ravana?¹³ It is you who have stirred up strife it is you who have separated me from my brethren. I used to be happy day and night with my friends, but now your evil tongues have raised up the smoke of contention. You women make men into rams so that they fight with one another.'

Sahiba replied, You eat too much milk and rice, hence you are proud and overbearing. You are the only blot on our family. If you would leave your home and go hungry for a time, perhaps you might give up this devilry. You are idle and do no work. You prowl about the village making eyes at the girls. The other women of the village taunt us at the spinning parties¹⁴ and say we are in love with you. For women fall in love with such beauty as is yours; even 'as flies are caught in honey. Day and night the women run after you. Your love has ruined many households.'

Thereupon Ranjha was wroth and spoke angry words to his sister-in-law, saying, 'All the world knows that you are the most quarrelsome woman in the village, and as for your beauty, it is such that your husband need not fear that any man will want to run away with you.'

The eyes of Sahiba reddened with rage and her black curls glistened like cobras:

'If we are not good enough for you,' said she, 'go and marry one of the Sial girls; go and play your flute among their houses and entrap some of their women. If you don't like our beauty go and marry Hir. Seek her day and night that you may entrap her. You can beguile women even out of the palace of Rani Kokilan.¹⁵ If you cannot get her out of the door by day, pull down the back wall and take her away by night.'

Ranjha replied, 'Men who have sisters-in-law like you should drown them in the deep stream. I will bring back Hir of the Sials in marriage and women like you shall be her hand-maidens.'

And he turned away in a rage; and Sahiba looking over his shoulder, said to him, 'You should be quick about this marriage business, or the beauty of hr will fade and you will be too late.'

So Ranjha, with his flute under his arm, left his father's country declaring that he would no longer eat or drink in Takht Hazara. And it came to pass that a herdsman ran and told his brethren and they said to him, 'Ranjha, what has befallen you that you quit our home? Our wives are your maid-servants and we are your slaves.'

And his brothers' wives besought him saying, 'We shed tears of blood when you talk of We give our life and our property and ourselves as a sacrifice to you.

Ranjha replied, 'Why do you try to mike me change my mind? For many days the food and water of Takht Hazara have been hateful to me. First with your taunts you burnt my heart and separated me from my brethren, and now you turn round and say smooth things. You cannot prevail. My mind is firm. The drum of my departure has sounded and I will leave the home of my father.'

So Ranjha quarrelled with his brethren and left Takht Hazara.

Notes

1. The village is still in existence. It is situated in the Shahpur District of the old Punjab.
2. Ranjha is still a well-known caste of the Jats in the old Punjab. The hem of *Hir-Ranjha* is known by his caste. His real name is given as Dhidhu, which with the plebeian ring about it, would be somewhat unusual for a man of aristocratic origin like Ranjha. It is

possible that Dhidhu was only a nickname.

3. Mauju is a corruption of Muizud Din, which is the name given in some of the Persian Hir-Ranjha Mathnavis. Mauj Din is now a common name In the old Punjab.
4. Chaudhri means primarily the headman of a village. It is also an honorific appellation used for addressing members of certain tribes, such as Jats and Rajputs. The word is common to Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali.
5. A reference to the Laila-tul-Qadr, the Night of Nights on which the first revelation of the Quran came to the Prophet. It is identified as the 27th night of Ramazan, the fasting month.
- 6 Lassi is a favourite drink in the Punjab countryside. It is the equivalent of the Iranian 'doogh' and the Turkish 'asran.
- 7 The job of measuring land today is one for the village 'patwari, a subordinate revenue official who wields great power and local influence.
- 8 Washing the hair with curds is still well known in the Punjab countryside.
9. Arsi, a small looking-glass worn on the thumb, is the old equivalent of the modern vanity case' of ladies and was a well known ornament for brides. Here Ranjha is accused of effeminacy, not that he could have been actually wearing an arsi on his thumb.
10. Ranjha is certainly no scholar of the Quran, which does not lay down any general proposition about the deoeitfulne~ of women anywhere. The reference is probably to the chapter entitled 'Yusuf' (Joseph) in Part 12 of the Quran where an unnamed witness accuses Potifer's wife of having falsely accused Joseph, and adds, Verily, great is the deceitfulness of you women. This is only an individual remark which carries no authority with it.
11. Raja Bhoj is a popular figure of legend who probably corresponds to a Hindu ruler in ancient India. His name lives in the famous proverb *Kahan Raja Bhoj aur Kahan Ganga teli*, that is, how can Ganga the poor oil-seller compare with Raja Bhoj? Whether the Raja was befooled by women in the manner described is difficult to say.
12. Kauros and Pandos were the two opposing parties in the wars of the 'Mahabharata'. They were cousins. The fair Draupadi is prominent in the story somewhat like Helen in the Trojan War.
13. Ravana is the legendary king of Ceylon, who figures as the chief adversary of Rama in the Ramayana epic. He carried off Sita, Razna's wife, whose rescue is the main theme of the poem. Ravana was killed in battle by Razna and the victory is celebrated every year at the Hindu festival of the Dushera when Ravana's effigy is ceremonially burnt.

14. Spinning parties — the Punjabi name is 'tarinjan' or 'bhora' — were a famous institution of the Punjab village. Young girls, generally unmarried ones, sat together with their spinning-wheels and competed with each other in spinning skill and scandalous conversation.

15 Rani Kokilan is a legendary queen whose palace is supposed to have been particularly well guarded. Whether any of the female mates of the palace were beguiled out of it is anybody's guess.

CHAPTER 2

Ranjha reaches the mosque

After much journeying he reached a mosque, which was as beautiful as the Holy Mecca or the great Mosque at Jerusalem. And hunger and cold fell upon him and weariness of travel. Then he took up his flute and played, and strange things happened. Some became senseless and others hearts yearned when they heard the music. Not a man or woman remained in the village. They all thronged round the mosque. Last of all out came the Mullah who was a very bag of quarrels. And the Mullah seeing Ranjha said, 'Who is this infidel with long hair? This is no place for rogues. Cut off your long hair so that you may be acceptable in God's sight.'

Ranjha retorted to the Mullah, 'You have a long beard like a venerable Shaikh, yet you behave like a devil. Why do you send innocent travellers and poor faqirs like me away? You sit in the pulpit with the Quran in front of you, yet your mind is bent on iniquity. You lead the village women astray; you are as a bull among cows.'²

The Mullah replied, 'Mosques are God's houses and evil liven are not admitted therein. You have abandoned prayer and keep long hair and scented moustaches. Such men we beat out of mosques. Dogs and beggars are alike impure, and both should be whipped.'

To which Ranjha gave reply, 'O deputy of Allah, may your sins be forgiven. In your mercy grant pardon to my faults. Tell me, O learned in wisdom, what is clean and what is unclean? What is right and what is wrong? What is prayer

made of and what is it built? How many cam and noses has prayer? What is its length and size, and with what is it comparised? To whom was prayer ordained in the beginning?

Whereupon the Mullah protested that he knew all the doctrines of the faith and all the prayers ordained for believers, and could lead the pious across the bridge of salvation. 'But,' said he, lewd fellows like Ranjha should be spurned from the assemblies of honest men.'

Hearing this, Ranjha jested right merrily at the Mullah's morals and his bawdy tricks, so that his hearers were much astonished and not a few were mightily pleased. And he teased the Mullah sorely, 'Mullahs run after women in mosques and cultivated land like laymen. They are like curses clinging to the house of God. They are blind men, lepers and cripples, always waiting greedily for a death in the house so that they may take the dead inn's raiment. They arise at midnight their fat bellies are smitten with hunger and they cry for something to eat. Under the shelter of Holy Writ they curse the living and when poor wayfarers and strangers come to beg for succour they cry, begone, begone!'

The Mullahs face was blackened. He hung his head and there was no spirit left in him. So he said to Ranjha, 'Remember God and cover your knees. I give you leave to pass the night in the mosque, but see to it, foolish Jat, that you leave it with covered head at early dawn, or I will summon four lusty scoundrels who will belabour you with cudgels and thrust you out of the assembly.'

So Ranjha slept in the mosque during the night and at early dawn he set forth on his travels. In his heart he remembered Hir and his mind was set on how he might compass his desire.

As he set out, the skirt of night was lifted and the yellow dawn appeared. The sparrow chirped and the starling began to sing. The men took their oxen out to plough and the girls brought their milking stools and cleaned their milk cans. The women of the household began to grind corn, while others kneaded flour with their hands. The noise of the grinding-stone was heard in every courtyard.

Notes

1. Playing the flute in a mosque is regarded as a sacrilege. It is strange that throughout the somewhat vigorous exchanges that follow between Ranjha and the Mullah, the latter makes no objection to this. Music before mosques was a serious point of dispute between Hindus and Muslims before the Independence and led to frequent inter-communal rioting.

2. Usborne has left out some of the coarser gibes of Ranjha here, which are full of anatomical detail typical of the more vigorous variety of Punjabi conversation.

3. Bridge of salvation is the *pul sirat*, a mythological bridge no broader than a sword's edge over which saint and sinner have to pass before reaching their final destination. The saint will cross to heaven, while the sinner will be cut through and fall to hell. Needless to add, the bridge is an invention of the pious imagination. The Quran does not mention it. 'Sirat', in Arabic means 'path'.

4 This is how a morning begins even now in a Punjab village.

CHAPTER 3

Ranjha reaches the bank of the Chenab

AT the third watch of the day, when the sun began to slope to the west, Ranjha reached the bank of the river Chenab. Many travellers were assembled at the ferry waiting for Luddan, the ferryman, to take them across. Now Luddan was as fat as a leather bag full of honey, such as trader folk bring home when they corns with merchandise from Kashmir. Ranjha said, 'Master ferry-man, for the love of God take me across the river.'

And Luddan smote his fat paunch, laughed, and with a bawdy oath replied, 'We have naught of God's love. We ply this ferry for gab.'

And Ranjha entreated him saying, 'I sorely need to reach my journey's end with despatch. I myself will take an oar.'

Luddan replied, 'He who is for yonder shore, let him pay his pence.² Him who gives his pence we will take across; even though he be a dacoit or a thief we will not repeat his name, but we chase away all beggars, faqirs⁵ and those who

eat unlawful meat like dogs. Those who attempt to enter our boat forcibly we throw into the river. Even the son of a Pir like Waris,' we will not take into our boat for nothing.'

At last Ranjha, weary of entreating the ferryman, sat down in a corner by himself. He drew out his flute and played the sad music of separation from one's beloved; and he wept hot tears as he thought of the evil fortune that had befallen him. Hearing his sweet music, all the men and women left the ferry and sat round Ranjha. The two wives of Luddan took his feet in their hands and pressed them. And Luddan's heart was angry within him, and he muttered, 'This youth is a wizard. He has cast some spell over my wives.' And he appealed to the villagers around him saying, 'Save us from the wiles of this Jat. He will beguile all our womenfolk away.'

But they heeded not his word, so powerful was the enchantment of his flute. Then Ranjha having solaced his soul with music, paid no heed to the entreaties of the folk at the ferry, but taking his shoes in his hand, set his feet in the river. And the people said, 'Sir, go not down into the river. The stream of the Chenab runs deep and strong. Even long poles cannot touch its bottom. One's life is lost at the mere sight of the waves of the Chenab.'

Luddan's wives tried to prevail on him to return and caught the skirt of his clothing. But Ranjha replied to them, 'It is best that those in trouble should die. They are happy who do not quit their homes. My parents are dead and

I have been tormented as Joseph was tormented by his brethren.' So Ranjha tied his clothes on his head and putting pride away from his soul, called on the names of God and Khwaja Khizr,' the Prophet of the Waters, and essayed to cross the river.

But the people' ran and caught him and brought him bark saying, 'Friend, enter not, the river or you will be drowned. We ourselves will carry you on our shoulders. We are your servants and you dwell as it were in the apple of our eye.' So they caught Ranjha by the arms, put him in the boat and seated him on the couch of Hir. And Ranjha

made much questioning concerning the couch and the fine linen thereon. And the people answered, 'This is the couch of a Jat damsel, the daughter of Mihr Chuchak. She is as lovely as the moon. The Queen of the fairies always seeks God's protection from her beauty. Those who have become a prey to

her charms can find no shelter on earth. Her beauty slays rich Khojas⁶ and Khatris¹ in the bazaar, like a murderous Kizilbash⁸ trooper riding out of the royal camp armed with a sword. Luddan and his boatmen are afraid of her, even as a goat fears the wolf. She is the pride of the Sial assembly. Her name is Hir.' (Quoth the poet: 'This is not a boat but a marriage procession.')

So Ranjha bade all the passers-by sit on the couch, boys and men, rich and poor. They surrounded him like moths round a lamp. And Luddan repented him that he had not taken Ranjha across at first, 'For, I fear,' said he, 'that this robber of the Chenab may by his magic beguile away my wives from me.'

Now the shepherds took the news to the village that a young man was singing in the boat. 'flowers drop from his mouth when he speaks. Luddan's wives are in love with him, and he sits on Hir's couch.'

And the people of the ferry asked Ranjha his story, 'Whence have you come? Why have you left your home? You seem very delicate. Has nobody given you any food, not even a drop of milk to drink?'

So Ranjha told his story unto the people, saying, 'I was the darling of my parents, but see now the work of God, in what strange wise fate has dealt with me.'

Notes

1. This is a description of the oath and not a translation. Boatmen are known for the unprintable words that frequently occur in their speech.
2. Pice would be more appropriate here. Usborne has used the English equivalent as it came more naturally to him.
3. Faqir is a mendicant. See also Introduction, note 24.
- 4 This is a reference to Waris Shah, the poet himself.
- 5 Muslims believe Khizr to be a prophet of God. According to legend he enjoys eternal life and knows the secret of everlasting youth. He holds authority over the waters, including the Water of Life. Clad in green garb (the name Khizr means green) he roams the world as a wandering immortal and appears to a fortunate few whenever and wherever it pleases him to do so. He is supposed to have taken Alexander of Macedon to the Water of Life and to have brought him back without having had a drink, Goethe speaks of Chiser (Khizr) in 'Hegire' the first poem of the Weg-Oestlither Divan:

Unter Lieben, Trinken, Singen.

Soll dich Chiser's Quell verjungen.

6 Khojas are a well-known tribe of Hindu converts to Islam in the old Punjab who are mainly engaged in trade. The followers of the Agha Khan are also known as khojas, but they are not the ones referred to here.

7. Khatri is the Hindu merchant class in Northern India. The word Khatri is apparently derived from 'Kshatriya', originally the fighting and ruling class in the Hindu caste system.

8. Kizilhash is, literally, a red-head. This is the name of soldierly tribe of Turkish origin in Iran, a number of whom came to India with the armies of Nadir Shah, and settled down in the Northern areas of the country.

CHAPTER 4

Hir and her companions come to the ferry

How can the poet describe the girl friends of Hir? They were fair and bright with beauty. Lovers became like moths round the lamp of their loveliness. Their eyes were pencilled with the collyrium of Ceylon and Kandahar.' Their eyebrows were like the bows of Lahore and their eyelashes like the arrows thereof. Neither the Chinese nor those of the North can rival the features of the Sials. When they walked hand in hand down to the river their lovers were slain in battalions. The music of their bangles echoed as they walked. Their foreheads were as fair as the porch of a mosque.

Last of all came Hir surrounded by her friends even as an eagle floats through the air. She was proud of her beauty and handfuls of pearls swung from her ears. The ring from her nose shone like the polar star. Her beauty was as mighty as the onset of a storm. When the red shirt on her breast quivered in the sun, whosoever saw it forgot both Heaven and Earth.

Poet, how can you praise the beauty of Hir? Her eyes were as soft with love as the eye of a deer or a narcissus; her cheeks were as bright as roses. Her features were as lovely as the curves of a manuscript written by a cunning scribe. When her eyes flashed it was as if the armies of the Punjab had fallen upon Hindustan.² Her lips were as red as a ruby and her chin like an apple of

the north.³ Her teeth were like pearls and beautiful as the seeds of a pomegranate. Her nose was like the blade of Hussain's sword; her locks were black cobras⁵ sitting on the treasures of the Desert. She stood like a cypress in the garden of Paradise Her thighs were as white as camphor and her legs as shapely as the pillars of a minaret. To look at her was the vision of the Night of Nights. The redness of her lips made a man cry 'Oh God, Oh God!' The onset of her beauty was as if armies from Kandahar had swept over the Punjab.⁸

Thus Hir and her girl friends came to the river to bathe. The tinkling of their anklets was heard from afar. They thundered like a cloud when they drew near the boat. They descended on the boatman as a hailstorm sweeps over a field. They ordered the guards of the ferry to be bound hand and foot. Hir spoke straightaway and said, 'Luddan, you black-faced rogue, why have you deified my couch? Whom have you allowed to sleep on my bed? Have you no respect for me or fear of God that you have done this thing?'

So they ran to the boat and looked at the couch and behold a comely youth was sleeping thereon with a red shawl over his shoulders. And Luddan lifted up his hands and said, 'Spare me, Lady, I am innocent. I did not invite the lad to sleep on your bed; he has come here himself without our invitation. The songs that he sings have cast a spell over our hearts. Be not proud of your beauty, Queen, nor be overbearing to your servants. Even tyrants fear God. Take heed that you become not like Zulaikha⁹ when her eyes fell on the beauty of Joseph.'

And Hir made answer in her anger, 'This lad takes no heed of aught that may befall him. Does he not know that this is the kingdom of my father Chuchak; I care for no one, be it a lion, an elephant or the son of a noble. Does he think he is the son of Nadhu Shah¹⁰ or that he is the Pir of Baghdad?'¹ I have a thousand slaves like him and I care not a whit for such as he.'

And Hir turning to Ranjha said, 'Sleeper, arise from my bed. Who are you and why have you chosen my sleeping place? One whole watch of the day¹² have I been waiting with my girl friend, Tell me, why are you sleeping so soundly? Have evil days befallen you that you run the risk of being flogged? Has sleep not come to you all night long that you sleep so sound a slumber? Or have you heedlessly slept on the bed thinking there were no master thereof forsooth?'

And Hir cried aloud in her wrath to her maidservants to belabour him with cudgels. The Queen in her wrath was furious to behold.

Notes

1. Kandahar still has collyrium mines.

2 Historically speaking, this is an imaginary situation, as in the past the armies of the Punjab are known to have defended Hindustan on more than one occasion rather than to have fallen upon it at any time. Even the Sikh power which rose long after Waris Shah's poem was written, was contained on the banks of the Sutlej river by the Anglo-Sikh treaty of 1809, and never became a menace to Hindustan. The poet's flight of fancy may have been inspired by a mistaken sense of local patriotism.

3. 'North' here may refer to Kabul or Kashmir, both of which are famous for their apples.

4 The Imam Hussain, grandson of the Prophet of Islam, who was martyred in the battle of Karbala in 611 AN., equivalent to the year 680 of the Christian era- The battle was fought against the forces of the Ummayyad Caliph Yazid who had succeeded his father Muawiya on the throne of Damascus. Speaking of swords. 'Zulfiqar', the sword of the Caliph Ali, father of Imam Hussain and fourth successor of the Prophet, is more famous than that of Imayn Husain himself.

5 According to Iranian poetic tradition, serpents are supposed to be guardians of hidden treasure. '*Mar bar sar-i-ganj*' (the serpent on the treasure) is a familiar expression in Persian. Cobras would, of course, be much more formidable guardians of treasure than ordinary snakes.

6 See Chapter 1, note 5.

7 Still a favourite exclamation with Muslims, whose thoughts readily turn to God whenever they see one of his beautiful works.

8. The Punjab has often been the battleground of invading forces from the North. The campaigns of Mahmood of Ghazna are famous. Here, the poet may be thinking of Ahmad Shah Abdali, whose capital was Kandahar. and who, in 1748, began a series of invasions of India through the Punjab.

9. According to the Muslim tradition Zulaikha is the name of Potifer's wife, who fell in love with Joseph and tried to seduce him without success- The incident is narrated in the Quran in the chapter entitled '*Yusuf*'. See also Chapter 1, note 10 Nadhu Shah was probably a rich merchant or *shroff* (banker) of the time.

11. Pir of Baghdad is a reference to Abdul Qadir Gilani, who is buried in Baghdad. See Invocation, note 2.

12. This is obviously a coquettish exaggeration – Hir could not have waited so long before venting her feelings on Ranjha!

CHAPTER 5

The meeting of Ranjha and Hir

And Ranjha opened his eyes and beheld lift and said, Be gentle with me, sweetheart.'

And Hir's heart melted within her even as the snow of Kashmir melts under the tyrannous sun of June.

Ranjha had his flute under his arm, and earrings in his ears. His beauty was as that of the full moon. Their four eyes met and dashed in the battlefield of love. The heart of Hir swelled with happiness even as a loaf swells with leaven. She sat in' his lap as lovingly as arrows nestle in the embrace of the quiver. They conversed happily one with the other. Love triumphant rode on the field of victory. The soul of Hit was sore perplexed within her. She abandoned the pride of her beauty and became submissive unto Ranjha.

'It is well,' quoth she, 'that I did not beat you or say anything that was unbecoming.' (Poet Waris: 'None can withstand when eyes fight eyes in the tourney of love.')

Ranjha replied 'This world is a dream. Even you, proud lady, will have to die. You should not be unkind to strangers or treat poor men with haughtiness. Take back your couch and quilt and I will depart hence and be no more seen.

And Hir made reply, 'This couch, Hir² and everything of 'nine is yours. Surely I did not reproach you. I clasp my hands in front of you? I swear I never lifted a finger against my lord. I have been wandering masterless amongst my friends, and now God has sent me Ranjha to be my Master.'

And Ranjha replied, 'Oh beauteous Lady: lovers, faqirs and black cobras cannot be brought to submission without incantations. The wine of your beauty has intoxicated me but you walk disdainfully.'

Hir replied, 'I am your slave. Tell me, friend, whence have you come? Has some proud woman driven you from your home? Whither and why are you wandering? What is your name? Of what caste are you? Who is the wedded wife you have left behind, for whom you are sorrowing? Your eyes are as soft

as the eyes of a deer. Flowers drop from your mouth as you speak. I am even as your slave. Tell me, friend, would it please you to graze my father's buffaloes? The herd belongs to my father, but you will be my servant. Does that plan suit my Lord's fancy? When you drink of my father's grey buffaloes' milk you will forget all your sad songs.

Ranjha replied, 'I am Ranjha and a Jat by caste. I come from Takht Hazara. I am, the favourite son of Chaudhri Mauju. On his death evil days befell me. My brothers by cunning stole the best fields. My portion was stones and bushes, and no rain fell thereon. My brothers burnt me with their taunts until I became like roasted meat. If your loveliness so pleases I will graze the herd under the shadow of your eyes, and do whatsoever your heart wishes. But how shall I be able to meet you? Let us devise some plan lest you go away with your girl friends, desert me and kill me in my helplessness.'

Hir replied with folded hands 'I will remain your slave and all my handmaidens will do your bidding. Is not the forest a meet place for the clashing of four eyes and the meeting of four lips? Journeys end in lovers' meeting. God has given me the cowherd for my lover and I have forgotten the love I had for my old friends and acquaintances.

Ranjha replied, 'Hir, you will sit among your girl friends at the spinning parties. I shall wander alone and disconsolate in the courtyard, and no one will take any heed of me. Do not feed me on bread and then deceive me, and expel me from the courtyard. Sir, do not beguile me. If you mean to be true, keep to your plighted word. Do not first be kind to a stranger and then turn your back upon him.'

Hir replied, 'I swear my father and my mother die if I turn my face from you. Without you I declare food to be abhorrent to me. I will never give my love to any other. Sitting on water I swear by Khwaja Khizr, the lord of the waters. May I turn into a pig if I break the oath of Love. May I be a leper and lose my sight and limbs if ever I seek any husband save Ranjha.'

And Ranjha replied, 'Hir, the way of love is difficult and my heart is perplexed within me. Love is more fearful than a sword or spear or the triple venom of the chuselra snake. Pledge me your faith that you intend to be true. Remember that on the day of Resurrection those who have broken faith will meet those whose faith they have betrayed.'

Notes

1. Is not Hir committing herself too early and too far? Sitting in a stranger's lap is certainly unusual, even in a case of alleged love at first sight.
2. Herself in other words.
3. That is, I beg your pardon. It is customary in the old Punjab to beg someone's pardon with folded hands. It is a custom probably inherited from Hindu society. The folding of hands is intended as a gesture of goodwill and non-aggression, if not of actual submission.
4. A grey-coloured buffalo is highly prized in the Punjab countryside. Apart from her beauty, she is said to be richer in milk than buffaloes of other colours.
5. 'Queen', 'lady', 'girl' and 'fir' used by Ranjha in such quick succession and Hir's tender response to each loving epithet show her precipitous descent into familiarity with the stranger whom she originally wanted to belabour. No wonder this was followed before long by physical intimacy.
6. The pig is an abomination to the Muslims as it is to the Jews. Although the word may, like many other terms of abuse in Punjabi, be used humorously between friends without giving offence, calling a man a pig is normally the reverse of a compliment.
7. This is a mistake of Usborne's. 'Chuselra' is a misreading for 'joshelra', which means a snake which is excited and on the offensive. This can be true of any snake and certainly does not refer to any particular variety of snake.

CHAPTER 6

Ranjha becomes Chuchak's cowherd

So Hir pledged her faith and Ranjha, trusting her, stood before Mihr¹ Chuchak. Hir went into the presence of her father and made Ranjha stand beside her. (Quoth the poet: 'See what a net of deceit Hir, the Jat girl, has spread.')

And Hir said, 'My father, hail. May my life be sacrificed to you, under the shadow of whose protection my youth has passed happily in the Sandal Bar.⁵ Verily have I swung on cords of silk in the garden of beauty. My father, I have found a servant who can tend our buffaloes.'

And Chuchak replied smilingly, 'Who is this boy and whence has he come? His body looks so soft that if you touch him he will bruise. He is not fit for buffaloes' work. He seems of such gentle birth that methinks he will consider the buffaloes his own and himself no one's servant. The splendour of God shines in his face. It is not meet that he should be a herdsman.'

And Hir replied to her father, 'My father, Ranjha is of gentle birth. He is the son of a Chaudhri of Takht Hazara. It is a real jewel that I have found.'

And Chuchak said, 'He seems to be a mere lad, but he has wise eyes and a kindly disposition. But why is he sad and why has he left his home? Is he meditating any deceit in his heart?' And Hir replied subtly, 'My father, he is as learned as Solomon, and he can shave the very beard of Plato.' He has cunning to trace out thefts and he speaks with wisdom in the assembly of the elders he can decide thousands of disputes and is as learned in the wisdom as the Dogar Jats.⁶ He can swim buffaloes across the river and recover stolen cattle. He keeps all the herd as it were in the apple of his eye. He is one in a thousand in a country where thieves are many and good servants scarce. He stands steadfast in duty as a wrestler stands firm in the midst of the arena.

And Chuchak replied with tenderness to Hir, 'You are championing his cause with zeal. We will see how the boy turns out. We accept what you say; the boy can be given charge of the buffaloes, but bid him take care, as it is no easy task to tend buffaloes in the Bar.'

(Quoth the poet: Lovers are fortunate whose tangled affairs have been put straight by the kindness of God.)

Then Hir came and told her mother, 'Mother, the difficulty that has so long beset us has at last been settled. The herd will no longer be masterless nor go astray in the forest. I have a Jat, a real jewel. I entreated him kindly and beguiled him with sweet talk and I have at length persuaded him to tend our cattle.'

And thus it came to pass that after a while Hir came to Ranjha and consoled him with sweet talk. And the boys of the village laughed and said to Ranjha, 'Now you will live on milk and cream all your life long.' -

And Hir said, 'You should not mind the jests of these rude boys. I will bring you butter and sugar and sweet bread. Go and drive the buffaloes into the

forest and trust in God. I and my sixty⁷ maids will accompany you and together we will track the footprints of the lost cattle.'

Notes

1. Mihr is an honorific title used by some castes of Jats and Arains.

2. The poet's intervention as a commentator at this stage, however traditional in character, is utterly unnecessary.

3. Sandal Bar is the territory between the Jhelum and Chenab rivers which derives its name from a legendary dacoit named 'Sandal' who was presumably the terror of the area. There are also other 'Bars' in the old Punjab, such as 'Nili Bar' in the Montgomery area (now renamed Sahiwal). 'Bar' may be described as a jungle.

4. That is, defeat him in argument.

5. The Panchayat, as it is called, is the Council of the elders of the village which hears disputes and settles them without recourse to the ordinary law. It was formally recognised as an institution by the British régime.

6. Dogar Jats are a Hindu tribe probably identical with the Dogras of Kashmir. Whoever they may have been, it seems they had a great reputation for wisdom.

7. Rather a large retinue for a girl who wants to keep her affair secret!

CHAPTER 7

Ranjha meets the Five Pirs in the forest

God showed His mercy and the Bar was covered with green, even with innumerable grasses and herbs. The buffaloes formed into a black line like a snake and got out of the forest and Ranjha took upon himself the task of a herdsman. He called on the name of God and entered the forest. And the sun smote him sore and he was in great tribulation.

Good fortune however came to him and he met the Five Pirs' on the way. First came Khwaja Khizr, lord of all the waters, then Shakarganj, the holy saint of Pakpattan. Then Shahbaz Qalandar, the holy saint of Uch,² and Zakana, saint of

Multan, and Sayyid Jalal of Bukhara, whom men also call Makhdum Jahanian. Ranjha saw by their countenances that they were holy men and besought their help.

The Pir replied, Child, eat your fill and drink grey buffaloes' milk and live on the fat of the land. Dismiss all sadness from your mind. God Himself will set your affairs a-right.'

And Ranjha replied, 'Sirs, I am in great distress. You are mediators with God and I salaam before you seven times.³ I beseech you bestow the girl Hir upon me, for the fire of love is devouring me.'

The holy Pirs answered and said, 'Child, all your wishes will be fulfilled; your arrow will hit the target, and your boat will reach the shore. Hir has been bestowed on you by the Darbar of God. My child, remember the Five Pirs in the time of your distress.'

Thus by the grace of God and the kindness of the Five Pirs, Hir, the Jat girl, was bestowed on Ranjha.

(Quoth the poet: 'When the days of good fortune come, all the Pirs, Faqirs,⁵ and Amirs,⁶ are ready to help.')

The Five Pirs were gracious unto Ranjha, Khizr gave him a turban tuft, Sayyid Jalal a dagger, Zalkaria a thick blanket, Lal Shahbaz a ring, and Shakarganj a kerchief. And they said, 'No one will do you harm. God has made you the owner of these cattle.'

And the buffaloes streamed out into the forest and were the glory of the land, even as swans are the glory of a lake. There were black buffaloes, grey buffaloes and brown. Some had horns upturned, others drooping, others had curly horns. Some were lazy and mild tempered, others were fat and lusty and of fiery spirit. They gambolled and jumped and threshed their tails from side to side. They swam in deep water. Their soft eyes were lotus buds and their teeth like rows of pearls.⁶ Ranjha drove the cattle into the forest and they were happy with him and hearkened to his voice, and he drove them whithersoever he listed.

Notes

1. 'Pir' is literally an old man. It has come to mean a saint, dead or alive. The importance of a Pir' depends on the number of his disciples, or the visitors and offerings to his tomb, as the case may be. See also Invocation, note 2.

2 Uch is an ancient town in Bahawalpur, now part of West Pakistan. It is famous for its Gilani and Bukhari Saints, who hailed originally from Gilan (Iraq) and Bukhara (Central Asia) respectively. Lal Shahbaz Qalandar is buried in Sind. 'Zakaria' is a reference to Baha-ud-Din Zakaria of Multan, a famous saint who is buried in that city. Jalal of Bukhara or Jalal Bukhari, who originally came from Uch, is also buried at Multan.

3. Seven low curtseys, a milder version of the Chinese kow-tow, were part of the ritual of the Mughal Court.

4 Darhar is the court of a king or notable.

5 A 'faqir' is a poor man, a mendicant. It also means a saint. See also Introduction, note 24.

6 'Amir' in Arabic means a ruler, from 'Amr' meaning rule, government, order. In the Urdu and Punjabi languages it has now come to mean a rich man.

7 'Tuft' is the well-known 'turrah', beloved of the rural aristocracy of the Punjab. It spreads like a peacock's tail over the side or the back of the more fashionable Punjabi turban. The tufted turban is a comparatively recent development, and is said to have been invented by the 'mirasis' or hereditary bards of the Punjab in the late nineteenth century.

8 This would seem to be the limit of poetic exaggeration. But if Shakespeare could describe the owl's 'to-whit-to-who' as 'a merry note', and Shelley could see beauty in serpents, why blame Waris Shah for trying to discover lotus buds and pearls in the eyes and teeth of his buffaloes?

CHAPTER 8

Hir and Ranjha meet in the forest

Hir Jatti¹ set out from Jhang Sial. She came as a cloud of beauty from Paradise to fertilise the Sandal Desert, or as the soul coming to awaken the body. She came to fulfil the eagerness of her heart, for she was possessed with love for Ranjha. She brought him boiled rice, sugar, butter and milk, and she said, with weeping eyes, 'I have been searching for you all over the forest.' And she

served him with all manner of attention. And Ranjha told Hir that according to Muhammadan² law the promises of women were not to be trusted:

God Himself hat said in the holy Qur'an: 'Verily your deceit is great.' Satan is the Lord of evil spirits and women. Women falsify the truth and feel no shame. The word of women, boys, hemp smokers and bhang smokers cannot be trusted. Only if you intend to keep your word, Hir, can the son of Mauju endure the humiliation of being a servant

Hir replied, 'Do not upbraid women. None can be so persistent or steadfast as a woman. For the love of Joseph Zulaikha renounced her kingdom. For the love of Mahiwal Sohni was drowned in the river, Is not the love of Laila⁵ known throughout the world and does not the grass grow green on her tomb to this day? Sassi died a martyr in the burning sands and Shirin died too for the sake of her lover Farhad. Had not prophets and saints mothers that bore them? Was not Eve Adam's equal?⁶ Men cannot be as bold as women. Ask Waris the poet, he knows this well.' As God and the Prophet are true, I give you my pledged word that I will be your slave as long as blood runs in my veins. I am yours to do with as you will; You -may sell me in the bazaar if it so pleases you.' So Hir comforted Ranjha with sweet words and poured out all her soul to him. She said, 'We shall be surrounded by enemies and you must confront all troubles with patience. The waves of the ocean of love are heavy with fate. They will either take us ashore or drown us. But beware of Kaidu, my wicked uncle. He is like Satan and bent on mischief. The world will reproach us and those who are ignorant will cast taunts at us, but the true lover sacrifices his life for his beloved. Lovers have no support but God.'

Thus every day Hir used to take a bowl of rice and pudding⁸ to Ranjha in the forest, and she swore to be true to him. She gave up her spinning and no longer sat with her girl friends. She was with Ranjha all the day. She set aside the blanket of beholding her wantonness.⁹

(Quoth the poet: 'Those who commit sin will burn in Hell')¹⁰

The news spread over the whole of Jhang that Hir had fallen in love with a shepherd and that she went to visit him every day in the forest.

Notes

1. Jatti means a Jat woman. In Punjabi and Urdu, the sound 'i' denotes the feminine gender, e.g. 'buddhi', old woman, 'ghori, a mare.

2 This is incorrect. Under Muslim (to call it Muhammadan is again incorrect) law, women are entitled to enter into contracts, including that of marriage.

3. See Chapter 1, note to.

4 Bhang is the Indian hemp which is used as an intoxicant and a narcotic. It is a favourite with the mystically inclined, particularly among Muslims and Sikhs. It is still smoked, chewed, eaten or drunk in the old Punjab area by wandering mendicants and many of those seeking spiritual exaltation or sexual pleasure, to both of which it seems to minister with equal facility. It is often euphemistically referred to as 'Thandyai', that is, cool drink. Most people would agree with Waris Shah about the word of bhang consumers not being trustworthy. It is not that they are given to deliberate untruth, but the opacity for invention and exaggeration which bhang promotes seems to lay veracity by the heels. There is the notorious example of the devotee of bhang who, in 1739, when Delhi had been invaded by Nadir Shah, declared that the invader had been beheaded by the vanquished Mughal Emperor Mohammad Shah. The rumour spread like wild-fire, and the citizens of Delhi, who could have had no love for Nadir's soldiers, started killing them wherever they found them. Nadir heard about this, and in a fit of rage ordered a general massacre. The tragic incident may have been present in Waris Shah's mind when he wrote his *Hir* in 1766.

5. *Laila-Majnun*, *Shirin-Farad*, *Sohni-Mahiwal* and *Sassi-Punnoo* are all tragic romances which have become classics. *Laila-Majnun* is a romance of the Arabian desert, with Majnun (literally 'mad man' the common appellation of Qais, of the tribe of Banu Amir), as the tragic lover and Laila as his sweetheart. *Shirin-Farhad* is a story of pre-Islamic Iran, Shirin being the famous beauty for whom young Farhad gave his life. *Sohni-Mahiwal* has its setting in the old Punjab. Sohni (literally the beautiful one) belonged to Gujjar, on the river Chenab, and Mahiwal (literally one who tends buffaloes) fell in love with her and the love affair ended in both of them losing their lives for each other. *Sassi-Punnoo* is a story of old Sind. Sassi (literally a girl who is well spoken of) belonged to Bhambore, an old city, the ruins of which are now being excavated by the Pakistan Archaeological Department. Punnoo was a Baluch chief who lost his heart to Sassi. True to the tradition of oriental romance they also died for each other. The story of Laila-Majnun occurs repeatedly in Arabic, Persian, Urdu and other languages in the Muslim countries. Similarly the Shirin-Farhad story has been related in Persian, Urdu and a number of other languages. *Sohni-Mahiwal* and *Sassi-Punnoo* have also travelled beyond their original setting, being popular both in the old Punjab and Sind. See also Introduction, note 4.

6 This accords with the Muslim view of the sexes. 'Women are like garments unto you and you are like garments unto them,' says a verse in the Quran.

7 Quite! He seems to have had good reason to know.

8 Pudding here is a reference to 'halwa', a sweet dish prepared with semolina and ghee (clarified butter).

9 That is, she revealed her wantonness for all to see. This is a somewhat circuitous translation by Usborne. Here Waris Shah is acting merely as a mouthpiece of popular opinion or sentiment, and does not necessarily wish to convey personal approbation or condemnation. In other words, that is the thing to say, whether you believe in it or not.

CHAPTER 9

Hir's mother is angry with her and Kaidu finds her in the forest with Ranjha

When Hir came back from the forest her mother rebuked her saying, 'The taunts of the village-folk have consumed us utterly. Would that no daughter Hir had been born to me. If you cease not from wickedness your father Chuchak and your brother Sultan will cut you in pieces.'

And Hir replied, 'Listen Milki, my mother, as long as breath remains in my body I will not leave Ranjha. Yes, though they carve me into little pieces and I become a martyr at Karbala? And so I shall go to meet the famous lovers of old; I shall see Laila, and Majnun and Sasses who was drowned in the river.'

And Milki was angry with Hir and said, 'This then is the reward your father and I receive for the love we have bestowed on our daughter. We thought we had planted a rose in our garden but it is a prickly thorn. You visit Ranjha daily in the forest and take him food, cake and pastry. You heed not what your parents say. Daughters who are disobedient to their parents are not daughters but prostitutes.'²

But Hir would not listen to her mother and continued to visit Ranjha in the forest

Meanwhile Kaidu the cripple, Hir's uncle, constantly urged Chuchak to chastise Hir. He kept watch over her footsteps as a spy.

He smelt the savour of the pastry and he secretly followed Hir when she went to the forest. At last the cunning of the cripple succeeded. Hir had gone to the river to fetch water and Ranjha was sitting alone, so Kaidu, in the guise of a mendicant faqir, came to him and begged for alms in the name of God. And Ranjha, thinking he was truly a holy man gave him half of his pastry. Kaidu gave him a faqir's blessing and retired towards the village.

When Hir came back from the river she asked Ranjha where the other half of the pastry was, and he told her that a crippled faqir had come and begged in God's name, and as he seemed a saintly man he had given him half of the pastry. Hir replied, 'Ranjha, where have your wits gone? That was no saintly faqir but my Satanic uncle Kaidu who goes about to destroy me. Did I not warn you? He is as evil as Satan. He separates husbands from wives and mothers from daughters. He is a great hypocrite, for what he sets up with his hands by day he kicks down by night with his feet. He will put in motion the well-gear⁵ of destruction and will drop Ak⁴juice into our milk'

Ranjha replied to Hir, 'Kaidu has only just left and he cannot be far away. Go and stop him on some pretence.

The heart of Hir was scorched with anger against Kaidu. So she ran and overtook him in the way and fell on him in her wrath like a tigress. She tore off his faqir's cap and ropes of beads and threw them on the ground. She thrashed at him even as a washerman beats his clothes on the washing-board.⁵ She thundered in her wrath, Give me back the pastry if you wish your life to be spared: else I will bind your hands and feet and hang you to a tree. Why do you pick quarrels with girls? Half of the pastry fell on the ground, the other half Kaidu matched from Hir, and having secured his prize, the cripple ran off as fast as his crooked legs would carry him to the village.

Then Kaidu came before the council of the village elders and said, 'See, here are the pieces of pastry which Hir gave to Ranjha. Will you now believe when I tell you she is a shameless hussy? Why does somebody not tell Chuchak to chastise her? She is bringing shame and humiliation on the kindred. Chuchak should have repented the day on which he engaged this cowherd. His wits must have forsaken him that he has not turned Ranjha away. And they came and told Chuchak what Kaidu had been saying in the assembly of the elders.

And Chuchak was wroth and said, 'Kaidu is a tale-bearer and a liar; he chases moths all day. He thinks he becomes a perfect faqir by wearing a rosary. He

thinks the girdle makes the darvesh.⁸ Why does he wag the tongue of slander against Hir? She only goes to the forest to play with her girl friends.'

But the women of the village mocked at Milki saying, 'Your daughter is a bad girl and our hearts are burnt with shame like roasted meat. The drum of her shame has been beaten throughout the whole valley of the Client. If we speak to her she is insolent to us. She has the pride of a princess. She goes to the forest under the pretence of going to the mosque, but she is getting another lesson from a different chapter. She is a bad example to the village and we are beginning to be anxious about our own daughters.'

And Kaidu said to Milki, 'For God's sake get your daughter married. The Qazi always says, Marry a naughty girl as soon as you can. Or else break her head and cut her into small pieces, as she is a disgrace to the village. Why do you not plaster up her mouth, as you plaster up your cornbins?'

And Milki was at last tortured to frenzy by these taunts, and said to Mithi, the barber woman, 'Go and call that hussy Hir and say her mother wants her.'

So Mithi went and called Hir. And Hir appeared and laughingly said to her mother, 'See, I am here.'

And Mithi said, 'You bad girl, you should be drowned in the deep stream for causing such a scandal. Grown up daughters who venture outside their father's house should be thrown down the wells. You are so fond of your lover, Hir, that we shall have to find a husband for you. If your brother comes to hear of your goings on he will hurry on your betrothal or he will hack you in pieces with his sword. Why have you cut off the nose of the family⁹ and covered us with disgrace? Come, Mithi, take off her ornaments. What is the good of giving jewellery to a girl like this? She is tarnishing the honour of Jhang Sial. We will dismiss the cowherd tonight. What do we want cowherds for?'

her out from the village. She is altogether abominable. Why did you not suffocate her when she was born, Milki, or poison her when she was a baby?

And Hir replied, 'Mother, I am very fortunate in that God has sent this cowherd to your house. All men thank God when they get such a treasure given them. What the Pen of Destiny has mitted has come to pass. Why do

you no]se abroad the whole affair? Do you not know that three things should be kept secret fire, a sore and Love?'

Thus Hir withstood her parents to their faces and refused to give up Ranjha. And Milki said to Chuchak, 'See how the girl withstands us to our faces. All our kith and kin put their fingers in their mouths¹⁰ with amazement and talk sarcastically about us. She has levelled the pride of the Sials to the dust.' And Chuchak replied; 'Give her away at once. Thrust her out from the village. She is altogether abominable. Why did you not suffocate her when she was born, Milki, or poison her when she was a baby?'

Notes

1. 'Martyr of Karbala' is the Imam Hussain, who gave his life at the battlefield of Karbala fighting the imperialist forces of the Ummayyad Caliph Yazid. This is surely an exaggerated way of putting it, so far as Hir is concerned, See also Chapter 4, note 4.

2 *A grossly exaggerated way of asserting parental authority. The expression is by no means unfamiliar in the Punjab villages even now.* -

3 Well-gear refers to the gear of the Persian wheel.

4 Ak is a wild plant which gives out a white milk-like substance believed to be poisonous.

5 A well-known technique with washermen all over the subcontinent, with which the advent of the steam laundry is interfering increasingly to the regret of many. Someone described the washerman's act as an attempt to break stones with cloth

6 'Darvesh originally meant a wandering mystic. Later, when the institution deteriorated, the word came to mean a mendicant living on charity.

7. Cornbins arc plastered with mud and straw.

8. This again is an exaggerated way of putting it, although there may be a genuine sentiment at the bottom of it. The 'purdah' has never been an established institution in rural areas as it has been for a Long time among Muslims in towns and cities, and it is quite usual for girls to move freely in the villages without a veil,

9. A well-known proverb common to Urdu and Punjabi. It means dishonouring and disgracing the family.

10. Fingers in their mouths is a typical female gesture common in the old Punjab. Having the finger of amazement in one's mouth' is also a familiar Persian idiom ('*angusht-i-hairat dar dahan'*) often used in Persian and Urdu poetry.

CHAPTER 10

Scandal spreads in the village and Chuchak dismisses Ranjha and then recalls him

So when Ranjha brought the cows back that night Chuchak was wroth, and he caned Ranjha and in the presence of all his kinsfolk rebuked him saying, 'Friend, give up the buffaloes and go away. You have become a subject for scandal and evil tale-bearing, Tell me, brethren of the Sials, what use have we for a cowherd like this? I did not engage him to be a bull among my cows. I meant him to take buffaloes and not girls into the forest; we eat taunts¹ all day long on his account.

Thereupon Ranjha threw down his shepherd's crook and blanket and quitted Chuchak's herd of cattle, even as a thief leaves the hole in the wall when he hears the watchman's footsteps. And he spoke to Chuchak in his anger, 'May thieves take away your buffaloes and dacoits run away with your calves. What do I care for your buffaloes or your daughter? For twelve years² I have been grazing your buffaloes and now you turn me away without wages.³ You are looting me like a Bania' whose ledger stays quietly in his shop while the interest swells into a mountain. So your daughter stayed in her house and you got my services for nothing.' So Ranjha in a rage shook the dust of the Sials off his feet and gave up the service of Chuchak.

But as soon as Ranjha had gone, the buffaloes refused to graze any longer. Some were lost, some were drowned; others were devoured by tiger⁵ or got lost on the further bank of the river. The Sials made attempts to recover their cattle but to no purpose, so Chuchak repented of his decision saying, 'The buffaloes will not graze. We are worn out with our exertion.

And Hir said to her mother, My father has turned the cowherd away and see the poor condition into which the cattle have fallen. People do not think fly father has dealt fairly with the cowherd.'

And Milki said to Chuchak, 'All the people curse us for having turned the cowherd out without paying him his wages. Had he asked for his wages you

would have had to pay him a whole hag-full of money. Go and beseech him to come back. Tell him is disquieted by his absence.'

Chuchak said to Milki, his wife, Go you and pacify him. Tell him to graze the buffaloes till Hir's marriage. Let him enjoy happiness. Who knows what may befall between now and then. We Jats are known to be sharp customers.⁶ We must get him by hook or crook.'

So Milki went to her brothers' and their wives' courtyard' and enquired where Ranjha had gone, and having found him she entreated him saying, 'Do not fret over much about the quarrel you had with Chuchak. Parents and children often fall out in such small matters. Come back and milk our buffaloes and spread Hir's couch. Since you have gone she has been much displeased with us. Only you en, pacify her. Our cattle, our wealth, the Sials and Hir are all yours.'⁸

And hr said to Ranjha, 'You should hearken to my mother for is she' not the mother of your beloved? My parents have not yet decided on my betrothal, and marriage is a long way off. Who knows which side the camel will sit down?''⁹

So Ranjha hearkened to the words of Hir's mother, and once more became Chuchak's herdsman: and he drove the cattle into the forest; and he bathed and called on the panic of Cod. And Hir brought him roasted barley and wheat flour mixed with sherbet, and she bowed herself before him. Love in person ministered to Ranjha.

One day the Five Pirs appeared before him, and Ranjha bowed himself to the ground, and Hir was with him. And the Pirs said, 'Children, we salute you. Remember God. Do not tarnish the world of love. Ranjha, you are Hir's and Hir is yours. A pearl and ruby have come together.¹⁰ Your love will cause trouble and strife in the world. The world will taunt you, hut be brave and steadfast. Do not abandon love, and remember God day and night.'

Notes

1. Eating taunts *is* only a telling way of saying we hear them.
2. Twelve years is, by tradition, a perfect period of time for legendary lovers to spend in the service of their sweethearts. Majuun is traditionally supposed to have stood on one leg for twelve years to please Laila or earn her compassion as may have been the case.

As compared with this impossible performance, Mahiwal only tended buffaloes for twelve years. The reference to twelve years here is merely a conventional expression (unless it is a slip of the pen on the part of the poet) and is hardly meant to be taken literally. In any case, it could not have taken twelve years for a scandal like this to develop, particularly when it all started with love at first sight!

3. Incidentally, the poet has never told us what wages were fixed by Chuchak with Ranjha. Indeed, there has been no mention of wages at all.

4. Bania is a Hindu shopkeeper.

5. This is the first time tigers are mentioned as being active in this neighbourhood. The reference need not however, be taken seriously. In Punjabi poetry tigers have a way of being at hand when the poet wants them to do a job of this kind, and are prompt in doing the needful.

6 This is uncalled for self-praise, if one could call it so. Actually, Jats have a reputation for being simple and honest folk.

7 Old houses in the Punjab countryside had a big courtyard with a number of living-rooms and bedrooms round it. A number of brothers living with their parents as a joint family was quite common.

8. This is merely a way of saying nice things and naturally does not imply any solemn promise or undertaking, least of all one involving a possible transfer of worldly possessions.

9 Or in English, 'which way the wind will blow'.

10 The Five Pin, or Saints, as Wads Shah presents them, seem to be concerned more with the success of an illicit love affair than with any idea of social morality! This is all the more remarkable as according to Waris Shah (see second pan. of Chapter 7) the Five Pirs number among themselves such spiritual celebrities, as Khwaja Khizr, Farid Shakarganj of Pakpattan, Shahbaz Qalandar of Sind, Baha-ud-Din Zakaria and Makhdum Jalalian of Multan.

11. Incidentally, Panjpir (the Five Pin) is also the name of a place thirty miles from Shahpur town in the Punjab. The word Panjpir seems to have become a common name for places. For example, near Thal on the way to the Kurram Valley, there is a mountain cave associated by the Hindus with the five Pandava brothers and called the Five Pandavas', while the Muslims call it Panjpir' i.e. the Five Pirs. (For all we know, the Hindus may be right. It is easier for five brothers to live together than for five Pirs to do so!)

CHAPTER 11

The Qazi admonishes Hir but she refuses to give up Ranjha

Now when Hir came back from the forest her parents sent for the Qazi and the Qazi sat between Chuchak and Milki, and he was made to sit in front of the Qazi.

And the Qazi said, 'Child, with all gentleness we give you counsel. Take heed unto our words with patience. It is not becoming for the daughter of Chuchak to talk to cowherds and penniless coolies. You should sit in the assemblies of women in their spinning parties. Turn your red spinning wheel¹ and sing the merry songs of the Chenab. Your demeanour should be meek and modest, remembering the dignity of your father and his family. For Jats carry weights² in the world and the girls should think of their parents. They should not grieve about. In a few days the messengers of your wedding will be here. The preparations for the marriage are all but complete. The Kheras will bring a marriage procession in a few days to take you to the house of your husband.'

And Hir replied to her father, 'As wine-bibbers cannot desert the bottle, as opium-eaters cannot live without opium, so I cannot live without Ranjha. As the stain of mango³ juice cannot be washed away from clothes, so the stain of love cannot be erased when once the heart has fallen a victim. Love is like baldness. You cannot get rid of it even in twelve years.

Thereupon Chuchak said to Milki, 'You have spoiled your daughter with too much kindness. She listens to nobody's advice. Rip open her belly with a sickle; pierce her eyes with a needle, and smash her head with a milking stool.'

The Qazi said, 'Those who do not obey their parents will be burnt alive. The girl seems to welcome death and the stake. Girl, you should beware of love. Under pain of love Sohni drowned herself in the river. Sassi died a martyr in the desert. When fathers become angered they hew their daughters in pieces. They bind them hand and foot and cast them into a deep pit. If we were to condemn you, you will be done to death at once.⁴ If evil doers are killed, God does not avenge their death.'

And Hir replied, 'Woe to that nation that destroys its daughters.⁵ It will be accursed and utterly perish from off the world. The blood of the victims will bear testimony. Those who kill their daughters will be accounted sinners on the Day of Resurrection. God will say, "Eat them, as you have killed them with your own hands." I will be submissive in all things to my parents, but do not ask me to give up the shepherd. I have pledged my faith to him. Mother, if you wish for happiness in this world, give Hir in marriage to Ranjha. It is easy to give advice, but difficult to pursue the path of love.'

And Milki replied, 'My daughter, all the people taunt us when they see your wicked ways. You are a black-faced wanton. You are thinking of Ranjha all the time. You weary the body and soul of your parents with sharp words. You bark like a bitch⁸ day and night.'

And Sultan, Hir's brother, came forward and said, Mother, she puts us to disgrace in the whole world. Do not keep such a bad daughter. Give her poison and get rid of her at once. If she does not obey you and sit in purdah,⁷ I will kill her. Do not let the shepherd into this compound or I will cut him into pieces. Mother, if you do not bring your daughter into submission I will burn the house down.'

Hir replied to her brother, 'Dear brother, my life is yours. When four eyes have met and clashed in love, the course of love cannot be stopped. My fate was written by the Pen of Destiny on the First Day of Days. The Pen and the Tablet of Destiny prostrated before love. How can poor Hir withstand it? All the Jat girls of Jhang are in love with him. My dear brother, you should pray to God that all the girls should follow the example of Hir. You should sacrifice a thousand sisters at the feet of love.'

And the Qazi yet again urged Hir to desist from her evil ways, saying that girls who disobeyed their parents would be losers on the Day of Judgement.

And Hir made answer to the Qazi, 'Lovers cannot dis-burden themselves of the burden of love. Know, Qazi, that I will not accept a Khera in marriage even though I am bound with iron chains or ropes. If I turn my face from Ranjha and desert love tomorrow I shall be debarred in the Resurrection from the company of lovers.⁸ To this burden of shame I will never consent. I deem the infamy of the world as a pleasure as long as I keep the love of Ranjha. Waris,⁹ I shall be called the Hir of Ranjha in Heaven, in the assembly of Fatima, the daughter of the Holy Prophet.'

And the Qazi was wroth and said, 'Nobody can stop or stay this wicked girl. Hir's pride knows no bounds. She must be given in marriage at once.'

And Hir called aside one of her girl friends and sent her to Ranjha at once with the following message, 'My parents and the Qazi are oppressing me and my life is being taken from me even as sugar is pressed out of a sugar mill. You, friend, are living happily but an army of sorrows is invading me.'

And the girl went and gave this message to Ranjha and told him to comfort Hir as she was being humiliated.

Notes

1. A spinning-wheel (charkha) used to be the inseparable companion of every woman, old or young, in the rural Punjab. Young girls and brides had red spinning-wheel, of smaller size. The spinning-wheel was an important link in rural society. Women spun cotton yarn, and the village weaver made it into cloth. In our times, Mahatma Gandhi used the spinning-wheel as a symbol of political agitation against the British régime in India, or more accurately, as a symbol of indigenous production to counter the imports of foreign cloth. About spinning parties, see Chapter 1, note 14.

2. Responsibilities.

3. Stains from mango juice can be removed with the help of modern laundry techniques, but what Hir says of baldness is probably still true.

4 All this is more in the nature of psychological warfare than any considered legal observation.

5 Female infanticide was not unknown in the subcontinent until the nineteenth century. Whatever Hir and the Qazi say about father, killing their daughters has no religious foundation in Islam. In fact, the Prophet condemned and abolished the custom, which was well known in pre-Islamic Arabia. Nor is there any basis for the supposition that those who killed their daughters would have to eat them on the Day of Judgement.

6. Here the word 'bitch' is an uncomplimentary reference to Hir's loquacity and does not necessarily imply lack of virtue.

7 See Chapter 9, note 8.

8. It is believed by Muslims that on the Day of Judgement like-minded people will stay or move together.

9 Waris Shah, like most Persian and Urdu poets who have written poetical romances,

has a habit of making a personal appearance on the stage whenever it pleases him, and even entering into conversation with his characters at will. He often stands aside to deliver an obiter *didunh*, or like the Greek chorus, make comment on the event, of the story- See also Chapter 8, note 10.

CHAPTER 12

Ranjha has audience of the Five Pirs and Mithi discourses on love

And Ranjha when he heard this was sad and desired in his heart to call on the Five Pirs so he bathed in the river and then took his flute and began to play. And he stood before the Five Pirs with folded hands and weeping eyes, and he prayed, 'For Gods sake, help me, or my love will be ruined.'

And the Five Pir at once came to his help, saying 'We have seen in your dream that your mind has been perplexed and your soul sore troubled within you.' And the Pirs said, 'Sing to us two or three songs as our heart is yearning for song.'

So Ranjha began to sing before the Five Pir. He took his flute and cunningly ran his fingers over the notes. He played the seven modes, even the modes of Kharj,² Raldiab, Sanehar, Panchant Maddham, Durat, and Nikanli, and with much skill he kept time to the beats of the drum, and he also played many variations on these tunes, even from Drab unto Gaddi Dun. And he sang all the songs that men sing, even the song of Bishenpatti and the songs that women of Manjha sing, the song of Sohni and Mahiwal and the songs of the Gujars² and the songs of the women of the east. And with the singing and the music he became as one in a trance. He swayed like a cobra. And the hearts of the Five Pirs were moved hearing Ranjha sing, and they said, 'Ask any favour of us and we will give it.'

Ranjha replied, Admit me to your holy order; make me a Malang and give me Hir as my Malangan and Mate.'

And the Pir said, 'We will be your helpers. Hir is yours but use her not as a wife, as men use women.⁵ Do not desert her nor take her away from her

parents house for she is no penniless girl nor a girl of mean birth, and remember to cast your eyes on no other woman than her.'

And Ranjha being perplexed in heart went to Mithi the barber woman and asked her concerning the ways of women and love. And Mithi replied, 'The way of love is hard and the path is tortuous. The taste of love is as bitter as poison. The very letters of Ishq⁶ are like the coils of a snake and only very wise men know its secrets. Love to the potter woman is part of the day's work like eating and drinking; the love of a shepherdess is fierce like a wolf; the love of a woman is as violent as the current of the Chenab. The love of a Shroff⁷ woman is as clear cut as the 37 on the coins of Muhammad Shah.⁹ The Bengali woman's love is fitful. The Hindustani's is childish. A little girl's love is fretful and peevish; she is always taunting and reproaching her lover. Kanjars⁸ know not what love is. God's curse on the casual light-o-loves. Touch them not. The love of a Khatri¹¹ woman is as soft as dough. The hilt woman loves openly but the Peshawar woman in secret. But hark ye! The birth place of love is among the Sials. Jhang is the father of Love and the Chenab is its mother. Did not Love exist from the beginning of the world? Did not God love Muhammad? Did not the holy saints know Love; even Adam and Eve, and Zakaria who got caught in a tree and was sawn asunder? Did not Abraham love Ismael? Was not God displeased with King Solomon and did not He cast him down from his throne in his displeasure, in the twinkling of an eye? Love also slew Hasan and Husain the holy martyrs, and is not the list of earthly Lovers long and famous; even Mirza Sahiban, Chander Badan, Shirin, Kanirup, Sassi and Punnoo, Laila and Majnun, Sohni and Mahiwal, Joseph and Zuleika?'

And Ranjha and Hir took counsel how they might conceal their plans from HWs parents; so they decided to take Mithi, the barber woman, into their confidence so that they might meet in Mithi's house. And Hir slipped five gold coins into Mithi's hands and made her promise not to tell the secret to the other girls. And Mithi's heart grew warm when she saw the money. Verily without money there is no wit nor wisdom. With the help of money the fool is the equal of the wise man. Waris, if you trust in God, he will give you your portion of the good things of this world. Mithi's house was near the watering place of the cattle, a little aside in a quiet corner. It was full of quilts and beds and soft coverlets, and Mithi used to scatter flowers for Ranjha and Hir to walk on. Ranjha's orders were obeyed throughout the house and he was treated with as much honour as a son-in-law. And Hir used to come during the night and stay

till one watch of the night remained and then slip back to her own house. In the morning Ranjha drove the buffaloes out to graze in the forest. Under the pretence of bathing, Hir and her friends used to meet him in the forest on the banks of the Chenab. And the banks of the Chenab laughed and shook with their merry making. Ranjha played on the flute and Hir and her girl friends sang the merry songs of the Chenab. Sonia the goldsmith girl, wrung the water out of her dripping hair and shook it over Ranjha, and then kissed him and ran away laughing. The daughter of Sadoo, the weaver, clung to him as a leather water-bag clings to the back of the water-carrier, and Miran and Bin, the daughters of Fadoo, the woodseller, ran and caught Hir and Ranjha and pressed their two faces together. Sanpatti, the shepherd's daughter, mocked them, and when Ranjha ran after her she dived into the water like a tall water fowl and escaped. Some stood like cranes among the tall reeds; others swam like otters. Some waddled to the banks like a crocodile; others floated on the water like dead fishes. Hir swam around Ranjha alone and floated towards him with roguish glances. With much cunning she set herself to catch that fish of Takht Hazara.

But the shepherds heard of these things and came and told the news to Kaidu; and Kaidu said to Milki, Your daughter is a daughter of shame. She plays with the shepherd in the pools of the Chenab river. She has tainted the honour of the countryside. We have tried all we can, both her parents and the Qazi and I, but we can do nothing with her.'

So Milki sent Aulia the barber, Alfoo the shoemaker, Janoo the ploughman and Dadoo the baker, to fetch fir. And they went and said to fir, 'Your mother is very angry with you. Ghuchak and the assembly of elders will thrash you.

And to Ranjha they said, 'A great calamity will befall you as Milki threatens to kill you. The Sials are so filled with warmth that they have not kindled fire on their hearths the whole day. The whole tribe is angry. The Sials have determined to kill you.

So Hir came and salaamed to her mother, and her mother said to her, 'You shameless hussy, you loud tongued abandoned harlot, you slit-nosed prostitute with cat's eyes. You are a pool of filthy water as the bottom of a tank. You can teach the cows to frisk when the bulls come after them, and you must know full well how bull buffaloes run after the cows. Fine mating

there has been in the forest You have caused your scandal to be noised abroad in every street and alley of the village.'

And Hir replied angrily to her mother, 'The mouth of a liar is a foul thing. Why are you speaking lies? Mother, what is the good of this overmuch talk? The cowherd was in the jungle and I was playing with my girl friends. Whose she-ass have I stolen? Why has this storm burst on my head? Why publish in the four corners of the city what is only known to a few? May pain, rot and disease consume the unfortunate daughter of Milki. I will not give up Ranjha even if my great grandfather comes and tries to make me do so.'

And Milki was silent'' before Hir as she saw that Hir was determined and that her heart was fixed, and that she had no fear of death at all. And Kaidu, the lame, the talebearer, the son of Satan, went about the village with his wicked half closed eyes saying, 'You fools, why do you not take my advice? Nobody will give you better counsel. I tell you the girl walks arm in arm with Ranjha all day in the forest If you do not take care he will run away with her, and where will be the honour of the Sials?'

Notes

1. The Chishtiyya sect of Sufis, which counts Fariduddin Shakarganj among its leaders, regards music (Sama) as a permissible means of experiencing spiritual exaltation.
- 2 These are the names of the seven notes in the classical music of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.
- 3 The Gujars are a famous tribe of the old Punjab who keep animals and sell their milk. They also engage in agriculture on a large scale. A number of Punjab towns, such as Gujranwala, Gujrat and Gujar Khan are named after the Gujar tribe.
- 4 Malang — a free-living mendicant.
- 5 This is salutary teaching for a young man in love, and the first expression of a moral sentiment on the part of the Five Pirs. Whether Ranjha honoured this injunction is far from certain.
- 6 Ishq is the Arabic word for love..
- 7 The Sikhs, the followers of Guru Nanak, who was one of the greatest representatives of the bhakti' movement which arose from the religious and cultural contact between

Hindus and Muslims under Muslim rule. The Sikhs became a militant body under Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth successor of Guru Nanak. They have a religious prohibition against shaving and smoking.

8. Shroff woman — Osborne means a woman belonging to a goldsmith family.

9. It was usual for kings to inscribe the year of their reign on their coins. There seems to be some mistake about the figure 37, because Muhammad Shah, known as 'Rangila' or the dissolute, did not reign for more than 28 years.

10. Kanjars are people who live on prostitution. A prostitute is called Kanjari in Punjabi.

11. Khatri — the second of the four principal Hindu castes. They are the merchant class of Northern India. See also, Chapter 3, note 7.

12. Judging by their names, some of Hirs girl friends are Hindus. This symbolises the atmosphere of the village in the old Punjab, where the village community as a whole was regarded as one social unit irrespective of caste or creed. A young man belonging to a village would be referred to as the son' of that particular village; similarly, a young girl married into that village would be its daughter-in-law'. Even a sweeper woman would be addressed as daughter', sister' or 'mother' (depending on her age and the age of the speaker) in the most aristocratic household in the village. If she was elderly, it would be rude to call her by her name.

13. Hir was obviously a favourite child and a spoilt one. Besides, the Sial tribe has always been more than usually considerate towards its women. It is one of the few tribes in the Punjab which allows women to inherit property under customary law.

CHAPTER 13

Hir thrashes Kaidu and Kaidu complains to the village elders

And Hir's girl friends came to her saying, 'Your evil uncle is stirring up the whole assembly of elders against you. He has noised the whole affair in the bazaar by beat of drum. If this goes unheeded who will call you fir? He should be taught a lesson which he will not forget.' So Hir took counsel together with her girls, and at her bidding they waited for an opportunity and caught Kaidu and surrounded him as a potter catches his ass. They tore

off his beggar's girdle and threw him on the ground. Their blows resounded like the hammers of the coppersmiths. They pulled out his hair and blackened his face with soot. They broke his cups and cooking pots. Kaidu cried out like a thief in the hands of the constable, and in his rage he bit them, scratched them and tore their clothes into ribbons. But the girls crowded round him and kept him at bay, even as the police guards encircle Lahore.' They then burnt his hut and let the dogs and chickens loose all over his property.

And with blazing torches they went off triumphantly to announce their victory to Hir. How can I describe the prowess of these fair beauties? It was as if the royal armies had returned to Lahore after subduing Muttra And Kaidu with blood flowing from his wounds and with torn clothes raised a great hue and cry saying, 'I come for justice. Administer justice, O Assembly of Elders. They have set fire to my hut Dogs and cocks and hens have looted my opium and bhang. They have broken my pots and pans and the bowl my master gave me. They have thrashed me and humbled me before the Whole world. I am wearied with weeping. I will lay my complaint before the whole world. I will seek justice from the Qazi.'

And Chuchak turned to Kaidu and said, 'Go away, cripple. You are the prince of rogues and always seeking alms. You worry people and then come and howl before the elders. You tease girls and then try and get them into trouble.' And the elders sent for the girls and asked them why they had beaten the poor lame fakir. Had they detected him in any wrong doings?' The girls put their fingers into their mouths with amazement and replied, 'He is a lewd and wicked fellow. He pinches our cheeks and handles us in a mighty unbecoming fashion. He spies out our comings and goings and he chases us as a bull chases a buffalo.'

Then Hir and her companions came before Milki and complained saying, 'We are your humble servants. Kaidu is a mad dog to be spurned. Why do you not drive him away? We have not touched him. Why do you not believe us? It is indeed a strange world. He treats us outrageously and quarrels with us, and then you go and console him with soft words. You are kind to a quarrelsome knave like him and make your daughters stand before the village elders. This is a new kind of justice. We are your humble obedient servants.

And Kaidu again made a great hue and cry before the assembly and asked for redress and justice. And the elders advised him to be patient and quiet, saying,

'The girls have behaved exceedingly foolishly. The fakir has been very harshly dealt with.' Then they scolded the girls and consoled the cripple, promising to build him a new hut and to give him more post³ and 'bhang' and all the things the girls destroyed.

And Kaidu grumbled and was discontented in his heart and muttered, These elders have lost faith and have abandoned justice. They show partiality to their daughters. It is a poor consolation they have given me. Verily it is a case of "a blind king and oppressing officials".'

And Chuchak answered Kaidu sharply and said, 'Our village elders are not men without shame or fear of God. We do not do anything which is unjust, and hate the thing that is evil. Let me see with mine eyes that your story is true and I will cut the throat of the wicked jade and turn the shepherd out of ..the country'

And Kaidu muttered to himself, 'I will grind Hir's flesh into small pieces like bhang, and I will make a rope of the hair of the shepherd.' And he replied to Chuchak, 'If you do not beat her after seeing her shame with your own eyes, then the assembly of elders are liars.' So Kaidu resolved in his own mind how he might catch Hir and Ranjha in the forest, and bring Chuchak to see them, for he reflected, 'Who will punish his daughter merely on what I say? Who will set the village on fire to avenge the loss of one sheep?'

So Kaidu lay in ambush in the forest like a closed fist. He hid himself like a dog in the bushes. The next morning Ranjha drove the cattle into the forest, and after two watches of the day had gone, Hir and her companions in their scarlet clothes came into the forest. The forest was ablaze with the beauty of the Sial girls. And the girls played 'Toss the Red handkerchief'⁴ together and then went back to their homes. Ranjha and Hir stayed behind and slept together peacefully in the forest And Kaidu spying them together alone ran off to the village as fast as his crippled legs would carry him, and said to the Assembly of the Elders, 'Come and see strange things in the forest.'

Notes

1. Lahore in the Mughal days (as in the British times and now) was always a well guarded city. It was a provincial capital and a great centre of civilisation and culture, particularly popular with the Persian nobles of the Mughal Court. The Empress Nur-Jehan spent her life in Lahore after the death of her husband, the Emperor Jehangir. Both are buried in Lahore.

2 Muttra — a big city in India about 100 miles south-east of Delhi. It is famous for its sweets and for having been the birth place of Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, whose sayings are collected in the Bhagavad Gita. The Gita (the Song Celestial) is one of the most important religious books of the Hindus and has been translated into English by Annie Besant and a number of others. The military expedition referred to by the poet seems to have been an imaginary one.

3 Post is opium. An opium eater is called 'posti'. Kaidu, as an aspirant to spiritual promotion, presumably required opium as an aid to contemplation.

4 A favorite game with young girls in the old Punjab. Printed scarfs, with a red background and white flowers, were often worn on the head by young girls who, when playing together, threw these scarfs at each other.

CHAPTER 14

Chuchak finds Ranjha and Hir in the forest

CHUCHAK muttered to himself, 'We have been dishonoured before the whole assembly.' And he saddled his horse and took a spear in his hand. It shone like lightning. The clatter of his galloping horse sounded from afar in the forest. And Hir heard the noise and was afraid of the coming of her father. And she said to Ranjha, 'Get up, my father is coming.' Then she wept and said, 'I shall not come here again, so forgive me.' And she hurried from Ranjha's side.

Mihr Chuchak was tortured to frenzy on seeing them alone in the forest. He said, 'See the tyranny of God. Women are roaming about here alone in the forest.' Shame pierced his heart. He quivered with rage and said, 'I will break your legs in two and cut off your head. Only thus will the scandal be stopped.'

And Hir turned towards Ranjha and said, 'Shepherd, leave your buffaloes and go away to your home. No one in future will care for you or bring your food. Forgive me, my father, for what has happened. I am your own dear daughter and it is not meet for men of gentle birth to bring about their own disgrace by publishing abroad their daughters' defects.

Chuchak stood bewildered like a saint that has drunk deeply of bhang,' and he bethought that Hir ought to be given away in marriage soon.

Now when Ranjha became a shepherd and tended the buffaloes of Chuchak, news was taken to his brethren in Takht Hazara. The brothers of Ranjha wrote to the Sink saying, You have employed the son of Mauju Chaudhri as a shepherd. How strange are the doings of Almighty God. He left us in anger and we have been searching for him day and night. All his fields have been made ready for cultivation; we have bushels of grain ready for him when he returns, the produce of all these years that he has been away. He has been in our minds always, and our wives who were his comrades are weeping for him. He has cut off our nose by becoming a grazier of buffaloes. We shall be grateful to you if you will send him back; otherwise we shall have to come with a special embassy to lay our request before you.

And Chuchak replied, 'We have employed Ranjha as Hir's servant. Had he been an evil man, we should have expelled him. The whole village stands in awe of him and all the shepherds obey him. Why have you turned such a young man as this out of your house? He is neither lame nor lazy nor clumsy fingered. We will not turn him over, but if he wishes to see his brothers no one will prevent him.'

And Ranjha's brothers and their wives wrote tauntingly to Hir and said, 'If you want boys to debauch we can supply you with plenty. It is a matter of amazement how much debauchery is being taught nowadays. You have robbed us of our brother-in-law whose face was like the moon. You should pick out a bigger man for your love intrigues. This boy Ranjha is too young to know what love means. Now Hir had the letter read² out to her and she told the contents to Ranjha, and after consulting him, she caused the following answer to be written on her behalf. Your letter has been received. We are shocked at its contents. We have employed Ranjha as a grazier of buffaloes and we will not let him go. The once plucked Belflower cannot be reset on the branch. Broken glass cannot be united. The bones that have once been thrown in the Ganges³ cannot return. Past times can never come back. The contract of love once entered on cannot be broken.'

And Ranjha's sisters-in-law replied to Hir, 'If you wish to challenge us on the score of beauty we are ready to accept the challenge. We are all of us beautiful and all our lives we have been servants of our dear Ranjha. He is like the

moon to us and we are like the Pleiades to him. He beats and abuses us but still we are his servants. You may take another slave from us in his stead and we shall be grateful. We have been sore distressed by his absence and we are like swans separated from the flock.'

To this letter Hir replied as follows without the knowledge of Chuchak. 'Greetings. What you ask me about Ranjha is impossible. I swear on the Qur'an I cannot give him up. Why are you so fond of him? His love is with me. In the assembly of the girls we sing songs about him. You are fine sisters-in-law. You are always squabbling with him. Your taunts have made him as thin as a piece of board.'

To this Ranjha's sisters-in-law made reply, 'He belongs to us but you stole him. You rob us of our money bags and then play the usurer over us. You come to borrow a light and then claim to be mistress of the house. The simpleton fell into your wily clutches like a blind mouse hunting for food in an empty corn-bin. May the curse of the Poet Waris Shah fall upon you, Hir, for you have robbed us of our dear brother-in-law.'

And Hir replied, 'Did Ranjha's sisters-in-law love him so much when they turned him out of his father's house? Did not his brothers expel him for a few moods of land? He slipped away from his house in despair even as a pearl slips off a silken thread. He roams all day in the thick forest and has sold his soul to this sinful personage.⁶ He refuses to go however much you exert yourselves. You can let his brothers know that we do not intend to restore him even for hundreds of thousands of rupees.'

Notes

1. See Chapter 8, note 4.

2 Hir is obviously unlettered.

3 This is a reference to the Hindu custom of Throwing the ashes into the sacred River Ganges after a dead body has been cremated.

4 This is a famous Punjabi proverb.

5 Here the poet has jumped quite unnecessarily into the fray. It may be presumed that he is tired of being a mere spectator of these exciting events and feels called upon to participate, even though on the wrong side

6 Hir is referring to herself.

CHAPTER 15

Chuchak proposes to get Hir married

Now during all this time Chuchak was perplexed in his heart about his daughter Him; and he called his relations and caste fellows together in an assembly to consult about Hir's marriage. He was undecided whether to give her in marriage to Ranjha or elsewhere.

Chuchak was determined to marry her somewhere to avert disgrace, and his brethren agreed with him, but they urged that the Sials had never given theft daughters to the Ranjha tribe and that they would be disgraced if they gave their daughters to such lowly and needy folk. The brotherhood recommended an alliance with the house of the Kheras as being Jats of good lineage whom Chuchak would be proud to own as relations. They said that the Kheras had already sent their barbers' to propose the betrothal. So Chuchak took the advice of the brotherhood and announced the betrothal to his friends and relations. The women of his household beat drums and gave presents to the minstrels and gave them bowls of sugar. They sang songs and made merry. The Kheras received the news with great joy. They assembled in crowds and danced with delight. They distributed dishes of milk and rice. But when Hir and Ranjha heard the merriment Hir was angry with her mother for betrothing her against her will and said she would never go with the Kheras however much her mother tried to make her. 'When did I ask you for a husband?' she exclaimed. 'Why do you try to conceal designs which cannot long remain hidden? You have betrothed a swan to an owl. You have mated a fairy to a bull.'

And Hir said to Ranjha, 'Great tyranny has fallen upon us. Let us go away to some distant part of the country. For when once I am admitted into the house of the Kheras they will never allow me to come back. We have been fighting on the battlefield of love. It does not become a gallant warrior to desert the battlefield.'

Ranjha replied, 'Love does not taste well if it is composed of theft and stealth and abduction. You are asking me to run away like a thief that has been found out'

Now the girls of Jhang Ski assembled together and came before Ranjha and asked, 'How fares it with you now? You have been grazing buffaloes day and night and now all the preparations for the marriage have been made and the barbers have delivered their message all over the country. Foolish Iran, ask the girl why she is treating you like this. You should say to her, "If you intended to turn your face from me why did you make me undergo such hardships? You have helped me on to the roof and now you kick away the ladder, flat must be alt Him, our friendship must now end".'

Ranjha replied to the girls and said, 'The uttering of many words is folly; all ills must be borne with patience. If God is good, the Khera and Hir Sial will never mate together. The patience of the heart is victorious over the world. You chattering women know nothing of Love. Verily Love is a bitter herb and sour to eat. Patience alone can mend the cloven sky. Those who keep silent always succeed.' And Hir's girls came and said to her, 'You have been insincere and have deserted your faith. Your lover Ranjha is ready to throw away his shepherd's stick and blanket and to leave your father's country. If you intended to break faith with him why did you first encourage him and then break his heart? He has borne the taunts of the whole world for your sake and you have been a great tyrant. Remember that the throne of God trembles when a man is deprived of his right.'

And Hir replied to the girls, 'Hide him under your sheet and bring him to me disguised as a girl, but do not let my parents know. We shall then be face to face and you can decide like a judge. Those who have been true will be acquitted and those who have been false will be blamed. I have been telling this lover of mine to run away with me but he missed his chance. Why does he turn round now and bewail his lot?

So one night the girls brought Ranjha disguised as a girl, and Hir and Ranjha once again pledged their troth to be true to one another.

Notes

1. Barber — See Introduction, note 1.

2 This is a ceremonial dish distributed on ceremonial occasions. A more common dish for such purposes is rice cooked in ghee and well sprinkled with sugar. The institution is alive in the countryside of the old Punjab

CHAPTER 16

Hir is married to Saida against her will

Meanwhile the Kheras asked the Brahmans¹ to consult the Stars and to fix the marriage. The Brahmans fixed Virwati (Thursday) in the month of Sawan² for the wedding; but Ranjha all this time was sad in his heart. Meanwhile all the kitchen- were busy making preparations for the feast and fine flour, sugar and butter melted into each other's embrace as an affectionate sister-in-law embraces her brother-in-law.

There were all sorts of Pilao³ and soups and all kinds of varieties of rice, even Mushki and Basmutti⁴ and Musagir and Begami and Sonputti. And they brought baskets of clothes of all kinds, huge plates of every sort of sweet-meat and divers fruits. And there was no end to the ornaments, amulets, anklets, necklaces, earrings and nose-rings which were prepared as a dowry for the bride. There were large dishes and small dishes. There were 'Surna'⁵ boxes for the bride to paint her eyes. There were drinking bowls of all sizes, frying pans, kneading dishes, spoons, rolling pins, milk cans and dinner trays, all of costly and regal magnificence. The guests turned green with jealousy when they saw the abundance of good things. The potter women brought earthen pots and bakers brought fuel from the forest. The water carriers rushed about drawing water from the wells. Men with ropes and poles were carrying large cooking-pots and others were carrying old fashioned guns and culverts. A large host of people came to enjoy Chuchak's hospitality. There were multitudes of barbers cooking the food. Chuchak has gained credit in the world and the people are praying for his long life and prosperity.

And Ranjha left his buffaloes and sat in a corner sad at heart.

Meanwhile flocks of beautiful women lined the tops of all the houses to watch the marriage procession. They were as delicate as fairies and as beautiful as houris. Their fairy forms must have been compounded of musk and perfume. They exchanged ribald⁶ songs and pleasantries with the women of the bridegroom's party. They flashed their beautiful red eyes and sang in sweet tones. They uncovered their heads and shoulders and showed their

rounded breasts. They gazed at their own beauty in their thumb looking-glasses.⁷ They were tantalising their maddened lovers. They clapped their hands and danced and sang songs of welcome to the bridegroom. They greeted everybody as they passed with some new song.

The crowd and the noise was as great as at the Fairs of Pakpattan or Nigah or Rattan or Thamman, where women flock to kiss the tomb of the saint and attain the achievement of their desires.

The girls went wild with jealousy when they saw the costly robes of the married Sial women. Then came the musicians, the dancing girls and the jesters⁸ and the minstrels with trumpets and cymbals even from Kashmir and the Dekkan. The horses neighed and the ground quivered with the trampling of many hoofs. There were grey horses, piebald horses, duns and mans, and chestnuts groomed to shine like the sun and gorgeously caparisoned. Their ears were quivering with excitement. They were ridden by handsome Khera youths, and the dancing girls sang and declaimed with amorous gestures, and they danced like peacocks. The men beating the drum chanted songs. The riders hail spears in their hands and were merry with good drink. The folds of their turbans were soaked in saffron. The saddle bells tinkled as the horses neighed and pranced. Thus the marriage procession came from Rangpur to Jhang and they halted at the village guest house. And mats were brought for them to sit on and huqqas⁹ of gold and silver and brass were brought for them to smoke. Garlands were flung round their necks. The minstrels sang to them and the I4heras distributed money to the minstrels with lavish hands.

When the procession arrived Ranjha's soul and his heart were scorched like roasted meat; and he said to himself sadly, 'Saida is drunk with joy today though he has not touched wine. Saida has become a Nawab¹⁰ and Hir his princess. Who cares for Ranjha the poor shepherd? Death is better than life without my beloved.'

And the people in their pity for Ranjha said, Chuchak has been cruel. He has broken his word and disgraced his faith.'

Meanwhile the members of the marriage procession girded on their belts and proceeded to the house of the bride. The oilmen held their torches in their hands to light the way for the procession and the barbers presented dishes of sweets for the bridegroom's party. Then five rupees and a shawl were given to the Kheras. When the relations of the bride and the bridegroom met they put

the bridegroom and his best man¹¹ on horseback. Then the fireworks began. There were stars and Catherine wheels, bombs, balloons, and coloured rain rockets, and set pieces of elephants, stags, peacocks, coloured circles, and moving thrones and revolving moons. All the neighbourhood flocked to see. After the fireworks came the dinner, and rice and sugar and butter were distributed in big dishes, and the singing women sang songs and were given money.

The bride and bridegroom were made to sit facing each other and each one put 'surma' in the other's eyes, and the fun waxed fast and furious and the girls pestered the bridegroom with jokes and Eddies and questions. They gave him a sheaf of wheat and asked him if he could weave a basket. They made the bride close her fist and asked the bridegroom if he could open it. They threw a pair of women's petticoats over his head. 'Try and lift this heavy cup with one finger,' shouted one girl, 'Bring us some stallion's milk,' said another. 'How can you work a well without bullocks?' said a third. 'Can you pitch a tent without poles? Can you put an elephant into a saucer?' said another. They tickled him under the chin and asked jeeringly, why he had brought his old mother along. To whom did he want to marry her? Was he hunting for a husband for his sister among their shepherds? At whom was his best Mali's mother casting her eyes? 'We can get the very cowherd you want for your mother.'

And Saida replied mockingly, You are as lively and as wise as "Belkis"¹² the wife of Solomon herself and your wit buns us up entirely. Go to Dhonkal and you will see a tent pitched without poles. Yes, I can make a well go without bullocks; take off your clothes and jump in. I have already married your cowherd's sister and we can supply justly men to suit all of you. I am ready to take all of you home with me.' Thus they jested and feasted at the marriage of Hir and Saida.¹²

The Qazi who was to solemnise the marriage was given a seat on the floor. They appointed two witnesses and an attorney and prepared to offer prayers. They told her the definition of Faith and made her repeat, 'There is only one God and Muhammad is his Prophet.' They made her read the six Kalmas' and taught her the Five Times of Prayer. And Hir the Sial girl said angrily to the Qazi, 'Why bother your head to pick a quarrel? I do not intend to turn my face away from Ranjha- What have Qazis and the "Shara"¹⁵ got to do with

True religion? There is a big well in Hell into which Qazis will be thrown by God.'

The Qazi again admonished Hir but she was displeased and refused to say a word to him. The Qazi said to Hir 'You should obey the orders of your religion, if you wish to live.'

Hir replied, 'I shall cry out in the Court of God that my mother betrothed me to Ranjha and has broken her promise. My love move is known to Dhul Bashak,¹⁶ to the Pen and the Tablet of Destiny and to the whole earth and sky.'

The Qazi said, Proud Beauty, wrapped in musk and insolence, the Prophet has ordained marriage and God has said in his holy writ "Many"?' Obey the bidding of your parents and accept the Khera as your husband. Are you the queen of Jasmshid¹⁸ or the daughter of Nadhu Shah that we should be afraid to tell you the truth? I will beat you with the whips of the Shara and administer the justice of Umer Khatab.¹⁹

Hir replied, 'Where the love of Ranjha has entered there is no place for the authority of the Kheras. If I turn my face from Ranjha what shelter will there be for me in the Day of Judgement?'

The Qazi was wroth with Hir for her obstinacy and he asked her angrily, 'Tell me who solemnised your marriage with Ranjha, and who were your witnesses? Who was your attorney? Without witnesses a marriage is invalid. These are the clear directions of the law of Muhammad.'

And Hir asked the Qazi 'Who taught you the law? You have no true knowledge of it. The soul of the Prophet solemnised our marriage. By the order of God, the polar²⁰ star was my attorney. 'The angels Gabriel, Michael, Israel and Israfil were the four witnesses.' Thus for a whole watch of the day did the Qazi admonish Hir and urge her to accept the marriage arranged by her parents. But she would not listen, and steadfastly refused to be the wife of anyone but Ranjha. The arguments and threats of the Qazi were of no avail for the colour of Am, Shin and Kaf²¹ had entered into her soul.

And Chuchak said to the Qazi, 'Listen to me. 'The marriage procession of the Kheras is sitting at my door, and if the marriage is not accomplished I shall be disgraced and the face of the Sials will be blackened. All the folk of my household are questioning me. My kith and kin from afar off are asking why the marriage ceremony has not begun. There is no man whom I respect and

trust as I trust you. I will give you anything you ask if you will bring the affair to a successful conclusion.'

The Qazi replied, You can only gain your object by deceit. The powerful and mighty have a way of their own. It is only Pirs, Fakirs and Saints who are afraid of using violence. Tell the bride's attorney that consent to the marriage must be wrung from Hir, even against her will. Let us gag her and read the marriage service.'

(Quoth the poet: Qazis have no fear of God and eat the bread of iniquity.)²²

The Qazi said, 'Make haste, Chuchak, and bring your kit and kin. Call the witnesses and the attorney. I will solemnise the marriage. If Ranjha the shepherd makes any trouble we will cast him into the fire.'

So the Qazi, by guile, against hr's will, solemnised the marriage. The witnesses and the attorney ran away afterwards as a camel flees on seeing a lion. And Hir said to the Qazi, 'May the curse of God fall on you and all such rogues and liars. If you are so anxious to give a bride to the Kheras, why not give your own daughter to them? God's curse on all Qazis and bribe takers.'

Notes

1. Brahmans. the 'twice-born', are the highest of the Hindu castes, the intellectual group in ancient hindu society. It may appear strange that a Muslim family should depend on Hindu Brahmans for fixing a marriage but this was by no means unusual in the old Punjab.

2 Sawan and Bhadon are the two rainy months of the year in the old Punjab. Two of the fountains in the Red Fort of Delhi are called Sawan and Bhadon. Poets are in the habit of comparing the profusion of their own tears for the beloved with the rain of Sawan and Bhadon.

3. Pilao is a meat and rice dish, very popular among the Muslims of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent Pilao has a number of varieties.

4 Basmutti, as its name implies, is a sweet-smelling variety of rice. It is grown in the central districts of the old Panjab. By all accounts it is the best in the subcontinent and is now a valuable export from Pakistan.

5. Surma is kohl, collyrium.

6 Ribald songs are a well-known institution. Most of the songs sang on such occasions are of the unprintable variety.

7 Thumb looking-glasses — this refers to the 'Arsi', an outsize silver ring with a mirror fitted into it, worn on the right thumb. It was one of the favourite ornaments of a bride in the old Punjab, and continued to be worn for a couple of months or so after marriage, during which period the newly-married girl was not expected to do household work. This is still the case in the less sophisticated parts of the Punjab countryside. See also Chapter 1, note 9.

8. The jesters, namely the 'bhands' and the 'Mirasis', who used to be the life of such occasions are vanishing fast along with the old feudal order which they adorned.

9 Huqqa, the hubble-bubble. This is a smoking pipe, the smoke being drawn through a vase filled with water to which a long tube and a bowl are attached. It is very common in villages in Pakistan and India and acts as a medium of peaceful social intercourse.

10 A Nwab is a Muslim ruling *chief* or a big landlord.

11 'Best man' is usually a little boy, the Sarbala or Shahbala, who rides in front of and sometimes behind the bridegroom on the same horse and receives his allotted quota of abuse from girls of the bride's party.

12. Belkis is the Queen of Sheba. Her full name is Thislim Kartion in Belgis.

13. Such questions and answers are still usual on such occasions, which are marked by youthful frivolity.

14. Kalma is the Muslim declaration of Faith. 'There is no God but one and Muhammad is his messenger', is the first Kalma. There are five ve others.

15 Shara or Shariat' is the system of Muslim Law.

16 Dhul Bashak is the cobra that supports the world in Hindu mythology.

17 Islam attaches great importance to the institution of marriage. The reference here is to the famous Quranic verse beginning with Marry who pleases you among women'. The Prophet said, 'Marriage is an institution I approve; whoever turns away from my institution turns away from me'

18. Jamshid is the well-known king of pre-Islamic Iran, subject of many Persian poems and legends. He is supposed to have belonged to the mythical 'Pishdaedian' dynasty, and to have been dethroned by Zahhak after a rule of 700 years. He is said to have invented the art of music and medicine.

19. Umar Ibn al Khattab, the second Caliph of Islam, famous for his passion for justice and unhesitating administration of it.

20 Qutub tara is the polar star. Qutub also means a great saint. 'Qutub', 'Abdal' 'Ghaus', etc., are stages of promotion in the saintly hierarchy.

21. Ain, Shin and Kaf: these three Arabic letters spell ISHQ which means Love.
22. This is more an expression of sympathy with Hir in her distress on the part of Waris Shah than a personal opinion, although he certainly seems to be angry with this particular Qazi.

CHAPTER 17

Hir is taken to Rangpur

Thus was Hir married by stratagem and put into the wedding palanquin by force. She was put into the Doli¹ moaning and crying. The Kheras took her off as thieves drive off stolen cattle. When Hir was put into the palanquin she made bitter lamentation even as a swan separated from the Rock and she cried out to Ranjha, 'Today your wealth has been looted by the Kheras. Takht Hazara and Jhang are left masterless. These are the wages of deceit with which the Sials have repaid you for your grazing. Who will take care of you when I am away? You will wander in misery and loneliness. Oh, Ranjha,² see my long hair has fallen down all over my breast in my misery. My jewellery is unkempt and uncared for. The bull, the snake, a the earth and the sky have turned against me to destroy me. Other brides have clothes of green, red and yellow but I wear only mournful white' Thus did Hir lament on being parted from Ranjha.

Meanwhile the buffaloes were ill at ease without their master Ranjha. They gathered together on the bank of the river and lifted their mouths in protest. They pushed folk hither and thither with their horns and broke the pots and pans of the village. Then the people bade them conciliate Ranjha by kissing his feet.

And all night the Kheras marched with the palanquin of Hir, and at dawn they reached the forest, being mightily pleased with the bride they were carrying off⁵. And they halted and sat down to eat and drink and be merry. And they prepared to go hunting.

But Ranjha who had followed the procession sat apart and his heart was sore within him. But no one paid any attention to him.

The Kheras rode after deer and hunted lions and foxes and showed much cunning with their bows and arrows. And they roasted the meat that they had killed and set aside a portion for Hir. And Hit finding herself alone and the Kheras merry making, made a signal to Ranjha, called him into her palanquin and embraced him tenderly.

One of the Kheras noticed this and brought news to the rest and they were wrathful. But Hir broke her necklace and pretended she had called Ranjha to help her pick up the pieces. She added that if any one touched him, even with the end of a feather, she would poison herself. Whereupon the Kheras kept silence and urged the procession to move on. And at last the palanquin reached the village of Rangpur and the women came out to greet the bride and sang songs of welcome. The girls lifted the bride out of the palanquin and poured oil over the threshold. Hir's mother-in-law swung water round the bride's head and drank it and gave thanks to God. They drew aside her veil and placed a Quran and five gold mohurs in front of her, and her mother-in-law and husband's sister laughed and made the midwife⁶ sit by her side. They gave presents to the midwife and other menials. When they espied Ranjha sitting near, they snatched the basket from his head and frightened him away. The village women congratulated Saida's mother on the bride. But Hir kept her own secret in her heart and she alone knew it. Ranjha's heart was sore within him. He drew near to Hir by stealth and spoke to her. She protested that Fate was too strong for her and that she could do nothing for Ranjha. Whereupon Ranjha upbraided Hir for first encouraging him and then abandoning him.

Hir replied, Ranjha, this love of ours must last for all our life long. The Five Pirs stand witness between you and me. I swear I will never be the wife of Saida. If he approaches me I will turn away from him. Surely the Five Pirs will punish him if he tries to come near me. Listen, I have a plan how we may meet again. I will write to you that you should come and see me in the disguise of a fakir. Abandon all your caste and position. Shave your head and become a wandering beggar. In this guise you will be able to have a glimpse of me. If you do not come and see me my soul will vanish away.'

(There follows in the text a tirade against Jats generally. As bringing out the weak points of the Jats it is of some ethnological and historical interest, but it has nothing much to do with the story so it is omitted here.)'

CHAPTER 18

Notes

1. Palanquin.

2 In spite of his misery, Ranjha is much luckier as a lover than Whittier's cowherd who got no further than a mild handshake when his sweetheart got married and went away

She kissed the lips of kith and kin
She laid her hand in mine
What more could ask the bashful boy
Who fed her father's kine.

3. The snake is the Bashak Nag, who according to Hindu mythology supports the world. See also Chapter 16, note 16.

4 Brides in the old Punjab wore coloured (and colourful) garments. White clothes, by tradition, were worn by widows, particularly among the Hindus, No ornaments were worn. Muslim widows, if they were childless, wore black or white. If they had children, particularly boys, they wore normal clothes, and ornaments too. The social pattern is now changed.

5. A traditional Punjab marriage still retains the symbolism of 'marriage by capture'. The bridal party, although it usually lacks the ferocity of an invading army, is led by the bridegroom who, complete with horse and dagger, is made to look like a general, although a somewhat slender one. The 'invaders' celebrate their victory by carrying off the bride in the midst of fireworks and fanfare. Resistance from the brides side now takes the form of abusive language towards the bridegroom and his family, particularly the ladies.

6 It is still usual for a dai to accompany the bride in her in-laws' house for the first two or three occasions to help her settle

down in her new surroundings. 'Dai' means both a midwife and a nurse. In the present context it is the latter.

7 Usborne's note.

Hir is unhappy in her new home

One day it was agreed that 'Gana' or Hunt the Bracelet' should be played and all the Jat girls were sent for to join in the game. They all danced with joy in the village when the news was sent round. They were all brides and fragrant with the odours of musk and rose and jasmine. It was as if a garden was full of Chanipa" and 'Chambeli' flowers. Their beauty shone like the radiance of the moon. Their faces were as shapely as the cupola of a mosque. There is no happiness in the world like the joy of a bride and bridegroom. Saida sat on a red firestool and the brides of the village sat round him. They flocked round Hir and brought her a bowl of milk with a bracelet at the bottom. They danced round her shaking it and asking her to dive for the bracelet. The other brides and bridegrooms threw their bracelets in and the fun waxed fast and furious.² But Hir remained pale and glum. When they seized her hand and put it in the bowl it was as cold and lifeless as the arm of a corpse. So finding that Hir was cold and dispirited and would not join in the game, the girls all gave up playing and went away sadly to their homes. The women of the village were displeased with Hit But she sat mute refusing to look at Saida and tears flowed from her eyes like rain from the black clouds of the monsoon.

Meanwhile the Qazi was saying to Chuchak, 'You are fortunate in that all your difficulties and troubles have vanished now tat Hir has beat placed in the house of the Kheras. All is silence in Jhang Sial and all are happy in Rangpur. All authority has deserted Ranjha and nobody pays any attention to him now.

And Ranjha's sisters-in-law discussed the affair in Takht Hazara and they laughed at the discomfiture of Ranjha. And they wrote him messages saying, 'The decree of fate must be borne. There is not a girl who is trustworthy. The Kheras have plucked the flower that you used to guard so tenderly and for whose sake you wandered so many years in dense forests full of tigers and lions. Come and set your font in our courtyard. We will present offerings to Clod if you come back to Hazara. We will dedicate a saucepan³ to the name of Mi. We will hold a wrestling match and offer garlands to Ghazi Pir. Have we not promised to light the lamps in honour of Khawaja Khizr if you return to us?'

And Ranjha replied, Sisters, when autumn withers the flower, the humming bird has to live on hope. When the garden dries up, the nightingale wanders about the jungle hoping that a bud will blossom somewhere. Only the son of a churl will run away from love. The true knight stakes his life for love and scatters destruction on those who oppose him.'

So Ranjha resolved to become a fakir and get his ears bored and to bring back lift captives or perish in the attempt And Ranjha's sisters-in-law at Hazara, when they received this reply sat in silence and then they said, 'Ranjha will never come back.' Meanwhile Hir languished in the house of her father-in-law. She refused to put on jewellery or gay clothes. She ate no food and lay awake all night thinking of Ranjha.

And Sehti, her husband's sister, spoke to her saying, 'Sister what spell has overcome you? You are getting weaker every day. Your colour is fading away. You have become like a dried and parched straw and all your bones stand out- Your conversation is gloomy. Tell me the secret of your heart that I may cure it.' So Hir told Sehti all her history and Sehti sat by Hir and consoled her saying she too had a lover, Murad Bakhsh, a camel driver, and that somehow they must contrive to help each other in their troubles.

One night Saida full of delight placed his foot on Hir's bed. Hir thrust him away saying, 'I have not yet said my prayers. But Saida was wilful and would not heed so Hir in her distress prayed to her Pir⁶ The Pir at once appeared and Hir said, 'I am the betrothed of Ranjha. My love is pledged to him.' So the Pir chastised Saida, broke his bones and tied up his hands and feet.⁷ And Saida fell down at the feet of the Pir and begged for mercy saying, 'I have sinned.'

At the dawn of the day Hir took a bath in the courtyard and she sat with her head dropping downwards in grief thinking of Ranjha. Her heart inclined to God and she remembered her Pir. She meditated on the unity of God and she dispelled all idolatry from her mind. Thus wrapped in the deepest contemplation she sat motionless as a statue. When the Five Pirs saw Hir sitting in devout meditation they at once appeared by the order of God.⁸ They awakened her by placing their hand on her shoulder and they said, 'Child, get up. What grief has overcome you?'

And Hir gave a deep sigh and tears came from her eyes as she replied, 'The Love of the Jat whom you gave to me has made me mad. This love of the shepherd has ruined me. God has made you my protector and I come to the

Pirs for help in my trouble The Pir were overcome with compassion, and using their spiritual power of ecstasy, they presented the image of Ranjha before her, saying, 'Child, spread out your skirt and receive the object of your wish.' And they added, He will meet you in person very soon for so it has been ordained by God.'

Notes

1. Champa is the tree *Michehia Champaca*, bearing a fragrant yellow flower. Chambeli is Jasmine, the *Jauminum grandiflorum*.
2. Some of these games were still known at the beginning of the twentieth century. They are now dying out and the fun and frolic of the old days is giving place to more modern and less innocent amusements.
3. Saucepan is probably a reference to 'koondah', an outsize dish which is filled with sweet preparations and distributed to the poor in the name of members of the Prophets family and his descendants. Ali is the son-in-law of the Prophet and the fourth Caliph of Islam.
- 4 Ghazi Pir is the appellation of more than one saint. The reference here is probably to the (Ghazi Pir who is buried at the foot of the hillock near Shah Kot in District Sheikhpura in West Pakistan. The people of Montgomery (now renamed Sahiwal), Jhang, Sheikhpura, Lyahlpur and Sargodha Districts even now congregate annually at this shrine and the celebrations last for more than a week.
- 5 It is ambitious for a faqir to think that he could bring back his lady love as a captive. That is normally the role of the warrior. But Ranjha was probably banking on the spiritual power he would gain as a faqir.
- 6 Many people still pray to the Pirs more readily than to God.
- 7 What an effective protector the Pir must be!
- 8 God is dragged in here quite unnecessarily.
- 9 Usborne's note.

CHAPTER 19

Hir sends a message to Ranjha

Arm a year had passed a Jat girl of Rangpur was returning to Jhang Sial to visit her own home and she came to Hir and offered to take any message she might want to send to her parents.

'Shall I tell them,' said she, how you like your husband and how you get on with his relations?'

And Hir replied, 'He is to me as thorns are to silk. The Pen of Destiny has been cruel to me. What can I do? Give my salaam to my homefolk with folded hands and in the garments of humility and say, "You have given me over into the hands of enemies. May my parents be drowned in the deep stream.¹ I will have nothing to do with them." Then seek out Ranjha and say to him, "Come to me or I shall die. I have thrown dust on the head of the Kheras and spat in the face of Saida." I long to meet him and have given offerings to the tomb of Hasan and Husain,' to Shudaa Ghazi and Bhola Pir that my prayer may be fulfilled.'

When the girl reached Jhang of the Sials she asked the folk them, 'Where is the boy who used to graze Chuchak's buffaloes and comes from Hazara? The boy who weeps and talks like a madman, who threw away his blanket and flute and lost his wits. The boy who is known among Lovers as Ranjha and who wears the garland of love on his head. Who has been ruined by Love and wanders distractedly in the courtyard woebegone, became the Kheras have taken away his Hir?'

And the girls replied, 'He is now a grown up lad and has given up all affections of the world. He roams about in the forest where there are wolves and tigers. No one speaks to him. Who would touch a snake if he were ignorant of casting spells?⁴ Sister, you had better talk to him yourself. We have no influence with him at all.'

So the girl went in search of Ranjha and said to him, Hir is on the point of death. Her last breath is hovering on her lips. You have cast some spell over her. She shows no affection for her husband's house, although they have

made all efforts to please her. She will not allow Saida to touch her and she will not go near him. She counts the stars all night and thinks of you. Go back to her disguised as a Jogi and manage to meet her somehow. All things reach the appointed end when God is kind.'

And Ranjha, when he heard this message, rejoiced exceedingly and he called the Mullah to him and said 'Write⁶ for me to Hir and tell her the pangs of separation that I endure. Write, 'You have taken rest in your newly found home. I am on thorns and burning embers. The fire of Love when once lit turns earth and sky. By deceit you induced me to graze your buffaloes. Verily women can pull down the stars from heaven. Such is their guile.' Write it down, Sir Mullah, every bit. Omit no part of my complaint. Write as lover writes to lover with a full heart. Write that nobody cares for me now that he has turned her face from me. The peacocks have flown away, and I have to live among owls.'

The drum of Love beat loudly in the ears of Ranjha when he thought upon Hir and he pondered much how he might meet her, and he said to himself, 'The river of Love is deep but a boat must be fashioned to cross it. Hir is the secret booty which the robber can only attain by self sacrifice. I must disguise myself as a fakir and this delicate body which has been fed on butter must be smeared over with the dust and ashes that become a fakir. I will go and learn some spell from a Jogi. I will have my ears bored and become his disciple. I will go and find some perfect fakir who can upset even Fate itself.' I will cut myself in pieces as if I were a comb, so that I may comb the locks of my beloved.'

Notes

1. This unfilial sentiment is hardly in harmony with the 'folded hands' and the 'garments of humility' with which the message is prefaced, but this apparent inconsistency merely reflects the conflict between Hir's regard for her parents and the painful way she feels they have let her down.
2. Imams Hasan and Imam Husain were grandsons of the Prophet of Islam. Imam Husain was martyred at Karbala. See also Chapter 4, note 4.
3. Shudaa Ghazi and Bhola Pir are presumably some saintly celebrities of the neighbourhood. 'Ghazi' means a holy warrior.
- 4 Casting spells is a reference to snake charmers.

5 Usborne's note.

6 The village Mullah was probably the only person in the village who could read and write. Ranjha is obviously illiterate like his sweetheart.

7 According to popular superstition in the Punjab countryside Pin, Fakirs and Jogis can, with the force of their piety, make the Moving Finger of Destiny cancel what it has written. Wan, Shah himself, in speaking of Mohiuddin Abdul Qadir Gilani in the 'Invocation' says that he can score out even the writing of the Pen of Destiny. Omar Khayyam, of course, would not support such an expectation. See also Invocation, note 3.

CHAPTER 20

Ranjha decides to become a Jogi

So Ranjha set off for 'Tilla', the hill where Balnath' the Jogi dwelt, for he said to himself, 'Balnath surely knows the way of salvation.'

And as he went from village to village he invited those who wished to join him and become a fakir, and he said, Brothers come with me and be a fakir. You have nothing to do but beg and eat. You get your ears bored and put some ashes on your body and all the world reveres you as a saint. Without toil or labour you can be as eminent as Nadir Shah? The mysteries of birth and the sadness of death have no concern for the fair. He sleeps in the mosque free from the cares of this impure world and begs and eats. He can scold people and incur no blame. If you call yourself a Pir or a fakir everybody is your servant.

At last, after many days' journeying, Ranjha reached Tilla the hill on which Balnath lived and Ranjha bowed his head and placed a piece of gur³ before Balnath as an offering, and clasped the feet of all the Jogis. They were all engaged in religious contemplation and prayers. They were reading Gayan Gita Bhagvat and Bharat, and Ranjha folded his hands before Balnath and said, 'Make me a fakir. Let me be your chela and be my Pir. The straight Path to God is inaccessible without the intervention of Murshids⁴ even as rice cannot be cooked without milk.'

And Balnath looked at Ranjha and found he was a lad of pleasing countenance and of a comely wit, and doubts arose in his heart and he said to Ranjha, 'My lad, your looks are saucy and you have commanding airs. Your demeanour is not that of a servant but of one whom others obey. Only those whose souls are submissive can become Jogis. You are more fitted to play the peacock and to strut in the assemblies of young coxcombs. You have a silken shawl over your shoulder, you have painted your eyes with lampblack; you play on the flute and stare at women. You tie cows up and milk them. In vain you try and flatter the Guru⁵

'Oh Jat, tell me the truth. What has befallen you that you wish to relinquish the pleasures of life and become a fakir? Jog is a very troublesome task. The taste of Jog is bitter and sour. You will have to dress as a Jogi, to wear dirty clothes, long hair, cropped skull and to beg your way through life. You will have to give up the pleasures of birth, to cease to rejoice when friends come or to grieve when they die. You will have to abstain from casting eyes on women. You will have to become divinely intoxicated by taking kand, mul, post, opium and other narcotic drugs.' You will have to think the world a mere vision You will have to go on long pilgrimages to Jagannath, Godavari, Ganges and Jamna. Jog is no easy task. You Jats cannot attain Jog.'

And Ranjha replied to Balnath, 'I accept all your conditions. I beseech you to give me Jog and to drown me in the deep waters of Fakiri⁹ I swear I have given up women and earthly affairs. Do not, Guru, pierce me again and again. You should not break the heart of one who falls helpless on your threshold.'

But Balnath still had doubts in his heart, and he said, 'What is the good of begging if man has no belief? Only those in love with death can acquire Jog. Good men subdue their passions by riding on the horse of patience and holding the reins of remembrance. Jog means to be dead while alive. One has to sing the song of nonentity¹⁰ using ones meagre body as a guitar. One's self has to be entirely absorbed. It is no child's play. You will never be able to undergo Jog. What is the use of asking for it? Child, listen. God has made his abode in this body of dust He is in every thing as a thread runs through the beads. He is the breath of life in the living. He is as it were the spirit of bhang and opium?' He is in the life of the world as colour is in the Mehndhi.¹² He permeates everything, even as the blood runs through all the body of men.

But Ranjha was insistent and would not be refused. He said to Balnath, 'Seeing your face has lifted the burden from my soul. By putting all the pleasures of the world behind me I have calmed my sorrows. I have not reached the degree of Jog called Chit Akas after passing through the stages of Bhut Kas and Juda Kas.¹³ I will die as a Jogi on your threshold and my blood will be on your head.' Kid when the Chelas saw that his heart was wavering towards Ranjha, they began to taunt their master, and their tongues were as sharp as daggers that had been sharpened on a whet-stone.

'You are opening your arms to this good looking Jat,' they said, and yet you do not give Jog to those who have undergone much trouble for many years. Verily Jogis have become enamoured of comely boys.'

And Ranjha tried to pacify them saying, 'I look upon you all as equals of Balnath and you are all my brother. With your help I may hope to get salvation on the Day of Judgment.'

And the Chelas replied, 'Boy, listen to us. For eighteen years we have been serving him. We have given up all and live by begging. All day and night we remember God. Yet he does not give us Jog. He is sometimes like fire and sometimes like water. We cannot discover his secret.'

And the Chelas in their anger intrigued with each other and rebelled against Balnath. They left the Jogi's house and kitchen. They pierced the Guru with their shameless taunts.

Whereupon the Guru rebuked them and his anger blazed from his eyes. The Chelas instantly obeyed him, so powerful was the enchantment that the Guru laid upon them. All ill feeling vanished from their minds. They obeyed the orders of their Guru and brought Balnath the earrings as he had told them, and the razor wherewith to shave Ranjha. And the Guru took off Ranjha's clothes and having rubbed him in ashes and embraced him, made him sit by his side. Then he took the razor of separation and shaved him completely. Then he bored his ears and put earrings on him. He gave him the beggar's bowl, the rosary, the horn and the shell in his hands, and made him learn the word Allah.¹ He taught him the way of God and the Gurus from the beginning, saying, 'Your heart should be far from other men's women. That is the way of Jog. An old woman should be treated as your mother and a young woman as your sister.'

But Ranjha having achieved his desire and having been granted Jog, shook off the disguise of penitence and replied boldly to Balnath, 'Cease vexing me any longer.. Even though you force your advice down my throat, I will not follow it. Who has taught you to captivate young men and to ensnare them in your net?'

Hearing this Balnath reproved Ranjha, saying, 'Remember you have adopted the creed of humiliation and beggary and you should banish all impure thoughts from your mind and not disgrace the creed of a fakir.'

Ranjha replied, 'Had I been only a lover of God, I should have sought only Him. If I had been silent before the love of women, would I have deserted my family and ruined myself? Hir has captivated my heart. That is why I have become a Jogi. I have become a fakir only that I might keep my Love in remembrance. Had I known that you would try to keep me from my Love, I would never have set foot on your hill of Tilla. Had I known that you would bore my ears, I would have put these earrings in the fire. Set my ears right or I will bring the sepoy of the Sirkar¹⁵ here.'

And Balnath was sad and hung his head on hearing these wild words, and he said, 'Verily I repent and am sorry for having given Jog to this youth. He has got the treasures of jog without spending a single farthing.' And he entreated¹⁶ Ranjha to give up his wilful and evil ways and to become a true fakir.

But Ranjha laughed him to scorn saying, 'We Jats are cunning strategists and we use all means to compass our hearts' desire. I will invoke the name of my Pir, my Guru and of God and pitch my flag in Rangpur where I will cut off the nose of the Kheras And spite the Sials. Do not think I can ever give up Hir. Gums who try to keep their disciples from women are as foolish as driven cattle. I will open my heart frankly to you. What can a Jat do with a beggars bowl or horn, whose heart is set only on ploughing? What is the good of teaching him to tell his beads when all he can do is to tell the tale of his cattle? I will be frank with you. I must search for my beloved. She belongs to me. And I am pursuing nobody else's property. The snake of Love has coiled itself round my heart and is sucking my life blood from me. My bones and my flesh melt when I am separated from Hir. Love fell on us when we were both young. Hir had her hair in long plaits and I had a small beard. We passed the Spring and Summer of our Love together, then evil days came and Hir's parents preferred to marry her elsewhere, and they betrothed her to the Kheras. When the stormy

wind of calamity fell upon me, I became a fakir and embraced the labours of austerity. You are the only true Guru¹⁷ in the world, and it is only through your kindness that a poor traveller can guide his boat ashore. Give me Hir. That is all I ask. My heart begs for Hir and for Hir alone.’ At last the Guru understood that Ranjha had been wounded sore by the arrow of love and that he would never give up the search for his beloved. So he prayed and poured ashes over his body and plunged his soul into the deep waters of meditation. He closed his eyes in the Darbar¹⁸ of God and uttered this prayer: ‘Oh God, the Lord of earth and sky, Ranjha the Jat has given up his kith and kin and all that he possesses and has become a fakir for love of the eyes of Hir, who has slain him with the arrow of Love. Grant, Oh Lord, that he may get his heart’s desire.’

The Five Pirs also prayed in the Court of God¹⁹ that Ranjha might receive that which his heart desired. Then there came a reply from the Darbar of God Hir has been bestowed on Ranjha and his boat has been taken ashore.’ So Balnath opened his eyes and said to Ranjha, ‘My son, your prayer has been granted. The True God has bestowed Hir upon you. The pearl and the ruby have been strung together. Go and invade the Kheras and utterly subdue them.’

Notes

1. According to tradition, Balnath was the fourth Guru of ‘Tilla Guruan’ (the mound of the Gurus) on the banks of the river Jhelum. The place is still preserved, and the ‘Jog Mat’ or the cult of the wandering mystics, with its emphasis on pantheism, is still practised there.

2 Nadir Shah is the Persian conqueror of Delhi whose invasion, In 1739, shook the Mughal Empire to its foundations. To Waris Shah, who wrote his poem in 1768, the invasion was a recent memory (see also Chapter 8, note 4). The desire to achieve social or spiritual eminence by living on other people is an eternal temptation for those who suffer from ergophobia.

3 Gur is raw sugar. It is well known as a ceremonial offering in the Punjab countryside. An invitation to a wedding or other social occasion accompanied by gun cannot be trifled with.

4 A Murshid is a spiritual teacher. Here Ranjha, a Muslim, becomes a spiritual disciple of Balnath, a Hindu yogi. This may seem strange today, but was by no means unusual at the time.

5 Guru — the Hindu holy man, the teacher, the Hindu counterpart of the Muslim Murshid. Gurus have Chelas’ and Murshids have Murids’, although the bonds of spiritual subjugation are similar in both cases.

6 Balnath obviously could not read Ranjha’s thoughts, a’ Jogis often claim to do. Otherwise he should not be asking these questions.

7 Narcotic drugs are not an essential part of the theory or practice of Jog, but certainly common practice both among Hindus and Muslims who profess to be faqirs. See also Introduction. note 24.

8 The Vedantists say the world is ‘Maya’ or illusion. This is essentially a Hindu doctrine, but it has had a profound influence on the Muslim mystics of India.

9 Fakiri is the state of being a fakir.

10 Song of Nonentity — this is the doctrine of annihilation in God (*fana fillah*) as practised by the Muslim Sufis, which has strong spiritual affiliations with the ‘Nirvana’ of the Hindus and Buddhists.

11 The sole reason for this strange comparison is Balnath’s familiarity with opium and bhang (hemp) as supposed aid, to spiritual contemplation.

12 Mehndhi — Ulsborne thought it was indigo, which is incorrect. Mehndhi is the Henna plant or Blood Egyptian Privet, Lawsonia. Alka, or Lawsonia Inermis, or Lawsonia Spinosa, cultivated throughout the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent for its leaves and as a hedge-plant for gardens. The powdered leave; beaten up with Catechu and made into paste are much used by women to dye their hands and feet a reddish oranges and by men to dye their beards, and occasionally to stain the tails and manes of horses. Tinting of fingertips and palms of hands with henna is usual with young girls on festive occasions, particularly at weddings. Brides and bridegrooms still have the palms of their hands and the soles of their feet tinted with henna, which retains its importance. The ‘Suhag Pura’ which is a paper packet tied with a ceremonial red-and-white tape, and is sent from the bridegroom’s house to that of the bride, contains henna as a symbol of matrimonial happiness which is used to tint the bride’s hands and feet.

13 The three different planes of Jog Philosophy.

14 The Hindu Balnath teaching Ranjha the name of Allah is a reminder of the Bhakti Movement which was the result of the impact of Islam on Hinduism and which produced great men like Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir, whose devotion to God transcended both Hindu and Muslim orthodoxy. Many of the Muslim Sufis In India represented the same tradition.

15 Government. The word ‘Sirkar’ is also an old form of address for kings and nobles. It

is still applied by sycophants to lesser luminaries..

16 Balnath apparently had no power to take back what he had given..

17 Ranjha's speech is full of inconsistencies. He begins by accusing Balnath of captivating young men and ensnaring them, and ends up by calling him the only true Guru in the world. These are obviously good tactics, as Ranjha does succeed in having his way with the Guru.

18 Court.

19 These may appear to be strange proceedings, but God here has obviously been modelled on the absolute and arbitrary monarchs of the time!

CHAPTER 21

Ranjha leaves Tilla for Rangpur disguised as a Jogi

So Ranjha made haste to leave Tilla and he collected strange herbs and potent roots from the woods and put them in his wallet, that he might appear as one skilled in medicine. And he determined to learn spells and enchantments and sorceries so that he might capture his beloved. He was determined that if necessary he would wear bangles like Mian Lal Hosain Shahbeg¹ and kiss the feet of a dog like Majnun² had done. So Ranjha set out from Tilla having bidden farewell to Balnath. The destroyer of the Kheras started like the storm-cloud that moves to the place where it has fallen once before.

As he passed from village to village the people said to themselves, 'This boy does not look like a Jogi. His wooden earrings and beggar's clothes do not suit him. His build is not that of a Jogi. His bones and feet are hard. Surely some proud woman has made him turn fakir.'

And Ranjha replied, 'I am the perfect Nath descended from seven generations of Naths. I have never handled a plough. My name is Dukh Bhajan Nath and I am the grandson of Dhanantar Vaid.³ My Guru is Hira Nath and I am going to worship at his shrine. Any one who opposes me goes sonless from this world.

And he strode off with swinging steps as one intoxicated, even as camelmen swing when riding on a camel's back. He made straight for the Kheras' abode even as a stream in flood sweeps down the bed of the river or as a lion springs on its victim. A partridge sang on the right as he started and he took this as a good omen.⁴

He was filled with love even as rain pours down in the darkness of a pitch black night. As Ranjha entered the neighbourhood of Rangpur he met a shepherd grazing his sheep and the shepherd looked at the Jogi as a lover looks into the eyes of his beloved, and said, 'Tell me without disguise what country have you come from?'

The Jogi replied, 'I come from the river Ganges, I am a bird of passage from the other side of the river. We Jogis stay in one place for twelve years and then wander for twelve years and we bring success to those who meet us.

The shepherd replied, 'Real fakirs do not tell lies. You claim to be a fakir and you are telling a lie. You cannot deceive a shepherd. They are the most cunning of all mankind. You are the Sials' shepherd and your name is Ranjha. You used to graze the buffaloes of Chuchak. You and Hir used to spend your time in the forest. You are the famous lover of Hir. The Sials were always taunted about you and Hir. All the world knows your story. You should flee from the Kheras or they will kill you.'

And the Jogi replied to the shepherd, 'Surely you will be punished for telling such lies. I and mine have been fakirs for seven generations. I have nothing to do with the world. I deal with beads of penitence and beggar bowls and live by asking alms. If you wish well for yourself do not call me a servant, for I am without doubt a holy man. I fear the very name of women. Who is Ranjha and who is Hir? If you call me a servant I will tear you to pieces.'

The Jogi shook with anger. The water of wrath gleamed in his angry eyes. And the shepherd, afraid of the wrath of the Jogi, fell at his feet and folded his hands in supplication, saying, 'Pir, forgive my sin. The glazer of buffaloes that I knew closely resembled you and such mistakes are pardonable. I will tell you all the story.'

And he told the Jogi the story of Ranjha and liar spread his blanket before him and treated him kindly. Meanwhile a wolf fell on the sheep, and the shepherd in his distress called the Jogi to attack the wolf, for he had counted his flock

and found the wolf had slain seven lambs and one sheep. The Jogi did as the shepherd besought him to do and confronted the wolf in battle. The Jogi called upon the Five Pin who supported him in the encounter. He smote the wolf with his beggar's bowl and the wolf fell to the ground like a log. Then the Jogi pierced him with his fakirs tongs and brought the body to the shepherd who was amazed at the sight. So the shepherd was convinced that the Jogi was a perfect saint and endowed with miraculous power and he fell at his feet in supplication.

And Ranjha said, Brother, let us sit down and talk together. We must take care that our secret does not leak out. The shepherd replied, 'You have disgraced the name of Love. Having won Hir's love you should have run away with her. Either you should never have fallen in love with her, or having once loved her, you should have killed her rather than let another have her. When the Kheras took her away in marriage you should have shaved your beard in the assembly⁵ You should have died rather than be disgraced as you have been disgraced.'

Ranjha replied, 'Your speech breaks my heart but we Jogis have patience even when we are trampled on.' The shepherd replied, 'You fool, Take the girl away if you can. Saida is no friend of yours. You have got your ears bored and you have grazed buffaloes for twelve years and are you still afraid of what the world will say? When you go to Rangpur to beg through the city, go carefully. The girls of the city will tease you but you should leave them severely alone and not tarnish the name of a fakir. Sehti the sister of Saida is a clever woman and you should beware of her. She is certain to be your enemy. She is not afraid of any fakir She is in love with a Baluch camel driver. You should let her understand that you know this. May God help you in your task. Fortune favours you. Your star is in the ascendant, Ranjha. You are about to ascend the throne of Akbar.' The jackal of Hazara is going to try and capture the lioness of Jhang. You, a fox' of the jungle of Takht Hazara, will become as favoured as a delicate musk deer of Khotan. You have heaped disgrace on the Sials and now you are going to humiliate the Kheras.

Notes

1 Mian Lal Hosain Shahbeg is the traditional guru of sweepers. He is also popularly known among the sweeping fraternity as Gugga.

2 'Sag-i-Laila' or Laila's dog, is a favourite theme with Pen and Urdu poets who often

make Laila's lover Majnun kiss sweetheart's dog, and hold long conversations with him. Generally speaking, in Persian and Urdu poetry, lovers like to think themselves as the dogs of their sweethearts. As an example, this is what Hafiz says

I hear that dogs have collars

Why don't you put one round Hafiz's neck?

3. Dhanantar Vaid was a celebrated Hindu physician of and India. Dukh Bhajan Nath is a play on words meaning the N weighed down by 'dukh' or sorrow, Hira Nath refers to his worship of Hir.

4 The superstition still persists.

5 In other words, disgraced yourself. In the old days, a beard as much a symbol of respectability as being clean-shaven in later times.

6 The Emperor Akbar, the Great Mughal.

7 It is no compliment to Ranjha to call him a jackal and a fox, but the shepherd, who apparently could think of no be analogy, obviously means well and therefore causes no offence.

CHAPTER 22

Ranjha arrives at Rangpur

So it came to pass that Ranjha came to the village of the Kheras. The girls of the village were taking water from the well when Ranjha addressed them. Some suspected he was the lover of Hir but they said nothing. A woman told him the name of the village. 'Aju,' she said, 'is the headman of the village and Saida is his son who stole away Hir the bride of Ranjha.' And Ranjha rejoiced when he heard the name of Hir. The children of the village followed him about as he begged from house to house and the young men asked him what he thought of the place when he had inspected all the girls. And Ranjha replied, 'How can I fix my attention on the Kheras with all these girls about? Their bright eyes slay their lover as with a sharp sword. The scent of their flowers and the black of their eyelashes have dealt death and destruction in the Bazaar.' The beauties of Rangpur thronged round the Jogi like moths round a lamp. They overwhelmed him with their surpassing beauty. His eyes shone in amazement. When the women of the village saw the beauty of the Jogi they surrounded him in

multitudes, old and young, fat and thin, married and unmarried. They poured out all their woes to the fakir and many wept as they told their stories. Some complained of their father-in-law or mother-in-law¹ Some complained that their husbands beat them, others that their neighbours were unkind. Others said, 'Our sons have gone to a distant country. When will they return?' Some said, 'For God's sake deliver me from the pain of love. Its flame has scorched me ever since I was born.'

Ranjha made all the girls sit close to him and told them to fetch freshly broken potsherds from the kiln. On them he drew mysterious lines and designs. Some he told to wear them round their necks, others to bind them round their loins. Others he told to put them in pitchers of water and make all the family drink them. Thus father-in-law, mother-in-law, husband, brothers and everybody will become kind.' To others he said, 'Be composed, God has fulfilled all your hopes.'

The girls came trooping out of their houses when they heard of the Jogi. 'Mother,' said they, 'a Jogi has come to our village with rings in his ears. He has a beggar's bowl in his hand and a necklace of beads round his neck. He has long hair like a juggler. His eyes are red and shine with the brilliance of fire; sometimes he plays on the "King"² and weeps. At other times he plays on the Nad and laughs. He calls on God day and night. He is the chela of Balnath and the love of someone has pierced his heart.'

And Saida's sister said to Hir, 'Sister, this Jogi is as beautiful as the moon and as slender as a cypress tree. He is the son of some lucky mother. He is searching about as if he had lost some valuable pearl. He is more beautiful even than you. He cries 'God be with you', as if he had lost his beloved friend. Did not Mirza and Sahitan lose their lives for love? Did not Joseph suffer imprisonment for twelve years for the love of Zulekha? Was not Kama ground to powder for love's sake? Surely this Jogi is a very thief of beauty and that is why he has his ears bored. Some say he has come from Jhang Sial. Others say he has come from Hazara. Some say he is not a Jogi at all but has got his ears bored for the sake of Hir.'

And Hir replied, 'I entreat you not to touch on this subject. It appears to me that this is a true message from God, and that it is Ranjha. My love for him has already ruined my life. Why has he come to destroy me again? He has lost his beloved and has also got his ears bored. What benefit has he received

from love? He became a shepherd and then cast dust and ashes on his body and relinquished all hope of name or fame.'

And Hir wept secretly and tears poured like rain from her eyes. And she said to the girls, 'Bring him somehow to me that we may find out where he comes from and who he is, who is his Guru and who bored his ears.'

The girls drawing water at the well made merry with the Jogi, saying, 'This is what becomes of the man who runs after girls. It is only those who have lost their hearts that bore their ears.' And then they tantalised him by displaying their charms. They burnt his heart sorely by saying, 'Hir is very happy with the Kheras.' They sidled up to him and touched him with their hands. They said, 'You have shown us your gracious presence. Now come and let your sun shine in the courtyard of Hir. Come behind us and walk down with us to the house of Ajju and look at pretty Sehti. Come into her courtyard and look at her.' And they laughingly said, 'Sir Fakir, we stand before you with folded hands. Please accede to our request and lay us poor women under a debt of gratitude.'

To which Ranjha replied haughtily, 'My family have been fakirs for seven generations and we do not know the ways of the world. I eat khand and mul,³ live in desolate places and enjoy the hermit life of the jungle. I know all about wolves, deer, lions and tigers. You all are mines of beauty, but what concern has a Jogi with beauty? I know all about medicine and healing herbs. The haunts of people and populous cities I avoid. I only know the ways of hermits, recluses, pilgrims, Gums, Jogis, and Bairagis.' Other people pound and sift bhang and sherbet. I sift men at a glance. I can banish fairies, Jinns, women and Satan himself. By my spells and incantations, I can compel men to submit to me.'

And the girls encircled round the handsome Jogi and asked him ceaseless questions about himself.

Ranjha replied, 'Do not ask vain questions. A snake, a lion and a fakir have no country. We are dervishes and have no kith and kin. What care we for bed or board, for the headman of a village or his women folk? You are all fairy queens and wise and witty women. I am a God-intoxicated fakir who has left the world behind. I pray you leave me alone. Why pick up a quarrel with a poor fakir? I am helpless in your presence. Why, did not you women put Harut and Marut⁵ in the well? You defeated even Plato and Aesop.⁶ You would tease the very angels themselves. Go and look for some youth of your own age and

leave the poor fakir alone. Why do you seek to ensnare me in the entanglement of your beauty? Women verily r faithless. I will never take their advice.'

So the girls went and told Hir, 'Hir, we have entreated the Jogi but he will not listen to us. We have praised the Kheras but he takes no notice. Fur, why do you lie weary and sad on your bed all day and no one speaks to you for fear of your displeasure?'

Hir replied, 'Girls, you may pierce me with a thousand taunts, but who can withstand the decree of God? I do not blame you. God does what He wishes. What was to be has been. All the miseries of the world have fallen on my head and yet I have not quarrelled with you.

And the girls replied, You have only just been married. What can you know of misery? You have shared no secrets with us. So keep your tongue under control. You yourself told us to go and fetch the Jogi and now you deny it.'

And Hir replied, 'Girls, you try and fix the responsibility on others for what you have done yourselves. It was a bad day when I was given to the Kheras in marriage.'

The girls replied, 'Daughters-in-law are usually afraid of their fathers- and brothers-in-law, but your father-in-law is afraid of you. Other brides milk the cow, knead the bread and grind the corn, but you never lift a straw. Women like you are afraid of witches in the day time but swim across the broad rivers at night.'

Hir replied, 'You taunt other people's daughters but you have never been entrapped in the net of love.'

The girls answered, 'Why do you quarrel with us? We never stood between you and your lover'

fir said, 'You bad wicked girls, destroyers of your own parents. What do you mean by your rash words? What you have said has burnt my heart. Verily I have a long and weary road to travel. I wish that Ranjha would come and embrace me or that even in my dreams I might meet hint'

The girls replied, 'What we have said has been out of kindness for you, and we bear no ill-will towards you. If the subject was grievous to you, to whom but you should we have mentioned it? If you wished to hide your secret in

your father-in-law's house, you should not have blazoned it abroad when you were living With your parents. Why do you cry out when the truth has been told to you? You should not have engaged in the game of love without deep forethought. Now you turn round and abuse us. What object had we in calling the Jogi? Was it not you who asked us to do it? The whole world knows about your love. Why do you make yourself an object of disdain.

Hir replied angrily and sarcastically, 'From your childhood upwards you have been learning unseemly tricks. You are the sort of girls who set aside the blanket of shame and dance in public. Verily you will be the salvation of your relatives, and the people into whose houses you marry will be exceedingly fortunate.

Meanwhile Hir's heart was rent with the pangs of separation from her lover and she was devising some way of seeing Ranjha. The Jogi at the same time decided to visit the house of Mehr Aju. So Ranjha took up his beggar's bowl and went from door to door, playing his shell and crying, 'You mistress of the courtyard, give alms, give alms.' Some gave him flour, others bread, others dishes of food. They asked for his blessings and he invoked blessings upon them.

Some said, 'We shall acquire holiness through the power of his intercession.' Others said, 'He is a thief spying after brides. He will seduce our women.' Said one, 'He pretends to be a fakir and pours ashes on his body. But he looks like Ranjha and has a love secret in his eyes.' Said another, See he takes wheat flower and butter, but will not touch millet or bread crusts. He is chasing the women and is no real fakir.'

But Ranjha went on his way unperturbed. Hir joked with some and scolded others and made fine scenes. He set up as a conjurer and gave some of them charmed threads⁷ and lucky knots. And Ranjha looked up and said to those round him, 'We have entered a ruined village. Not a girl sings at her spinning wheel. No one plays Kilbari⁸ or Samsni and makes the earth dance. No one hunts for needles or plays "Walan"⁹ No one plays Maya or makes crows or peacocks fly. No one sings Choratori or plays Garidda in the street. Let us up and leave this dull village.'

And the boys replied to Ranjha, 'We will show you the place where the girls sit in their spinning parties.' And he saw them laughing and chatting and breaking each other's thread for fun. And they sang sweet songs as they

turned spinning wheels, and one said mischievously to Ranjha, 'The loves of one's childhood do not last longer than four days.' And another said, 'What do you want, Jogi?' And Sehti, to cajole him took off his necklace. And the Jogi turned and said, 'Who is this hussy?' Somebody replied, 'She is Aju's daughter.' The Jogi replied, 'Who is Aju and why is she making mischief? Aju has got a bad bargain. She is rude to fakirs and does not kiss their beads. She is a good-for-nothing hussy who can neither card nor spin.'

And Sehti replied, 'Jogi, your words are harsh. If you touch me I will throw you down and then you will know who I am. Your disguise is a trick. If you enter my courtyard, I will have your legs broken and pull out your hair. I will thrash you like a donkey and then you will remember God and learn wisdom.'

And Ranjha exclaimed, 'Why does this snake hiss at me and why does this tigress want to drink my blood? I suppose she is tired of her husband and is hunting for a lover.' And the Jogi passed on into the courtyard of a Jat who was milking a cow. He blew his horn and played on his shell and roared like an intoxicated bull. The cow alarmed by the extraordinary noise kicked over the rope and spilt the milk. And the Jat in fury exclaimed, 'Fancy giving alms to this poisonous snake.'

And the Jogi's eyes became red with anger and he lifted his beggars bowl to strike the Jat. Meanwhile the Jat's wife flew at him and abused him and all his kith and kin, his grandfathers and great-grandfathers for spoiling the milk.¹⁰ She pushed him away and tore his shirt and flung taunts at him. The Jogi in his wrath kicked her and knocked out all her teeth.¹¹ She lay on the ground like a log. And the Jat seeing his wife on the ground raised a line and cry and shouted, 'The bear has killed the fairy. He has killed my wife. Friends, bring your sticks and come to my aid.'

And the men cried, 'We are coming, we are coming.' And the Jogi in alarm took to his heels. And as he passed by one of the houses he saw a beautiful girl sitting all alone like a princess in a jewelled chamber of the king. The Jogi was hunting for his prey like a hawk. He was as a born dacoit robbing a banker. He was as handsome as the subadar¹² of Lahore. He knocked at the door and said, 'Hir, bride of the Kheras, art you well? Give me alms, give me alms.'

And as soon as Sehti saw him, she opposed him fiercely and said to Hir, 'He is a wicked man and nobody curbs his evil ways. I will break his bones and teach him to cast love-eyes in my courtyard. What do you mean by saying, "Are you well, Hir?" You are flaunting your beauty like an enamoured peacock. You are hunting for your beloved and yet you call on the name of Pir-and fakirs. You singing "Allah, Allah" and beg with a strange look in your eyes. You are like a camel without a nose string,¹³ and no one dares drive you away.'

And the Jogi replied, 'Do not try and cajole me with your charms. It is you with your clinking jewellery that looks like a vain peacock. I said "Pir" which you mistook for "Hir" and nobody dares set you right Why are you speaking harshly to wayfarers and strangers? You are oppressing poor fakirs and causing trouble in the houses of the fathers-in-law. You are like an amorous cow sparring with bulls.'

And Sehti said, 'Listen, sister, to what he says. He is a Jat and not Jogi. He is a liar and a lewd fellow, shedding his shameless fat paunch in the village. He is no wayfarer and stranger, for he knows Hir's name and then 'Immediately says he never heard it. He will get his beggar's bowl and his beaded necklaces broken and his hair pulled if he comes near me. Who will save him from my wrath? He is not a headman of the village. He is a wandering minstrel, or a leather worker, or a sweeper of some sent. The Jogi replied, 'You miserable hussy, you squat snub-nosed' village flirt, you loin-cloth of Satan, beware. If a Jatti quarrels with a fakir, her lot will be one of hardship and sorrow.'

The women of the village hearing the noise of voices and bickering, said to Sehti, 'Why do you quarrel with the Jogi? He sings as sweetly as Tan Sen, ¹⁵ and he knows songs by sixties and hundreds; he spends all his time singing songs and wearing charms. It is not meet to quarrel with such folk.'

And Sehti replied, 'It is only fat-bellied rascals that live by begging. He is obstinate and unbending as a beam in the roof. He is as an unripe sugarcane. His lips utter pious words but his heart is set on his beloved. When he sees Hir he sighs and his eyes melt with love.' And Sehti turned to the Jogi and said, 'You quarrel-monger, you have spoilt your ears. I will spoil the rest of you. If you sing your Jogi song I'll make the Jats sing ribald songs about you. I'll send for a couple of young rascals like you and order them to thrash you. I'll make you dance round our courtyard like a juggler's bears.'¹⁶ I will tear

open the fresh wounds of your heart and on the Day of Judgement I will get redress from your taunts.'

And the Jogi replied, 'Verily you are the mother of wisdom and the grandmother of understanding. Your wit has cancelled the decrees of Fate and your words are as mysterious as an Arabic verb¹⁷ Surely there is no country like Kashmir, lustre like that of the moon, nought so sweet as the sound of a distant drum, nothing so terrifying as the earthquake and the Day of Judgement. And there is nothing so quarrelsome as Sehti. Aye, there is nothing so bitter as anger and there is nothing so sweet as the kisses from the lips of the beloved. There is no book like the Quran and no silence like that of death. There are none so fortunate as the Kheras, no one so full of sin as the Poet Waris and there is no spell like that of his poetry.'

And Sehti replied, Why quarrel with women and bandy words with small girls? What are the things that can never keep still? Water, wayfarer's dogs, lads given to debauchery and fakirs. You are no Jogi. Tell us from where came Jog? From whence came Shinas¹⁹ and Bairag? From whence came the beggar's horn and beggar's bowl and the praying beads? Who gave you the commandment to wear long hair? Who ordered you to smear your body with musk and ashes?'

The Jogi replied, 'Solomon is the Pir of Jinns and evil spirits. Self-interest is the Pir of all Jats and Love is the Pir of all lovers. Listen, Sehti, and I will tell you the way of Jog. We fakirs are like black snakes and we acquire power and virtue by reading spells. We get up at midnight and pore over sacred books by the banks of untrodden streams, we expel all impurities from our speech by using the toothbrush of repentance and we sit on the carpet of true belief. We become deaf and dumb by holding our breath in the tenth position.²⁰ We can ward off deceit and burn evil spirits. We can cast spells and destroy those whom we want to destroy.²¹ We can make absent lovers smell the fragrance of their beloved's presence. Women who revile us we can make ride in penance on an ass with a shaved head. Let virgins beware who oppose our power or it will fare ill with their virginity.'

Notes

1 A common complaint on the part of impatient young women who long for an independent home but are held down to homes of their parents-in-law by the joint family system, which though originally a Hindu institution, later on became more less

common to Hindus and Muslim, alike.

2 'King' and Nad' are both musical instruments, popular in the old Punjab.

3 Kand and Mul — narcotic preparations of opium. (Usborne's note.)

4 A Bairagi is a holy mendicant, a homeless wanderer, who has severed all human ties. He is virtually a Jogi, but possibly a more hard-boiled one.

5 Harut and Marut are two angels mentioned in the Quran. Popular legend makes them fall in love with a dancing girl named Zohra, who was responsible for their downfall and imprisonment in a well in Babylon. The well in question is still supposed to exist and is pointed out to credulous tourists by local guides among the ruins of Babylon. As for Zohra, she is supposed, according to the same legend, to have become the morning star. In fact, Zohra is the Persian name for Venus.

6 This again is mere legend. History does not relate how, if at all, Plato and Aesop were outwitted by women. It may have happened to them of course!

7 'Taweez', 'dhaga' and 'gat' are all charmed devices for warding off evil. 'Dhaga' is a twisted cotton thread, over which a holy man says a prayer. The 'dhaga' may be tied into knots in which case it becomes a 'gat'. A 'gat' is sometimes made of a leather string. 'Taweez' is an amulet.

8 Kilbari — a game something like Here we go round the mulberry bush'. Sammi is a similar game. (Usborne's note.)

9 Wa'an, Garidda, Choratori and Maya are dances accompanied by music and singing and are popular among girls.

10 In similar circumstances one would expect to hear similar compliments in the Punjab countryside even today!

11 Ranjha does not appear to be much of a Jogi in the whole of this episode.

12 Governor of Lahore. In the old days, Governors and other high dignitaries were expected to be handsome, and were in any case supposed to be so by those who wanted to flatter them and obtain favours.

13 'Shutar-i-be Matar', that is, a camel without a nose string, is an idiomatic reference to a person of uncontrolled and unpredictable habits.

14 A snub nose is not regarded as a point of beauty either in men or women in the old Punjab.

15 Tan Sen — a famous Indian singer in the court of the Emperor Akbar. (Usborne's note) Mian Tan Sen, as he is generally called, was a Muslim.

16 Jugglers and their bears are still a familiar sight in the old Punjab. Some have monkeys which are equally popular.

17 Arabic is a proverbially difficult language and Arabic verbs, alas, are so mysterious today as they were in Waris Shah's days.

18 Self-approbation is quite common among Persian and Urdu poets. As compared with most of them Waris Shah is modest — and true.

19 Shinas and Bairag-Sanyas, or renunciation of the world. Bairag means the same thing. This is the last state of human life according to the Hindus.

20 This is a reference to Yogic practices. 'Prana Yam', as it is called, involves the holding of breath for long periods and simultaneously concentrating on the idea of the Deity.

21 This may seem strange in the mouth of a faqir who is dedicated to the service of God. In actual fact, the displeasure of a faqir is as much feared and avoided as his blessing is sought after.

CHAPTER 23

Ranjha meets Hir

And Sehti replied, 'Jogi, if you have all these powers. perhaps you can cure our bride hr. Every day she is getting weaker.'

And Ranjha replied, 'Sehti, beguile me not with vain words. Bring your bride here that I may see her and inspect the colour of her eyes and face. I will see her veins and feel her pulse. Then I will prescribe the remedy.¹ But she must tell me when the disease began and tell me the taste in her mouth. Through the blessings of my Pir and teacher, I can tell the names of all diseases. I can whisper the call to prayer in the ears of a newly born babe,² I can weave spells and put children to sleep with lullabies. I can dry up the womb of women and slay liars, adulterers and infidels. With cunning oils and potent herbs I can cure pains and paralysis and the eighteen kinds of leprosy. With the spleen of a roasted goat I can cure blindness. With boiled Ghaghar³ herbs I can bring about miscarriage. I can make a perfect cure of a barren woman by letting out blood from her ankle vein. I can assuage the pain of wounds with

an ointment of soap and soda. If a man has toothache I can pluck out his tooth with my pincers. Those who cannot see in the dark, I can restore to sight by giving them hot roasted oil seeds. I can cure a withered arm or a benumbed leg by rubbing in the oil of a pelican. If a man is attacked by epilepsy, I apply the leather of my shoe to his nostril. If a man's face is awry, I show him the looking-glass of Aleppo and he is cured. I cure stomach-ache with the milk of a she-camel. With cooling draughts of Dhannia⁴ I can assuage the fires of passion. When a man is at the point of death and gasping with his last breath, I put honey and milk in his mouth. At his last hour, when the expiring life sticks fast in the gullet of the dying man, I recite the Holy Quran and his soul passes away in peace. But you must tell me what disease your bride has got or else all your talk will be vain and all my spells and power will be of no avail. Also, my beautiful one, you should not be proud of your beauty or hold your head so high, for what cares a fakir for your beauty or for your beautiful sister-in-law Hir? Your Hir is a crane and she has been mated to an owl. Your fairy has been yoked to an ass. Like should be mated to like. You should not mate a high bred Arab mare to an ass.

About this time Hir came into the courtyard and from one of the inner chambers she overheard the words of the Jogi. And she wondered who the speaker might be and she said to herself, 'He calls me a docile mare and the Khera an ass. Perhaps he will sympathise with me. Perhaps God has sent my cowherd tack. Perhaps he has obeyed my word and got his ears bored. Who else can speak in such dark riddles? The girls hint mysteriously that he is a Jogi, but perhaps he is my Icing Ranjha. Nobody but Ranjha could know my name. I will stand up to him and answer him face to face.'

And Hir said to the Jogi, Jogi, go away from here. Those who are unhappy cannot laugh. Why should one disclose the secrets of one's heart to Jogis, strangers and fools?'

The Jogi replied to Hir, We are the perfect fakirs of God. Ask anything from us, fair beauty, and we can bring it about. If a lover parts from his beloved one, with spells of magic numbers we can unite them. We can reconcile friends who have fallen out. We can cure all pain and disease and avert the onslaught of calamity. Do not be obstinate but give alms to a poor fakir.'

And Hir replied, 'It is not true, Jogi; parted friends cannot be reunited. I have searched far and wide but have found no one who can accomplish that. Tell me

when the true God will bring back the lover I have lost. If anybody can remove the pain in my heart he may make shoes of my flesh. Oh poet Waris Shah! If I hear that my lover is returning, I will offer sweet cakes and light my lamps with rich butter for oil.⁵

And the Jogi replied, 'I know all the secrets of the universe. On the Resurrection Day everything will be revealed. On that day the sky and clouds will cleave asunder. When Israfil blows his trumpet all the habitations of men will fall down. The supports of heaven will be rent asunder. The snake and the bull⁶ will be flied with fear on that day. The mountains will fly into small pieces. All that will remain will be the seven last things; the Chair and the Throne of God, the Tablet of Destiny, and the Pen, Paradise, the Soul and Hell. Everything will vanish in an instant. Only lover and fakir will remain constant. Then tinning to Hir he said, 'If you will sit near me I will open the Holy Book and by casting magic' lots I will tell your horoscope. You were a little girl and your hair was hanging down your back. He was a boy with the early dawn of manhood on his lips. He played on a flute. Your eyes clashed in love and two hearts were captivated by each other. He was sold at the very shop of love and he grazed somebody's buffaloes in hopes of his reward, but you married and his hopes were drowned in the deep waters of despair. The Five Pirs had married you⁸ to him and this second marriage was not lawful. Love has mined him and now he is roaming about disconsolate in forests and desolate places. He went to Tilla and got his ears bored and became a Jogi. He has today entered your village. He is not far from you. All this I have found in the book of the signs of the stars.'

And Hir stood up and said, This Jogi has read the signs of the stars correctly. He is a true pandit and Jotshi⁹ Tell me Jogi, where is my lover who stole my heart away and brought ruin on himself.'

The Jogi replied, 'Why are you searching outside, your lover is in your own house. Put off your veil, my beautiful bride and look if you cannot see your lost lover.'

And Hir said, 'Jogi, it cannot be true. He cannot be in the house.' Then she decided to draw aside her veil. She glanced at the Jogi and behold! It was her lost lover, And she said to him softly, Our secret must be hidden from the eyes of Sehti.'

The Jogi replied, 'Bride of the Kheras, do not teach wisdom to the wise. Be not proud of your beauty but be kind to old friends.'

Notes

1 Ranjha is speaking here more like a learned physician than a faqir. That, of course, is intended to impress his ignorant hearers.

2 This is a regular and well-known custom among Muslims everywhere. The azan or call to prayer is whispered in the ear of the new-born baby either by a priest *or* a relative.

3 Ghaghar is a creeper, the leaves of which are boiled and used for fomentation. It may also possibly be used for inducing abortion, although it would be unusual for a faqir to participate in bringing this about.

4 Dhannia is coriander seed. It is believed to have properties similar to bromide.

5 A proverb common to Punjabi and Urdu. 'Rich butter' here is intended for ghee or melted butter. Lighting lamps in mosque even with ordinary oil is still a well-known way of expression of gratitude to God for His favours. Punjabi mothers still promise lamp-lighting in mosques when they pray for their children,

6 The snake and the bull, according to tradition, support the earth (Usborne's note). This is Hindu tradition, which became common popular belief both among Hindus and the more ignorant among Muslims. See also Chapter 16, note 16.

7 An unauthorised but popular use of the Holy Quran.

8 This is the equivalent of marriage made in heaven, and equally difficult to prove.

9 Jotshi is an astrologer. 'Pandit' is a learned Brahmin, but is now used by both Hindus and Muslims for a wise and erudite person.

CHAPTER 24

Sehti quarrels with the Jogi and turns him out of the house

When Sehti saw that the hearts of Hir and the Jogi had become one and that Hir had fallen under his spell, she began abusing the Jogi to her, 'Sister, all Jogis are liars. This snub-nosed squat dirty-faced wicked Jogi cannot be trusted.'

The Jogi replied, 'You should catch hold of the feet of the fakir in humility and with supplication instead of quarrelling with him. You are a lucky woman to be so fond of camels' and such 111cc. Ah! By the grace of God, my Pir tells me everything.'

Sehti flared up in wrath, 'You are a lewd slippery tongued person. What do you mean with your pointed remarks about camels. Are you charging inc with theft. Your shoulders seem itching for a beating. Fat fellows like you should be sent to look after ploughs and buffaloes.'

The Jogi: 'A Jat woman is only good for four things, pressing wool, scaring sparrows, grazing lambs and nursing a baby. She loves quarrels and beats fakirs. She looks after her on family and abuses others.'

Sehti: 'I will beat you with cudgels and knock your teeth out.'

Jogi: 'You are going the way to feel my stick round your legs. Girls with fringes² over their foreheads should not quarrel with holy fakirs. I can ruin you utterly, as I have saintly power in each finger tip.'

Hir glanced at the Jogi and made signs to him to stop quarrelling and she urged Sehti not to quarrel with the Jogi.

And Sehti replied, 'See, what has happened. The fakir has ensnared the bride of Saida. You have drunk grey³buffalo's milk and make eyes at your lover.'

Hir flashed back at Sehti, Girls who quarrel with fairs like this must be wanting husbands very badly. You are always interfering when grown up boys come in sight. You are as obstinate as a negress.⁴

Sehti: 'Friends, my sister-in-law is murdering me. She is siding with the fakir. Either the Jogi is her lover or has brought some message from her lover.'

fir: 'My sister-in-law claims to be washed in milk and virtue, and now she calls me a leader of thieves. In very truth loose women have become grand ladies and ugly women are flaunting themselves as if they were peacocks in the garden of beauty. Look at this loose-tongued seductive darling of the Balooches. Look at her showing off! her airs and graces like a prostitute of Lahore⁵ A crawling deceitful reptile who devours men's hearts.'

Then Sehti lost her temper and said to her maid-servant Rabel, 'Let us give this fakir alms and turn him out Give him a handful of millet and tell him to go away.'

So Rabel gave him a handful of millet and angrily bade him begone. Sehti had first charmed him with her blandishments. Then she turned him out and sent him packing. She entered the garden of the Ferringhees and set the well machinery going. She disturbed the sleeping snake.

The Jog1 was furious at being treated in this scurvy manner and burst forth in anger, 'You ate shaving my beard in giving me mere bird's food.' You have defiled my beggar's bowl and I shall have to wash my rosary..

And Rabel replied, Why do you find fault with millet? All Jats eat it. It is the food of the hungry and povertystricken. It is the father and mother of the poor.'

And Sehti threw some millet into his cup and the cup fell to the ground and broke.

And the Jogi cried, 'A great tyranny has been committed. You have ruined the fakir by breaking his cup. May your lover die, you tyrant of a woman. You taunted your sister-in-law with her lover. Why did you fall in love with Murad the camel-man? You fell into the hand of the Balooch like a stolen camel. He looted you of your boasted virginity.'

And Sehti replied, What do we Jats know about cups? Go spend a farthing and ask a potter to make you a new one.

And the Jogi wept when he saw the broken cup, and he said, My Pir gave it to me and it was very precious.' And he tried to pick the broken pieces up and in doing so he caught fir's eyes and he said to Sehti, You have broken my cup and

tell me to get another made by a potter. Have you no fear of Almighty God? If I tell my Pir he will ruin your family.'

And Sehti replied, 'Your cup was broken by Fate. You can buy a tub at my expense if you like. Who can resist God's fate? Fate expelled Adam and Eve from Paradise and drove them down to earth. Fate overthrew Pharaoh in the river and Fate put a prince and a prophet like Joseph in the well. Fate has shaved your beard and bored your ears. No one can escape from Fate.'

And Hir said to Sehti, 'What strange perverseness is this? Why quarrel with holy fakirs whose only support is God? Why do you break his cup and ill-treat him at my door? Why bring down ruin on happy homes and why burn those who have already been scorched by the fire of Love?'

And Sehti replied, 'O virtuous one whose sheet is as stainless as a praying mat! The whole house is yours and who are we? You are as important as if you had brought a shipload of clothes from your father's house. You flirting hussy and milker of buffaloes You are still running after men. You never speak A word to your husband Saida, but you are hand in glove with the Jogi.'

Hir replied, You have picked up a quarrel with the fakir. You are sure to run away with somebody. You won't stay long in your husband's house and you will be defamed in all the streets and bazaars of the town. Beware, the fakir is dangerous. Do not tease him or he will cause trouble. He is simply and quietly worshipping his Guru. Take care that he does not invoke his aid. Otherwise his wrath will descend on us like a sudden invasion of Ahmad Shahs and God save Jandiala (the birthplace of the poet). Remember Alexander touched the feet of a fakir and then he conquered the fort of Daz. A fakir gave his blessing to Timurlane and sovereignty remained in his family for several generations. Go and fall at the feet of the fakir or his curse will fall on you.

Sehti replied, 'Sister, I have been scorched by your taunts and bitter words. I will take poison. I will either die or kill him or get you beaten. As sure as I am a woman, I will tell my brother of your disgraceful conduct with the shepherd.'

Finally, after many hot words on both sides, Sehti got so enraged that she and her maid snatched up the long pestle with which they grind rice and rushed

on the Jogi. They broke his beggar's bowl and rosary. They felled him to the ground. They broke his head with milk pots and crushed him even as Abu Samand fell on Nawab Hosain Khan at Ghunian."

Then the Jogi was wroth. He remembered his Pir. He girded up his loins and he smote his assailants even as the Pathans of Kasur looted the camp of Bakshi.¹¹ He caught them by the hair and dragged them round the courtyard. He slapped them, beat them, and pinched them.

And Hir cried out from inside, 'For God's sake, Jogi, stay your hand.' And the women of the neighbourhood hearing the altercation assembled 'like a flock of Kabul dogs and they thrust the Jogi out of the courtyard.

And Ranjha complained bitterly to Hir of the way he had been used, and he entreated God, saying, 'Why hast Thou separated me from my beloved after bringing us together? What sin have I committed that I have been given a glimpse of Paradise and then turned out in the wilderness? What can I do? I have no money to give to the officers and no tribute to enable me to reach to the darbar.³ And the Jogi wept bitterly and he said to himself, 'I will fast forty days and forty nights and I will recite powerful enchantment which will overcome all difficulties and will unite me to my beloved.' And he swore to take vengeance on Sehti, if the Five Pir would help him.

Notes

1 This is, an oblique reference to Murad, Sehti's Baluch lover, the camel-driver about whom the shepherd had already told Ranjha.

2 Fringes is a reference to the 'Mehndhi, a fringe of delicately intertwined strands of hair all round the forehead of a virgin girl in the old Punjab. The 'Mehndhi', which is a symbol of virginity, disappears at the wedding and is not resumed after marriage. There is a touching ceremony at the bride's house when her Mehndhi is untied as a token of her goodbye to her unmarried past. Sehti was unmarried, and this is a reference to her virgin state.

3 A grey buffalo is believed to be particularly rich in milk with a high cream content.

4 Negresses were famed for their courage and physical prowess and were often employed to guard great harems. The 'Qalmaqis' and 'Urda Begnis' were generally negresses who guarded Mughal harems.

5 Lahore has always been a great centre of civilisation and culture, Lahore courtesan, were famous for their beauty and cultivated manner..

6 Feringhees are the Europeans. This is the only reference to them in the poem. The Portuguese, the French, the Dutch, and the English came to India in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and were known as Feringhees, although it is probable that the term was applied particularly to the French. The garden of the Feringhees is an obscure phrase.

7 Birds food — a proud beggar indeed! Ranjha expected wheat and rice, instead of the millet grain given to him, which is even now considered inferior food in the Punjab countryside.

8 A reference to Ahmnad Shah Abdali who invaded India after Nadir Shah and broke the Mahratta power at the third Battle of Panipat in 1761, five years before Hir was written.

9 All this, of course, is poetic invention rather than history.

10 Abu Samand . . . Chunian — ‘Abn Sarnand is a corruption of Abdus Saman who is said to have fought Nawab Hosain Khan, the Governor of Chunian and defeated him.

11 This is presumably a reference to some contemporary event.

12 This refers to bribery and corruption in the administration, never entirely absent from India or any other country at any time. Tribute’ refers to the Nazrana, a gift, usually presented to a ruler in olden times in the form of cash or other valuables. A number of kings and emperors were, however, accessible to their poor subjects easily and without Nazrana’.

13 This does not do any credit to Ranjha or the Five Pin but Ranjha is, of course, only masquerading as a jogi and his faith in the willingness and ability of the Five Pirs to help him in his love is a matter of private belief.

CHAPTER 25

Ranjha retires to Kalabagh

And Ranjha meditated deeply in his heart, and he collected ashes from the hearth and sat down on a hillock in the garden of Kalabagh. And he kindled fire and meditated on God, and sparks came from his body. He stopped his breath and meditated like a holy mahant,’ and under the shadow of the tree he was absorbed in deep meditation. Then he recited spells and incantations

and a voice came from the Five Pirs saying, ‘Go to, my child, your grief is gone. You will meet your beloved in the morning.’

And Ranjha was pleased when he heard the voice of the Five Pin, and he said to himself, ‘Now I shall meet my beloved.’

And it came to pass that on Friday all the girls of the village assembled to pay a visit to the garden in Kalabagh. They descended on the garden in their battalions of beauty as a flock of slender cranes. The earth trembled at the onset of these fairies. And they fell on the hut of the Jogi. They put out his fire, threw away his beggar’s bowl and wallet and scattered his bhang.² They broke his pestle and mortar. They threw away his turban, his chain and his tongs, his cup and his horn. They destroyed his possessions and looted him as armies have looted the Punjab³ Then the Jogi gave a loud roar from inside the garden and with a stick in his hand advanced to attack them even as a garrison of a fort makes a night attack on its besiegers. And he cried in his wrath, ‘Where is the caravan of these female devils.’ The girls hearing the terrible roar of the Jogi, all ran away, all save one beautiful sparrow whom he caught.

She cried, ‘Help, help,’ and threw off all her clothes and ornaments to save her life. You are a demon,’ she cried, ‘and we are helpless fairies. If you touch us we shall die. What have you to tell me? What message have you to send? My aunt Hir has been your friend from the beginning. We all know she is your beloved. I will take her any message you give me.’

The Jogi sighed when he heard the name of Hir and he sent a message through the girl to her complaining how badly she had treated him, and the girl ran off and told Hir, saying, ‘I had gone to play with my girl friends and he told me his secret. All day he fixes his eyes on the path leading to the village and all night he girds up his loins and counts the stars in despair. Tears flow from his eyes like the rains in summer. When you got into your Doli and hid yourself from your lover, all the world mocked at you. Your cruel treatment of Ranjha has pierced the heart of the whole world. Everybody says you belong to the shepherd. He is being tortured and taunted about you every day.’

And Hir replied to the girl ‘Ranjha has been foolish to babble the secret of his heart to a woman. Did not Mansur get crucified for telling his secret? Did not Joseph get put in the well for telling his dream? Have not parrots been put in cages for chattering? True lovers conceal the insanity of their love. Those who disclose their secret are the losers on the battlefield of love. What has happened

to Ranjha's wits that he has spoilt the whole affair? Why should not I be proud of my beauty? I will darken my eye lashes' and with the power of my eyes make Ranjha and Saida fight over me. I will subdue the garden of Kalabagh and levy tribute on Jog.'

The next day in order to compass the object of her desire, Hir went to Sehti and clasped her feet and tried to win her over with soft words saying, 'Sister, forgive me, I entreat you, for all my faults and for having quarrelled with you. You may abuse me twice over for all I have abused you. If you will accomplish my desire and bring my lover back to me, I will be your slave for ever. My house and property, my gold and silver, all my cows and my buffaloes will be yours. Ranjha has been my lover from the beginning, when we were boy and girl together. He has humbled himself for my sake. He has renounced home and fortunes and has tended buffaloes. He has bored his ears and has become a Jogi for my sake.'

And Sehti tossed her head and said, 'You clasp my feet to achieve your own object. You turned me out of the house and now you come and beseech me with folded hands. Verily selfishness rules the actions of all peoples in this world.'

And Hir still further besought Sehti with honeyed words saying, 'Sister, speak kindly to me. You should sympathise with those who are in trouble. Let us go into the garden and become reconciled with the Jogi. Bhag Bhari,⁵ help me to meet my Ranjha. Those who do good actions will be rewarded in Paradise. If you restore Hit to her lover, you will meet your own lover Murad?

Notes

1. A mahant is a saintly devotee, a Guru.

2 Bhang — this is the first time Ranjha is specifically mentioned as being in possession of bhang, Indian hemp, like many other devotees of the contemplative life.

3 All this seems to have been done out of fun and not from any malice or ill-will towards the Jogi.

4 With antimony or kohl.

5 Bhag Bhari — this is an apostrophe to the woman with whom the poet Waris Shah fell in love. (Ujssborne's note.) As explained in earlier notes, This need not necessarily have been her real name.

CHAPTER 26

Sehti and Hir make friends

AND Sehti's heart leapt with joy even as Satan dances with delight when a sinner forgets to say his morning prayers. And she said to fir, 'Go, I have forgiven your fault, as you have been faithful in love from the beginning. Let us go and bring about a reconciliation of the lovers.'

So Sehti filled a big dish with sugar and cream and covered it with a cloth and put five rupees therein. Then she went to the garden of Kalabagh and stood with her offering near the Jogi.

And the Jogi when he saw her coming muttered, 'Why does a blast from hell blow on holy men? We asked for ram and a hot wind has sprung up to scorch us.'

And Sehti salaamed with folded hands,' but Ranjha gave no reply. The heart of the lover however softened on seeing Sehti in a mood of entreaty.

And the Jogi said to Sehti, 'Women were created as the origin of discord from the very beginning of the world. Those who wedded them were mined while those who held aloof from women became saints and acceptable to God. It was woman who got Adam expelled from Paradise,²

And Sehti replied, 'It was not woman but the greed of man that expelled Adam from Paradise. The angel told him not to eat the grain of wheat and not to go near the forbidden tree and the same order was given to the peacock and the snake. But the lust of the belly prevailed. He ate wheat and he was expelled from Paradise.'

The Jogi replied, 'Why do you speak ill of men? Women have been bad from the beginning. Has not God said, "Verily, women, your deceit is great"? Their deceitfulness is mentioned in the Quran. When have they ever been faithful to anyone?'

And Sehti replied, 'Why abuse women? It is men who are bad. They are not content with their lawful wives but go hunting for the petticoats belonging to other men. It is men who are shameless and black faced. They come to their

senses when they lose their wives and then they say, "It is Destiny." They sit at the feet of Mullahs and listen to the doctrines of Hypocrisy. How goes the well known saying, "To have a wife is equivalent to being in possession of Half Religion." Only he who is married can have prayers lawfully said over him when he dies.⁴ God has said in the Quran, MARRY."⁵ A home looks well with a wife even as lamps look well on a dark night.

'Why do you find fault with those who gave you birth and why do you declare them to be the sisters of Satan? If there were no women in the world the universe would come to an end. Did not God create all things in couples. The earth and the sky, day and night man and woman. Is it not said in the Quran, 'We have created every living thing in pairs.'" Tell me, Jogi, why do you claim to be a great Saint? You fill your belly and you gorge your appetite like a donkey and you forget to thank God. You send messages by little girls. Your ways are full of deceit. You call yourself a wise man and boast of your knowledge. Tell me what is in that basket underneath this sheet? How much money is there and what is the vessel made of?'

And Ranjha replied, 'The dish is filled with sugar and rice and you have put five farthings⁵ on the top of it. Go and see, if you have any doubt in your mind.'

So Sehti uncovered the dish and looked at it, and behold, it was full of sugar and rice. And when Sehti beheld the miracle which the fakir had performed, she besought him with folded hands saying, 'I have been your slave from the beginning with all my heart and soul. I will follow your footsteps and serve you with devotion as your maid-servant. My heart, my property, all my girl friends and Hir herself belong to you. I now put all my trust in God's fair.'

And Ranjha said to Sehti, 'I have grazed buffaloes for many years for the sake of lift. Tell her that a grazer of buffaloes is calling her. Bring her; the Sial, to me, and then you will obtain your lover Murad. Say to her, 'Take off your veil, my beloved, and come. Tell me, for God's sake, what fault I have committed and show me your moon-like face. The long snakes of your locks have entangled me. The arrows of your eyelashes have pierced my heart. Love has swept aside the curtain of shame. I am being pounded incessantly as a partridge. Very lovely is the walking of my beloved. I have given up the world and become a fakir for your sake. Either come yourself into the garden or take me into your house, my beloved.'"

And Sehti replied, 'I can live only if I meet Murad. I can only go with your message if you will bring me my lover. If you bring Murad I will fall at your feet. Hir's love has ruined me and I am like roasted meat⁷ day and night.'

And Ranjha replied, 'Sehti, be sure that God will bring your lover to you. I will recite such a powerful spell that he will come at once. God by his grace will bring him hundreds of miles in an instant.'

Notes

1 This is the Hindu way of greeting others.

2 This is the Christian legend. The Quran says, on the other hand, that it was Satan who led both Adam and Eve into trouble. Nor does Islam encourage or approve of celibacy. On the contrary, the Prophet has dissociated himself from those who do not want to marry. Celibacy and monasticism both represent Christian, not Muslim, tradition.

3. See Chapter 1, note 10.

4 This is an exaggeration. Funeral prayers are by no means restricted to married men.

5 See Chapter 16, note 17.

6 This is Usborne's expression. A farthing is an English coin quite unknown to Ranjha or Sehti. The reference in the text is to a small local coin.

7 To become a 'kebab' or roasted meat is the proverbial way of expressing grief or longing for the beloved. A lover becoming roasted meat while suffering the pangs of separation is a normal occurrence in Urdu and Persian poetry.

CHAPTER 27

Sehti takes Ranjha's message to Hir and Hir meets Ranjha in the garden

So Sehti went to Hir and gave her the message of the Jogi, saying, 'You got him to tend your buffaloes by deceit and now you have broken your promise and married Saida. He has turned fakir and covered his body with dust and ashes. Hir has mired his name and honour by the practice of great austerities, he has

obtained the help of the Five Pirs and he has shown Hir his power by a miracle. Go to him at once as a submissive subject with a present in your hand, for a new governor has been appointed to rule over us. I have seen each miracle of his more wonderful than the last. It is as if Christ had come down from Heaven to earth.¹

Hir replied to Sehti, 'I will go and unveil myself to Ranjha and dispel his sorrow, for my life is the dust of his feet and my heart and soul belong to him. Ranjha is lying stricken sore with the pains of separation from his beloved. I will go like Jesus and bring him to life.'

So Hir took a bath and clothed herself in silk and scented her hair with attar of roses and all manner sweet scents. She painted her eyes with antimony and dabbed 'watna'² and 'dandasa' on her face and lips, and the beauty of them was doubled. She put handfuls of earrings in her ear and anklets on her feet. Jewels shone on her forehead.³ She was as beautiful as a peacock.

And when Ranjha saw her coming, he said, 'This is either a fairy that I see or it is Hir, the Sial.'

And Hir salaamed with folded hands and caught Ranjha's feet, saying 'Embrace me, Ranjha, for the fire of separation is burning me. My heart has been burnt to a cinder. I return your deposit untouched. Since I plighted my troth to you I have embraced no other man. Let us go away together, my beloved, wherever you will. I obey your orders.' And Hir threw herself round his neck.

The moth was burnt in the flame. Out of the smoke the fire was kindled. Like mad things they swung together in the intoxication of Love. The poison of Love ran fire through their blood. The news of their meeting spread through all the world where the drums of Love were beaten.

Then Hir left Ranjha and consulted Sehti how she might arrange to meet him again. You will get Murad,' said she, 'and I will get my love. Let us make some plan to meet our lovers, so that I may spend the rest of my life with Ranjha, for youth and beauty are but the guests of a few days. Let us enjoy them while we can.'

Now when Hir came back to her house after seeing Ranjha in the garden, her girl friends Raeban and Saifan saw her heightened colour and they said to her, 'Sister, what has befallen you that your forehead shines like a rose. Your

complexion is like the dawn on a golden oriole. When you set out you were as one dead and now your beauty is ravishingly alive. Your eyes gleam with happiness like the leaping water of a stream. Somebody has set the well of beauty in motion. Your breast is heaving under your red shirt. Somebody has kissed the lamp-black off your eyes. Somebody has been celebrating the high festival of Eid in the garden of Kalabagh. The hungry have been filled and fakir have fed to their heart's content. Pearls that Saida never touched have been polished by others today. Perhaps Ranjha has looted your garden of all its fruit.'

And Hir replied to her girl friends, 'Why are you teasing a poor girl like me? I have a touch of asthma and that is why the colour comes into my cheeks. I ran after a runaway calf and that is why the strings of my skirt are loose on both sides. My sides are red because I was lying face downwards looking over the top of my house. I was sucking at my lips and that is why the colour has come off them. I was looking down the path leading to my home and a calf came down the land and pressed me against the side of the house. That is why I have scratches on my body. I swear, nothing else has happened. Why do you tease me and say what is unseemly?'

The girls replied, 'Sister, the colour of your eyes is red like blood. Your beauty is like the flower in spring. The Kheras have been put to confusion today.'

The girls replied, Ho ho, today the Punjab has fallen into the hands of Kandaharis⁵. Someone has looted your beauty today.' Hir replied, 'Sisters, why do you tease me with your taunts? I was knocked over by a buffalo in the way and he tore off all my bangles and earrings, he chased me with loud roars. I was going to run away in fright just as girls run away when they see their intended husbands.⁶ Thanks to my good fortune I met a fakir who took me safely back to the village.'

And the girls replied, 'Sister, this bull has been pursuing you for a very long time. It is curious he tramples on nobody's fields but yours, and only steals your grapes. This bull has come from Hazara and is at the present moment lying distraught in the garden crying, "HIR, HIR."'

And Hir said, Sisters, I am not happy among the Kheras and God and the Prophet are my witnesses.'

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1 The Second Coming of Christ on earth to reform a sinful world is part of Muslim legend.

2 W'atna is a special preparation rubbed on the skin to cleanse it. It is generally used by brides at their wedding. 'Dandasa' is, or used to be, the equivalent of lipstick in the rural Punjab. It is made from the bark of certain trees which, when rubbed on the teeth and lips, gives them a gentle red colour.

3 Jewels on Hir's forehead could either belong to a 'tikka', a 'jhoomar' or a 'tawitari'. Another ornament, the 'donee' is worn a little further back on the head across the parting of the hair.

4 Lamp-black is a reference to the antimony that Hir put on her eyes.

5 This is probably a reference to the invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali, whose capital was Kandahar. See Chapter 4, note 8.

6 While boys and girls in the rural Punjab move about freely to do their daily work and can see or talk to each other, it is not usual for them to do so if they are betrothed to be married. After the 'mangni' or betrothal, a girl does not see her fiancé until marriage

CHAPTER 28

Sehti and Hir plan a stratagem

And Sehti and Hir consulted together how Hir might leave the Kheras amid be united to Ranjha. Sehti invented a cunning stratagem. She forsook all the tradition of the Faith. She consulted the book of the curses of God, and deceits in the volume of Satan.¹

Sehti went to her mother and spoke to her about Hir, saying, 'Mother, Hir is not well. She is becoming thinner every day. She lies on her couch all day and looks miserable. She will not touch her spinning wheel or her wool basket. She neither eats nor drinks and her body withers away with grief. As elephants² are the pride of armies and cows and buffaloes are the pride of the farmyard, so sons wives are the pride of the house. But this bride whom we purchased⁵ with so much difficulty is the beginning of our misfortune. She takes fire when she sees Saida, her lawful husband; and he runs away from

her as from an evil spirit. We never see her happy or laughing. We have consulted Mullahs and physicians and hakims and they cost much money. Let us conquer the obstinacy of this wilful bride. Saida should chide her and beat her and we will not interfere.'

And Hir came before her mother-in-law like Umar the trickster and wove a cunning web of deceit saying, 'Mother, I am weary of staying indoors. May I go into the fields with Sehti? Let me see green gardens. My heart is weary sitting in the house.'

And her mother-in-law was silent and pondered the matter in her heart. And Sehti broke in saying, 'Sister, come into the helds with me. Mother, she is wasting away because she never leaves her house; we are spoiling the health of this rose-bud bride by keeping her indoors.'

And Sehti's mother replied, lilt may go and walk about and may be she will recover her health and strength. At present she lies day and night like a sick woman. Let Hir rid care from her mind and laugh with her lips, and let the bud of my hope blossom again.' She can go with you if she wishes and you may take her into the fields where she may enjoy the company of her girl friends. But remember, Hir, be prudent, and when you leave this house do not do what is unbecoming to a bride. Take God and the Prophet to witness.

Having thus obtained her mother's permission, Sehti assembled her girl friends together. 'Friends,' said Sehti, you must all get imp early, before daybreak, without telling your parents beforehand. To please the bride Hir, she is to be taken into the garden and she will also pick cotton in the fields.'

The girls sat up half the night weaving their plans. They were as beautiful as princess, and as wicked as the grandmother of Satan! They challenged each other to wrestle the next morning on the ~ll. There was Kammoo the sadler's wife, Samini the baker's wife, Bakhtawar the wife of the blackmith, Tajo the wife of the watchman, and the wife of the baiter; there was Nando the water carrier's wife and Daulati the girl with seven brothers, and many others. It was agreed that they should all go to the fields in the early morning.

So in the morning they all assembled together. Not a girl remained in the village. It was as if the Turks had drawn up their armies to invade Hindustan.⁷ There was Amir Khatun, Salaniati, Bholan and Imam Khatun Gujari, Rahtnate, Daulton and Bhagi the minstrel's wife, and Miran the singing girl, and Ghani

Raur, the beautiful Jatti with Miinan her pretty friend. There was Sukhdev, and Mingtim and Sahiba, and Jhando, the wicked girl, who teased her friends, and Hir with her dark painted eyes, and Darshani and Datopti from the hills with their 'Achna Gachna', and queer hill jargon. Then, was Nur Begum from Khandahar who spoke Persian, and Kammoo from Baghdad who spoke Arabic, and Nur Bibi and Thakur Bibi⁸ who sang ravishing songs.

They laughed and sang and played games together, and one of them tonic a sharp thorn from an acacia bush and pricked Hir's foot Sehti bit it with her teeth and caused blood to flow, and they pretended Hir had been bitten by a snake. And he wept and cried and roiled on the ground saying, 'I am dying, call somebody to cure me.' Her face grew yellow and her eyes became pale, she clenched her teeth and fainted.

And Sehti raised a cry, 'The bride has been bitten by a black snake.' So the girls put her on a bed and brought her home and all the people of the village left their work and gathered together to see her. Never was such a crafty swindle found in any book. They shaved the very beard of Plato.⁹ Satan came and salaamed and said, 'I have been outmatched by these girls.'

The people of the village when they saw Ilk said, 'A venomous snake has bitten her. Her breath comes quickly, the poison has run into every vein of her body. Some said, 'Give her butter and milk,' others said, 'Search out an enchanter who knows powerful spells.'

And the Kheras brought hundreds of fakirs and hakims and enchanters and they gave her cunning drugs. They brought Tiriak¹⁰ for snakes from Hazara and amulets and incense. They supplied milk of AK to the wound, powdered metals and curds of milk which no woman or man had ever cast eyes upon. They spent bags of money trying to cure the bride.

And Hir's mother-in-law beat her breast and said, 'These cures do no good. Hir is going to die. Hir's fate will soon be accomplished.'

And Sehti said, 'This snake will not be subdued by ordinary spells. There is a very cunning Jogi in the Kalabagh garden in whose flute there are thousands of spells. Cobras and Krites bow down before him and hooded snakes and crested snakes stand in awe of him. All evil spirits and Jinns" fly away at his word.'

So Aju said to Saida, 'Son, brides are precious things. Go to the fakir and salaam him with folded hands.'

So Saida got ready his shoes and girt up his loins and took a stick in his hand and walked rapidly to the garden where the Jogi was. He was as yellow as a straw from anxiety about Hir. And he caught the feet of the Jogi and implored him saying, My wife went into a cotton field to pick cotton and a black snake bit her. She is writhing with pain day and night." We have tried all the physicians and enchanters but to no purpose. Sehti has told us of you and the whole family has sent me to call you.'

When the Jogi heard Saida's voice his heart leapt within him and he suspected that Sehti and Hir had invented some cunning stratagem. And the Jogi spoke to Saida and said, 'Who can avoid destiny? Snakes bite according to the decree of destiny. Holy men who live like hermits in the jungle have no concern with the affairs of this world and shrink from the company of women. The snakes of Jhang Sial obey no one's enchantment. What if the Jatti die? Then the fakir will be happy. Fakirs should not go near women. Why should we treat your Jatti? We have ruined our own family. Why should we concern ourselves with yours, you whore's son?'

And Saida fell at his feet and implored him to come and heal Hir, saying, 'She wept when she got mit of the marriage palanquin. She would have nothing to say to me or to any of my family. If I touch her she raises a cry. I cannot come near her bed as she shrinks from me in fear. She is always weeping.'

Whereupon the Jogi drew a square on the ground and thrust a knife therein and said, 'Sit down Jat, and swear on the Quran that you have never touched Hir.'

He put the knife to his throat and made him swear and Saida swore saying, 'May I be a leper if I ever touched Hir.'

Then suddenly the Jogi blazed with anger and roared at Saida, 'You have come into my holy hut with your shoes on. You have profaned this holy place.' And he thrust him out and beat him even as cattle are thrust out of the cattle-pen.

He dealt so severely with Saida that he was covered with blood² and Saida ran to his house weeping and told his story to his father, 'He is not a Jogi but a robber and a dacoit.'

And Ajjū was wroth and said 'As he has treated my son so will I treat him. I will have speedy vengeance upon him.' Thereupon Sehti said, 'Father, you should go yourself to the Jogi. Perhaps Saida stood with pride before him and not with proper humility.'

Notes

1 The book of the curses of God, and the volume of Satan are only metaphors. There are no such books.

2 Elephants have also been the ruin of armies, as for instance, in the three battles of Panipat, or the battles between Alexander and Porus, and Mahmud of Ghazna and Anand al. Indeed, a number of decisive battles in Indian history are battles between the horse and the elephant, a fast-moving, quick manoeuvring mobile force defeating a slow and stationary opponent

3 'Purchase' here is only a strong expression used by Sehti to lend emphasis to her point, and is not to be taken literally.

4 Umar was a famous trickster mentioned in the stories of Faizi, brother of Abu'l Fazl, a Minister of the Emperor Akbar (Usborne's note) Umar Ayyar, with his famous Zambeel is a popular character in the 'Dastan-i-Amir Hatnza or the story of the legendary exploits of Amir Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet. The 'Zambeel' or bag of Umar Ayyar is credited by legend with a capacity for holding innumerable articles of innumerable sorts and sizes without any limit whatsoever.

5 A fond and touching wish of a mother-in-law who wants to see her son happy.

6 If Satan ever had a grandmother!

7 This may be a reference to the original conquest of the subcontinent by Turks like Mahmud of Ghazna and his successors, or possibly to their cousins the Mongols under Genghis Khan and Timur.

8 These are a mixture of Hindu and Muslim names. It is not unlikely that one or more of these girls spoke Persian, as Muslim women were taught the Persian classics like Sadi's *Gulistan* in pre-British days, when the old educational system was still in force. A village girl speaking Arabic would, however, be an unusual phenomenon.

9 Punjabi idiom, Plato and 'Luqman' (Aesop) represent the height of wisdom.

10 Tiriak — Tiryak or antidote.

11 Jinns — Genie.

12 It must be presumed to have been an imaginary snake with very slow poison.

13 Strange proceedings on the part of a faqir even though a fake one, although quite understandable from a jealous rival, faqir or no faqir.

CHAPTER 29

Ranjha is called in to cure Hir's snake bite

So Ajjū said, 'I will go if all of you wish it.' So Ajjū went and stood before the Jogi with folded hands and besought him to come and cure Hir. And the Jogi at last consented, and as he went to the house of Ajjū a partridge sang on the right for good luck. Thus the Kheras themselves worked their own destruction and shaved their own beards. The wolf had been called in to guard the flock. Ajjū thought himself a great man as he had brought the fakir.

'Sister,' said the women, 'let us rejoice that Hir's life has been saved. The physician she longed for has now come. All the pain and trouble has gone. The perfect Saint has come, even he that deserted his home and became a cowherd and then a Jogi. The man whose name was abhorred by the Kheras has been brought by Hir's own father-in-law.'

Meanwhile, Sehti took charge of the Jogi and lodged him in the hut belonging to the village minstrel. And he gave his orders that bread must be cooked for the holy man. 'No man or woman must come near or cast their shadow on it. A separate place must be prepared and Hir's couch placed on it. I will burn incense at night. I will read enchantments over her. None must be allowed to come near her as the snake is a powerful¹ one and his bite is difficult to cure. Only Sehti may come; only a virgin girl must be allowed to cross the threshold.' And the Kheras did as the Jogi bade them and put Hir in the cottage with the Jogi, and Sehti was with them.

But Ranjha's heart was heavy within him as he sat in the hut and at midnight he remembered the Five Pirs. He kissed the handkerchief of Shakarganj and took the ring of Lal Shahbaz; he smelt the sweet savour that came from the cudgel of Sayyad Jalal of Bokhara, -and he grasped the dagger given him by Makhdum Jabnian. And Ranjha prayed, 'May the Five Pirs bless my enterprise and make the way easy. And Pit Bahauddin shook the earth, and the way was opened unto Ranjha, and a voice spoke, 'Jat, arise, go on your way. Why are you sleeping? The way has been opened for you.'

And Ranjha went outside the house and made ready to depart, and Sehti came to him and salaamed to him saying, 'For the love of God, take my poor boat ashore. I have set all the plans of the Kheras at naught and tarnished the reputation of the whole family. For the sake of your love, I have given Hir into your hand. Now give me my over Murad. This is the only request I have to make to you. And Ranjha lifted his hands and prayed to God, 'Oh God restore this Jatti's lover to her. She has brought to accomplishment my desire. She has brought about the union of lovers and for the sake of love has become of ill fame throughout all the world.'

And the Five Pirs prayed, 'Oh God unite the girl to her lover.'

So God² showed his kindness and Murad, her lover stood before her. And Murad spoke and said, 'Girl, make haste and see this fairy-like camel.' And the camel of Murad grunted as her master spoke. And Murad said, 'Some spell or enchantment fell on me, someone caught the nose string of my camel and brought me to your door. I was riding in the long line of camels half asleep. Then a voice from heaven came into my ear; my camel heard it and grunted. She sped as quick as an arrow or a storm wind. My string of camels has been lost. You have exercised some sorcery over me. My camel is the grand-daughter of the best camel in the world. Come up, my bride, and mount on my camel. Is not her month soft? Her back is as firm as a mountain. She has been moulded by angels.'

So Murad took Sehti on his camel and Ranjha took Hir. Thus the bridegrooms set forth with their brides.

Notes

1 The snake could hardly have been a powerful one; a powerful snake would have killed her long before.

2 Waris Shah is so intent upon bringing about a union of true lovers that he does not hesitate even to invoke the Almighty's own interference in their favour. Inwardly, he must have wished for some such miracle for himself and Bhag Bhari as well, but it does not seem to have happened.

3 An Arab poet seems to have arranged it differently

I love her, and she loves me,

And her she-camel loves my he-camel. (Al Hamasah)

The idea, of course, is that the she-camel will perforce bring the sweetheart to the poet, because she wants to meet her camel lover.

4 Every good camelman thinks so even if he does not say it.

CHAPTER 30

The discovery of Hir's escape with Ranjha

The next morning the ploughmen yoked their oxen and went forth to plough, and so, the house of the sick bride was empty. They looked inside and outside and they woke up the watchman who was asleep near the door. There was a great stir in the town and everybody said, 'Those wicked girls Hir and Sehti have brought disgrace on the whole village. They have cut off our nose¹ and we shall be defamed through the whole world.'

So the Kheras drew up their arms on hearing the news. The soldiers took spears and daggers and set out to pursue them. The people said to Ajjū, 'Your house has been ruined today. The stain will not be washed away for many generations.' And the women beat their sides and wept. Now the armies of the Kheras succeeded in overtaking Murad. But the Balcoches drew up their forces and drove back the Kheras. They rushed on them with spears and arrows and routed them, even as Alexander muted Darius.

Now there was a man-eating lion in the jungle through which Hir and Ranjha had to pass. He smelt them and came towards them with a roar. And Hir said, 'Ranjha, the lion is coming, remember the Pirs for God's sake.'

And Ranjha remembered the Five Pirs and they came in the twinkling of an eye. They said, 'Go to, my son, and you will be victorious. Abandon all pride and beseech the lion with entreaty. And if he will not listen to your entreaty, slay him.'

And Ranjha said, Gallant lion, I beseech you by Pir and fakir, do not kill us who are helpless. In the name of Hazrat Pir Dastgir² I beseech you go away.

And the lion replied, 'Ranjha listen to me. For the last seven days, I have not had food. I have been much troubled by hunger and thirst. Now God has sent me a victim.' The lion roared, 'I will eat both of you.' And he leapt towards Ranjha.

And Ranjha said to Hir, 'You stay here, beloved. I will go and kill the lion and will then come back to you.'

The lion ground his teeth on hearing the words of Ranjha. And he said, 'What does this mortal say? And he made another spring at Ranjha. Then Ranjha took the cudgel of Jahanian and thrust it into the side of the lion and he drove the dagger of Sayyid Jalal Bokhari into his belly. And then Ranjha skinned the lion and put his nails and flesh in his wallet. And they set forth and came into the country of Raja Adali, and slumber overcame Ranjha, and despite the warnings of Hir he fell asleep. And sleep overcame Hir also.

Destiny overwhelmed both the lovers. For the Kheras came in pursuit and found Ranjha asleep, his head resting on Hir. They took Hir away and beat Ranjha unmercifully with whips until his body was swollen.

And he advised Ranjha to seek for justice from Raja Adali. And Ranjha cried out aloud,³ and the Raja heard it and said, 'What is this noise?' And the Raja's servants said, 'A Jogi has come asking for justice.'

Notes

1 That is, disgraced us. The physical cuffing of the nose is not involved here, although in certain other cases it could happen. An unfaithful wife, for example, was supposed to have her nose cut to prevent her from attracting any more paramours. It is also said of a blunt knife that it is not good enough to cut the nose of a recalcitrant wife.

2 Hazrat Pir Dastgir — 'The Lord of Pirs' notes Usborne. The name, which means 'the Saint with the helping hand' is popularly given to Syed Abdul Qadir Gilani, the founder of the Qadiriyya Sect of the Sufis whose shrine in Baghdad is famous all over the Muslim world, See Invocation, note 2.

3 Rulers in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent in the old days were proverbially easy of access to seekers of justice. The Emperor Jehangir, and before him Sultan Ferozeshah Tughlaq, is famous for his 'chain of justice which was connected with the imperial bedroom and could be pulled at any time of night or day by anyone who wanted to appeal to the Emperor in person for redress.

CHAPTER 31

Ranjha and Hir before the Raja

RANJHA came before the Raja and his body was sore with the blows of the Kheras' whips and he said, 'May you and your kingdom live long. The fame of your justice¹ has spread even to Turkey and Syria. I have been beaten in your kingdom and have committed no fault.'

So the Raja issued orders to his armies and they overtook the Kheras and brought them before the Darbar of the Raja.

And Ranjha said, 'I am a poor fakir and these dacoits and robbers have taken away my wife from me.'

And the Kheras replied, 'This thug² of the Manjha³ is very clever; he knows all kinds of powerful enchantments. One day our daughter-in-law was bitten by a snake, and Sehti told us there was a Jogi in the garden of Kalabagh who was cunning in spells and could cure her; and oh Raja, this saint and fakir of God decamped with both of the women one night. He is a thief and should be killed.' You should not be deceived by his rosaries and beads. He is a cunning rogue and clever in disguises.'

And Ranjha said, 'They saw she was beautiful and they took her away. Hir is mine and I am Hir's. The Five Pir gave us in marriage. I have been dealt with in a tyrannous fashion and ask for justice.'

And the Raja was angry with the Kheras and said, 'You have committed a great sin in troubling this holy fair. I will cut your nose and ears off and hang you if the Qazi⁵ says you are liars. I will crucify you on the stake.'

So they came before the Qazi, and the Qazi said, 'Let each side make a statement on oath and I will administer the justice of Umer Khattab.'⁶

So the Kheras spoke saying, 'Hit was the daughter of Chuchak the Sial. Many were the suitors for her hand, but her father betrothed her to the son of Aju. We took a marriage procession and brought back our bride and spent much money. Thousands of people, Hindus and Mohammadans, were present at the marriage ceremony. The proper rites were performed. The Mullah read the

Quran and witnesses were present. The whole countryside knows she was given to us in marriage. 'This swindler took her away as Ravan ran away with Sita.⁷ He came when there was a great famine and grain was very dear. He grazed Chuchak's buffaloes and then claimed the hand of his daughter. His horn and beggar's bowl are all lies. He is a swindler who can bring down the very stalls with spells.'

Then the Qazi turned to Ranjha and said, 'Fakir, have you got any witnesses? Without witnesses to the marriage she can be no wife.'

And Ranjha replied, 'Listen to my words, you who know the law and the principles of religion. On the day our souls said yes, I was betrothed to Hir. In the Tablet of Destiny, God has written the union of our souls⁸ What need have we of earthly love when our souls have attained the Divine Love?'

The Qazi replied, 'Speak the truth, and have done with these falsehoods. You have brought shame on the Sials and the Kheras. Give up your evil ways or you will taste my whip.'⁹

And Ranjha replied, 'See what harm these Qazis do in the world. They preach the doctrine of the wicked and live on stolen property. If you sympathise so much with the Kheras, Qazi, give them your own daughter.'

And the Qazi was angered and snatched Hir from Ranjha and gave her to the Kheras saying, 'This fakir is a swindler and a pious fraud. Whereat Hir was sore perplexed and her countenance became pale and lifeless.'

And Ranjha said, 'Go away. Separation is worse than death. These dacoits have looted me. What do people know of the pain I suffer? I am a poor fakir and have no money to give to the officers in whose hands the decision lies. He has Hir and I have the pain'

And Hir sighed with grief and said, 'O God, see how we are consumed as with fire. Fire is before us and snakes and tigers behind us and our power is of no avail. O Master, either unite me with Ranjha or slay both of us. The people of this country have exercised tyranny against us. O God, consume this city with fire. Let your wrath fall on this city even as it fell on Pharaoh whom you drowned, even as it fell on Solomon and caused him to be dethroned.'

Thus did Hir invoke curses on the city. And Ranjha lifted up his hands likewise and invoked curses on the city saying, 'O God all powerful and

mighty give these tyrants their reward at once. Put the city to fire. Burn the whole city, save only the herds and the cattle.'

See the power of God. Owing to the sighs of the lovers, the city caught fire. Fire broke out in all four quarters of the city. It destroyed houses both small and great. The news spread all over the country. Then the Raja said, 'What act of oppression has been done?'

So the astrologers cast their lots and said to the Raja, 'The sins of your officials are free from sin. But God has listened to the sighs of the lovers. Hence this misfortune has overwhelmed us. Fire has descended from Heaven and it has burnt the palaces, forts and ditches of the city. If you will call up and conciliate the lovers, perhaps God will forgive all those who have sinned.'

So the Raja sent out his soldiers, and they caught the Kheras and brought them into his presence. And the Raja took Hir from the Kheras saying, 'I will hang you all!¹⁰ Hir the Jatti belongs to Ranjha. Why do you oppress strangers?'

And the Kheras went away disappointed.

So Ranjha and Hir stood before the Raja, and he said to them, 'God's curse on those who tell lies. I will kill those who oppress the poor. I will cut off the nose of those who take bribes. You may go to your rightful husband. Grasp the skirts of his clothing and the arm of him that belongs by right to you and see that you never desert the true faith.'

Notes

1 The word 'Adali', which seems to be a nickname, is presumably derived from Adl, meaning justice. Adali, or Adil, would mean just. It is difficult to identify this Raja, who has probably been invented by the poet for the purpose of the story.

2 Thug – robber. The thugs used to strangle their victims before robbing them out of regard for their feelings, it is said. Thuggi was one of the evils combated by Lord William Bentinck who was Governor-General of India under the East India Company for some time in the first half of the nineteenth century. For further details see Meadows Taylor's *History of the Thugs*.

3 'Manjha' is the area covered by the greater part of the Lahore, Amritsar and Ferozepur Districts of the old Punjab, now divided between India and Pakistan.

4 Death for theft sounds draconic, but the punishment may have been administered when the offence became frequent or pronounced.

5 Qazi — It is very considerate of the Raja, obviously a Hindu to entrust matters pertaining to Muslims to a Qazi, a Muslim Judge. Such examples are not wanting in actual fact.

6 Umar Khattab, the Second Caliph of Islam. His correct name is Umar Ibn al Khattab, that is, Umar son of Khattab. He was famous for his passion for justice and his genius for administration.

7 This reference to the Ravan-Sita episode, which is the subject of the 'Ramayana, is intended to curry favour with the Raja, who is a Hindu.

8 A marriage made in heaven. It is a pity such unions are not always recognised on earth!

9 The Qazi is much milder than his Raja who had threatened to crucify the whole lot!

10 The Raja's bark is certainly worse than his bite.

CHAPTER 32

The poisoning of Hir and the death of Ranjha

Thus God showed His mercy and the Raja caused the two lovers to meet again. And Ranjha called down blessings on the Raja saying, God be praised and may weal and wealth come to your kingdom. May all troubles flee away and may you rule over horses, camels, elephants, batteries, Hindustan' and Sind.'

So Ranjha set off towards his home taking Hir with him and he said to her, 'Girl, you have been bestowed by God and the Five Pirs on me.'

And Hir replied, If I enter the country like this, people will say I an' a runaway woman, and that you have been the ruin of the houses of fathers and fathers-in-law. Of what avail will such a victory be? The women will say I have not been properly married. My aunts will taunt me and ask inc why I have come back in this way.'

And after they had gone some distance on their way he said, 'This is the valley where we met. This is where we beat Kaidu, bound him with ropes and dragged him along the ground. This is where we used to talk together and this is where destiny overcame us. When the marriage procession of the Kheras came up it was as if the Rood of Noah had overwhelmed us.'

Now the shepherds were grazing their buffaloes in the jungle and they espied Hir and Ranjha and when they drew close, they recognised them, and the shepherds said to Ranjha, 'Who has bored your ears?'

And they went and told the Sials, 'Behold the shepherd has brought the girl Hir back. He has shaved the beard of the Kheras without water'²

And the Sials said, Do not let them go away. Bring Hir to her aunts and tell Ranjha to bring a marriage procession in order to wed Hir.' And they brought Hir and Ranjha to the Sials.

Now at the same time a barber came up on an embassy from the Kheras to demand back Hir, and the Sials said to the barber, 'You must make some good excuse to the Kheras for us and give this message and say, "We gave you Hir in marriage. Alas that she was dead to us. You never showed us the face of our daughter afterwards. She and you are both dead to us. Why are you now asking us about her? From of old time you were mean. You are publishing your own disgrace by making these inquiries. The army of the enemy has looted you. Why are you now beating your drums? The conquerors have already divided the spoils of victory. You have ruined our daughter. We will take in exchange a girl from you by way of satisfaction.'" And they sent back the barber with taunts saying, 'Do not come again on an embassy to us.

Then the brotherhood brought Hir and Ranjha to their home and laid a rich couch for them to sit on and all the family was happy. They took the Jogi's rings out of his ears. They shaved him and put a rich turban on his head, they gave him a silk shirt and sat him on the throne,⁵ even as Joseph was placed on the throne after having been brought out of the pit⁶ They ensnared the heart of Ranjha with their cunning, for they were communing in their heart how they might kill Hir. Kaidu was for ever plotting evil against them. Thus they became responsible for the murder and they themselves caused the blot on their own fame.

Meanwhile, Ranjha at the suggestion of the Sials had gone to his home, and he told his brethren to prepare a marriage procession so that he might go and marry Hit. Many baskets of fruit and sweets were put on the heads of the barbers. They prepared bands of minstrels and fireworks, and Ranjha's brothers' wives danced with happiness and sang songs. Ah, put not your trust in life. Man is even as a goat in the hands of the butcher.

Meanwhile, somebody whispered into Hir's ears that her parents were going to send her back to the Kheras and that they had already sent a message to have her fetched away. And Kaidu chided Hir saying, 'If the Kheras come there will be trouble, many quarrels and much disturbance. The witnesses of the marriage will come and they will confound your made-up tales.'

And Kaidu and the Sials held counsel together, and Kaidu said 'Brethren of the Sials, such things have never before been said of our tribe as will be said now. For men will say, "Go and look at the faithfulness of these Sials. They marry their daughters to one man and then contemplate giving her in marriage to another."'

And the brethren made the answer, 'Brother, you are right. Our honour and your honour are one. All over the world we are taunted with the story of Hir. We shall lose fame and gain great disgrace if we send the girl off with the shepherd. Let us poison Hir, even if we become sinful in the sight of God. Does not Hir always remain sickly and in poor health?'

So Kaidu in his evil cunning came and sat down beside Hir and said, 'My daughter, you must be brave and patient.'

Hir replied, 'Uncle, what need have I of patience?'

And Kaidu replied, 'Ranjha has been killed. Death with a glittering sword has overtaken him.' And hearing Kaidu's words Hir sighed deeply and fainted away. And the Sials gave her sherbet and mixed poison with it and thus brought ruin and disgrace on their name. The parents of Hir killed her. This was the doing of God.' When the fever of death was upon her, she cried out for Ranjha saying, 'Bring Ranjha here that I may see him once again.'

And Kaidu said, 'Ranjha has been killed, keep quiet or it will go ill with you.'

So Hir breathed her last crying, 'Ranjha, Ranjha.'

And they buried her and sent a message to Ranjha saying, 'The hour of destiny has arrived. We had hoped otherwise but no one can escape the destiny of death. Even as it is written in the Holy Quran, "Everything is mortal save only God."'

And they sent a messenger with the letter and he left Jhang and arrived at Hazara, and he entered the house of Ranjha and wept as he handed the letter.

Ranjha asked him, 'Why this dejected air? Why are you sobbing? Is my beloved ill? Is my property safe?'

And the messenger sighed and said, 'That dacoit death from whom no one can escape has looted your property. Hir has been dead for the last eight watches. They baffled her body and buried her yesterday and as soon as they began the last funeral rites, they sent me to give you the news.'

On hearing these words Ranjha heaved a sigh and the breath of life forsook him.

Thus both lovers passed away from this mortal world and entered into the halls of eternity. Both remained firm in love and passed away steadfast in true love.

Death comes to all. Even Noah the father of many children, the master of the storm, the king of religion and the world, died at the last of a good old age and was buried.

The world is but a play and fields and forests all will melt away in the final day of dissolution. Only the poet's poetry remains an everlasting remembrance, for no one has written such a beautiful Hir.

Notes

1 The Arab historians speak of Hind and Sind separately. Sind, in their description, is bounded by Multan, Jaisalmer and Gujrat and Hind, or Hindustan, begins where Sind ends. The Arabic title of the famous *Chach Nameh* one of the earliest histories of Sind, is *The History of Hind and Sind* (Tarikh-ul-Hind was Sind).

2 The use of soap for shaving is a much later invention in the Punjab. Even now, shaving with water without soap is common with village barbers. Here, 'shaving without water is intended to express ridicule, as barbers, even in the Punjab, do not shave beards without water. Indeed, they may even use soap -

3 See Introduction, note 25.

4 He must have looked unkempt and they wanted to make him look his handsome self.

5 Throne' here probably refers to the 'pearha', an article of furniture common in Punjabi homes.

6 Prison.

7 Shakespeare

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods

They kill us for their sport.

Tribal pride was apparently more powerful than the laws of God. This is a frequent phenomenon.

9 This is a highly deterministic view of human action

10 Quran, Chapter 27, Sura Ar-Rahman verses 26 and 27.

11 The word property' is used here in the sense of something held dear. Ranjha is not trying to speak of women as chattels.

EPILOGUE

Poets and sinners offer counsel in the world. The counsel of the wise is held of no account. No one speaks the truth. Lying has become the custom of the world. With gangs of ruffians men commit iniquity. Tyrants have sharp swords in their hands. There is no Governor, Ruler or Emperor.

The country and the people have all been reduced to rump. There is great disturbance throughout the country. Everybody carries a sword in his hand. The curtain of all modesty has been lifted. People commit deeds of shame in the open bazaar. Thieves have become headmen and harlots have become mistresses of the household. Bards of devils have multiplied exceedingly all over the land. The nobles have fallen in their estate. Men of menial rank flourish. The peasantry are waxen fat.¹

The Jats have become rulers in the country. Everybody has become lord of his own castle. When love came to me I felt a desire to write this story in verse. I wrote it in the year 1180 Hijri in the southern country.²

When I produced the tale among learned men it became known to the world. Waris, those who have recited the Holy Kalima have attained salvation. Kharal Hans is a well known place. Here I composed this story. Poets, you should determine the worth of any poem. I have let my horse loose in the arena. Other poets have wasted their efforts in writing on petty themes.³ I have composed a grand poem.'

Oh wise man, you should note that there is a secret under the guise of my words. I have written this Hir with care and meditation. Young people read it with pleasure. I have planted a flower to give a sweet savour. Thank God my purpose is achieved. I have worked at it anxiously day and night. I have no capital of good works. Of what can I be proud? I have no hope without Thy grace. I am only a poor sinner. Without the favour of the Prophet I am helpless. I am ashamed of my unworthiness. The sinner trembles at the thought of the last trumpet even as the faithful air afraid for the faith and as pilgrims long for the sight of the Kaaba, even as the General thinks that the state of his army and his servants are afraid of their pay being cut for neglect of duty.

Of all the wretched Punjab I am most concerned for Kasur. I am concerned for my faith and conscience even as Moses was frightened on Holy Sinai. Ghazis

will get Pan-disc and martyrs claim their houris. The world is outwardly fair but inwardly it is bad even as the sound of a drum is beautiful from afar. O God, grant true faith and dignity and honour. Our hope is only in God the Bountiful. Waris Shah, I have no capital of good works. O Cod! Grant me Thy presence.

Waris Shah lives at Jandiala and is the pupil of the Saint of Kasur⁵ Having finished the story I presented it to my master for his acceptance. He elevates whom lie will and throws down whom He will.⁶ God alone is great. All excellences and dignity art in God alone. I am helpless.

With the aid of Shakarganj⁷ I have conferred this benefit on the world. Waris Shah, your name will be famous, if God be kind. O Lord, accept my humility. Dispel all my infirmities. Waris Shah has shed the light of his genius over all the faithful in the world. O God, this is always my prayer that I may lean always on Thy support. Let me depart from this world in peace and give me Thy grace in the end. Keep me in Thy Love and take the load of trouble off my shoulders.

May he who reads or copies my poor efforts derive pleasure. May the Prophet be your intercessor and watch over you, past, present and future. O Almighty God, overlook the fault of poor Waris Shah. By the Grace of God I have fulfilled the request of my dear friends. The story of true lovers is like the scent of a rose in a garden. He who reads it with love in his heart will be able to separate the true from the false.

I have written a poem of much pith even as a string of royal pearls. I have written it at length and embellished it with various beautiful things. I have written it as a parable. It is as beautiful as a necklace of rubies. He who reads it will be much pleased and the people will praise it.

Waris Shah is anxious to see God's face even as Hir longed for her lover. I make my request before the Holy Court of Cod, who is the Lord of Mercy. If I have let fall a word in ignorance may God forgive me. Without Thy justice I have no shelter. My safety depends on Thy Grace. May my anxieties about my faith and the world vanish. This is my only prayer. May God pardon him who copies these words and give his bounty to those who recite it. May its readers enjoy the book. O God, preserve the honour of all men. Let every man depart from this world with his short-comings hidden from the public. God,

give all the faithful faith, conscience and a sight of Thy presence in the Day of Judgement.⁵

Notes

1 The latter half of the eighteenth century, to which Waris Shah is referring here, marked the decline of the Mughal Empire in India, and was a period of great confusion and disturbance. Waris Shah's description of the conditions of his day is probably not exaggerated.

2 Southern country — Usborne's note says: Lammnan Des is the present Montgomery district of the Punjab. It was the year 120 of the Bikramajit era. (These two dates do not exactly correspond, but the poem was written in AD. 1766.)

3 Petty themes — literally, ground in a hand mill. (Usborne.)

4 Grand poem — literally, ground my grain in a bullock-driven mill. (Usborne.)

5 Saint of Kasur - Mamdum Mafia Ghulamn Murtaza of Kasur. See Introduction, note 4.

6 This refers to God and not to Waris Shah's teacher. It is a verse from the Quran.

7 Shakarganj is the saint of Pakpattan. See notes on Introduction.

8 This interesting but somewhat rambling epilogue is translated at full length without any attempt at excision or condensation. The rest of the poem has been considerably condensed but noting important has been omitted. — C. F. Usborne