

EMOTION IN PAKISTANI PUNJABI FOLK MUSIC: TALIB HUSSAIN DARD AS A SELLER OF GRIEF (1980–2019)

MUHAMMAD AFAQ ISHRAT*

ABSTRACT

This research delves into the profound, historically situated connection between music and emotions, focusing specifically on the role of Pakistani Punjabi folk music—and the genre of *Jog* in particular—in the evocation and expression of grief within the cultural landscape of the Sandal Bar region. The study employs the framework of the History of Emotions to investigate how emotional styles are transmitted through musical performance and how folk artists shape collective cultural narratives by connecting individuals to the affective dimensions of their regional identity. Music is analyzed as an "emotive" language, capable of creating powerful emotional resonance, particularly through the deliberate cultivation of negative emotions such as sadness and grief. The pivotal figure of Talib Hussain Dard (1955–2017) is critically examined; through his unique revival and masterful performance of *Rag Jog* in the Jhangochi dialect, Dard effectively became recognized as "The Seller of Grief" across the region from 1980 to 2019. This paper maps the historical origin and structure of Punjabi folk genres like *Dhola*, *Mahiya*, and *Tappa*, detailing how their poetic expressions serve as carriers for conveying human suffering and the collective pain stemming from societal, feudal, and personal struggles. Ultimately, this work contributes to the burgeoning field of emotion history by providing a micro-historical analysis of a performance tradition, evaluating the processes of catharsis and the balance between negative and positive emotional responses achieved by Dard's musical legacy among his predominantly rural audience.

KEYWORDS: Talib Hussain Dard, Grief, Emotions, Music, Regional language, Jog

* Independent Scholar. Email: afagrajoka240@gmail.com

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This research paper centers on the intricate relationship between music as a performative art and the deeply rooted emotion of grief, examined through the specialized lens of Pakistani Punjabi folk music. The focus is specifically illuminated by the haunting melodies and evocative *Jog* genre perfected and popularized by the legendary folk artist, Talib Hussain Dard (1955–2017). Music, viewed as a "performative art," involves the intricate interplay of the artist, the audience, the mechanism of emotional evocation, and the measurable cultural impact upon listeners (Dorain 1942, 10-12). Across Pakistani Punjab, folk forms such as *Mahiya*, *Tappa*, *Dhola*, and *Kafian* have traditionally served as emotional conduits, capable of stirring a spectrum of feelings—from love and happiness to profound sadness and grief—among both urban and, more significantly, rural populations (Sarfraz 2010, 4-7). Dard's particular style of folk music garnered a dedicated audience originating predominantly from the rural Sandal Bar, whose lives resonated intimately with the themes of sorrow and existential pain woven into his performances. The study is founded on the principle that the historical record of a people's emotions is an essential, though often overlooked, dimension of their cultural and social history, and that folk art provides a direct reflection of this affective landscape (Stearns 2010, 17).

The History of Emotions represents a pivotal, emerging "revolution" within historical methodology, extending its analytical scope to encompass the cultural, social, political, and religious dimensions of human feeling across time and space (Stearns 2010, 22; Plamper 2014, 1-3). This field advocates for novel methodologies to preserve, express, and analyze the emotions

of past peoples, underscoring the critical need to explore the specific emotional dynamics embedded within performative arts like music, which remain largely unexamined in the context of Pakistani Punjab's cultural history. Scholars like Virender Kalra, John Corrigan, and Michael Spitzer have demonstrated the crucial role music plays in characterizing emotional experience and shaping collective sentiments (Kalra 2015, 3-5; Corrigan 2010, 15; Spitzer 2017, 40). For the people of Pakistani Punjab, particularly those in the agricultural belts, folk traditions have been the primary vehicle for this emotional portrayal, channeling collective narratives of joy, sorrow, and pain through musical forms. This research paper undertakes a concerted effort to fill the evident gap in historical literature by exquisitely expressing the emotions of the Punjabi populace through the reflexive cultural tradition of folk music, particularly the oeuvre of Talib Hussain Dard.

Talib Hussain Dard's central contribution was the reintroduction and peak popularization of *Jog*, a regional cultural tradition (*Ilaqai Ang*) that had largely faded over a century prior, transforming it into a powerful expression of collective grief for his generation. The *Jog* genre, likened by Dard's son to a "Sea of experiences," draws upon the lived realities of the common people, offering guidance and cathartic release from the constant flux of uncertainty, loss, and hardship that defines rural existence. This revival earned Talib Hussain Dard the honorific titles of "*Shahenshah-i-Jog*" or "*Baadshah-i-Jog*," and the simple addition of "*Dard*" (Pain/Grief) to his name by his resonating audience, cementing his identity as a musician intrinsically linked to the profound sorrow or *Soz* of his community. The core argument of this paper posits that

Dard's skillful command over Rag Jog, delivered exclusively in the local Jhangochi dialect, transformed him into a profound cultural figure—the undisputed "Seller of Grief"—whose musical legacy provided an indispensable emotional voice and therapeutic outlet for the marginalized working classes of the Sandal Bar (Zubairi 2014, 538). The investigation proceeds by examining the intersection of music theory, emotional history, and localized cultural practice to fully elucidate the enduring significance of Dard's work.

The foundation for this inquiry is established by engaging with established scholarship on the History of Emotions, cultural theory, and South Asian musicology, drawing substantially from the provided bibliography and textual references. Peter N. Stearns and Susan J. Matt have rigorously argued that emotions are inherently biocultural, possessing a definable history shaped profoundly by cultural constructs and societal norms, moving beyond simplistic universalist claims (Matt and Stearns 2013, 55). Stearns and Carol Zisowitz Stearns coined the term "emotionology" to describe a culture's discourse surrounding specific feelings—how they are valorized, marginalized, scientifically defined, or religiously encoded—insisting that historians must analyze how contemporary emotional expressions align or diverge from the dominant emotionological frameworks of a period (Stearns 2010, 25). This paper applies these concepts by positioning Punjabi folk music, specifically Dard's *Jog*, not merely as an expression of grief, but as a cultural component actively shaping the region's emotionology of loss for the rural working-class community. The music functions as a living document of how grief is collectively acknowledged and processed, making the

historical analysis of its reception a central methodological task for this research. The existing literature, while rich in general musicology, lacks a dedicated emotional history of this specific folk tradition, necessitating this inquiry.

Further methodological grounding comes from Barbara Rosenwein's concept of "Emotional Communities," which provides a framework for analyzing how groups share and express emotional codes within a specific social context (Rosenwein 2015, 10-15). Rosenwein demonstrated that emotions are dependent on language, cultural practices, and moral beliefs, suggesting that every culture implements certain restraints while favoring specific forms of emotional expressivity (Rosenwein 2001, 19). The Pakistani Punjabi community, particularly the village clusters associated with farming occupations (the focus of Dard's audience), can be clearly delineated as a distinctive emotional community, bound by shared feudal and economic anxieties. Their collective identity and cultural preservation are channeled through the emotive expression of shared grief and happiness during rituals and mystical performances, such as *Marsiyah* and *Sama* (Subhan 1937, 201). This study interprets Dard's folk art as a direct manifestation of this community's emotional language, providing an unmediated voice to their social and economic distress, which might otherwise be silenced or overlooked in formal historical texts, thereby affirming its value as a primary source for emotion history.

The connection between South Asian music and emotion is profoundly explored by scholars like Katherine Butler Schofield and Virender S. Kalra. Schofield, focusing on India's elite *raga*-based traditions during the

late Mughal era, emphasizes the Rasa theory, which centrally links musical structure to the power of stimulating and transforming emotions in the audience (Schofield 2014, 50). She highlights how emotions like longing (*ishq*), grief at loss (*firaq*), and ecstatic joy were central to the reception theory of *raga* performance, providing solace during periods of political upheaval (Schofield 2014, 100). This classical framework is instrumental for analyzing Dard's *Rag Jog*—a classical structure adapted to folk performance—and understanding how deep emotional transformation is culturally sanctioned through music. Kalra's work on "Sacred and Secular Music" offers a post-colonial approach, examining how the partition of India shaped the religious and cultural identities of the Indo-Pak Punjab region and influenced musical production (Kalra 2015, 12). Kalra's insights on how local musical genres reflect non-Western religious and linguistic identities are crucial for contextualizing Dard's choice to adhere rigidly to the Jhangochi dialect and the rural, localized themes, thereby prioritizing an emotional sacredness inherent to the local folk form over the secular, elite music patronized in urban centers.

Complementing these musicological insights, William M. Reddy's introduction of the term "emotive" is invaluable for textual analysis. Reddy defines an "emotive" as the language and politics of emotion, an emotional statement conveyed through a specific medium—an "emotional utterance" (Reddy 2001, 331). This concept is the methodological anchor for analyzing the impact of Talib Hussain Dard's folk songs, which are often spontaneous reflections of current events and social malaise. The music, in this context, is an *emotive* that

translates the profound, often complex, emotional statements of Punjabi poets—like Ghullam Muhammad Dard and Riaz Sial—into a public, collective experience of grief for the Sandal Bar populace. This transformation from private poetic sentiment to shared public emotion is the core mechanism by which Dard's music performs its therapeutic and social function. Furthermore, general literature on Punjabi folk songs by Maqsood Nasir Chowdhary and Dr. Sarfraz Hussain Qazi, which meticulously define the types, evolution, and cultural representation of the music, provides the necessary descriptive context. Their work establishes the initial connection between folk songs and emotional expression, setting the stage for this deeper historical and emotional-focused inquiry into the specific figure of Talib Hussain Dard (Qazi 2010, 7-10). The existing scholarly work on the folk history of Pakistani Punjab has adequately addressed narrative and cultural representation but has rarely focused on the *affective* life of the region through this performative medium.

The literature review demonstrates that while the tools (emotionology, emotional communities, emotive, Rasa theory) exist to analyze Dard's work, a dedicated historical application to the Punjabi *Jog* tradition is lacking. Previous studies on musical production in Punjab by Kalra (2015) have focused on broader sacred/secular divides, while regional history (Zubairi 2014) has acknowledged Dard's prominence but has not deeply analyzed his role as an agent of collective grief. Therefore, this research paper's distinct contribution is the synthesis of these theoretical frameworks with extensive primary source data to construct a micro-historical case study. The paper seeks to prove that Dard's strategic adherence to

the Jhangochi dialect and the themes of suffering served a specific socio-emotional function, thereby distinguishing his work and its historical impact from that of his contemporaries in the broader Punjabi musical landscape. This synthesis is crucial for validating folk music as a primary source for writing the history of emotions of non-elite, rural communities in South Asia.

The theoretical framework primarily employs William M. Reddy's concept of the "emotive" and Barbara Rosenwein's notion of "emotional communities," allowing the research to analyze Talib Hussain Dard's *Jog* as a powerful emotional utterance specifically tailored to resonate with the rural Punjabi emotional community of the Sandal Bar (Reddy 2001, 331; Rosenwein 2015, 15). The study views the folk music as a critical, non-textual historical source, preserving and transmitting the emotional history of a geographically specific, subaltern group. This approach allows for a micro-historical analysis of emotional transformation, observing how listening to Dard's *Jog* over the period 1980–2019 fostered a consistent, shared experience of grief, shifting the emotional state of the audience from potential happiness to shared sadness and catharsis. The research questions—such as the distinction of Dard as an exponent of grief, the historical trajectory of *Jog*, and the societal factors influencing the expression of grief—are thus designed to be answered through this combined theoretical lens, ensuring the analysis is both theoretically grounded and empirically verifiable.

The data collection is rigorous, integrating both primary and secondary sources, with an emphasis on primary materials that capture the lived experience

of the musician and his audience. Primary data includes transcribed interviews conducted by the author with Dard's family (his sons, Imran Talib and Zaigham Abbass Dard), his close friends, and poets whose work he immortalized (Mhr Altaf Bharwana). These oral histories are invaluable for constructing the biographical introduction, understanding the genesis of Dard's style, and, most importantly, gathering empirical data regarding the impact of his songs on the emotional lives of individuals who listened to him. Further primary evidence is derived from recordings and records, including cassettes from local agencies like "Pak Gramo Phone Agency Jhang," providing tangible evidence of his repertoire and popularity. Critically, the paper also incorporates unique primary sources, such as the diary and letter of Muhammad Aamir Ganjera, a death-sentenced prisoner, which demonstrates the profound and personal role Dard's music played in coping with extreme emotional duress. The interpretation of these sources relies heavily on the contextual understanding of the Sandal Bar's feudal and social structure.

Secondary source material, gathered from institutions including the National College of Arts Library and Government College University, Lahore, provides the necessary historical and musicological context. This includes scholarly articles, books on Punjabi literature and musicology (Qazi 2010, 46; Bhutta 2010, 12), and regional gazetteers (1884, 1), which are utilized to situate Dard within the broader cultural history of the Sandal Bar. The paper employs an interpretive method, where the translated lyrical content of Dard's *Dohras* and *Mahiyas* is analyzed for its emotional themes (longing, betrayal, injustice) and then cross-referenced with the oral and

documentary evidence of its reception to confirm its role as an emotive of grief. A critical component of the methodology involves comparative analysis with the work of Dard's contemporaries, Mansoor Malangi and Allah Dita Lonewala, to precisely define Dard's unique niche and emotional specialization within the folk music genre. Objectivity and neutrality are maintained throughout the research process, ensuring that personal biases do not interfere with the interpretation of the emotional and historical data. The study's reliance on authentic local dialect and cultural knowledge ensures that the research remains deeply rooted in the vernacular experience of the community it seeks to understand.

Furthermore, the methodology integrates principles from the Arousal Theory in musical aesthetics, which posits that music's power lies in its disposition to arouse emotions in the listener, contrasting with the Cognitive Appraisal model (Buccella 2015, 10-12). While the latter focuses on intellectual interpretation, Dard's music, aimed at an uneducated audience, primarily leveraged the former. The use of simple, repetitive melodic motifs and the mournful *Jog* mode directly stimulated emotional release, bypassing complex intellectual engagement. This methodology allows for a two-tiered analysis: first, identifying the musical and lyrical elements of the *Jog* that structurally resemble grief (the dispositional quality), and second, confirming the documented emotional response (the arousal) among the rural listeners through primary interviews. This combined approach moves beyond simple textual reading to a deep understanding of the *affective transmission* of the folk performance,

solidifying the research's position within applied emotion history.

MUSIC AND EMOTIONS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The study of the relationship between music and emotion necessitates establishing clear, historically informed definitions for the core terms. Music, in its broadest sense, transcends simple organized sound, becoming a profound philosophical and cultural nexus of human experience that is inseparable from the emotional life of a community (Davies 2003, 1-3). Unlike the fixed text of literature or the tangible object of painting, musical works are ephemeral, brought to life through performance and interpretation, which grants them a unique capacity for emotional malleability and allows for varied subjective and collective responses (Coolingwood 1938, 20-25). Emotion itself, a term with roots in the medieval French meaning "movement" or "motion of the crowd," has been subject to philosophical scrutiny since antiquity, with Plato and Aristotle using terms like *Path* and *Pathos* to describe human feeling (Plamper 2014, 5-7). The modern field of the History of Emotions, which gained prominence after events like 9/11 necessitated a historical understanding of negative emotions, studies how people experienced, expressed, and managed feelings within specific cultural and political contexts, connecting emotion directly to music, media, and medicine (Boddice 2017, 10-15; Gull 2015, 93). This discipline provides the essential framework for analyzing Punjabi folk music not as abstract art, but as a cultural document detailing the emotional life of the Sandal Bar.

A critical distinction in musicology, highly relevant to analyzing Dard's work, is the

difference between expression and expressiveness in conveying emotion. *Expression* refers to the outward manifestation of a performer's emotional state—what the individual does to show feeling, often through technique or vocal delivery (Robinson 1994, 13). *Expressiveness*, conversely, is an inherent quality possessed by the art itself, regardless of the performer's personal feelings (Davies 2003, 241-245). This distinction is particularly challenging in the context of folk music with lyrics (*impure music*), where the text's emotion often informs the music's perceived expressiveness. However, the core theoretical challenge is that composers or performers are not required to genuinely feel the emotion their work conveys, suggesting that music's emotional content—its potential to sound sad or grief-stricken—exists independently of the artist (Budd 1985, 30-33). Talib Hussain Dard's identity as "The Seller of Grief" suggests a powerful convergence: his performance (*expression*) was so compelling that the audience perceived the grief (*expressiveness*) as an authentic, inherent quality of the *Jog*, thereby legitimizing the emotional content for the entire community. This convergence validates the performative delivery as central to the emotion's historical impact.

Music operates as a powerful language of emotion, not through conventional syntax or semantics, but through a unique form of affective communication rooted in resemblance and disposition (Cooke 1959, 12-15). The musical expressiveness, its dispositional quality, is derived from the structural and dynamic qualities of the music—its rhythm, tempo, and melody—mimicking the physical and vocal manifestations of an emotional state in a human being (Levinson 1990, 327-330). The

slow, mournful, and drawn-out nature of Dard's Rag Jog thus structurally resembles the phenomenology of human grief (slowed movement, solemn tone, contraction of the chest), directly communicating the emotion without relying solely on the lyrics for effect. This sonic mimesis is why the musical form itself is effective even across linguistic barriers. Jerrold Levinson elaborates on this through the "imaginative response" theory, positing that music's expressiveness lies in its ability to promote an emotional response in the listener by making them *hear* the music as a literal expression of feeling (Levinson 1990, 335). This imaginative response is crucial to the historical process of forming and sharing emotions, as Jan Plamper asserts, suggesting that imagination is central to emotional construction itself (Plamper 2015, 20-22).

A central philosophical question addressed by this study is the "paradox of tragedy": why do humans actively seek out art that arouses negative emotions like sadness, sorrow, and grief (Levinson 1990, 306-310)? In the context of Talib Hussain Dard's popularity, this is directly relevant, as his audience deliberately sought out his "grief-selling" performances. The classical answer, rooted in Aristotle's theory of catharsis, suggests that the emotional engagement with art, even negative content, leads to a positive psychological purgation or cleansing of those very emotions (Scheff 1979, 10-12). Listeners of Dard's *Jog* experienced a shared release of their own inner grief and pain, often stemming from the unfulfilled wishes or harsh realities of rural life. This act of shared emotional venting fosters social cohesion and provides a cultural mechanism for balancing life's inherent negative and positive experiences (Reddy 2001, 335). Furthermore, the

communal experience of hearing one's own private grief articulated through a revered artist provides intellectual and emotional validation, turning personal suffering into a collective, intelligible, and manageable experience, which is the cornerstone of its therapeutic function within the Sandal Bar community.

The impact of music extends beyond individual psychological release, operating as a potent cultural mirror that shapes and reflects the general behavior and affective trends of an entire society (Davies 2003, 40-45). Neuroscientific research has shown that organized musical sounds cause neurons in different brain regions to fire more synchronously, demonstrating a physiological basis for music's emotional impact (Evans 2001, 62). However, the subjective, cultural layer is most crucial for the historian: music acts as a powerful mirroring mechanism, transmitting emotional codes and fostering collective sentiments across society. In the case of Punjabi folk music, the art form became deeply intertwined with political, social, and cultural narratives, shaping the very social behavior of the villagers (Kalra 2015, 30-33). By consistently exposing the audience to themes of loss, injustice, and hardship through the compelling, high-quality performance of *Jog*, Dard was actively contributing to the construction of a shared identity rooted in resilience and the acknowledgment of suffering. The preference for Dard's music among uneducated farmers underscores its role as an accessible, profound form of intellectual and emotional guidance, offering life lessons and an existential compass during periods of social and economic uncertainty. This folk tradition, particularly the *Jog* genre, effectively preserved the collective memory of struggles, turning hardship into a shared

source of artistic and social cohesion in a way that formal history often fails to capture.

PAKISTAN'S PUNJABI FOLK MUSIC AND EMOTIONS: A TYPOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Punjabi folk songs constitute a powerful and ancient form of artistic expression, originating outside the formal structures of urban literature and rooted deep within rural and agricultural communities (Qazi 2010, 7-10). These songs, having traveled orally through millennia, possess a unique ability to evoke profound emotions through their simplicity of language, natural rhythm, and unvarnished expression of human feeling, particularly grief and love. While the precise date of their origin is elusive, the tradition is strongly linked to the arrival of the Aryans around 1500 B.C., where songs became intertwined with religious rituals and cultural life, providing a constant emotional pulse to the evolving civilization of the subcontinent (Sharma 1996, 120-125). Rafique Khawar described folk songs not merely as waves, but as a "storm of desolate deserts," capable of rising from the depths of ecstasy and carrying away the outer world with the flood of emotions they contain (Qazi 2010, 7). This raw, untamed, and communal nature distinguishes folk songs from more structured, individually authored literary forms like the *Ghazal* or *Nazm*, which adhere to specific metrical and thematic constraints (Bruijin 2014, 50-55). Folk music, in contrast, serves as the collective, living expression of a people's emotional history, serving as a powerful and authentic cultural identifier that remains resistant to the formalities of elite society. This resilience against formal literary structure is precisely

what allows the raw, uncodified emotion of the masses to find a public voice.

The rich tradition of Pakistani Punjabi folk music is categorized by various distinct types, each playing a specific role in emotional and communal life, forming a tapestry of affective transmission. *Mahiya*, for instance, is a popular, relatively short form, often viewed as a romantic dialogue between two lovers, typically conveying lessons or expressions of affection and personal feeling, with its verses providing a means of intimate, relational expression (Qureshi 2008, 57; Nasir 2010, 231). Its short, poignant verses, often using an A-B-A rhyming scheme, are perfect for expressing a fleeting thought or a sharp pang of longing, requiring deep emotional restraint to deliver its core message effectively. *Dhola* derives its name from the *Dhol* (drum) and is intrinsically linked to dance and celebratory events, yet its independent verses often convey complete messages, and the form has deep historical roots in the Potohari region (Qazi 2010, 46). Characterized by a strong, often energetic rhythm, the *Dhola* acts as a pulse for communal action, paradoxically expressing both collective joy during festivals and shared resilience in the face of hardship, its driving beat providing a physical mechanism for emotional release.

Tappa, another significant genre, is a folk song of gathering and celebration, often sung with the *Dholak* during weddings, acting as a collective voice for individual emotional experiences, blending happiness, sadness, and even disgust in a spontaneous communal setting. The structure of *Tappa* is fragmented and highly flexible, consisting of couplets or short stanzas that can be quickly improvised or combined, reflecting the chaotic, immediate surge of collective

emotions during a festive gathering. These typologies confirm that Punjabi folk music is not monocultural but a multi-faceted emotional reservoir, reflecting the *full* spectrum of life's experiences, with a particular strength in articulating the prevalence of negative emotions—such as the sorrow, loss, and hardship—that historically permeate human experience. This nuanced emotional mapping embedded in the song structures provides vital evidence for the region's emotionology.

The language of Pakistani Punjabi folk songs is a central determinant of their emotional power and cultural identity, characterized by its simplicity, directness, and deep imprint of local dialects. Unlike formalized or codified literary forms, folk songs are liberated from strict linguistic or philosophical rules, allowing the pure emotions of the common person to be carried unburdened by artificiality, hence their designation as an incomplete class of literature by some elitist standards (Qazi 2010, 8). The local accent and dialect act as an authentic cultural mirror, encapsulating the social, cultural, and linguistic values of the specific region. For Talib Hussain Dard, the steadfast choice to perform almost exclusively in the Jhangochi dialect—an intermediate Punjabi dialect spoken across the Sandal Bar—was a deeply political and emotional decision, cementing his authenticity among the rural populace. This choice elevated the regional dialect, providing a voice and dignity to the emotional world of a marginalized group, simultaneously resisting the cultural hegemony of Standard Punjabi or Urdu (Naqvi 2019, 3). The Jhangochi dialect, with its distinct phonetic qualities that blend the soft, elongated vowels of Saraiki with the robust consonants of Punjabi, creates a

melancholic, drawn-out vocal delivery uniquely suited to the expression of grief and longing. The language, therefore, is not just a medium, but the identity itself, reflecting the emotional resilience and cultural stability of the people against broader societal changes.

WOMEN AS THE PRIMARY CARRIERS OF EMOTIONAL HERITAGE

In the history of Punjabi folk music, women occupy a central and indispensable role as the primary creators, expressers, and carriers of the emotional heritage. Historically, the feminine divine was often associated with emotion across civilizations, leading to women being viewed as the main channels for emotional expression, a concept evident in ancient Indian civilizations like the Darawari Tehzeeb (Zubairi 2014, 289). In contemporary rural Punjab, uneducated women possess a deep, oral familiarity with folk songs, learning them from childhood and passing them down across generations, an intimacy often lacking in their male or educated counterparts. They sing these songs spontaneously during pivotal life moments—childbirth, weddings, or ritualistic bathing ceremonies—making the songs integral vessels for expressing the intricate emotional tapestry of their lives, from the euphoria of motherhood to the occasional conflicts of family dynamics. The distinction is clear: women’s songs are deeply immersed in affection, emotional nuance, and the complexities of human relationships, while men’s songs often lean toward heroic narratives (Djupsjobacka 2018, 5-7). This oral tradition, maintained and transmitted primarily by Punjabi mothers, ensures the preservation of the cultural and emotional landscape, reinforcing the songs’ role as

invaluable cultural artifacts that capture the social dynamics and gender history of the region. The spontaneous, often unrecorded nature of women's folk songs makes their emotional content an authentic, untainted source for historical research.

FOLK MUSIC AS CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION

Pakistani Punjabi folk music serves as a vital historical and cultural document, representing the entire life-world of the Punjab, from its complex history of kingship and warfare to its most intimate social rituals. The songs provide profound insights into the emotional communities of Punjab, which are united by shared emotional codes and practices. Public celebrations, particularly the multi-day wedding festivities, are saturated with folk music, dance (*Bhangra, Jhumar*), and specific songs for rituals like *Hena* and *Gharoli*, cementing the music's function in celebrating collective joy (Zubairi 2014, 278). Conversely, even solemn religious events, such as the Ashura procession, utilize folk rhythms—the beat of the *MAROO* drum—to intricately convey public grief and summon emotional assemblies (Naqvi 2017, 287). The poetry of folk music preserves the historical narrative, detailing the dynamics between rulers and the ruled, administrative methods, and the resilience of the common person. Furthermore, the songs offer glimpses into social history, such as the evolution of gender relations, the age of interaction between young men and women, and the adoption of veiling practices, all woven into the lyrical narratives (Djupsjobacka 2018, 8). Thus, Pakistani Punjabi folk music is an enduring cultural tapestry, providing not just entertainment, but an unparalleled insight into the emotional and historical

consciousness of the region, transcending superficial boundaries and preserving the authentic *Afsana* of the Punjabi people (Qazi 2010, 10).

TALIB HUSSAIN DARD AS THE SELLER OF GRIEF: A MICRO-HISTORICAL STUDY OF AFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

The Sandal Bar region, particularly the District of Jhang, boasts a formidable musical heritage that has produced numerous masters of both classical and folk singing throughout history, including revered figures like Khurshid Alam Shah and Ustad Maula Bakhsh (Zubairi 2014, 538). Talib Hussain Dard, born in 1955 near Khewa, Jhang, inherited this rich legacy, yet carved a distinct path defined by his intense focus on the rawest human emotions. Despite receiving only a fifth-standard education, his inclination towards music was evident from childhood, participating in local *Naats* and, being a Shia Muslim, singing religious eulogies (*Noha*, *Manqabat*) which are fundamentally rooted in the evocation of profound grief and sorrow. His professional career, spanning nearly fifty years, began in earnest after formal classical training under the renowned Ustad Slammat Ali Khan (Sham Sherazi) for four to five years, and local folk training from Ustad Nazar Hussain. This dual training—classical depth combined with folk authenticity—was the foundation of his unique style. His breakthrough and the period of his greatest impact spanned the 1980s and 1990s, where his *Jog* performances became ubiquitous across Pakistan Television and Radio Pakistan, forging an inseparable connection between his adopted moniker, “*Dard*” (Pain), and the collective suffering of his audience (Kamboh 2019, 1). The ability to blend the technical complexity of classical *Raga* with the

emotional immediacy of folk music was the key to his mass appeal.

Talib Hussain Dard’s central contribution to Punjabi folk music was the comprehensive revival, refinement, and elevation of Rag Jog, transforming it from a faded regional tradition into his signature musical genre. While *Rag Jog* existed previously in the musical landscape of Punjab, it was Dard’s unique artistic vision and technical mastery that propelled it to a status unparalleled by his contemporaries. The traditional *Dhola* had long served to express grief in the villages, but Dard had the genius to “imagine and extract that *Sur* (Jog)” which had the perfect emotional resonance for the masses. This *Sur* is technically related to the North Indian classical *Raga Jogiya* or *Bhairavi*, modes traditionally associated with sadness, asceticism, and longing (*viraha*). Dard adapted the classical structure by focusing heavily on the lower registers and employing meend (glides) and gamak (vibrato) in a slow, deliberate tempo, which structurally mimicked the prolonged, lamenting nature of human grief, validating the Arousal Theory in practice. *Jog* under Dard’s hand was not merely music; it was a deeply cathartic cultural mechanism designed to connect with the soul of his community, transforming personal suffering into collective, musical expression. This mastery earned him the title “*Shahenshah-i-Jog*” from the people themselves, marking his art as a fusion of profound emotional observation and poetic inspiration. The profound emotional depth of his *Jog* was so unique that even his son, Imran Talib, recognized the challenge in replicating his father's distinct style, underscoring the singularity of Dard’s contribution to the genre. His dedication to this specific, mournful musical mode solidified his affective specialization.

The poetry that Dard chose to perform was integral to his identity as "The Seller of Grief," serving as the direct medium for articulating the emotional truths of the Sandal Bar. Unlike other folk singers who were dependent on renowned poets, Dard gave voice and immortality to a select group of local poets, many of whom belonged to the Rachnawi area, including Ghulam Muhammad Dard, Riaz Sial, Mushtaq Nanga, and Altaf Bharwana. These poets specialized in short, potent forms like *Dohra* and *Mahiya*, which were often immediately written to reflect Dard's immediate emotional state or the collective psyche of the moment. The lyrical themes consistently revolved around societal flaws, the injustices of the feudal system, the pain of betrayal in relationships, and an existential sense of loss and longing, often containing advice for navigating life's ubiquitous challenges. The emotional force of the music stems directly from its grounded socio-political content.

The *Dohras* he sang provided potent emotional narratives, such as the one depicting the overwhelming fear and pain of a dream where the protagonist almost dies from the intensity of his beloved's presence (*Dohra 1*), a reflection on the spiritual and emotional turmoil of desire. This speaks to the intense preoccupation with unattainable desire and spiritual yearning within the emotional community. Another powerful *Dohra* captures the tragic relief of an intense wait, only to find death (*Izrael*) standing at the door instead of the beloved, symbolizing the final, painful release from profound grief (*Dohra 2*). This narrative arc directly parallels the fatalism and sense of impending doom often felt by a struggling agricultural class, where life's only certainty is the finality of hardship. The verses describing the intense physical manifestation of longing (*Dohra 3*):

"Hunn hijar tery wich dukhian da, wadaa dukhda a sann sann dhola" (In your absence O my love, I feel every second pain), directly connect the spiritual concept of *Hijar* (separation) to the debilitating physical agony of the common person.

Furthermore, Dard's performance often addressed the issue of social constraints and betrayal rooted in the feudal economy. The *Dohra* that speaks of a messenger urging the beloved: *"Keh'thun hath rangwa k khuhs betha en darpok nasal daa haaven"* (Whom you married today is no one but a shame), is not merely about romantic betrayal but social pressure. This lyric strongly implies a betrayal where the woman, often constrained by economic forces, marries someone else, leading to a profound sense of injustice felt by the jilted lover and resonated by the entire community facing similar social limitations. These lyrics, by portraying profound pain and suffering in simple, vernacular Jhangochi, offered his audience an immediate, recognizable mirror to their own existence, translating private agony into a shared, public lament. The instrumental accompaniment—including the *Taboor*, *Tabla*, and his most crucial tool, the Harmonium—was kept minimal, ensuring the raw emotional power of the voice and the poetry remained paramount.

Talib Hussain Dard's audience was not defined by class, but by a shared geography and emotional disposition, transcending boundaries to reach listeners in Balochistan, Sindh, and the Sikh community in Indian Punjab, yet they were overwhelmingly comprised of uneducated farmers and local folks from the Sandal Bar. This demographic preference is crucial to understanding his socio-political impact. His music functioned as a powerful, non-violent form of social

commentary, giving voice to the deprivations, societal differences, and exploitation experienced under the prevailing feudal and capitalist structures of the region. The comprehensive and inclusive nature of his selected poetry meant that he catered to all schools of thought, transforming a simple peasant into a listener who could appreciate the nuances of classical singing blended with folk accessibility. His use of music to channel raw emotions acted as a deterrent to extremism, demonstrating a profound political and therapeutic function.

In a stark reflection of the cultural bias of the elite, Dard was never granted a major national award, such as the presidential award bestowed upon his contemporary, Allah Dita Lonewala, despite Dard being the truer torchbearer of the Jhangochi culture and its emotional life. While Dard attributed this oversight to his own "backwardness from media coverage" and "no haste for the award," the reality reflects the deep-seated reluctance of the urban-centric bureaucracy to promote authentic, unvarnished rural folk art performed in a non-standardized dialect (Naqvi 2019, 2). This historical neglect, paradoxically, reinforces his authenticity as a voice *for* the marginalized, positioning him as a cultural hero who refused to compromise his art for state recognition. His influence extended to reducing extremism in society by channeling raw emotions into art, suggesting his music served a powerful political and therapeutic function.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH CONTEMPORARIES: DEFINING THE NICHE OF GRIEF

Dard's unique emotional specialization is best understood in comparison to his

prominent contemporaries from the same region, primarily Mansoor Malangi (1965–2014) and Allah Dita Lonewala (1957–2021). While all three were celebrated folk singers of the Sandal Bar, their musical and linguistic choices created distinct emotional communities. Lonewala, for instance, often adopted Lahori and Lyallpuri Punjabi dialects, and his repertoire leaned towards *Tappa* and songs with more upbeat, romantic, or celebratory themes, making him highly popular for weddings and festive occasions. His music was inclusive, but its affective disposition was geared toward joy and light-hearted longing, not profound grief. Malangi, on the other hand, frequently incorporated Urdu and elements of the *Ghazal* form into his folk songs, positioning his work at a higher, more literary-conscious tier that appealed more broadly to the educated or semi-urban audience.

Dard's distinctiveness was his unyielding commitment to Jhangochi and the overwhelming focus on Rag Jog and the emotional landscape of sorrow. His music served a different social function: it was the ritual of lamentation. While Lonewala provided the music for the wedding, Dard provided the music for the *Wajogh* (separation) that followed, or the grief inherent in the harsh reality of life. By focusing almost exclusively on grief, loss, and social injustice articulated in the local vernacular, Dard cemented his role as the specialist of sorrow, ensuring his music was indispensable for the existential processing of hardship, thus carving a unique and powerful niche as the true emotional mirror of the rural, marginalized Sandal Bar. This affective specialization is the core of his historical and cultural legacy.

Beyond its musical and social dimensions, *Jog* possesses a profound philosophical and spiritual undercurrent rooted in the Indian Subcontinent's history. The term originates from the Sanskrit word meaning "to unite," yet it became ironically linked to "Separation" (*Wajogh*) within philosophical and spiritual contexts. This philosophical separation refers to the worldly soul's distance from the true soul or divine essence, a concept central to Hindu philosophy and exemplified in the *Bhagwat Geeta* (Sharma 2008, 205). The quest for spiritual unity is represented by practices like Yoga, traditionally associated with the Nath followers who were known as *Jogi*, with a significant epicenter in the Punjab at *Tilla Jogiyān* (Bhutta 2010, 12). The *Nath* tradition profoundly influenced early Punjabi literature, establishing a cultural context where the state of separation (*Wajogh*) and the journey back to unity (*Sanjogh*) became deeply entrenched emotional and narrative themes.

Dard's adaptation of *Jog* seamlessly integrated this profound spiritual concept with the raw, temporal grief of the common man. His music presented personal suffering (economic hardship, failed love, social injustice) as a microcosm of the grand, philosophical separation from the divine, lending existential weight and meaning to everyday pain. By linking the personal tragedies articulated in the *Dohras* to the universal quest for unity, Dard's *Jog* offered more than temporary catharsis; it provided a spiritual and intellectual framework for enduring life's inevitable sorrows. This framework provided the audience with a profound cognitive appraisal tool, allowing them to recontextualize their temporal grief as part of a larger, even divine, scheme. The theme of *Hijar* (longing/absence), a core

emotional result valued in *raga* traditions (Schofield 2014, 100), became the primary affective bridge between the philosophical concept of *Wajogh* and the lived emotional reality of his listeners. This depth ensured that Dard's musical legacy transcended mere entertainment, establishing him as a genuine cultural and spiritual guide for the people of the Sandal Bar.

CONCLUSION

My paper argues that Punjabi folk music, particularly the oeuvre of Talib Hussain Dard, is far more than mere entertainment; it is an invaluable, living historical document of the emotional community of the Sandal Bar. The investigation confirmed that the emotional core of this folk tradition—its simplicity, its reliance on local dialects like *Jhangochi*, and its communal, oral transmission—allows it to serve as a powerful and authentic emotive for expressing and evoking collective grief. The music provided a public, cathartic outlet for the personal and societal pain stemming from the hardships of rural life, a phenomenon the elite cultural sphere largely ignored. Dard's specialized focus on sorrow distinguished him from his contemporaries, solidifying his role as the region's affective specialist.

Talib Hussain Dard's central significance lies in his masterful revival and popularization of Rag *Jog*, transforming him into the undisputed "Seller of Grief." His unique artistry lay in fusing formal classical training with the raw, vernacular delivery required by folk art, ensuring that the philosophical and spiritual weight of the *Jog* tradition—the profound pain of separation (*Wajogh*)—was translated into an accessible, deeply resonant emotional experience for the common man. By consistently

performing the evocative poetry of local bards focused on social critique and personal loss, Dard provided an indispensable voice for the marginalized, confirming his status as a cultural force that transcended official recognition. The legacy of his music is a testament to the enduring power of art to not only reflect but actively shape the emotional consciousness of a people, offering validation and resilience in the face of ongoing existential hardship. Further research should explore the evolution of the *Jog* genre in the post-Dard era and its continued role in navigating digital media and globalized Punjabi diaspora experiences, particularly focusing on how younger artists manage the tension between regional authenticity and mass media marketability.

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