



The Bhand Tradition in Shakespearean Comedy: Twelfth Night and As You Like It

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ABSTRACT

Bhands or Mirasis are the traditional entertainers of Pakistani and Indian Punjab. Their wit and wisdom; dancing and singing; humor and satire; and skill and craft, resemble those of Shakespearean Clowns. Touchstones and Feste, the two fools of Shakespearean comedies, exhibit several characteristics like those of Bhands or Mirasis. Both Touchstone and Feste speak wisely, make satirical remarks, give ironical statements, involve in a chain of repartee and use several other comic devices to create humor. Bhands practice almost the same comic weapons. Touchstone's use of scatology and lampoon, Feste's singing and aphoristic speech bring them very close to the traditional Bhands or Mirasis of Pakistan and India. This study juxtaposes the Bhands and Mirasis with Shakespearean clowns on the basis of the commonalities of the means and skills they use to produce humour. This study also explores the Shakespearean comic aspects in Twelfth Night and As you like it under the theoretical framework of Subjective Readers Response Theory focusing on Touchstones and Feste in As You like it and Twelfth Night respectively. This research paper also tries to reveal how the traditional Bhands outshine Shakespearean clowns in a way as the latter were the mouthpieces of Shakespeare and the former did not follow any scrip and spoke extemporaneously on the stage, especially, in the Punjabi stage dramas in Pakistan.

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1. Introduction

Bhand tradition is very old. Bhands or Mirasis are the traditional entertainers of Punjab both in Pakistan and India. Bhands are just like court jesters who would entertain kings with their comic performances and funny remarks. In Punjab, the heads of the villages employed Bhands or Mirasis for their entertainment. Bhands would have comic license to make comic or witty remarks about almost everything and on everyone, including the village heads or Zamindars who were the "holders or occupiers" of land. The origin lyrics are Persian, and the resulting name was widely used wherever Persian stimulus was blowout by the or other Indian Muslim." (Zamindar | Definition, System, & Mughal Empire | Britannica Money, n.d.) Bhands were actors, singers, dancers, mimics, etc. They had a very keen eye over social and political issues and would make funny but wise remarks about the world around them. Gradually, Bhands emerged in the shape of a family, a community and a professional group of entertainers. A member of the Bhand family must possess certain qualities to follow the Bhands' tradition. A literary scholar tells the origin of the word Bhands and mentions some of their prominent qualities. He states, "Bhands comes from 'bhana' an ironic and accurate drama, generally a soliloquy that is mentioned in Bharata's Natyashastra... The Bhands has to train themselves, to be practiced actor, performer, entertainer, and artist" (Hanjura.A., 2008).

Researchers mention the Muslim origin of Bhands or Mirasis belonged to the poor social class and entertained the commoners. Over time their qualities; wit, wisdom, and humor were

acknowledged by feudal lords, and eventually, they found their place in royal palaces in India as professional entertainers and court jesters. Chamota was a traditional comic tool carried by Bhandis in their hands. It aroused loud noise without hurting when one Bhand strikes it to his companion after delivering a punch line during comic scenes or repartee duels. The jesters, known as Bhandis or Naqqals, played a significant role in Punjab's cultural life. They were mostly Muslims and their job was to make people laugh by acting out funny stories. They lived tough lives and were often very poor. In the past, they were supported by wealthy landowners and sometimes worked in courts. They entertained people with witty jokes, mimicry, funny dialogues, dances, and pantomimes. They also used a leather strap called "Chamota" for slapstick comedy. They were good story-tellers...weddings, betrothal ceremonies, and other auspicious occasions...There was a common practice to invite two or more than two Mirasis and make them sit face to face to sing...The whole atmosphere used to get saturated with their musical strains. (Culture of Punjab- Punjabi heritage & traditions, n.d.).

A critic notifies in The Hindu a different origin of Bhandis but one thing is clear the nouns Bhandis, Mirasis, or Naqqals refer to the same traditional entertainers of the subcontinent. The Hindu goes, The Kanjari and Mirasi are the "castes" given to people who earn their living by dancing Kanjari and singing/jesting Mirasi...Specified folk communities like the 'mirasi', 'naqqals,' 'kavishers,' 'baazigars,' 'sufi' and sikhdhadis' 'malangs,' 'naths,' 'saperas' and 'jogis' carried on the task of cultural propagation. They have become the culture-bearers of Punjab's rich heritage... (Special issue). In the article Spectrum, the tribute, the researcher explores the Arab origin of Mirasis and also mentions the source from which the word Mirasi is derived. Some of them moved to Persia over the years, and then made their way to united Punjab through Afghanistan...A group went to India along with Sufi saint Khwaja Moin-ud-Din Chishti and ultimately settled in Rajasthan...They were a community who lived away from towns or villages. The leader of this people was always called Mir. Therefore, each individual tribe member became known locally as a Mir. This is what Mir Bibi means. Perhaps the prefix 'Mir' in the word 'Mirasi' leads one to this conclusion also.

Bhandis tradition dates back to the reign of Mughal Emperors in India. Bhandis were famous and admired by people for their jokes, ready wit, satire, and repartee. Karela Bhand of Delhi was famous during the time of Muhammad Shah Badshah. His wit, sarcasm, jokes, and mimicry were well-appreciated at that time. The incident given below shows the art and genius of Karela Bhand. Once, a nobleman in Lucknow gave Karela Bhand an old and worn-out shawl as a gift. Karela Bhand examined it closely, turning it around and inspecting it. Someone asked, "What are you looking at?" Karela Bhand replied, "There seems to be something written here." "What does it say?" they asked. Karela Bhand put on his glasses and pretended to read with difficulty, "La Ilaha Illallah," the first part of the Islamic kalima. When they mentioned that it also says "Mohammedu Rasoolullah," Karela Bhand looked surprised and said, "How could that be written? This shawl is from before the time of our Prophet." Bhandis have been considered a symbol of mirth in eighteenth century India. Their performances produced attraction in the sociocultural festivals and local functions as well. People cheered in happiness and appreciated them. A poet of the eighteenth century India, Mir Hassan wrote a couplet about Bhandis "kia Bhandis our Bhagtiyon ne hujoom/ Huiaaheahe Mubarak ki dhoom"

A historian relates that Bhand tradition to the period when Guru Nanak preached to people. Bhai Mardana was a close companion of Baba Guru Nanak and remained with him during long travels. Guru Nanak preached to people and Bhai Mardana played Rubab. Bhai Mardana was a son of Mirasi Muslim. Guru Nanak was accompanied on his journeys throughout the forty-seven years of Bhai Mardana's life. Ranging from the Guru being with him in cold hills to hot deserts, he never went away from the side of the Guru... The guru honored him as a holy person and member. Moreover, the Guru included his bani (verses) in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Mardana was elder than Guru Nanak and he was born to a Muslim "mirasi". Mirasis were people who made their living by amusing others; they were called "bhand" or "naqqal", which means story tellers in Punjab. Sometimes these poor people would be capable to get work in darbars of outdated frontrunners or native group leaders where they received extra income. (Mardana gives away clothes and rood, 2008). Gibb Scheffler links Mirasis to Hindu Dum Group. He mentions that Mirasis are professional singers who converted to Islam from Hinduism. In a paper, "The Performing Communities of Punjab", Scheffler mentions different categories of Mirasis; The Rubabis, The Bhandis, The Naqqalis, and the Dhadis. In general, "Mirasi" is a professional tag

used to describe a Muslim inherited profession. Also used as a name for several ethnic groups that perform. Many people believe that the Mirasi communities originally came from the Dum people. It's possible that they were once Hindus and later converted to Islam. Any instrument you can imagine has a mirasi playing it; and in India they are choruses of any theatre category or song.... They have frolicked a major role in the development of Hindustani classical composition (Neuman, 1980).

The districts with most populated Mirasis include, Ludhiana, Sangrur, and Patiala. In present day Punjab, there are many endogamous divisions within the community (Ludhiana). The Mardana had historically been singers and players of rabab and sarangi ... They think themselves as if they were only true ones or defaulters of Mirasi's and also superior to other groups of Mirasis Bahnds: These are associated with low-caste communities who have specialized in slapstick comedy duos consisting of two characters such as a straight man dressed up in "low-class' or 'bumpkin" attire and a "funny man'. Traditionally, these two entertain during childbirth and wedding occasions (Pandit, 2021). The Naqlia put on a rural variety show with a troupe made up of family members. This group includes actors, comedians, singers, musicians, and performers who impersonate females. They portray a working-class lifestyle that involves difficult manual labor for men and household chores and financial worries for women. Despite these challenges, they find reward in the camaraderie they share with their colleagues and neighbors. Any instrument you can imagine has a mirasi playing it; and in India they are singers of any entertainment category or music. The districts with most populated Mirasis include, Ludhiana, Sangrur, and Patiala. In present day Punjab, there are many endogamous divisions within the community (Ludhiana). They think themselves as if they were only true ones or defaulters of Mirasi's and also superior to other groups of Mirasis Bahnds: These are associated with low-caste communities who have specialized in slapstick comedy duos consisting of two characters such as a straight man dressed up in "low-class' or 'bumpkin" attire and a "funny man'. Traditionally, these two entertain during childbirth and wedding occasions (RAHAT, SIDDIQUI, & FARAH).

Although historians and critics mention diverse origins of the Bhand tradition and the word Bhand and Mirasi, they mention approximately the same characteristics or Bhands and Mirasis. Claire Parament wrote an essay on Pakistani theatre. She declares that Bhands are socio-political critics of Pakistan (Schreffler, 2011). Claire not only touched on the history of the 'Bhands' community, linking it with 'court jesters' in the Western concept, but she brought in a rather shocking comparison to the most current characters and events in today's Pakistani socio-political scenario. From lawyers to parliamentarians, from military dictators to media, from corrupt systems to theatre plays, nothing escaped Claire's scrutiny through the eyes and mouth of Munir Hussain, who is still a prominent practicing Bhands (Pamment, 2017). Explaining the characteristics of Bhands, M. K. Raina says, "The tradition and skills are passed from one generation to the next, usually from fathers to sons. A Bhand must learn how to act, dance, do acrobatics, and play music well through training and practice. The Bhands tradition is very deeply-rooted in Kashmir. Bhands are stage actors in Kashmir who perform in traditional folk-musical plays. These plays are satirical commentaries on the present socio-cultural trends." M. K. Raina notifies, The plays performed by the Bhands are called "pather." This word seems to come from "Patra," which means dramatic character. A researcher gives information about Bhand Pather and Bahnds Jashan, (Raina, 1999).

Bhand Pather stands as a beloved folk art originating from Jammu and Kashmir. This traditional theatrical form blends elements of drama and dance with a satirical flair, serving as a platform to highlight societal and cultural issues. Typically staged during social and cultural events, Bhands Jashan features a troupe of 10 to 15 performers delivering their art in a traditional manner, accompanied by light musical accompaniment. Bhands Pather, a cornerstone of Kashmir's folk theater scene, offers a poignant commentary on social norms and vices, employing satire to shed light on prevailing traditions and injustices (Raina, 1999). Kashmiri Bhands are similar to traditional Bhands of India and Pakistan. They possess wit and wisdom, can sing and dance, satirize social evils, and lampoon at anyone they want. It is very important to a member of the Bhands community in Kashmir to train himself as a professional Bhands "The Bhands have to train themselves to be skillful actors, dancers, acrobats, and musicians.

1.1. Background of the study

The Bhand tradition, rooted in the rural landscape of Pakistan and India. This tradition epitomizes the essence of traditional and local means of entertainment. Bhands and Mirasis are

celebrated for their multilayered performances, including wit, wisdom, dance, song, and an interesting blend of humor, satire and slapstick. Interestingly, these characteristics embrace those of the Shakespearean Clowns, typically manifested by Touchstone in "As You Like It" and Feste in "Twelfth Night." This study delves into the striking similarities between these traditional entertainers of Punjab and Shakespearean clowns. Although Bhands and Mirasis often perform without any script and their humorous remarks exhibit their unique creative genius as Ahmad Bilal says about a great ever stand-up and theatre comedian in his paper, "Amanullah Khan, a performer, arose as an image of improvisational and redundant extemporize theatre." yet despite speaking scripted dialogues, Shakespearean clowns share a goodly number of comic weapons to entertain the audience.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Although significant resemblances and their implications can be explored between the traditional Bhands of Pakistani and Indian Punjab; and Shakespearean clowns, yet no specific research has been made in this regard in academic discourse. Especially, the skill, intelligence and craft of Bhands and Mirasis have almost been ignored by the critics. This study also aims to fill this chasm by exploring the similarities between the two apparently distinct types of stage performers to unravel their artistic and comic intersections.

1.3. Significance of the study

This research is significant as it identifies comedic parallels between the Bhands and Mirasis of Pakistan and India, and the Shakespearean Clowns. It also accentuates that comic theatres of East and West share several attributes that strengthens the concept of universality of humour. This study is also significant that it explores how Bhands and Mirasis use comic devices without any written script. They come on the stage and speak humour impromptu.

1.4. Research objectives

The primary objectives of this research are:

1. To list and analyze comic devices employed by Bhands and Mirasis in Traditional Pakistani and Indian theatrical and non-theatrical performances.
2. To examine the characteristics of Shakespearean Clowns, with a focus on Touchstone in "As You Like It" and Feste in "Twelfth Night".
3. To explore the similarities between the performances of Bands or Mirasis, and Shakespearean Clowns in terms of wit and wisdom.
4. To explore the evidences of Bhand Tradition in Shakespearean Comedy

1.5. Research Questions

The paper pursues to address the following questions:

1. How do Bhands or Mirasis employ comic devices in traditional commercial theatre of Pakistani Punjab?
2. What are the characteristics of the comic dialogues of Shakespearean Clowns, mainly exemplified by Touchstone and Feste?
3. How do Bhands or Mirasis produce humour and how is it comparable to that produced by Shakespearean clowns?
4. Can Bhands or Mirasis be called unique performers of comic theatre as they stage a drama without any script and speak humour impromptu?

2. Literature Review

Several critics have done valuable work on Shakespearean fools. In Shakespeare's play "Twelfth Night," the character Feste may seem minor at first, but he's actually very important. Shakespeare contrasts Feste's cleverness, which he uses to fictitious to be silly, with the genuine foolishness of other characters. This shows Feste's real insight and makes his character in the play (Kinsley, 2008). Touchstones' dress is not an ordinary costume of a clown for Hannah Thompkins. It contains symbolic significance for him. He says, "...The way Feste's costume is split in half represents the different roles and contradictions he represents. These include being both wise and foolish, aware and unaware, and symbolizing both life and death. Like other characters similar to him, he comments on human behavior, watching closely in the Arden Forest." (Thompkins, 2008). The critics are so keen on analyzing Shakespearean fools as one of them

counts even the words; foolery, foolish, folly in Twelfth Night. Shakespeare seems preoccupied with madness and folly in a Twelfth night. The word "fool" and its variants ("foolery," "foolish," and so forth) appear eighty times in the play, and the word "folly" occurs seven times" (Chidester, 2008). Some critics compare the Bhands or Mirasis to the court jesters of Europe. "The pro-establishment in mirasi, dom (domni) merely sang the praises of the paymaster... This is exactly what the 'fools' or law court clowns did in Europe. They piercing out to their influential customers and after all, mere human beings with no superior privileges to be the legislatures of celestial supremacy" (Rahman, 2008). Abdul Halim Sharar, a renowned chronicler of nineteenth-century states in the previous Lucknow. "The Bahnds are a sympathetic of Nationwide Comedians, and they accomplished the same occupation here as was prepared by the Witness and Snitch in England" (Surai, 2008). Male Bhands usually convert their self into stage performances in the funny play, there's a political issue being addressed with a touch of humor and satire, making fun of politicians and their followers. One of the main characters holds a large pair of tongs to create background music. They wear rough sandals or soft plastic shoes on their feet. Female performers often wear bright colors and tight-fitting costumes.

In comic execution, Bhands has primitive roots which have used comedy to stride a line between flattering and changing patrons. Bhands are facing discrimination socially being a subaltern population (Abbas & Aziz, 2020). Initially, women were barred from participating in performances, but over time, this restriction has evolved, allowing for increased involvement of women. Women associated with Bhands primarily functioned as local dancers, entertaining guests at weddings. However, the main comedic elements of Bhands' performances, including plays and singing, remained the domain of male performers. In earlier times within the Bhand community, male characters held sway, but this dynamic has since shifted. In their spontaneous acts, Bhands rely on audience participation, encouraging individuals to reflect their social status through generous contributions to avoid being targeted for further jests. Bhander captivates its audience with comedic performances tailored to their preferences and social standing. Jokes take center stage in their theatrical productions, conveyed through the actors' body language, facial expressions, vocal tones, and other observable cues, allowing the audience to engage and interpret these elements (Burgoyne, 2018). So, critics have explored several aspects of Shakespearean Fools by analyzing, interpreting and explaining their words, phrases and dialogues. The comparison between Bhands and Shakespearean Fools also shows that modes, mediums and manners of entertainment are approximately the same all over the world. Fools and Clowns in Shakespearean Comedies are the creation of a peerless creative artist, William Shakespeare but the Bhands and Mirasis are the God-gifted comedians, singers, dancers and actors.

3. Research Framework

This research is purely qualitative and the researcher has applied transactional reader response methodology to analyze the character of Touchstone and Feste in Twelfth night and As you like it respectively. The Transactional reader's response theory is associated with Louise Rosenblatt and analyzed transactions between reader and text. Rosenblatt emphasizes approaching text more aesthetic rather efferent.

4. Methodology

Characters of Touchstone and Feste have been analyzed by applying the methodology of extracting determinate meanings of particular said characters concerning traditional Bhand culture. Determinate analyzing refers to studying facts within the text.

5. Discussion

After being familiar with the Bhand Tradition, it would be interesting to see the similarities between Shakespearean clowns and Bhands. Both the clowns and the Bhands possess several identical characteristics.

5.1. Epigrammatic Style of Clowns and Bhands

Shakespearean fools or clowns are very wise. Their dialogues become epigrammatic when they expose their wisdom. Multiple times they foretell, predict, and mention the follies of the principal characters. Truth and reality become integral parts of their sentences. In Twelfth, Night Feste says to Malvolio, "there is no darkness but ignorance" (4.2.38). (William Shakespeare, 2019). With the same aphoristic style he says to the Duke, "Truly, sir, the better for my foes and the worse for my friends" (5.1.10) (William Shakespeare, 2019). A celebrated Pakistani

Bhand, Amanullah Khan was also famous for his epigrammatic speaking style. His witty and brief sentences are much appreciated in India and Pakistan. His microscopic observation of society and its humorous representation has been considered very entertaining and a landmark for other comedians. He was honoured with Pride of Performance award. (GOVERNMENT of PAKISTAN CABINET SECRETARIAT CABINET DIVISION AWARDS WING GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS and LEGAL PROVISION for MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS for PAKISTAN CIVIL AWARDS 2018 Onwards Ph: 051-9203013 Wwww.cabinet.gov.pk, n.d.) In Star-TV's Laughter Challenge, he received thunderous applause and hilarious laughter from the audience and the judges; Sidhu and Shaikhar. In an episode of this show, he steps on the stage and the judges stand up in his reverence. He says spontaneously, "Thank you all of you. The person, who is praised on the stage, becomes a hero, only for the time being and just for two or three minutes. Anyway, thanks a lot." (Amanullah Khan). In the same show, he satirizes women's nature and says, "If a woman does triple M.A, she will remain a woman. Moreover, in a stage play Tariq Teddy Says to Amanullah Khan, you are very wise, answer me if the world trade Centre had been here in Pakistan and if it had been attacked by terrorists, how would the Pakistani Government have handled the situation? "He replies briefly, "Very simple, Pakistani Government would have banned Double Sawari "pillion ride" on motorbikes" (A. u. Khan, 2008).

5.2. Pun – a shared comic device

Moreover, Shakespearean fools play with words just like jugglers show feats. They manipulate words to make their sentences witty, humorous, and aphoristic. In *As You Like It*, Touchstone says, "The more pity, the fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly" (1.2.76-77).(W. Shakespeare, 2019) In this sentence, one can observe alliteration of /f/and /w/' which is cacophonous and euphonic alliteration respectively. The adverb "wisely" is connected with the verb "speak" and qualifies the noun "fools" and the adverb "foolishly" is related to the verb "do" which qualifies the noun "wise men". The alliteration /f/ and /w/ sounds make the sentence coherent and fluent while the words "wisely" and "foolishly" establish a sharp contrast. The word play has been very popular in Bhandis and Mirasis. Almost every Bhand of Lahore stage plays with words efficiently. In the play, *Ik tera Sanaman Khana*, a Hijra (SkhawatNaz) does a verbal attack on another eunuch (Nawaz Anjum) and says, *Ay os banday nu pasand kar di ay jehra Phullay waich da ay. Tay baz okat tay o phullay vi vaich dainda ay, Jehray nai vi phullay hunday.* (Ik Tera Sanam Khana Full Stage Drama, n.d.) Here the word "Phullay" is used as a noun and also as an adjective. The word "phullay" is a pun here. It means corn and blossomed at the same time. In a stage play *Khirkki kay peechay*, Amanullah Khan asks a question seriously to his co-actor, "Teray dada Jee haayat nai yaaaaa... Wahayat ne"? (KHIRKI KE PEECHAY (FULL DRAMA) - MASTANA, AMANULLAH, SOHAIL AHMAD & KHALID ABBAS DAR, n.d.) Here, the word is repeated twice with addition of "wa" at the second time but the meaning of the two words is changed. Hayat means "alive" and "wahayat" means "shameless or "vulgar".

5.3. Comic License and Realism

Furthermore, Shakespearean clowns enjoy the freedom of speech. They can satirize the follies and weaknesses of anyone around them. Through their verbal wit, they expose truth and reality. But it is always very difficult for kings and dukes to bear the brunt of a clown. They lose their temper often and punish their clowns, totally neglecting their comic license. In *As You Like It* Touchstone is well aware of the short-tempered royal class and advises Celia to speak in front of these royal people keeping her fate in mind. He says, "Or as the Destinies decrees" (1.2.91).(Shakespeare, 1906) He further exposes his fear of being punished, "Nay, I shall never be aware of mine own wit till I break my skins against it" (2.4.54).(Shakespeare, 1906) In the *Twelfth Night*, Touchstone says, that foolishness is everywhere, just like the sun shines everywhere. The speaker is saying they wouldn't mind if the fool spent as much time with their master as with their mistress because they see wisdom in the fool's behavior. (3.1.36-39).(W. Shakespeare, 2019) Here lies the irony in the behavior of Royal Class people. Whenever a clown crosses the limit of the elites' pseudo sense of honor, they give a pretty tough time to the clowns. The condition persists even today. In India, a senior officer mal-treated Janswinder. Outside his office in the Civil Secretariat, Bhalla found himself in an altercation with a senior officer from the Punjab Government a few months back. Unbeknownst to the officer, he was tangling with a well-known Punjabi comedian, Jaswinder Bhalla, who hails from a tradition that doesn't take such incidents lightly. Bhalla, along with his colleague Bal Muskan Sharma, both rooted in the rich comedic tradition of Punjab, are hitting back at the state government with their sharp satire. They've released an impactful audio-video cassette to take a jab at the government's actions.

(SarbjitDhaliwal, 2008) This incident shows that both clowns and Bhands have been paying the price of their wit for long.

5.4. Satire and Candid Commentary

Additionally, Shakespearean clowns pinch by passing satirical remarks on others. Their satire is never malicious but reveals the follies of others. One can observe a sharp blow of satire when in *As You Like It* Touchstone says to Be Beau, "Thus men may grow wiser every day: it is the first time that ever I heard breaking of ribs were the sport for ladies" (1.2.119-20) (Shakespeare, 1906). Shakespearean fools satirize everyone; the low or the high, the rich or the poor, and the young or the old. Their range of satire is boundless. Straight forward pungent remarks and fearless commentary on society are the trademarks of the Bhands too. Amanullah Khan satirizes Traffic policemen and says that in the morning they speak politely and gradually they become tired and speak rudely in the evening. He makes fun of the ever-idle people of India and Pakistan. He says, "if you ask somebody where you are going, he will reply, "I'm going to take a meal!". And if you ask somebody where are you coming from, "He will reply, "I'm coming from home, having taken meal!". So, nobody does anything except take meal all the clay long" (Amanullah Khan). In a stage play *Ustajee*, Sohail Ahmad says to his younger brother who is a professional wrestler, "Take a lesson from Japanese wrestlers and leave your profession, Whenever some Japanese wrestler comes to Pakistan, the Pakistani doctors reserve beds for Pakistani wrestlers in advance" (Ustajee). (Aman ullah Khan, 2008)

5.5. Exposition and Comparison

In the Elizabethan Age, it was a trend to write love poetry, Sir Philip Sidney's poem "My true love Hath My Heart and I have his" is a fine example of Elizabethan love poetry. But many Elizabethan poets wrote love poetry as a fashion without any heartfelt gravity. In *As You Like It*, Touchstone's love story contains ridiculous love expressions which give a reference to Elizabethan artificial love poetry. Touchstone says to Rosalind, it means that when the speaker was in love, they did strange things. They broke their sword on a rock and gave it to someone who came to visit Jane Smile at night. They remember kissing a cricket bat and the milk that Jane's hands, which they found pretty, had squeezed from a cow. They also remember pretending a pea pod was Jane, taking out two peas, giving them to her, and saying, with tears, "Wear these for my sake." The speaker concludes that lovers do strange things, but just like everything else in life, the foolishness of love doesn't last forever. (2.4.43-52) (Shakespeare, 1906). Bhands are also well aware of the contemporary trends of their age and expose the wrong practices of contemporary society in a humorous way. The songs in old Pakistani movies of the seventies and eighties were a combination of meaningful poetry and attractive music. The heroes and heroines of those films were decent and vulgarity was a word alien to the film audience. The present Pakistani movies are facing a continuous downfall because poetry is teemed with vulgar puns and loud music. The female performers in these movies are instructed by the directors to expose their bodies. This present plight of Pakistani movies is ridiculed in a stage play, *Ustad Jee*, the *Ustad Jee* (Sohail Ahmad) says, "The old period of Pakistani film was great. In old songs, the heroine danced shyly and jumped gently to pluck the peas from the nearest branch of a tree. And when today's heroine becomes emotional she says "The Shagird" (Nawaz Anjurn) starts singing, "Choop lay ungoor bhanvay choos lay tuambian." (Aman ullah Khan, 2008)

5.6. The Use of Lampoon and Comic Similes

In addition, Shakespearean fools drive bayonets when they lampoon others. In the *Twelfth Night*, Feste declares Olivia a "fool" (1.5.61). (W. Shakespeare, 2019) In *As You Like It*, Touchstone calls Corim a "clown" (2.4.61) and proves Corim a pimp (3.2.74-81). (Shakespeare, 1906). Bhands is also famous for lampooning. They never spare anyone. An example of lampooning in the ancient Bhands tradition is given below. In the late 19th century, the Urdu term for shooting a gun was "goli daaghna," hence the term "bandooq daagh." Dagh Dehlavi, a renowned poet of the subcontinent, directed derogatory remarks towards the leader "Ustad" of the Bhands. Left with no recourse, Ustad had to endure the insult silently. Several weeks later, at a function where Dagh and Ustad was also present, later took decisive action. Ustad called a man onto the stage, handed him a gun, directed him towards Dagh, and commanded him to bud. Initially hesitant, guy eventually complied. Ustad, using colorful language, taunted Dagh until he fled the scene. Ustad pursued him to the Bazar, teaching Dagh a lesson about crossing paths with a Bhand. (Surai, 2008). The language of the Shakespearean Clown is decorated with similes. But they make a comparison to the funniest objects. Such similes can be called comic similes. In *As You Like It* "Touchstone says to Corim, " you're in a bad situation, like an egg that's poorly

cooked and burned on just one side. " (3.2.35-36).(Shakespeare, 1906) Bhands of Indian Punjab also make comic comparisons and receive thunderous clapping and laughter. Kapil Sharma is a famous comedian and actor of India. Like many other comedians of Pakistan and India, he started journey from theatre, and exhibits the qualities of traditional Bhands in his performances. In Kapil Sharma Show, Mr. Arora (Kapil Sharma) says to Sunil Grover, "Your horse like face makes me recall that my grandfather had a horse." In another episode of the same show, Sunil Grover compares his fat co-actor Kiku Sharda with a new tractor. Witty similes require the same wit and wisdom that a poet employs to compare two different objects having same qualities or characteristics.

8.7. Scatological Humour

The tradition of scatological humour starts from Aristophanic comedy. His plays, *The Wasps*, *The Knights*, and *The Acharnians* depict several examples of scatology. In *As You Like It*, on a couple of occasions, Touchstone uses scatological language, the clown or fool who belongs to the low class of the society and the people of lower class use vulgar language very frequently. They often speak the scatological language in their daily routine life. The upper class of society is well-mannered and very keen on the use of language. The use of scatological language makes Touchstone a real character. In *As You Like It*, he says to Corim, "Most shallow man! thou worms-meat, in respect of a good piece of flesh indeed! Learn of the wise, and perpend: civet is of a baser birth than tar, the very uncleanly flux of a cat. Mend the instance, shepherd" (3.2.62-65). (Shakespeare, 1906). When Corim says that by touching their sheep all the time their hands become greasy so, it is unclean to kiss each other's hands. At this Touchstone replies, "Why, do not your courtier's hands sweat? and is not the grease of a mutton as wholesome as the sweat of a man? Shallow, shallow. A better instance, I say; come" (3.2.72).(Shakespeare, 1906) The use of scatological humor is also evident in the Bhands Tradition. Amanullah Khan, several stage shows would use scatology in his witty dialogues. His use of scatology was also based upon observation of workaday life of a common man. Generally, in Pakistan, private contractors manage public toilets. They hire toilet cleaning workers who wash the excrement away and also take a meagre amount of money from those who use public toilets. This job is considered to be most disgraceful. Generally, people look down upon public toilet personnel. In a stage play "Khirkki Ke Peechay", Amanullah Khan Squats on the stage and Mastana passes a comic comment on him that the former looks like sitting in the toilet. Spontaneously, Amanullah Khan replies, "Why are you making fun of my sitting style? Your only duty is to take 3 Rupees from me." (KHIRKI KE PEECHAY (FULL DRAMA) - MASTANA, AMANULLAH, SOHAIL AHMAD & KHALID ABBAS DAR, n.d.) These comments raised thunderous laughter because Amanullah calls Mastana a toilet cleaner.

5.7. Singing

Additionally, Shakespearean clowns are singers as well. In *The Twelfth Night*, Sir Andrew praises Feste's singing quality. (2.3.18).(Shakespeare, 1906). Feste is a good singer who sings songs not merely to do his professional duty but he enjoys singing. He says, "I take pleasure in singing Sir" (2.4.67).(Shakespeare, 1906)
Feste sings,

*O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
Ostay and hear; your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low:
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.* (2.3.37-42)(Shakespeare, 1906)

The art of singing is considered a compulsory characteristic for every Bhand. In the ancient Bhand tradition, Dhadis and Rubabis were the title names of those Mirasis whose task was only singing. Bhands learnt the art of singing to follow their tradition. Among Pakistani Bhands, "Babbu Baral, Amanullah Khan, Albela, Sakhawat Naz, Nasir Pia, Fakhri Han, Khalid Abbas Dar, and Nawaz Annum are good singers. Babbu Baral is famous in Pakistan and India for his melodious throat. His song "Beetiyon Ruttan" received appreciation from the Indo-Pak audience. Especially, Amanullah Khan belonged to a traditional singers' family and, himself, was a very accomplished singer of classical and semi-classical style. Amanullah used this skill to mimic other singers and gathered a lot of praise.

5.8. Repartee and Comic Duals

Repartee is the sole comic device that receives spontaneous laughter from the audience. In both Twelfth Night and As You Like It, clowns use repartee to create humor. In As You Like It, Sir Oliver Martext says, "Is their none here-to give the woman!" (3.1.58). And touch stone replies, "I will not take her on a gift of any man" (3.1.59). (Shakespeare, 1906)

In the Twelfth Night, Viola says, "Art, not thou the Lady Olivia's fool?" (3.1.30) and Feste replies, No, indeed, sir; the Lady Olivia has no irrationality: she will keep no jester, sir, till she be married; and fools are as like husbands as pilchards are to herrings; the husband's the bigger: I am indeed another fool, but her corrupter of words" (3.1.31-34) (Shakespeare, 1906)

Bhanda's specialty lies in repartee which is purely a Punjabi comic device. Even today, in several villages of Punjab, Bhanda enhances the beauty of festivals and functions through fighting repartee duals. The Bhanda of Lahore, Gujranwala, and Faisalabad use this comic device skillfully. In Twelfth Night Malvolio gives a reference to the verbal fight between the clowns. (1.5.74-75). (W. Shakespeare, 2019).

The verbal fight or the repartee dual is often fought by Mastana and Tariq Teddy in several Pakistani Punjabi stage plays. A significant example of this repartee dual or comic fight in the stage play named "Le Ja Sakhiya" between Sohail Ahmad and Jawad Wasim, with a refrain "Aye kon sahib ne?" Sohail Ahmad has a big face and Jawad Wasim is bald headed. Jawad says to Sohail Ahmad, "Who is this person who fights with that man who shows him a small mirror?" Sohail Ahmad replies, "Who is this person who start quarrelling with comb sellers?" Then Jawad says, "Who is this person who bathes in a dry canal?" Sohail Ahmad fights back, "Who is this person whom the barber says that he will pour water on his head to check if there is any puncture in the head?" This repartee dual starts 59:05 minutes of the play and end at 1:04 hours. The duration of this unscripted repartee dual is 6.3 minutes.

5.9. Hyperbole

Moreover, exaggeration is one of the most effective tools to create humor, the writer draws a sharp contrast between appearance and reality, and as a result, the situation, statement, or the character becomes comic. Touchstone ridicules Williams, calls him a rustic and illiterate person, and threatens him to leave the company of Audrey. The task of a clown is to entertain, to amuse, and only to do verbal fights with others. The situation becomes humorous when Touchstone talks like a wrestler and frightens Williams by saying, "...I kill thee, make thee away, translate thy life into death, thy liberty into bondage: I will deal in poison with thee, or bastinado, or steel; I will bandy with thee in faction; I will overrun thee with policy; I will kill thee a hundred and fifty ways: therefore tremble and depart" (5,1.51-56), (Shakespeare, 1906). Amanullah Khan, a celebrated Bahanda of the subcontinent relates a funny story of a traditional wrestler of Patiala in a comedy show, Great Indian Laughter Challenge on Star One Channel. The wrestlers of Indo-Pak take pleasure to boast of their physical strength and enjoy telling the stories of their victorious fights; self-praise is their favorite topic, and Amanullah Khan funnily mentions their habit,

"Pattiala ma bohot mojan hoakarti then. Ik din kia hoa k meray ghar ma chor aa gya, Tail main ne mala hua thaa, langoot main ne bandha hua tha, fikr mujhay kasay ka nahi tha, Us ne meray he bistar se aik bari chadar nikalli or ghar ka samaan bandhnay laga. Samaan ziada tha, ab sohray se Chukiya naa jaway. Mene khud chakwaya, kiu k, tail main ne mala hua thaa, langoot main ne bandha hua tha, fikr mujha ykasay ka nahi tha. Ab Chor agay agay main peechay peechay. Main ne kaha chalta ja sohray kahan tak jaye ga. Rastay main ik neher a gai. Sohrav ko tairna ata tha. Who neher main utra or dosray knaray utr gya. Main ne kaha chaltaja sohray kahan tak jaye ga kiukay, Tail main ne mala hua thaa, langoot main ne bandha hua tha, fikr mujhay kasay ka nahi tha. Main pul kay oper Say chakkar kat k aya. Tail Malaya ka mala reh gva, chor or langot ka kuch pata nai chala." (Aman ullah Khan, 2008)

5.10. Themes and topics

The theme of love and marriage has been a universal topic for several writers. Sir Frances Bacon wrote an essay, Of Marriage and Single Life. Jane Austen wrote novels on the theme of love and marriage. Shakespearean clowns use their wit and humor and comment on the marriage topic in their unique way. In As You Like It, Touchstone says to Duke Senior, " ... poor virgin, sir, an ill-favored thing, sir, but mine own; poor humor of mine, sir, to take that that no man

else will: rich honesty dwells like a miser, sir, in a poor house; as your pearl in your foul oyster" (5.4.54-59) (Shakespeare, 1906) In the Twelfth Night, Feste says to Maria, "Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage (I .5. 17) (W. Shakespeare, 2019).

Bhands also choose the marriage topic for their witty remarks. In several stage dramas of Pakistan, "Bhands show the traditional fight of husbands and wives: they mention the mistrust of wives of their husbands, expose the quarrelsome, talkative, and spendthrift nature of traditional Pakistani wives, and many other minute aspects of matrimonial life. In a Punjabi Stage Drama, the bride-groom (Sakhawat Naz), says to his bride (Amanat Chan), "O my princess!" The bride (very dark-complexioned and ugly) replies, "Lie! I'm not a princess at all, how can I be with that face? You have started the first discussion of our matrimonial life with a false sentence." After exchanging some humorous dialogues the bride says, "From now onwards, will you please return home at nine regularly." The bridegroom replies, "I am your husband, not Azhar Lodhi (Azhar Lodhi was a newscaster on PTV's nightly 9 o' clock news bulletin)!" (Roti Khol Deo).

5.11. Disguise and Double Roles

Feste is a professional clown. His skill reaches its peak when he visits Malvolio in a dark cell in the disguise of Sir Topas, the curate. He proves himself as an adept actor and speaks exactly as some real clergyman does. In the dark cell, he changes his voice and manner of talking very skillfully and Malvolio believes without the slightest doubt that Feste and Sir Topas both have come to meet him. Malvolio cries for help, "Sir Topas, Sir Topas!" (4.2.56) and when Feste sings in his original voice after a very short time, Malvolio cries again, "Fool!" He pleads, "Fool, I say!" (4.2.73).(W. Shakespeare, 2019).

Similarly, in a Punjabi stage play, *Ik Tera Sanam Khana*, Sohail Ahmad performs a double role; a Ghunda (Moti Dogar) who is very kind to the people of his Kachi Basti and protects the poor residents from the cruelty of a rich man. The rich man wants to demolish that Basti and wishes to use that land for his vested benefits. He kills Moti Dogar (Sohail Ahmad) and the Basti dwellers bring a eunuch who takes after Moti Dogar to protect them from the cruelty of that rich man. In the end, the Basti residents and the eunuch win to save their houses. Sohail Ahmad performs the role of Moti Dogar very effectively because his huge physique and heavy voice suit exactly the role of a Gunda. But the role of a Hijra (eunuch) is a challenge for him. He changes his voice and speaks in a feminine tone. His gestures, facial expressions, and accent exactly resemble those of traditional Hijras of Pakistan. He receives thunderous applause and laughter throughout the play from the audience. His acting proves that Bhands are skillful actors and can perform double roles skillfully like Shakespearean fools.

6. Conclusion

The Bhand tradition originated centuries ago in the sub-continent and was fully developed in the period of the Mughal Emperors of India. It is still alive because almost all Bhands or Mirasis follow the footsteps of their forefathers. Bhands are comedians, actors, singers, dancers, and professional entertainers like Shakespearean clowns. They are blessed with wit and wisdom. Like Shakespearean fools, they use aphoristic sentences to articulate their wise ideas. Both Bhands and clowns are well aware of contemporary trends and fashions. They also comment on the topics of universal appeal. Repartee, lampoon, satire, wordplay, irony, and hyperboles are the common qualities of Shakespearean fools and the Bhands. Shakespearean clowns can be called the Bhands of the Elizabethan stage while the Bhands might be considered the Shakespearean clowns of the sub-continent. Technological advancement and the recent reign of electronic and social media resurrected and evolved Bhand Tradition. Previously, Bhands were limited to the villages, towns, theatre etc. Their comic skills were also unexplored. Now, the appraisers like Aftab Iqbal, a Pakistani businessman, T.V host, journalist and the founder of a media group, explore skilful Bhands and utilize their comic skills to entertain and educate the public like Shakespeare introduced clowns to amuse and enlighten his contemporaries. Thus, although the original Bhand Culture is not altogether intact, yet the Bhand Tradition is evolving and progressing with greater scope and better possibilities.

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