

Thereafter, he made his permanent abode in Sehwan. Dynastic politics was more important than spiritual values to Sheikh Sadar-ud-din. He did not follow his esteemed father's decision to appoint Fakhruddin Iraqi as his successor. Sadar-ud-din created such an adverse situation for his brother-in-law, Fakhruddin Iraqi that he decided to leave Multan, together with his family for good. Thus Sadar-ud-din became the hereditary successor to his father.<sup>3</sup> This revisionism and betrayal of the mystic ideology of Baha-ud-Din Zakaria by his son prompted Sheikh Usman Marvandi to delink himself from the Suharwardiya fraternity. In his life sketch of Iraqi, William C. Chittick has narrated the sad event that resulted in Iraqi's permanent departure from Multan:

Sehwan was, at this time, a hotbed of rival sects and creeds. As soon as it was known that a great Saint had taken up his residence outside the city, the pirs and holy men put their heads together fearing greatly for their livelihood. As a broad hint that Shaikh Usman should go away, they sent him a messenger with a bowl of milk filled to the brim. Just as the bowl could not hold a drop more, so the city had no more room for another *fakir*. Usman made a fitting reply to these worldly-minded saints. He floated a flower on the milk, and asked the messenger to take the bowl back. No reply could have been apter, or conveyed his meaning better. True, the city could hold no more fakirs, but Usman did not intend to be a *fakir* like others. He would be that rarer thing—a flower of saintliness, whose fragrance and beauty brought all men together and reconciled them in a common worship of God.<sup>4</sup>

Muhammad Zain-ul-Aabideen Rashidee in his booklet entitled *Shahbaz-e-waliat* has described him as a *Sharia* bound Qalandar. He is of the opinion that Lal Shahbaz Qalandar has nothing to do with the Ismailee community.<sup>5</sup> Syed Abdul Qadir Thathvi's has identified him as the Red Falcon of the divine heights.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Haider Sindhi has highlighted his

**Fateh Muhammad Malik**

## Lal Shahbaz Qalandar and The Popular Image of Sainthood in Pakistan

Shaikh Usman Marvandi (1177-1274), popularly known as Lal Shahbaz (Red Falcon) Qalandar was born and brought up in Marvand, Azerbaijan. At the age of seven he committed the whole text of Qur'an to his memory. He was initiated in Sufism at the age of twenty-four by his own father, Shaikh Kabir-ud-din, himself a Sufi. Lal Shahbaz travelled extensively through the Muslim world and reached Multan in 1263. Both the Governor of Multan and the founder of the Suhrawardi Sufi order in India were fascinated by his personality. The spiritual sovereign of Multan initiated him "into the Suhrawardiyya order and gave him his own *khirqah*".<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the sad demise of his *Murshid*, Lal Shahbaz had to suffer from the most severe emotional crisis of another kind. Adrain Duarte's description of the tragedy is as follows:

Shaikh Usman loved the daughter of his friend Baha-ud-din Zakariyya. The father knew and approved of their love and had promised the girl's hand in marriage to the Qalandar. As soon as he had made up his mind to settle down in Sind, Shaikh Usman turned his steps towards Multan in order to claim the hand of his promised bride. Shaikh Baha-ud-din, however, had died in the meanwhile, and his son Sadr-ud-din refused to give his sister to Usman. The refusal cast a deep gloom over the Saint's life and he returned sadly to Sehwan, only to die there in 1274, of grief and disappointment.<sup>2</sup>

I am the royal falcon of *Lamakan*, I cannot be contained in space. I am the legendry unseen bird, I cannot be represented by any sign or symbol.

شہبازِ لامکانم، من در مکاں نگنجم  
عشقائی بے نشانم، من در نشان نگنجم

I, Usman Marvandi, am moving about in this world in such a state of intoxication that I can see nothing except He. He is in me or me in Him.<sup>9</sup>

منم عثمان مروندی چرا مستی دریں عالم  
کہ جز یابو و یامن ہو دگر چیزے نمی دانم

While discussing the mendicant Saints of South Asia, Anna Suvorova has observed: "In the legends of popular Islam, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar is depicted as an infernal dancer, in flowing scarlet clothes dancing on burning coals, surrounded by tongues of flame.....There are verses and hymns in Persian ascribed to Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. The key image of his poetry is the dance of death, the convulsions of a person hanged on the gallows (*daar*) who is a martyr of Divine love."<sup>10</sup> Katherine Pratt Ewing's detailed discussion of the concept of Qalandar in Sufism is illuminating. Tracing the historical background of the emergence of the Qalandriya order she has aptly observed that:

"Both Jami and his predecessor Suhrawardi, who lived three centuries apart, made the distinction between men of their own time 'who took the dress of the *qalandars* in order to indulge in debaucheries' and the true qalandar, whose spiritual concerns are genuine (Trimingham 1971:268; Schimmel 1975:88),.... In other literary contexts the qalandar's position is exalted, despite his often disreputable behavior. He seems to have escaped his abjection. The qalandar's exaltation is particularly evident in Persian Sufi poetry written in the eleventh through fifteenth centuries, though it is a theme even in the

contribution to the educational advancement of the area. He had established a residential institution in which students from far and wide come to stay in order to receive instruction in various fields of knowledge. Dr. Haider has included more than 200 poems of the qalandar in his book.<sup>7</sup> His own description of the spiritual journey is as follows:

I have come to a raging river, where man is in great travail. How strange it is that there is neither a boat nor a boat man.

رسیدم من بدریائے کہ موجش آدمی خوار است  
نہ کشتی اندر آں دریا نہ ملّائے، عجب کار است

Shariat (law) is the boat and Tariqat (way) is the sails/ Haqiqat (reality) is the anchor and reason alone can find no way.

شریعت کشتی باشد، [کذا] طریقت بادبان او  
حقیقت لنگرے باشد کہ راہ فقر دشوار است

Anna Suvorova has pointed out that "the key image of his poetry is the dance of death, the convulsions of a person hanged on the gallows (*daar*) who is a martyr of divine love."<sup>8</sup> As far as his poetry is concerned, he has declared, time and again, that he is a follower of the divine intoxicated tradition of Mansur Al-Hallaj. Says he:

For the love of the friend I dance over fire, sometime I roll in the desert, and sometime on the thorns.

ز عشق دوست ہر ساعت درونِ نار می رقصم  
گہ بر خاک می رقصم، گہ بر خار می رقصم

I have become notorious in your love. I beseech you to come to me. I am not afraid of this disrepute, and am dancing in every Bazar.

شدم بدنام در عشقش بیا اے پارسا اکنوں  
نمی ترسم ز رسوائی، بہر بازار می رقصم

I am Usman Marvandi, the companion of Mansoor Hallaj, so I am not afraid of condemnation but like him ecstatically dance at the gallows.

منم عثمان مروندی کہ یارِ خواجہ منصور  
ملامت می کند خلتے، و من بر دار می رقصم

Some other such songs say:

With tearful eyes,  
I came to beg happiness from you  
O Hussaini, Red Folcon

اکھاں دے وچ اتھرو لے کے  
خوشیاں منگن آئی آں  
حسینی لال قلندر

Save me from grief O Red Folcon  
Qalandar  
Restore my dignity  
where else I could go to share my pain  
I don't know anyone else who can  
share my grief.  
You are the only one, on whose door  
I can knock.  
O Hussaini Red Folcon

بچالے غم تو مینوں قلندر لال  
رکھ لاج مری لچ پال  
میں دکھاری  
درداں ماری  
کس نوں حال سداواں  
تیرے درنوں چھڈ کے سائیاں، کیہڑے درتے جاواں  
حسینی لال قلندر

The dark night of suffering,  
has engulfed me.  
Illuminate my dark night,  
with your inner light

میرے دکھ دے گھور ہنیرے  
چھا گئے میرے چار چوہیرے  
کرناں سٹ کے  
دے چائن دکھ ٹال

The popular image of the saint is reflected in the above quoted folk songs in veneration of the Qalandar. A German scholar Jurgen Wasim Frembgen had spent five days and nights at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar on pilgrimage. He shared his observations and experiences with his readers in a book entitled "At the Shrine of the Red Sufi". He witnessed people from every nook and cranny of Pakistan presenting their devotional songs at the shrine. He had observed that:

"On each of the principle days of the festival, there is a mehndi presentation to the Qalandar's Shrine....Truly the Urs is a ritual simulation of, a wedding 'Eh mehndi murshid Laal di' (this is the henna night of my spiritual

twentieth-century poetry of Muhammad Iqbal... Broadly, the qalandar signified a counter to the excesses of formalism, where knowledge has been linked to social status and power. It was the antithesis of forms of knowledge that had, in their institutional manifestations, become distorted by a search for prestige, in which selfish goals have distorted community orientations."<sup>11</sup>

The transformation of Lal Shahbaz into a *qalandar* was a positive reaction against the thoroughly materialistic attitude of some Sheikhs of *Suharwardiya* Sufi order. Instead of the king he identified himself with the suffering humanity. In the popular imagination 'this royal falcon of the divine heights (*La-Makan*)' is very much an earthly creature, who has devoted his life to serve the depressed, dejected, persecuted and poverty-ridden population. This mystical way of life gave him immense and everlasting popularity. His fame spread even to the remotest corners of the Indus Valley after his death. Each year his Urs is celebrated in Sehwan. *Dhamal* and *Mehndi* ceremonies are a unique feature of the celebrations. As mentioned earlier, the marriage ceremony of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar could not be performed during his life time because of his unfulfilled love. It appears as if his devotees perform this ceremony as an annual tribute to him by way of sharing his grief. During this music and dance festival, folk songs in veneration of the Saint are sung, sometimes in an ecstatic manner. The image of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in these devotional folk songs, composed in various dialects of Punjabi language is of a saint gifted with the power of intercession between God and the suffering humanity.

O red-robed, protect me always,  
Jhule Lal  
Friend of Sindh, of Sehwan,  
God-intoxicated Qalandar,  
Every breath intoxicated by you,  
Qalandar (Translation by Fatima Bhutto)<sup>12</sup>

اولال میری پت رکھو بھلا  
جھولے لال  
سندھڑی دا، سہون دا، سخی شہباز  
سخی لچ پال قلندر  
داماد مست قلندر!

not in keeping with the dignity of the great saint....The Government has now sponsored a development plan, the foundation stone of which was laid by the prime minister Mr. Z. A. Bhutto on 27th January 1974.....The scheme envisages construction of a housing colony consisting of 150 quarters to rehabilitate the persons displaced by development around the mausoleum. A number of plots, each measuring 240 sq. yards, have been developed on which two room houses are being constructed with space left for addition of more rooms. Other shelterless people are being given one-room quarters on 80 sq. yd. plots.<sup>14</sup>

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2. Dr. Adrain Duarte, *The Beggar Saint of Sehwan and Some Sketches of Sind*, (Karachi: Elite Publishers, 1974), p.8
3. William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson (Translators), *Fakhurddin Iraqi: Divine Flashes*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), p.41
4. Dr. Adrain Duarte, op. cited, p.8
5. Muhammad Zain-ul-Aabideen Rashidee, *Shahbaz-e-Waliat*, (Larkana: Sadaat Academy, 1998), p.20
6. شاہباز نشین لاہوت شاہ اورنگ خطہ ملکوت  
اہل دل، عارف معارف حق صاحب وجد و تارک مطلق  
شاہ عثمان، شاہباز لقب اشرف الدات ہم شریف نسب
7. Ghulam Haider Sindhi, *Hayat-e-Qalandar Shahbaz*, (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research Pakistan, 2006), p.179.
8. Anna Suvarova, op. cited, p.187
9. Inam Muhammad (Translator), *Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar of Sehwan Sharif*, (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1978), pp.9-10
10. Anna Suvarova, op. cited, p.187
11. Katherine Pratt Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis and Islam*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp.235, 236, 231.
12. Fatima Bhutto, *Pakistan's embattled shrines*, (New York: The New York Times,

leader Lal), can be heard, then the refrain, '*Jeewe Laal, oh sohna Laal*' (long live Lal, Oh, you beautiful Lal). And again touchingly, the hymn-like invocation, 'Oh Jeewe Laal, Oh mera sohna murshid.....Sehwan itself is full of life, enraptured and intoxicated in its veneration of Lal Shahbaz. Around 3 O' clock in the night, I see a large group of Dervishes, who have formed a human chain, pass by the tents below the ancient fort."<sup>13</sup>

These songs in veneration of their spiritual guide and healer have drawn on elements of fantasy and folklore to create timeless master pieces. Side by side these laments of the wretched of the earth, Dhamal and Qawwali sessions are regularly held at the shrine. Dhamal is a devotional dance by the fervent devotees to a drum beat that rises to a crescendo. Qawwali (*Sama*) is Sufi Music for the purpose of realising spiritual ideals of Sufism. It arouses divine ecstasy. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan has given a worldwide popularity to the qawwali song: *dama dam mast qalandar* by his performance in the East as well as in the West.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had an enduring fascination with Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. He had made special arrangements to install a golden gate at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had transformed *dama dam mast qalandar* into a revolutionary slogan during his mass movement against Ayub dictatorship in early seventies. Ever since *dama dam mast qalandar* has become one of the most popular slogans of political processions. Katherine Pratt Ewing has quoted the following few lines from a booklet published by the Sindh Information Department:

At the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sind, one of Pakistan's major shrine and a particular focus of pilgrimage for qalandars, the government of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was busy constructing housing, as a government-sponsored pamphlet proudly reported. The environment of the mausoleum of Qalandar Lal Shahbaz is

International Edition, February 24, 2017).

13. Jurgen Wasim Frembgen, *At the Shrine of the Red Sufi*, (Oxford, 2012), pp.93-94

14. Katherine Pratt Ewing, op. cited, P.208

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