

# SUFI RHYTHMS

*interpreted in free verse*

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*in memory of my dear friend*

**LAEEQ BABREE**

*the Sufi Rhythm of the twentieth century*



”مٹھو گھوڑے“ توں ”کھنکر“ تیکر آوندے آوندے لیتق باہری لیرولیر ہو گیا  
 اے انہاں دیاں اے نغماں ذات دیاں اوہ دھجیاں نیں بنہاں توں اوہ اپنے لہو  
 وچ رنگ کے ساڑے سامنے پیش کررے نیں۔ سلطان باہو نے آکھیا اے۔  
 تن من میرا پرزے پرزے جیویں درزی دیاں لیراں ہو  
 انہاں لیراں دی گل کھنی پا کے رساں سنگ فقیراں ہو  
 سلطان باہو دے ساناں وچ اپنی آواز رلا کے بولن والا لیتق باہری صرف  
 ساڑے عمدہ دا نمائندہ ای نہیں بلکہ پنجابی شاعری دی روایت توں نویں خاہاں  
 نال جوڑن دا وسیلہ وی اے۔ لیتق باہری دے شعری تجربے وچ شرکت لئی  
 جس درویشی دی لوڑ اے اوہی درویشی انسان دی نجات دا ذریعہ اے۔ فراہسی  
 زبان دے سکالر ہندے ہویاں انہاں نیں پنجابی زبان دے نال اپنا تخلیقی رشتہ  
 قائم رکھیا اے ”کھنکر“ اس رشتے دا پھل سونہا تے کھرا نمونہ اے۔

(احمد داؤد)

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# FOREWORD

In *Sufi Rhythms* Professor Harjeet Singh Gill has rendered in free verse a selection of the compositions of the Sufi poets of the Punjab. These texts presented different linguistic and conceptual registers. To begin with were the steady rhythms of Baba Farid and Sultan Bahu. They were followed by the extremely sophisticated diction and concepts of Shah Hussain. With Bulleh Shah we have the resounding notes of his rustic, down to earth, popular lore. Laeeq Babree continues the sacred tradition of the Sufi Babas with an admixture of post-modern consciousness. Translating these musical and mystical notes was not an easy task but it is hoped that the earlier experience of Nanak Bani felicitated this enterprise of the author.

S. S. Boparai  
Vice-Chancellor

## PREFACE

When Indian and Pakistani soldiers were killing each other in 1965, Laeeq Babree and I used to discuss, over glasses of red wine, the nuances of Punjabi Sufi poetry at the Cité Universitaire in Paris. There was always a matter of comparison with the French poets of the nineteenth century, especially of the symbolist movement, very close in rhythm and concept to the Sufis of the Punjab. These French “Sufis” presented a certain universal anguish and suffering that is the lot of all those who delve deep within themselves and transcend this mundane world. Of course, Charles Baudelaire was the most distinguished “Sufi” of them all.

The interpretations of the Punjabi Sufi compositions in English free verse has not been an easy task. It was, in fact, an impossible enterprise, and yet I thought, I must attempt at interpreting in English rhythm and resonance what the great Sufis had articulated in the most appropriate idiom. There was also the question of different linguistic registers. To begin with were the steady rhythms of Baba Farid and Sultan Bahu. They were followed by the extremely sophisticated diction and concepts of Shah Hussain. The fourth register was that of Bulleh Shah with his rustic, down to earth, very popular lore. With Laeeq Babree the tone and texture changed radically. The voice of Babree is pure and sublime, deeply rooted in Sufi metaphysics no doubt but there is also a very prominent



streak of post-modern consciousness. No wonder, all these variations of the musical notes could not be easily communicated in a foreign idiom... Off and on I took liberties with the texts to harmonise the discourse. I hope the Sufi Babas will forgive this indulgence... In any case, most of the anthologies are very poorly edited. Apart from the numerous internal variations, the number of compositions assigned to each poet also varies considerably...HSG.

# BABA FARID

( 1173 – 1268 )



when the streams were inundated  
none could swim across  
none could help  
when it was all over  
none could hold  
the burning wheels  
none could go against the will of the Almighty  
the mothers breasts fed no milk  
there was no reunion

Farid counsels his friends  
it would be too late  
when the swan of the soul leaves  
when this body is reduced to dust !

the wedding day approaches  
the moment of departure arrives  
the messenger of death appears  
the light of life dims  
the bones crackle  
nothing can stop the inevitable march of Time  
the bride of life will marry the bridegroom of death  
the wedding ritual will follow  
none can hold the destined hour !

Farid, if you perceive the truth  
do not indulge in evil deeds  
delve deep into your being  
and realise the futility of earthly needs !

Farid, if you are maltreated  
do not react with violence and projection  
visit the Other  
and kiss his feet in humility and affection !

Farid, those who did not  
meditate and reflect  
when the hair were black  
and the body was young  
they would never perceive the truth  
when the hair are white  
and the body withers !

Farid, I saw those beautiful eyes  
the eyes that bewitched the whole world  
they could not bear the shades of kajal  
they are now infested with birds nests !

Farid, do not belittle the dust  
the living march on its bed  
the dead are buried under its crust !

Farid, the nights are long  
in solitude, in suffering  
there is anguish, there is pain  
in dependence and despair  
there is frustration, there is disdain !



Farid, it is dark and cloudy  
it is raining, it is muddy  
if I walk, I am soaked  
if I stay, I forsake my Love

let my shawl be drenched  
let heavens inundate the streets  
I shall not retrieve my steps  
I shall not abandon my Love !

Farid, my bread is made of wood  
my hunger is my soup  
those who indulge in luxuries  
whose bread is buttered  
will suffer for ever  
will be burdened with misery and misfortune !

Farid, be patient with rough bread and cold water  
do not be jealous of those  
whose bread is buttered  
whose indulgence is the target of every envy !

Farid, a night without my Love  
is a night in anguish, in pain  
ask those who live for ever in solitude  
how they spend their nights  
in suffering, in disdain !

I do not regret my youth  
if my heart resonates with love  
Farid, how many young are withering  
bereft of communion  
bereft of love's reunion !

solitude is the prince of all emotions  
the rhythm of all reflections  
Farid, the body that does not suffer solitude  
is a body deserted and destitute !

Farid, precious lives were spent  
in building palaces and mansions  
all ended in nothing  
death smothered them all  
in burial grounds, in dust, in desolation !

Farid, do not indulge  
in palaces, in mansions  
when the end comes  
when the dust covers it all  
there will be none to console  
none to utter a word of affection !

Farid, search for the lake  
whose pristine waters  
purify body and soul  
do not fall in dirty ponds  
of filth and mud  
to drench your being  
in the depths of darkness and depression !

Farid, black is my robe  
and black is my age  
drenched in evil deeds  
people call me a sage !

as a young girl  
I dreamt and played  
married, I was lost in the mire of worldly deeds  
Farid, I repent, I regret  
but I cannot be a young girl again  
there is no rejuvenation  
all efforts are in vain !

a head that does not bow before his Creator  
is a head worthless and condemned  
a burning wood for fire  
it is burnt in the oven of remorse and regret !

Farid, meet evil with good  
show no hatred or revenge  
your being will stay away from vanity  
healthy and pure in serenity !

Farid, I thought  
I alone suffered misery and misfortune  
as I looked around  
every house was consumed with the same fire  
with the same dejection and gloom !

the stream is overflowing  
the currents are strong and frightening  
with the wit and the spirit of the boatman  
the boat remains afloat and safe  
of all danger and disdain !



Farid, the body decays  
a skeleton of bones lingers  
and yet no news of the grace of God  
what misfortune  
what destiny awaits the destitute !

these eyes have witnessed  
days in indulgence  
and days in love and care  
Farid, none cares for the other  
the self weighs over every affair !

a tree on the bank of a river  
vacillates in hope and despair  
Farid, the unbaked pot  
will be dissolved in the running stream  
one day or the other !

Farid, the mansions and dwellings  
will all be left behind  
the graveyards will reduce the bodies to dust  
in the final grind !

Farid, the approaching death  
is foreseen as the descending bank of the river  
the fires of hell are frightening  
the cries of the victims are deafening !

there are some who meditate and reflect  
who perceive the truth  
and there are others  
who worry not about the ensuing pains

those who spend their lives in honest deeds  
need not bother  
about the fires of hell  
or the hazards of misfortune !

on the bank of a river  
a crane was meditating on his game  
suddenly a hawk swept him away

all reflections were forgotten  
all life was extinguished  
what was never thought of  
never dreamt of  
was pushed into oblivion  
in a moment of God's wrath  
in a moment of providential act !

Farid, blessed are those  
who dwell in the vast spaces of the woods  
living on flowers and fruits  
in serenity, in sublimity  
they enjoy the company of the Creator !

Farid, the season has turned  
the woods tremble and the leaves have fallen  
the four corners of the universe are searched in disdain  
there is no sight of my Love  
all efforts are in vain !

Farid, those who have forgotten their Creator  
are left with frightening forms  
they find no peace in this world  
they expect no serenity in the other !



# SHAH HUSSAIN

( 1538 – 1599 )





this is but a brief stay  
there is no return  
there will be no flowers again  
no spring either

deal in honest deeds  
beyond all repentance, all deception  
beyond all horizons, all projections

Hussain, the faqir of the Master pleads  
in the end, all will be reduced to dust  
spend your last days  
in humble supplication, in reflection !

I came to spin with my friends  
I know not how to spin  
I began to play  
I began to sing  
the spinning wheel is set aside  
I brought loads of cotton to spin  
I know not where it is all gone  
others have been spinning for hours  
I am lost in wilderness  
others are proud of their spinning  
I got nothing to show  
nothing to prove my finesse  
Hussain, the able girls will be admired by their Love  
I will regret in vain !

friends, spinning all day

at all hours

I am restless, I am tired

after a year of spinning

I have but a single roll to show

how will my Love admire me

such a novice, such an ignorant girl

happily, my spinning wheel is broken

I need not spin any more

Hussain, the faqir of the Master says

nothing stays

this world is a matter of days !

o innocent, ignorant girl  
you have spent all life in spinning  
day and night  
you spin, you wind, you rewind  
a wrong spin, an awkward step  
will land you in trouble  
your Love will not appreciate your ignorance

when the message arrives  
there is no delay  
Hussain, the faqir says  
one cannot alter  
the divine ways !

in the end  
it will be a matter of deeds  
the judge cares not  
whether you are a sufi or a bhangi  
a faqir or a hippy  
it all depends upon His will  
none can alter His order  
He is one, He is numerous  
He is here, He is every where  
He is the cause of every spectacle  
Hussain, the faqir says  
she is the beloved of the Master  
whose heart vibrates in love  
who follows her Love's ways !

come friends  
let us sing and dance  
let us play in the streets of our father  
soon it will be all over  
there will be no mother to let us play

I yearn to meet my Love  
I am scared of the jealous eyes  
my friends are happy in love  
they live in big mansions  
they enjoy every moment of their life

my spinning is stopped  
there is but a single roll to show  
I am scared  
I am afraid of the unknown

my friends are enjoying their swings  
on the big peepal tree  
they swing and sing  
they bother not  
what awaits them  
at their in-laws  
in the next world

Hussain, the faqir says  
this stay is a matter of days  
none can alter the Master's ways !



the river is deep  
the night is dark  
bereft of good deeds  
how can I cross this river of sorrow and suffering

there is none to help me  
none to take me across  
the boatman is angry  
my cries and prayers are in vain

all my friends are happy in love  
I am lonely and sad  
Hussain, the faqir says  
I yearn and linger with the same refrain !

please, mother, let me play  
who else will play in your courtyard  
all this play is an illusion  
nothing stays for ever  
I am scared, I am trembling  
will my Love embrace me

this world is mortal  
I have wasted my youth  
I was so careless and lazy  
I know not what lies ahead

Shah Hussain is the faqir of the Master  
he lives in His will  
in the end one has to leave this world  
with no time for repentance and remorse  
with no time to follow the divine discourse !

In this composition, the young unmarried girl pleads with her mother to allow her to play, for her carefree days at the parental home are numbered. Once she is married, she would leave the

parents home for ever and that would also be the end of her playing and the beginning of a new life full of responsibilities. She is unsure, for she does not know what lies ahead. Joy of the union and fear of the unknown are interrelated. The narrative-poem operates at two levels : the anthropological and the cosmological. At the anthropological level we encounter the cultural infrastructure of the kinship system in the medieval Punjab, the special relation of the daughter and the mother, the system of marriage where the daughter is passed on to the other family, the social structure with its complexities, intrigues, exploitations and maneuvers. The feudal norms of honour and chastity are emphasized. Towards the end, the poet suggests that one should rather avoid this anthropological cobweb to concentrate on the more sublime pursuit of gnosis, the knowledge that involves the passionate desire to embrace the Absolute.

steadily you wear your salu  
steadily you wear your salu

my salu is precious  
it is a gift of my Love  
several friends came to see it  
all appreciated its finesse

I hung my salu on the peg  
a neighbour wanted to borrow it  
my salu cannot be given away  
my love cannot be bartered

this salu is from far away Kashmir  
it has traversed snow clad mountains  
it has travelled all around  
the known world and the unknown universe

this salu is from Gujarat  
I am afraid of the first night  
the first encounter with the sublime light

this salu is from far away Multan  
only God knows the secrets of the heart  
only He can measure the depths of my faith  
only He can fathom the unknown straits

this salu is strange  
there is none  
with whom I can share my anguish  
to whom I can disclose my pain

this salu is put together  
with love and affection and expectation  
only God forsaken will wear it  
it can never be exchanged  
its secrets can never be betrayed

all my friends have their salus  
they are all branches of the same tree  
but none compares with thee

the colour of the salu knows  
it cannot last for ever  
the departure is immanent  
the night is dark  
and the woods are frightening

Hussain, the faqir pleads with faith and fortitude  
God is beyond all certitudes !

In one of the most beautiful poetic articulations, Shah Hussain constitutes the discourse of *salu*, the red-orange shawl, a symbol of love and affection, of endearment and longings, of union and separation. It is a gift of love which is extremely personal and existential and thus obviously cannot be shared with any other person. In its extreme existential intimacy, it presents a universe of fantasies and images in an ambiance charged with mysterious depths and awesome distances. For a young girl in a small village in the medieval Punjab, Kashmir, Gujarat and Multan evoke images of far away places, out of any physical or spiritual reach. They serve almost as cardinal points of a universe of love which stretches from the highest snow covered mountains and the most obtrusive paths of Kashmir to the burning sun and the desert of Multan and the forbidden swamps of Gujarat. Gujarat is in any case a mythical name attached to several places in the old Punjab and beyond it. These images or poetic flights do not circumscribe only a geographical territory, Shah Hussain creates a universe of love and longings, of solitude and anguish, of the most mysterious depths and darkness in the wilderness which can be imagined only in the surrealistic world. It is overwhelmed by the celebration of love and also by the anguish of solitude and the transitory nature of the colour of *salu*, or the ways of this world. The extreme loneliness in the wilderness of the jungle and the darkness of the night is obviously dialectically related with the moments of extreme happiness. Hope and despair intermingle with each other in this most fascinating composition. The anthropological parameters, the points of departure for all imaginative fantasies, go beyond the normal dialectical interaction with the Other, with the unknown ; they simply dissolve into the cosmic universe, which is the final abode of all poetic, existential realisations.

In fact what Shah Hussain is articulating through the slow weaving of the imagery and the mysterious universe is not really

any given physical space, however far and out of reach it may be. The veritable encounter is of the Being with the Other, the Other who in spite of the extreme intimacy of existential relation remains unknown and unknowable. The salu, the token of love, becomes absolutely ephemeral and transparent and in a surrealist universe, the physical and the spiritual, the real and the surreal, the phantasmatic and the dream fuse with each other. On the horizon of the celebration of love and union, there are the inevitable rays of anguish and solitude, of anxieties and uncertainties. And like the most colourful horizon charged with celestial beauty, it is always within reach and unattainable simultaneously. In this universe of mysterious depths and unfathomable darkness, the known and the unknown are inextricably interrelated and one is never sure of one's place within and without. It is at this moment of an obvious alienation that Shah Hussain constitutes the universe of hope and happiness of ultimate union with the ultimate Love. In this union, the Actor and the Acted, the Subject and the Object, the Being and the Other, all merge in the absolute unity of the most transcendent truth from where there is no going beyond. The normal space and time lose their identity and there is perfect union of the lovers.



play on, young girl, play on  
sooner or later you have to go to your in-laws  
playing with your ball  
adorned with golden earrings  
you are oblivious of the inevitable  
parents home is only an illusion  
a matter of days

with the month of sawan  
the rains of love and union herald  
the season of joy and romance

Shah Hussain, the faqir says  
the hour of departure is ringing aloud  
even the most beautiful moments  
are a matter of days  
none can alter the Master's ways !

turn, o spinning wheel, turn  
long live your weaver  
who weaves the cotton of love

Shah Hussain is old  
with wrinkles all over  
at dawn he looks for those  
who have left their hearth

with every movement  
vibrates the name of the Master  
with every beat  
there is perfect union  
there is perfect communion

the spinning wheel echoes His name  
every heart beat follows its strain  
Shah Hussain, the faqir, prays  
it is you, it is you  
it is the same refrain !

The spinning wheel is one of the most powerful literary signifiers employed by Shah Hussain. The vivid and frequent descriptions of the spinning wheel in Punjabi poetry act as frozen images of a bygone era. At the same time, the spinning wheel signifies the wheel of creation, of steady preparation for the ultimate union with God. Through the spins of the wheel are created the threads of unity of the universe. The spinning wheel or for that matter other signifiers are then no more mere anthropological units, they are transformed into the sufi pantheistic discourse.

this love is spinning my being  
this love is spinning my being

I know not how to spin  
I carelessly turn my wheel  
bread of sorrows, soup of thorns  
pangs of solitude torture me

there is no turning back  
with faith and fortitude  
one goes on and on  
hazards and hurdles do not stop  
the onward march  
the onward adventure

Hussain, the faqir of the Master says  
he knows no spinning  
he knows not how to please his Love  
he does not perceive the divine ways !

the nights are long and tortuous  
in their dark depths  
there is the eternal fear of the unknown

with falling flesh  
I am only a skeleton  
a bundle of bones  
in immanence, in manifestation  
there is no reflection, no perception

loneliness has stretched my being  
Ranjha is the yogi  
I am his yogiani  
in madness, in awkward state  
there is anguish, there is pain

Hussain, the faqir of the Master says  
his Love is the only refuge  
his only refrain, his only muse !

This composition of Shah Hussain highlights the narrative of Hir-Ranjha, the eternal lovers, the overlapping of a faqir and a yogi and the sorrows of separation and solitude that Hussain excels in as no other Punjabi sufi poet before him or after him. The hymn is surcharged with love. Here too the anthropological and the cosmological domains coincide. In Salu and other hymns, the poet evokes night, for the long and painful night touches the mysterious sacred domain of the universe. The night alludes to the space of intimacy and the spirit's pure freedom. It also alludes frequently to derangement. The night impels the spirit to set out for the dwelling of the divine after the plenitude of suffering and waiting. These are dream like sequences where the real and the surreal, anthropology and cosmology merge.

I have to go to the abode of my Love

I pray for some company

I plead, I beseech

I am left alone

the river is deep

the boat is old

and the savage beasts are all over

whoever brings the news of my Love

whoever brings a ray of hope

I shower them with gifts

I offer them silver rings

the nights are dark

the days are tortuous

in loneliness, in disdain

there is anguish, there is pain

Ranjha is supposed to be a healer  
but my pains are mysterious  
in misery, in solitude  
I suffer in silence, in fortitude

Shah Hussain, the humble faqir says  
the Master has called me  
I must follow the divine way  
there will be no delay !

There is desire but there is also hesitation. The beloved is on the other side, in the woods, in the wilderness surrounded by savage beasts. The river is deep and the boat is broken. The boatman is also not very sympathetic but the lover must go to his beloved. Even the smallest news of his Love brings joy and happiness for the offering of gifts and presents. The love stricken lover believes in the healing touch of the beloved but there does not seem to be an easy approach and yet all is not lost, for there is the eternal hope in God who is ultimately responsible for all unions and separations.



one day these streets of your father  
will be nothing but a dream  
all happiness, all joy  
is a matter of days

the butterflies leave the flowers  
the leaves and the branches  
only she knows the anguish of the heart  
who is stricken with love  
who suffers in separation, in solitude  
who bears all in faith, in fortitude

I look for him  
in woods, in wilderness  
in dark clouds  
in mysterious mounds

o qazi, leave me alone  
the heart heeds not thee  
whatever had to happen  
has already happened  
there is nothing more to foresee

only those nights are counted  
when my Love awakened me  
with his rhythm, with his resonance  
with the heart beats of his presence

my name is Hussain  
my caste is weaver  
the weaver woman blame me  
for the long delays  
for my sufi ways !

The streets of the parents will very soon be only a dream. The affairs of the heart do not follow the dictates of the qazi, the guardian of the rules and regulations of the social order. When the heart surrenders, there is no going back. Only those nights, moments are worth living, worth any existential realisation that are spent in the company of the beloved. There is separation from the parents home but there is also the union with Love where heart and hearth coalesce.

the love stricken can spin no more

how can she spin

once fallen in love

all routine is set aside

all duties are forgotten

the madness of love has taken over

all weaving is lost

the red spinning wheel and the white cotton

does weave no more

it is long since I fell in love

since I fell in the depths of the unknown

in the depths of anguish and pain

Hussain, the humble faqir says

in love, in madness

my eyes are intoxicated

I see no more the spectacle of the world !

The love stricken sufi faqir, Shah Hussain, identifies himself with the young girl who is supposed to be busy at the spinning wheel to prepare her dowry but the intoxication of love is so strong, lost in the transcendental flight of love, she has lost all interest in the routine affairs of the world, the world of her parents, the mundane world of small routines. The red spinning wheel and pure white cotton, all symbols of love and purity, are fused with the pangs of solitude and the longings for the union which are always elusive. All the same, the intoxicated eyes of Hussain remind him of the ultimate bliss.

play and be happy for a few days  
do not be proud of beauty and bounty  
do not be too clever like others  
stay serene and steady

the friends with whom you spent your childhood  
those friends are all gone  
they all left their parents abode  
they left for their in-laws  
all over, there is even mode

the streets of your father  
will one day be only a dream  
Hussain, the faqir of the Master says  
spend your days in reflection and good deeds !

Again the same refrain of the short lived abode of the parents, the universe that is in flux, that is momentary, that cannot be depended upon for long. One day these streets will only be a dream, a dream that will never be realised again. Already several friends have left this comfortable world. You cannot stay here for ever. Hence, it is time to reflect and think of the other world, the world of the union with the Master, the world that is everlasting, that is not ephemeral like the abode of the parents where you are only a traveller, where you should not be proud of your beauty and bounty, which, in any case, will not last for ever.

I beseech, I yearn, I pray  
for His love, for His grace

as a yogi, I strike the fire of love  
in its warmth, I live  
in its cold, I die  
the night passes in pain  
the day in anguish  
my life and death hang on the thread  
of His rhythm, of His refrain

with my hair flowing on the shoulder  
I am a yogan since the beginning of Time  
searching for Him in the woods  
in the wilderness  
I stay silent and serene  
I am scared of the unknown

Hussain, the faqir of the Master prays  
day and night I vibrate with faith and fortitude  
day and night I seek the divine certitude !



In this composition charged with yogic symbolism, Shah Hussain goes beyond the usual metaphors of the Muslim universe of mysticism. For the sufi Hussain, all local, regional metaphors and symbols are important to communicate with his Indian audience. The yogan yearns to meet her yogi, the separated love whose presence or absence, spiritual or physical, is the eternal realisation of life and death. In this existentially charged hymn, the poet presents the pangs of separation from his love by identifying himself with the yogan, the feminine aspect of the lover. This gender transformation in the quest of love is an extremely important signifier in sufi mysticism.

I reflect only on Thy name

I beseech none but Thee

I have faith in Thee

I perceive only Thy sublimity

in and out it is all red

I am in love since eternity

I trade only in Thee

I live and die in Thee

there are disciples and there are masters

there are all kinds of manifestations

and there is Shah Hussain, the faqir

let us sing and dance together

beyond all disputes

beyond all contestations !

In the same linguistic register but constituting a slightly different universe of love, Shah Hussain meditates on the eternal theme of faith and fortitude, of absolute trust and sublime rejoicing in the company of his love, his Master. In sufi metaphysics, *maikhana*, the tavern, is preferred to *madrassa*, the school, and *ishq*, love, to *aqal*, reason. It is interesting to note that the celebration of love is accompanied by the eternal promise of faith and fortitude for all the disciples and all the masters. The poet weaves an atmosphere of happiness and ecstasy but at the same time does not forget the possibility of relapsing into faithlessness and distrust. Within and without, it is all red, the colour of love and happiness but there is also hesitation and misgiving.

lying on thorns  
suffering in love  
solitude is my destiny  
in whom should I confide

bread of pain, soup of sorrow  
the fire lit with my bones  
there is no respite  
in whom should I confide

searching in woods, in wilderness  
I yearn for my shepherd  
I yearn for my love  
my faith and fortitude do not coincide  
in whom should I confide

the fire of sorrow is lit  
it is all burning red  
it has consumed my being  
in its frightening stride  
in whom should I confide

reaching for the horizon  
for my love, for my Ranjha  
searching in vain  
Ranjha is within me  
within the rhythms of my being  
in whom should I confide

Hussain, the faqir says  
pity the wretched  
pity the miserable  
who have lost the divine light  
in whom should I confide !

Surcharged with the metaphors of the universe of the narratives and the legends of the mythical Punjab, this composition of Shah Hussain constitutes a world, forlorn and frustrating, wretched and worrisome, completely at the mercy of the Almighty Lord, the careless Love. At the same time, it presents a highly existential universe of love and union that is looming on the horizon even though it may never be achieved. The metaphors of the shepherd, the legendary Mahinwal, and the most celebrated romantic hero of them all, the sublime Ranjha who has been immortalised even by the Sikh Gurus, are all there to emphasise the mystical aspect of the sufi lore. There is obviously no respite from the ever burning fires of separation but there is also the red hot emotions which engulf the lover and the beloved in the most sublime union.

all the four corners of my shawl  
are wet with tears  
since long he promised to come  
twelve months have passed  
there is no trace, no gesture of his presence

I know not how to spin  
and I blame the spinning wheel  
the divine scribe has written my destiny  
wailing and crying go on for eternity

my abode is pitch dark  
and my Love is away  
the black deer has eaten  
the fields of Shah Hussain  
in one sway !

The pangs of solitude are sharp and merciless. The sorrow and suffering are writ large on the destiny of the lover. His Love is away and all the promises are of no avail. Moreover, the abode is covered with absolute darkness of despair and depression and the lover does not know where to go, what to do to please his Love. The death is around the corner and the faqir has not been able to do what was required of him in this life. Going beyond and going within amount to the same thing if the spinning wheel of life has not woven its allotted cotton to prepare the dowry of good deeds. Before the soul realises the futility of this mundane world, it is too late.

my mind is steady with the Almighty Lord  
with the Master of all worlds  
qazis and mullahs give loads of advice  
they point to the path of love  
what has love to do with the ways of the world

beyond the river is the abode of my Love  
I promised to reach him  
I beseech the boatman  
I plead, I request  
all in vain

Hussain, the humble faqir says  
one has to leave this world sooner or later  
ultimately Allah is the only refuge  
the only muse !



And finally, the triumphant note surcharged with love and absolute freedom of thought and action. The rules and regulations of the qazis and the mullahs are of no avail. Love does not need all these mundane paths circumscribed by the boundaries of ecclesiastic dictates. It is beyond all secular codes which prescribe all kinds of dos and donts. Shah Hussain, the sufi faqir asserts his existential right to follow his own path, the path of love where the only desire and quest is to reach the abode of his Love, however difficult and dangerous the crossing of the river may be.

none can stay for ever  
none can cling to the threads of life  
reflect upon this brief stay  
this rest of four days

lost in the glamour of wealth  
in the grandeur of mansions and palaces  
think of your final abode  
the grave and the burial ground  
where you will rest in peace for ever

this pride of beauty and bounty  
is nothing but a reflection of the light  
its darkness, its depth is frightening

live in humility and peace  
live in the fear of the destiny

Hussain, the faqir says  
if you yearn for life  
die before the death arrives  
none but the Master survives !

the night of life has passed  
there is no reflection, no discourse  
there is none to share  
your love, your remorse

all castes are elevated  
the faqirs are the lowest of the lowest  
they are servants of the Master  
lost in the depths of reflection  
they perceive His sublime projection

when the night is gone  
when the day arrives  
the boatman calls  
for the travellers to cross  
the river of sorrow and suffering

Hussain, the humble faqir  
pleads for the final crossing  
for the sublime union !

my hand is in the hand of my Love  
I am scared, I am afraid  
He may not leave me alone

the night is mysterious  
the wilderness is frightening  
and the dark clouds are hovering  
over the entire universe

bereft of friends  
there is none to help  
none to come to the succour of the poor

Hussain, the faqir says  
only those know the pangs of love  
who have known emptiness in plenitude  
who have suffered solitude !

friends, there is no place  
to utter a single word  
to make a single gesture

within and without  
in the depths of the heart  
in the vast spaces of wilderness  
He is immanent, He is manifest

Hussain, the humble faqir pleads  
there is but one refuge  
there is but one muse !

all my friends are able and gifted  
I know not how to spin  
I know not how to hold  
His rhythm and resonance

the whole nature  
the whole culture  
is scared of the Almighty

I know not how to plead  
how to please my Lord  
I have forgotten the divine path  
the sublime reflection of love

Hussain, the humble faqir says  
where should I follow His trace  
where should I find His grace !

with the basket of love on my head

I wander in the streets

on the hazardous paths

on perilous beats

Hussain, the faqir of the Master says

I found my Love within my tormented self

within the dark depths

of my being, of my becoming

within the excruciating pains of my heart !

this life is full of hazards  
on the long path of the unknown  
none is sure of his place  
none can count on anything

the horses, the elephants  
the mansions, the palaces  
the mullahs, the qazis  
all are a matter of days  
none stays

Hussain, the humble faqir of the Master says  
none can alter the divine ways !



day and night I spin  
I spin for Him  
for His rhythm  
for His resonance

this spinning is full of hazards  
one awkward step  
one awkward spin  
can obliterate all good deeds  
one must live in His will  
in His reflection

this life is short  
none is sure  
within or without  
when the last call is announced  
when the last message arrives  
there is no delay  
none can stay  
all princes and kings must obey

Hussain, the faqir says  
none can alter the Master's ways !

# SULTAN BAHU

( 1630 – 1690 )



within and without  
in and out  
there is resonance of my Love  
there are beats of His rhythm

in union there is light  
in separation there is darkness

Bahu is the slave in the two worlds  
who serves his Master in every breath  
in every movement of his heart and hearth !

let my body be the mirror  
to reflect the vision of my Master

let this reflection be multiplied  
in every fiber of my body  
in every beat of my breath

in search of my Love  
I run around  
I look within and without

Bahu, the vision of my Love  
transcends all thresholds of the universe !

in the city of Baghdad  
there are mansions and palaces

my body and soul are torn to pieces  
with these rags I cover my self  
and join the faqirs of Baghdad

I beg in the streets  
I join the mendicants of my Love  
Bahu, I resonate with the hymns of my Master !

engrossed in learning and logic  
the alphabet of love is forgotten

separated from the Master  
there is no learning, no wisdom

there is light in the fourteen spheres  
the learned blind sees no reflection

bereft of the union with my Love  
Bahu, there is nothing but the tales of dejection !

exiled from heaven

man is thrown in the turmoil of this world

exiled from home

I follow the contours of my destiny

leave me alone, o mad world

I am already sinking in dejection and depression

Bahu, I am a stranger here

and I know not what awaits me there !



the learned are honoured as Mushaikh  
they stay away from prayer and devotion

their cottage is looted  
they know not the plunder and the rot

the Master prevails in every heart  
in every breath

Bahu, there is union in love and affection  
there is peace in meditation and reflection !

with loads of learning  
the erudite labour in this world

bereft of the discourse of love  
they wander forlorn and forgotten

with one gaze of the lover  
there are stars in the sky  
with thousand eyes of the sceptic discourse  
there is none to come to the aid of the wretched  
none to pull him across the river of turmoil

the tension between love and logic continues  
the disjunction grows further and further

Bahu, those who never negotiated the currents of love  
are lost for ever  
lost in this and the other world !

there is no renunciation  
with plenty and prosperity

there is renunciation  
when the faqir holds the begging bowl

drinking deep into the river  
of the mysterious unity  
the disciple remains thirsty

Bahu, the path that leads the faqir  
is the path drenched in tears and turmoil  
the ignorant populace laughs  
and returns home with sound and spectacle !

lost in the currents of love  
the faqir attains the cosmic status

with reflection in the mirror of love  
the vision of perception  
is lost in the depths of renunciation

the being is annihilated  
the becoming has no form

Bahu, bereft of absolute sacrifice  
there is no renunciation  
no reception  
no projection in ritual and deception !

with faith and fortitude  
they search and perceive the cosmic truth  
  
in ever beat of their heart  
the name of Allah resonates in the universe  
  
in immanence, in manifestation  
there is one rhythm  
one sound that resounds in every heart  
  
Bahu, blessed are those faqirs  
who transcend life and death in every breath !

the heart that does not resonate with love  
is the heart condemned

withered, wanton waste  
there is no reception, no acceptance

even the hard stones are preferred  
to such a heart  
that has no feeling, no resonance

Bahu, there is no union, no celebration  
deserted, it fades into oblivion !

in the jungle, the tiger prowls  
and the hawk descends on the birds

fearless, careless  
the lover wanders in the wilderness  
suffering heat and cold  
hunger and thirst

Bahu, with head bowed before the Almighty  
the lover is beyond the reach of death and destruction !

those who dwell deep in love  
are ever engrossed in meditation, in reflection

beyond the worldly affairs  
beyond the mundane world  
they reverberate in cosmic prayers

Bahu, blessed are such lovers  
with their devotion  
with their sublime perception !



those who have attained their Love  
with the first letter of the alphabet  
they need no reading of the Quran  
their heart beats with love  
they need no ritual, no ceremony

beyond the threshold of heaven and hell  
they reverberate in cosmic union

Bahu, blessed are these lovers  
who enjoy divine communion !

as long as there is self assertion  
there is pride and prejudice  
there is no devotion, no love

with selflessness  
with humility and reflection  
there is love  
there is reception  
the faqir arrives at divine perception

Bahu, in renunciation  
in the jaws of death  
there is life  
there is sublime projection !

rise, o moon, rise  
your light spreads all over

my Love is away  
it is all dark  
hundreds of moons cannot obliterate  
this dark cover

when my Love, my moon shines  
there is light  
there is life

Bahu, this being reverberates  
for the divine union  
for the resonance of communion !

the depths of the heart  
are deeper than the oceans

there is churning  
there is turmoil  
there are all the mysteries of the unknown

the fourteen spheres are within this heart  
none can fathom its deeper layers

Bahu, only the seer of the heart  
can perceive the cosmic rays of love !

in the river of my heart  
there is turmoil  
there is prayer of Khawja Pir

there is meditation  
there is reflection  
but none reaches its projections

the stranger is immersed  
in the currents of love  
all play is forgotten  
all joy is gone

Bahu, it is sad  
it is gloomy  
it is lost in the depths of the destiny !

in the depths of my heart  
there is anguish  
there is suffering

those who deal in worldly affairs  
know not the turmoil within

the river of heart flows  
to inundate all desires and dreams

Bahu prays for his Master's blessing  
for his love and affection !

the path of the faqir  
is the path laden with love and devotion

there are no learned discourses  
no discussions, no debates

this world worships idols  
there is none to perceive the divine truth

when the last hour comes  
when death is announced  
Bahu, all learning fades away  
there is no muse  
there is no refuge !

the nights are spent  
in anguish, in pain

there is no respite  
from sorrow, from disdain

stuck on the cross  
the head of the lover bleeds in vain

Bahu bows before his Master  
who sustains his love in every refrain !



the dark night of suffering  
is lit with the lamp of love

in the dead silence of wilderness  
the heart beats in divine resonance

the woods are thick  
and the savage hounds are frightening

Bahu, those who dwell deep  
in the mysterious being of the unknown  
transcend all danger and death !

the path of the faqir  
is the path of begging and suffering  
of meditation and reflection

in the midst of the river of anguish  
there is thirst, there is hunger

Bahu, in the path of the faqir  
there are tears of blood  
there are sorrow and suffering  
people do not care for the destitute  
they laugh away his misfortune !

dwelling deep in my heart  
I follow the divine rhythm  
with service and servitude

in solitude, in sufferance  
I am the laughing stock of the multitude

within my heart I found my Love  
I need not go to Mecca or Madina

Bahu, it is all within  
all in the rhythm of faith and fortitude !

the river of love is inundated  
the currents are strong  
and the storm is overwhelming  
the lover's boat faces unknown dangers

Bahu, one must transcend  
the threshold of life and death  
the ignorant is scared  
of its violent wrath !

in renunciation, in devotion  
the lovers are at peace with themselves

those who have sacrificed their lives for the Master  
need not fear in this or the other world

they are lit within with the light of love  
they need no worldly lamps

Bahu, they transcend all learning and reflection  
there are no disputes, no discussions !

the learned discourses of the ascetic  
lead not to the path of God

even a hundred years of hunger and thirst  
rites and rituals  
show not the door of the Sublime

the ignorant is lost in the hazardous routes  
in the worship of the idols

Bahu, blessed are the faqirs  
who have found their love within their own hearts !

the fire of love is lit  
none can extinguish its flames

love has no caste, no creed  
it bows at every threshold

restless, wandering, it sleeps no more  
in anguish, in pain, it is always awake

Bahu, blessed are those  
who live in union, in sublime communion !

in the path of love  
there are no rules, no order

the qazi is stuck in rites, in rituals  
in the mire of mundane affairs

there are those who counsel and advise  
love follows its own rhythms  
the vibrations of its own heart

Bahu, blessed are those  
who are the beloveds of the Master  
who follow the sublime light !



in the depths of my love  
in the inner core of my body and soul  
there is rhythm, there is resonance

every beat of the heart  
follows the divine order

there is anguish, there is silence  
immersed in the river of love  
it is carried away by its strong currents

Bahu, there is no need for rituals, for ceremonies  
on the path of love  
the heart reverberates with cosmic rhythms !

in the game of love  
every thing is at stake

the lover follows the divine call  
however hazardous the path may be  
there is no return, no retreat

mad in love  
every beat of the heart resonates with sublime rhythm  
dissolved in the cosmic projection  
there is no hesitation, no reflection

Bahu, in this divine state  
the lover transcends all thresholds and perceptions !



# BULLEH SHAH

( 1680 - 1758 )



awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

one day it will be no more  
this world will be left behind  
the last resting place will be the burial ground  
the insects will eat your flesh in the mound  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

the messenger has arrived  
you will soon be married  
where is your dowry  
your good deeds  
lazy and careless  
you have not bothered about the next world  
awake, my friend, awake

sleep no more for God's sake

in careless sleep you have spent all your life

no cutting, no spinning

there is nothing in your dowry

there is nothing to meet your Love

awake, my friend, awake

sleep no more for God's sake

in youth, in pride

you wasted your precious days with friends

playing and dancing

you spent no time in meditation and reflection

awake, my friend, awake

sleep no more for God's sake

you were always careless

you knew not

how to cut, how to spin

you spent your time in eating and drinking

in the pleasures of the youth

awake, my friend, awake

sleep no more for God's sake

the message has arrived  
for the union with your Love  
with the sublime unknown  
with the mysterious Lord  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

you will leave this world  
never to return  
never to be able to repent and regret  
within a few days, it will be no more  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

the woods are dark  
and the path is long and hazardous  
there is no guide  
none to help the eternal sinner  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake



in that mansion  
there will be no friend  
to share your sorrow  
to share your suffering  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

all the princes and the kings are gone  
and with them their palaces and horses  
there is none to hold their throne  
none to follow their glorious days  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

where is the mighty Alexander  
where are the powerful armies  
where are the pirs and the prophets  
all had to follow the last call  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

where is the handsome Yousaf  
where is the most beautiful Zulekha  
death smothered them all  
none was spared in the last call  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

where is the magnificent throne of Suleman  
flying like angels in the sky  
only the Creator knows the end of His creation  
there is no perception, no projection  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

where are the pirs and the mirs  
where are the princes and the sultans  
where are their enormous armies  
none could halt the onward march  
none could stop the destined hour  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

as you sow, so do you reap  
like a lonely crane  
you will cry without friend or companion  
none can fly without the feathers of love  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

the woods are infested with savage beasts  
there is none to help on the lonely route  
in wilderness, in deserted places  
it is all dark and somber  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake

Bulleh Shah, take care  
your Love is your only support  
in Him, with Him, there is every code  
awake, my friend, awake  
sleep no more for God's sake !

Bullah, I know not who am I  
I know not its reason or rhyme

I am neither a believer in the mosque  
nor a sceptic of rituals and rites  
I know not the mystery of the universe  
nor the wisdom of Moses and prophets  
Bullah, I know not who am I  
I know not its reason or rhyme

I know not the discourse of the sacred books  
I know not the rites of the taverns  
neither I follow the trances of the sages  
nor the rules of sleep and awakening  
Bullah, I know not who am I  
I know not its reason or rhyme

I am neither happy nor sad  
I am neither here nor there  
neither in any state divine  
I neither follow the spectacle of earth and water  
nor the force of fire and air  
Bullah, I know not who am I  
I know not its reason or rhyme

I neither belong to the Arab lands  
nor to the city of Lahore  
I neither belong to Hindustan  
nor to the villages of hinterland  
I am neither a Hindu nor a Musalman  
nor I live in Nadaun  
Bullah, I know not who am I  
I know not its reason or rhyme

I know not the mysteries of faith  
nor the union of Adam and Eve  
I know not my origins and ends  
I am neither asleep nor awake  
Bullah, I know not who am I  
I know not its reason or rhyme

I delve deep in the inner layers of my being  
I recognise none but Thee  
I know not the wisdom of the sages  
I follow no discourse, no images  
Bullah, I know not who am I  
I know not its reason or rhyme !

dear friend, it is a matter of days  
follow the Master's ways

you can rule for four days  
your kingdom and cruelty will wither away  
none will follow you when the end is announced  
none will steer you safe and sound  
dear friend, it is a matter of days  
follow the Master's ways

all your friends and followers will be left behind  
there will be none to repent and regret  
in the silence of this city  
all will be reduced to dust  
dear friend, it is a matter of days  
follow the Master's ways

with the boatman of the Lord  
loads of sinners can cross  
the river of sorrow and suffering  
I am drowned in my sins  
in my dark deeds and deceptions  
dear friend, it is a matter of days  
follow the Master's ways

this path is frightening  
there are dangers all over  
with the support of my Love  
I transcend all fear and horror  
dear friend, it is a matter of days  
follow the Master's ways !



I beseech, I yearn  
I wait eternally for my Love

I don't have a pebble to pay the boatman  
I earned nothing in my life  
I quarrelled in vain  
how can I cross the river of sorrow and suffering  
I beseech, I yearn  
I wait eternally for my Love

the river is deep and frightening  
many a brave swimmer has lost his life  
the river is in spate  
my crying and wailing are in vain  
I beseech, I yearn  
I wait eternally for my Love

in the depths of the river  
the swimmers fight for their last breath  
the boatmen cross with ease and grace  
I alone am stuck on the bank of destiny  
I beseech, I yearn  
I wait eternally for my Love

on this side of the river, I stand aloof  
on the other side of the river, I call my Love  
the river is in spate  
my crying and wailing are in vain  
I beseech, I yearn  
I wait eternally for my Love

across the river Chanab  
there are woods and savage beasts  
it is lonely and frightening  
I beseech my God  
I wait for my Love  
I am scared  
I am afraid of the unknown

the night is dark  
but the stars are lit  
the divine light shows the path  
I came to the river  
to cross the strong currents of my destiny  
I beseech, I yearn  
I wait eternally for my Love

I am ignorant, I am innocent  
I know not how to navigate  
I know not the art of the boatman  
I weep, I cry, I suffer in vain  
I beseech, I yearn  
I wait eternally for my Love !

where do you come from  
where do you go  
tell me, my dear friend  
your veritable goal

the mansions you are proud of  
will all be left behind  
in corruption, in cruelty  
you have wasted your life  
none will help you  
in the final grind

where do you come from  
where do you go  
tell me, my dear friend  
your veritable goal

live in faith and fear of the Master  
in meditation and reflection of the divine forces

in the city of eternal silence  
all will be reduced to dust

where do you come from  
where do you go  
tell me, my dear friend  
your veritable goal

the messenger of death  
smothers all and sundry  
all this pleasure, all this prosperity  
is a matter of four days  
none can alter the Master's ways

where do you come from  
where do you go  
tell me, my dear friend  
your veritable goal !

live in faith and fortitude

bear all this in silence and servitude

truth is bitter

truth is sharp

truth does not tolerate falsehood and filth

truth has no friend, no companion

in jealousy and hatred

truth is consumed in the depths of deception

truth is honoured in the Master's domain

truth and truth is the only refrain

live in faith and fortitude

bear all this in silence and servitude

in the kingdom of truth

there are no rules, no regulations

no rituals, no false projections

in the House of Love

truth is honoured by the true

there is perception, there is reflection

live in faith and fortitude

bear all this in silence and servitude

in love, in faith

one cannot hide the truth

Bullah, there is rhythm and resonance

in every word, in every utterance

of faith and fortitude

of silence and servitude !

I cannot help it  
I must tell the truth  
in falsehood, there is no refuge  
  
in deceit and deception  
there is no perception, no reflection  
in truth and transcendence  
the secret is no more  
no more the false wall of corruption

I cannot help it  
I must tell the truth  
in falsehood, there is no refuge  
  
those who have dwelt deep within  
who have discovered the divine discourse  
they live in peace and perception  
there is no remorse



I cannot help it  
I must tell the truth  
in falsehood, there is no refuge

this world is full of deceit and dejection  
it is all dark in the dungeon of deception  
peep within and find the sublime light  
delve deep and perceive the divine sight

I cannot help it  
I must tell the truth  
in falsehood, there is no refuge

there is no measure of the infinity  
there is no disclosure of the divinity  
there is eternal spectacle  
of sublime form and purity

I cannot help it  
I must tell the truth  
in falsehood, there is no refuge

there are friendly signs  
there are graceful gestures  
the heart vibrates with sublime rhythms  
the lover knows not  
the truth of the divine mystery

I cannot help it  
I must tell the truth  
in falsehood, there is no refuge

when the divine spectacle was manifest  
when the miracle of the Master  
struck the known and the unknown  
the believer and the sceptic  
there was no discussion, no debate  
no false wisdom, no clever chat

I cannot help it  
I must tell the truth  
in falsehood, there is no refuge

there is no place for learned discourses  
no place for logic and rationality  
in the depths of the inner layers of the heart  
it is all transparent, all sublimity

Bullah, I cannot help it  
I must tell the truth  
in falsehood, there is no refuge !

dear friend, I am stricken with love  
stricken with the pangs of solitude  
with the anguish and pain of destitute

I am burning with desire  
with the sharp cuts of loneliness  
restless, I vibrate with the fear of the unknown  
I follow my Love's horizon

the living are scared  
the dead are pushed into oblivion  
one knows not where one is led to  
one knows not the mysterious designs of the Master  
the pangs of love  
the sharp cuts of solitude  
push the being to the disastrous path  
the path of no return  
the path of danger and dejection

Bulleh Shah, this love is strange  
none can follow its moves  
none can know its rules

dear friend, I am stricken with love  
stricken with the pangs of solitude  
with the anguish and pain of the destitute !

my spinning wheel is broken  
I can spin no more

the night was long  
at dawn I long for my Love  
the wheel is turned aside  
it needs repair  
I am restless, sad in despair  
I can spin no more

the spinning wheel swings in all directions  
it follows its own projections  
it needs repair  
restless, I am sad in despair  
I can spin no more

the string is broken  
the wheel moves no more  
my Love is away  
there is no place for my sun's rays

the friends have gathered  
to spin and sing  
to celebrate love and longings  
to share their hearts pains and pretensions  
restless, I am lonely and depressed  
my wheel is broken  
I can spin no more

my heart is broken  
in solitude, in misery  
I am left lonely and forsaken  
I can no more join my friends  
in their joy, in their celebration

my wheel is broken  
I can spin no more  
it needs repair  
restless, I am sad in despair !

the hajis go to Mecca  
my Ranjha, my Love, is my Mecca  
the union with him  
is the greatest pilgrimage  
is the greatest pious act

I am betrothed to my Love  
I am engaged for ever  
my father protests for nothing

once I have followed this path  
there is no return  
I must continue  
however hazardous it may be  
however tortuous  
it may turn



the hajis take long, arduous routes

I need not bother

my Love is within me

within the vibrations of my heart

the hajis, the qazis follow illusions

they are lost in religious discourses

in rites and rituals, in rules and regulations

my Love is my life, my death

I am mad in love

I am stricken with its pangs and pains

Bullah, the path of love is hazardous and tortuous

but there is no return

there is no regret !

one day it will all be reduced to dust  
resting in the grave  
there will be no regret, no trust  
the dead do not return  
the living approach their end

in life, in luxurious mansions  
there is no care, no reflection  
the self alone matters  
devotion and good deeds are forgotten  
in the grave, they lie stiff and forsaken

in haughty positions  
they never bothered about the lowly  
they never reflected on their destiny  
as the end approaches  
it is too late to repent and regret  
to have faith and trust

today or tomorrow it will be no more  
it will all be reduced to dust  
resting in the grave  
there will be no regret, no trust

the onward march of Time continues  
none waits for friends or foes  
there is no resting place, no halt  
we have to endure  
what others have suffered  
sooner or later it will be no more  
it will all be reduced to dust

Bullah, there is no resting place  
for the sinner, there is no solace  
remorse and regret  
must follow faith and trust  
one day it will be no more  
it will all be reduced to dust !

the night has passed  
the stars have disappeared  
o traveller, awake  
before it is too late to meet your Love  
to plead for His indulgence  
to plead for His mercy and benevolence

the whole world is on the move  
the trumpets of departure have warned the populace  
for the ensuing flight  
for the inevitable fight

spend your days in devotion and reflection  
for, once gone, there is no return  
no looking back  
no chance to retrace your steps

the soldiers, the armies  
the sadhus, the faqirs  
all have fled this mortal world  
your turn is approaching  
in haste, in hurry, forget not your Master

for divine forgiveness  
for sublime redemption

there are those who are thirsty  
even on the bank of the river of life  
the sinners did not pause and reflect  
did not repent and regret  
soon it will be too late to meet your Love  
to plead for His indulgence  
to plead for mercy and benevolence

Bullah, it is time to venture into the unknown  
to fathom the mysterious universe  
to devote your life to meditation and reflection  
to step in with love and affection  
for, soon it will be too late to meet your Love  
to plead for His indulgence  
to plead for His mercy and benevolence !

spin on, young girl, spin on  
fill your dowry with goodies  
for, soon it will be all gone

your spinning will cover your naked being  
you will meet your Love with affection and grace

even a hundred years of spinning  
can be snatched away with one shaft of destiny  
with one stroke of divine wrath  
spin on, young girl, spin on

do not be lazy  
do not forget the bounty of the Master  
do not forget the approaching encounter  
your Love will adorn you with love and affection  
spin on, young girl, spin on

the indulgence of your parents  
will not last for ever  
you must prepare your future  
your wedding, your departure

you cannot stay forever at your parents home

you have to leave before others have gone

spin on, young girl, spin on

bereft of your dowry

bereft of your meditation and reflection

you cannot please your Lord

you cannot count on His love and affection

spin on, young girl, spin on

your friends are happy and light

their dowry bags are colourful and bright

you must follow their advice

you must prepare for every sight

spin on, young girl, spin on

Bulleh Shah, there will be rejoicing

feasts and singing and dancing

when the day of the union approaches

when your Love arrives

spin on, young girl, spin on !

# LAEEQ BABREE

( 1931 – 2003 )







in midday  
under the burning sun  
a woman is selling ghughu ghore  
the clay toys for children  
in the silence of the wretched  
in the rhythm of anguish and solitude  
  
with the tears of misery and misfortune  
her kajal is wiped away  
poverty stricken, her dreams are shattered  
  
all around, there are mansions and palaces  
the bazaars of duplicity and deception  
the jugglery of words  
  
there is anguish, there is pain  
the eyes, sad and melancholy  
  
in this dark night of depression  
there are lingering voices of those who care not  
for the sorrows and sufferings of others  
others who cannot react or respond !

with her long black hair  
on her shoulder  
a young girl is lying  
on the bank of a river  
the moonlit night shines over the whole universe

she has nightmares  
of the cross of suffering  
she is haunted by flesh and blood

she dreams of the elders  
of the lawmakers of her social world  
of the ensuing discipline and punishment

in this wilderness  
a bird sings on a God forsaken tree  
on another branch  
there is the cry of the jungle

in this half awakened state  
in this stumbling move  
there seems to be light  
of the forlorn sight  
of the stars of the nation !

in the dirty waters  
of the cities of the wretched  
the blood sucking leeches  
are busy with their nefarious task

at every step  
their cruel stings hold fast  
these merchants of men and manners  
these merchants of the destiny of the poor

the shattered dreams  
the frightening nightmares  
the tortuous dark nights  
moaning with misery and misfortune

lying on hot sands  
bereft of wind and water  
they dream of  
golden days ahead !

in the dungeon  
from the roof of destiny  
fall the drops of blood  
there is dead silence  
the lips are sealed with eternal suffering

all around  
there are lines of life and death  
in the frightening voices of the miserable  
the newborn child cries in vain  
the lips are sealed with eternal suffering

from the times immemorial  
from the branches of the wretched existence  
the blind do not see the inevitable  
they boast of unknown pleasures

molesting the breasts of the young girl  
they play the game of love and lust  
they fall in the blind hole  
they know not where they come from  
where they go

on the path of eternity  
in the waters of anguish and suffering  
the sun never shines  
in this wretched atmosphere  
there is no horizon, no light !

the washerwoman  
brings the blood stained clothes  
of love and lust  
of dishonoured, disgusted moments

with ferment and fury  
she washes these clothes  
to rub off all the filth  
of the sins of those  
who obliterate the being of the other  
who annihilate the last vestiges  
of human existence

her tired eyes look around  
for a word of sympathy  
for a word of remorse  
for a gesture of humanity



at every step  
she is stricken with anguish and suffering  
with the solitude of the victim

weeping and sobbing  
she returns to her den  
to say farewell  
to trees and flowers  
to say farewell  
to the deep, slow moving river of solitude  
to say farewell  
to the fast fading shadows  
of the helpless wilderness !

covered with the blanket of misery  
the human existence  
sat on the black stone  
of eternal Time  
shackled with the pangs of solitude

in deep thought of the morrow  
in the silence of the unknown  
the young life left behind its ambitions  
its hopes and dreams  
the shadows of the frightening woods  
were lost in the mist of destiny

beyond the horizon  
the tired eyes are closing their dark lids  
in the illusion of silver lining  
in the dense fog of depression and despair  
she waits for ever  
for some sign of benevolence !

on the edge of the depressing night  
the poor and the wretched  
wait in vain  
obliterating their own existence  
they lick their wounds of misfortune

the silent waters  
give no solace  
in anguish, in pain  
in endless suffering  
the eyes are closed  
frightened to see their own existence

the little sparrow fell from the roof  
to her death  
to her devastating annihilation !

who has opened the door  
who has let the light in  
who has shattered my dreams  
who has opened the book of my destiny

all alone

all naked

human existence has appeared from nowhere

who has left the traces

of these shadows of the lingering lamps

who has uttered these empty word

the words of insignificance

the words of the zero state of existence

enveloped in cold winds

in the shivering moments of the miserable beings

there are dark shadows of death

shackled with the existence of each other

they are led to their doom

to their eternal annihilation !

on the tree of life  
the innocent doves chatter in unison  
invoking the boatman  
to propel faster and faster  
the currents are strong  
and the river of existence is in spate  
  
in this wilderness  
in this vast space of wind and water  
the silence of emptiness  
is deadly and devastating  
the words of hope and affection  
are lost in the deaf and dumb pages of destiny  
  
in the slowly dying fire of the ashes  
there is gloom  
there is the moaning of the unconscious being  
  
turn around, o traveller  
the young girls wait in vain  
in helplessness, in disdain !

spinning the cotton of life  
the young girl waits in vain

there are no flowers on the mango trees  
no fruits of hope and happiness  
her beautiful bangles are broken  
her heart sinks in grief

in the ruins of the Time immemorial  
under the blue skies of ambitions  
the stars twinkle no more  
the prophets send no gesture of redemption

within and without  
it is the same discourse  
the dark existence has not disclosed  
any secret code

spinning the cotton of life  
the young girl waits in vain !

the little girls  
playing with dolls and their robes  
lost in the innocent joys of childhood  
in the words without any significance  
know not what awaits them  
what may appear on the unknown horizon

friends of the spinning wheel  
have lost their songs in the mist of destiny  
in the dense fog of anguish  
there is depression  
there is dejection !

the little squirrels  
are jumping up and down  
the bamboo trees  
happy and gay  
they transcend the hazards of human existence

the denizens of the deserts  
are lost in the vast spaces of the universe  
embroiled in the jugglery of words  
they know not the threshold of destiny

in anguish, in suffering  
the hands in prayer, in meditation  
are bewildered  
they know not the resonance of reflection !



as the shadows lengthened  
as the night approached  
there were festivities in the palaces  
there were resounding rhythms  
of the bangles of the beautiful girls

amidst the beats of the drum  
amidst the dreams of serenity  
there were dark lines  
there were hazards of life

there was no mercy  
no care for the wretched  
the dreams of the young, beautiful girls  
were shattered  
the ambitions of the innocent youth  
were devastated !

there was moonlit night  
in the city of the blind  
with the help of their sticks  
they went around  
looking for the divine light

the words of humanity  
lost their significance  
at the threshold of life  
the beautiful scarf of the young girl  
was torn to pieces  
there was no trace left  
of dreams and derisions

away from the world  
away from the jealous eyes  
the naked being washed herself  
in the lake of destiny  
and the scribes drowned their sorrow  
in the river of suffering !

the path of suffering was long  
the tears of the wretched  
rolled down the face of the earth

a young girl was taking care  
of the grains of life  
she was holding on  
to fast fading shadows

the eternal Time passed  
precious lives were spent  
in measuring the hazardous steps of life  
to save the honour of the motherland

but no bird came  
with the message of love  
to pick the grains of life !

the labour of the friends was not rewarded  
tired, they lost all promise and patience

the potter was exhausted  
all her pots were left behind  
her labour, her love  
were not valued in the final grind

laid down on the floor of life  
the pots dried in vain  
the rains soaked every grain !