History of Sindhi Literature

L H Ajwani

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Sindhi, like Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali, is one of the four languages of the sub-continent which goes back to the earliest recorded evidence of civilisation. According to Grierson, it can be bracketed with Lahnda as the two languages of the North-West group of Sanskrit languages. John Beames characterised it as "infinitely more natural and captivating than anything which the hide-bound Pandit-ridden languages of the eastern part of India can show."

The present history traces the development of Sindhi Literature from its remote beginnings to 1947.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS work lays no claim to originality or research. It is simply the first attempt, in the English language, to give a simple and connected narrative of literature in the Sindhi language.

Md. Sidik Memon has to his credit, the first *History of Sindhi Literature*, and Lutfallah Badwi has written a *History of Sindhi Poetry*, but these two books, written in Sindhi, are very different from the present History. The present writer has freely drawn upon them, specially for minor Sindhi poets, but his viewpoint is his own. His debt to these two authors is, however, very considerable, and cannot be over-estimated.

This History could not have been completed but for the encouragement and guidance received from the Sahitya Akademi to whose authorities the present writer is deeply indebted for their helpfulness and courtesy.

Professor D. K. Mansharamani was good enough to place his whole library of Sindhi books at the disposal of the present writer, and to suggest a formula for the conversion of Hijri years into Christian years. Mr. K. R. Bhatia, Assistant Collector of Central Excise, kindly lent his unpublished typescript entitled 'Medieval Sind'. The present writer is grateful to these two friends.

The writer of this History has worked under many handicaps, chief of them being remoteness from Sind and Sindhi libraries, and an attack of crippling disease. He realises his shortcomings and the faults and errors that abound in this book and craves indulgence at the hands of his readers for being so presumptuous as to be a pioneer. The goodwill extended to him by the readers of the Chapter on Sindhi in *Contemporary Indian Literature*, published more than a decade ago, has emboldened him to write this History.

L. H. AJWANI

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Chapter I

SIND AND SINDHIS

The province of Sind lies between North latitude 23° 35′ and 28° 30′ and 67° to 70° East longitude and is the most westerly part of the Indian sub-continent. It is an alluvial plain formed by the river Sindhu or Indus (after the five Panjab rivers have poured their waters therein) plus the delta of the river. A range of hills in the West demarcates Sind from Baluchistan and a stretch of desert in the east distinguishes it from Rajasthan. The Rann of Cutch in the south is the boundary between Sind and Cutch. Panjab lies in the north. Sind is generally known as the lower valley of the Indus and this river bisects the province for 360 miles. Sind's area is about 57,000 square miles. There are three well-defined parts of Sind, the *Siro* or Head, the *Vichola* or the Middle, the *Lar* or the Descent, and two outlaying regions, one in the West, Kohistan or the hill-tract, and the other in the East, the Registan, or Desert of Thar.

In ancient times, Sind was a much bigger region, its boundaries extending to Kashmir, Kandhar and Kanoj in the north and to Saurashtra in the south, and its traders had penetrated to all parts of the known world. The Phoenician traders have been sometimes described to be of Sindhi extraction ; they had at least many associations with Sind. The Sindhis have had a continuous tradition of maritime enterprise as well as of commercial intercourse with Central Asia. The 'Sindwork' merchants have their branches, even now, in most parts of the civilised world. As a result of travel and intercourse, the Sindhis have been free from many taboos prevalent in other parts of India. Untouchability is mostly not prevalent among the Sindhis.

The river Sindhu has occupied the first and foremost place in the affection of the Sindhis. Sind is even more a gift of the River (Sindhu) than Egypt is of the River (Nile). As Hyder Bux Jatoi put it in his rapturous tribute to the Sindhu, more than forty years ago, Sind exists because of the Darya Shah, i.e., the great River, and would be nothing if the River were not there. In Sindhi life and literature the great River is the source of inspiration and devotional feeling. In the most ancient times

there was this feeling of adoration for the Sindhu as for a Deity and it has continued to the present day. The *Rig-Veda* has voiced this feeling :—[1]

'Let now the poet, here writing in the place of sacrifice, tell, O rivers, your chief glories. The Rivers have come forth by seven and seven from three quarters, the Sindhu surpassing all in her glory. From the mountains onward towards the Sea, the Sindhu hasteneth in her strength, rushing in the path that Varuna had smoothed out ; eager for the prize, she surpasses in that race all that run. Above the earth, even in the heavens, is heard the sound of her rolling waters ; the gleam of bright lights lengthens out her unending course. From the mountainside the Sindhu comes rolling like a bull, as from the clouds the waters rush amid the roll of thunder. The other rivers run to pour their waters into thee.

'From both sides thou drawest on the following streams like to a conquering King, rushing to the front, leading his following hosts. O Ganges, Jumna, Sarasvati, Sutlej and Ravi, and you also, O Asikri, Marudridha, hearken O Vitasta and Arjikiya with the Sushoma, listen now to this my praise, flashing, sparkling, gleaming, in her majesty the unconquerable, the most abundant of streams, beautiful as a handsome, spotted mare, the Sindhu rolls her waters over the lands.

'Mistress of a chariot, with noble horses richly dressed, golden, adorned, yielding nutriment, abounding in wool, youthful, gracious, she traverses a land full of sweetness.'

The chant *Jhoole-Lal* or Hallelujah to the River-Deity has taken strong possession of the Sindhi mind and heart, and even a film has been composed called Jhoole-Lal.

The Sindhu has had profound effect on Sindhi life and culture, and because of its shifting character has made Sindhi life and civilisation unstable and prone to constant changes. 'For ages the Indus has been pushing its bed across the valley from east to west, generally by the gradual process of erosion, which effectually wipes out every trace of town or village on its banks ; but at times also by a more or less sudden shifting of its waters into entirely new channels, leaving large tracts of country to go to waste, and forcing the inhabitants of many a popular place to abandon their old homes, and follow the river in search of new settlements."[2] Postans has commented on this instability of locations and men in Sind[3]: 'The geographical features of such a

country are very peculiar. Towns, once of commercial importance, are now no longer valuable for the objects of traffic ; the facilities afforded by the river being withdrawn and its advantages lost, ports which are resorted to for the whole trade of the Indus are ruined and abandoned, and portions, at some periods cultivated and productive, are in the course of a short space of time, often converted into desert tracts. The natural sloth of the natives of Sind induces them always to choose their localities near the river, where subsistence is easily obtained, and in this way they often suffer ; for whole villages are in the course of a season swept away in its torrent.'

As a result, Sind might have, as an alternative name, the title of *Mohen-Jo-Daro* or the Mounds of the Dead, the name given to the site of the excavations near Dokri in Larkana where Rakhal Das Bannerji made his epoch-making discovery in the 'twenties which showed that as far back as 3240 B.C.-2750 B.C. Sind had a civilisation, and in many ways a more advanced civilisation, than that of Sumer or Egypt. Most ancient of lands, Sind has no building, no monument to show what Sind or Sindhi civilisation was in ancient times. For a knowledge of its past men have to dig underground, and excavate the mounds that litter the land. Sindhi literature has vanished into this limbo of oblivion, and no excavations can give us an idea of Sindhi literature earlier than the sixteenth century A.D. Sind is either the River or the Sand-dunes, mounds and Desert, and Sind's typical inhabitants are either the River-Folk or the Boatmen, or the Desert-dwellers and Camel Drivers who make way through the Desert. In the Sindhi dictionary no word has so many synonyms as the Camel, the 'Ship of the Desert'. The best of Sindhi literature, extant, has been sometimes called Desert Melodies.

Another *fluctuation* in Sindhi life and habits has been because of its peculiar history. Indeed, both geography and history have combined to give a twist and instability to Sindhi way of living. Sind, as a frontier province, has been a trampling-ground for aliens and invaders, and no particular races or people have left abiding marks. In Sind history it is always a question mark. Who the inhabitants of Sind in the Mohen-Jo-Daro era were cannot be determined with certainty. The Aryans and the Dravidians, the aboriginal races, the Scythians and Greeks, Arabs and Europeans, Iranians and Turanians, Mongols and Pathans have all marched through Sind and left

some imprints. Sind has been isolated, sometimes, completely from the Indian sub-continent, and assumed the character of a Central Asian territory. Now Sind is completely merged in West Pakistan and the very word 'Sind' seems to have disappeared. This periodical effacement of Sind and the Sindhis has largely told upon Sindhi character and made it chameleon-like. Not many Indians have such a characteristic of adopting the dress, habits, and ideologies of other peoples as the Sindhis have. Unlike the Panjabis, their neighbours, the Sindhis have shown no desire in their recorded history to oppose or withstand the ingress, influx, and influence of invaders and aggressors. The hospitality of the Sindhis is proverbial, but it has not saved them from persecution or aggression.

On the other hand, the Sindhis have shown a resilience which has made them quickly recover from circumstances which might have well doomed them to complete destruction. And they have cultivated a broad-mindedness and religious tolerance which have saved them from bigotry and fanaticism. The strongest point about a Sindhi is that he is a *Sufi* and a Sufi has been called la-kufi i.e. 'without a creed'. Never much given to ritualism, the Sindhi has veneration for all that calls him to a realisation of the Divine in man and nature. The Sindhi has a profound consciousness that this world of multiplicity or *Kasrat* has behind it Unity or *Wahdat*, and that the object of existence is to pierce behind the veil of phenomenal existence and reach the one Reality. The way to this God-realisation, which is not different from self-realisation, lies through Discipline and Love. Most Sindhi songs turn on this Realisation through self-abnegation and Love, albeit physical love, for the Sufis believe that physical love is the bridge to be crossed before one can attain to spiritual love. This Sufistic belief has been the sheet-anchor of Sindhis, Hindus as well as Muslims, in the many ups and downs they have had to face in the past as well as in recent years.

The story of Sind, through the ages, has been the story of the decline of a great fertile and civilised region to the level of a backward and despised tract, until the British raised it once more to a prosperous and honourable position. The *Rig-Veda* says : 'The Sindh is rich in horses, rich in chariots, rich in cloths, rich in gold ornaments well made, rich in wood for ever fresh, abounding in Silama plants, and the auspicious river wears honey-growing flowers'.[4] Burton who named Sind as *The Unhappy Valley* ad-

mitted that in days gone by Sind was 'a most lovely land situated in a delightful climate—a fertile plain traversed by the beneficent Mehran with large flourishing cities, its gardens being gardens of Iram or fabulous paradise'.[5] In his well-known work on *Mohen-Jo-Daro* civilisation in Sind in the period 3250 B.C. 2750 B.C., Sir John Marshall refers to the Indus Valley Culture as 'a marvellous culture, surpassing in many respects the slendour of Egypt and Mesopotamia', and says that 'one thing that stands out clearand unmistakable both at Mohen-Jo-Daro and Harappa is the civilization hitherto excavated at these two places is not an independent civilization but one already age-old and stereotyped on Indian soil, with many millennia of human endeavour behind it'.[6] The Indus Valley Civilization, as known from the Mohen-Jo-Daro excavations, has excited the wonder of archaeologists and historians because of its planning, its advance in hygienic living, its culture. Unfortunately, the characters on the seals in the *Mohen-Jo-Daro* have not been deciphered yet, but there is enough evidence thrown up to show that Sind had a long-established, progressive, and fine civilisation even five thousand years ago.

In the two great epics of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, Sind does not loom large, for the centre of gravity in Indian life had shifted by then from the Sindhu to the Ganges and the Jamna, but Sindhi horses are praised and reference made to Sindhus mingling with the deep.[7] In *Mahabharata*, the ruler of Sind, Jayadratha, is shown as fighting on the side of his brother-in-law Duryodhana, and meeting death at the hands of the Pandav hero, Arjuna. The horses, cows, cotton cloth and fine muslin of Sind attracted the greedy Persian King Cyrus the Great (558-530 B.C.), and his successor, Darius the Great, who annexed Sind in 512 B.C. Sind's yearly contribution of 360 talents of gold was the largest furnished by any satrapy of the Persian empire. Alexander's passage through Sind on his way back to Babylon through the land route via Makran left no impression on Sind at all. In the days of the Mauryans, Sind formed a part of their empire and Buddhism came to Sind. After the decline of the Mauryan empire came the Bactrians, the Greeks (the Yavanas), the Parthians, and most important of all the Sakas or the Scythians whose blood mingled with that of the Sindhis so largely that Sind became 'Indo-Scythic'. In the Age of Guptas, Sind was quite a flourishing and progressive province and it continued to be such until the coming of the Arabs. Dr. Suniti Kumar

Chatterjee admits this on pages 349 and 350 of his *Languages and Literatures of India* and says that ' before the coming of the Arabs early in the 8th century, Sindh appears to have been quite abreast with other parts of India.... the people of ancient Sindh participated in the common cultural life of the rest of India.... Unfortunately the remains of ancient Hindu civilization in Sindh which could be found on the surface have not been preserved, due to the ravages of both man and Nature. But nevertheless, what has been found by excavation of the ancient Brahminical and Buddhist culture sites of Sind is sufficient to indicate the high artistic achievement of the Sindh people.' [8]

When the Arabs invaded Sind under Mahomed Bin Kasim, in 712 A.D., Sindhis had become superstitious, caste-ridden, ease-loving and timorous. There were traitors like Moka Bassaya to show the way to the invader, and cowardly governors like Agham Lohana, to take shelter under the creed of non-violence and refuse to fight. The Arabs easily conquered Sind and brought Islam to Sind (and India). Their military power lasted only a short while but Sind's ancient culture was rudely shaken and suffered a set-back. From 712 to 1843, Sind was under Muslim rule, first Arab rule, then the rule of two indigenous Sindhi tribes, the Sumras (1050-1350) and the Sammas (1350-1520), then the rule of Arghuns and Turkhans (1520-1590), and finally the rule of the Mogul Emperors which lasted upto the death of Aurangzeb, after which the Kalhoras, a race of mendicants, ruled over Sind till 1783 or thereabouts, followed by the sixty years' rule of the Baloch Talpurs or Mirs, until the British conquered Sind in 1843.

This long period of thousand years or more of Muslim rule in Sind was a period of almost progressive degeneration for Sind and Sindhis. When the Arabs conquered Sind they were much less civilized than the Sindhis, and Sindhi physicians and learned men were taken to Baghdad. The cultural effect of the Arab conquest of Sind may be summed up in the oft-quoted words of Henry Cousens : ' The Arabs destroyed but did not build.' [9] Postans has aptly remarked in a review of the History of Sind in the Muslim period that ' a general review of the history of Sind for that period leads to the conclusion that under its Hindu possessors it was a rich, flourishing, and extensive monarchy, but that, subsequently becoming the prey of conquerors who, while they were generally involved in contests for the supremacy paid

no attention to the improvement of the country or maintenance of the imperial authority, this valuable territory dwindled at length into a mere subah.... The prosperous State in which the Mohemadans found Sindh is fully attested by their own historians.' [10]

Medievel Sind, i.e., Sind before the first quarter of the sixteenth century, seems to have lost touch with India and to nave come very much under the influence of the heterodox sects of Islam that had sprung up in Persia and western parts of Asia, and which favoured worship of Saints and their Tombs. Sind became not only a land of the Mounds of the Dead but also a land of the Tombs. Indeed, the Tombs were more than the number of habitable cottages and houses in Sind. Many Hindus who did not favour Islam came to forsake their religion because of the Tombs and the holy men interred therein. Elliott, in his History of India, has referred to the prevalence of Islamic heresies in medieval Sind and the deleterious effect they had on the minds of the Hindus : ' Their (the Muslim heretics') cursing of Muhammad ; their incarnations of the diety ; their types and allegories ; their philosophy divided into exoteric and esoteric ; their religious reticence ; their regard for particular numbers, particularly seven and twelve ; their various stages of initiation, their abstruse allusions ; their mythical interpretations ; their pantheistic theosophy, were so much in conformity with sentiments already pervalent among those willing disciples, that little persuasion could have been required to induce them to embrace so congenial a system of metaphysical diversity.' [11]

In the sixteenth century, specially after Sind was annexed to the Mogul Empire, Sind came again under Indian influences, and the Bhakta Kavi movement which was then dominant all over North India gripped the Sindhi mind and imagination. Kabir and Tulsidas, Mirabai and Surdas, and especially the utterances of Guru Nanak and his successors, the Sikh gurus, and innumerable Yogis or Jogis and Sanyasis, powerfully affected the faith and utterances of the Sindhi poets and saints, and out of the fusion of Indian thought with the belief of the free thinkers of Islam who came from Persia and western parts of Asia, was born that Sindhi *Sufism* which is the most powerful factor or element in Sindhi life and literature. The triumphant march of Sufism in Sind could not be impeded by the fanaticism of either the Kalhoras who murdered the greatest of Sindhi Sufis, Shah Inayat of Jhok,

or the Talpurs who snatched at every opportunity to convert their Hindu subjects to Islam. The Sufis believed that Ram and Rahim were one and that no particular creed was needed to lead man to the knowledge and realisation of his divine essence.

The British conquest of Sind, in 1843, was no doubt an act of aggression, but the Sindhis welcomed their rule as giving them relief from autocracy and barbarism. The Province became a fertile, prosperous, and advanced region after a benighted and backward existence for over a thousand years. In the pre-British era, one-third of Sind was reserved for *shikargahs* or hunting-ground for the rulers, and there were hardly a million inhabitants scattered over a country as big as England. Under the British rule, specially after the Sukkur Barrage, Sind became a land of plenty and attracted outsiders. The Hindu minority, freed from autocratic tyranny, became one of the most enlightened peoples in India and built up a large number of educational institutions, hospitals and welfare centres. But the traditional weakness and political short-sightedness of the Sindhis once more led to their downfall and ruin. They invited the Muslim League Partitionists to make their headquarters in Sind, which no other Muslim majority province did, with the result that the Hindu Sindhis had to flee because of the communal disturbances and seek refuge in other parts of India, and the Muslim Sindhis had to submit to the extinction of their separate entity within a short period of one decade. Sind and the Sindhi language were both put on the shelf, in Sind itself, and also in India that is Bharat. Now Sindhi has been recognised as a major language in India, that is Bharat, and it is hoped that there is a bright future before it.

CHAPTER II

SINDHI LANGUAGE AND ITS ANCESTRY

NEARLY a century ago, Dr. E. Trumpp made a thorough study of the Sindhi language in his monumental *Sindhi Alphabet and Grammar* (1872), and his pronouncement still stands almost unaltered by the subsequent research : 'The Sindhi is a pure Sanskritical language, more free from foreign elements than any of the North Indian vernaculars. The old Prakrit Grammarians may have had their good reason to designate the Apabhramsha dialect from which the modern Sindhi is immediately derived, as the lowest of all the Prakrit dialects ; but if we compare now the Sindhi with its sister-tongues we must assign to it, in a grammatical point of view, the first place among them. It is much more closely related to the old Prakrit, than the Marathi, Hindi, Panjabi and Bengali of our days, and it has preserved an exuberance of grammatical forms, for which all its sisters may well envy it. For, while all the modern vernaculars of India are already in a state of complete decomposition, the old venerable mother-tongue being hardly recognisable in her degenerate daughters, the Sindhi has, on the contrary, preserved most important fragments of it and erected for itself a grammatical structure, which surpasses in beauty of execution and internal harmony by far the loose and levelling construction of its sister.

'The Sindhi has remained steady in the first stage of decomposition after the old Prakrit, whereas all the other cognate dialects have sunk some degrees deeper ; we shall see that the rules which the Prakrit grammarian Kramadishvara has laid down in reference to the Apabhramsha, are still recognisable in the present Sindhi, which by no means can be stated of the other dialects. The Sindhi has thus become an independent language, which though sharing a common origin with its sister-tongues, is very materially differing from them." [1]

Another great authority on the Sindhi language, Sir George Grierson, has assigned Sindhi to the Outer sub-branch of Indo-Aryan languages (Sanskrit stock), and bracketed Sindhi with Lahnda as the two languages of the North-western group, the Western Panjab and Sindh. This group is stated to be in con-

tact with Dardic languages to the north and north-east. 'On the West it has the Eranian Pashto, and on the south it meets the Arabian sea. Only on the east is it in contact with other Indo-Aryan languages, and these are, in order from north to south, Panjabi, the Marwari dialect of Rajasthani, and Gujarati, all the belonging to the Inner sub-branch. Dardic languages were once spoken over the whole of this tract, and have left their trace, on both Lahnda and Sindhi, but, notwithstanding this infection of Dardic speech, both are clearly Outer languages, and present points of relationship with the Outer languages of Eastern India, which are wanting in Panjabi and Rajasthani.'[2]

As for Lahnda, Sir George Grierson describes it as almost a Dardic language infected by Western Hindi, while Panjabi is a form of Western Hindi infected by Dardic. But he says about *Sindhi* that 'Sindhi, on the contrary, has much more nearly retained its original character of a language mainly Outer, but partly Dardic. To its east it has Rajasthani, not Panjabi, but it is protected from invasion from the east by physical obstacle of the desert of Western Rajputana. While Modern Lahnda merges imperceptibly into Panjabi, Sindhi does not merge into Rajasthani, but remains quite distinct from it. Although from very early times the area in which the North-Western group of Indo-Aryan languages is spoken has been frequently subjected to foreign influence, it is extraordinary how little this mixed Dardic-cum-Outer form of speech has been influenced by it, except that, under Musalman domination, the vocabulary has become infused with Persian (including Arabic) words.'

As regards the linguistic ancestry of Sindhi, Grierson says: 'The immediate predecessor of Sindhi was an Apabhramsha Prakrit named Vrachada, regarding which the Indian Grammarian Markandeya gives us a few particulars. He moreover mentions a Vrachada Paisachi apparently spoken in the same locality, and lays stress on the fact that the Kekaya Paisachi is the principal form of that Prakrit. Paisachi was the language of the ancestors of the modern Dards, so that the fact of the existence of a Dardic influence on the languages of the North-Western group is borne out by this evidence that Paisachi was once spoken in this same tract.'

Grierson says that very few books were written in Sindhi and that its proper alphabet is Lahnda, but that Gurmukhi and Nagari alphabets are also employed, and now Persian alphabet

is in use, by which doubtless he means the Arabic-Sindhi script devised one hundred years ago under instructions from the British rulers of Sind.

Finally, Grierson notes that Sindhi has preserved many phonetic, and grammatical, peculiarities which have disappeared elsewhere and is a typical example of the Outer languages. 'In ancient times Sindh included the old Vrachada country, and to the present day the language retains special features which were recorded hundreds of years ago as characteristic of the old Vrachada Apabhramsha from which it is descended.' But, in a footnote, Grierson stresses the fact that he does by no means suggest that Sindhi is derived from any Paisachi or Dardic dialect, the Paisachi being foreigners and not original inhabitants of Sind.

John Beames had to make a reluctant admission about the Sindhi language : "It is a rough language, having thorny paths of its own, but there hangs about it, to my mind, somewhat of the charm of wild flowers in a hedge whose untamed luxuriance pleases more than the regular splendour of the parterre. Even as early as Prakrit times the dialect of the Indus Valley shook itself free from trammels and earned for itself from the pedantic followers of rule and line, the contemptuous epithet of *Apabhramsha*, or vitiated. There is a flavour of wheaten flour and reek of cottage smoke about Panjabi and Sindhi, which is infinitely more natural and captivating than anything which the hide-bound Pandit-ridden languages of the eastern part of India can show it.[3] Burton, who continually thought of Sind as the *Unhappy Valley*, was constrained to admit in 1851 that 'As regards the literature in the Sindhi tongue it may be easily asserted that no vernacular dialect at the time of our taking that country possessed more, and few so much, original composition', and further said that 'the poetical literature of Sind is much more various and valuable than the prose and yields not in importance either to Marathi or the original compositions in the Hindi and Brij dialects.'[4]

After the Partition of India, controversy has been intense about the ancestry of the Sindhi language. It has been questioned whether Sind has really been derived from the Vrachada Apabhramsha Prakrit form of Sanskrit. This hesitation arises from the assumption that *there was a Sindhi language when there was no Sanskrit or when there were no Vedas.* It has been

argued that the Aryans entered India centuries later than the Mohen-Jo-Daro people, and that the Vedas are posterior to the Indus Valley Civilisation of five thousand years ago. Some scholars point to four letters in Sindhi alphabet which are peculiar to Sindhi, to Sindhi words ending in *r* which elsewhere end in *l*, and to a few other things and jump to the conclusion that Sindhi is of more ancient origin than the Sanskrit and that far from being derived from it, is anterior to it. Some even hint that Sanskrit, if it is not a younger offspring of a commom language, owes its birth to Sindhi ! Absurdity could seldom go further. This absurdity reaches its climax in the belief that Sindhi is a Semitic language or a derivative of a Semitic language.

Some of the objectors to the received belief of Sindhi originating in the Vrachad Apabramsha of Prakrit-Sanskrit are very halting and hesistant like Mr. Jairamdas Doulatram who has examined in his *The Ancestry of Sindhi* (1957) Markandeya's statement in section 18th in *Prakrit-Sarvaswa* that the ' Vrachda Apabhramsha had originated in the Sindhu Desa ', and adducing reasons to doubt it has asked : ' Is it the language as we know as *Sindhi* has evolved not from Vrachda Apabhramsha but from the local variety of Prakrit which had developed along its own lines in the *lower* Indus Valley, with its centre of life at Brahmanka....or Brahamanabad, as known to Arab and Persian historians. The course of evolution of the Indo-Aryan languages....would appear to support the above possibility and to suggest that an ancient variant, of the pre-Vedic Prakrit, spoken by the people of the lower Indus Valley, has probably continued to evolve, acquiring the form of Old Sindhi in the phase of the " Secondary " Prakrit. Is it then, that, later, while Sanskrit was in use by the learned in this region and the inter-regional literary Nagara Apabhramsha had also thrown out its own variant in the form of Vrachda, somewhere to the *north* of present *Sindh*, the Sindhi Prakrit simultaneously continued its independent process of evolution and change in the main region of the lower Indus Valley and crystallised into a distinctive spoken and literary language which may be termed Middle Sindhi of the end of the first milennium of the Christian era, as contrasted with old Sindhi of the earlier period and the modern Sindh of the post Apabhramsha period ? Is it that Vrachda was not the local language of the people of present Sindh but, due to proximity, it may have lent some words or phonetic peculiarities to a northern

dialect which has coloured the language of present Sindh, owing to the continued political, social and cultural domination over it for several centuries by the people coming from regions to the north and north-west of Sind ? '

Mr. Jairamdas may be justified in his doubts, but his whole argument is vitiated by the insertion of the words ' pre-Vedic Prakrit '. There was never any pre-Vedic Prakrit ; all the Vernaculars or Prakrits in Sind whether of the Mohen-Jo-Daro Civilisation, or before it, were post-Vedic Prakrits. Even if Mr. Jairamdas' argument be conceded *in toto* it would only result in the elimination of the prefix ' Vracada ' or ' Vrachada ' to Apabhramsha Prakrit-Sanskrit, which rightfully is accepted as the progenitor or the source of the Sindhi language.

In opposition to Mr. Jairamdas Doulatram's argument about the indigenous growth of Sindhi in the lower Sindh Valley, is the stand taken by Dr. Nabibux Baloch, Head of the Department of Sindhi, Sind University, in his writings in *Mihran* and in his *History of Sindhi language from ancient times to the times of the Samas* (1962). He agrees with Mr. Jairamdas in discarding Markandeya's statement that Vrachada Apabhramsha had originated in Sindhu Desha (page 16), but instead of using the term ' pre-Vedic ' he uses ' Proto-Prakrit ' as the source of Apabhramsha, and without rhyme or reason makes the assumption that the ancient language of Sind was certainly some Semitic language which was afterwards influenced by Aryan languages.

Further, he observes that the ancient Sindhi language was influenced mostly by the Iranian and Dardic languages, and in the next instance by Sanskrit through its Pali Prakrit derivatives. He refutes the generally held belief that Sindhi is derived from Sanskrit. He attributes this belief mostly to the partiality of the European lingusits to Sanskrit, and in the next instance, to Hindu writers of Sind. He thinks that the first inhabitants of Sind came from the West and that their civilisation, which culminated in Mohen-Jo-Daro civilisation, was derived from the civilisations of Sumer and Babylon that grew on the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris.

Later on, he attributes to the Arab conquerors of Sind the civilisation and culture of the Sindhis, blinking his eyes to the fact that the Arab conquerors were distinctly inferior in civilisation and culture to the effete Sindhis they conquered, and that in any case the Arabs knew how ' to destroy ' and not how ' to

build '. Dr. Nabibux pays no attention to the researches of men like Mr. Jhamatmal Narumal, Dr. H.M. Gurbaxani, or Mr. Abdul Karim Sandelo, who have agreed that four-fifths of all the Sindhi words have their roots in Sanskrit.

After the Partition, there has been a tendency on the part of some Sindhi Muslims to attribute their ancestry to some son or grandson of Noah, and to trace their genealogy to some Semite, and it is little wonder that they would like the ancestry of Sindhi language to be traced to some Semitic or West Asiatic source.

But not all Sindhi Muslims can swallow such gratuitous assumptions or falsifications of history. A young Sindhi Muslim, Siraj-ul-Haq, has controverted the statements of Dr. Nabibux Baloch in his recent book in Sindhi on *Sindhi Boli* (1964) with indignation, while professing at the same time great respect for the learned Doctor.[5] In his love for Sind, Sindhis and their language, Siraj has equated Arabic and Sanskrit as languages having contributed nothing worthwhile to Sindhi language and culture. His thesis is (as he has expressed it in the Foreword): ' The history of Sindhi is older than that of Sanskrit and in one way Sanskrit and its related civilisation or culture are derived from the civilisation or culture of Sind and from Sindhi language.... There is relationship between Sanskrit and Sindhi, but not that which is talked about. In fact it is something quite the opposite (of what is held). If Sindhi is indebted to Sanskrit for some words, Sanskrit is indebted to Sindhi a great deal more. Sanskrit is born of Sindhi—if not directly, at least indirectly.'

In the pursuit of this thesis he goes about with great glee and it is really exhilarating to see him and his co-adjutor, Mohamed Ibrahim Joyo, calling Dr. Nabibux Baloch's arguments in favour of Sindhi deriving from Arabic vowels and grammatical rules as ' Bunk '! It requires great courage in a Sindhi Muslim to demolish the Arabic citadel in such a doughty manner. Perhaps it was necessary in a crusader against Arabic and Arabs (as the civilisers of Sindhis) to state that modern Sindhi as well as Sanskrit and all Indo-Pakistan languages were derived from the same ancient language which may be called Sindhi or Proto-Sindhi, or Proto-Indic, which originated in Sindhu Valley, and which was taken from Sindhu valley to the various parts of India and Pakistan, and to foreign countries.

For a proof of the existence of this prime source, Siraj has tried to decipher the seals found in Mohen-Jo-Daro and Harr ɒa.

He finds as a result of this deciphering, that the Sindhi language, as we have it, is the developed form of the most ancient languages—which was also Sindhi. The young author has shown wide reading and some critical acumen in working out his main thesis that Sindhi is not only not derived from Sanskrit but comes from the same source as Sanskrit, and is perhaps an anterior derivative from the same source, so that Sindhi has influenced Sanskrit more than Sanskrit has influenced Sindhi, and that the common features of the two languages and their differences are because of their common origin. 'Because of springing from the same source there is common ground between them (Sanskrit and Sindhi) as well as differences.'[6] An instance of words retaining termination 'r' in Sindhi words but changing that ancient termination into 'l' in Sanskrit and languages derived from Sanskrit affords a proof to the author that Sindhi was more ancient than Sanskrit, and exerted its influence upon Sanskrit.

It will be time to think of Siraj-ul-Haq when some scholar concedes his claim that what Sir John Marshall or Father Heras could not do, i.e., decipher the Mohen-Jo-Daro seals, has been done by this young Sindhi Muslim. His great achievement in *Sindhi Boli* is the shattering blow he has given to the far-fetched theory of Dr. Nabibux Baloch that the Semitic languages had anything to do with the origin and growth of a language purely Indian in origin. Suraj-ul-Haq has given many instances to prove the utter dissimilarity between Semitic languages and Sindhi or Sanskrit or the Indo-Aryan languages. In the Semitic languages a word of three letters is usually the root from which various other words are formed by addition of certain letters by following certain grammatical rules. There is nothing like this in any Indo-Aryan language.

It is noteworthy that the most distinguished of Arabic scholars in Sind, Dr. U.M. Daudpota, accepts *in toto* the contention of Trumpp and Grierson : 'Sindhi is an old language and has been directly descended from the "Virachada" dialect of Prakrit.'[7] Dr. Daudpota is chary of adding 'Sanskrit' to 'Prakrit' but the term 'Sanskrit' is understood, *Prakrit* being only the vernacular and Sanskrit the language of refinement and perfection.

One of the reasons for the difficulty experienced in the recognition of Sindhi as a 'Sanskritical' language is its present script (Arabic-Sindhi script) which was devised artificially under orders

from the British Government. When the British conquered Sind in 1843 there was no one script in use, the literati being conversant only with Persian script because of the use of Persian in Courts in pre-British days. The first grammars and dictionaries of the Sindhi language were in Devanagri script for reasons advanced by Captain George Stack in his pioneering work on *Sindhi* Grammar 1849 (Wathen's Grammar, prepared a quarter of a century earlier, was in Persian script, but it has been pronounced by competent scholars to be no grammar at all). Captain Stack says :[8]

'In commencing this work, my first thought was in what character I should write the native words.

'My choice lay among the Sindhi (or rather any of its numerous signs), the Roman, the Persian, the Gurumukhi, and the Devnagri.

'The first I saw at once would not do. Its scanty use of vowels made it quite impossible to delineate single words through it, so as to be at all intelligible.

'The Roman, too, I decided against. I never could understand the advantage of framing out of the Roman characters symbols to express sounds in Eastern tongues....

'The Persian was not decided against without some consideration. I had as regards it the precedent of Wathen's Grammar, and also of some Sindhi books extant in that character. But in this, too, many additional marks were required to represent sounds foreign to the Persian.

'My choice then lay between the Gurumukhi and Devnagri. The former led to the advantage of assimilating with the Sindhi somewhat more than the Devnagri did, and of being also more known to Hindoos in Sindh ; but I have preferred the Devnagri —1st as being a character with which Europeans are more-acquainted ; and 2nd only, a form being the foundation of the Sindhi itself it seemed more appropriate where a different character was required, to write in it than in any other, although cognate and generally similar.

'To some of the Devnagri letters it will be seen, I have added signs to complete the sounds used in Sindhi ; but these are not many, nor is the distiction in pronounciation so great as to make these signs absolutely necessary.'

For the same reasons Captain Stack used Devnagri script for his English-Sindhi Dictionary (1849) and Sindhi-English Dictionary (1855). Now, the Arabic-Sindhi script, devised under

British auspices, is generally in common use, and that gives rise to the supposition that Arabic has something to do with the Sindhi language.

There is the further difficulty that we have no surviving specimens of the Sindhi language prior to the Sumra rule. There are proofs that books in Sindhi were extant during early Arabic rule, for some books comprising an early history of Sind, Mahabharata stories and such other accounts, were translated into Arabic from Sindhi before 1000 A.D.,[9] but we have before us no specimens of Sindhi poetry or prose at all before the Sumras. The Sindhi literature of the Hindu period and pre-Sumra period has perished beyond recall, but not beyond speculation. The so-called specimen of Sindhi poetry discovered by Pir Hasamuddin Rashdi as belonging to the second century of Hejira or 8th century A.D.,[10] is Sindhi only to his imagination and no idea of the Sindhi language of that period can be obtained from it.

For all his research Dr. Nabibux Baloch is not able to produce a genuine Sindhi sentence of a period earlier than the Sumra regime (1050 A.D.—1350 A.D.). Mr Jairamdas Doulatram has referred in an article in *Hindvasi* dated 5–5–1957 to Alberuni (author of *Tarikh-al-Hind*) who visited Sind and Hind between 1017 A.D. and 1030 A.D. and reported that there were eleven scripts in use in India out of which three were in use in Sind—Ardhanagri, Saindhu and Malwari. Dr. U. M. Daudpota says much the same thing : ' As for the script in which Sindhi was being written, Al Biruni (973—1048 A.D.) says in his *Kitab ul Hind* that the alphabet used in southern Sind towards the sea-coast was Malwari, while in some parts the Ardhanagri script was in vogue.'[11] But not a single line of Sindhi in these scripts is available. Some other writers have dug up references to Sindhi verses in Muni Ramsinha's *dohas*, preserved in a manuscript in a Jain Mandir, and to other manuscripts, but specimens of these *dohas* show signs of Rajasthani, or Gujarati....but none of Sindhi language as we know it. A careful student of the language like Dr. Daudpota would not have, otherwise, been constrained to admit that ' There is no proper information as to the time at which Sindhi verse was first composed '[12] and that the the first specimens in the Sindhi language make their appearance only in the 8th century A.H. i.e. the fourteenth century A.D.

Prof. Bherumal Mahirchand's contention that the Sindhi language as we know it was formed only about 1100 A.D. has not

yet been controverted.[13] The specimens of the Sindhi language as given in Dr. Nabibux Baloch's *History of the Sindhi language as* belonging to the times of the Sumras or the Sammas have one startling point of agreement. *They have almost no admixture of either Persian or Arabic words*, even when it is religious poetry (e.g. of the Khoja community). Beyond a stray word like 'Barkat' (grace) here and there all the words are of Sanskrit-Prakrit origin. Looking at these specimens the Sanskrit-Prakrit origin or ancestry of the Sindhi language becomes clear and apparent.

The ancestry of the Sindhi language is thus not much in doubt. It is one of the oldest Sanskrit-Prakrit languages. But it has been enriched greatly by Arabic and Persian languages in the course of its contacts with people whose mother-tongue was either Arabic or Persian, and it has vestiges of older influences like the Dravidian as well. The vocabulary of Sindhi is copious, and can meet all the requirements of a sophisticated age. For the camel, ' the ship of the desert ' Sindhi has at least fifteen words ! It has been noticed that all the parts of the body, and most of the Indian flora and fauna, can be well described in Sindhi, which cannot be said of many other Indian languages, and that the various relationships in a family can be stated in one word in Sindhi while it would take many words in other languages to state those relationships.

Sindhi is specially rich in nomenclature of crops (as pointed out in his little book on the subject by Kotumal Advani), grasses (vide S. C. Shahani's and Ramdas Lakhani's articles in the D. J. Sind College Miscellany) and fisheries. Parmanand Mewaram made a brave attempt about sixty years ago to bring out an exhaustive Dictionary of the Sindhi language, but it now badly requires a revision as so many new words have come to be known and recognised since that date.

Chapter III

THE RAW MATERIAL OF SINDHI LITERATURE

The Bulk of Sindhi literature owes its origin either to religion or to popular legends. The religion of the Sindhis, whether of Muslims or Hindus, is not orthodox Islam or orthodox Hinduism, but a rather heterodox worship of saints and holy men, and observance of rituals which may be dubbed as superstitions. Lt. Burnes in his *Travels of Bokhara* has characterised the boatmen or fisher-folk of Sind, the original inhabitants of Sind, as superstitious : 'if they see a crocodile in the waters lower down than Hyderabad they regard it as an evil omen. In the songs and refrains they chant (while rowing their boats) the names of saints and holy men are to be found in every chant.'[1]

The dominant religious belief or legend in Sind is that of the River-Deity. Abbott, in his *Sind : A Reinterpretation*, has given the legend of Khwaja Khizr, the River-Deity, whose shrine stands in the river on the other side of Rohri. Khwaja Khizr is said to have changed the course of the river from Alore to its present bed at Sukkur, to save the merchant Shah Husain's daughter's honour, and to have brought into being a burning torch at the spot where his shrine now stands. Another legend credits a shepherd and his wife with tracking a mysterious flame from Rohri to its present spot in the midst of the waters of the Sindhu and to have built a shrine. What is important to note is that this shrine of Khwaja Khizr at Sukkur, known under the name of *Zindah Pir* (Living Saint), has been venerated and worshipped by both Muslims and Hindus, and has had, as regular Mujawars or keepers of the shrine, both Hindus and Muslims. Another story about Khwaja Khizr is that he plunged into the waters of Sindhu at Sukkur, and when he rose to the surface he was at Oderolal (near Hyderabad), a spot named in commemoration of the River-Deity.

The Hindu legend about the River-Deity has a historical or semi-historical basis. The Hindu River-Deity incarnate, Amarlal (Immortal Hero) or Oderolal (the Exalted Hero), was a historical personage who was born at Nasarpur in 1007 *sambat*, i.e., in the year 950 or 951, when a petty chief at Tatta, Mirkhshah,

by name, was making the life of his Hindu subjects intolerable by forcing them to accept Islam at the point of the sword. The oppressed Hindus prayed to god *Varuna*, the god of the river, to come to their help, and it is said the River-Deity incarnated himself at Nasarpur in the house of Ratan Rao Lohano and his devoted wife, Devaki.

With the advent of the infant, Odero, miraculous events took place which sent a shiver down the spine of the fanatical tyrant of Tatta and stayed his hand. Odero or Amarlal became steeped in Vedic lore even in his teens and began to preach the doctrine of religious toleration and love towards all, the cardinal principles of Hindu religion. But he was a warrior as well as a holy person. His horse and his sword struck terror in the hearts of the bigoted ones. He was, so to say, King Arthur, St. George, St. Augustine, all rolled into one : he filled the shrinking Hindus with courage and martial spirit, revealed to them the abiding glories of their religion, and put holy terror into the persecuting Muslims. He exhorted the Muslim fanatics to give up forced conversions, as these practices were against the dictates of the Koran, and an affront to the Almighty, who was not only the God of the Muslims but also of the Hindus as well. After finishing his mission, the warrior-saint and his horse disappeared into the waters of the Sindhu.

Many miracles are reported to his credit, one being that of getting into the river at Nasarpur and emerging out of it at Sukkur, a miracle reverse of that attributed to Khwaja Khizr. He is said to have passed on many of his emblems and articles of apparel to his cousin, Pagar, whom he nominated as his successor. This Pagar was the first of Thakurs, traditional keepers of the shrines consecrated to Amarlal or Oderolal. These Thakurs were to be found all over Sind but they were strong especially at Sewhan, Shikarpur and Ranipur. They had disciples among some of the most cultured families of Sindhi Hindus whom they visited periodically for giving instruction and for the collection of an annual tribute.

A whole host of hymns and songs has arisen out of the worship of Oderolal, generally known as *Panjras* or five lined verses. At the end of these Panjras is the stirring chant or refrain : *Jhule Lal Jhule Lal* or *Hallelujah to Lal*, which has become now the clarion cry of Sindhi Hindus in India. As Odero or Amarlal is said to have been born on a Friday evening, on the New Moon

day of the Hindu year in the month of Chet (Chaitra), Chetichand or New Moon day in Chet (called Gudi Parva in Maharashtra) is the special day of rejoicing and social gatherings for Sindhi Hindus in India, and Friday (Tharoon) is the day of the River-Deity.

The tenth century seems to have been a time of disintegration and decay for the Hindus in Sind until Oderolal rallied them and put spirit in them. The reason of this decay was that Sind was practically cut off from the rest of India. The old Sindhi civilisation or culture which had furnished great teachers and physicians to the Muslim world (one Sindhi physician was called to treat Caliph Haroon al-Rashid) was moribund. And the great religious revival brought about by Shankar Acharya in India was missing in Sind where the Buddhist as well as the Brahminical Hindus had lost touch with the fountainhead of their religion. Corrupt Tantric practices flourished in Sind, of which the most notorious instance was Dalurai, a degenerate Vàn Margi Hindu ruler, whose Nagri or City was destroyed by wrath from above, like Sodom and Gomorrah.

The legend of the destruction of Dalurai-ji-Nagri (the city of Dalurai) is one of the most persistent Sindhi legends and is linked up with the shifting of the bed of the Sindhu. There are different versions of the destruction of Dalurai-ji-Nagri. It is agreed, however, that Dalurai was a Hindu ruler, and it is taken for granted that he was a Hindu King who lived after Dahir and just before the Sumras, or in the early years of Sumra rule. He is generally believed to have lived in the early part of either the second half of the tenth century or the eleventh century. His capital city is held by some to be Alore, by others Brahamanabad. The legends mention simply Dalurai-ji-Nagri, the city of Dalurai. An awful earthquake and cyclone changed one night the flow of the river from the capital to its present bed, the Sukkur-Bukkur gorge, and destroyed Dalurai's Nagri and all the inhabitants including Dalurai.

The usual version may be given in the words of the writer of *Sind and Its Sufis*, 'The Fall of Brahmanabad': 'One of the Hindu rajas who attained to inglorious fame was Raja Dalurai; his country seems to have attained a high degree of prosperity. Tradition says that this king was powerful and brave, but was a devil incarnate of insatiable lust. He deflowered the virgins of the land and ordered that any virgin that was married, must first

contact the touch of his infamy. A girl of Brahman family, a pious and pure virgin found herself in danger. Her virtue and honour were more dear to her than all else. She prayed to the champion of the pure and the chaste for relief from the power of this demoniacal Dalurai. Already evil portents in the land had not been lacking. Prophets and star-readers prognosticated a huge calamity. It is said, that, on the night of the marriage of this girl, a terrific cyclone and a tremendous earthquake destroyed the country of Dalurai, and the huge city was a complete ruin. Whether tradition is corect regarding the story of the virgin can never be ascertained, but it is a fact that the ruins of Brahamanabad and Alore can to this time be witnessed. They stretch for many miles. The sight at Brahamanabed is awe-inspiring. A solitary tower, mostly dilapidated, stands witness to the terrible catastrophe that occurred centuries back.'[2]

In some versions, the virgin or new bride who was sought to be deflowered is represented to be a daughter of a sister of the King, and Dalurai is represented as an incredible monster and *Vam Margi* bent upon committing incest upon the body of his niece. One Hindu story-writer has stated that the hand of God smote Dalurai and destroyed his capital, Alore, when the monster wanted his own daughter to come to his bed on her bridal night. Nirmaldas Fatehchand, author of the story, '*Dalurai-ji-Nagri*', has separated the events leading to the shifting of the river Sindhu from those leading to the destruction of Dalurai's city. The change of the flow of Sindhu is attributed to the curse of a Syed Saif-ul-Mulk (Shah Husain) whose daughter was requisitioned for the king's palace: as the Syed's boats raised anchor and cut ropes to go down the river and escape Dalurai's grasp, the river flowed into another bed leaving Alore high and dry so that no pursuit of the runaway boats was possible. The destruction of the city came thereafter.

Whatever be the true story, the destruction of Alore and Brahamanabad and the change in the bed of the river Sindhu are catastrophes which linger in the memory of the Sindhis and are accepted as historical facts. The fate of Dalurai is always quoted as a warning to the lascivious and evildoers. The Muslims, of course, see in the story a miracle performed by a holy Syed, descendant of the Prophet, and the downfall of an unbeliever.

So much for the legends connected with the Sindhu. Regarding religious legends, the most important is about Pir Usman

Shah Marwandi (Lal Shahbaz) who was born at Marwand in Afghanistan in 1143. He came with his companions from Multan to Sewhan in Sind, and preached liberal religious doctrines which brought him much following. He is known as Lal Shahbaz (Red King-falcon), i.e. one who flies in the highest spiritual firmament, and many miracles are claimed for him while he was alive, and a lot more after his death, for he is said to have fulfilled the wishes of those who prayed to him sincerely and with devotion.

Pir Usman Shah has been called Shahbaz (peregrine falcon) because he is said to have turned himself into a falcon to pick up his friend Shaikh Farid Shakur Ganj from the gallows. He was called Lal, Red or Ruby, because of his Red Robe shining as a ruby, which he wore all his life after he had plunged in a cauldron of boiling oil and came out all crimson.[3] His famous shrine at Sewhan, with its great dome has been a centre of pilgrimage for both Hindus and Muslims. In the annual celebrations at the shrine, contributions to the *Mendi* function were made by the Hindus even more liberally than the Muslims. By some Hindus, Lal Shahbaz is regarded as a precursor of Sufism in Sind, the way of life which unites the Hindu and the Muslim. He is accepted by them as an incarnation of Bhartrihari, the recluse brother of King Vikramaditya, who is said to have worshipped Shiva where Lal Shahbaz's shrine is in Sewhan.

If Lal Shahbaz was the first Sufi, Shah Inayat of Jhok (called now Jhok Shariff or Holy Jhok), is known as the Master-Sufi and Holy Martyr, and his shrine at Jhok is the senior Sufi shrine in all Sind. All Sufis deem it a privilege to pay their homage at Jhok before proceeding to the shrines of other Sufis. Shah Inayat was a contemporary of Shah Abdul Latif, Sind's premier poet, and it is said that the most pathetic reference in the poetry of Shah is to the treacherous killing in 1718 of Shah Inayat by the Kalhoras with the prior sanction of Farruksere, Emperor of Delhi : ' Today, the Seeker's haunting chant is not heard in the parlours. The exalted ones are gone, the monasteries pall upon me. They who revived the spirit within us, those denizens of a higher sphere, are no more with us.'

But the sage himself did not mind the death. After his head was cut off it was sent to the Emperor at Delhi and the decapitated head is said to have uttered verses now called *Besar Namah* (the poetry of the Decapitated Head) of which one of the verses is (in Persian) :—' What matters if this head has been

offered at the feet of the Beloved ; a heavy obligation had to be repaid, what matters if it is paid in this way ?' To the executioner who was going to deal the death-stroke he offered grateful thanks : 'You are releasing me from the evil of Being. May God reward you in both the worlds for the favour you are doing me.'

The death of this saint led to the downfall of the Kalhoras and showed everyone what unmitigated rascals they were. The Emperor, who commanded his death, was blinded and tortured to death, it is said, by two Syed brothers who had become followers of Inayat Sufi in Delhi. This Sufi saint had lived for some time at Hyderabad (Deccan) and he had an all-India reputation. He had thousands of followers and they wanted to fight his enemies but he asked them to desist, for he must resign himself to the will of God.

A Sindhi verse of Inayat has survived in which he expresses his exultation and gratitude to his Beloved (God) for accepting an ugly, mean and weak person (like himself) and accosting him, face to face. (Another great sufi saint, Sachal, was saved from a like fate, by the kind intervention of one Talpur ruler.)

Shah Inayat was not the only martyr in Sindhi legends whose decapitated head spoke and uttered verses. There are the seven riddles propounded by seven decapitated heads of Fakirs who were beheaded at the behest of Jam Tamachi II (or Jam Nizamuddin) Samma prince at Mamui, near Tatta, in the fourteenth century. They are called *Mamui* verses or riddles, also because in Persian *Muamma* means a riddle. At various times, and even in the period of World War II, men wanted to read in these riddles a warning of the things to come. Bherumal Mahirchand claims that these verses are the oldest Sindhi verses extant.[4] They show no mixture of Arabic or Persian words.

It is said that each of the seven decapitated Fakirs burst into poetry or prophecy and after uttering one verse vanished to distant Amri, near Sewhan, where all the seven bodies were buried by an astonished populace. These seven prophecies or riddles have been put into English verse, in a flippant manner, by Burton : [5]

(1) Dyke of Arore be burst and flow
Hakro perennial to the main :
Swim ye fish, and ye lilies grow
Where Sammahs plough the sultry plain

(2) Steeds, gaunt and blue, pour from the North,
And matrons walk the crowded way :
Then Scinde ! incline thy stubborn head
Unto the strangers' sabre sway.

(3) For years to come broad Ar (Bhagar) shall flow ;
But when it dries by Fate's decree,
The fierce Beloch shall sell his son
For silver pieces, two or three.

(4) I hear from Lar the sound of strife,
I see the hosts from Siro haste ;
Then Scinde ! from 'twixt the South and East
The brand of war thy shores will waste.

(5) Karo Kabaro's walls shall view
Fierce combat raging half a day
The Mirmichi shall routed be
Then Scinde ! once more be blithe and gay.

(6) The Mirmichi ! who may teach ye
The surest token him to know ?
His lady fair wears double tails,
And down his neck the long curls flow.

(7) Come, come ye man ! and sit in peace
Beneath the Nagar's sheltering shade
Beyond Puran no roof-tree-plant
Nor let one hearth stone there be laid !

The only authentic verses in the Sindhi language to dispute ancient lineage with the Mamui verses are those in which the legend of *Dodo Chanesar* is recited. These verses belong to the to the times of Sumras and, if genuine, they must be regarded as anterior to Mamui verses which belong to the Samma rule, or the latter part of the 14th century.

The story of Dodo Chanesar is a part of the Sindhi tradition, so much so that whenever a man is regarded as tied to the apron-strings of his mother he is compared to Chanesar. Bhoongar, Sumra, who ruled in Sind in the first decades of the 13th century, had two wives. From one who was not from Soomra stock he had a son, Chanesar, and from the other, a Soomra princess, he

had a daughter Bhagi and a son Dodo. To unite Chanesar and Dodo their father proposed that Chanesar's son Nangar should be betrothed to Dodo's daughter, Koel. When Bhoongar died there was a dispute as to who should succeed him. Chanesar, though older than Dodo, was markedly inferior to him in kingly qualities.

Bhagi was called in to arbitrate and she decided in favour of Chanesar as the older brother, although Dodo was her own full brother. When the nobles called Chanesar to their Council Board and said to him :

Come and succeed your father, come Chanesar, come,
Luck is in your favour, well that your mother bore you

he temporised, and instead of occupying the throne, replied :

Rally the troops in the meanwhile, let me go home and come
Let me ask Mamma, that lady of venerable years.

As soon as Chanesar left, there was a universal condemnation of his conduct. How were they to trust a ruler who would consult his Mamma in matters with which women had nothing to do ? So, they asked Dodo to be their chief. Chanesar, who had gone into the palace met rebuffs at the hands of his mother as well as his wife. The mother told him :

I brought you into the world as a male child, but you have turned to be a female
Get into the area of spinning wheels, and spin thirty flaxen strands.

His wife, who was his mother's niece, also said tauntingly :

Auntie ! well have you addressed this husband of mine
Let him get into the midst of spinning wheels and spin thirty flaxen strands.
He is fit for household jobs ; what has he to do with rule ?

Chanesar was furious when he discovered that Dodo had taken over, and swore that he would have his revenge. His mother commended his resolve and exhorted him :

Strike at (raw) mangoes, blow to create a storm
See that you are not bereft of both these.

Chanesar sent a message to Dodo to abdicate in his favour, and when no answer was received, he threatened him with dire consequences : he would seek the aid of Sultan Alauddin of Delhi and pull him down from the throne. Dodo was adamant, his

nobles were firm in not allowing Chanesar any chance to be their ruler. Then Chanesar went to Delhi and sought the aid of the Sultan, offering him his sister, Bhagi, and other girls :

Father left behind nine lovely damsels
I was bringing them as tribute to you, but Dodo withheld my hand
My duty is to report, your privilege now to take action.

Sultan Allauddin marched to Sind with his troops to depose Dodo. The Sindhi army was no match for the Imperial troops. Dodo sent his would-be son-in-law Nangar (Chanesar's son) to supplicate the Sultan in his favour. At first Allauddin melted in favour of Dodo, but when Chanesar reminded him that Bhagi had not yet become his, the Sultan told Dodo's envoy:

Let the two brothers be reconciled and pass on Bhagi to me
Then will the Sumras receive honour at my hands and gift of lands
So get along quickly, and prepare for the wedding.

Nangar expostulated with the Sultan and told him that the **Sumras** never gave their daughters in marriage to the non-**Sumras**. The Sultan made immediate preparations for battle **and** the first casualty was Nangar, the son of Chanesar and the would-be son-in-law of Dodo :

Nangar and the Moguls engaged in a terrible fight
The crown was laid in the dust and warriors killed galore
Nangar lay on the ground, bereft of help and defence.

Nangar's corpse was brought to the palace, and his fiancee, Koel, took a vow to remain unmarried all her life.

In the battle that ensued, Dodo's dear friend Hasso, who had brought Soda Rajputs from Amarkot to help him, performed wonderful deeds but was killed by Nadir, Allaudin's general. Dodo now came to the field himself and sent his womenfolk to Abro, Samma ruler of Cutch, for safety. Abro promised to guard the Sumra women with his life.

My life for each Sumra lady who has ought shelter with me

Abro sent word to Dodo to fight like a man. Dodo fought bravely but the odds were against him and he was killed. Allauddin entered the place to pick Sumra women for his harem and found the women's apartments empty. When he learnt that the women had taken refuge with Abro he offered to make Abro ruler of

Mathelo and Multan if he transferred the Sumra women to him. Abro's reply was clear and ringing :

Neither Mathelo nor Multan is dear to my heart
Better death than the disgrace of delivering Sumris to you.

Abro's son Mamat fought so bravely that Allauddin was nonplussed. But at last, Mamat, his cousin Sabar, and Abro himself fell before the might of the Sultan's army :

The sun's light was obscured, darkness fell around
Abro fought so hard as if the sea was engulfing the shallows.

When Allauddin sought to satisfy his lust in the arms of the beautiful Sumra queens he found only ashes left for him. They had performed the *Rajput* act of *Johar*—burnt themselves on the funeral pyre.

After a careful scrutiny of this story, it appears almost certain that Dodo, Chanesar, Hasso, Abro etc. were all Hindu Rajputs and that the Sumras had not been converted to Islam at the time to which this legend relates. Md. Sidik Memon has related this story in his *History of Sindhi Literature*.[6]

And that brings us to the seven well-known legends of Sind which have been immortalised in the verses of Sind's greatest poet, Shah Latif, and other poets. They form the raw material of Sindhi literature. There have been several versions of these seven legends. The most popular versions are given below.[7]

Rai Dyach

The most ancient of these Sindhi legends is a legend of Greater Sind, not the attenuated Sind of modern times. It relates to the days when Cutch and Saurashtra were linked to Sind and were, so to say, a part of Greater Sind. The story of Rai Dyach, related by Shah in *Sur Sorath*, is said to be the story of Rai Dewas who ruled in Girnar in Junagadh (Saurashtra) between 1003 and 1010, and who was of Sindhi extraction, belonging to the tribe of (Chuda) Samma who had emigrated from Sind to Cutch and Saurashtra (after the displacement of Rai dynasty in Sind by Chach, the Brahmin). The name of the father of Rai Dyach or Rai Dewas was Rai Kanwat. In the legend current in Sind about Rai Dyach, two stories, separately related about Rai Dewas and Ranik Devi in Gujarat, were blended into one. The tragedy related by Shah Latif, i.e., the cutting off his own head by Rai Dyach, at the instance of ministrel Bijal, occurred in 1010,

i.e., about half a century after the advent of Oderolal in Sind. As no Muslim historian of Sind has referred to this story, nor any predecessor of Shah, the story has to be reconstructed from Shah. This story of Rai Dyach was the first story in prose to be put into print and read in schools after the British took over Sind. It was given in a pioneering work on Sindhi Grammar, as a specimen of Sindhi prose—and it was such a fine specimen !

The story or legend begins with the birth of a male child to the sister of Rai Dyach, ruler of Junagadh, whose capital was in Girnar fort. While she was *enceinte*, the astrologers prophesied that she would bear a son who was destined to slay his maternal uncle, her own dear brother. The mother asked the nurse attendant on her to take away the new-born child and put an end to its life. The nurse was so fascinated by the looks of the infant that instead of throttling it she put the infant in a box and consigned it to the waters. The box floated down to Anairai's territory in Gujarat and was discovered by a *Charan* or minstrel, who and his wife adopted the child and gave him the name of Bijal.

This Bijal grew up to be an expert in many crafts, chiefly in the art of drawing a bow across a harp whose strings were made of animal guts. He made music that enthralled men as well as brutes. While Bijal was growing upto be a magical performer on his *chang* or harp, an incident occurred in Girnar which changed his whole life. The lovely Sorath, daughter of a potter, Ratna, in Girnar was intercepted while being led in a procession to wed Anairai, Bijal's monarch and she was taken to wife by Rai Dyach.

Anairai, being balked of his bride by the intervention of Rai Dyach, led an army against his opponent but could not raise the sieze of Aparkot where Rai Dyach had shut himself up with his Sorath. Returning to his palace, thoroughly discomfited, Anairai sent a plate full of diamonds and pearls around the city with a proclamation that the plate could be taken by any one who could fulfil the pet wish of the monarch (Anairai). Bijal's wife who was sure that her husband could achieve anything, took that plate and informed Bijal about it when he came home. Bijal immediately rushed to the Palace, and he was stupefied when Anairai told him to bring the severed head of Rai Dyach to him as a price for the plate of jewels passed on to his wife. What could Bijal say to that ? His life and the lives of those nearest and dearest to him would be forfeit if he refused to do the bidding of his lord.

So, minstrel Bijal took his harp and went his way to Girnar in Junagadh. He began to play upon the harp and immediately collected a crowd. Rai Dyach sent for him, and as he listened to Bijal's music Rai Dyach was entranced. He asked Bijal to name a boon and said that it would be granted to him. When Bijal was convinced that Rai Dyach was in earnest he said that the boon he wanted was something far above riches or rank or worldly possessions. Then he named it : ' O King ! I want your head.' When the queen, Sorath, heard this astounding demand, she began to offer Bijal all she and her husband had ... they could even become his slaves... but Bijal was not to be shaken from his resolve.

And Rai Dyach kept his word and cut off his own head which Bijal hastened to place before Anairai, his master. But Anairai looked at him with scorn, as if Bijal were a monster, and ordered him and his entire family to leave his domain. Bijal proceeded forthwith to Junagadh and arrived there as Sorath was preparing to jump into the flames with the headless corpse of her husband held firmly in her lap. Into that fire Bijal too jumped and so did his wife. Anairai was the only one of the actors in the tragic drama to eke out his miserable existence in remorse and despair.

Lila Chanesar

The second of these seven legends is named after Chanesar, Sumra, ruler, according to *Tahfat-al-Kiram*, of Devalkot, near Tatta, from 1288 to 1306, and his wife Lila. It is stated that Kounroo, daughter of Rai Khangar, Solanki ruler of Lakhpat (then a Sindhi sea-port), fell in love with Chanesar, but could not seduce Chanesar from his devotedness to Lila. So she disguised herself as a maid-servant and took service under Lila in the royal palace. She soon endeared herself to Lila who began to probe Kounroo to know the cause of her depression and melancholy. Once, when Lila was in a melting mood Kounroo came out with the story of her heart, and revealing herself as a Solanki princess, offered to part with her famous necklace, the *Navlakha Har* valued at rupees nine lakhs, if Lila allowed her to stay in her husband's bed for one night.

Tempted by the dazzling necklace Lila sent in Kounroo to her husband's bed chamber when he was half-tipsy. In the morning Chanesar was amazed to find a strange woman in his bed. When

Kounroo related her story to Chanesar, his heart, so far completely given to Lila, was weaned from his wife. He accepted Kounroo as his consort and Lila had to quit the palace, Lila's entreaties and wailings proved of no avail. Sindhi poets have inscribed the woes of Lila in immortal verse.

Lila bided her time in her parents' house until a marriage function brought Chanesar to her city. At the wedding feast Lila donned the veil of a dancer and danced so poignantly that she snatched the hearts of those who had collected at the feast. Chanesar, specially, fell a victim to her rhythm and melody and entreated her to lift her veil. This she did with much ado, and when Chanesar found that the dancer to whom he had lost his heart was his Lila, and no one else, he was ecstatically united to her. Some versions give this legend a tragic ending, the wedding feast proving a finale to the woes of Lila who fell dead in the arms of Chanesar, who too followed her in death.

Umar Marui

The next legend, in point of historical sequence, is that of Marui, immortal Sindhi heroine for all time to come, the symbol of patriotism and loyalty in Sindhi life and literature. The Cutchi legends trace her origin to a royal stock. Her mother Meradi brought her to Malir, a village in Thar (not to be confused with Malir, near Karachi), where Palna of Maru tribe, (Panwhars or cowherds and shepherds by profession) gave her shelter and adopted her as his daughter. Marui grew up to be the *belle* of the village. Her maternal grandfather, Palna, plighted her troth to Khetsen, a kinsman, which infuriated another young man, Phog Sen. The frustrated youth repaired to Amarkot, capital of the Sumra ruler, Umar, who is said to have ruled in Thar from 1355–1390 (according to *Tahfat-al-Kiram*). He told Umar that a girl of matchless beauty like Marui was fit to adorn a palace and not the cottage-shed of a poor rustic, and so fed him with a recital of the lovely limbs and features of Marui that Umar determined to kidnap her.

Mounting a swift camel, Umar proceeded to the village well where Marui used to go to fetch water, and forcibly kidnapped her and brought her to Amarkot. He thought that a village girl would easily succumb to the riches and comforts displayed before her. But Marui was made of sterner stuff. She refused so much as to cast a glance at the fine food, dresses and jewels offered to her and kept on insisting that she should be restored to

her fiance (or husband). She was another Sita defying the might and persuasions of a Ravana ; only there was no Rama or Hanuman to fight for her or penetrate to the fortress where she was confined. The steadfastness, chastity and patriotism of Marui are chronicled in verses which find an echo in every Sindhi heart :

O Umar ! how can blameworthy girls (like me) don white apparel
When their husbands are pelted with taunts in Thar ?

Marui told Umar that she was yearning night and day to go back to Malir. She preferred the rough berries of Malir to the choicest dainties in Amarkot, the thorns and brambles of Malir to luxuries in Amarkot palace. Marui's clothes were awry, her body was famished because of fasting, only her eyes kept wandering through iron bars to the road leading to Malir to espy, if possible, her Maru waiting for her. She did not abuse Umar or call forth maledictions upon his head. She said that he was her brother, that he must treat her as a sister, and send her back to her affianced one. If she died, perchance, while she was in Amarkot, her corpse shoud be handed over to the Marus at Malir, the last rites should be performed only at Malir—if her soul was to rest in peace. Her day was spent in standing, and watching through the bars, the road leading to Malir, and her nights in wailing, praying and keeping a never-ending vigil.

By and by, reason dawned on Umar. He came to know that he had been fed at the breast by the mother of Marui, and that Marui was his foster-sister. He begged pardon of her and sent her back to her people with apologies and gifts which a sister might well receive from a brother. When she reached her place her fiance (or husband) would not take her back. He would not believe that she had come back unsullied after a stay in the palace of the ruler. The poor girl protested her loyalty and faith, but the protestations did not count. She had to undergo the Ordeal by Fire to prove her purity. When she came unscathed from holding a burning iron bar in her hands she was received in the fold of her people. Umar had tried to convince them of her purity and brought an army with him to punish the Marus if they still doubted her, but at Marui's insistence he took his troops back to Amarkot. He, too, was ready to undergo any ordeal to prove that he had had no carnal relations with Marui.

The story of Marui contains details which establish a strong presumption that she was a Hindu girl. In all the accounts of Amarkot, the spelling is Amarkot and not Umarkot, i.e., the fort of Amar. Is it that Umar too was a Hindu Rajput and that the Sumras had not been converted to Islam at the time to which this legend refers ? In any case, Marui lives in the hearts of all Sindhis, Hindus as well as Muslims.

Mumal Rano

The next well-known legend, in historical sequence, is that of Mumal Rano. It refers to the closing years of the fourteenth century when Raja Nand ruled at Mirpur Mathelo. Abbott has said in his book on Sind that Raja Nand was ruler in Mirpur Mathelo in 1395.

Raja Nand was the father of nine girls, among whom Mumal was the loveliest, and Sumal the brainiest. This Raja was the proud possessor of a bear's tooth which had the virtue of converting a watery tract into dry land for his possessor. Taking advantage of this marvellous tooth Raja Nand hid his treasure in the bed of a stream where he only could go and locate it. This secret of his came to be known to a *Fakir*, who went to the palace at a time when Raja Nand and Sumal were away hunting. Mumal heard the whining cry of the Fakir and asked him what she could do for him. The Fakir replied that he was afflicted with a disease which could be cured only if a boar's tooth could be had. Mumal, not knowing the properties of the boar's tooth, searched for it among her father's things, and brought it to the Fakir who promptly located the royal treasure and filched it.

When Raja Nand came back and learnt of his loss he was so infuriated that he could have killed Mumal. But Sumal intervened and said that she would retrieve the lost treasure's equivalent by an ingenious plan. A curious mansion named *Kak* was constructed by her at the top of which was Mumal's chamber. This mansion had so many mazes, distractions, and frightful spots that it was impossible for anyone to reach the chamber of Mumal unless he knew the secrets of the mansion. Sumal made a proclamation that Mumal would wed the first person who was able to get to her chamber. If the wooer lost the game, his wealth would pass on to Mumal. Many princes tried to go up to Mumal but the Kak and its talismanic guard kept them back. And they

lost their riches which went to accumulate the depleted coffers of Raja Nand.

At last, Hamir Sumra (who is said to have ascended the throne in 1400) and three of his ministers set out to win the hand of Mumal. The Sumra and two of his ministers failed in the attempt. The third minister, Rano, persisted in his quest and was not terrified by the roar of wild beasts or the sound of curiously contrived devices and machines. The magic talismans could not deter him ; he got to Mumal's chamber and was clasped in her embrace. His sovereign, Hamir Sumra, and his two colleagues went back thinking that Rano had lost his life somewhere.

Mumal and Rano had some hectic days of a continuous honeymoon. But Rano then bethought of visiting his own people, and persuading Mumal to stay behind he went back to Hamir Sumra who promptly put him in prison, where he rotted awhile until his sister, wife of Hamir Sumra, managed to secure pardon for him from her husband. Rano then set out for Kak.

But things had taken another turn at Kak. The crafty Sumal was intent only on making more and more money and in this she was aided and abetted by her maid-servant Natar. Sumal had given instructions that no one should be able to get at Mumal, not even her husband, if he came back at all. Natar promised to see to it. Sumal had adopted the device of putting on man's apparel and sleeping in the same bed with Mumal who was simply disconsolate in the absence of Rano.

When Rano reached Kak at the dead of night, Natar tried to dissuade him from going up to Mumal's chamber telling him that Mumal had taken another lover. Rano was aghast at this news and brushing Natar aside ran up to see everything for himself. Finding Mumal asleep by the side of a male person (he did not look into the face of Sumal), he first of all thought of killing both of them by one stroke of his sword. But he desisted from this resolve. And leaving his stick behind he crept away.

In the morning, when truth dawned on Mumal and she saw Rano's stick, she went out of Kak and reached Amarkot. She assumed the disguise of a merchant and in her male attire met Rano and made friends with him. They got so thick that they were always together. Once, while the two were playing dice, Rano's glance fell on the upraised arm of his comrade and he recognised Mumal. He turned his face away and for all the supplications of Mumal would have nothing to do with her.

Mumal adopted the only course open for a Hindu girl who was rejected by her husband. She collected a pile of wood and set fire to it. After she had jumped into the fire Rano came to know of it. Repentance was too late. He too jumped into the same fire, and thus met Mumal.

Nuri-Tamachi

The previous legends refer either to the rule of the Sumras or the period anterior to it. The legend of Nuri-Tamachi refers to the succeeding rule of the Sammas. Jam Tamachi I is said to have ascended the throne after his uncle Jam Joona and his nephew Babina were taken away as prisoners by Sultan Feroz Tughlaq. There have been two Jam Tamachis among the Samna rulers of Sind. Some writers have said that Jam Tamachi II and not Jam Tamachi I was the hero of this legend.

Anyway, it is a Jam Tamachi who is said to have fallen in love at first sight with the daughter of a fisherman, while he was on a trip on the waters of lake Keenjhar (situated between Tatta and Jherruck at the bottom of Halaya hill). Her name was Gandri (belonging to dirt).. He immediately re-named her Nuri (Light). To fall in love with a fisherman's daughter is not new in Indian literature. The ancestor of the Kauravas and Pandavas did the same when he fell in love with Satyavati, a fisherman's daughter. Nuri and her father were only too happy to accede to the wishes of Jam Tamachi, and Nuri was too humble to demand anything for herself or to set herself up as a privileged person. She was content to be the lowliest of the low in the palace of Tamachi. The fisher-folk of the Keenjhar lake rejoiced in the nuptials of Tamachi and Nuri, for their lord and son-in-law exempted them from paying taxes and passed on to them all the rights of over-lordship on lake Keenjhar and its environs.

Nuri was naturally not appreciated by the Samma women in the palace of Tamachi, but she kept calm and humble, trying to be of service to everyone. The proof of her humility and gentleness came when Tamachi commanded all his women to put on their best dress so that he might choose one of them for going out with him. All other women decked themselves in flaunting dresses. Nuri was dressed in the simplest dress and kept her glance on the ground, not wishing to thrust herself upon the notice of the Jam. When Tamachi reviewed them all he felt at once that Nuri was superior to all the women gathered there,

because of simplicity, charm, elegance and humility. She was radiant with her own god-given beauty, and devoid of malice and jealousy. He chose her for his companion and elevated her to the dignity of Queen-regnant.

Nuri and Tamachi's legend has been pronounced to be the one tale in Sindhi literature which has no tinge of sorrow and unhappiness and which is flowers, flowers all the way!

> The fisher girl had in her neither conceit nor ego
> With downcast eyes she entrapped the king
> This was all her art.

Suhni Mehar

In point of sheer beauty of verse the last two of the seven legends, as rendered by Shah, surpass all other legends. One is the legend of the River as in the tale of Suhni Mehar, and the other the legend of the Desert,as in the tale of Sausi Punhoon. Both these legends have had a currency outside Sind. The Panjabi tale of Sohni Mahiwal is regarded by some as the original of the Sindhi tale—which fact is disputed by Sindhis who point out a grave near Shahdadpur as being that of Suhni. There are several versions of the tale. It is agreed that Suhni was the daughter of a potter, by name Tula, and that she was married to a kinsman of hers by name Dum. But there are different versions how she fell in love with Mehar (buffalo-keeper) whose name is given as Sahar, a name resembling Sair which means the Sea or the great River.

One version is that when the wedding party reached the river ferry to cross over to the opposite bank a glass of milk was supplied by Mehar to the bride, and thereafter neither Mehar nor Suhni had a thought of any one save each other. The other version is that Mehar was originally a merchant prince of Bokhara, Izzat Beg, who fell in love with Suhni, the potter's daughter, as soon as he saw her and renounced his dignity and his wealth to be near her until he was so reduced to destitution as to seek a menial job with Tula the potter who engaged him on a pittance to tend his buffaloes. Thus Izzat Beg became a Mehar. Once his master's daughter went to the stall of buffaloes and asked for a drink of milk. Mehar was overjoyed, and he milked a buffalo and gave the drink to her to assuage her thirst :

And that sip bereft her of reason, that freshly milched drink.
Suhni now sought every opportunity to go to Mehar's stall until

it became a scandal. The potter thought that the best way of ending the scandal was to get Suhni a husband and pack her off from his house. He did so. The Mehar was, of course, dismissed. He went and established himself on the opposite bank of the river, after many wanderings, in jungles.

Suhni prayed to God to keep Dum, her husband, off her person, and in a miraculous manner that prayer of hers was answered. There never occurred a chance for Dum to defile her body : he went off in a deep stupor as soon as he was alone with Suhni, and was fast asleep from dusk to dawn.

Meanwhile, the reputation of a holy person who had set himself on the opposite bank reached Suhni and she went to see him, out of sheer curiosity. They recognised each other as soon as they met, and embraced fondly. Now it became a habit with Suhni to cross the river, floating on a jar every evening, and take her supper with Mehar, (which consisted of fish generally), pass the night with him and go back to Dum before he opened his eyes in the morning. Once when Mehar could not get fish to broil for his mistress he cut off a piece of flesh from his thigh, put it over fire and offered it to Suhni for supper.

The course of true love never did run smooth. The sister of Dum came to know of this proceeding which she considered to be nefarious, and she sought to restrain Suhni from keeping her tryst, one evening substituting for her jar a vessel made of wet clay. The night was dark, there was lightning in the sky, the river ran full, and it was extremely hazardous for Suhni to venture on the waters. But she was so full of Mehar that she did not pause to notice that a clay vessel had been substituted for her *pucca* jar, and she went into the water. The clay vessel was dissolved in midsteam and Suhni began to call on Mehar to come to her rescue. When the cries reached Mehar on the other bank it was too late to take a boat to the spot. Not caring for the rush of the waters or the big fish waiting with mouths gaped wide for victims he too plunged into water, and Suhni and he were carried away by the River as they were locked in each other's arms, and the Sindhu gave them a resting place. Three entities regarded as separate entities became one and the same, the three whose names all began with the letter S—Suhni, Sahar (Mehar) and Sair (the ocean-like River Sindhu).

A never-to-be-effaced description, of the Sindhu and the monsters of the deep, is given in Shah's account of the drowning

of Suhni. This incident is said to have taken place in the reign of Shah Jahan, i.e., a few decades before the birth of Shah Abdul Latif.

Sasui Punhoon

The last of the seven legends used by Shah Abdul Latif in his poetry is the best-known and most popular tale in Sindhi literature—the love-story of Sasui Punhoon—, which in its tragic conclusion bears some resemblance to the story of Romeo and Juliet. This story has travelled beyond the confines of Sind and some Panjabi writers too have made references to it and done research as well. The spots over which Sasui roamed in her wanderings are still called by her name. Not only is the name Sasui (really *Shashi* or the moon) proverbial in the language but the name of Punhoon, too, has become an equivalent of 'the Beloved' or 'that which is sought after'. Probably the most quoted verses, in the Sindhi language are those in which Sasui sums up the entire mystic philosophy of the East :

> Penetrating within Self I communed with my own Being.
> No mountains were there to cross, no object without to seek
> Myself was the Punhoon I sought. Suffering was so long as
> I was Sasui.

Sasui was born in a Hindu household, in the house of a Brahmin by name Naoo. The Brahmin was astounded to discover in his daughter's horoscope that she was to wed a Muslim. He put her in a box and consigned the box to the river. The box floated on to Bhambhor, a flourishing place situated on the highway from Makran to Tatta, and it was taken out by a washerman named Mahomed. He brought her up as his own child and took good care of her.

Sasui grew up lovely as the moon, after which she was named. The fame of her surpassing loveliness travelled to many places through the mouths of merchants who had to pass through Bhambhor to take their merchandise to the great mart of Tatta. Punhoon, the eldest son of Ari Jam, ruler of Makran, was agog with excitement to see for himself this famed beauty, and disguising himself as a merchant he travelled to Bhambhor. There he exposed his wares for sale, and among others Sasui too came to buy the fine things he had brought. It was a case of love at first sight for both the parties. Punhoon forgot that he was a prince. He settled at Bhambhor to be near the object of his love.

Love and murder will be out, and Mahomed the washerman was aware, at length, of the attachment subsisting between the Prince of Makran and his own daughter. Punhoon begged for the hand of Sasui, and Mahomed put him on probation : he must give up his patrimony and become one of them. And Punhoon began to wash clothes side by side with Sasui, very awkwardly at first, and, then, like an expert, as if he was to the manner born. When he had completed his probation, Mahomed was only too glad to get him married to Sasui, of course on the express understanding that he was to live with his in-laws and not to go back to his own people in Makran.

When Punhoon had taken to the washerman's craft, his companions had, of course, gone back to their homes. The father of Punhoon, on learning what his son had done, felt as if some one had dealt him a death-blow. He lay prostrate and wept incessantly until it looked as if he would go blind and slowly creep to death. Three brothers of Punhoon, by name Chunroo, Hotu, and Notu, then resolved that they must bring back Punhoon, anyhow, if their father's life was to be saved. They promised to their father to bring Punhoon back to him, by any, means, fair or foul ; the old man took cheer and began to attend to matters of State.

It did not take the brothers long to reach Bhambhor and find Punhoon. Sasui, unaware of the guile behind the soft words of her brothers-in-law, welcomed them heartily and did her best to make them comfortable. Punhoon refused to listen to persuasions about going home, and said that his home was where Sasui was. Finding him adamant, the brothers resolved to kidnap him. One night, when they had feasted well, wined and dined, and Punhoon was asleep in a semi-intoxicated condition, and above all, when Sasui had also retired to rest after a hard day's work, the three brothers bound Punhoon to a camel and took him away to Makran, by forced marches.

Sasui found Punhoon gone when she woke up in the morning, and was stupefied. She and her father tried to get at the fugitives but that was not possible. A sandstorm had blotted out the foot prints of the camels. Sasui blamed herself for her negligence and the sleep that had overtaken her. She could not understand how the camels whose grunts should have come to her ears had been silenced or muffled. She was inclined to utter harsh words about her brothers-in-law when the realisation came to her that it was

fate that had conspired against her—not her brothers-in-law, not the camels, not the storm and sand that had wiped off the traces of their march.....

She was not going to submit quietly to fate. She must find Punhoon or perish. She left her home and took her way to Makran on foot through a difficult terrain of sand dunes and hills. The wanderings and wailings of Sasui on the desert track from Bhambhor to Makran have been immortalised in Sindhi poetry. At each step in the desert she enquired if her Punhoon had been seen by anyone. Some miracles are said to have happened during this quest of Sasui. A spot sacred to Sasui exists at Mabarni where a fountain of water spouted up to slake her thirst. It is said that if it is tapped with a stick, an agonising cry will issue out of the ground.

In these wanderings Sasui reached a spot which was like an oasis. A goatherd was tending his goats and Sasui went forward to him with her usual query, 'Please, did you see my Punhoon anywhere ?'. The goatherd was amazed at her beauty and thought that God had rewarded him and heard his mother's prayers who was always praying for a lovely bride for him. He advanced to seize her in his grasp. Sasui prayed to God to preserve her honour ; the ground beneath Sasui opened and closed up again as soon as she got inside. But the hem of her garment showed outside. The goatherd who beheld this miracle began to lament and pray that his sin might be forgiven. He built a tomb at this spot to expiate his sin and sat as *Mujawar* or keeper at the shrine of the holy one whom he had tried to molest.

Punhoon was taken to Makran, but in the absence of Sasui he behaved like a maniac. Out of sheer despair, and to save his reason and his life, his father permitted him to go back to Bhambhor. When he reached the grave of Sasui the hem of Sasui's garment attracted his notice, and he asked the *Mujawar* to tell him the truth. When he learnt that Sasui was entombed there he prayed that he might be allowed to join her. The earth opened again and he was swallowed up in the grave of Sasui. This tomb became a place of pilgrimage for not only Sindhis but for people from Multan and distant places. For common folk the story of Sasui furnished a lesson, viz., that marriages should be contracted only with one's peers and known persons. Never marry an alien.

It may be said that the bulk of Sindhi literature revolves round

these seven love-tales, and that these seven tales form the raw material which nearly every poet and some prose writers have utilised as a foundation for their lyrics, narrative poems, essays and philosophical dissertations. The student of Sindhi literature will have an imperfect understanding of even the twentieth century Sindhi literature if he has no knowledge of these seven legends. All of these stories have passed into common parlance in Sindhi society and language.

Over and above these well-known legends there are some other legends and folk-tales which have almost disappeared from the ken of the Sindhis. In his *History of the Sindhi language,* Prof. Nabibux Baloch makes mention of some of these folk-tales.[8] He mentions among the traditional and amatory tales, the tale of *Mal Mahmud* and *Mahr Nigar,* the tale of *Daman, the Goldsmith,* the tale of *Umar and Ganga* and the tale of *Khuda Dost* and *Mahamud Gahzni.* Among the tales of chivalry and fighting he lays stress on the tales of the fights between Sindhi Sumras and Gajjars of Barmer in the century 1150–1250, the fight between the Sumras and Sultan Allauddin (mentioned in the foregoing legend of Dodo and Chanesar), ministrel's tales of the miserliness of the Sumras, the tales of the bravery ,and generosity of Samma chief, Jàm Lakho, and some other Jams, e.g., Jam Hali. Obscure references to some of these tales may be found in later Sindhi poetry, but none of these tales is popular or lives in the memory of the Sindhis. Stray extracts from these tales have been preserved in certain manuscripts in the form of two-lined verses (with end rhymes in the Hindi *doha* form) which were the precursors of the polished *beyts* of Shah Abdul Latif..

Koel-Deepak

A Sindhi folk-tale which purports to belong to the eleventh century but which has only recently come to light is that of Koel and Deepak (or Deepchand), a tale which reminds one of the *Arabian Nights.* It has made little impact upon Sindhi literature but some *dohas* relating the story have found a place in Sindhi magazines.

Koel, the lovely daughter of the Muslim minister of Ibn Soomar ruler of Tatta, attended the same school as Deepak, the son of a Hindu merchant. Their juvenile attachment ripened into passion so that when Koel attained puberty and lived apart in her mansion Deepak visited her nightly, climbing aloft with the aid of a

rope. One moonlit night he was caught in the act by Ibn Soomar, who was going about (in the disguise of a police official) on nightly rounds. Deepak requested to be set free on bail before he appeared in the Court in the morning, and was asked to produce a surety. None of his relatives would stand surety, but Navrang, his faithful friend, stood surety, and showed Ibn Soomar his residence.

Sure that Deepak would make a bee-line to Koel's mansion as soon as he was released, Ibn Soomar ran in advance, and hid himself in a room therein. Within minutes Deepak appeared on the scene. Koel had dropped into uneasy slumber, her clothes wet with tears at Deepak's absence. Deepak cut his finger and began to write his woeful tale, with his own blood, on Koel's scraf. Before he could finish, Koel got up and forgot everything in joy at seeing Deepak. When she learnt that Deepak was going to stand trial as a thief and very probably be hanged she promised that she would don a black robe, appear on the scene and die along with him. Ibn Soomar was immensely gratified to see that there was nothing carnal in the love of Koel and Deepak.

Next morning, while Deepak was yet asleep, Navrang's wife enjoined upon her husband to take the place of his friend and be condemned to death in his place. Ibn Soomar had meanwhile stationed an elephant outside the only open gateway to his court asking the *mahout* to keep out any black-robed figure from getting in. While Navrang was pleading guilty, and seeking death, Deepak burst upon the assembly and said that he was the guilty party and deserved death. Another uproar followed soon in the shape of a black-robed Dervish who made way inside and claimed as a holy pilgrim that the ' benefit of the clergy ' be extended to the accused Deepak and pardon granted to him. The entire court was puzzled at the turn things had taken, but Ibn Soomar, who was in the know of everything, soon set the matters right by extending pardon to Deepak and lauding Koel's purity, faithfulness, love and resourcefulness. In her black attire she had forcibly made her way in after slaying the elephant stationed to bar her progress. The true lovers were married according to Hindu and Muslim rites, both, and lived happily for many years. [9]

Chapter IV

SUFISM AND THE SINDHI WAY OF LIFE

By common consent, Sindhi literature in its written form, and as distinguished from folk-tales and folk-songs, dates from the third decade of the 16th century, and is agreed to have reached its full stature after the lapse of two hundred years, namely, in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif. In 1520 or thereabouts, the Arghuns-Turkhans became the masters of Sind, and, in 1592, Akbar annexed Sind to the Mogul Empire. After the Arghun ascendancy, Persian became the Court language in Sind and continued to be so until the British conquest of Sind (1843).

Before the Arghuns, Arabic, the sacred language for the Muslims, was in vogue with the literati, but no literature in Sindhi was produced under its aegis. The Persian language and literature, however, proved a *catalyst* in the formation of Sindhi literature. Hundreds of Sindhis tried their hand at Persian verse, and their names are chronicled in the *Histories* penned by Muslims of Sind (in Persian), but it would be a waste of time and energy to speak about even one of these pseudo-Persian writers : none of them reached even to tolerable mediocrity. But this 'Persian' activity led to the production of writing verse in the vernacular, i.e., Sindhi, as well. According to Pir Husamuddin Rashdi the first extant Sindhi verses are those chronicled in *Majamal-ul-Tarikh* :[1]

Arah Barah Kankarh

Kara Kare Mundrah

But this is not Sindhi language at all. Pir Husamuddin Rashdi has referred to the legends of Dodo Chanesar and Mamui riddles which were a part of oral Sindhi literature before 1520–21 (the beginning of the rule of Arghuns), but this was really folklore. Pir Husamuddin mentions the names of two Sindhi poets in the days of the Sammas : Shaikh Hamad bin Rashiduddin Jamali, a resident of Samui, near Tatta (died 1362), and Shaikh Ishaq Ahangar (Iron-smith) who lived in Narankot (now Hyderabad) in the last days of the Sammas. No verse of Jamali has survived, and only one of Ahangar : 'I wish I were a sparrow to fly and sit on the gable of the Beloved's roof. The

Beloved would then utter his golden speech and warn me off with the exclamation, "Drik".' Other names also occur in chronicles at the end of the Samma era, as of poets, for instance, the names Dervesh Raju and Shaikh Bhiria, but as no authentic specimens of their poetry are available we might pass over their names and come to that of Qazi Qazan, the first authentic Sindhi poet, and a bridge between the old folklore and the 'classical' Sindhi poetry which reached its highest point in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit (1689–1752). But before we examine the poetry of Qazi Qazan and other predecessors of Shah we must know a little about the Sindhi way of life (and the Sindhi faith) which is reflected in Shah as well as in all the great Sindhi poets, and which has been termed as Sufism.

Sindhi literature has its being in a mysticism which has come to be known as *Sufism* or *Tasawwuf*. This Sufism is a synthesis of ancient Indian wisdom, i.e., Vedant Yoga-Bhakti, and the Persian brand of Islamic Sufism, as propounded in such Persian classics as Jami's *Yusuf Zuleikha,* Attar's *Mantiq-al-Tair* and, above all, in Rumi's famous *Masnavi*. One might say that Sindhi poetry would be quite different if the winds of *Sant-Kavi* (saint -poet) movement in medieval India had not blown upon the Persian-knowing Sindhi Sufis who, whatever the religion in which they were born, have always proclaimed themselves bound by no creed or rigid doctrine : *Sufi la-kufi* i.e. Sufis are without any religious dogma or doctrine.

The word Sufi has been variously derived : from *Suf* or the rough woollen cloth worn by Sufis in Khorasan, Iran and Iraq ; from *Safa* or Purity ; from *Sophia* or Wisdom. Sir William Jones said at the end of the 18th century : A' figurative mode of expressing the fervour of devotion, or the ardent love of created spirits towards their Beneficent creator, has pervailed from time immemorial in *Asia ;* particularly among the *Persian* both ancient *Hushangis* and modern *Sufis*, who seem to have borrowed it from the Indian philosophers of the *Vedanta* school .... "Plato travelled into *Italy* and *Egypt*", says Claude Fleury, to learn the "theology of the Pagans at its fountain head ;" its true fountain, however, was neither in *Italy* nor in *Egypt*....but in *Persia* or India.'[2] Malcolm, also quoted by Arberry, derives Sufism from the doctrines and practices of the Indian *Yogis* and Gnanis but points out at the same time that the Sufis did not take to the austerities practised by Indian ascetics : 'The Persian

Soofees, though they have borrowed much of their belief and many of their usages from India, have not adopted, as a means of attaining beatitude, the dreadful austerities common among the visionary devotees of the Hindoos.'[3]

Nowadays, there is a tendency among Sindhi Muslims to consider Sufism as derived chiefly from texts in the Koran and the sayings of Prohpet Mahomed, and to regard Sufism as esoteric or inner Islam. Titus Burckhart says : 'Since Sufism represents the inner aspect of Islam its doctrine is in substance an esoteric commentary on the Quran.'[4]

This is also the position assumed by Mirza Kalich Beg, the most prolific of modern Sindhi writers, in his little book in Sindhi on *Tasawwuf* written for the Sindhi Sahit Society, and published in 1922. Mirza Kalich Beg rejects all theories about Sufism in Sind or India having its origin in either India or Greek philosophy, and says that it is an esoteric interpretation of Islamic doctrine that first arose in Arabia and then made its way to Iran and India. He distinguishes between two forms of Sufism, the Sunni or Puritanical Tasawwuf and Shia Tasawwuf or colourful Tasawwuf which has permeated all Sindhi poetry since the sixteenth century.

After the Partition of India, several Muslim writers in Sind have striven to prove that Sufism, which is the one common and supreme element in all Sindhi poetry, was inspired by certain texts in the Koran of which *Kun* (be) and *Fayakun* (It was) is the most favourite. None of them has, however, been able to explain two outstanding facts about the Sufistic content in Sindhi poetry, namely that it makes constant references to and uses material of Indian Vedanta and Yoga and Bhakti, and that a purely Koranic interpretation could never have been acceptable to the Hindus of Sind who also numbered themselves among the Sufis. The one inescapable fact about Sindhi poetry, whether written by Hindus or Muslims, is that while both these communities profess their own religion and quote their own texts they agree in certain basic concepts which could never have the countenance of orthodox Islam. The Dutch scholar Dozy asked in 1879 : 'Did mysticism really issue from the bosom of Islam as has been claimed ? There is good reason to doubt it, for the witnesses introduced into the debate are too recent to have authority. Moreover, they themselves consist for the most part of mystics, Sufis, and they always sought to trace the birth of their doctrine not only to the earliest period of Islam, by making Sufis for example of Ali and

Muhamad, but even to the age of patriarchs, saying that Abraham himself was already a Sufi.... It is much more natural to believe that mysticism came from Persia ; it actually existed in that country before the Muslim conquest, thanks to influence from India ; even before this period the idea of emanation and of the return of everything to God had wide currency in Persia, and it was commonly said that the world has no objective and visible existence, that all that exists is God, and that, apart from God, nothing is.'[5]

The main belief of the Sufis is the same as that of the Vedantist, namely, that there is only one Brahm, one Essence, one *Being* in the Universe, that whatever else may exist does not really exist : it is an illusion, Maya, or as the Sufis call it, *Tilsam*. There is no difference between the soul and the Over-soul. When Mansur Hallaj was beheaded by orthodox Muslims for saying ' I am Truth or God ', he was not uttering something *kufr* or heresy. He was uttering the highest Truth. According to the Sufis, man is not born in sin (because of some supposed misdeed on the part of his remote ancestors), and, it is not one person only who would be son of God, or God Himself. Every-one of us is potentially God. It is for us to know ourselves, or realise ourselves, to reach this stage. The greatest of Sindhi poets says : ' Do not call this as Creator and the other as creation, both are the same.' It is enough to realise one's divine origin to be Divinity itself. Of course, one has to pass through disciplines and stages to divest oneself of the sense of separateness, one has to pass through *shariat* (the law) *Tarikat* (way), and *Haqiqat* (Reality) to be able to reach *Marfat*, the stage of supreme knowledge of Self and Realisation of Self.

To cast off the veil of Ignorance it becomes necessary to accept the guidance of a Guru or Murshid. He who seeks shall find, but great urge must be there and wise guidance. There are always *Abdals* (the great ones) to help wayfarers on the path, there are always Qutbs or Pole-stars or Masters to cheer the trudging traveller. With their help the ignorant one will get out of Illusion or Ignorance which makes him conscious of his separateness from the Absolute. The Sufi is one whose faith in Unity in Diversity can never be shaken. The Sufi believes that the ultimate destiny of an individual is to go back to the sun of which it is a ray or emanation, to be absorbed in it, to be *Fana* or annihilated in it. Annihilation of self or Fana is the ultimate goal which will take one to *baqa*, the permanent state of union

with God. This can happen only by the mystical union of man with God. The great instrument of this Union is Bhakti or Devotion and Love through which man reaches the stage of exaltation and absorption into God.

Even as the moth burns itself in the candle and attains to union with the Beloved, so man must be filled with Bhakti and and Love and burn himself alive at the altar of the Supreme Being. As a first step, the physical love for a fair one is good ; it will root out the ego. But the physical love is only a bridge to cross over to the other bank—the Annihilation of self. Woe unto one who stands at the bridge and does not pass on to Divine Love after tasting the pleasures and bitternesses of Physical Love. The wine the Sufis drink is not the wine of grapes but of mystical exaltation and union. The Sufi is so intoxicated that he has no knowledge or care of self or the world. As long as man has sense of *separateness* he is nothing, *nafi* ; when he loses Identity and becomes One with Him he knows Asbat or positiveness.

Jethmal Parsram, in his *Sind and Its Sufis*, has given some extracts from the principal Sindhi Poets which show that the Sindhi Sufi poets are products of the two twin forces of Indian and Persian mysticism. Music and Dance, not countenanced by orthodox Islam, are powerful means to induce this state of exaltation. There must be renunciation of all worldly desires, there must be renunciation of the next world, renunciation of even Godhead, and finally renunciation of renunciation. The indvidual ego must perish, to be ultimately that *I* which is the Supreme Being.

Dr. Sorley, in his learned book on *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*, for all his talk of Islam, boils down Sindhi Sufism to what is indistinguishable from Indian mysticism of Vedant-Yog-Bhakti type. Sorley says : 'The two great characteristics of Sufi thought, namely, a belief in the unity, through effort, of the human soul with God, and the transitoriness of temporal things, which are a veil hiding the true nature of illumination from the comprehension of man, are evident in all Shah Latif's poetry. Like the great poets of Persia he employs a variety of images to bring out his essential lesson. Prominent is the distiction between the true love (ishk haqiqi) and the false love (ishk majazi), between the true wine and the false wine. The Vintner is God who vouchsafes a sip of the wine that brings a true realization of Him. One of the

out the *Risalo* is that of separation from the Beloved, the state in which the soul is apart from God, and has failed to achieve union with him.

The seas of separation roll
And drown each single separate soul

Here the emphasis is on the word "separate" Another of the commonest forms of expression in Sufi thought is that of the path or way, the progress towards mystical fulfilment. The soul of man is a searcher upon the path. As Sell points out, the great object of life being to escape from the hindrances to pure love and to return to the divine essence, the Talib, or Seeker, attaches himself to a murshid or teacher and becomes a Salik or traveller, passing through periods of service, love, seclusion, knowledge, ecstasy, to truth, union with God (wool) and fana (extinction of individuality in the divine). The Sufi philosophy thus demands a strict self-discipline with renunciation of selfish feelings and a curbing of evil passion. It is based on a deep ethical system and lays stress upon purity of heart. The self during the stage of purification, is thus a danger and an obstacle. It misleads the seeker and interposes between Him and the sought a Veil that is hard to pierce.'[6] (Adapted)

'The Province of Sind claims the distinction of being the home of Indian Sufism. According to Khwaja Hasan Nizami, the Suhrawardi Sufis were the first to arrive in India and made their headquarters in Sind. This must have followed many centuries after the Arab conquest in A.D. 711 because it is well known that the Suhrawardhyah order attained great influence in India under the leadership of the learned divine Baha-al-Haqq Baha-al-Din Zakariya of Multan (1170–1267). While returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, he visited Baghdad and became a favourite disciple of Shaykh al-Shuyukh Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, the founder of the order (1144–1235)....The spiritual descendants and disciples of the Suhrawardi order produced some of the greatest literary men in the world of Islam....One of them, Sayyid Jalahl al-Din Surkh-posh (1192–1291) who was born in Bukhara and settled in Uch, (in Sind), carried extensive spiritual influence throughout Sind, Gujarat, and the Punjab....The famous Qadiri order, founded by Shaykh Abdul-al-Qadir Jilani of Baghdad (1078–1166) entered India through Sind in 1482.... Sayyid Bandagi Muhammad Ghawath, one of the descendants of

the founder, took up his residence in Sind, at Uch, already made famous in the annals of Muslim Saints by the Suhrawardi order. He died in 1517 in Uch..... This order enjoys great prestige on account of the powerful personality, learning, eloquence, and piety of the founder. Innumerable miracles (*karamat*) are attributed to him and the honorific titles of al-ghawath al-Azam, Piri-i-Piran, Pir-i-Dastgir, Bare Pir, are used for him.... Sheykh Abdul Qadir Gilani was undoubtedly mainly responsible for the popularisation of the new note of passion and emotion in orthodox Islam, which had been introduced into more intellectual circle by Ghazali.' As for the two other Sufi orders, the Chishti order was introduced in India by 1192 by Khwaja Mu'in-al-Din Chishti who made his headquarters in Ajmer, and the Naqshabandi order was introduced late in India in the early years of the seventeenth century by Khwaja Berang and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhandi.[7] Mirza Kalich Beg says on page 38 in his brochure on Tasawwuf that Shaikh Bahauddin Zakriya, the man who introduced Islamic Sufism in Sind, had three very intimate friends : one Syed Jalal Bukhari (already mentioned and who came to be known as Makhdum Jahaniyan), Shaikh Fariduddin Shakar Ganj Dahlavi, and more famous than all of them, Shaikh Usman Marwandi who became famous as Lal Shahbaz of Sewhan. Decended from Imam Jaffar Alsadiq, he used to wear scarlet coloured clothes and shaved his beard and hence was called Lal Shahbaz. He came from Merwand to Multan and then to Sewhan. He died in 1304. These were known as 'char yar', four friends. A fifth companion was Shah Sham Bu Ali Kalandar. Shaikh Bahauddin was succeeded by his son Sadr-ul-Din.

It is admitted by Arberry that Sufism in India was much coloured by the Hindu customs. ' The practice of many Hindu social customs (*bid'at*) is an Indian innovation not known in other Islamic countries. Pilgrimages to shrines of the saint, giving offerings and making vows, burning *chiragh*, the oil lamp with a wick, over the tomb of a saint, the partaking of sweets and food given as offerings on tombs and shrines of saints as sacred portions (*tabarruk*), are not indigenous to Islam, but a result of the influence of Hindu environment which has also resulted in veneration for the Muslim saint, gradually merging into such phrases as are hardly distinguishable from the saint-worship of Hinduism and the animistic phrases of pagan

primitive religious life.'[8]

The headquarters of Sindhi Sufis are at Jhok. They recognize the martyr Shah Inayat as the master Sufi, who was a disciple of Shah Abdul Malik brother of Kalim Allah, whose disciple in turn was Abdul Karim of Bulri, poet and great grandfather of Shah Abdul Latif. The poet Sachal's family was connected with Shaikh Abdulkadir Gilani.

The sufism or mysticism of Iranian sort (from Persia, Khorasan and Iraq) got synthesised in Sind with the mysticism that overran the whole of India in the medieval ages : the first of these *Sant-Kavis* was Jaya Deva, author of the famous poem *Gita Govinda* who lived in the twelfth century. He first 'sung the theme that became, in one form or another, universal in subsequent Indian literature. It was the mystic theme of the longing of the soul to find union with, or aborption into, the Divine Essence, personified in one or the other of the Hindu deities, Rama or Krishna.'[9] 'This doctrine of "bhakti" or faith....became from its inculcation in the "Bhagavad Gita", and further exposition in the "Bhagavad Purana" and "Bhakti Sutra" of Sandilya in the twelfth century, the almost pervading theme of Indian literature. It passed from the system of Yoga, or attainment of absorption of the soul into the essence of the deity in whom faith is placed, to its final development in the life of salvation, following from a faith or absolute belief in words and doctrines of the great teachers, such as Sankar Acharya, Ramanuja, Ramanand, Basava, Vallabhacharya and the Sikh gurus.'

In this movement, Kabir occupies a prominent place. Kabir rose above 'restrictions of caste, sect, and the bowing down to idols.' In the Sbadabali or 'One Thousand Sayings of Kabir', 'the Vedantic doctrine of Maya, the Jain, Buddhistic, and Brahamanic doctrine of compassion towards all life were brought side by side with the monotheistic conception of Vishnu.' Kabir said: 'Of what avail is it to shave your beard, prostrate yourself on the ground, or immerse your body in the stream, whilst you shed blood you call yourself pure and boast of virtues that you never display. Of what benefit is cleansing your mouth, counting your beads, performing ablution, and bowing yourself in temples, when, whilst you mutter your prayers, or journey to Mecca and Medina, deceitfulness is in your heart ?.... Behold but one in all things, it is the second that leads you astray.' When Kabir died, both Hindus and Muslims claimed his body.

Other Sant-Kavis (Saint Poets) were Badyapati or Vidyapati who wrote 'sonnets in the Maithili dialect, the longings of the soul for God, in the allegorical form of the love of Radha for Krishna ', Chandidas and above all, Mirabai, whose divine songs penetrated the peninsula and still hold the highest place in the affection of Indians. The realistic as well as the spiritualistic side of mysticism or devotion found expression in Vallabhacharya, and Chaitanya, a household word in Bengal. According to Vallabhacharya ' the human soul, though separated from the Divine Essence of Krishna, is identical with it, and, as such, is as though it were a divine spark of the Supreme spirit itself. The body, as the abode of this portion of the Divine Essence of Krishna, should be honoured and revered, not subjected to asceticism.' Chaitanya (born in 1485) showed in his character, and preached to the world, the purest morality as an accompaniment of spiritual improvement. He inculcated devotion to Krishna along with humility and purity. ' Always remember that you are a sojourner in the world, and you must be prepared for your own home.' ' Do everything which you know Krishna wishes you to do, never think that you do a thing independently of the holy wish of Krishna.' Chaitanya was Krishna-intoxicated, and he made others drunk with the love of Krishna, the Divine Child, Cowherd and Charioteer. He had trances, and vision of Krishna.

Two poets whose poetry influenced all subsequent Indian poetry, not excepting the poetry of Sindhis, were the blind poet Sur Das who poured forth his devotion for Krishna in his *Sur Sagar*, and the great poet, Tulsidas, who is one of the major poets in world literature and who writes of Rama in his *Ram-Charit-Manas*, usually called at Tulsi Krit Ramayana. Tulsidas died in 1624 but his great work was begun as early as 1574. Tulsi Das's ' Rama represents the Supreme Being, through faith in whom all intention of self fades away, leaving the soul in a trance-like ecstasy to sink into placid oneness with the deity's own true nature, the Universal essence from which proceeds all creation.' Other names of Sant-Kavis are those of Dadu, and the greatest of them all, Guru Nanak (born in 1469). Guru Nanak said ' There is no Hindu no Mussalman ! ' The system inculcated by Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, was, in its essentials, that taught by the ' Bhagvad Gita ', by Kabir, and by Vedantism. It was the worship of One Supreme Being, manifesting itself in a

plurality of forms, under the power of Maya, or delusion, which produces the fallacious appearance of duality.

'All is Govind, all in Govind ; without Govind there is no other

.....

A wave of water, froth and bubble, do not become separate from the water
The world is the sport of the Supreme Brahm,
playing about he does not become another.'

(Trumpp's translation)

'Nanak remained a thorough Hindu, and if he had companionship with Musalmans, and many of these even became his disciples, it was owing to the fact that Sufism, which all these Musalmans were professing, was in reality, nothing but a Pantheism, derived from the Hindu sources, and only outwardly adjusted to the forms of the Islam.' (Trumpp).. The Nirvana, or absorption of the soul—the Supreme Essence, was to be obtained by meditation, and repeating of, the name of qualities of the Supreme Being, Hari. Devotion for the Guru and faith in his teachings lead to the true knowledge of Brahman and the power of Maya, whence flows freedom from all delusion of duality :

In whose heart there is faith in the Guru :
Into that man's mind comes Hari, the Lord.

.....

Who considers the Supreme Brahm as true :
That man is absorbed in the True One, says Nanak.

In the North, arose Guru Nanak and his successors, in the South arose Tukaram, comtemporary of Shivaji, who worshipped Krishna under the idol of Vithoba :

'Sing the song with earnestness, making pure the heart ;
If you would attain God, then this is an easy way,
Make your heart lowly, touch the feet of Saints,
Of others do not hear the good or bad quality, nor think of them.

Tuka says : Be it much or little, do good to others.

Thus from the twelfth century to the sixteenth or seventeenth the movement of Vedantism-Bhakti (with yoga dissolved in them) swept over India and the Sant-Kavis passed on the essence of this movement to all parts of India. Sind might have remained isolated for a time from the rest of India but in the sixteenth

century it opened itself wide to influences of Indian thought. *Out of the mingling of Iranian type of Sufism with Indian Vedantism-Bhakti was evolved that peculiar mysticism which is the bedrock of Sindhi literature.* He who would truly understand the soul of Sindhi poetry must be conversant with the poetry of these Sant-Kavis. Of equal importance in the inspiration of the Sindhi Sufi poets is the poetry of Jalal-uddin Rumi (the *Masnavi* and the *Poems of Shams Tabriz*) and to a lesser extent the poetry of Fariduddin Attar (*Mantiq-al-Tair*) and the chapter in Jami's *Yusuf Zuleikha* wherein Sufistic doctrine is expounded.

Jami explains in *Yusuf Zuleikha* the Sufistic philosophy in these terms : God created the Universe to behold His Beauty therein. He is Real, the Universe is Unreal. ' The lovely face cannot endure privacy. If the door is shut the face must peep from the window.' The tulip and the rose must needs reveal their loveliness. Then why should not the Supreme Beauty be curious to see its own image ? This unreal phenomenal world or the Universe is the mirror in which the image of Supreme Beauty is seen ; in it the Absolute Being has projected itself. And the ray of the Supreme Beauty as seen in such wonderous beauties as Laili or Shirin or Yusuf made those mad who looked at them. *Love* is the only fact of existence. The heart that is devoid of the pangs of love is no heart. The sky, the whole world is in ferment because of love for Beauty. ' Do you want to be free ? Then become a prisoner of Love. Have the agony of Love in your breast so that you become happy.' Wise men who knew not Love are forgotten, only Lovers are remembered. ' Do not turn away your face from Love even if it be physical love ; it will clear your way for True or spiritual Love.' If a man knows not the alphabet how will he be able to read a text in Koran ? Nothing else matters save Love. (It is the only means to get oneself merged in the Supreme Being).

Without a sympathetic knowledge of Sufism and its conception of God, Love, the Lover and the Beloved, the Sindhi poetry will not appeal to the mind of the reader in the way it ought to. Some of the Sindhis are so Sufi-minded that they will fail to recognise any beauty or appeal in literature which has no Sufistic content. A well-known Sindhi writer has left behind a manuscript work in English in which he has interpreted Shakespeare's sonnets specially, and his dramas generally, to be expositions of Sufistic thought and philosophy !

Chapter V

THE PREDECESSORS OF SHAH

Except folk-tales and folk-songs, which are necessarily of anonymous authorship, there is no poem or prose passage in Sindhi which dates to a period earlier than the sixteenth century. Curiously enough, all the earliest Sindhi poems of known authorship are posterior to the Arghun ascendancy in Sind, i.e. they were written after 1520 or 1521 A.D. With the complete loss of sovereignty in Sind of races which were Sindhi in origin (the Sumras and the Summas) begins the period of the sway of Persian language and literature in the life of the Sindhis. For more than three centuries Sind was Persianised and the Sindhi literati prided themselves on their knowledge of Persian and their ability to compose in that language.

The Arghun-Turkhan rule in Sind was of not more than seventy years' duration, and after 1592 when the Moguls took over, until the days of the Kalhoras (18th century), Sind was subject to rulers whose language was Persian. The stamp of Persian writers, specially the Mystics, was strong upon Sindhi language and literature. The Arabs never exercised a tithe of that sway over the imagination, and culture of Sindhis that the Persians did, for the Arab conquerors, besides being less civilised than the Sindhis, lived as garrisons in the midst of a vast populace untouched by Arabic literature or culture. The Muslims learnt their Koran in Arabic, that is all. The influence of Persian literature was profound and affected all parts of Sind. This was due to the contingents of Persian speaking people (from Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Persia, Central Asia) in Sind, also the fact that the Persian language was the court language under Arghuns, Turkhans and the Moguls, as also to a third powerful cause, namely, the appeal made to even the common people in Sind by the mystic utterances of Rumi, Hafiz, Jami, Attar, Ghazali—and even by didactic writers like Saadi.

Because of Persian influence, a number of Sindhis wrote in Persian verse, in imitation of the great Persian poets. No Sindhi showed such mastery of Persian verse as, for instance, Amir Khusrau did in medieval India, or Iqbal in our own times.

But the number of versifiers in Persian language was so large that books have been written on them by those who have made researches. To the student of Sindhi literature these names or their compositions are of no use or interest. These are at best poetical exercises such as it was the custom in Europe to write in the Middle Ages, and as no history of English literature mentions these Latin exercises, even when penned by such a genius as Milton, they can be dismissed here as of no use whatsoever.

Some Muslim writers of literary histories have written uncritical panegyrics on these Sindhi writers. These Persian compositions simply testify to the fact that in the 16th and 17th centuries there was a great deal of literary activity in Sind. The best evidence of this activity is the number of Persian historical, semi-historical and biographical works composed by Sindhis in this period which give us some valuable information about Sind, its rulers, and some noble families. The most famous of these are the *Tarikh Mausumi*, *Tarikh Tahiri*, *Beglar Nama*, *Tuhfai-ul-Karim*, *Bayan-ul-arfin*, and *Chachnama*.

Writers on Sind and Sindhi literature have generally mentioned this literary activity, but they have missed the other important aspect of it, without which no understanding is possible of Sindhi literature in the two centuries and a half before Shah Abdul Latif. That is the continual influence of medieval Indian writers, the Bhakt-Kavis (Saints-poets), upon Sindhis, after Sind came into contact with other Indian provinces and emerged out of its isolation.

In the Mogul era, Sind was a Mogul subah and some Sindhis attained to high positions under the Moguls, specially Abual Fazl and Faizi, of Sewhan, who rose to be ministers at the court of Akbar. Bukker in Upper Sind, and Tatta in Lower Sind, were places frequently visited by Indians as well as by travellers to India, and there was a salutary exchange of views. Sind was contiguous to Rajasthan, as well as to Panjab, and the Rajasthani and Panjabi influences were direct and deep in the everyday life of the Sindhis. The Sindhi literature before Shah is a product of three forces. There was, firstly, the folklore of Sind, the heritage that had come down from the time of the Sammas, Sumras, and the Hindu rulers gone before them, secondly it was the influence of Persian mystics-poets, and thirdly the Indian Bhakt-Kavis whose verses exuded the fragrance of Vedantism

Yoga and Bhakti.

A curious amalgam of Indian poetry and Sindhi indigenous influence is the so-called *Gnan* (spiritual knowledge) verses attributed to Pir Sadruddin and his son Hasan Kabiruddin (end of 14th and beginning of 15th century) who converted some Hindus to the Ismaili form of Islam and gave them the title of Khojas. These *Gnan* verses are often a hotch-potch of Hindi, Sindhi and Gujarati, and have no claim to poetical excellence. This literature of the Khojas ' which is not very extensive, requires a sound knowledge of Sanskrit, and specially of the modern Indian dialects, such as Sindhi, Kachi, and Gujarati, in which the sacred Gnans are written.'[1] Some of these Gnans have been rendered in modern Sindhi spelling and pronunciations in Nabibux's *History of Sindhi Language* and the opening verses are :

Why not get up and yearn for God, O wretch ?
You have been asleep all the night....
Only those remember the Lord
Who wake up before the morn is bright.

The poets before Shah paved the way for him and their verses have sometimes been incorporated into Shah's verses and at their best are not very much distinguishable from his verses. The characteristics of pre-Shah Sindhi poetry are : firstly, the form of the verse is purely Indian i.e. the *doha* form with hardly a variation here and there, and, secondly, that they make a startling appeal to the reader, fed on the ancient scriptures of India. The best known verse of the first authentic poet of the pre-Shah era, namely Qazi Qazan is : ' The Jogi woke me up from slumber, and made me betake to the path that leads to the Beloved.' The poet, is, of course referring to his *murshid* or *guru* (Syed Miran Mahdi of Jaunpur), but the feeling and expression are thoroughly in the Indian tradition. A third characteristic is the affinity to the Persian mystics or Sufis. This is apparent from another verse of Qazi Qazan : ' Why need I have anything to do with *la* or negation ? For me there is nothing visible but the Beloved.' A fourth characteristic of Sindhi poetry written before Shah is the implicit references to legends and tales well-known in Sind. See Qazi Qazan's another verse : ' Within me lay the Beloved. And when the Camel Driver took him away I wrung hands, for my heart was with him.' There is a reference here to the story of Sasui and

Punhun and the kidnapping of Punhun by camel-drivers to remove him from proximity to Sasui. The fifth characteristic of Sindhi poetry is to glance at the scenes and sights of Nature and extract a moral from them. One of the verses of Qazan bears witness to this tendency of the Sindhi poets :

The Sea gave a mighty kick
Engulfing high and low
Everything was reduced to unity
No direction or separate thing to know

The sixth and the last, but not the least, characteristic of early Sindhi poetry is that which is part of the Indian heritage, namely, that the only knowledge worth knowing, the only Gnan that has any value, is that which leads to Union with Beloved, i.e. God-realisation or self-realisation. This is the burden of three of the remaining verses of Qazi Qazan. (Alas ! that only seven gems should have been preserved of the treasury of verse that was given to the world by the first authentic Sindhi poet) : 'My studies only served to trip me up. Every word was a crocodile to battle with. What could Logic do for me, or Metaphysics or Grammar ? They could not take me to the Beloved. For all your knowledge of Logic, Grammar and Metaphysics you will still be a tiny ant presuming from your well to scan the sky overhead.' These seven verses of Qazi Qazan, preserved along with Shah Abdul Karim's verses in the *Bayan-ul-Arfin*, a Persian composition, point the way to subsequent Sindhi poetry. They have not the exaltation and supreme merit of Shah's poetry, but it would be hard to find out seven other verses which would indicate the tendencies of Sindhi poetry as well as these.

Qazi Qazan lived through four reigns—the reigns of the last two Samma rulers of Sind, Jam Nizamuddin and Jam Nando, and the two first Arghun rulers, Shah Arghun Beg and Shah Husain. His birth date is not clear but he died in 1551 in Medina, in Arabia. He and his family were caught in the maelstrom of foreign invasion when Shah Arghun overran Tatta, the capital of Lower Sind, in December 1520, but his piety, learning and reputation, made a strong appeal to the conqueror who was pleased to protect him and his family Shah Arghun died in July 1522, and his successor, Shah Husain, was pleased to appoint him as Qazi or as the chief Judicial

functionary at Bukkur, capital of Upper Sind, in which high post he remained for over 20 years, discharging the duties of his office with exemplary integrity and justice. As usual, many stories are related about Qazi Qazan's power to work miracles, but these stories, even if they were true, would not enhance the reputation he has attained in the eyes of the Sindhis by reason of the seven verses left by him. The only point of note about him is that his life took another turn after he came to know his spiritual preceptor, of whom he spoke as the yogi who had awakened him from stupor and turned him to spiritual pursuits.

Unfortunately, the historical accounts of this period are all written by Muslim historians who are out to give glowing accounts of their ancestors, and certain holy Syeds and other Muslim theologians and saints, and no specimen of Sindhi poetry written by the Hindus has been preserved. In *Hindvasi* dated the 4th July 1965, Mr. Jairamdas Doulatram has referred to a Hindu Bhakt-Kavi of Sind as a predecessor of Shah, one Dev Chander, who was born at Amarkot in Sind (Akbar's birthplace) on 11th October 1581. The Turkhans were then rulers of Sind but Amarkot was outside their jurisdiction. Dev Chander took *sanyas* at an early age and made pilgrimages to many famous religious places. He became known as Swami Nijanand and died at Jamnagar, in Saurashtra, on 5 September 1655. He had a disciple, Swami Prannath, a very learned and well-travelled man, who was for many years Minister in a State. Swami Prannath was in Sind in the years 1667–1668 and biographical details about him have been given by his disciple, Swami Laldas. Swami Prannath has left behind him 18,758 verses, of which 600 shlokas are said to be in Sindhi. If these six hundred verses were published a good idea would be had of the poetry written by the Hindu predecessors of Shah. Very probably the verses of Swami Prannath would bear the mark of the influence of his *Guru*, or include the guru's direct composition, as well.

One of the reasons of the disappearance of Sindhi poetry written by Hindus in the two centuries preceding the Shah, apart from religious bigotry, would probably be that there would be a large admixture in their vocabulary of words from the Hindi language, and their poems must have got mixed up with Panjabi or Rajasthani or Gujarati poetry. The poems of Kabir, Tulsidas, Mirabai and Surdas, and above all of Guru Nanak and his successors, must have been exemplars for them,

and as the Muslim historians and biographers were not directly interested in this poetry the poems have not been preserved, or at least not been discovered.

Pro. Lutf Allah Badwi makes a mention of several minor Sindhi poets[2] who followed in the wake of Qazi Qazan but most of them seem to have been known more for their piety and religious zeal than for their peotry. Makhdum Ahmed Bhatti is mentioned in *Tuhfat-ul-kiram* as a man of piety, and tradition places his death as due to the recitation of some poignant verses in his presence, which reminded him of his Beloved. Pir Mahomed Lakhi of Tatta migrated to Lakhi in Upper Sind and died there at the end of the 16th century. He has written *Manajat* or Invocations in praise of the Prophet, which have little poetical merit, except that he makes an innovation of adding rhymes by prolonging sound vowels like *alif* at the end of every line. Words of pure Sindhi origin are placed in juxtaposition with those of Arabic and Persian origin, in a rather unpleasant manner.

Another pious personage was Makhdum Noah who was born in 1505. Miracles worked by him are recorded in *Tuhfaf-ul-kiram* and *Hadiqat Al Awalya*. He translated the Koran in Persian language. He was much respected by the then rulers of Sind as well as by the Moguls. In his poems also occur references to Hindu Jogis, Swamis and Kapris who pierced their ears. Lutf Allah Kadri's fifteen verses are to be found in *Minhaj Almaroof* which was composed thirty-four years before the birth of Shah. His poetry does not contain stanzas of only two verses as in *dohas* but extend to even seven verses. The burden of his poetry is of course Sufistic. He strains after alliteration in his verses but there is little mellifluousness in them. Usman Ihsani came from Bhagnari in Baluchistan to Lakhi about 1640 and was a contemporary of Pir Md. Lakhvi. He has written *Vatan Nama*, the main burden of which is the inevitability of Death, and the grave. A pious man, the green dome of whose grave is a landmark and a place for pilgrimage at Sukkur, was Shah Khairuddin (born at Baghdad in 1505 and died in 1617) whose one verse (in dialogue form) survives :

Question : You are neither in Ka'aba nor Qiblah
You are in the posture of prayer

Answer : He who knows the King needs no Kibla
Who will dare prescribe him how to pray ?

Leaving aside these minor writers, the three major poets who deserve mention as predecessors of Shah are first, and the greatest of them all Shah Abdul Karim (1536–1620), his great grandfather, Abu-al-Hasan sometimes described as ' founder of Sindhi literature ' (born 1661), and Shah Inat or Miyum Shah (birth before 1613–1623 and death somewhere between 1701–1719).

To take these three major poets in the reverse order : Shah *Inat* is fortunate in his biographer, Nabibux Baloch, who has recently brought out a sumptuous volume entitled *Poetry* of *Shah Inat* (Sindhi Adabi Board Hyderabad 1963), in which he writes in the *Introduction* : ' Thus, Shah 'Inat or Miyum Shah 'Inat, as he has been affectionately called by his progeny and the people, was essentially a poet of the seventeenth century A.D. He was a classical poet in as much as he used the classical Sindhi idiom and employed the classical forms of Sindhi *bait* and *waee* or *kafi* in his poetry. Yet he heralded a new era in the domain of Sindhi poetry by combining the poetic contents of the age-old bardic tradition and of the more cultivated spiritual thought of the Sufi-saint poets. Prior to this, Sindhi poetry had been nurtured by the country bards and the professional minstrels to commemorate the valour of the heroes in wars or the munificence of the generous in peace and to entertain the people by composing and singing their folk tales and pseudo-historical romances. It was also employed by the Sufis and the saints as a medium to express their spiritual ideas and experiences or convey their personal approval or disapproval of the deeds of some contemporary individuals. These two streams had not yet come to a confluence ; each followed its own course. While the bardic tradition was more widely diffused, spiritual poetry had successively found its great exponents in the great Sufi poets reaching almost its climax in form and expression, in the compositions of Qazi Qazan (died 1551 A.D.) and Shah Abdul Karim (died 1620/21 A.D.) the great grand-father of Shah Abdul Latif. They were the great predecessors of Miyun Shah 'Inat, and we find their poetry essentially spiritual and didactic in content, little related to the life of the people or their traditional heroes, folk-tale and romances.... Combining the two traditions, he forged a new line as a " saint-poet of the people " singing about their heroes in war and peace and their traditional tales and romance as

well as about the traders, weavers and the monsoon rains on which depends the prosperity of the people. He also treated the spiritual themes of love and hope in his poetry and composed verses in praise of the saints and selfless devotees in search of God. The volume of his poetry that has reached us pertains to twenty main topics covering all the above themes, each a chapter by itself, headlined in the extant manuscripts as "SURUD" indicating the specific mode in which each one was to be sung.... Fortunately, the new era in Sindhi poetry heralded by Miyun Shah 'Inat, soon found its greatest exponent in Shah Abdul Latif (1689–1752) who was yet in his twenties or even younger when Shah 'Inat died. According to the oral tradition current to this day, Shah Abdul Latif is said to have gone and met the elderly Shah 'Inat more than once and they recited to each other some of their parallel verses on common themes. However that may be, there remains no doubt that young Shah Abdul Latif was strongly influenced by the form and technique used by Miyun Shah 'Inat, and within the framework of his own poetic genius he adopted them even to the extent of using some of the same idioms and expressions though with a more precise skill and insight. No doubt Shah Abdul Latif soared higher in the realm of ideas than Miyun Shah 'Inat who, as a pioneer, was mainly concerned with the contents of his new themes and experiments in the use of powerful idiom and fresh imagery to render the description more vivid and more poetic. But in so doing he set the fashion and paved the way for the advent of Shah Abdul Latif.' The Sur-Khambat of Inat, for instance, reminds one of the same *Sur* in Shah, though the magic of Shah Abdul Latif is absent. :

O moon ! in my mind is your tale
By God, says Inat, you are radiant in (dark) night
Won't you see, and display to me, the Beloved I seek ?

In *Sur Marui*, the heroine's wail is the same as in Shah Abdul Latif, but there is not the same poignancy :

Marus be, O Sumra ! my kith and only kin.
Their protege I, how may I here abide ?
Lead me to them, says Syed, to the chaste ones
That the lost village girl be restored to their side.

In *Sur Dhanasri* Inat does something which Shah Latif had no need to do. He calls upon holy men like Pir Gilani, Bahauddin,

and especially upon Lal Shahbaz Marwandi, for aid and protection.

Moulvi Abu al Hasan of Tatta, (born in 1661), the author of *Muqaddama Alsalwat* (1700 A.D.) a book which lays down instructions about Namaz (Prayers) and Wazu (Abiutions) has earned an enormous reputation because the above compilation was the *first book written as a Sindhi book*, and it has become usual to speak of Abu al Hasan's 'Sindhi'. A controversy has arisen whether the Sindhi of Abu-al-Hasan in his *Muqaddama Alsalwat* is poetry or poetic *prose*. In the Pakistan literary magazine, *Nai Zindagi*, (October 1964), one contributor (Shamsuddin Ursani) has tried to show that Abu-al-Hasan was the first prose writer in the Sindhi language whose composition has survived. Another contributor to this magazine, Abdul Jabbar Junejo, writing in June 1965 issue, tries to prove that the first prose writer in Sindhi was Makhdum Jafar Bubkein who wrote a book in prose on 'Talaq' (Divorce) in the days of the Arghuns, and that, Abu-al-Hasan was a poet who wrote not in Doha form but the *Kabat* form of Hindi verse in which there is no limitation of verses unlike the *doha* or *beyt*. The *kabat* offers a variety of Tals according to the *matras* in each line. This *Kabat* form of Hindi verse has been extensively used by theological writers who give instructions in religious observances. Junejo notes that from the time of Abu-al-Hasan, to that of Abdul Rahim Grohri, Kabat was much in fashion, side by side with *beyt*. In later days i.e. after the Kalhoras, romances and love tales were also composed in *Kabat* verse. A learned artificer in this verse was Makdhum Md. Hasham, also Abdullah Ziauddin. Abu-al-Hasan's merit is that he tries to enliven the dry disquisitions on *Namaz* with fanciful images, bringing the moon for instance to illustrate the radiance of Namaz and Ablutions. His language is the language of Lar and is full of figures of speech. *Tuhfat ul kiram* describes Abu-al-Hasan as a very learned man and a renowned teacher of Theology. He is said to have died at the age of ninety. His nephew, Makhdum Abdullah, wrote *Kanaz Albhrat* following the model of his uncle.

Abu-al Hasan deserves credit as a pioneer and he may be credited with writing 'Sindhi', but as a poet he is very ordinary and may even be called a not very clever versifier. He was a master of rhetoric rather than poetry. Md. Sidik Memon, in his Sindhi history of Sindhi literature, has vastly overrated Abu-al-Hasan as a master of 'Sindhi'.

The greatest of Shah Abdul Latif's predecessors was Shah Abdul Karim of Bulri, his great great-grandfather, who has been called by Sindhi critics as the Chaucer of Sind or the 'Morning Star' of Sindhi literature. He was born in 1536 and died in 1620. Six years after his death, Mahomed Raza Abdul Wasay also called Mir Daryai, son of Darogha Gohar (of Tatta), one of his disciples, wrote *Bayan Alarfin* in which he gave a biographical sketch of his master with ninety-three or ninety-four of his verses along with eight or seven verses of Qazi Qazan which Shah Abdul Karim was fond of reciting. This work was in obscurity until it was rendered into Sindhi by Abdul Rahim, son of Md. Malook in 1798. It was printed in Bombay (in abridged form) by Makhdum Abdul, son of Haji Md. Mengui Naorang Pota in 1874. Mirza Kalich Beg brought out *Risalo Karimi* in 1904, which was re-edited by Dr. U. M. Daudpota in 1937. A recent edition of this Risalo under the title of *Karim-Jo-Kalam* has been issued by Sindhi Adabi Society, Sukkur Sind, under the editorship of Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi.

Everyone who has written about Shah Abdul Karim has emphasised his saintly character. He was descended from Syed Sharafuddin, whose father, Syed Mir Ali, emigrated from Herat to settle at Matiari in Sind, and he kept up the noblest traditions of the race of the Prophet. Like Prophet Mahomed he had, so to say, his motto 'Poverty is my pride', and he maintained himself and family on the pittance gathered by manual labour in fields and forests. Many stories are related of the stoicism, humility and self-control. He delighted in music, and the contemplation of God, and frequented the society of holy fakirs and seekers after God, chief of whom was Makhdum Noah, at whose suggestion he went to live in Bulri (after which place he is now known).

Shah Karim had no thought of marriage but could not say 'no' to his elder brother and guardian, Syed Jalal Shah, and he did his best after marriage to make his spouse happy. His sons had to bear with him in his work and worship ; one of his sons came near death (while working in the fields) for want of adequate food. He had eleven sons, the second of whom, Syed Jamal Shah, was privileged to be the grandfather of the greatest of Sindhi poet, Shah Abdul Latif.

Shah Karim was not a well-read person : he is said to have studied only two *siparas* or cantos from the Koran. But he learnt all that had to be learnt about religion and mysticism from the

fakirs and dervishes of his time, and was, by oral tradition, well-versed in the works of Persian mystics whose verses were on the tongues of all men. He always preached to his followers to spend all their time in the contemplation of the Lord, but he would not deter them from pursuit of worldly knowledge. He was an example of the well-known instruction : ' Let the hand be busy in labour and the heart busy in yearning after God.' Many miracles are recorded of him. He was regarded as an *Awaliya* or man of God, and some of those who have written of him prefer to regard him as a Saint, and not as a Poet. They think that he does not shine as a poet.

But now the critics are agreed that he is the first genuine and considerable poet in the Sindhi language, the morning-star of Sindhi poetry, the herald of the Sol or sun of Sindhi literature, his own great-grandson, Shah Abdul Latif. His 94 verses are in the traditional Indian doha verse form, of two lines each ; 3 of them run over three lines each, an innovation which does him credit and which was bettered by Shah Abdul Latif.

Dr. Daudpota has noted that Shah Karim's diction is pure Sindhi : he has used only 29 Arabic words and one Arabic phrase and only 8 words of Persian. Shah Karim lived at a time when Arabic-Persian words had not spoiled the Sindhi idiom. His words are, of course, of Lar, or Lower Sind, in pronunciation and spelling. Dr. Daudpota has one complaint about Shah Karim's poetry, namely that there is not much variety in it, but he has nothing but admiration for the sweetness and music of the verse. The fact is that Shah Karim's verses are thoroughly tinged with mysticism of the type of Rumi, but his imagery is thoroughly Sindhi. His most famous beyts or verses are those in which he says that (1) the twain are incompatible ; yearning for the Beloved, and care of the world ; (2) the tongue or the eye cannot realise the Dear One ; (3) I may be physically in this spot, O Umar, but in my heart I am with the Marus in Thar ; (4) He is the king, the message and the Messenger, the knower and the knowledge ; (5) others may study Grammar, my only knowledge consists in one word—He and He alone: (6) As soon as the first is open comes the wind, so reveal not the tale of the heart ; (7) Water may be fetched by every maiden in her jars but of what value is water which is not for the Beloved but brought for money's sake ?

Chapter VI

SHAH ABDUL LATIF OF BHIT

Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit, called simply ' Shah ' or ' Monarch ', is a unique figure in literature. He is not only the greatest of Sindhi writers, but he has been equated with the literature of his land, as if he were co-terminous with Sindhi literature. The first foreigners who explored the civilization and culture of Sind thought that Shah was the only Poet and Philosopher Sind had produced, and the universal vogue of *Shah-Jo-Risalo*, or Shah's Poetical Works, in the land of the Sindhu, inclined them to believe that the *Risalo* was the only literary work in the Sindhi language.

It has become clear now that, far from being the only poet of Sind, or the only singer of his time, Shah was only one—albeit the greatest—of a multitude of poets who formed a 'nest of singing birds' in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Shah was the finest flower in a garden of poetry. His poetry is not that of a pioneer, it is the poetry of fulfilment ; it is not the poetry of experimentation or innovation, it is the poetry of gracious benediction. Nor is it correct to call him the *last* of the traditional or medieval poets in Sindhi, as some have tried to make out ; Shah is no Milton, ' the last of the Elizabethans '. It is well-known that Shah looked upon Sachal as his spiritual successor. And there were others besides Sachal to keep up the tradition of Shah. Shah did for Sindhi language and literature—and the Sindhi people—what other world poets have done for their own language and country in their own particular way—Hafiz for the Persian Lyric, Dante for the ' illustrious vernacular ' of Italy, and Tulsidas for Hindi language and literature.

Another misconception about Shah requires a more detailed exposure, because it is more persistent. It is to treat Shah as purely a poet of Islam, writing for the Muslims, and in the approved Islamic fashion. Were Shah really an Islamic poet, pure and simple, he would not have made the appeal he has made to the Hindu mind and sentiment. The Sindhi-Hindus, forced by Muslim bigotry to quit Sind, still turn to *Shah-Jo-Risalo* as to a scripture, and with nostalgic sentiment. This

would be impossible if Shah were a poet of Islam, and not a patriotic Sindhi and essentially Indian poet, fully in line with other Indian poets. That Shah was by birth, upbringing and ancestry, a Muslim, and that he conformed to the tenets of his faith, cannot be gainsaid. Shah had any amount of reverence for the Prophet, and admiration and affection for his son-in-law, Ali, and Ali's son martyred in Kerbela. But he was not a doctrinaire Muslim, bound by a dogma or ritual. Some of his most famous lines are :

It were well to practise *Namaz* and Fast
But Love's vision needs a separate Art.

There is a legend that when they asked Shah whether he was a Sunni Muslim or a Shia, he said he was neither, he was in-between. And when some one said : 'There is nothing in-between', he said 'Then I am Nothing.' Muslim writers have shed quite needless ink to discuss what kind of *Sufi* he was : did he belong to the Qadiri order, or the Chishti order ? He had something which neither of the Orders had, and no preceptor of either of these Orders could claim to have initiated him into Sufism. So some one asks, was he then of the Uwesi type of Sufi, a man who has not had a preceptor or Murshid ? No definite reply is possible. A man who could don the garb of Hindu Jogis, wander with them for years, make pilgrimages to Hinglaj, Dwarka and other sacred places of the Hindus, a man who broke, without the slightest compunction, the Islamic injunction against *Samaa* or Dance-music, and died tasting the pleasure of that Dance-music, a man who went out of his way, in that era of Kalhora bigotry, to pull out from a crowd of fanatic Muslims a poor Hindu whom they were proceeding to convert forcibly to Islam, could hardly be regarded as a Muslim, pure and simple. It is noteworthy that one of the constant and dear friends of Shah was Madan, a Hindu, and the two musicians who comforted his soul, Atal and Chanchal, were also Hindus. If, in *Sur Kalyan* he referred to Prohpet Mahomed as the *Karni* or the 'Cause' of creation, or elsewhere he imagined the rain cloud wafting across Islamic lands and shedding grateful showers over the Tomb of the Prophet, or if he quoted or referred to the verses of the Koran in more than a hundred places in the *Risalo,* it only shows his faith and poetic fervour and his understanding of the audience to whom he was addressing his poetry. It does not show propagandist zeal or dogmatism. Were everything that he wrote

to perish and only one or two Surs like *Sur Ramkali* to survive, there would be no difficulty in demonstrating that Shah had affinity with Hindus and their religion. G. M. Syed, in his thoughtful book, *Paigham-e-Latif* or Message of Latif, has drawn a comparison between a poet of Pan-Islamism, or an essentially Islamic poet like Iqbal, and a patriotic and nationalist poet like Shah. When Shah was praying to God to shower plenty and prosperity upon Sind, in lines dear to every Sindhi, he was doubtless visualising Sind as an integral part of Hind.

No reader of Shah can forget that the entire poetry of Shah is cast in the traditional *ragas* and *raginis* of Indian poetry, his heroes and heroines are Indians, every inch, and that the content of his poetry is Indian, medieval no doubt, but medieval Indian, and not Central Asiatic, or West Asiatic. The shrewd readers of Shah have noted that in all his story-poems the *woman* is the lover and the *male* person the one sought after—in the fashion peculiar to Indian poets alone.

One point which the commentators and critics of Shah and his poetry have clean missed is that Shah should be regarded not as the voice and interpreter of the attenuated Sind we know, but the poet of that Greater Sind which extended anciently to Kashmir and Kanoj, to Makran and Saurashtra, Jaisalmer and Barmer. On any other assumption, the ' stories ' of Shah would have no proper significance, and his wanderings would be without an aim and purpose. Plot the extreme points reached by Shah in his wanderings on a map of the Indian Sub-Continent and that would show the confines of the Greater Sind of which Shah sang in his *Surs*.

It is possible to make too much of the *mystic* and sufistic element in Shah's poetry, and to by-pass another predominant *motif* or element in his poetry—his *Sindhiyat* or the peculiar *Sindhi-ness* of his poetry which is to be found in no other Sindhi poet or writer. This *Sindhiyat* is of course one of the earliest and most fragrant of the several flowers in the Indian garland of Poetry and Philosophy. The two main aspects in Shah's poetry which deserve detailed treatment are his mysticism and *Sindhiyat*. Fitly has he been called the Sage of Mihran (or the Sindhu), where Mihran or the Sindhu is simply the longest of the Indian rivers. The two most important points in Shah's poetry and his mental make-up are that he was a God-intoxicated Soul and that he was the Voice of Sind. His being a

Muslim does not matter so very much.

It is also worth nothing that barring one Muslim, namely Mirza Kalich Beg, the author of a biography of Shah in Sindhi, and a *Lexicon* on Shah, nearly all the editors, biographers, critics and commentators on Shah upto the separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency (1937), nay upto the Partition of India (1947) were non-Muslims. Dr. Ernest Trumpp was the first to bring out an edition of the Risalo (1866), and Dr. H. T. Sorley was the first to write in English a book on the life and times of Shah and translate quite a representative chunk of his poems (*Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit* 1940). Sir Bartle Frere's manuscript on Shah has not been published nor Mir Abdul Husain's manuscript, alluded to by some writers. Apart from these names, almost all other names of earnest workers in Shah's vineyard, in the British regime, have been Hindu names. Dayaram Gidumal, Judge, wrote on Shah under the pen name of *Sigma* in his *Something about Sind* (1882) ; gathering from authentic sources anecdotes about Shah, Lilaram (Sing)Watanmal, another Judge, wrote a short life of the poet (1890) ; educationist Tarachand Showkiram, brought out an edition of Shah, under Government aegis in 1900 ; Lalchand Amardinomal wrote in Sindhi a brochure on *Shaha no Shah* in the first decade of the present century. Jethmal Parsram wrote *Stories from Shah* and treated of Shah in his *Sufis and Mystics of Sind* in the second decade ; Bherumal Mahirchand produced his *Latifi-Sair* in 1928 giving a sketch of the Travels of Shah, Naraindas Bhambhani wrote in Sindhi a book on *The Heroines of Shah*, Professors T. L. Vaswani, M. M. Gidwani and the present writer wrote magazine articles and pamphlets on Shah, and above all, Dr. H. M. Gurbaxani brought out three volumes of *Shah-Jo-Risalo* (from 1923 onwards) with his masterly Introduction on Shah (*Muqadamah Latifi*) which will always remain a landmark in Sindhi literature. The two Muslim names of writers on Shah in the British period are those of Md. Sidik Memon, writer in Sindhi of a *History of Sindhi Literature* in the third decade of twentieth century in which he had perforce to find the greatest space for Shah, and Dr. U. M. Daudpota, the favourite pupil of Dr. H. M. Gurbaxani, and his assistant in the preparation of his monumental work.

After the Partition of India, the Pakistani Sindhis have done more systematic work on Shah and his *Risalo* than their Hindu

counterparts in India. As long as Sind was a separate Province, in Pakistan, the Government of Sind did much to finance research and scholarship on Shah, and endowed a cultural centre at Bhit, the place of Shah. The Muslim scholar who deserves praise for editing the *Surs* of Shah left unedited by Dr. Gurbaxani was Ghulam Md. Shahwani, who brought out a complete edition of the *Risalo* with Introduction and Notes in 1950, following strictly in the footsteps of Dr. Gurbaxani. Muslim scholars, whose names deserve mention for work done on Shah, are those of Md. Ibrahim Joyo, editor *Mihran*, Nabibux Baloch, Head of Sindhi Studies in Sind University, Pir Hasamuddin Rashdi (writer of a brochure in Urdu on Sindhi Adab or literature), Lutfullah Badvi (author of a *History of Sindhi Poetry* in three volumes), and Taj Md. Agha (writer of *Aks-e-Latif* 1951, Shah's life in Urdu). Special mention must be made of Ayaz, most eminent of living Sindhi poets and translator in Urdu of the *Risalo*, Din Mohamed Wafai, author of *Lutf-al-Latif* (1951) perhaps the most readable book produced in Pakistan (in Sindhi) on Shah, Ghulam Murtaza Syed, author of a brilliant analysis of Shah's Thought and Mentality (*Paigham-e-Latif*), and above all of that gracious couple, Imdad Kazi (most recent editor of the *Risalo*), and Mrs. Elsa Kazi, poet and translator of Shah's lyrics. The number of Muslims writing on *Yadgar-e-Latif* or Tributes and Homage to Shah in pamphlets and magazines is simply legion : the *Mihran* as well *Nai Sind*, and *Goth Sudhar*, with their annual special *Shah* issues, cannot be ignored by anyone who loves Shah.

In Bharat, that is India, there are three post-Partition writers on Shah whose names deserve special mention. Kalyan Advani has done solid work on Shah by annotating all the *Surs* of *Shah* in a sumptuous one-volume publication which it is a pleasure to read and handle. His book on Shah is a ' must ' for every student of Shah. Fatehchand Vaswani's *Selections* from Shah, with scholarly chapters on various aspects of Shah's personality and poetry, are interesting and instructive. Ram Ranjwani, in his (Sindhi) *Seven Stories from Shah*, has dramatised some of the best *Surs* in Shah with chapters on folklore, to which the present writer has furnished an Introduction on Shah's role as the voice or interpreter of Sind.

Shah Abdul Latif, the greatest of Sindhi poets, was born in 1689, in a Syed family, his father Shah Habibulah being one of

the well-known holy men of his time. According to *Tuhfat-al-kiram* Shah Habib was often plunged in meditation so that he sometimes did not know what was happening around him. He would not recognize his own son at times, so abstracted he was in his devotions. But he seems to have been a tender and loving parent. There is a well-known story that Shah Habib was once startled to find his beloved son almost buried to the neck in the bark of a tree, or in a sand-dune in which he lay in meditation, and thought that he was no more in the land of the living. He exclaimed in fright :

The wind has turned into a storm,
The limbs lie buried in dust.

And there came a rejoinder from his son :

The breath yet comes and goes,
To see the Beloved, linger it must.

There is another story that when Habib lay dying, he was very anxious to see his son for the last time and sent a message to him:

Would that I could get from you, while living
My dear, that which you are sure to give when I am gone.

Shah Latif sent back the consoling reply :

Be not dejected, I am never far from you
This distance is only apparent,
Your bourn and mine coincide.

Actually, the father gave up the breath before his son reached his bedside. The father died just seven years before his son (in 1745), some say that he died ten years earlier. It has been acknowledged by Shah's biographers that if any one could claim to be Shah's guide in the spiritual arena it was his father. Long before Shah was born it had been told to his father that his son 'Latif' would be a 'Kutb' or 'Pole Star' of his era. So he called his first-born as Latif but the child soon died, and he named the second son, too, as Latif. Shah Abdul Latif died without offspring, and his only brother (really step brother) Jamal, succeeded to the *gadi*, and Jamal's descendants still enjoy that *gadi*.

Shah Latif's father was according to tradition, a holy man, but his great-grandfather, Shah Karim of Bulri, was a much more renowned and revered personage. Shah Karim's holiness was such as has eclipsed his very genuine claim to being a Poet and let some admirers think of him only as a holy man. Actually,

Shah Karim is the greatest poet in Sindhi before his great-grandson came on the scene, and the framework (Hindi *doha*) of his hundred or so verses, and their content (Sindhi folklore and Sufism), have been adopted in Shah's poetry, and Karim's compositions intermingled with those of Shah. Shah Latif had not to undergo that discipline of extreme poverty which his great-grandfather had to, nor to face the ordeals which his ancestor did. Shah Karim was from the first inclined to a life of monasticism and celibacy, and he had to contract a marriage because he could not very well say 'nay' to his elders. There was nothing of that other-worldliness in Shah Latif who was throughout life a normal, healthy man, free from sensuality and greed, but as willing and able to enjoy friendship, love, and social intercourse as any other man. And Shah Latif had not to hold the plough and face starvation as his distinguished forbear had to. There is nothing to show that Shah Karim undertook long journeys, and sojourned into distant lands, like Shah Latif. Shah Karim's life was secluded, Shah Latif's life was open and a centre of attraction for kindred spirits. Shah Karim knew not princes nor their courts, but Shah Latif, if he did not become a high judicial officer like Qazi Qazan, the first authentic Sindhi poet, enjoyed the esteem and regard of the Kalhora rulers of the land and bigwigs like Makhdums, even though he might first have awakened their jealousy and ire. The most famous of the Kalhora rulers, Ghulam Shah Kalhora, was born to Kalhora Noor Mahomed because of the blessing of Shah Latif. And this Kalhora Noor Mahomed actually tested Shah's strength of mind and self restraint by leaving him alone with a bevy of maidens, good to look at but not very particular in their morals. And when Shah disdained their charms and wiles, the Kalhora ruler twitted him about his puritanism, to meet with a reply, the last line of which has become current in the Sindhi language :

> Let the wenches have their fling
> Not to them will *Lahutis* cling.

But Shah Karim never went through the agony Shah Latif did when he heard of the martyrdom of the most eminent of Sindhi Sufis, Shah Inayat of Jhok :

> No sound of Seekers is heard in parlours ; the *Adesis* are gone
> Monasteries have lost their attraction
> Those who had the elixir of life are dead and gone.

There was something in Shah Latif's brave and gracious encounter with the princes and tyrants of his time which recalls the Prophet and Ali, the 'Lion of Islam', from whom he was lineally descended. There was in him something as well, of his tactful ancestor, Syed Haider, 13th in ascent from Shah Latif—who secured the goodwill of conqueror Tamerlane with a feast and a present of one rupee for every man in Tamerlane's army, and laid the foundation of his family's fortunes. Syed Haider came from Herat in Afghanistan in 1398, and settled in Sind at Matiari (Mutalwi). He had a wife in Herat and another in Sind who also belonged to a Syed family. His Sindhi son, Mir Ali, after he grew up, proceeded to Herat and successfully claimed a part of his patrimony from his step-brothers. He returned to Sind and became the progenitor of two Syed lines : the Sharafpotas and Mirapotas. Shah Latif belonged to the Sharafpotas.

The great-grandfather of Shah Latif migrated from Matiari to Bulri and is now known as the sage of Bulri. His son i.e. the grandfather of Shah Latif, died in an encounter with dacoits to assist a widow who had been robbed. When he died, the family was ensconced again in Matiari from where the father of Shah Latif migrated for a time to the village of Bhaipur in Hala Taluka and ultimately to Kotri Mogul in the same Taluka. Shah Latif, several years afterwards, left Kotri to find a new place, *Bhit*, (literally a sand-dune) four or five miles away from (the now desolate) Kotri Mogul. Bhit is now famous in Sindhi annals, for every Sindhi has heard of Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit, and Bhit has become the most famous cultural centre in Sind. The birth of Shah Latif took place in Bhaipur, and his early years were spent in Kotri.

The childhood of Shah Latif was spent in a family famous for generations for piety, devotion and social service. And he kept to these traditions, adding to the family traits the traits of love of music, and clemency towards men and birds and beasts. In an age of cruel and wilful huntsmen he refused to hunt poor animals, and preferred the company of boys who could utter soul-stirring strains and awaken in him meditation and love of solitude. Shah Latif was not a huntsman but he was a sportsman all right, and he showed his mastery of archery when he managed to fly an arrow through the fingers of Mirza Mogul Beg, a grandee of his village, Kotri, and make a hole in his amulet, without hurting the Beg in the slightest. As is usual, there are

several anecdotes about the wonderful signs perceptible in the child Latif which were indicative of his future greatness. Maulvi Din Md. Wafai refers to two flowers presented to the child Shah by a god-intoxicated fakir, Watai, of Tatta, which really blonged to Khwaja Khizr, the blue mantled Deity of the Sindhu. They symbolised the investment of the child with the fragrant spirit and sparkle of Sind.

How far Shah was an educated man has been debated. Those who believe in miracles eagerly assume that Shah was an *Umi* i.e. unlettered man, and that knowledge and illumination came to him from High. They believe with the Persian poet :

Sans books, sans figures, sans letters
Knowledge comes to the Man of God.

In the lives of saints and mystics of the East, the claim to have derived knowledge directly from God, without scholastic training or education, is a recurrent tale. It is said that as a boy Shah Latif was sent to learn the alphabet from Akhund Nur Mahomed Bhatti, but he refused to proceed after the first letter, *Alif*, to the next letter (*Bai*), saying that there was nothing beyond Alif, the One or Unity: He was then withdrawn from the school and never got any further scholastic training. This story is to be taken with a grain of salt. Long afterwards, Shah said in a verse that has become well known :

Read one letter, Alif, the only one,
The rest you can all forget.
Let thy spirit have a cleansing
No other study for you next.

This may be placed along with his other pronouncement on the same theme :

How can vigils and Lents
Vie with a glimpse of Love ?
Turn thou pages endless
One word, only, will you probe.

Here is insistence upon Alif, Unity, One Thing, One word, the substratum of all things, and the need of vision of that One Thing, here is declaration of the supreme duty of knowing that One Word which was in the beginning and which was with God and which was God. . . .and not any belittling of book-learning as such. If book-learning interfere with God-vision it has to go, that is all. But those who have read the *Risalo* of Shah will

refuse to believe that he had only God-intoxication and no book-learning.

That he knew the Koran is apparent to the most superficial reader of the *Risalo* ; it is also certain that he was fond of Jalauddin Rumi's *Masnavi* the Bible of the Persian mystics, and treasured the copy of the *Masnavi* presented to him by the Kalhora ruler of the time. From 'internal' evidence of the Risalo it is clear that Shah knew the *Koran* and the *Hadis* (Traditions of the Prophet) in Arabic, the *Masnavi* of Rumi in the Persian language, the wellknown Bhakti compositions in the Hindi or the vernacular current in north India, and the folklore and legends of Sind, and the compositions of his predecessors like Qazi Qazan and Shah Karim, some of whose verses are incorporated in his own, or are paraphrased in his poetry. It is possible that all these poems or compositions were learnt by Shah by oral tradition and committed to memory, but it is very improbable that this is what happened. There was not much book-learning in Sind in the Muslim times, but Shah Abdul Latif must have had his share of what there was.

Whether he was book-learned or not, Shah Abdul Latif had his full share of Nature-learning. Like Wordsworth he had wandered over hills and dales, rivers and lakes and the deserts and wildernesses of his native land, to settle at last in Bhit, the Sand-dune, in the environs of Lake Kirar. There is sufficient evidence of Shah's Travels for a continuous period of three years after he reached the age of twenty, and his subsequent journey, many years afterwards, to Multan to bring stones for the monument over his great-grandfather's grave. But he was never without the intimate companionship of Nature, Nature not red in tooth and claw, or cloying in the extreme, but Nature in her vastness and solitariness, inducing in the sojourner a sense of stillness and infinitude, of Oneness and Eternity, of voiceless music and undisturbed harmony. Fitly has Shah's poetry been called 'Desert Melodies.'

Shah is never a townsman or a courtier ; his poetry is not of the market-place or of the church cloisters, nor of the learned Pandits and lawgivers. So, some critics have mistaken him for a *rustic* poet. If rustic means that he was of the countryside it is alright to call him rustic, but if 'rustic' denotes ignorance of culture, boorishness or narrowness of mind and sympathies, Shah was anything but a rustic. Any man or woman, however,

highly trained or polished, will find something in Shah's *Risalo* to teach him gentleness of manners, catholicity of sympathies, and breadth of vision. Sorely, otherwise a devoted admirer of Shah, lays too much stress upon the *rusticity* of Shah and brings him down a peg lower than Rumi, Jami, and Hafiz, famous Persian poets :

> No might is here of Roumi's verse
> No Jami's soul-wrapt music swings.
> No high-tuned note of Hafiz wit
> Within your humble minstrel rings.

Dr. Sorley condescends to distribute some praise to Shah, too, but as the poet of Islam :

> And yet—strange paradox it be,
> That not less searching is the calm,
> The simple magic of his lays
> Than wise, deep utterance of Islam.[1]

The great defect of Sorley's study of Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit is that he wants to crib and confine him into the narrow mould of a dogma that he calls Islam, instead of viewing him as a typical, true Indian *rishi*, the man who had a *darshan* or vision of God, and who passed on that vision in ecstatic words to his rapt hearers. Bhit was a medieval *Ashram* or forest-sanctuary where Shah saw the world and saw it whole, and saw beyond it and behind it the Mystery of Mysteries. Sorley does not seem to be conscious or even dimly aware of the glory of the Upanishads and the Rishis of the Upanishads. Shah, and after him, Sachal and Sami, were the inheritors and interpreters of a precious heritage—the heritage left by the Rishis who chanted the *mantras* of Vedas and Upanishads on the banks of the Sindhu, and meditated on Man, Nature and God, and pierced to the uttermost depths of Being. If Sorley had said that all the threefold qualities in Rumi, Jami and Hafiz—might, soul-wraptness, and lyricism—were joined in the 'lowly' and 'humble' bard of Sind, he would not have been far wrong. The technique of the poetry of Shah is indeed not that of a rustic but that of an accomplished Master. While Rumi's method is to relate an entire story in sequence to bring out his Sufistic moral, Shah's method is to throw darts of meaning and suggest spiritual points in tales well-known to all his readers and hearers and so not in need of recital or recapitulation. Marui has only to say, 'It isnot

the wont of Marus to exchange in-laws for gold ' to convey what a whole chapter or book could not, Sasui has only to turn upon herself in the midst of poignant woe and wailing and to utter the words ' why to arraign husband's brothers for mischief, only if my Day had not played mischief ' to sum up all that is to be learnt about Man and Fate, Shah has only to remark in Suhni's story ' The jar was broken, the wench died, all the means vanished, then only did Suhni hear the call of Mehar ' to suggest a mighty spiritual instruction. Sorley selects the best in that ' soul-wrapt ' chapter in *Yusuf-Zuleikha* :

See where the tulip grows
In upland meadows, how in balmy spring
It decks itself and how amidst its thorns
The wild rose rends its garment and reveals
Its loveliness. Thou too, when some rare thought
Or beauteous image or deep mystery
Flashes across thy soul, canst not endure
To let it pass but holdst it, that perchance
In speech or writing thou mayst send it forth
To charm the world.

and remarks : ' The Risalo has nothing comparable with this passage from Jami'[2]. But Shah's greatness is not in long-drawn passages ; it is in the minute coruscations his pen flings forth in all directions. Shah did not compose poems in his ' study ', his *beyts* or verses were sparks or bits of revelations. As he said of himself :

These be not verses as you think
But revelations that abide
They turn your mind inward
And take you to His side.

As for Hafiz, one of the great lyric poets of the world, a Sindhi listening to his lyrics and Shah's lyrics sung at the same time would be hard put to make a decision which is sweeter in tone and more magical in appeal. Hafiz says about his *ghazals*, that they are a string of pearls and that the very firmament links them to the Pleiades. Shah does not use such language about his poetry, but he invented the *wai* or *kafi* which is as melodious in tune, as lofty in tone, as the Persian *ghazal*, even in the hands of its greatest master. The simplicity, humility, economy in words, and absence of self-consciousness on the part of Shah

proclaim him to be one with Nature, but they do not warrant anyone to call him a rustic. Sorley has animadverted against Shah's habit of intermingling the remarks of the poet and outbursts of his heroines in the narration of their stories, and termed it irritating and illogical ; he forgets that Shah is a lyrical and not a dramatic poet and that these interjections add to the music and majesty of the narrative. Sorley's real grouse is that in this practice Shah was following Hindi poets. He blinks his eyes to the fact that Shah was essentially an Indian poet, in the Indian tradition. Shah lived for over sixty years, a fairly long period in his age, in stirring times. He was eighteen when Aurangzeeb died, and the Kalhoras gradually took over the administration. He was alive when Nadir Shah invaded India. But there is no mention nor echo of these events in his verse. He lived in the vicinity of Khudabad, the capital of the Kalhoras, but he might have lived hundreds of miles away, so little was his life influenced by them.

The three points of interest in the life of Shah are his Wanderings, his Marriage, and his life with his Associates. Fortunately, we have more data or information about these points in Shah's life than we have about any other Sindhi poet. To take up first, his Wanderings. There is a fine book extant in Sindhi about the wanderings of Shah under the title *Latifi Sair*, (Latif's Travels), written by that painstaking Professor of Sindhi, Bherumal Mahirchand. At the outset, the writer pays a tribute to Shah the *Sailani* or Wanderer by commenting on his remarkable powers of observation of men as well as Nature. Shah minutely observes the women-spinners at their spinning wheel, as well as the common crow, as the bird which defiles the place where it sits and flies from place to place, making an ideal messenger. Shah notices the luminaries in the sky, the thunder and the rain, in the bazaar he observes the blacksmith at his anvil, the goldsmith and pearl merchant with their precious wares, and the potter at the wheel. His especial attention is directed to the flight of the birds across the sky, and the march of the camel in the desert. The Desert and the magnificent River which is a veritable ocean were the poet's life-long studies. The Desert was, as it were, at his very door. Bhit, the place of his residence, meant ' a sand-dune ', and he delighted in solitary walks in the region of sand-dunes. He was also in touch with voyagers across the river to the Indian ocean beyond. One of his *Surs*,

the *Sur Samundi* or Sur of the sea-farers, describes the preparation of the voyagers for their voyages and the woes and tribulations of the anxious spouses they left behind. Shah knew about the European pirates ; he calls them Phlangis (from *Feringees* or Franks the appellation for Europeans in general). Of course everything in Shah's poetry has a meaning attached to it, and the life of the Desert-dwellers, as well as that of River-farers and sea-farers, furnishes him with valuable lessons. There are anecdotes about Shah Latif being often found by herdsmen and wanderers lying in the desert, entranced in meditation, with his head held between his knees. This picture sketched of Shah Latif by Sindhi painters often show him in this posture of the head gripped between the knees or ' Monas ' :

Lay your head inside the *Monas*
Have little care of what you eat
Look down and close your eyes
Behold the Friend, and Him meet.

The ' Mona ' has been sometimes compared to the Mount Sina or Sinai where Moses had his vision of God.

It is said that for three years at least Shah Latif went on wandering, far and wide, in the company of Hindu Jogis and Sanyasis. This period may be compared to the Horton period in Milton's life, the period of incubation of poetic genius. The material gathered in the course of these wanderings was sufficient to last him a lifetime. He was twenty three or twenty four when he returned from his travels.

The first place to which Shah repaired for pilgrimage was Ganja Takar near modern Hyderabad (a city which came into existence a short while after Shah's death). Shah had a *darshan* of Goddess Kali's image in the temple of the goddess at Ganja Takar. Then he proceeded with Hindu Jogis to the famous Hindu pilgrimage centre of Hinglaj in Las Bela State, Baluchistan, following the route along the modern route to Karachi (then a small fishing-place). In conformity with the usage of Hindu pilgrims, Shah donned the ochre-coloured garments of Hindu Sanyasis. On the way from Ganja Takar to Hinglaj Shah passed by Hilaya Hill, and Keenjhar Lake. He saw the place where Jam Tamachi had had his dalliance with the fisher-girl Nuri or Gandri, and referred to it, afterwards, in *Sur Kamol*. Near Karachi on the side of present Manora port, he saw Kalachi

whirlpool, where a big crocodile lay hidden which had taken the toll of six brothers of Mari the fisherman. Shah has referred to Kalachi in his poetry. On the way to Karachi, Shah saw Bambhor, the place of the most famous heroine in Sindhi legends and song, Sasui. It was not easy to make way through the wilderness after crossing the Hab river. Shah had a first hand experience of the desolate spots, hills and sand-dunes through which Sasui had to make her way in frantic search of Punhun, her lover. Then Shah reached the fabled Hara mountain and Hingol riverlet. It was after an arduous journey that Shah and his fellow-pilgrims reached Hinglaj.

The famous Hindu pilgrim-centre of Hinglaj is a cave at the base of Hara hill wherein five hundred pilgrims could enter comfortably at a time, and pour milk over the recumbent figure of the goddess Amba. Shah paid a second visit, too, to Hinglaj, but on that occasion he had a disagreement with his Hindu fellow-pilgrims, and it is said that he disappeared from Hinglaj in a miraculous fashion, and appeared at Tatta instead. But Shah retained till the last affection and regard for Hindu Jogis. He distinguished between two sets of Jogis, one *Nuri* i.e. seekers of Light, and others *Nari* i.e. Burning in Hell :

Some be *Nuris*, other *Naris*
In the world of Jogis living,
They set aflame the ashen heart
For them alone I'm existing.

In his itinerary of Las Bela and Kech Makran, Shah saw many of the places he was to make famous in his *Surs* about Sasui e.g. *Wankar* and *Lahut*, also Jhalwan, a mountainous region in Baluchistan. Returning via Tatta and places in Lar he reached Kutch and Bhuj. The 1819 earthquake which completely separated Kutch from Sind, by the influx of an inland sea, was yet to come, and a man could go from Sind to Kutch most easily. In Kutch Shah made his pilgrimage to Lakhpat, Narainsar, and Kotesar.

From Kutch, Shah proceeded to Saurashtra, or Kathiawar, and visited places of pilgrimage such as Dwarka and Porebunder and the famed city of Junagadh and the fort of Girnar about which he sang in *Sur Sorath*. He went to Khambat or Cambáy as well. On return, he made his way into Thar, saw Malir, ever consecrated to Marui, and also places connected with the

heroine, Mumal. Shah seems to have got beneath the skin of the Tharis so completely that he has adopted the Thari speech. He has rendered, as a born Thari, the customs, costumes, dwellings, cactuses, wonderful trees, deep wells and sands of Thar in his verse, and described Thar when blessed by rain-drops. He saw Jaisalmer and Ladhoro or Ladano above the river Kak, of Mumal-Rano fame. Shah went so far as Barmer. He saw Puran, the old bed of the River Sindhu as well.

Shah spent some time in Upper Sind in Sahiti cities like Naushahro, in Darazan near Khairpur, where he met the child Sachal, the greatest of his successors. Shah saw Upper Sind and Bahawalpur when he went as far as Multan to bring stones to decorate the tomb of his great-grandfather. Central Sind he knew from his birth. As for Lower Sind, he seems to be familiar with it as many of his friends and disciples lived there and he had to visit them periodically. It must not be forgotten that the pronunciation and spelling of Shah's poems is of Lar or or Lower Sind, and that his most piognant memory was that of Martyr-Sufi, Shah Inayat, of Jhok.

There was one pilgrimage on which his heart was set, but death overtook him in 1752 before he could fulfil his wish. That was a pilgrimage to Kerbela in Iraq, the scene of the tragedy of Imam Husain and his devoted companions. The story of Kerbela is such as to move any heart, and a poet and mystic like Shah was eager to set his eyes on Kerbala. It is a disputable point whether *Sur Kedaro*, wherein the tragedy of Kerbala is celebrated in song, is the work of Shah Latif, but whether the verses are his own or those of other poets there is no doubt that the Kedaro verses have got so intermingled with the poetry of Shah as to be indistinguishable from it, and they reveal his magic touch in many places. The devotion of Shah Latif to Kerbala has led many to ask the question whether he was a Shia, but it is not necessary to answer that query.

The travels of Shah gave him an intimate idea of almost every inch of ground celebrated in Sindhi legend and folklore, particularly about Thar, which desert region would have remained otherwise *terra incognita* in Sindhi literature if he had not opened it for the gaze and affectionate inspection of the Sindhis. In the course of his travels, Shah had, of course, to encounter many perils to his life and limbs, but he came out unscathed from these ordeals. He came in contact with all sorts of

persons—and stories are related of these encounters. The most famous of these encounters was his meeting with a solitary hermit who was chanting frantically to himself one line, in a dense forest, between Hinglaj and Tatta :

Alone alone, wending towards Punhoon

He did not know the other two lines to complete the verse. And when Shah supplied the missing line :

The hills are tough, but they are a boon

the hermit asked for the third and final line and Shah recited it as well :

Gather your aches to reach Him soon.

And as soon-as the desolate lover got the complete verse, he fell down and gave up the ghost ! The Shah had to dig the grave and bury the lover, but he could never forget the yearning and all-consuming love of the deceased for the object of his devotion.

Even if Shah did not go to school, he had his education by circumambulating the sacred precincts of Greater Sind. All the roughnesses, irregularities and oddities he may have derived by growing up in the company of fanatic Syeds and Fakirs were rounded off and polished by his initiation into Yoga, Bhakti, and Vedant, the traditional philosophy and all-embracing religion or mysticism which India had treasured for thousands of years. It is problematic whether Shah would have risen to full stature as the poet of Sind and a true mystic, if he had not travelled over the whole of Greater Sind and spent at least three precious years in the company of Hindu Sanyasis and Jogis and dressed, lived, worshipped like them and became one of them. The Surs *Ramkali* and *Khahori* bear eloquent testimony to the *Sindhiyat* (and *Indian*) character of his poetry and thought.

Now to turn to Shah's Love and Marriage, let us remember what the Persian poet, Jami, says in a celebrated passage :

'T were better we in love should still remain :
Without this converse we are all in vain....
The heart's no heart that is without love's pain.
Without it bodies' moistened clay remain
Towards passions' pain thy face turn upon the earth ;
The world of passion is a world of mirth.

Of love's sweet pain may never heart be free,
On earth without Love may man never be....
Be passion's captive, that thou mayst be free,
Lay on thy breast its burden, glad to be.
Love's wine with warmth and ardency will bless,
All else brings melancholy, selfishness....
Though in the world thou may things essay
Love only takes thee from thyself away.
Turn not thy face from love, though it be feigned,
Access to God's truth through it may be gained

The last two lines are the most significant, but they have not been well translated. The correct translation of the Persian verses of Jami is :

Turn not thy face from Love, though it be *Carnal*
For it will pave the way to Truth *Eternal*.

The sense of what Jami urges is however quite clear. What is stated by Jami is illustrated in the Love-life of Shah Abdul Latif. Physical or Carnal passion or love is the first step towards Divine Love, because this passion makes a man forget his own entity, and completely absorbs him in an all-consuming yearning for union with the Beloved. This is a bridge that leads to the shore of Union with God. Woe to him who stops short at the bridge of physical possession and enjoyment, and plunges only into the sad satiety of physical meeting and union. Ultimately the lover has to shift his devotion from a frail body to the Eternal who has no body, no form, and annihilate his separate being to become one with the Being of all Beings. This is what the Sufi or the Mystic aims at in his progress from Body to the Spirit, from Passion to Perfection, from Individuality to Annihilation (of Self). And Shah Latif soared from carnal love to the sublime height of spiritual or Divine Love. And equally noteworthy is the point that Shah was no voluptuary who turned to God when he had become blase or weaned and disillusioned from love. He was a man of a single Love, and a single experience of connubial bliss. After a fairly early experience of physical love in his life he settled down to the enjoyment of Spiritual Love and enjoyment. He was fortunate and blessed in love. It was at the age of twenty, that is before he set out on travels, that he was enmeshed in the folds of love. As a matter of fact, it was partly to be away from the scene of what looked like hopeless passion that Shah left Kotri where his childhood was spent

The top grandee of Kotri Mogul was Mirza Mogul Beg, a scion of the House of Arghuns who ruled over Sind a century before Shah was born. The Arghuns, like other Muslim aristocratic families of India, and Central Asia, were strict observers of *Purdah* and did not allow any female member of their family, above the age of seven or eight, to be seen by a stranger. And they were also very proud in their ways. The only persons to whom they showed some consideration were the Syeds, descendants of the Prophet of Islam, and spiritual guides of the laity. Mirza Mogul Beg occasionally repaired to Shah's father to obtain charms and amulets from him, or to ask him to offer prayers for him and his family in times of difficulty and danger. Once it so happend that the adolescent daughter of the Mirza fell somewhat seriously ill, and the worried father went to Shah Habib, Shah Latif's father, to invite him to his house to offer prayers and prepare a charm for averting danger to his daughter. Shah Habib was unwell, so he asked Shah Latif to go instead with the Mirza. When Shah reached the house of the Arghun grandee, he was led to the cot of the invalid who lay thoroughly huddled up in a heap of clothes. And Shah fell in 'love at first sight' with one whose face he could not see well, covered as it was by a muslim veil. He was only able to lift her hand and cross his fingers with her little finger. To console the anxious parent he offered the usual prayer and retaining her little finger in his grasp he exclaimed :

No harm, no danger, dare attend
One whose little finger lies in Syed's hand.

The Mirza was incensed at what he took to be the insult implied in this exclamation, and with great difficulty controlled himself from dealing a death-blow to the youth who dared to hint of espousal with his daughter. But thereafter he became hostile to the Syeds of his village and pursued them with hatred and rancour until they had to quit Kotri and build their *Haveli* or family residence at a considerable distance from the place where Mirza lived. Many years afterwards, Shah removed himself to Bhit, a desolate place at a distance of five miles.

It never occurred to Shah to take any anti-social step to meet the object of his love or to take her by stealth of force. Instead, he left his father's place at the age of 20 and set on travels to drown his sorrows and derive spiritual solace in the

the company of Hindu Jogis. Pilgrimages to the places consecrated by the touch or passage of immortal Sindhi heroines like Sasui, Marui and Mumal, only made his own woes of separation afflict him the more.

Soon after Shah returned from travels, some say, only after the lapse of three days, the death of Mirza Mogul Beg occurred under tragic circumstances. In 1711, on a day when the Mirza and his male companions were not in Kotri, some dacoits of Dal Tribe made a clean sweep of the belongings left behind in charge of the women-folk. When the Mirza returned he was all-agog with anger and he went after the dacoits. Mirza and his men had to pass through the street where Shah and his father had taken up their new abode, and seeing the plight of their old neighbours the Syeds offered their services to the Mirza to help him in running down the dacoits. Mirza spurned this offer with scorn, and went in pursuit of the Dal dacoits. In a hand-to-hand fight with the dacoits Mirza and all his men were killed. Only one male member of the Arghuns in Kotri was left to carry on the race—one minor child who was called ' Gola '. The followers of the Syeds carried the news of this catastrophe to Shah summing up the news in one word ' Bud Khabis ' or ' The rascal ceased to be '—which words yielded by the *Abjad*, or Persian numeral system, the year of the death of the Mirza (1711). Shah at once corrected them and asked them to render the date as ' Yak Mogul bih budah ', i.e. ' One good Mogul used to be ' words which yielded by the *Abjad* rule the same year Shah was too great to gloat over the demise of his foe. Some see in this incident a conclusive proof of Shah's scholastic learning.

The death of nearly all the male members of their family brought down the Mirza's women-folk to a helpless condition, and many of them thought that their sufferings were due to the wrongs done by them to the Syeds. The hand of Syeedah Begum, the adolescent girl with whom Shah Latif had been in love for four years, was offered to the despairing lover and he attained to his earthly paradise when she entered the portals of his house. This lady was known thereafter as *Taj-al-mukhdarat* or *Crown of Chaste Damsels* and she proved herself to be deserving of all the tributes that could be paid to a woman. Kalyan Advani in his ' Shah ' has applied to her the famous lines of Sa'adi, the Persian moralist ·

A woman that is good, loyal and chaste
Can make a monarch of her beggar-mate.

With this marriage Shah's life became full and sweet—but not fruitful. His travels had broadened his outlook and had done something more. The Hindu philosophy had turned his mind inwards and taken him from *Ishq Majazi*, Physical or carnal Love, to the path of *Ishq Haqiqi*, True or spiritual love. This is apparent from the well-known anecdote about Shah's behaviour when his wife became *enceinte*. In that 'interesting' condition women acquire strange and not-so-strange cravings. The wife of Shah felt a craving to eat the pala fish, and a follower of Shah took a distant journey to bring a *pala* for his master's spouse. While the man was returning with the dainty present Shah found him panting and foot-weary. On being told that he had been away to satisfy a demand of his wife the Shah exclaimed, 'What use is it to have a child if it can cause agony to my *Fakirs* even before it is born?' It is said that the lady had soon an abortion and never conceived again. Shah never felt the need of offspring of his own. His *Fakirs* were the progeny he delighted in.

Shah was not a domesticated or family man. It has been said that he was rarely to be seen in the interior of women's rooms in his house, but that he was always in his *otak* or men's parlour, in the company of his beloved Fakirs. From the early years of his life he was accustomed to seeing his father and other Syeds surrounded by a large concourse of associates and disciples who had flocked for spiritual guidance. Shah passed his life in the company of admiring *Fakirs* and disciples who gave a signal proof of devotion to him by fetching bricks and doing odd jobs in the construction of the main edifice and the environing shanties, while Shah was a-building Bhit. And this devotion continued until his death in 1752, and even afterwards.

Every Friday, even now, the *Fakirs* wake all at night and chant Shah's soul-arousing lyrics at his tomb in Bhit. Dayaram Gidumal kept such a wake or vigil in the eighties of the last century and described it as under: 'The deepest silence occasionally broken by a hearty "Allahee" prevailed in the wide courtyard where I kept my memorable vigil with more than a hundred men, women and children'[4].

Nobody has said anything about Shah Abdul Latif or his father doing anything manual to earn their livelihood. His

father's reputation as a holy man and his own fame as a poet and sage brought the family enough offerings from disciples to maintain their simple existence. Shah Abdul Latif had enough for his needs, but no more.

In his first encounter with the Begs it was patent that he could not vie with them in status and position in the village , they were grandees, he was a commoner, albeit invested with much respect as a Syed, a lineal descendant of the Prophet. The Kalhora rulers, though inimical at first, afterwards regarded him with respect as a philosopher and holy man. They were specially impressed with his moral virtues when they found that he spurned all wordly temptations. Not only did he live a chaste life as a married man, but he rejected alchohol as well as tobacco and would not encourage men to take snuff while in his company. For his age he was an extremely abstemious person.

For all his humility Shah was an exceedingly commanding personality. His tall handsome exterior impressed even those who did not know him. He gave many proofs of his manliness and bravery especially when he tamed and rode an unruly horse which the Kalhora Prince deliberately gave him to ride hoping that it would overthrow and kill the rider.

But though he was never boisterous and convival he was sociable to an extraordinary degree. *He loved solitude and society at the same time.* All the time he could get he would like to slink away and be a silent watcher in the desert or by the river brink and commune with Nature and his God. Sights and scenes which others failed to notice engaged his attention. Once he saw some goats, very thirsty, making their headlong run to a waterhole. They had their fill and when their thirst was slaked they fouled the water hole with their droppings and ran away without another look at the water. This scene immediately led to a fine poetical outburst : 'May I ever seek and wander and never meet the Beloved '.

Once he was sitting, solitary, on a banyan tree, counting the beads of his rosary and remembering God's names. Two women came and rested under the tree. One of them asked her companion : 'How many times have you met your dear one ?' The other replied : 'How can one keep an account of it ? ' Shah learnt the lesson of his life and stopped counting the beads of his rosary and flung the rosary aside.

His favourite posture of solitary communion with God as already described was putting his head between two knees and

going into a trance. It is this posture which is painted in the pictures that have been drawn about him from men's imagination. Another stance which was common was falling into ecstasy while music, vocal and instrumental filled the air. It was purely Indian music, and the *Ragas* and *Raginis* were Indian. It was no exotic music which enthralled him. There was nothing erotic in the dance-music he encouraged. Appropriately enough, he breathed his last at the age of 64 in 1752 while listening rapturously to such music or *Samaa* as it was called.

Shah, as already remarked, was as fond of solitude as of society. He had a large concourse of friends and associates some of whom were well-known all over Sind. Din Md. Wafai, in his *Lut-al-Latif* has a whole chapter devoted to a recital of the contacts Shah had with these personages. The first and most important of those friends and associates was of course Shah Inayat, the sage of Jhok and best-known of Sindhi Sufis, whose martyrdom has been commemorated in *Sur Ramkali*.

Other prominent associates were Khwaja Md. Zaman Lawari, Fakir Sahib of Darazan, Syed Md. ancestor of Rashdi Pirs, Makhdum Abdul Rahim Grohri and ' Hindu Bhagat Madan. There are many authenticated and spurious anecdotes about his meetings with and colloquies with these Fakirs, but the most famous of these relates to his second visit to Darazan when he met Sachal, grandson of Mian Sahibdino, who was only five years old at that time and was destined to be next only to Shah Latiff in eminence as a poet. Shah Latif at once recognised the surpassing greatness of the boy and said that he was going to take the lid off the kettle (of poetry) he had himself set to boil. Thus Shah proclaimed Sachal as his spiritual successor and his prophecy came to pass. As a Muslim writer has said, what Shah described in tales and figurative language was made plain and effective by Sachal in open forceful language.

Madan, a Hindu Bhagat, was very dear to Shah, and they had frequent discussions on matters of mystic import. It is said that Madan once went to a lonely spot and was frightened by the vociferous croakings and cries of frogs. Madan ran to Shah to tell of his freight. Shah commended his attitude of fright and said that that was the fit attitude to assume towards God. He said : ' Give Him all you can and still be

always in state of freight and terror. Never be arrogant that you are giving something, our friend is really terrible

In Bhit, Shah continually enjoyed the company of his two Indian musicians Atal and Chanchal and agreeable associates like Bilal, Inayat and Wagand, and his two amanuenses, Tamar and Hashim. These companies were devoted to him, and it is said that when in a fit of exasperation and frustration he flung his *Risalo* in the Kirar Lake, Tamar and his colleague retrieved the loss by transcribing the *Risalo* from memory. An original manuscript of Shah's *Risalo* is still treasured by the descendants of Tamar.

Shah was really a great patriot ; one has only to read the *Sur Marui* to know what love Shah bore to the land of his birth. Modern readers go so far as to call him a nationalist and democrat, and see in his poetry a sympathy for the common man far in advance of his age. Shah loved the toiling masses of Sind—the potters, the blacksmiths, the poor peasants, the weavers and fishermen. He had no feudal notions and no affinity with the robber barons and bigoted priests of his time. He watched with delight the birds and the beasts about him and drew several morals from their habits. He re-created in his verse the Sind he loved and uttered the famous benediction on Sind and all humanity :

O Lord ! may Sind be ever prosperous and fertile....
May all humanity be of cheer !

The Desert and the River that are Sind are immortalised for ever by this poet of Sind. Shah immortalised the simple Sindhi heroines and a few heroes (e. g. Abro) in his verse, and gave shining permanence to Sindhi folklore and legends. No other Sindhi poet has done a tithe of his work in enshrining Sind, its birds and beasts, its flowers and grasses, its artisans and poor toilers, its rustics and fishermen, and, above all, the Sindhi women, in literature.

Shah became a classic in his own lifetime, and ever afterwards, his pre-eminence as the greatest of Sindhi poets has remained un-challenged. Other Sindhi poets have provoked controversies, Shah has evoked only reverential comments. All sections of Sindhis, Muslims and Hindus alike, treasure his *Risalo* as their most precious literary treasure, and even in India, that is Bharat, Shah Abdul Latif rules the hearts of Sindhis.

Chapter VII

THE RISALO OF SHAH

The *Risalo* of Shah Abdul Latif, or his Poetical Works, is the greatest and most valued book in Sindhi literature, and is regarded by the Sindhis as their one cultural and spiritual treasure which they would not like to give up.

The *Risalo* remained a sealed book to the non-Sindhis until Dr. Sorley translated into English some pieces culled under the title of *Muntakhab* by a Sindhi Kazi. Two or three Sindhis had earlier tried their hand at a translation of a few pieces but with indifferent success. The most satisfying translation of the *Risalo* was made in Urdu, a few years ago, by the greatest of living Sindhi poets, Ayaz, and millions of Indians as well as Pakistanis who do not know Sindhi can now have a taste of Shah's poetic genius by reading the translation of Ayaz.

Sindhi poets of the twentieth century, whether ' reactionary ' or ' progressive ', have been unanimous in disclaiming for themselves or for any other Sindhi poet any comparison or equality with Shah, and have sung and spoken of Shah with a reverence bordering on idolatry.

The *Risalo* of Shah is thus unique in Sindhi literature and it is meet that it should have a separate chapter devoted to it in a *History of Sindhi Literature*. A good account of the *Risalo* will be found in the book on Shah by Dr. Sorley. That account, however, is coloured by the author's assumption that Shah was a poet of Islam. If he had, instead, stopped at calling him a Muslim poet there could be no objection. He is constrained to admit on page 220 : ' While the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif is typically Muslim in sentiment and expression the musical foundation owes little to Islam.... The rags and ragins constitute a form of Hindustani music pure and simple.'[1] Later on, he states that ' there is no distinctively Sindhi school of music. The music of Sind is a part of the musical heritage of Hindustan ' and ' Most of the musicians in Sind have been Hindus and not Mussalmans ', and he attributes the love of Sindhi Hindus for the poetry of Shah to this fact ! He reiterates it that while the thought of Shah may be Islamic, the musical forms in which the poems are sung are part of the

Hindu heritage of India.

To take first the *form* of Shah's verse : 'it is either the traditional Indian *dohra-beyt* and its extensions, or the Sindhi *wai* which is an exalted wail peculiar to the Sindhi genius. Shah does not have anything to do with Persian-Arabic prosody or the forms of verse used in Arabic-Persian poetry which the Sindhi poets adopted wholesale after the British conquest of Sind. The reader of the *Risalo* looks in vain in the *Risalo* for any *Ghazal* or *Masnavi* or *Rubayi* or *Mussadas* or *Mustazad* or even for a simple *qita*.' The *Risalo* has a freedom of verse movement and nobody has succeeded in confining the verses in an artificial mould of prosody. All attempts are on the side of applying the Indian prosodic measures which were current in the Bhakti verse-compositions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in kindred Indian languages, like the Panjabi and the Hindi.

As for the *contents* there are thirty *Surs* or Cantos in the *Risalo*, including *Sur Kedaro* whose authorship is disputed, and their nomenclature is not on a uniform model. Some of the *Surs* like *Kalyan*, *Yaman Kalyan*, *Asa*, *Sarang*, and *Ramkali* bear the names of Hindustani rags and *raginis* and are to be sung to that particular music, some *Surs* bear the names of the heroines whose stories they relate e.g. *Suhini*, *Lila Chanesar*, *Marui* and *Sasui*. Some *Surs* bear equivocal names and the name of the musical composition is the same as that of a heroine or a place e.g. *Khambat* and *Sorath*, while there are other *Surs* which have reference to the places where they were composed or to the subject-matter e.g. *Dahar* (sand-regions), *Karail* (a bird with rich plumage), *Khahori* (seekers after God), *Rip* (catastrophe), and *Kapaiti* (spinner). There is only one *Sur* whose name suggests an Islamic dirge, namely *Husaini*, which gives expression to the woes and wails of the Sindhi heroine, Sasui, and in one place specifically refers to the wail of Bibi Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, for the death of her darling son, Husain, on Kerbela battlefield.

A brief glance at the contents of the thirty *Surs* will show that the thought and sentiments in the various *Surs* are sufistic and aim at God-realisation which, in the last instance, is the same as self-realisation. The yearning of the individual to be mystically united to and incorporated in the source of all being forms the theme of all the *Surs*, and Sufism is the predominant philosophy. Love that is physical and carnal (*Majazi*) is the

step towards love that is spiritual and transcendental (*Haqiqi*). Of course, there are variations on the theme and there are descriptions of the moonlight, the beneficent showers of rain, the various trades of artisans, the sea-voyagers, fights on the battlefields....but all these lead to the same conclusion : the union of man with God. The essential need is to be a lover and seeker, to resolve all separateness and egoism, and to lose oneself in the Beloved, the only Existence. In the course of this insistence to give up one's separate entity, various images and pictures are poetically presented : the acceptance of .wine from the vintner at the cost of one's head, death-plunge into the river, martyrdom on the battlefield, travail over mountains and wildernesses, captivity in a prison, hard penances and vigils, ride on the camel in the moonlight, sight of crows, cranes and swans, and of monster-whales. Almost everywhere there is an exhortation to live a life of purity and humility, self-abnegation and self-effacement. The emphasis is on surrender to the will of God and renunciation of wordly desires and temptations. Shah is rarely directly didactic. All the morals flow artlessly from the poignant sorrows of some damsel or the account of the search for the Beloved. There is a fusion of the ecstatic quest of a God-intoxicated soul, and the hard realities of life. Below is a brief description of the contents of each *Sur*. (The edition relied upon is the one-volume edition by Prof. Kalyan Advani).

Sur Kalyan. This *Sur* opens with a praise of the Lord and the Prophet and stresses the unity of Godhead and absence of everything else. All else that seems to exist simply appears to do so. (This belief is the same as the primary belief of the Vedantist : the world is a myth, an illusion. Only the Brahm exists). Shah says : Call Him neither the Lover nor the Beloved ! Call him neither creator, -nor the created. The echo and the voice are the same. Look for Unity in Multiplicity. The lover who wants to attain to the ecstasy of love must prepare to give up his life most cheerfully for a ship of the wine of the vintner. For the seeker the true rest is to be found on the scaffold, true realisation only in Death. He seeks you whom you are seeking: your true comfort is only He who is now causing you agony. He is your only remedy, only balm, only healer.

Sur Yaman Kalyan opens with the rapturous cry : ' You are the Healer, the Friend, the remedy for my ills,' and expatiates on the theme : ' I want no medicine, I want the agony of Love. Perchance my Physician will visit me.' The poet exalts the

moths who voluntarily burn themselves in the flame, and those who bow their head beneath the sharp axe. He desires to be the iron which the blacksmith heats and inserts into fire. The cup of poison handed to the Seeker really confers eternal life. Reverent mention is made of the Master of Sufis, Jalal-ud-din Rumi, who stressed that God is the source of all beauty which everybody is seeking, and which is to be realised only after removing the veil of separateness. The poet discards all book-learning, all fasts, all vigils, and urges a striving after God-vision. If the Archer shoots His arrow offer yourself as the target, he who cares for his life or reputation need not tread the path of love.

Sur Khambat : Two pictures are delineated in this *Sur*. One is that of the resplendent full moon whose beauty and lustre pale before the effulgence of the beauty of the Beloved. But the moon can brighten the courtyard of the Beloved, be a help in the journey at night to the terrain of the Beloved, and carry a silent message to Him. The other picture is that of the camel, stupid camel, that like man's mind prefers the acacia tree to spicy fragrant wood, but which, wisely controlled and guided, can take one to the gardens of paradise where a leaf of a tree would be worth millions. He who has ridden on a camel in the vastnesses of Sind in a moonlit night can appreciate the beauty of this *Sur*.

Sur Sri Rag: This *Sur* draws a moral from the life of boatmen and their boats, and speaks of their preparing to go on a voyage: The poet asks the boatman, i.e. the Seeker, to keep his oars, sails and the boat, shining and spotless, if he has to wade through this world and reach his destination. If the seeker does not observe purity and piety he will not reach God. Blessed is he who wakes up the whole night and remembers the Lord; his corpse even will be respected. The boatman is to trade in truth and precious wares, not in coarse and gross substances. If the boatman has to escape the pirates, especially the Feringi (European) sea-robbers, he must always be on the watch i.e. the seeker on the path must always beware of temptations and wordly wiles. There is also a comparison between mere crystal or stone, and precious jewels, and the poet bewails it that those who could distinguish the jewels from spurious stones are vanishing fast. The sum and substance of this *Sur* is that in his quest for God man has to be ever wakeful, ever watchful, and discriminating between the real and the spurious substance. The poet utilises the imagery of a boat and the jeweller's craft.

Sur Samundi is the next *Sur,* and, as its name implies, it

deals with *Sumund* or the sea. With the commencement of the north wind the sea-voyagers are making preparations to take to the sea and sail to distant Lanka (Ceylon). The wives of these voyagers are filled with anguish with the dread of separation from their lovers and husbands, and this will be their state of mind until the menfolk come safely back. The crow, the traditional messenger, is repeatedly beseeched to bring the tidings of the approach of the voyages. The poor women have no fare to pay the master mariner to take them to Lanka. They have to wait and wail until the men and their craft come back to the landing place. The spiritual significance of these women's anguish and their lack of fare-money is clear enough.

Sur Suhini : This beautiful *Sur* deals with the story of Suhini, the married girl, who fell in love with the buffalo-keeper Mehar or Sahar, when he offered her a drink of milk. Every night she crept to the brink of the river and floated to the other side on a jar to pass the night with Mehar. She would not mind the rush of the waters or the sharks and whales in the water, or wind, or weather. She did not notice that in place of the baked clay, on which she used to float to the other side of the river, her enemy had substituted a jar of unbaked clay which, as soon as placed in water, dissolved, and let her sink to the bottom. She screamed for her Mehar as she was going down, but he reached her too late. Through her death she became one with her lover, while her corpse was devoured by sea-monsters. The sea which played a part in this catastrophe was the third trinity (Sea, Suhini and Sahar) which was turned into eternal Unity in a mystical manner.

This *Sur* has a wonderful appeal. There is a fine description of the raging waters, the monsters of the deep, winds and waves, and of all-absorbing love in the heart of Suhini which blinded her and made her oblivious to worldly shame and mundane considerations. Stress is laid upon the *jar* which was the barrier that kept her from eternal union with Mehar ; its breaking was the best thing that could ever happen. The poet introduces a notion favourite with him, namely that Suhini was pledged to her lover even before the creation came into being, and that she had to face any ordeal to be united to the source of her being, and to give up all support, all solace, all separateness, to attain to that end. She was very different from other women-lovers who stood on the brink of the

water, weighing and considering all things, and when they would enter water would think they were making a sacrifice. 'Sahar belongs only to those who can enter the water with a smile.' The *Sur* contains an explicit sufistic exhortation : 'Learn diligently the lesson of *Shariyat* (orthodox observation of religion), go down the swift current of *Tariqat* (the liberal way), then be alive to the perception of *Haqiqat* (Reality). Last of all, to the true lovers will come what they have amply deserved, *Maarfat* (God-realisation).'

Sur Sasui Abri : This *Sur,* perhaps the most important Sur in the *Risalo,* along with four other sister *Surs, Mazoori, Desi, Kohiyari* and *Husaini* deals with the woeful story of Sasui, the most famous of Sindhi heroines. Sasui wandered over deserts and dales, hills and sand-dunes, in search of her husband, Punhoon, whom his brothers from Makran carried away, drugged and unconscious from her bedside on camel back, while she remained insensible in sleep. Punhoon, at last, escaped from Makran and came to Sind, but, like Romeo and Juliet the lovers got united only in an untimely grave. Punhoon, Prince of Kech Makran, had won the affections and the hand of Sasui, the adopted daughter of a Muslim washerman of Bhambhor, in Sind, only after consenting to ply the craft of a washerman and live with Sasui as her husband, but it was not to be. His life and fate have the warning : 'Never enter into matrimonial relations with aliens, for they will sooner or later leave you alone and forsaken, and wend to their native place. And after their departure your place (Bhambhor) will have no reason to be.'

The woes and wanderings of Sasui have been pathetically described, how she went over hideous dirty mountains and deserts, footsore, weary, thirsty, arms outstretched wide, enquiring of everyone whom she could contact: 'Did you see my Punhoon?' The poet imagines that when the Angel of Death came to beckon her she thought that Punhoon had sent a messenger to her.

In this distress her self-reproaches only added to her anguish. Why did she allow sleep to lock her into such a deep slumber that she did not wake up while her Punhoon was being taken away by his brothers? She upbraided the camels for being so silent on that occasion, and so vociferous otherwise. She upbra ded the cruel brothers of Punhoon for the outrage... Presently it dawned upon her that it was no use upbraiding or

blaming anyone. It was fate, 'the Day' as she called it, which was against her. What was to be had to be. Now no more return to Bhambhor ; she must make her way to Kech Makran. Why did she get entangled with a cruel heartless alien ? (She finds everlasting rest and un on with Punhoon the grave in which she jumped, to escape defilement).

Finally, the realisation came to her that she was talking nonsense. Punhoon was near her, inside her heart, nay Punhoon was herself. In that identification all differences were resolved, separateness had turned into union. In the *Surs* dealing with Sasui occur the most pithy, poignant, and pathetic verses in Shah. Almost all Sindhis are conversant with these verses and frequently repeat them on suitable occasions.

In *Sur Abri* occur the lines: 'Insects that float on water are unable to slake their thirst, stupid as they are. The Beloved is nearer than one's own breath, and there is frantic search for him !' The poet pointedly observes in this *Sur* that knowledge has no value at all unless a vision of the Beloved is obtained. This *Sur* relates, as has been already observed, how Izrael, the angel of Death, awoke Sasui in her grave and she took him for a messenger from Punhoon. The most famous lines in the *Risalo* occur in this *Sur* in which Sasui states that as long as she felt that she was Sasui i.e. other than Punhoon, she felt anguish, but when she got identified with Punhoon there was no mountain to cross, no Kech to explore. This *Sur* defines *Ruh-Rihan* or soul-communion as losing one's separate identity and merging into the Beloved. This *Sur* emphasises the need of a murshid or Preceptor to guide the Seeker.

In *Sur Mazoori* the stress is on renunciation and the difficult path to traverse before Haro or Punhoon's place can be reached. The lover must die, before Death comes, in order to be with the Beloved. The utmost exertion, the utmost sacrifice are needed for attainment to the Beloved. As the name of this *Sur* denotes (Mazoori means feebleness or helplessness) it describes the helpless, pitiable condition of Sasui in quest of Punhoon.

Sur Desi (Native) is so called because it emphasises that connections should only be with fellow-natives and not aliens, who will, of course, pack up their tents and desert Bhambhor. Those three *d*'s are alternately reviled and exalted which caused the separation of Sasui and Punhoon—*Daghs* (camels), *Der* (husband's brothers), and *Doongar* (mountains).

Sur Kohiyari (mountain) further expatiates on the sufferings the

mountains inflicted on Sasui in her wanderings, and blames Sasui for all the ills which could have been avoided if deep slumber had not overtaken her. But, on the other hand, the pangs of love, in Sasui, are so powerful that they can burn up all mountains.

Sur Husaini is a kind of dirge or a wail on the woes and *martyrdom* of Sasui, recalling in her thirst and death agony the martyrdom of Husain, the grandson of the Prophet.

Sur Lila Chanesar is a song of the repentance of Lila. She was so tempted by the dazzle of the nine-lakh jewelled necklace of Kounroo (who was madly in love with her husband, Chahesar or Dasro), that she consented to let Kounroo pass one night in her bed with Chanesar, in exchange for that necklace. As a result, Chanesar cast her off for ever, and she had to shed perennial tears of repentance and humble herself in a debased manner.

Whether Lila got back her husband or not it is of no account. Shah illustrates from this story that God is a very jealous God and will not have you if you barter Him away, even for an instant, tempted by pelf. Lila's continual lament is : "Let the ornaments burn to cinders, the necklace turn to dust. I want my husband at any cost, be it the veriest self-abasement.' She remembers with anguish how she had wanted to play her own game, to have the necklace and her husband too, so to say to eat her cake and have it too, and how the game turned in favour of Kounroo who must now ever gloat upon her. Lila realises too late that it is no use being sophisticated. 'O God! May I never become wise, or clever. Those that are wise and sophisticated, suffer. The Beloved was pleased with me so long as I was unsophisticated.' But the poet says it was good for Lila to suffer the pangs of separation, and realise the Truth. As long as she had her husband she was full of self, when she was separated from him she gave up self and did that which could bring him round. The difference between her splendid condition as the spouse of Chanesar and her squalid state when cast off by him is well portrayed by the poet. This *Sur* does not deal with Nature or external descriptions.

Sur Mumal Rano : This Sur is full of fine description of Beauty, and the vigil and anguish of Mumal. Rano (Mendhro or Sodho) and his three companions meet a *Kapri* or recluse who is shedding tears as he speaks of the lovely Mumal and her magic palace of Kak. The love for Mumal has invested him with a special glow and lustre. He so intrigues Rano with the description of the beauty of Mumal, whose eyes are like

glistening diamonds and like pincers to grapple men's hearts, that Rano and his friends make a bee-line for Kak. In that maze of a palace Rano wins by a ruse the love of the hitherto invincible Mumal. For a time Mumal enjoys ecstatic happiness with Rano until a trick is played upon her by her sister, Sumal. Sumal dons male garb and gets into bed with her. Rano arrives suddenly at the scene and thinks Mumal to be unfaithful to him and quits her for ever. Too late, Mumal realises what has happened and she gets distracted and employs all means possible to bring back Rano for whom she constantly waits and watches. Her vigil and wail form the best part of the *Sur*. She finds peace only when she realises that Kak and the camel mounts, gardens and palaces, messengers and maids are of no account whatsoever. Like Sasui she gets over separateness and feels Mendhro or Rano in the inmost recesses of her being, i.e. becomes Mendhro herself. Then she is at peace. The agony of separation had purified her.

Three things are of note in this *Sur*. First, the rapturous account of the beauty of Mumal and her companions, and their apparel : ' like rose flowers were their dresses, their hair always reeked of *Chameli* fragrance, they played with silver and gold.' The second and the most important is the account of the night-vigil of Mumal : ' All night long I lit the lamp for you until the dawn broke. Come back, O Mendhra, for the sake of God.' The third is the lesson that the slightest misunderstanding with the Beloved is the greatest of all possible disasters and must be avoided at all costs.

Sur Marui is perhaps the most popular of the *Surs*. Its special appeal is to those who have nostalgic memories of Sind, and to those who are democratically minded, and patriotic in their outlook. A simple countrywoman, Marui, bred in poverty and in thatched cottages amidst people living, on the brink of starvation, and on grasses and roots, rejects the offers of Prince Umar who wants to set her up in a palace. She keeps always looking in the distant horizon for the track that leads to Malir from which she has been kidnapped, and where her beloved Marus live. When the rains come she remembers with exultation as well as frustration how her native desert region of Thar must have bloomed and blossomed. She prefers her condition of poverty to all the temptations of high living offered to her ; she must keep faith with her fiance (or

bridegroom) to whom she was contracted, she thinks, even while the souls of human beings were created. She asks again and again why her people have not remembered to send a message to her. When her steadfast devotion to her land and her people softens the heart of her captor, and a messenger is admitted from her own place, in her presence, she welcomes him effusively and tears fall from her eyes as if she was irrigating the Thar Desert with those drops of water. She had expected to give up her last breath in captivity in Umar's palace at Amarkot and had beseeched him, as if making her last will and testament, that her corpse should be taken to her beloved Malir. That would be enough satisfaction for her ; if not in life, at least in death, she should feel the contact of her beloved country. Marui is an incarnation of chasity and patriotism.

She is a heroine at all points. Not a word of malediction escapes from her mouth against either her kidnapper, or the disappointed suitor for her hand who had instigated Umar to do that act of voilence. She calls upon Umar, as her brother, to protect her honour and send her back to Malir. And that is what Umar does in the end. (It is said that he comes to know that Marui is his foster-sister, both having sucked milk at the same breast).

Pictures have been painted of Marui's looking out from the terraces and balustrades of Umar's palace, in a bedraggled but erect state, eyes fixed on the distant horizon to Malir, pouring her heart out in lyrics of longing, faith and devotion. She asks why no messenger has reached her from her people whether on foot or on camel-back. Why has everybody forgotton her ? To Umar, who continually pesters her, she plainly says that the coarse cloth her people have dowered her with is dearer to her than all the silk and brocade he can offer her. She cannot sleep in a soft bed while her groom is stretched in the open in bitter cold. The acacia trees and wild roots of her native desert are sweeter to her than the palace dainties. Marus do not exchange their in-laws for mere gold or luxury. She feels for her Marus who must be fasting and fretting at losing her. Marui feels the disgrace to which Umar has put her, and beseeches him not even to suggest that she can be untrue to her land or her people. If she cannot go to Malir while alive let him do her the favour of her corpse being conveyed to Malir when she dies ; her spirit will be satisfied. Marui recalls with nostalgia the various household chores she did in

Malir, and that remembrance cheers her up a little. She welcomes the rains as she recalls how her desert Thar must be looking fresh and beautiful after the rains. Even in her worst moods the voice of Hope keeps her up : 'There is God who will listen to your cries and let you go to Malir after all.'

To the modern reader this *Sur* gives the essence of *patriotism* even more than a picture of chastity and devotion, and exalts the life of simple poor folk above the pampered life of princes and feudal lords. To the Sindhi refugees in India this *Sur* is specially dear.

Sur Kamod : This *Sur*, called after Kam or the Hindu God of Love, has this peculiarity that it breathes not a word of sorrow or suffering or separation. It treats of joyful union only. Jam Tamachi, the overlord of Keenjhar lake, falls in love with Gandri (the coarse wench), a fisher-girl, and makes her his bride, exempting the fisher folk from paying any taxes at all. Gandri (afterwards called Nuri or Of Light) attains to the position of the consort of Jam by her lowliness and humility. She maintains her pre-eminence among the wives of the Jam solely through her humility. 'Neither pride nor egoism had any place in the mind of the fisher-girl, she captivated the Prince with her downcast eyes, the sole blandishment in her repertory.' The moral is that God or the Beloved will be pleased only with one who has cast out egoism and pride.

A fine description is given of Lake Keenjhar and its lowly fishermen and fisherwomen with their ugly features and malodorous baskets.

Sur Ghato deals with the story of Moriro, the sailor, who avenged the death of his six brothers, (victims of a whale infesting the environs of a whirlpool at Kalachi) by killing the monster. He is a type of the Seeker who kills the dreadful monster of one's evil self. Ghato means a hunter.

Sur Sorath : This is a very popular *Sur*, almost as popular as *Sur Marui*. It tells a story with a clear beginning and end, and this *Sur* is eminently suited for children's classes.

The story begins with the journey of Bijal, the minstrel, to Rai Dyach's place (Junagadh), with a prayer that he should succeed in bringing back the head of the king (to satisfy his own king Anairai's lust for revenge). Bijal reaches Junagadh and all people gather to listen to his music. Rai Dyach too sends for him within his fort, and is entranced with his music He offers to give to Bijal anything he wants. Bijal rejects all

wordly possessions and wants the king to cut off his head and give it to him. Those about the king, specially Sorath, his bride, entreat Bijal to ask for some other boon, but Bijal sticks to his demand. Rai Dyach is so charmed by the music of Bijal that he is ready to cut off his head, not once but many times, if it were possible, and offer it to Bijal. The Rai at last cuts off his head, and Junagadh, so to say, falls into dust. (Bijal takes the head to Anairai who banishes him from his dominions as a monster, and Bijal returns to Junagadh just when Sorath and other queens are preparing to burn themselves with the corpse of their deceased lord. He too plunges into the fire and dies).

Readers of this *Sur* find in it Shah's personal predilection for music, and think that he is speaking of himself while speaking of Rai Dyach who tells Bijal : 'I give up my head as a willing sacrifice to you. Take this to your home and hurry to Anairai to keep your promise to him. I should cheerfully cut off my head a hundred times for your music's sake.' Commentators see in Rai Dyach the seeker and Bijal the spiritual preceptor. They regard Sorath, (behind the scenes while the tragedy is being enacted) as the personification of the sensual self which is a barrier between Man and God.

Sur Kedaro from (Sanskrit *Kedar* the battlefield) pathetically describes the tragedy of Kerbela, and pays touching tributes to the gallantry, generosity and devotion of Husain, the martyr of Kerbela and grandson of the Prophet. In moving language it is described how vultures feasted to their fill on those killed on the field of Kerbala. The moral of this piece is given in the oft-quoted lines :

> 'The Friend (God) slaughters His darlings and dear ones, and metes out to them suffering in a mood of indifference and regardlessness. Some deep mystery lies therein.'

It is disputed whether Shah wrote this *Sur* but the descriptions of the battle, of martyrdoms, and the devotion to the Prophet, Ali, and their descendants, show the hand of a master.

Sur Sarang is the most delightful of *Surs* containing as it does an account of the falling of rain on the parched and grateful earth beneath. The whole creation is athirst for rain: men, beasts, birds and fish, oysters in the sea. The sole exception is the women in rickety cottages whose menfolk are not with them. They are filled with terror at the sight of the clouds and the roar of the thunder. But those women, who

have husbands and flocks, are filled with delight, for now there will be enough grass and grain, milk and butter. The close of the *Sur* is memorable. The poet takes the rain and the lightning over Constantinople, Kabul and Samarkand, over Delhi, the Deccan, Bhuj, Girnar, Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Amarkot, and his native Sind upon whom he utters the famous benediction : ' O Lord ! may Sind be ever prosperous and fertile ! O friend ! Sweet Beloved ! may all humanity be of cheer.' Earlier, there is a special mention of the lightning and rain passing reverently over the sepulchure of the Prophet (at Medina).

In *Sur Sarang* there are five similes, chief among them being the likeness of the clouds to the black tresses of the Beloved, and of red lightning to His flowing apparel.

In this *Sur* the instruction is : give up your individual existence, and through extinction of self, be at one with Reality. Those eyes are of no use, which do not see the Beloved, the first thing in the morning. The two famous lines in this *Sur* are those in which the lover entreats the Beloved to seat Himself in the eyes of the lover so that the others see Him not while the lover sees only the Beloved. The mark of a Muslim is not in the utterance of the Kalma, or the creed, but in the affirmation of God as the only Being, while the mark of the heretic is faith in more than one entity. The main lesson in *Sur Asa* is the belief in God as being the only Existence. The poet again explicitly lays down the sufistic stages : only he puts *Tariqat* first (the way, the routine), then *Shariat* (ritual), then *Haqiqat* (Reality) and last of all *Maarfat* (self-realisation).

Sur Rip means the *Sur* devoted to a dreadful event or a catastrophe. It describes the lover as always full of woe. The two famous lines in this *Sur* are those which liken the love of a true lover to a brick-kiln : he is burning with the pangs of love all the day long, but there is nothing outside to show that it is inferno within.

Sur Khahori is named after Khahori or the recluses who keep away from the trodden paths of men and take to wildernesses to commune with the inner spirit. Ganjo Takar (or Hill), where Shah had met Sanyasis, is taken in this *Sur* as the symbol of the retreat of the Seekers after Truth. He exhorts the Khahoris to keep away from the beaten track and step on ground unfamiliar to men, and be an Uwesi faqir i.e. one who needs not a murshid or preceptor. Alas ! Such Khahoris are

rarely to be met with, they seem to have packed up their tents and vanished into the inane.

Sur Barwo Sindhi : In this *Sur* the only *Sur* called Sindhi, Shah exhorts the lover to be a faithful servant of the Lord and to put up with His wayward moods : sometimes the Beloved's doors will be closed altogether, and again they will stand wide open. Sometimes there will be no admission, and then there will be cordial invitation. There is a mystery about the Beloved and His ways which need not be questioned or explored. On his part the lover must be devoted and true. Alas ! that there should be so much insincerity in this world, so much cruelty. Only the fragrance of goodness and truth will survive. Yearn not for worldly possessions, yearn for only one thing, namely the Beloved. In well-known lines we are asked to choose only one Beloved and give away the heart to that one Beloved, and not to flirt from door to door, changing loyalties and love.

Sur Ramkali is unique in the *Surs* in two respects. It deals with Hindu hermits and Seekers after God. Then, again, it is the only *Sur* in which there is a distinct reference to a contemporary event of importance, namely the martyrdom of Sufi Inayat (when Shah was thirty one years old).

Shah has met two kinds of Hindu Jogis or Yogis, namely *Nuri* (endowed with light), and *Nari* (burning with Hell fire). With the Jogis he has gone on a pilgrimage to Hinglaj and Dwarka, and listened to their soul-exalting strains which surpass those of the fabulous Bijal. These seekers after light always travel to the East. No wordly goods or pursuits can deflect them from their path. The formula for becoming a Jogi is simple : break all other connections; haunt the doors of these friends (Jogis) with body bared, and tears in your eyes ; ask a boon of this august assembly of persons who know and yet do not seem to know. Kill all your desires and be silent. Constantly assume the posture of the head between the knees with prayer in your heart. These naked jogis have captivated the Lord not because they are naked with their pure unalloyed love. Shah hints that the incantations and rituals of Jogis were established even before Islam : ' the Jogis heard a call to prayer which was anterior to Islam, which called them to abandon all other support and meet their Guru Gorakhnath.' Shah's reference to the martyrdom of Inayat is heart-rending. Allusion has already been made to it. Towards the end of this *Sur* there is a lofty note of exultation:

Where no sky no heaven exist, nor any earth, nor any climbing moon, nor a trace of the sun, in that lofty region is the settlement of Adesis (Jogis). Far-reaching is their knowledge, their realisation of the Lord is through Non-existence.'

Sur Kapaiti, or the *Sur* of the spinners, is frankly instructional, teaching spiritual lessons through analogy. Man is a spinner and his loom is the self. His duty is to spin the flax or the yarn faithfully and diligently. As long as he does his duty with all his heart, oblivious to egoism and external considerations, the *Sarafs* or the yarn-trader (God) will be pleased with him and accept the yarn without a demur. But if he spins the yarn egotistically and selfishly, his yarn will not be acceptable, however finely it is spun. 'Those who spin with love in their heart will have their yarn accepted and paid for by the *Sarafs* (merchants), without so much as its being put in the scales.' God will accept the stupid and the dull if humility, sincerity, and love attend them, and will reject outright the clever and the wise if they are egotists, insincere, and tricky.

Sur Purab is a kind of a supplement to *Sur Ramkali* expatiating on *Purab*, the East, as typifying that spiritual light which is the goal of the Jogis, and to which they have betaken themselves, leaving the poet forsaken and desolate: 'The Purabiyas (Easterners) have gone to Puri in the East, this morning. These Adesis were verily musk-laden and fragrant.'

Earlier, the poet praises the crow as the Beloved's messenger who alone can bring glad tidings from the Beloved and convey to the Beloved his entreaties and appeals: 'O crow! take my message to the Beloved, and tell him, "O darling, too many days have elapsed since you went away, for some reason, or the other. Your absence is causing me intense agony".'

Sur Karail is a *Sur* dealing with *Karail* which may mean either a peacock or a swan. The comparison is between the true lover who like the swan disdains dirty water or lucre and flies into the sky and drinks only unsullied water, unlike the cranes and crows who feed upon and drink fetid matter and dirty water. More often, it is the cranes we meet, and not the swans, for Satan is quick and powerful in his dirty work. Love is the great instrument for spiritual regeneration and union: 'The Lotus is underneath, in the bottom of the earth; the butterfly flies to heaven. But God brings about the desired consummation of their union. Love be praised which brings the two lovers together.' The true seeker after God is like

the swan or peacock. He abjures ugliness and blackness and can foil that hunter, Satan, the most devilish of snakes. The true Jogi who could burn Junagadh could as well tame the snake (Devil) even as a snake-charmer.

Sur Prabhati is named after Prabhat or the Daybreak, because it contains an exhortation to begin the day like a begger-minstrel with strumming the harp to please the generous Master. Indeed, the Lord is so generous that he fills even the dullard with plenty if He is pleased with him. The Lord is the All-Giver ; no other can give away anything.

This is one of the shortest *Surs* but there are copious passages in it apt for quotation. At least four of these passages are on the lips of lovers of Shah. The first is that which reminds wise people to note that God can so make the dullard filled with plenty that it would puzzle the clever and the wise, and tempt to do away with all their cleverness and fine instruments. The second is that there is no caste involved in endowment, all that is wanted is sincere service. And the Jam or the Lord will favour even the ugly simple-minded ones. The third passage calls upon man to beg only of Him who showers gifts every day, and not of the false, worldly people. In the fourth, the Lord is praised as the only donor, all others are beggars. The rain comes only in season, but God's rain of gifts falls perpetually.

Sur Dahar : Passing through a *Dahar*, or an arid valley which is now a desert but where a stream flowed formerly, Shah is led to miscellaneous reflections. What was a busy mart once is now a desert region where only thorns grow. The poet remembers God and His Prophet in this desolation, and calls upon the desolate bride to keep awake and not go to sleep if she cares to meet the bridegroom. The *Sur* ends with references to Jadejas, Samas and other Sindhi Rajput tribes and celebrates the exploits of Lakho Phulani, dacoit by profession, but friend of the poor and a chivalrous knight, in fact.

Sur Bilawal, the last *Sur* of Shah, refers to the legend of Dodo and Chanesar, and the bravery of Abro who defended with his own life the honour of the Sama women entrusted to him. The generosity of Jadam Jakhro and the gallantry of Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, are also lauded. The *Sur* ends with a humorous note deriding the glutton Wagand who was a kind of privileged jester at the ' court ' of Shah.

Shah is a lyric poet with a strong dramatic instinct. In his

story-poems he leaves out everything except the dramatic climax, and crisis, and expatiates on those alone. He takes for granted that his readers know the story well. He recites only those events which are material to his purpose, and which have some significance from the moral and spiritual points of view. He has said that his poems are spiritual lessons, sacred lessons, and that he has composed them to lead the hearer or reader to the side of the Beloved. That is the sole purpose, the *raison d' etre* of his verse-compositions. In his verses critics have failed to observe 'logic' and 'consecutiveness'. Sometimes he will take up the end of a story, or legend, or incident, and the finishing portions of a scene, then revert to the initial happening or scene. Nor are his speakers arranged in any logical manner. His heroines, and heroes (if any) will interject or make an observation. He will reinforce it with his own remarks and then pass on to his narrative. To a western reader this is irritating enough. But it must be realised that Shah's manner is his own. He lights up a theme with flashes and coruscations of light, not with a steady light. But these flashes are illuminating in an extraordinary degree. His imitators have been many but none has been so successful in giving to apparently random verses a meaning and a significance highly penetrating and effective. That Shah could be dramatic has been proved by competent Sindhi writers having composed dramas which owe their success to Shah's lyrics being interspersed in the body of the plays and forming an integral part. A highly successful drama of this kind was *Umar Márui* written in the 'twenties by Lalchand Amardinomal which was a great success on the stage. Lilaram Pherwani's *Lila Chanesar*, written in the late 'thirties, has literary merits which hardly any original play in the language shows, while *Mumal Rano* of Ram Panjwani written in the forties of this century has always been popular. Ram Panjwani made seven plays out of Shah's story poems which have found favour with critics and lay readers alike. In another age, and under other circumstances, Shah could very well have been a dramatist of the first rank.

The same cannot be said of the *narrative* genius of Shah. In *Sur Kedaro* and some other places he shows himself possessed of an *epic* genius, but only by fits and starts. However, even up to this day, no one in Sindhi literature has rivalled

Shah in his account of brave fighters on the battlefield. But Shah is no Homer or even a Chaucer. He was so taken up with the inner significance of a tale as to have no patience to narrate all the events in an intelligent order.

And except in the concluding part of one of the *Surs* Shah has no humour. Even in that *Sur* it is derisive humour accompanied by verbal wit. It has been fitly said that the best description of Shah as a man and a poet is to say that he was a God-intoxicated soul.

A remark has been made about Shakespeare that he has heroines only, and no heroes. This remark applied to Shah more than even to Shakespeare, for except Rai Dyach he has no heroes at all. Punhoon, Umar, Mehar, Rano, Chanesar are no heroes, and some of them might even be pronounced contemptible, or nincompoops, if taken as wordly personages. Shah conceives of the seeker as a women and God as the Beloved or the Groom whom the woman wants to win and hold. This conception, as well as the word *Sati* (chaste wife), which Shah uses, are purely Indian, and one might say Hindu in origin and use. Shah has stuck to the Hindu conception of marriage which visualises marriage subsisting even after death. Shah emphasises that his heroines were pledged to their Beloveds before birth, and that they will remain so united even after death. Shah's brand of Sufism has this powerful and unique Hindu element of the eternal relationship of woman and man reinforcing his whole philosophy of Love. All the heroines of Shah would readily join with Parvati, Shiva's consort, in her memorable statement :

Janam koti lag rager hamari
Baroon Shambhu nahin-rahoon kunwari

'Through all my births the relationship persists : either I marry Shambhu or Shiva, or remain unmarried all my life.'

Shah's heroines have qualities which distinguish them from many other heroines. They are all simple including even the mysterious Mumal, and the gullible greedy Lila, and they have no sophistication about them, but all of them are steadfast in their resolve to attain to the Beloved, and all are ready to sacrifice themselves to gain this sole object or purpose of their existence. They have another imperceptible but all-pervading quality—they are *Sindhi* women and have the essence of Sind in their mental and spiritual fabric—the vastness and solitariness of the Desert, the appeal of the Sindhu or Mihran

in their blood, their familiar vehicle being, of course, the camel, the ship of the desert.

Marui stands out among these heroines because of her patriotism, her rejection of luxury in favour of the simple life of the desert, her clinging to the dust of her native arid region in death as in life. Marui is typical of Shah himself. Shah could have said with Wordsworth, substituting 'Sind' for 'England', and 'river' for 'sea':

I travelled among unknown men
In lands beyond the sea
Nor England did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

To the twentieth century Sindhis Shah is as much the Voice of Sind as a Sufi poet. If one can for a moment forget Shah's philosophy, and his quest for the Infinite, he can still feast his eyes and ears upon the Sind that is revealed in his lyrics. All the dreams and desires of the Sindhis which were revealed in fragments, in their legends and folklore, are given the seal of permanence, nay immortality, in Shah's verse. The mountains, dales and wildernesses, the desert and the populous marts of Sind, its flora and fauna, all pass steadily before the eyes of the reader of Shah, and he hears the sound of the blacksmith's anvil, of the shuttle and the loom, of the oars of the fisherman, and the steady pit-pat of the camel's feet on the sand. Perhaps he may hear the splash of Suhini in the waters and the gnashing of the teeth of sea-monsters, even. No bulbuls of Shiraz haunt Shah's poems, nor the tulips, beloved of Persian poets. The crow, the crane and the peacock are enough for him, and the lotus which attracts the butterfly from the heavens. Shah's essential Sindhiyat or sindhism is specially apparent when his lyrics are placed side by side with those twentieth century poets in the Sindhi language who take an artificial inspiration from foreign images and foreign scenes. There is nothing like Leila Majnun or Yusuf Zuleikha or Shirin Farhad in Shah's poems. His simple Sindhi heroines can easily hold their own with them and perhaps give them a point or two.

Shah's love for Sind is quite apparent in the lines at the end of *Sur Sarang* to which reference has already been made. As remarked elsewhere, Shah has been called a 'rustic' poet. If by the term 'rustic' is meant that there was want of refinement or culture in his poetry nothing can be farther from truth. The sentiments, the thoughts and the expression are highly

cultivated, without the least uncouthness in them ; his *Risalo* is one of the master pieces of artistic verse in world literature.

But if by ' rustic ' it is meant that Shah has little to do with kings and noblemen and much to do with country folk who are simple, straight, and without sophistication, he can be called a rustic poet. With marvellous art Shah is able to interest us in the simple annals of the poor as much as the great masters of literature are able to do with complex, fashionable, or highly placed men and women. The washerwoman Sasui, and the desert-dweller Marui, are some of the finest creations of a great poet's pen.

The special merit of Shah is that he succeeded in raising a *rustic* language to an expressiveness and elegance of the highest degree. Perhaps the most notable achievement of Shah consisted in making a language which was never a court language, (at least in a thousand years) more artistic, finished and copious than the court language of the times as spoken or written in Sind. Using a strictly native language without appreciable admixture of Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, he was able to 'Sanskritize ' it i.e. polish it. In the literature of the world it has been given to few to find a language the language of peasants and fishermen, and leave it as a language which courtiers as well as scholars could use with profit and pleasure. The insertion of texts from the Koran does not spoil or detract from the native directness and finish of his verses. Shah's Sindhi is almost pure Prakrit but he has given it a variety and elegant twist to suit the tastes of the scholar and the gentleman. It is estimated that Shah has used at least 12,000 words (some say it is nearer twenty thousand) at least four-fifths of which are purely Sindhi. The Persian and Arabic made small inroads upon Shah's rich vocabulary, and highly Sanskritised words were of course not in vogue at all in Sind. No other Sindhi writer has his diction and vocabulary, not to talk of poetic talent, in which there is no challenge and comparison at all. Sindhi language has of course changed in many respects in the two centuries after Shah, but the change has not been always for the better. For expression of highest truths, for abstruse discussions, as well as for simple description of the countryside, its people and its crafts, those who use Sindhi generally turn to Shah's *Risalo* for the words. If they seek not guidance from Shah they generally are awkward and unintelligible. The Sindhi of Shah, barring a few archaisms, or words now not in vogue, is still the language of the masses and the ' classes ' as we

Chapter VIII

MINOR WRITERS IN THE PRE-BRITISH ERA

The century and a quarter between the decay of Mogul rule in Sind and the British conquest was a period of incessant literary activity in the upper strata of Sindhi society. But most of this activity was directed to little purpose because it was motivated by theological impulses. Endless discussions were carried on to elucidate such vexatious and frivolous problems how and when to perform ablutions. Many vied with one another to pen another poem in praise of the Prophet and to express their longing to perform a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. Several of those who took to 'secular' writing showed off their skill in writing chronicles in the Persian language with fulsome praises of little men, all but forgotten today. Burton has derided the Persian spoken and written by Sindhis as compared to the sweet language of Shiraz. It is no use giving any credit to any of the Sindhi writers of Persian or to attach any trustworthiness to the eulogistic and encomiastic notices of mediocrities in their narratives. Poetry written in the Persian language could be disregarded as a mechanical composition.

And, yet, from the two towering poets who may be mentioned in the same breath as Shah, (with whom they form a peerless trio), Sachal and Sami, there are a few other Sindhi writers who, albeit minor writers, deserve a separate notice, and cannot be grouped together as so many nameless contemporaries and successors of Shah. Their collective achievements were many and varied. For one thing they gave a vogue to the *Wai* form ... of verse adopted by Shah as a pendant to his *beyts* (in each chapter of his *Sur*). An exalted wail, amatory and soul-stirring, came to be the national lyric form of verse for Sindhis under the new name of *Kafi*. Until this day, the *Kafi* is the most popular, most expressive, most touching of all Sindhi verse forms.

Then, again, these minor poets introduced a variety in Sindhi poetry mostly in those four m-categories, namely the *Madah* (apostrophe, praise), *Maulud* (Prophet's Praise),

Marsia (elegy on the death of a celebrity), and *Masnavi* (connected narrative). Nothing like these M's was seen in Sindhi poetry before.

A third noteworthy feature of Sindhi poetry in the period 1718-1843 was the fillip given by Hindi and Vedantist literature to Sindhi poetry. Sami was the Master who could claim to have rendered the 'speech of Vedas' in the vernacular of the Sindhis, but there were several others, like Rohal and Dalpat, to aid in the task of bringing the Sindhis nearer to their fellow-Indians in thinking, sentiment and speech.

The beginnings of Sindhi prose, and measured verse according to Arabic–Persian Prosody, can also be seen in the Sindhi literature of this era.

But it must be admitted that the minor Sindhi poets did not as a rule take pride or joy in their work. They felt they were using an unworthy medium of speech as compared to their compeers who were skilled in the use of Persian; and it is rare to meet an exultant or joyous Sindhi poet in this era. Mostly, the Sindhi poets are semi-apologetic in tone, except of course the two Masters, Sachal and Sami.

The eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth-century may be called the classic or the golden age of Sindhi poetry because of the trio, Shah, Sachal and Sami, who remain unchallenged and peerless upto this day. When it is remembered that the Kalhora and Talpur rule was that of barbaric rulers, and that, feudal lords both temporal and spiritual swayed the masses in this era, the wonder grows steadily how Sind, the land of *Shikargahs*, and Tombs, was able to throw up such sweet and sublime singers in a time of darkness. Sachal and Sami, major poets, must have each a separate chapter but the minor writers are grouped hereunder. Makhdum Abdul Rauf Bhatti, described by Md. Sidik Memon as the first Sindhi poet to try measured verse according to Persian prosody, died in 1752, in the same year, as Shah Abdul Latif, but he was slightly older than Shah. He was known for his *Mauluds* i.e. Praises of the Prophet, and he was so fortunate in his death as to die in Medina, the place of the sepulchre of the Prophet. His *Mauluds* require two teams to recite or sing, each taking up a verse or two. A translation of Saadi's *Karima* in Sindhi, in the same metre as the original Persian work, is also attributed to him, and if that is true, he, and not Akhund Gul Md., must be credited with initiating

poetry in Shindi on the Persian model. His bother, Makdhum Md. Ibrahim Bhatti, who was eight years younger than he, followed the *dohra* form of verse and used it for religious instructions for orthodox Muslims. There is little or nothing of sufistic content in the verses of the two brothers.

Some names of miscellaneous writers and indifferent writers of verse in the Kalhora period are : Maulvi Md. Husain, who translated in 1763 the stories of Prophets from Persian into Sindhi under the title of *Sair Bustan* (Trip to a garden), Makhdum Ziauddin who died in 1759 and preached about the duties of children to their parents, Makhdum Abdul Khaliq Thatwi author of *Matlub al Momnin* (composed in 1763), and Makhdum Md. Sharif Ranipuri author of *Mulki Sindhi* (composed in 1747), Pir Md. Baqa, progenitor of the Pagaro Pirs, who wrote some amatory verses (died 1784), and Sahibdino Fakir (1687-1785), whose chief distinction is that he was grandfather of the great poet Sachal.

Makhdum Md. Hashim Thatwi (born 1693) stands on a different footing from these miscellaneous writers because of his reputation for erudition. Like Qazi Qazan he was appointed Chief Jugde (at Tatta). He was a prolific author in three languages, Arabic, Persian and Sindhi, but his Sindhi verses have a mechanical rhyme ending or no ending at all and can hardly be read at the present time. Prof. Lutfullah Badwi says that his works are still read in theological schools, but he admits at the same time that the learned Dr. Gurbaxani did not think much of him.

A colourful personality of the Kalhora period is that of Makhdum Abdur Rahim Grihori, born in 1739. He is called Grihori because he was born in Grihor village in Thar Parkar district. He is known as the most famous disciple of the Lawari Master, Md. Zaman, and it is difficult to disentangle his own compositions from that of his master. His death occurred under somewhat peculiar circumstances. He died in a fanatical attack he led against a temple in which an idol was installed. He broke the idol but lost his life. This event which occurred in the fortieth year of his life has been mentioned in eulogistic terms by Muslim writers, but we can only regard it as a typical event of the barbaric and fanatical rule of the Kalhoras. Md. Zaman's *Abyat Sindi* or Sindhi *beyts* have been edited recently, and while it would be futile to deny them excellence as didactic verses it must be admitted

that they do not show any poetic afflatus and may be called pseudo-sufistic verses on the model generally current in those days and perfected by Shah, (with whose verses some of the *beyts* have got intermingled). Most of his writings are strictly theological.

Syed Sabit Ali Shah, who was born in 1740, i.e. one year after Grihori, enjoys the distinction of being the first writer of *Marsias* or mournful Elegies on the death of celebrities. He belonged originally to Multan from where he came to Sewhan and settled there permanently. His poems contain affectionate references to Sewhan, the city of Lal Shahbaz. He early practised writing *Qasidas* or elegiac verses in praise of some notables, from which he passed on to *Marsias* or elegies in commemoration of the death of someone. His first *marsia* was devoted to the Prophet and his descendants. He was not very firm in his loyalties, for after the Talpurs displaced the Kalhoras he began writing *Fateh Nama* and *Zafar Namah* in commemoration of Talpur victories, quietly, forgetting his former patrons. He died in 1810. He could write satirical verses as well. His *marsias* followed the Persian models, and many of them turned on the tragedy of Kerbela. They have been collected in four volumes by Mirza Kalich Beg.

Another ' first ' in Kalhora days was Sarfraz Khan Kalhoro who was the last Kalhoro ruler of Sind. He ascended the throne in 1772 and was deposed and killed three years afterwards. He was not the first to bring Persian prosodic forms in Sindhi verse, (that distinction belongs to Makhdum Abdul Rauf Bhatti) but he was fortunate in writing the first and most popular *Madah* (Praise) in the Sindhi language, which, because of its lilt, has become very popular. Men as well as women recite with delight the easy rhymes of his *Madah* in praise of the Prophet, which is said to have been composed by him in prison while he was awaiting death. A Sindhi Hindu, afterwards, while waiting for trial in a British prison, composed a *Madah* in praise of Guru Nanak on the model of Sarfraz's *Madah*, but considered as poetry it is doggerel as compared to its original. Many other imitations of Sarfraz's *Madah* have also been composed but none of them has attained to the popularity of the first Madah in the Sindhi language.

Rohal, the progenitor of the famous Kandri tribe of poets and pious men, enjoys a peculiar distinction among the poets of the Kalhora period because he was a kind of bridge

between the hide-bound theological and metaphysical Muslim poets of his time and the Hindi poets of India. He was at first employed by the Kalhora Government, but he renounced the world and reached the heights of Sufism through the blessing of the sufi sage of Jhok, Shah Inayat, the famous martyr. He was led to Kandri in Khirpur State by the behest of his Master, a place so called because of thorn trees (*Kandas*). The spot furnished a shelter for him. Here he settled and attained to great renown, the Talpur Mir of Khairpur being one of his adherents. The verse : ' We saw God (Kaltar) in Kandri ' is well-known to Sindhis.

Rohal has left poetry in Sindhi as well as in the Siraiki dialect, and Hindi language. His message in all the three languages was the same : give up all egoism, and hatred for others, frequent the society of liberated souls, and follow the cult of Love. One of his Sindhi *beyts* has attained a popularity equal to the best verses of Shah, Sami or Sachal. It sings of universal tolerance. Its test is : ' In *kufr* (*Heresy*) *as well as Islam, they are going the wrong way. These are Hindus, those are Muslims, and in between is hatred for each other. The blind who walk in eternal darkness are not to see the Truth. O Rohal ! as soon as the encircling path of the Beloved is reached it will be noticed that God pervades everything and in Him is no complication or change. How can she who sleeps in God's house turn the feet anywhere else but towards the Lord ?*'

Another, almost equally popular *beyt*, of his, is that in which he says : ' What shame or care have they who have thrown overboard all apparel, and walk stark naked ? These Samis have nothing more to do with Ganges or Girnar. They need no reed instruments to play, or to string the harp. O Rohal ! these Lahutis (renouncers) are ecstatic in the vision that has entranced them.'

In the Talpur period of sixty years (1783–1843) the Kalhora trend of praises and poems in laudation of the Prophet continued apace. Pir Hasamuddin Rashidi mentions two well-known such poems, namely *Aghasna-Ya-Sayeda* (Help ! O Syed), and Juman Charan's *Ya Pir Piran Badshah* (Oh ! Master of Masters ! King !)' He also lays stress on the *Masnawis* or connected narratives in poetic form, as distinguished from fragmentary narratives in previous Sindhi poetry

of which the two best specimens were Hafeez's *Mumal Rano* and Haji Abdulla's *Leila Majnun* (1792). The beginnings of Sindhi prose also appeared in the work of Akhund Aziz (died 1824). Persian prosody came to the fore in these six decades. The *wai* form invented by Shah appeared under the popular form of *Kafi* in the works of Sindhi minor poets and attained to great popularity if not proficiency. Sachal's *Kafis*, of course have not their equal in Sindhi lyric poetry.

Leaving aside the poetry of the major poets, Sachal and Ṣami, the most considerable poet of the six decades of Talpur rule was Hamal Laghari (1815–1879) who is thought by some literary critics to be the best known poet in Sindhi literature next to Shah. He wrote both in the Siraiki dialect of Sindhi, and Sindhi itself, and his narrative of the love-story of *Heer Ranjho* became very popular in Bahawalpur State and Upper Sind. The narrative is for the most part in the form of a dialogue between Heer and her mother. The flow of his verse is marvellous, especially when he proceeds to describe the instability of human existence : '*where are those kings, Alexander and Darius, the grand monarchs? Where are the chants of Nadir, where are all the trumpets and drums, all gone, none remains. The Rang-mahals of the Queens are no more, meet it is for you to take note and do acts of righteousness.*' He introduces a new pathos in the story of Sasui and Marui and makes use of dialogues. His most famous lyric is the one in which he complains of the *crooked* things or persons around him : crooked are the locks of the beloved, crooked are the eyebrows, crooked is the speech he hears, and crooked the speed of the feet. He says that where these four crooked things come together, the action or the proceedings must also be far from straight. He bewails the crooked behaviour of his friend as well as the stranger ; crooked is the proceeding before him and also the bazar itself. The rider is crooked, the leader, too, far from straight. The very turban is crooked, and so the scimitar. The petty official is crooked in his conduct, and so the very government. What is poor Hamal to do in the midst of such topsy turvydom ? All that he can do is to keep himself and his speech in a line of truth and straightforwardness.

Hamal's verses to the rain recall Shah's famous *Sur Sarang*. That is the highest praise a minor Sindhi poet can have showered upon him.

Syed Khair Shah is remembered because of his hostility to his great contemporary Syed Sabit Ali Shah, and his interesting description of a quarrel said to have occurred between the Cap and the Turban, which has some vestiges of humour, if not humour itself.

Pir Ali Gohar Shah's *Kafis* have an appeal of their own even though occasionally marred by scriptural allusions to Noah and other figures.

Fateh Fakir was another composer of *Kafis* in which he imagines himself to be Sasui in quest of Punhoon.

Arif is known for his meticulous translation in Sindhi of Saadi's Persian didactic poem *Karima*.

Fakir Md. Sidik or Sadiq wrote on the model of Shah, and in some of his *beyts* he has captured the great poet's art, but the total effect of his *Surs* upon the mind is that of a craftsman and not an artist.

Dalpatram Sufi died about two years before the British conquered Sind, that is in 1841. He was a disciple of Bhai Asardas — a famous mystic of Hyderabad—, and he left behind him successors to preach his philosophy of Sufism-cum-Vedantism. He was known for his charities, and renouncement of all worldly desires. He is sometimes compared to his great contemporary Sami but connoisseurs of poetry can perceive the great difference between the two. Dalpat's poetry is an admixture of poems on Sasui, Kalal (wine seller), Spring, the Rainy Season, Kafis, Tales from Rumi etc., and lack the wonderful clarity, serenity and harmony of Sami. Some of his moral stories, for instance the story of the Blind men who went to see an elephant, have great significance. His most famous *beyt* is that in which he asks : *Is there one God in peepul tree and another God in the babul tree ? You say, God resides in the Kaaba, but does He leave the idol temple high and dry ? O Dalpat ! Whence came this dissension in the people around us ?* In another less-known *beyt* he repeats himself : what has brought about this cleavage between the Turks and the Banias (Hindus) ? If God is in the *peepul* tree only, who pervades then the babul tree ? The traces of His feet are to be seen in each strand and leaf of a tree. The blind and the deaf know not how the land lies. Rare is that person, says Dalpat, who walks around and sees the Friend's mark everywhere.

Dalpat has been edited by two researchers : Prof. M. J.

Thakur and Gidumal Harjani, but neither of these editions satisfies the critical taste.

The poets of Kandri : Rohal, the famous poet of Kandri, left behind him a school of not less than four eminent poets, one of whom, Murad Fakir, was his disciple, and three were his sons, Shahu Fakir, Ghulam Ali Fakir and Daryakhan. Of these four, the first, namely, Murad Fakir, and the last who was also his youngest son, Daryakhan, merit special notice.

Murad Fakir was an ardent disciple of Rohal and also his wife's brother, and learnt from his preceptor the lesson that if a man has to war against anyone he has to make war against the Tempter within him. He employed the current stories of Suhni, Sasui, Marui, Lila and others to preach spiritual lessons, and showed a religious broadmindedness comparable to that of Rohal. He said that man has within himself all the holy places, Ganges, Dwarka and Kashi, why need he bother then to go East or West ? If a man can subdue his inner self he performs pilgrimages to all holy places without taking the trouble of proceeding to these sacred spots.

Shahu Fakir, and his brother Ghulam Ali Fakir, have also written some good lyrics and *Kafis*. Daryakhan surpasses all of them, with the wide range of his poetry and technical skill. His Sindhi verses are redolent of the fragrance of Hindi verse as well as of Islamic scriptural allusions, and he continues the noble mission of his father, namely, to be a bridge between the Muslims and Hindus at a time, when, if a Hindu was careless enough to utter a word or phrase such as the Muslims used of their Prophet or religion, he was forcibly circumcised and converted to Islam. He writes in Hindi of Krishna as if he were another devotee like Mirabai. His *Kafis* can be easily sung, and he is one of those few minor Muslims poets whose lyrics are being unearthed lovingly by Hindu readers.

CHAPTER IX

SACHAL : POET OF REVOLT

SACHAL known as Sarmast (or the Intoxicated), was named by Shah as his spiritual successor while he was only a child. Shah died in 1752 when Sachal was only thirteen years old but, as has been already related, Shah met Sachal when the latter was only five or seven years old, and he clearly said that Sachal would complete the mission he had undertaken : 'Here is the one to take the lid off the cauldron I have set to boil.' And Sachal was a worthy successor to Shah.

What Shah had proceeded to convey in narratives, and by suggestion, in song, Sachal completed with an explosive outburst. He was the lyric poet, *par excellence,* and a Poet of Revolt even like Shelley in English literature, and Hafiz in Persian literature. Fitly have critics called him the Hafiz of Daraz, after the place he stayed in (between Ranipur and Gambat, in Khairpur State, in Upper Sind). If Shelley's lyrics are unsurpassed in English literature and so also Hafiz's *ghazals* in Persian, the *kafis* of Sachal represent the high watermark reached by lyrical poetry in the Sindhi language.

And Sachal was even more in revolt against the falsehoods cant and silly dogmas of his time than Shelley or Hafiz. He exposed the Mullas, Akhunds and Makhdums who were the literary and spiritual directors of men's consciences in his day, and went so far as to say : 'Strike the mulla on his pate.'

Sachal's name implies Truth, and he was an uncompromising follower of Truth. He exhorted all and sundry : '*Speak out the Truth, care not whomsoever it offend.*' Perhaps the greatest proof of his devotion to Truth was that he proclaimed his Master, the mystic poet Attar, author of *Mantiq,* to be the greatest of Sufis and said that Jami and Jalal-ud-din Rumi were fit to do only menial service to him. He went further to say, 'Attar was God Himself and no other.'

He perpetrated enough heresies to have been burnt many times over by the orthodox, and only the repeated intervention of the Talpur rules saved him form a violent death and allowed

him to live on until the age of ninety. Fancy he, a Muslim, saying with defiance :

The kalma (creed) cannot make me a Muslim
Nor can Ahmed (Mahomed) fetch me faith from Araby
Sachu is the Most High himself
Though he be called a human being.

In another place he says :

If I recite the *kalma* I turn a heretic
I shall not get entrapped in this maze
I shall not step into the Prophet's track
For unless I discard the Prophet
I may not enter the Presence.

Lest some Hindus might claim him as one of their own he turned roundly on their divine personages :

If Ram Rahim be truly same
What constitutes Ravan's frame ?
Krishna's being why did you seek
On Kansa vengeance to wreak ?

His clarion cry was ' Hama ust ' ('All is He '), and he recognised no difference of caste or religion or profession. Sachal was one or two centuries before his time and stood for a classless society. In those times it was most unusual for a fakir or religious man like Sachal to turn away from his door a feudal lord of the countryside and refuse him an interview. But this is what Sachal did with Shams, the lord of Thari, and brought him to his senses. This Shams afterwards became the most celebrated of his disciples, under the name of (Nanak) Yusuf.

Not that Sachal was proud or haughty. He was the gentlest of men. He was humble to an extraordinary degree, but any wrong made him indignant, and if he could undo the wrong he would do so. He freed a Hindu official from the captivity of the Talpurs by boldly walking into their stronghold like a lion (the story is that he turned himself into a lion actually), and challenging them in their armoury and strong room.

Sachal did not lose himself like Shelley in dreams of the perfectibility of mankind, and a new Hellas on earth. Sachal knew by introspection that Hellas was here, that man had perfection in him, could he but attain to self-realisation. In one of his famous lyrics he said : ' If only you were to know your own worth you would be the leader of leaders, the commander in-chief himself.'

He is known to all lovers of Sindhi as Sachal the Intoxicated One. 'God-intoxicated' is the common title applied also to Shah and other mystics, but it is a title specially applicable to Sachal who lived most of the time in a kind of trance, far from any company, singing to himself, and uttering gems of lyrics some of which were caught by his admirers and followers and inscribed in their notebooks. He has derided those who took hemp and alchohol as stimulants and intoxicants ; he himself needed no drink or smoke. He hated artificial drugs, drinks and smokes so much that nobody dared drink or smoke in his presence. What need for artificial intoxication was there for one who was always in a state of intoxication or semi-intoxication by mystic communion with the Oversoul ? Among all Sindhi Poets Sachal could most easily sympathise with and join in Emerson's conception of 'Brahma':

If the red slayer thinks he slays,
Or if the slain thinks he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near ;
Shadow and sunlight are the same ;
The vanished Gods to me appear ;
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out ;
When me they fly, I am the wings ;
I am the doubter and the doubt
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

Sachal's lyrics remind one at every step of the Gita and Upanishads as has been pointed out by his most capable interpreter, Jethmal Parsram. [1] Some of his most famous lines are : 'Neither am I born of anyone, nor am I nourished by any one.' And again : 'I am neither water nor heat, neither cloud nor the sun, neither father nor mother.' And in one of his famous lyrics he recalls Rumi : 'Some say this, and some say that. I am what I am. Some call me Momin (Muslim) and some Kafir, some term me an ingoramus and some as self-evident. Some call me a magician, some call me a poet. I am what I am. Some call me a man and some call me verily a devil. Some call me great, and some a maniac. I am what I am.' He lived his life indifferent to praise and blame,

had no thought of reforming the world or pleasing it in any manner. He did not want to be known as a Teacher or a Seeker, only Sachal or Sachu the Truthful One ; his admirers added the appellation Sarmast or the Intoxicated after his name, and they were right. He could have affirmed with the divine Rumi himself (writing as Shams Tabriz) : 'O God ! Shams Tabriz says that I am so much intoxicated in this world that I know nothing save intoxication and senselessness.'

Abdul Wahab, afterwards known as Sachal, was born in 1739 in the village of Darazan, Khairpur State. His father Salahuddin was the eldest son of a dervish and poet, Sahibdino (called Moragi), who was much respected for his piety and otherworldliness. Sachal's genealogy has been traced to Umar Farooq, who succeeded Aboubakr, the first Caliph of the Muslims, and in whose days Islam made such spectacular progress.

Sachal's father passed away while Sachal was a child, and his paternal uncle, Fakir Abdul Haq, took charge of him, brought him up with care, and became his first and only spiritual preceptor. Sachal always referred to his uncle as his *Hadi*, or murshid, and said that his uncle was not *Abd* or slave of *Haq* (God), but that he was verily God's manifestation.

Abdul Haq saw to it that his nephew received the best tuition possible in Persian and Arabic languages, the languages of the learned in those days: Besides Arabic and Persian, Sachal knew Urdu and Hindi, and the Siraiki dialect of Sindhi current at the court of the Talpurs. He wrote poems, afterwards, in Persian, Urdu, Siraiki dialect of Sindhi, and though he did not write in Arabic he could quote extensively in that language. In his reading he gave special attention to Attar whom he eulogised as the Holy Ghost (*pak vijud*), God Himself. Attar's famous poem, *Mantiq-al-Tair,* is an apologue how thirty (*si*) birds (*murgh*) went to Koh Kaf (Caucasus mountain) in quest of the phoenix (simurgh) and reached it after terrible experiences only to find that simurgh, the phoenix, was no other than they themselves. They had put themselves to needless trouble in crossing dreadful valleys. These valleys, of course, were the stages of the ' Pilgrim's Progress :'. (namely, quest, love, realisation, abnegation, unity, wonder, poverty, annihilation).

Sachal did not, like Shah, proceed on travels or wanderings as a part of his education, and did not fall in love with a

woman. He was all his life in love with Beauty, but with no particularly beautiful woman or a beautiful object. A story has come down that he was cured of a disease by looking at a beautiful woman singing and dancing. But there is nothing to show that he was even remotely in love with a woman. His wife lived for only two years after marriage and he never married again. He had married her purely to do his duty, for she was his uncle Abdul Haq's daughter, and she was meant to be his consort. Sachal was an introvert, and at the same time a great lover of Beauty. He did not leave his shanty to look at the beauties of Nature. Music, Dancing and Poetry were enough to satisfy his aesthetic sense ; he had occasionally a sight of a beautiful singer and dancer.

In his habits he was an ascetic. Night meals he did not take at all, and in his day meals he came to shun meat and take pulses instead. In his dress, too, he was very simple and all that was distinctive in his scanty apparel was his green turban. He kept a staff by his side and often went out unshod. In appearance he was of middling size, and quite sparse-looking. One could never mistake him for one of the corpulent, well-fed, lusty and lustful priests, or wandering friars, of his time. More often than not his feelings were so worked upon, specially when he listened to music,' that tears fell fast from his eyes. It is true many admirers gathered round him, but he always preferred to be by himself. He disclaimed all pretensions to holiness or spiritual eminence. He has disclaimed, in verses well-known to his readers, all claim to greatness or Shaikhdom or even to a Makhdumship. He says he is not a kazi or a mulla or a teacher. He will never become a sham to mislead people, and to air his personality. Last of all, he thanks God for His mercy that he has been able to learn no art (*Hunr*).

Shah is said to have practised meticulously the outward observance of Islamic ritual, to set an example of good conduct to others. Sachal eschewed all formal religion ; his religion was the religion of Love. He says : ' I do not turn the beads of a rosary, nor go in for prayers and piety. It is not for me to proceed to temples and mosques or turn an anchorite. Fate has been kind to Sachal for Love has held him in its grasp.'

In another place he shows that since Love has made him its own he need practise no religion, go on no pilgrimage to Mecca or other places, perform no ritual whatsoever.

It is strange that Sachal escaped the fate of Socrates and Christ, Mansur Hallaj and Gandhi. The pillars of orthodoxy of the time tried their level best to declare him a kafir or a heretic and condemn him to the gallows. There was something soothing and magnetic about him, which impressed the grandees of the day and saved him from the rage of the orthodox, and the illiterate masses. The Talpur Mir felt this magnetism, and most of all Rais Shams, who got admittance to his presence with difficulty and would not forsake him, even though Sachal drove him away from his presence. This Shams became his voluntary apostle under the name of Nanak Yusuf and became a considerable poet in his own right. It is said that at the time of his passing away, Sachal called thrice for his senior disciple one Yakub, to see him, but Yakub was not on the spot. Yusuf was always there, so he responded to the call, and received the parting blessing and spiritual crown from his master, citing from the scriptures that if Yakub (Jacob) was absent his son Yusuf (Joseph) would do in his place.

As usual, many miracles are reported to have happened in Sachal's life, though he was deadly against arrogating to himself any powers superior to that of an ordinary human being. He died at the ripe age of ninety, in 1829, saying that he was to live upto the age of 105, but that he was dying 15 years earlier to attend the audience of the Friend soon enough.

On Sachal a great elegy was written on his death by his disciple Bedil, himself an eminent poet :

Wonderful was the magic of Love in Darazan, my friends!
Sachu was there, the intoxicated Seeker, and the gnostic.
Heavy was the shower of the rain of yearning on that hero.
The pangs of separation were there, visible and invisible
Inebriated he was, truly, with the rapture of Oneness
Verily he was another Mansur, Love itself incarnate.
He was Attar himself in fervour and sentiment .....
Commander he stood in the ranks of those given to Love,
Bedil haunts the door of the donor for a gift of his ardour.

His fame has gone on steadily increasing after his death, especially with the Hindus who have had to migrate from Sind.

However, Sachal has not been quite fortunate in his biographers and editors. Mirza Ali Quli Beg did a service to his memory by publishing a collection of Sachal's *Kafis* in 1902 but he had not the industry or critical acumen of his brother,

Mirza Kalich Beg, the biographer of Shah Abdul Latif. Agha Sufi brought out a huge volume on Sachal in 1933 which would have been far more valuable if it had been reduced to one third of its length, so prolix it is, and so uncritical. The writer sought to do for Sachal what Prof. Gurbaxani had done for Shah Latif, and even tried to surpass Gurbaxani, but he had neither the erudition of the Professor nor his gift of style. His work is valued now for its collection of titbits about Sachal, and agglomeration of Sachal's Sindhi and non-Sindhi poems. After the Partition of India a Hindu woman follower of Sachal calling herself Nimano Fakir brought out an edition of his works which is anything but scholarly. The two best books, or rather brochures, on Sachal, are those by two Hindu Professors, Jethmal Parsram and Kalyan Advani. Jethmal Parsram has given a very readable and clear exposition of Sachal's thought and sentiment, and Advani has given in a nutshell all that is worth knowing about Sachal's life and works. The present writer is not aware of any effort made in Pakistan to bring out editions of Sachal's works or translations of his poems. Sachal's poetry is not one to commend itself very much to bigots and reactionaries. A well-edited, definitive edition of Sachal's works is really a desideratum and would be welcome even to the uneducated Sindhi, for his lyrics readily appeal even to those who have no grounding in the classics.

The poetry of Sachal, it is agreed on all hands, is the result of *Be-Khudi* (or going out of one's self), a state in which he knew not what he was doing or saying. He did not utter poetry under excitement, or external pressure, or influence of Nature ; but only when a Higher power took control of him. When he was restored to normalcy the amanuenses who wrote down his utterances, (some say under the orders of the Talpur chiefs), read out to him what they had written, and beseeched him to fill in certain gaps or explain ambiguities, and his reply always was :) I do not know what I said or meant '. These stories might be exaggerated but there is no doubt that Sachal's poetry is sincere, spontaneous, and soul-outpouring.

Sachal wrote poetry in Persian under the appellation of *Askhara* (Patent of Manifest) and *Khudai* (Divinity) and he is aid to have composed, not only *Diwan Ashkara*, but many

other *Namas* or Anthologies of poems, e.g. *Raz Nama, Gudaz Nama, Tar Nama* etc. And in Urdu, too, he has left a considerable stock of poems, some of them more Hindi than Urdu, but it is the poems he composed in Sindhi, and the Sindhi dialect (Siraiki), current at the Talpur courts, which merit our attention.

Sachal inevitably invites comparison, as a poet, with Shah. One difference is that Shah used the Lar kind of Sindhi. Sachal used the Upper Sind language which has a charming intonation and grammatical peculiarities of its own. Shah's language is Sindhi of the original Parakrit type with few Persian or Arabic words and phrases (save for quotations), Sachal's Sindhi has many Persian and Arabic words, and curiously enough, Hindi and Sanskrit words, too, adorning it. Shah was essentially the poet of Sind and interpreter of Sindhi thought and sentiment. Sachal paid no attention to Sind or Sindhis, he was a free-thinker who clung to no habitation, and took no interest in anything local or topical.

Shah was a close observer of nature, and has given exquisite similes and imagery, in his poems, derived from this observation. Sachal was too introspective to look closely at or derive lessons from nature or even from humanity. In one of his lovely lyrics he has referred to the spinners and the distaff, and immediately got rid of the image by referring to Love and Beauty. Shah has practically re-told the legends and love stories current in his time, whereas Sachal refers to some of the tales but does not condescend to any narrative at all.

Shah's method is of suggestion and intuition, Sachal's method is of downright exposition and vehement assertion or denunciation. Both poets mean the same thing but their method and style differ greatly. Shah's poetry reaches its peak with the lament of Sasui that her misery was self-created and the result of separateness : as soon as she was aware that Punhoon was no other than Sasusi her misery ended. Sachal must be direct and downright, and proclaim with Mansur, at the top of his voice, *Analhaq*, ' Verily I am God '. Shah will hint that fasts and prayers have their use, though the objective is something else, namely God-vision, Sachal will downright condemn the orthodox priests given to fasting and prayers and declare them as frauds and counterfeits. Of course what Shah means is also what Sachal means when Sachal says :

'Lose your self and seek that which is within you. True knowledge can come only through self-realisation'. 'Be neither Pir (Preceptor) nor the Disciple, enjoy the delight of intoxication. O raw fellow! abandon Makhdumship and Shaikhdom. Neither curses nor blessings will help you on the path towards God. Wear your own turban, and your task will be easy.' The difference between Shah and Sachal is that Shah tolerated the idiot and the hypocrite, as well as the wise and the virtuous ; Sachal has no place or feeling for the foolish dogmatist and the followers of formal religion.

Sachal was out and out a free-thinker and above any creed or dogma. He says : 'O Sachu ! the Lord is one beyond all doubt. He enjoys the scene anywhere and is king at all points. Sometimes He will read the Hindu scriptures, sometimes the Koran. He can be Jesus as well as Mahomed and even Hanuman (monkey-god). He can create a bewilderment for His own self (out of pure fun).' Sachal has written some verses in praise of Krishna which no Vaishnavite can better. At times he can praise the Prophet as well. Shah never under undertook such a task. In form he always remained a pious Muslim.

Shah made sufistic truths known by apologues and parables Sachal clearly outlined them. Jethmal Parsram, in his little book on Sachal, has dwelt on the sufistic riddles and high thoughts made plain in Sachal's poetry : Self-realisation, Negation and Affirmation (*Nafi and Asbat*), *Hama ust* (All is He) or *Haq Manjud* (God everywhere), *Zat Sifat* (Substance and Attributes), the 'talisman' or the riddle of the soul and oversoul being One, As a man thinketh etc., and shows that the Gita and the Upanishads convey the same teaching as Sachal's poetry. He concludes that Sachal realised in his state of intoxication that

Verily it is a sin to think of something else
Every shape, every form is the Lord Himself.

Well did Shah prophesy that the kettle or cauldron of spiritual truths, which he had left in the boiling stage, would have its lid taken off by Sachal, and the dainties poured out for repast by all and sundry. Initiated or uninitiated, no one can mistake the meaning of Sachal when he says : 'When a man puts on a garment he will not say that his name is that garment. He will retain his own name.' 'I am sorry to have been reduced to the state. Here I have been reduced to the state of a

menial and I was Sultan there', and 'How may I forget my substance or (divine) essence, and assume that which I am not? Only by breaking this (counterfeit) idol can I reveal my true essence. In the state of intoxication I can declare like Mansur that I am the Truth or God.' 'They lighted the lamp to see the sun and could see the sun nowhere. When they saw the sun they could see the sun's light everywhere. All Diversity is Oneness, even as the water drops from the rain.'

In one of his Persian verses Sachal exclaims :

I dance, I dance, I dance, to my disgrace,
Everybody proceeds to say, here is madness.

And really Sachal's poetry is that of *exaltation* approximating to insensateness and madness, from the point of a common man. Fitly his most common title is "Sarmast' (thoroughly intoxicated). The poetry of Sachal is full of sound and fury but is also filled with the highest and most valuable sense thoroughly eschewing worldliness and calculation. A certain preparation is required on the part of a reader or a singer to enjoy Sachal's poetry. A humdrum sort of person may not know what to make of it. On the other hand, the poetry of Shah will appeal to any Sindhi in all moods and situations.

Sachal lacks the catholicity, the serenity, and the restraint of Shah. He is not a versatile poet, nor a narrator, and he has no dramatic talent of springing a climax on the reader from hints steadily building up. His poetry is limited in scope and turns on the single topic : '*What am I*', which of course is the most exalted of topics, and of most concern to all of us.

But all Sachal's poetry is incantation, a prelude to magic not magic itself. It is the poetry of inspiration, of the highest afflatus. And in point of *lyrical* intensity and power it yields to no other poetry in the Sindhi language, and recalls, as has already been observed, Shelley or Hafiz. The reader of Sachal's poetry can well imagine him capable of writing under other skies Shelley's *Ode to the West wind* or that brief lyric *O World ! O Life ! O Time !* He can also imagine him to be writing under other circumstances the best lyrics of Hafiz in praise of wine and the beauty of the Beloved, and exclaiming :

O Zephyr ! as you pass that nymph's street
With Hafiz's story her you greet.

It is the unapproachable *kafis* of Sachal that is the best part of his poetry. Because these *Kafis* can be sung like *ghazals* some have divided the *kafis* into *kafis* proper and *ghazals*, but that is an untenable proposition. Sachal's main claim to pre-eminence as a poet is not because of his Sufistic poems but because of his love-lyrics known as *kafis* and which it is the despair of all succeeding Sindhi poets even distantly to emulate.

The *Kafi* is a term given to the amatory spiritual lyric brought into being first by Shah under the name of *Wai*. The *Wai* as an exquisite love plaint at the end of a *Sur* of Shah in which he gave expression to the pangs of separation of the hapless lover. Perhaps the best known *Wai* of Shah is that in which he says that neither the sun nor the moon nor the stars can have the animation of the Beloved, nor can butter, honey, and candy vie with the sweetness of the Beloved. The *Wai* was perfected under the term *Kafi* by Sachal with the verses rhyming not only at the end, but having internal rhymes in the verses themselves. And the *Kafi* has the test and touch of a true lyric : it can be sung and must be sung. Nearly a century and a half has elapsed after Sachal's decease but no one has ventured to challenge Sachal's pre-eminence in the field of the *Kafi*.

The *Kafis* of Sachal always extol Love above Reason and are full of mysticism and the anguish of separation from the Beloved. In Sachal's best known Siraiki *kafi* the first line is : 'The heart that has drunk the cup to the fill (of the wine of love) is ever intoxicated ', and the next line is : ' where is the place for any Religion whether *Kufr* (Heresy) or Islam? Mansur went to the gallows proclaiming " I am God ". This love is going to bring censure upon your head and put you to utter disgrace.'

One of Sachal's most popular Sindhi kafis begins with a confession :

One wanton touch of the Beloved
Has put me off my sense
No longer care I for a fast
Or for prayers have remembrance
For wine I have ever fondness
Whether it be night or day
Be he a Mulla or a Kazi
Cannot make me stay away.

All the lyrics of Sachal are not necessarily mystical. In one of his characteristic 'secular' *kafis* he says :

To whom should I reveal my heart O sisters ?
Punhoon plighted his troth—and left.
I had a peep of the Beloved out of the window
The darling just looked a moment—and left.
He had with him bow and arrows and scimitar
He pierced my heart all right—and left.
How should I know his caste and belongings ?
He rode to Kech on camel's back—and left.
What has Sachal now to do with flax and spinning ?
The Beloved polished the distaff—and left.

Perhaps the best known of Sachal's *kafis* is one in which he gave expression to the highest mystic truth, namely the oneness of the soul with the Oversoul through the alchemy of Love :

He came to know Himself
Naught else had He in view
To be able to realise this
He got enmeshed in love
He alighted from high heaven
To pour a cascade of love
Became Mansur to mount the gallows
Just to have His head cut off.
He treated the bazars of Egypt
Just to be sold for a slave (reference to Joseph).
Sachu speaks the bare Truth
To speak of His sojourn on earth.

Rashdi says that Sachal was conscious that ordinary folk might be misled into wrong paths with all that clatter of Godhead and Man, and that he destroyed some of his more outspoken poems. Whatever may be the fact, Sachal left enough poetry of the orthodox type, i.e. on the model of poets less intoxicated than he, to claim to be the second of the peerless Trinity of great Sindhi poets. Rashdi quotes two specimens. In one of them Sachal addresses the usual messenger of Love, the Sindhi crow, and beseeches him : 'For God's sake, go back to the Beloved and convey to him a message from the forsaken one. But first fall at his feet and give him a hundred salutations and greetings. Tell him, O Beloved where you are not, it is nothing but mourning all the

way. Be pleased to extend a promise that you will come soon.' The other specimen shows Marui yearning to be back in her own place and saying : 'Last night I received the glad tidings that the land of my fathers has bloomed and blossomed. The clouds have burst and lightnings roared apace. The streams are flowing and the rivulets are filled to the brim with water.'

Sachal's Kafis and Shah's Desert Melodies both require a wide space, the heavens above and the earth rolling away beneath, to produce due effect on the listeners, and lift their hearts up to God. The modern fashion to have a crowd in a narrow hall listen to their songs just like film music is to be deprecated. Even then Shah's poetry can perhaps suit all tastes and evoke sufficient response under all circumstances, but Sachal's lyrics, having the spirit of freedom and free-thinking as their very essence, require vastness and free movement in space. Those who have listened at night to one of Sachal's *kafis*, recited or sung by a team of 'intoxicated' dervishes-dancers, in the wide expanse stretching away in all directions from his tomb in Darazan, will never be able to forget the memory of a unique experience.

CHAPTER X

SAMI AND HIS SLOKAS

KABIR has observed in one of his famous *dohras* that the moon may not be *sital* or cool, the very snow (*him*) of the Himalayas may not be cool, but that the saint, the sadhu, is always cool and serene, wrapped up as he is in the love of God. Among Sindhi poets Sami is such a personality. He is always *sital* or cool, wrapped up in the contemplation of his inner self and the love of God, performing all the duties in a busy and long life with perfect equanimity, with malice towards none, and equal regard for the high and low, be it the smallest ant (*chiti*) or the big elephant (*kanchar*).

There is a difference of opinion whether Sami lived to be 107 years old (1743–1850) or whether he lived to be 120 (1730–1850). The Sindhi writer who discovered him to the pubiic, Kauromal Khilnani, said only 30 years after his death that Sami was 107 at the time of his death, but the latest editor of Sami's poems, Prof. B. H. Nagrani, is of the opinion that Sami was 120 years old at the time of his death. There is one reason that may be urged against Nagrani's conclusion which is that by all accounts Sami's son Ghanshamdas was forty years old at the time of his father's death, and if the earlier date be taken for Sami's birth, we must accept it that he was born when his father was *eighty* years old, which is highly improbable. Anyhow, it is admitted on all hands that Sami lived to a ripe old age, and his spare living and equable and serene temperament must have contributed to his longevity.

Of the three great Sindhi poets, Shah lived to be sixty-four, Sachal ninety, and Sami more than a centenarian, which argues well for a man who wants to be a poet and still live a long life. But it is a great change to pass from Shah's narratives and his heroines' wails, and the volcanic eruptions of Sachal, to Sami's calm, serene *slokas* and his state of repose. William Watson has said of Wordsworth : 'Thou hadst for weary feet the gift of rest' and added that men found in him not blast or blaze 'but peace on earth.' A similar tribute may be paid to Sami, and with much more

justice than to Wordsworth (who curiously enough passed away in the same year as Sami !)

Whatever may be the exact birthdate of Sami, he lived through the Kalhora and Talpur era, and witnessed the British occupation of Sind, but there is scarcely a word in his poetry to show that he felt the impact of any rule or administration in his life. The only reference to his lifelong profession or craft is when he glances in his poetry at 'true merchandise' and 'profitable transactions' in a figurative sense. Throughout life he alternated between the biggest place in Sind and the best-known mart in all Central Asia and Western India---Shikarpur—, and the best-known *mandi* or emporium for cloth in Upper India—Amritsar—, but there is nothing to show in his poetry that he was one of the tribe of merchants known all over West and Central Asia in those days, or that he had known the best days of Sikh rule, under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in the holy city of the Sikhs. As a cloth merchant and commission agent, he must have been very very busy, and in constant intercourse, with not only Hindus of his caste and province, but with Pathan merchants and the Sikhs. There is nothing, however, in his poetry to show that he could find anything to distinguish one set of people from the other. If at all he makes any particular mention, it is of the low castes and untouchables, just to emphasise that before God they are the same as the members of the high castes : 'Sami, true greatness belongs to a Bhakta (Devotee), be he anyone. Those who were of low caste attained to high position by self-exertion. The scavengers, the workers in leather, the weavers and spinners, transformed themselves by constant devotion (to God)'.

The central thought, the only thought which mattered to Sami, whether in the cloth-shop or a cloister, was the one to which he gave expression in his best-known *sloka* :

Sami in this house there is another dwelling
And within that dwelling is another residence
In that residence is He that is houseless
Unreached by senses, speech or mind
Pure, indefinable, ever serene
The Guru has revealed this eternal glory.

Various meanings have been given to these lines but the most common is that the Soul, same as the Oversoul, is not the gross body, nor the astral body nor the casual body, and is not reached by the senses or the mind or the intellect or speech.

Of course, there are other *slokas* to point out the way to recognise this Soul, The main thing is to tear off the veil of *Maya* (Illusion) which hides the Reality from our eyes. It is *Maya* which alone succeeds in disturbing Sami to the smallest extent, for he raises his voice ever so little when he has to deal with *Maya*, and he calls it infernal, witch, equivalents of 'bitch', and such other names. Nothing else, neither individual evildoers, nor malefactors in the governing classes, provokes him to ire or censure. For forty years he remained enmeshed in the toils of this *Maya* and then got extricated from it. The fortieth year has proved a grand climacteric in the life of many seekers after Truth.

Chainrai Bachumal (or Murlidhar) Dattaramani, afterwards known as Sami, belonged to the well-known Lund community of Shikarpur, and followed the profession of a cloth-merchant, and commission agent. He is reported, variously, to have acted as an agent of Bhai Gangaram Tindinmalani, and a Pathan merchant of Rawalpindi and Amritsar, but whosoever were his principals, he followed the cloth-merchant's profession all his life, and his hereditary profession was followed by his descendants until the Partition of India. The two chief places for his craft were Shikarpur and Amritsar and he had to make frequent journeys to these two places. His earlier *slokas* were composed at Shikarpur, and the latter at Amritsar, and a whole quarter (*Sami Sheer*) was named after him in Shikarpur, as well as a well of drinking water. There is no record to show that he made any significant impact on the life of Amritsar or its people.

The great event in his life was his meeting with Swami Menghraj, a learned Pandit and Vedantist of his time, who happened to stay at the monastery of Hemandas near Hathi Gate in Shikarpur. Swami Menghraj is said to have originally belonged to Ahmedpur (Bahawalpur State). Some are of the view that he was a Kashmiri Pandit. It is immaterial whether he was a Kashmiri or Bahawalpuri. But his spiritual ministrations made Bhai Chainrai turn a new leaf in his life and become a Vedantist. In his *slokas* Bhai Chainrai never uses his own name but speaks of his *Guru* always, for the most part as *Sami* (a popular rendering of Swami), or *Brahmin* or *Mengho*. In this respect, as in many others, he followed the practice of the Sikh Gurus who in their verses always called themselves after their Master, Guru Nanak. Swami

Menghraj inspired his disciple with the mission to interpret Vedant in his poetry. The aim of Sami, as he expressed it more than once, was *to render the teaching of Vedas in speech (or verse)*. And nobly he fulfilled that mission as *Guru-dakshina* or tribute to his master.

Kalyan Advani, in his 'Sami,' has a given name of a Muslim divine, Ali Nawaz, to whom Sami is said to have gravitated for spiritual instruction and comfort, while other Hindu writers have mentioned the name of Bairagi Naraindas and others. It is needless to lay stress upon Sami's intercourse with either Muslim divines or Hindu hermits, for all that he learnt from Swami Menghraj was enough for him. He has made many references to the four Vedas, the six systems of Hindu Philosophy, 18 Puranas, the Gita, and there was the wholesale influence of the Sikh scriptures upon him. No further instruction was needed to teach him Karma Yoga, Gyan Yoga, Bhakti Yoga or the Vedant doctrines. He is said to have learnt at the feet of his Master when he was twenty-three years old. He took seventeen years to assimilate the teaching, and by forty he was an adept.

Sami's *slokas* include some verses of Muslim and Hindu poets, and he has, besides, paraphrased some verses of Shah, his elder contemporary, to which reference will again be made. This shows Sami's catholic sympathies and wide-ranging knowledge.

The only happening in the life of Sami which the biographers have loved to describe is the manner in which his *slokas* or verses came to be written. It seems that he employed no amanuenses but wrote his *slokas* in Gurmukhi on slips of paper or wood, and placed them in a jar. His son Ghanshamdas collected these slips. Stories are extant how a Sadhu who was to edit and publish these slips disappeared with the manuscript. There must have been more repositories for the slips than one or two jars. It is to the everlasting credit of Kauromal Khilnani, the father of Sindhi prose, that 35 years after the death of the poet he was able to collect 2,100 *slokas* and publish them with a fine introduction, along with a Gist of Sami's teachings from the pen of Dayaram Gidumal.

Kauromal Khilnani's three-volume edition of *Sami* is still highly prized. The first edition appeared in 1885–1890, the second in 1898, and the third in 1914 while the editor was still

alive. The three volumes contain a preface (by the editor), Dayaram Gidumal's gist of Sami's teachings, and a glossary at the end. In the editor's preface we are told that earlier, some infructuous attempts were made by some one in 1874 to include some *slokas* in Sindhi vernacular readers, and that 800 *slokas* were badly printed in Gurmukhi script. The editor took pains to collect 2,100 *slokas*, transcribe them as correctly as he could, and present them to the Sindhi-reading public with whatever biographical facts he was able to gather about Sami's life.

The most valuable part of the editor's introduction is really the last few lines in which he sums up the Vedantist teachings of the poet. He says: 'Sami held the Vedantist doctrine which, in a nutshell, is that *Agyan* (false knowledge) has misled the Jiva (Individual self) into thinking this transitory universe to be *Sat* or true. Five evil forces as *Kama* (lust), *Krodha* (anger) etc., have enmeshed man into their net and made him lose himself in separateness. When, in the company of sadhus, the veil of *Avidya* (No-knowledge) is removed, the idea of separateness will be eliminated from his mind. The illusion of the separateness of self from God will be gone, and the *Jiva* will be dissolved in God even as the ray of light is absorbed in the source of light, or the drop of water into the sea.'

Dayaram Gidumal elaborates these few words in a Gist which is a gem of Sindhi prose. A reader of Sami's *slokas* could have an understanding of Sami with the help of the brief remarks of Kauromal Khilnani and the Gist by Dayaram Gidumal.

Dayaram Gidumal begins by remarking that there are five great adversaries of man which obstruct and retard his spiritual progress, namely Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment and Egoism. Prophets and great masters, various religious men, have warned us against the wiles of these devils but we are so much in their grip that we can scarcely resist them. It is only when a great calamity overwhelms us or serious ill-health that we become conscious of the deletrious working of these five devils, and we begin to remember God. So let us welcome misfortunes and ill-health that we might awaken to a sense of the verities of life.

To cast out these devils the only way is to frequent the society of sadhus or the saintly beings who are wrapt up in

God, who have renounced false pleasures, and who take the good and bad things of life with equal grace.

However, it is not enough to frequent the company of sadhus. One must try to be a sadhu, to have self-realisation and God-realisation. A sadhu is not necessarily he who has renounced the world and turned a hermit. Rather, a sadhu is he who faces the facts of life and bravely faces them. The sadhu considers life to be a trust and discharges the obligations of the trust most faithfully, most distinterestedly. If riches come to him he is not to amass wealth for himself but to distribute it as a trustee. If he is a learned man his learning should be only for the service of others.

Dayaram Gidumal says that Sami's *slokas* lay special stress upon man's giving up his *mamta*, or self-love, and taking to remembrance of humanity and God. Men have died for the love of a woman but the highest act is to live and die for the source of all Beauty. Sami's verses, like those of Shah Abdul Latif, teach self-abnegation and service of others, and inculcate utilisation of all the faculties and endowments, not for personal ends and pelf, but for devotion to God and service of His creatures. In fulfilling this task the sadhu will welcome all the sorrows and calamities, and drink poison as if it were sweet syrup. Dayaram Gidumal says, finally, that the lesson of Vedant is : 'The welfare of others is one's own welfare, the service of others is serving oneself, and the slavery of God is superior to the sovereignty enjoyed by Sultans.' The ethical teaching of Sami cannot be better summarised.

After Kauromal Khilnani's edition several editions have appeared in Arabic Sindhi script, as well as Gurmukhi, one Lahore edition containing as many as 3,500 *slokas*, but the only edition worth noting is the complete edition in four projected volumes (of which three volumes have already appeared) by Prof. B. H. Nagrani. The first volume of this edition appeared in 1955 with a literary introduction from the pen of the present writer in which the meta-physics and ethics of the *slokas* were not discussed at all. It is expected that Nagrani's edition will contain all the extant *slokas* which are said to number more than four thousand. Nagrani's edition contains an exhaustive introduction on Vedantism and the state of Sind in Sami's time as well as the different readings of the *Slokas*. Sami's *slokas* are distributed under appropriate headings such as *Avidya*, *Moorkh* etc., so that the *slokas* can well be studied

theme-wise. The earlier *slokas* on a theme are given first, and then the latter ones. All this must have involved much industry and careful work.

There have been some selections from Sami, the most popular of which was the one made by Wadhumal Mulchand (Kauromal Sindhi Sahit Mandal), in 1938, with a good commentary. Shanti L. Shahani translated into English some of Sami's *slokas* in 1947 under the title of *Songs of the Spirit* which contains also fine introductory matter by two well-known Sindhi Professors, Prof. T. L. Vaswani and Prof. S. N. Pherwani.

Two Professors who have brought out excellent manuals on *Sami* are Prof. Kalyan Advani, whose brochure on *Sami* is a very satisfactory compendium, and Prof. Lekhraj Aziz, who has sought to explain in simple language the metaphysics of Sami. Both of these critical books have been brought out in India after partition

The present writer is not aware of any edition or extensive commentary on Sami written in Pakistan after the Partition. Rashdi's little book in Urdu on Sindhi literature, written after the Partition, makes no mention of Sami, but the Shikarpuri Muslim writer, Prof. Badwi, mentions him with pride as his fellow-Shikarpuri in a book brought out just before the Partition.

Md. Sidik Memon, writing thirty years ago, treats Sami as the last writer in the pre-British era, but he does not consider him to be the least, and he touches a point which no previous writer on Sami had thought of. It is to point out that Sami, though a Vedantist, is in a line with the other Sufi poets of Sind, and has a startling resemblance to them, and only a few points of difference. Memon says that the subject matter of Sami's *slokas* is the same as the poetry of the Sufistic poets *namely, to unite the human spirit or soul with God or the Oversoul purging it of worldly and sensual pleasures and attachments.* He adds that Sami's *slokas* have developed two ideas not to be found in Sufistic thought, (Memon has forgotten a celebrated passage in Rumi), firstly the *Transmigration of the Soul* (and the 84-lakh lives lived before the human state), and secondly the five devils, *Kama, Krodh, Lobh, Moh* and *Ahankara* (the Sufis collectivise them under the title of *Nafs Amarah* or sinning self). But in all other respects Sami's *slokas* and the verses of the Muslim Sufi poets have the same

contents and message. Prominent among these are the following beliefs and doctrines : (1) God is one and without a second. (2) God's creation is without a flaw. (3) Man has continually to make supplications to God. (4) It is necessary to offer *Bandagi* or *Bhakti* i.e., Devotion to God. (5) Mere formal prayer is futile if the heart is not in it. (6) God is everything, and everything proceeds from Him. (7) One must die before actual Death. (8) Learning is infructuous without True Love. (9) The Beloved is within you. (10) True Lovers and Devotees have to undergo sufferings.

It is good that a Muslim writer has dwelt on the similarities in the thought and sentiment of Sami and the Sufistic poets. The truth is that Sami is almost as much a Sufi as Shah and Sachal, with this difference that the doctrines of the Upanishad and the Gita are expounded in his *slokas* and Vedantic 'riddles' brought out in a clear light.

Sami's *slokas* sometimes are so startlingly like Shah that they must have been derived from his poetry. Prof. Lekhraj Aziz has pointed out some *slokas*, as for instance the *sloka* on formal learning being only an accessory to sinning, which, except for one or two words at the beginning of the verse and at the end, is like Shah's well-known verse on the subject. So also the references to Suhni's drowning and the exhortation to Sasui to keep moving in search of the alien with whom she had formed a matrimonial alliance, are taken directly from Shah. Prof. Kalyan Advani has a whole chapter on Shah and Sami.

Sami's *slokas* are indeed just like those of any other Sindhi poet and some of them, when covering more than the usual three or more lines, may be treated like the usual Sindhi *kafis*. One sloka of Sami beginning with :

This unreal Sport is His device
The player chooses His part
Here He is a Pir Fakir and Grandee
There He is a Shaikh, Mulla and Kazi....

is included in the anthologies of Sindhi *kafis* and is sung as a *kafi*. Sami's slokas have a Hindu garb but the content is that mysticism, which delights all Sindhi hearts.

Sami has his peculiarities. His language is entirely that of Shikarpur and Upper Sind, and not so sophisticated as that of Central Sind, but it is definitely sweeter, simpler and more appealing to untutored minds, and specially to women. Except Shah's verses no poet's verses are so familiar to the Sindhi

woman as Sami's *slokas*. Sami appeals to Sindhis because of the uniform tenor, melodiousness, and serenity of his verses. Any other poet except Sami would tire his readers by adhering to a single theme for hundreds of verses. For instance, (in Nagrani's edition) there are no less than 107 *slokas* on *Maya* (Illusion), 120 on *Avidya* (Lack of knowledge), 213 on *Agyan* (False Knowledge or Reason) and 277 on *Gurmukh* (one who has turned his face to the Guru). It is marvellous how Sami is able to interest his readers by what is endless repetition and harping on the same point. Though saying the same thing over and over again, he lends freshness and novelty to his speech, and is always eloquent and persuasive. Poets of love have been able to interest their readers in their subject by repetition, and variations on one theme, but it is Sami's unique achievement to treat of abstractions and spiritual topics and keep his readers continually engaged, and even enraptured. The uniqueness is also derived from this fact that Sami scarcely raises his voice or creates pleasing and seductive images to the mind like other poets. One of Sami's special merits, indeed, is that he writes no romantic poetry and that Love (romantic love) and War are absent in his *slokas*, and yet is so attractive a poet. The wonder is that he is always cool and even ratiocinative. He once remarked that *Love and Reason are two wings of the same bird*. And his *slokas* have the ingredients of divine Love as well as the highest Reasoning both mixed together and lending a peculiar flavour to his poetry.

The Sindhis apply to the poetry of Sami the title *madhu* i.e., sweet. The *slokas* of Sami may lack variety but they are uniformly sweet and melodious. He seemed to have specialised in words and music which are never harsh or grating ' but sweet as is Apollo's lute, and a perpetual feast of nectared sweets.' How he contrives this, nobody has yet analysed or explained. Sami has not eschewed Persian or Arabic words of common usage in Sindhi. There is no ostentation of learning to dazzle the readers, nor slang, or vulgar speech, which might shock refined ears. Sami's poetry is like that of a sweet-water river, deep and unruffled, deceptive to the eye as a simple sheet of water but, when explored, to be found to have a bottom which cannot be reached with a plumb or a line, its water being not only sweet but of sanative value, verily a tonic

Sami's poetry may not be simple, *sensuous*, and sweet, but it is certainly simple, *serene* and sweet. If there is any example of *grand style* to be met with in Sindhi poetry it is in the *slokas* of Sami, but the wonderful thing that it is grand without speaking of Kings and Queens, Heaven and Hell, wars and bloodshed, or even the romance of love. Nor is there any unusual imagery in his poetry. Sami uses the simple conventional imagery of the lotus in a pond, the wide sky, the musk the deer carries unknowingly in its navel, the mirage in the desert, the illusion of a snake in place of a rope, the moth and the flame, the flute of Krishna, etc., and by the aid of this imagery creates a poetic universe not to be met with in other Sindhi poets. Perhaps the two most enduring pictures his grand style has created are those of *Suhagin* (the wife blessed in her husband), and *Begumpur* (the city where there is no misery). The cumulative effect of the poetry of Sami upon the mind of English-educated readers may be compared in some respects to the impression left by a reading of *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Imitation of Christ*.

Sami's own claim was that he was the *interpreter of the Vedas in the Sindhi language*. It was a modest claim and true enough. All that the Hindu culture stands for, the ethics of *Tyaga* and *Vairagya*, and *Ahimsa*, the philosophy of the Vedant, the Karma Yoga, Gyan Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga.... and the rest, may be found expounded in Sami's *slokas* with a skill, simplicity, and completeness which takes the breath away. Those who are curious to know the ethics in Sami's *slokas* may begin with reading Dayaram Gidumal's Gist, those who want to know how these so very simple verses interpret the Hindu metaphysics and technicalities of the Vedant may read Nagrani's exhaustive Introduction, and Lekhraj Aziz's little book. The ordinary reader can enjoy the *slokas* without going into the mysteries of the *Anhad* or *Kundalini* or the various *Pranas*.

Though Sami is an unrivalled singer or interpreter of the wisdom of the Vedas he was careful to add that he was saying nothing new, nothing different, from what others had said, whether Hindus or Muslims. He explicictly said, '*Whether it be in Persian or in Hindi the saints have spoken of the same thing*', and to demonstrate his identity with the Muslim mystics he wrote many *slokas* which could have been written

by any one of them, using Persian-Sanskrit words in an equal measure, for instance a *sloka* begins with *Ajaib Aqul* (Wonderful Wisdom) and says : 'The *Salik* (Adept or Seeker) conferred (upon me) a wonderful wisdom, affectionately. The *Ruh* (spirit) realised it and abandoned all tumult and fury. The soul ascended to *Nur Mahal* (the palace of light) and reached *Haq* (God or Rality) and entered Oneness through the instrumentality of Love.' The terminology in this *sloka* may be called thoroughly Muslim. In another *sloka* there are only two words (*Nirakar*, *Akar*) not readily intelligible to a Muslim. The contents of this particular *sloka* are those acceptable to all Sindhi minds : 'Sami, all that you see is the manifestation of the Wonderful one. It is the Lord who is Himself the beholder, the speaker and listener. He who is without a form has manifested Himself in a form in this Universe.' (*Nirakar* is that which has no form, *Akar* means that which has a form).

To the Hindus who migrated from Sind, two decades ago, Sami's *slokas* are specially dear, but the Sindhi Muslims will find in them a rich treasure which they will do well to cherish and lay to their heart. Sami is one of the three mighty and 'classical' Sindhi poets, and the last and culminating product of the confluence of the Hindu Bhakti-kavi movement and the Sindhi Sufistic thought and movement. After Sami, in the British era, the whole scene changes, and the Sindhi *beyt* and *doha* type of verses are displaced by poetry cast in the rigid Persian prosodic measures.

Chapter XI

POETRY IN THE BRITISH ERA

The conquest of Sind by the British in 1843 was an event of profound significance in the life and literature of Sind. The Muslim rule, which had been established for eleven hundred years and more, was gone. The great change in literary circles was that Persian became of no account; Sindhi had come in into its own. It is true that the Court language was again an alien language i.e., English, but for all common purposes, and at lower administrative levels, Sindhi was the medium of communication and writing.

Naturally, there came to be a hectic activity in and about the Sindhi language. Dictionaries, grammars and vocabularies engaged the attention of scholars. School Texts had to be devised in all the subjects taught—history, geography, agriculture, mathematics, etc. For the next forty years and more, in fact until the foundation of the Dayaram Jethmal Sind College, in 1887, and the commencement of higher education in Sind, the Sindhi intelligentsia were busy in translations from English and Indian languages to suit the requirements of learners in schools in Sind. It was an era of translations.

The growth of Sindhi prose will be the subject-matter of another chapter. In this chapter, mention must be made of a great change which powerfully influenced Sindhi poetry in this era. It was the step taken by Sir Bartle Frere, (who became Commissioner in Sind in 1851), to appoint a Committee which laid down an artificial script for the Sindhi language now called Arabic Sindhi, because it is Arabic plus some letters to denote sounds not known to the Arabic. This script suited both Muslims and Hindus, for the Muslims had to know Arabic script to read the Koran, and the Hindus found it agreeable as they had been used to Persian language and script for generations, and the new Arabic script was very similar to the Persian script. The new script consisted of no less than 52 letters but it is well-adapted to noting down almost all sounds in various languages. For one hundred years and more Sindhi literature has been printed in the Arabic sindhi script. There is now a sharp cleavage of opinion between various sections of Sindhi Hindus settled in India,

after the Partition, whether to scrap this script and adopt Devanagari script in use in India, or whether to stick to the hundred-years-old script. No settlement seems in sight. Time alone can resolve the issue.

The effect of the advent of the British in Sind, and the adoption of the Arabic-Sindhi script, was far-reaching on Sindhi poetry. The Sindhis ceased to write indifferent poetical compositions in Persian (which used to be a favourite exercise with them), and turned all their attention to Sindhi verse-compositions with the great difference that they turned to Persian prosody and Persian poetic forms like *Ghazal, Masnavi, Rubai* etc., for their Sindhi poetry. Not that Persian prosody and Persian poetic forms were not known to Sindhi poets in the pre-British era. Even Sachal had composed some poetry along these lines, and Sabitali Shah's *marsias* belonged strictly to the Persian models. Sindhi poetry, as a whole, was in the old and traditional *beyt* and *doha* forms, even like the poetry in the Hindi language; and the music was meant to be in Hindi *ragas and raginis*. Now all was changed. Sindhi poets, Muslims and Hindus, vied with each other to emulate the Persian poets, and instead of *Risalas*, as of old, there was a shower of *Diwans* of *ghazals*, of *masnavis*, and *rubaiyat*, in imitation of the Persian poets. With such wholesale limitation, it is vain to look in the British era for any giant in Sindhi poetry. Even Bewas, who brought modernity in Sindhi poetry, failed to extricate himself very much from the shackles of Persian poetry. Perhaps the only worthwhile poets in this era are the father and son, Bedil and Bekas who were followers of Sachal.

The British period 1843–1947 may be conveniently divided into two unequal parts namely the period 1843–1907, and the 1907–1947 period. The years 1843–1907 were years of experimentation and translation, in prose, but they were years of *Diwans* and *Musaddases* (six lined stanzas) and *Rubaiyats* in Sindhi poetry, very few of them showing lofty thought or mellifluousness. These *Diwans* were almost all stereotyped. After the praise of Allah follows the praise of the Prophet. After that insipid metrical verses follow in order according to the letter of the alphabet to which the Redif or rhyme belongs. Many of the *Diwans* are to be judged as mechanical exercises or technical triumphs at the best. The *ghazal* was the predominant form of verse in this period, and many of the writers imagined themselves to be compeers of Hafiz, the Master of this

form of poetry ! But all they achieved was an indiscriminate use of images and allusions in the poetry of Persian *ghazal* writers : the moth and the lamp, the *Saki* (cup- bearer) and wine, the cypress-tree and the tulip, the narcissus and the hyacinth, the rose and the nightingale, the spring and the musk, the eyes of the gazelle, the snare of the locks of the Beloved, Leila and Majnun, Shirin and Farhad, Yusuf and Zuleikha .... and so on. The poor lotus and acacia tree, the camel and the moonlight in the desert, Marui and Sasui ..... were put on the shelf. It was the tail of the comet appearing on the horizon when the head had already vanished : the Persian language and Persian writing had disappereared from Sind, but the Persian prosody and the Persian verse forms were in full swing. To introduce Arabic texts from the *Koran* or the *Hadis* was another thing : the best poets in the foregoing age had done it and well. Muslims poets could continue the practice.

The credit of inaugurating the ' Persian ' modes of poetry in Sindhi belongs to Khalifa Gul Mahomed called *Gul*. Rashidi includes his name in the poets of the Talpur period, but every other literary historian mentions his name as the vanguard of the new Sindhi poetry in the British era. Rashdi says that he lived from 1811 to 1856, Md. Sidik Memon gives the years as 1808–1855. The main thing in his life is the publication of the *Diwan* or collection of his *ghazals* which he undertook in Bombay, in 1855, in a press which lithographed books. This edition was in Sindhi script and was the precursor of subsequent *Diwans* printed in Sindhi. The typography was not quite clear, so the Sindhi Sahit Society published an edition in the years of the First World War. Muslim readers were dissatisfied with the edition, and when the Sind Muslim Adabi Society was formed in the ' thirties their 1933 publication was a new edition of *Gul* with an introduction by Kazi Abdul Gafoor who belonged to Hala, the birthplace of Akhund Gul. The poet did not live to see the reception accorded to his *Diwan*, for after seeing to its publication he proceeded for pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, and died there soon afterwards (in 1855 or 1856).

There are 175 *ghazals* in all in the *Diwan* of *Gul*, the last *ghazal* hinting at his imminent death, and concluding with laudation of God and the Prophet. The greatest admirers of Gul have to admit that there is neither *spontaneity* nor *mellifluousness* in his poetry. He had to formulate rhymes ending with hard and harsh consonants, and that he was able to achieve

moderate success speaks volumes for his industry and technical excellence. Gul is frankly didactic and that acts as a brake on whatever poetic inspiration he had. Md. Sidik Memon notes that though Gul knew Persian prosody, his *ghazals* occasionally betray metrical defects ; but that is to be excused, as Gul was a pioneer in his line.

A few of Gul's *ghazals* have achieved popularity. The most popular is the one in which he says : ' O heart ! many a person has gone the round of his existence, come and then left. They have had all sorts of enjoyments and then left. Many a merchant has spent nights and days in buying and selling. Having dealt in worldly lies they have gone .... Many a log went floating in and above the water. When the water ebbed they got high and dry—and left ..... Gul, what may I tell you about the facts of this wordly existence ?' What do you know about it ? O heart, many a person came, and then went away.'

Contemporary with Gul was another poetical celebrity of Hala, another Akhund named Md. Kasim who was probably a little older than Gul. He was born either in 1806 or 1809 and died in 1881. He was in Government service as well as in the service of a Mir for sometime, and being a fine calligraphist was in much demand for writing on posters and signboards. He prepared his *Diwan* in 1875, and it was published under the auspices of Sind Vernacular Society in 1878. Those who practised metrical composition in his time, princes as well as peasants, came to Kasim for correction. Many of them have paid tributes to him for his ' colourful ghazals ', ' verse making ' and ' poetical criticism '. He ventured to criticise some of the novices in poetry writing, in his *ghazals*, and they accepted his censure with seeming satisfaction.

Akhund Kasim's poetry is frequently interlarded with Persian and Arabic verses of his own composition. In his time it may have been a mark of excellence ; to us it detracts much from the merits of his poetry. His Sindhi poetry is only a fraction of his total verse-composition, and comparatively meagre (it is 147 ghazals in all and some *kafis*) ; it is still a very heavy reading because of its theological contents, didactical elaborateness and dryness. He seems to have parted company with both Nature and Man, two recurring subjects in poetry elsewhere. Mirza Kalich Beg is responsible for editing his poems and getting them a wide currency. He had a vast reputation in his days, doubtless because of his metrical expertness and

his veneer of theology as well as Sufism, but now he is much less read than Gul. In one of his *kafis* he has made a parade of bringing together Sasui, Mumal as well as Marui !

A name that is always associated with Kasim and his *Diwan* is that of *Fazil*, (1836–1900) who, though a younger contemporary, is always spoken in the same breath as he, as both the poets had close association, only Fazil was much less given to seriousness and elaborateness than Kasim. Both had their books of poems accepted by the Vernacular Text Book Committee and both had the sponsorship of Mirza Kalich Beg and the pleasure of having their poems read by students. Kasim was a calligraphist and theologian ; Fazil was a jurist of eminence. Fazil's father, Syed Haidarshah, was also a poet and author of *Leila-Majnun* in dohra form.

Fazil wrote *ghazals* as well as *kafis*, and his Sindhi and Persian verses were published in the 'thirties by the Sind Muslim Adabi Society. They have a variety of topics and treat of carnal love as well as spiritual love. He had gone through the experience of a love-affair in his youth and come to the conclusion that it is futile to give oneself up to *Majazi* or carnal passion ; one must abandon oneself to spiritual love only. It is noticeable that the imagery in Persian poetry i.e. the rose and nightingale, and narcissus and hyacinth stuff, are scarcely to be found in Fazil's poetry, which shows his masculine and robust understanding. His *Diwan* contains in its present printed edition less than ninety *ghazals*.

There is much that is common in Kasim's *Diwan* and Fazil's with this difference that Kasim is almost invariably didactic, Fazil dilutes dry instruction with love and its alchemy. When Kasim refers to love he is still didactic. In one of his best *ghazals* Kasim begins with : 'Be steadfast in Love, abandon all other tasks and duties', and ends with the exhortation : 'Kasim, obey the orders of God, keep in dread of Him. Listen to what I say and I say truthfully, abandon all other tasks and duties.' Fazil generally makes use of love as in : 'The lovers perpetually proclaim that they are thirsty because of heart agony ; those who have realised know that the world is a mirage'. Occasionally, be becomes frankly didactic : 'To suffer and to complain mean nothing but bitterness ; sweet is silence. Verily, silence is sweetness all the way. If the tongue wags about calamities it simply gets elongated. The safe course is always to keep sweet silence.' None but those cons-

trained to study Kasim and Fazli for examination purposes would read these *Diwans* in spare time. Gul's *Diwan* is a far better reading ; his outlook and sympathies are far more catholic than either Kasim's or Fazil's.

A curiosity in Sindhi literature was the blind poet, ***Hafiz Hamid Tikhrai,*** who passed away in 1897, at the age of 65, after a busy life in which he showed a wonderful tactile expertness. He worked in a cloth shop, and his touch was so perfect that no one who could see with his eyes the various kinds of cloth could judge them so well as this blind salesman who could tell you what kind of cloth it was by a touch of his hands. He was learned in scriptures, and in the Persian language and literature, and could compose *ghazals*, *qasidas* and other 'Persian' forms of verse with ease. One of his admirers remarks that *Hafiz* was specially known for writing *Khutbas* or Poetical Addresses, which were recited in mosques, at the time of Friday prayers. Another notes that Hafiz rendered, in measured verse, the wails and plaints of some of the heroines in Shah's poetry e.g. Marui and Sasui. He did not leave behind any *Diwan* but only miscellaneous verse on the Persian model. He was fortunate to leave behind him his son, the well-known journalist and satirist, Md. Hashim Mukhlas, who collected his father's Arabic, Persian, and Sindhi poetry and published it under the title of *Armaghan Hamid*. A new feature of the Sindhi verse-composition in this volume was the introduction of certain satirical poems, but the best of Hafiz's poetry is that which describes Marui's impassioned pleas to Umar : 'O Umar ! take away the oppressive chains that make me helpless. Give me leave to go back to my Marus in Malir '.

A colourful personality among the composers of *Diwans* in he second half of the last century was that of Shams-ud-din who took the poetical surname of Bulbul (1857–1919) and became the author of *Diwan Bulbul* (1891) and *Karima Natural* (which is an appendix to the *Diwan*). He was a zamindar, journalist and a poet, and also among the first to awaken the Muslims of Sind from their apathy and ask them to agitate for their political rights. He also won a certain notoriety by eloping with a Parsi woman of Karachi, and intertwining her name with his verse compositions. He wrote several satirical poems, on the lines of Akbar Allahabadi's poems (in Urdu), of which the best known is : 'O ignorant one ! go to London and make love to a lady, and through infatuation for her, proclaim in a church that

you are a Christian.' In some of these satirical verses he writes one line in Sindhi and the next in Persian. The *Diwan* of Bulbul has no poetical inspiration behind it. It is the verse of a journalist, reformer, and satirist. But it is refreshing with its digs at jackets, pantaloons, cheroots, shaving of beard, etc. Even in *Karima Natural,* which is in *masnavi* form, he has one line on the use of whisky, and the petting of lapdogs, and another from the Persian of Saadi, the author of *Karima.* Bulbul is fortunate in having had Dr. Shaikh Md. Ibrahim to write his biography.

Maulvi Abdul Gafoor Humayuni (born 1847) who wrote under the pen-name *Mafutun* (agitated) has left behind him a few poems which have a flow and sweetness rarely to be found in poems of the 'Persian' School.

A book of Sindhi poems appeared in this period which was not a *Diwan* of *ghazals* but a collection of *musaddases* (six-lined stanza poems). It was called *musaddas Abojho* (Musaddas of the unsophisticated one). It won a wide popularity with the Muslim reading public. It was the work of Maulvi Allah Bux who called himself Abojho. Abojho became Persian Teacher in the Muslim Madrasah at Karachi in 1889, and died at his post in 1901. One part of his *Musaddas* is a translation of a poem of the Urdu poet Hali, who wrote it in 1879 to awaken the Muslims to a sense of their past glory, and to inspirit them with a fervour to work for a glorious future. Another part of the poem is devoted to a recital of the movements in other parts of India, led by Syed Amir Ali and others, for the welfare of the Muslims, and also in praise of Hasanali Effendi, his patron and co-worker for the uplift of the Sindhi Muslims. The poem had a topical excellence which gave it a certain currency. Ihsan Badvi has devoted a chapter to this poem in his Sindhi *Essays on literary criticism.*

Two scions of the ruling family of Talpurs (or Mirs) deserve special mention, namely Mir Hasanali Khan Hasam who lived from 1824 to 1909, and his nephew Mir Abdul Husain Khan (1851–1924) better known as Sangi, and probably the most prominent figure among all the poets who wrote in the British era on Persian models.

Hasan was a son of the last ruling Mir of Sind, Mir Nasir-khan, and was in house-captivity in Poona and Calcutta, with other Mirs, until he was allowed to return to Hyderabad in 1862.

His masterpiece is *Sind Jo Shahnamo* which has made som critics give him the title of Firdausi of Sind. His *Shahnam* gives a spirited narrative of the troubled events in Sind fro Sarfraz Khan to the time of Mir Murad Ali Khan, and the bes passage in the poem is that in which Hasan describes the batt between the Kalhoras and The Talpurs. In this passage th words employed are Sindhi, but elsewhere there are passages i which nearly half the words are Persian. Occasionally, h introduces morals in his narrative, specially from the Persia poet Saadi. This is because he was too much in the compan of the poets Gada (Ghulam Md. Shah) and Kasim. He wrot some other poems like *Shahenshah Nama*, but the only poem o lasting literary value from his pen was the *Shahnamo*. Hi poems are completely free from sufistic and amatory matter.

That cannot be said of Sangi, his nephew, who got infatua ed with a European lady in Bengal, espoused her, and celebra ed his nuptials with her in verse, esteeming himself as an ther Jam Tamachi, and his love as an another Gandri or Nur When she died he was disconsolate and went about like a mania until another European or Eurasian lady caught his eye The *Diwan* of Sangi is in two volumes and it appeared i 1904. In the first volume there are about 250 *ghazals* an *qasidas*, and in the other volume are about 200 *ghazals* an *qasidas* and about one hundred and thirty kafis and miscella neous poems. Though he lived for twenty years after this, hi best work was done by 1904 and he must be judged by it.

Sangi was a noted sportsman and poet, and the patron o poets. He wrote, in addition to Sindhi poetry, prose and poetr in Persian and Urdu as well. But his special distinction is tha he is the best ghazal writer in Sindhi. The Persian School o Sindhi poetry is sometimes known as the School of Sangi, an not the School of Gul, or any other Sindhi poet. The writer who have followed Sangi in Sindhi *ghazal* are greatly indebte to him, though they may not acknowledge it.

Sangi's *ghazals* have special merits of their own. Mos other writers have written *ghazals* in the conventional style Sangi has poured his *individual* experiences into them an given them a point and appeal almost unique in Sindhi *ghazals* Md. Sidik Memon has noted that Sangi has introduced image from various trades and professions, even like Shah. His lov poetry is frank and uninhibited. His poem on the Eyes (of th Beloved) is well-known. In one place he says that the fines

muslin of Dacca (the thinnest of all textures) weighs down heavily on the delicately nurtured body of his beloved ! He is natural in his similes and metaphors, and takes them from familiar surroundings.

Sangi is not only an outstanding poet of love but he excels in descriptions of Nature as well. His description of rain in Malir is an apt description as well as a memorial to the Sindhi heroine Marui. He retains the characteristics of the Persian School by making allusions to narcissuses and hyacinths but dilutes these exotic allusions by bringing in the native 'Ratan Jot' and 'Jessamine' flowers as well. He knew the worth of his poetry and has said : 'I am Nizami of his epoch and also Jami. No crudity is there in my *ghazals*. We have cast out all rawness in iove and come out sound and whole. God has been our helper under all conditions.' This 'we' was doubtless reminiscent of his title of 'His Highness.'

Above all, he has the saving grace of humour, and can rail not only against the orthodox Mullas, but even against himself. He describes his futile efforts to retard the evil effects of advancing age by such contrivances as hair dyes. Altogether, Sangi is the most readable, modern and most mellifluous of the Persian School of Sindhi poets, and, with the exception of Bedil-Bekas, the greatest modern Sindhi poet before the advent of Bewas.

Syed Haji Ghulam Shah (Gada) 1826–1905 merits mention, if for nothing else, as an associate and instructor of the two Talpur poets mentioned above. His poetry is that of a courtier, and has nothing special to commend it.

Two other miscellaneous poets of the Persian School of the period 1843–1907 were : Syed Murtazai, author of *Yusuf Zuleikha* on the model of Jami's poem of the same name, with this difference that the Syed has introduced much material not germane to the story of Yusif Zuleikha, and Maulvi Ghulam Mahomed, the author of *Sikandar Nama* (written in 1873 and published in 1889) on the model of the poem of the same name by the Persian poet Nizami, with unhistorical apocryphal and inconclusive accounts of Alexander the Great, with the addition of unnecessary moralisings in indifferent verse.

Diwan Surat Bahar was the work of Surat Singh (1832-1897) who joined the name of his intimate friend, Bahar Singh, in his volume of poems. Surat's poems were devotional and mostly in Urdu, Hindi and Persian. His Sindhi *kafis* are simple, devotional, and full of feeling.

Two high officials in the service of the British Government, who were mainly writers in other fields of literature, but can still be considered as poets of the Persian School, were Lilaram Singh (Khaki), a Civil Judge, and Mirza Kalich Beg, a high Revenue official.

Khaki seems to have cultivated poetry as a dilettante. His *ghazals* have Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Panjabi and Siraiki words interlarded with Sindhi words in almost every passage, and he strains after alliteration. Even his best *ghazal*, in which he says that his sweet beloved is coming presently with gold-laced apparel and a string of camels, is more a clever verse-composition than poetry. He is a learned poet in his allusions, but has no poetic imagination, and he has been criticised for faulty rhymes.

Mirza Kalich Beg (1853–1929) was very different from Khaki. He is the most careful, most learned, most prolific of all modern Sindhi writers, and his stamp is so clear and visible on all departments of Sindhi literature that the entire literary period in British era may be called the Epoch of Kalich. A fuller account of Kalich as an essayist, critic, historian, translator, dramatist, etc., will be given in another chapter, here it will be sufficient to glance at his poetry.

Mirza Kalich Beg's original poems were issued under the title of *Saudai Kham* (immature ravings) in two volumes, one published, and another not published, in his lifetime, in which Sindhi *ghazals* and miscellaneous poems were mingled. He made a translation of the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam, wrote *Kashf Aijaz*, a translation in *masnavi* or narrative form of Shabstri's *Gulshan-i-Raz*, and made translations in verse of passages from English poets, and from Arabic, Persian and Urdu poets in *Amul Manek* (invaluable gems) and *Motiyun-ji-Dabli* (casket of pearls). Afterwards his *ghazals* were collected in a regular Diwan, which, according to Md. Sidik Memon, contains 433 *ghazals*, and *qasidas*, all in Sindhi. A distinguishing mark of Mirza's translation of Omar Khayyam was the Introduction to it written by Dayaram Gidumal, which reaches the summit of Sindhi prose, and gives the translation a peculiar place in Sindhi literature.

Mirza Kalich Beg wrote lyrics in his dramas, one of which has become very well known, namely, the lyric in *Khurshid* which contains a woeful plaint : 'Sincerity is disappeared from this world. Strange is the whirligig of Time. Rogues

and liars have come to the top.' Better known is the poem which may be sung as a *ghazal* or *kafi* : 'What if the worldly aim has been attained at last? If the ultimate object, the Lord, is not reached, what matters if everything else is within grasp?'

Saudai Kham contains, mostly, the compositions of Mirza Kalich Beg when he was a young man, and all the lyrics he wrote for his dramas are also gathered in this book. Mirza Kalich Beg composed verses until the last, but it is safe to say that all his best poetry was written in the first fifty years of his life.

In his translation of the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam Mirza Kalich Beg was a pioneer. Scores of Sindhis are even now writing *Rubaiyat* or quatrains in Sindhi, and they are indebted to Mirza Kalich Beg. One can hardly imagine that these *Rubaiyat* are translations, they are so natural and happy in expression. Edward Fitzgerald's success in English in his translation (or adaptation) of the original quatrains of Omar Khayyam was matched by Mirza Kalich Beg's happy translation. All the verse translations of Mirza Kalich Beg were not so felicitous. He was a very unequal writer, and many times he printed what should have been better destroyed. His output was tremendous and the quality very uneven, sometimes even jejune.

In his original poems he was an expert craftsman and knew and observed the rules of Persian prosody. But he lacked poetic inspiration; it was mostly 'perspiration'. It was industrious application that earned for him the first place in all literary circles, whether of poets or prose writers. He was inclined to be too moral, instructional, and dogmatic, and in his lifetime was the great 'Cham' of literature, like the great Dr. Johnson. But some of his love-poems are much above the level of the love-poems of poets of the Persian School. The *ghazal* which begins with : 'Don't slay me, bit by bit, with your coquetry, O Beloved! Don't cast me out farther and farther from your presence, O darling! I have agreed to be killed, but you can take pity. Let your dagger pierce O killer! but do it slowly and more slowly", shows that beneath the solemn and almost forbidding exterior of the Mirza there was beating a heart tender and susceptible.

All the poets in the period 1843–1907 did not lose themselves in arid imitations of Persian poets. There were some

who continued, for instance, the traditional method of composing poems on love and allied subjects, and on sufistic themes. To Udharam Thanwerdas belongs the credit of first collecting Sindhi story poems and supplementing them with his own verses in *dohra* form in Readers meant for classes in Sindhi primary schools. The first poem so published was the story of *Rai Dyach* partly in verse, and partly in prose, in 1861, and was followed by the love story-poem of *Kamsen and Kamrup* (composed by the blind Lalu Bhagat) in 1869, and the story of *Mehr Munir* in 1871. The poem entitled *Rai Dyach* was mostly made up of Shah's verses in *Sur Sorath*, but the concluding stanza in which praise is showered upon Rai Dyach, his mother, his wife (Sorath), Bijal, and Bijal's wife, and the malediction is reserved for Anairai only, and the reader is instructed to remember the name of Ram, is Udharam's own composition.

Kamsen and Kamrup is the love-story of Kamsen, the son of Raja Nar Kar Pal, and Kamrup the beautiful daughter of Raja Jaisingh, and employs the machinery of supernatural agencies. Md. Sidik Memon testifies to the fact that Lalu Bhagat's *dohras* in this poem are finely strung and pleasing, and the love story appealing and full of pathos.

The story-poem of *Mehr Munir* and *Badr Munir* is rendered from Urdu. It is much inferior to *Kamsen and Kamrup* in poetical merit.

Akhund Abdur Rahim Abbasi divides the credit with Udharam for helping in the preservation of Sindhi story-poems. He published in 1871 the story of *Saif-ul-Maluk and Badi-ul-Jamal* composed by someone who has only given his name as Bahar. The story is in 356 *dohras*.

Akhund Abdur Rahim was also instrumental in compiling the story of Umar Marui in verse from the *dohras* composed by Shah as well as Ahmed Fakir Kabir Shah and other lesser poets. He has to his credit the task of bringing to light the story-poem Sasui Punhoon which was originally composed by Arif Kalhoro. All these poems appeared about the year 1871.

Akhund Abdur Rahim also brought together some other story-poems. (1) The story of generous Waqyo, of Cutch, and the equally generous Lakho Jam of Sind, said to have been composed by some poet who called himself Haji, (2) the story of Jam-Jam Sultan composed by some one who called himself Mir and (3) the story of the loves of Bahram Shah and Gul Andam originally composed by Chato Khati (washerman) and

(4) the story of Ajaib Shah (and Noosh Lab) composed by various poets. None of these stories can lay claim to poetic merit. They are valuable only as curiosities and to show that in the early days of the British rule all the Sindhis who attempted verse composition did not follow the Persian models. Md. Sidik Memon deserves thanks for chronicling (in his Sindhi History of Literature) these story-poems.

In the period 1843–1907 one story poem made its mark and was reprinted for a dozen times or so, mainly because it became a favourite with school students and teachers, alike. Even the general readers liked it very much, and it was perhaps the best narrative poem produced in Sindhi in the British days. It was the story-poem of *Sasui Punhoon* by a Hindu named Moryo Fakir, son of Pursumal, published in 1873. It was a flowing narrative and related the main events in the chequered careers of Sasui and Punhoon in the truthful, unbiased, and feeling manner, considering the fact that a Hindu was relating the story of the love of the daughter of a Hindu Brahmin (Naoon) for a Muslim Prince. The surprising thing about the poem was that the author claimed to have finished it in three days.

A Hindu poet who got celebrity for his poetical writings, not as a poet of the Persian school, but as a traditional Sindhi poet with sufistic ideas, was Master Asoomal of Hala who was born in 1853 and published a *Diwan* in 1897 followed by a *Risalo* and another books of poems entitled *Prem Ghuncha*. He was a follower of the Jhok school of sufis, and at the same time imbibed and propagated the doctrines of yoga and vedanta. In his poems is a curious mixture of recondite Sanskrit and Arabic words and phrases, so that neither Hindus nor Muslims can follow him easily. Even when he describes spring or Holi he cannot help lending abstruseness and spiritual significance to natural scenes and events and innocent amusements. His *ghazals* lack flow and sweetness.

Contemporary with Asoomal was another Hindu poet filled with vedantist-sufistic ideas whose poems are rapidly gaining ground among Sindhis in Free India. Jiwatsingh, disciple of Sain or Saint Villaitrai, was born in Kambar, Larkana, in 1840, and passed away in 1899, leaving behind him a large circle of admirers and associates. He practised as a physician, late in life, and patients flocked to him. His verses have not much poetic merit in them, but they lend themselves to recitation and

song. His chief disciple and successor in composing sufisti verses was Bhojraj Motwani (1867–1920).

Several Hindu Bhahats wrote *slokas* in this period, in imita tion of Sami's *slokas*, but they cannot be termed as poets. Pro minent among these *sloka* writers were Taro Bhagat, whos *slokas* were published in 1895, and Swami Dharamdas o Larkana, who had a large following because of his saintliness

Two Muslim Sufi poets of this period, who have inspire Hindu adherents to write their biographies, were firstly, Kut Shah of Jahania, Hyderabad Sind (1813–1910), and Budhal o Upper Sind (1865–1939). Prof. Jhamandas Bhatia is th biographer of Kutb Shah, and Anandram Rajani of Budha Anandram has also collected in this biography the poetry o Budhal.

There is not much difference between the poetry of Kut Shah and Budhal. The sufistic ideas are the same, but Budhal' poetry is much more varied, for he makes use of Sindhi heroine Marui, Sasui, and the Panjabi heroine Heer, extensively, in hi *kafis*. In both Kutb and Budhal there is the same catholicity o views, and freedom from fanaticism, and the same regard fo performance of rituals as necessary formalities. As poet however, they cannot be placed in the front rank.

That cannot be said of the father and son, *Bedil* and *Beka* who not only stand in the front rank of Sindhi poets but ma claim superiority over all Sindhis who have tried their hand a verse, whether on the Persian model, or in the traditional Sindh manner, excepting, of course, that peerless trio, Shah, Sachal an Sami. Bedil and Bekas were sufi poets, strictly in line wit Sachal, but whenever they wanted they could write poems o the Persian models as well. And ,as a matter of fact, they hav left more *Persian* poetry than poetry in the Sindhi languag *Bedil* signifies the man who has given away his heart, whil *Bekas* signifies one who has no one to call his own. Fakir Kadi Bux (Abdul Kadir) known as Bedil, was born at Rohri in 181 and passed away in 1872. He was lame in one foot, but, in spit of that handicap, he made many arduous journeys, considerin that means of transport were very few at that time. He unde took a journey, mostly by boat, to Sewhan to pay his respects a the shrine of Lal Shahbaz, (he has repeatedly referred in h poetry in devotional and glowing terms to Lal Shahbaz, at th shrine of the Master of Sufis, Shah Inayat the martyr of Jho and at the great poet Sachal's shrine at Darazan, which w

near his place of residence (Rohri). It would be pleasant to contemplate that he and Sachal had met together, and that as Shah had nominated Sachal to be his spiritual heir, Sachal had in turn passed on the crown of Sindhi sufistic poetry to Bedil, but we can only make guesses at truth. This much is certain that Bedil got his poetic inspiration from Sachal, on whose death he wrote the finest elegy in the language (reference has been made to it in the chapter on Sachal). Bedil was a lad of fifteen, (or some say twelve) when Sachal passed away.

Bedil was one of the most learned of Sindhi poets. He knew Persian, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Siraiki dialect of Sindhi, and Sindhi, and is said to have had a knowledge of Sanskrit as well. But learning sat lightly on him, as also worldly goods. Whatever presents or offerings he got he promptly distributed among those who happened to be near him, or sent it to those who were the keepers of holy shrines.

Many miracles are recorded, testifying to the extraordinary and supernatural powers of Bedil, but it is not necessary either to believe or disbelieve them. He put himself in the hands of God and prayed for no undue favours or gifts. The main event in his life were his successive infatuations (for they can scarcely be called loves.) He was first taken up with the beauty of a Brahmin woman living opposite his shop, who promptly complained to her people that he was looking too intently at her. The next object of his infatuation was a Hindu boy Karmchand. The third was a Shikarpuri fakir, Ghulam Md. whose early death made him wild with grief. But the fourth and final target was Kazi Pir Md. of Rohri who predeceased Bedil by three or four years and made him so unhappy that he longed for his own death. The death of the Kazi moved him to write the sorrowful verse : 'O friend ! how could you find it in your heart to leave me alone and have no thought of me ? Without you, O beloved, my heart is restless, and my life bitter agony .'

It must not be thought that Bedil was given to immoral practices. He married two women, one of whom was the mother of Bekas (or Md. Mohsin). Bedil followed the precept of Jami the great Sufi poet who said : 'Turn not your face away from love even if it be *Majazi* (Physical) for it makes the way for *Haqiqat* (Reality or spiritual love.) And Sufis regard *Majazi* love as the bridge that leads to *Haqiqi* love. Bedil was a great lover of beauty in human shape.

We have a full account of Bedil's life, his associates, and anecdotes about him, thanks to the patient investigations of Gidumal Harjani, who has published a biography of Bedil as well as of his son Bekas, with the *Diwan* or collected poems of both the poets. Gidumal Harjani has not attempted, however, to annotate or to write a commentary on the poetry of Bedil and Bekas. From the interest aroused by his publications it is hoped that some one will make up this deficiency. Gidumal Harjani has pointed out the defects in the Pakistani edition of Bedil's works. Bulchand Rajpal has also done some work on Bedil's poetry.

The poetry of Bedil occupies many volumes in languages other than Sindhi. His poems in Sindhi comprise three volumes, namely *Vahadat Nama*, *Srood Nama*, and a small section called *Faraiz Sufia* (Duties of a Sufi). There are miscellaneous poems as well. There are *beyts* as well as *kafis* in these volumes.

Bedil is of the school of Sachal with the great difference that there was nothing of the spirit of revolt in him. There are no diatribes in his poetry against Makhdums, Akhunds and Mullas. If anything, Bedil was afraid to wound the susceptibilities of priests in his conduct or in his poetry. He could not help shocking some people by his infatuations or amatory fixations, but these trespasses upon decorum were easily pardonable in a sufistic poet. While Bedil lacked the fire, fury and freedom of thought, of Sachal, he captured in his poetry something of the lyricism and melody of Sachal in his *beyts* and *kafis*.

And, of course, his thought is entirely that of a Sindhi Sufi. His most quoted *kafi* is one in the Siraiki dialect which expresses his sufistic thought : 'Learn the art to annihilate self. There is no need either to learn or to teach. The Beloved is not to be discovered through argument. Reason or Intellect cannot lead you to Him.' In another *kafi*, which is probably his most popular *kafi*, he comes nearest to Sachal : 'I am what I am. I put on various garments, and again divest myself of them, sometimes Hindu, sometimes Momin (Muslim). Various colours I have, various hues and disguises. I turn Mumal and in that garb I kill a thousand suitors. My secret is known only to the mad topers who recite it in glee. In this manifest (or phenomenal) world I go about, for the sake of pretence, by the name of Bedil.' This *kafi* is perhaps one of the half a dozen best *kafis* in the language.

His death was commemorated by his worthy son in a poem which recalls but does not rival the matchless elegy, inscribed to the memory of Sachal, by his father. Fakir Md. Mohsin *Bekas*, the son of Bedil, whose name as a poet is inextricably connected with his father's, was born in 1859, and passed away in 1882. He was brought up and educated by his father, after whom he took in every way, even to the rendering of allegiance to Lal Shahbaz of Sewhan, and infatuation with the beautiful in human flesh. Bekas fixed his affections on a boy Kanyo, and another boy Hiro. But, unlike his father, Bekas himself was also lovely in looks and attracted much notice because of his gaudy dress and attractive mien; he is said to have neglected his wife which his father could never be accused of doing.

Bekas died young while he was only twenty three years old. But he has left enough poetry to invite a comparison with Keats like whom he might be called 'sensuous.' The *kafis* of Bekas are affecting e.g. the *kafi* beginning with : 'Separation from you has killed me, come back soon, reviver of my life', and 'Do not get angry with me, O dearest, my heart's confidant ! Let us get together once again.' Assuming himself to be another Marui, he feelingly cries out : 'The yearning for my parental folks is making me shed tears night and day. I am here sitting helpless, in agony, for Marus, and they are drinking milk over there. My breath goes out to them every now and then.' For the rest, the thoughts in Bekas are so much similar to those of his father that their poems could easily be interchanged or mistaken, one for the other.

The Period 1907–1947

This period was one of literary activity in the field of prose rather than poetry. Men's minds turned in this period to politics and social reform, and that atmosphere of restfulness or leisurely living was absent which would have been congenial for the growth of poetry. Besides, it was a period of young crusaders and they had neither the equipment nor time to indulge in such a luxury as poetry.

The Muslims in Sind suddenly found themselves thrust in posts of power and profit in their own land after half a century of political stagnation. Separate electorates were given to them, after 1907, and guarantees of high office out of all proportion to their qualifications, but in keeping with their preponderance in number. Thirty years afterwards they found themselves the

ruling caste, in a separate province of their own, and forty years afterwards they found themselves in the proud position of being in the capital and central place in Muslim Pakistan. Within a few years they found themselves overwhelmed by their co-religionists from other parts of Pakistan, and now they have neither Sind nor an official Sindhi language, and they have reverted to their century old conditions with the difference that they have now to learn Urdu in place of Persian.

The Hindus in Sind were freedom fighters, throughout this period; being inspired by the Bengal patriots, at first, and then by the campaign of Mahatma Gandhi and his associates. Swami Vivekananda's speeches and writings on Vedanta were in the hands of every educated Hindu. The Congress transformed itself from a body of 'arm-chair' politicians to a realistic political movement, after 1907. The first World War broke the myth of European wisdom, goodness and hegemony, and exposed the evils of Western civilisation. The Hindus clung to Sind as long as Sind was Hind, but when the Sindhi culture was in danger of being sacrificed to fanaticism, and alien ways of living, the Sindhi Hindus made a beeline for Hind, where they have held fast to their culture which is an integral part of the Indian culture.

Naturally, it was not a time for the composition of *Diwans* and *Risalas* as in the past. Curiously enough, the chief protagonist of the preceding Persian School of poetry was a Hindu, Lekhraj Kishinchand, who called himself *Aziz*. He was born in 1904, and he is still happily with us. But he has changed in the years after the Partition. In the pre-Partition years he published his collected works or *kuliyat* in two volumes one containing his *ghazals* in which he has specialised, and the other volume containing *masnavis* or narratives of *The Queen of Egypt* and *Alchemist*, derived from the Sunder Sahitya publications.

Aziz had qualifications for writing *ghazals* and *masnavis* in Sindhi which few Hindus or Muslims had. He was a good student of Persian as well as of the English language ; he had taken part in Muslim organised *mushairas* as well as cultural associations organised in a first class College in Bombay (Elphinstone College). He was a zemindar and had come in contact with peasants and rustics who preserved undefiled their native language. Aziz had acquired a mastery over Persian prosody which was the despair of many, and he knew Persian and

Arabic words as well as words of Sanskrit origin—a difficult combination in the Sind of his days.

Aziz took part in the literary controversies of the day against both Hindu and Muslim opponents, Hindus who were admirers of Bewas, the founder of the new and modern school of poetry, and Muslims who admired the strict upholders of the Persian traditions, like the poet 'Wasif.

The technical excellence of the poetry of Aziz has been generally granted as also the copiousness of his diction, but there is a serious doubt whether he possesses the *imagination* of a poet, and whether he should not be called a derivative poet. His antagonists have often traced his poems to some foreign source ; he believes that a poet must draw largely upon whatever poetic material comes to his hand. Some of Aziz's short poems have been studied in the classroom, but it cannot be said that any of his *ghazals* or *masnavis* have become popular reading. The poetry of Aziz does not lend itself to quotation or recitation. His *ghazals* and other poems must be read as a whole to be enjoyed.

The difference between Aziz and popular poets cannot be better illustrated than by comparing his poem on the *Sindhu* with the earlier and famous poem on the same subject by Hyder Bux Jatoi, he wrote it while he was in College. Jatoi's address to the Sindhu or Indus river has reached nearly every Sindhi, and the poem is recited with glee, but the very learned poem of Aziz has fallen flat upon Sindhis, even those who have made a fetish of the Sindhu after the Partition. Hyder Buz Jatoi wrote his Address or Apostrophe to the river of the Sindhis in the 'twenties. After that he produced some excellent *Rubaiyat* and wrote a *Shikwah* or complaint in the manner of the Urdu poet Iqbal, and published it in a volume wherein he extolled, among other things, the hill-station of Mussoorie. His book gave offence to bigoted Mullas, and it was withdrawn from circulation. Then Jatoi leaped into the political fray, and became the rallying point for those who stood for the peasants and shouted *Hari Haqdar*. He is a rare man who has deliberately sacrificed not only his job, but also his poetical career, and has been courting imprisonment, just for the sake of the poor and the oppressed. At one time he promised to be the most outstanding of living Sindhi poets.

Another Hindu poet, who had neither the technical excellence of Aziz, nor the heroic qualities of Jatoi, but who was a

gentle modest soul, a lovable figure ever trying to learn from his betters, and improve his knowledge and skill till he became a true poet of the masses or *Janta*, was Parsram Hiranand *Zia* (light). In the pre-Partition days he published his poems in a volume entitled *Taswir-i-Ihsas* (Picture of sensibility), 1943, which many admirers of Zia, as they knew him in after days, will scarcely believe to be his composition. But read with care it shows the poet in the making. *Taswir-i-Ihsas* is written with an eye to his audience which he knew was Muslim, and it won the approbation of Dr. Daudpota, Director of Public Instruction, who awarded a prize for it. The diction of the poet is unnatural. He talks of Kaaba, Imam Husain and idol-temples like any Muslim poet, and follows up a poem addressed to Krishna, ' the King of the Flute ', with a poem addressed to the Prophet, whose intercession he wants on the Day of Judgment, saying that though he is not a Muslim he is a follower of the Prophet. The *Rubaiyat* have the conventional allusions to the wine-bearer (*Saki*), prayers and prostrations (*Sijdah*) and Kaaba. The best poem in the volume is that which is entitled ' Remembrance of one's native land in a foreign country '. . The Muslim poet from whom Zia learnt writing poetry was Murad Ali *Kazim*, himself a minor poet of the Persian school of Sindhi poetry, part-author of *Gulzar-i-Ranjoor*.

Other Hindus who wrote worth-while poems on the Persian model in the period were the learned Dr. H. I. Sadarangani who composed very readable and enjoyable *Rubaiyat* (Quatrains), Sobhraj Nirmaldas, son of an eminent Hindu scholar of Persian and Arabic (Nirmaldas Fatechand), and author of poems which were read in schools. It cannot be said that the Hindus in this period produced any volume of poems on the Persian model which would entitle the author to be mentioned in the same breath as Bedil-Bekas or Sangi.

Poetry written in this period by Muslims is not impressive. The old system of composing *Diwans* continued but the only *Diwan* that has survived and been reprinted is the *Diwan* of Md. Bux Wasif which appeared first in 1922 and was reprinted in 1955. The opening *ghazal* is written in the Persian language and is followed by verses in Urdu. The Sindhi *ghazals* open with an apostrophe to the Prophet, after which comes the conventional mention of Love in a manner bordering on pathos : Today have collected many of the goods of love in my heart, that

one to be agitated at his present time, even the locks of the beloved one have become distracted.' Somehow, the so-called poet had got to bring in Love, the Beloved, and the ringlets or locks ! The rest of the *ghazals* are no better ; they contain nothing but cliches.

More pleasing by far are the *kafis* and stray poems like those of Nawaz Ali Jafferi (Niyaz) and Agha, and such other Muslim poets. Nawaz Ali gives a new and pleasing twist to the story of the Nightingale and the Rose, and employs several poetic devices to aid in the flow and melody of his verses. Another agreeable poet was *Kojhi* (the ugly one) Md. Bux, who was a devoted follower of the shrine at Darazan.

The most pleasing, elegant, and unexceptionable book of poems by a Muslim in the Persian metrical fashion was brought out in the ' forties by Ghulamali Rahim Bux *Masroor* of Shikarpur under the title of *Musaddas-i-Masroor* or *Heeran-Jo-Har* (A necklace of diamonds). He employs the terminology of the Sufis (*Sifati, Zati*), the allusions beloved by the theologians (e.g. Fort Khyber, Adam's Trust etc.) and the poetic form beloved of the Persians, but he blends all discordant elements in a harmonious manner and leaves a sense of fluency, ease, and sometimes, even of eloquence, upon the mind of the reader. Without being pointedly didactic he teaches moral truths welcome to Hindus as well as Muslims. Primarily his volume of poems is meant for young readers, for he fondly believes that 'the foundation of everything in the universe is based upon proper education or nurture', but readers of all ages will like to wear this Necklace of Diamonds.

An unusual book of poems appeared in this period from the aged sage and savant Dayaram Gidumal (who called himself Nimano or Humble, Zero, and such other names) under the title of *Mana-ja-Chahbook* (whips or scourge of the mind). It is a philosophical poem in rhythmic verse, but not metrical verse by any pattern, and may be called one of the first poetic works in free verse in Sindhi. Dayaram Gidumal was as conversant, as a Sindhi could hope to be, with Sufism as well as Vedantism, and was a devoted follower of the devotional teachings of Guru Nanak and the Sikh Gurus. A synthesis, which is rare to find, of all these systems, is to be found in *Mana-Ja-Chahbook* (1923-1926), and the book is likely to be considered in the long run as one of the epoch-making works in the Sindhi language. It

puts a seal of finality upon the author's previous translations, in prose, of such works as Patanjali's *Yoga* and the *Bhagvad-Gita*. Dayaram Gidumal's fine poem on *Sindhri*, extolling the synthetic and composite quality in Sindhi culture and history, is deservedly famous.

Another work of merit in Sindhi poetry is *Poorab Sandesh* (Message of the East) described in brackets as *Buddha-Jiwan* (life of the Buddha), produced in 1937, by Dewandas Kishnani *Azad*, to which the present writer had the pleasure to contribute an introduction. The book was an adaptation of Arnold's *Light of Asia*. The poet was not exactly of the School of Bewas, but he had derived something from Bewas, and had eschewed the arid imagery and unnaturalness in diction and sentiment which the writers of the Persian School delighted to indulge in. Azad combined the freshness and boldness of Bewas, to his own boyish exuberance and joy of life, and produced a poem of exceeding vigour and sensuous appeal.

Poorab Sandesh is a narrative poem in six-lined stanzas, the first four lines in a stanza having the same word at the end as a rhyme, a different rhyme serving the last two lines. These six-lined stanzas are enriched and varied by lyrical passages which break the monotony of the narrative stanzas. Some of these descriptions might have been taken from a traditional sufistic poem or a love poem. For instance, stanza 69 runs as under : 'He took a sip from his Beloved as if from the tavern of love, and became insensible to anything else save the intoxication thereof. Then followed the delightful game of alternate caresses and breaks-up. The woman was filled with yearning for her man, and he was filled with longing for her. Their entire time was taken up with love, it became an endless medley of dance, song and enjoyment.' Under the term *Padmini* he celebrates the beauty and charms of Gautama's Yashodhara. As soon as he gets to Buddha's Illumination he discards this sensuousness and takes up a severe tone. But his exuberance and youthful vigour burst through all restraints.

Azad's *Poorab Sandesh* was probably the most enjoyable adaptation or translation in Sindhi poetry of a poem in a different language, but there were several other poetic translations of remarkable merit. Chief of them was the translation in metrical verse, strictly according to Persian prosody, of *Bhagvad Gita*, by Prof. N. V. Thadani in 1923. Verse-translations were already

there in Sindhi, of *Bhagvad Gita*, by Mulchand Lala, Menghraj Kalwani, Chainrai Bulchand, and others, but Thadani's translation was altogether different, and it gave some idea of the sublimity and loftiness of the original to those who knew not Sanskrit. While N. V. Thadani was always serious and high pitched, his brother R. V. Thadani went to the opposite extreme and issued *Nonsense Rhymes for Children* in lithograph print in the 'forties which now are hard to get but deserve reprinting . One of the most catching of these nonsensical rhymes is that which talks of Bhagat of *Bhambor* whose father was a *chor* (thief).

Sadhu T. L. Vaswani's free verse translation of *Bhagvad Gita*, however, found a larger audience than N. V. Thadani's metrical and learned version, because it was couched in simpler language, and was brought to the notice of the large body of the followers of the religious teachings of the Sadhu. Other miscellaneous free-verse poetic outpourings of the Sadhu, under the pen name of Nuri (the consort of Jam Tamachi), too, attracted a large number of readers who appreciated the simplicity, humility, and devotion of the author.

Nanikram Dharamdas Mirchandani attempted a verse-translation of Kalidas's famous *Meghdoot*, in 1947, with a running commentary on the opposite pages. The stanzas were in the traditional Sindhi *beyt* form with the identical rhyme at the end of the first three lines, and in the middle of the fourth line. The language used is simple and elegant. This translation did not attract much attention because it appeared in the year of the Partition of India. In spite of the translator's efforts at poetic alliteration and assonance the verse composition looks like poetic prose, and does not give any idea of the poetic intensity and lyrical feeling of one of the world's great poet-dramatists. All that can be said of the translation is that it is pretty but not Kalidas, as someone said of Pope's translation of *Homer* that it was pretty but not Homer.

That cannot be said of Prof. M. U. Malkani's poetical renderings of Rabindra Nath Tagore's *Gardener* (in *Preet Ja Geet*) (1940) and *Gitanjali* (1942), though he himself claims in the former that he is the writer of merely 'poetic prose'. Following Dayaram Gidumal, this learned and versatile Professor opens a new path for Sindhi poetry in free verse. Some passages in *Gitanjali* have been much appreciated by all ranks of Sindhis. The best tribute to Malkani as a translator and poet

is that Sindhis who have read Tagore's works, as rendered by himself in English, opine that he has captured something of the flow and fragrance of the original. Some passages in Malkani's *Gitanjali* lend themselves to recitation as well as song.

Another Professor who also attempted translation in prose resembling free verse was Prof. D. K. Mansharamani who translated Nazrul Islam's outspoken poems in the cause of freedom under the title of *Bagi* (Rebel).

The new School of Poetry

The period 1907–1947 saw a change coming over Sindhi poetry, both in content and form, mainly through the instrumentality of a gentle soul, exceedingly humble and mild, but tough and unyielding in his convictions. A schoolmaster who adopted the name of Bewas or Helpless opened a new horizon for lovers of poetry.

The time was fully ripe for such a change. After more than sixty years of insipid and monotonous verses, and theological and moral cliches, on the part of the school of Akhund Gul Md., readers wanted something modern and new. The old similes and images of the cypress and the beloved, the narcissus and the hyacinth, the rose and the tulip, the eyes of the gazelle, the *saki* and the wine, the moth and the flame, coral lips and pearly teeth, the mole on the cheek .... and allusions to Shirin Farhad, Yusuf Zuleikha, and Leila Majnun .... had begun to pall on the jaded reader. The theological genuflexions and subtleties no longer attracted the modern man or woman. The poetry of Sufism and Love delighted the Sindhis still, but they did not want merely a jarring paraphrase of some Persian poet. The *kafi* held its own but it had to be simple, sensuous and sweet—which the followers of Gul were unable to give to their audience.

Bewas was not the first or the only poet to open a window on modern themes in his poetry. Twenty years had elapsed since the founding of the D.J. Sind College, and plenty of writers in the College *Miscellany* were there to adopt new themes and modes of poetry. A fine example of this modernity was Bherumal Mahirchand who wrote in the year 1901 a long poem in the *Miscellany* in the traditional Sindhi *beyts*, on salt miners at Maurypur, and conveyed broad sufistic truths through the mouth of the mother of one of these miners. He translated some English poems, too, the most telling being Eliza Cook's poem on Time. Bhawandas Khubchand wrote in the *Miscellany*

3-lined *beyts* on Separation, in 1909. Four years later Md. Sidik Memon wrote two-lined *beyts* on Morning in an original manner. Lilaram Premchand wrote in like manner, in 1916, on Alexander's Testament.

Kishinchand Tirathdas Khatri, known to the Sindhi world as *Bewas*, was born in 1885 and passed away in 1947 in his ' Jashan Khana ' (the House of Joy) at Larkana, which had become a rendezvous of the rising generation of Sindhi poets. He was a ' primary ' school-teacher and rose to be Headmaster. The superintendent in the Teachers' Training School caught him composing verses at the age of 16 and prophesied that he would become a great poet. In 1907 he was already a poet.

Bewas began hesitatingly with poems for children and dramas for the stage. The poems for children gathered now under the title of *Shirin Shair* (sweet poems) are the simplest and sweetest poems in Sindhi for the juveniles. One peculiarity of Bewas is that he can write unsophisticated and simple poems, as well at highly complex and intellectual poetry as in *Samundi Sipoon* (sea pearl-oysters) which, according to Fatehchand Vaswani, life-long friend and publiciser of Bewas, is his best work. It is full of modern thought : in the very first ' Pur ' or canto of the poem he refers to Lord Krishna and makes the announcement : ' He has abandoned Mathura and Gokal. He is no longer the Lord of Jamuna. Engage yourself in the service of society and enquire therein about the whereabouts of the beloved Lord of the Flute.' All the verses in *Samundi Sipoon* are by no means as simple as these lines ; many of them require an extensive commentary.

Many of the poems of Bewas are written in Persian prosodic verse but his *Ganga joon Lahroon* and *Guru Nanak Jiwan Katha* are written in forms invented by him. Formalists have found that his poems do not observe strict rules of Persian prosody. They should welcome the variations introduced by Bewas. And the eight-lined stanzas of *Guru Nanak Jiwan Katha* have furnished a new form of narrative verse, to subsequent writers. The six-lined stanzas he formulated to describe Vishwamitra's *Repentance* and Rishi *Ashram* are as far from the hackneyed *Musaddas* of the Persian School as can ever be.

But it is in his thought and sentiment, diction and imagery that Bewas shows his modernity and progressiveness. His poem on *Porhiyut* or Labourer was the first of its kind in the language. He extols the Labourer as if he were speaking of a blue-blooded

aristocrat and then pities him : 'Your noble right hand is bringing plenty out of a grain, it is a clever artist, bold in execution ..... You are responsible for creating gold out of land, but you are without gold, hungry, forced to work without choice of your own, you have neither goods nor your own home.' His *Gariban Ji Jhoopri* (The poor man's cottage) with its pathetic refrain : 'Ah ! May no damage reach the poor folks' cottage' is, even in these days of socialistic slogans, still haunting enough: 'The sun and the moon peep into the crevices (of your cottage), beams of distant stars and the Pleiades creep inside, their walls let the murmuring wind escape through them, the rain showers from the roofs as if to water the ground below, Nature is seen in perfection here, it is a gift intended for health, Ah ! May no damage reach the poor folks' cottage.'

He is conversant with sufistic-vedantic doctrines but he gives them a twist of his own, as in the poem on *Istri* (woman) : 'when that Oneness caught up with the idea of manifesting itself, it donned the garb of woman so that Beauty become a lure. The Purush and Prakriti got made out of *zat* (substance) and *sifati* (attributes), and the play began of the seeing Eye and the scene to be seen.'

The poetic ideals of Bewas were Shah and Tagore, and he has paid tributes to both of them. From Shah he learnt to be truthful, bold and yet modest ; from Tagore he learnt that the poet was not meant to bring sadness into the life of others, but to bring joy in life, and delight in beauty. Bewas conveyed Joy in his poetry, and delighted frankly in Beauty, and declared that his mission was to turn a sorrow-stricken world into pure delight, and make it fertile and prosperous. Probably that is why he termed his house *Jashan Khana* (Abode of Joy).

Bewas was a nationalist, and he was the first to write national songs which were on the lips of everybody in the Freedom Movement days. He said : 'Reason or intellect, freedom, dignity, prosperity, prestige crave admittance only where there is love for one's land. Those mothers may by all means smile who sing lullabies to infants that the highest service consists in sacrificing oneself entirely in the cause of the country.'

He has written many poems on Love and Beauty but not in the old hackneyed manner. In *Taj Mahal* he prettily echoes the popular 'Tear turned into marble' belief into : 'Two or three tears from the weeping eyes (of the desolate Shah Jahan) had a separate existence, and turned into eternity in the shape of the Taj.

He has taken up, for poetic treatment, many modern concepts and made Sindhi poetry richer than it used to be. To take one instance : in the poem ' Big Heart ' he says : ' Make your heart bigger in this world. You can live, and I, too, can live. Bring about a change in your mentality, so that you may live and I too may live ', and introduces the concept of co-existence, in a fitting manner.

In his diction Bewas is not a purist and fanatic. He emlploys words of Persian and Arabic origin as easily and unaffectedly, as those of Sindhi or Sanskrit-Prakrit origin, provided they have found their way in common usage. Bewas introduced the system of double or compound words in Sindhi poetry.

Bewas had the true gift of the lyricist : his poems sing themselves. In *Rishi Ashram* he describes the peacocks and the deer dancing, monkeys leaping, birds humming and all live creatures bursting into joy, and his words and metre also take a measured jump as if to dance.

But Bewas lacks the large vision, immense sweep, the inevitable touch of Shah, Sachal and Sami. He himself would have admitted that he cannot take his place with these masters of Sindhi poetry.

A peculiar service that Bewas rendered to Sindhi poetry was that he inspired and guided a band of young men to complete the revolution he had brought about. Two of these young men became poets in their own right i.e. Hundraj Dukhayal and Hari Dilgar. Others (like Ram Panjwani and Gobind Bhatia) helped in the emancipation of Sindhi poetry from the shackles of the Persian school by their songs and public utterances. Other young Sindhi poets who were not direct pupils of *Sain* (Master) Bewas, like those mentioned above, had imbibed his spirit like Azad, the author of *Purab Sandesh*. It may be affirmed that Sindhi poetry has not been the same after Bewas and that every writer of Sindhi poetry after the 'thirties, when Bewas emerged as the unquestioned leader of Sindhi poets, has upon him and his work the stamp of Bewas. The two great Sindhi poets of Pakistan and India (who were just winning their spurs in the pages of the D. J. Sind. College *Miscellany* in 1947) i.e., Ayaz and Narain Shyam, have both been indebted to Bewas in the initial stages while they have travelled much farther, for they have made experiments which Bewas never did or intended to do (e.g. with poems on the model of Hindi *geets* and *sorathas* and English sonnets.) Fani

(Khialdas), who too began writing poetry before 1947, is much indebted to Bewas. while major poets of to-day like Gordhan Bharati, as well as minor writers like Dayal Asha, also owe much to Bewas and his poetry. For all practical purposes the appearance of Bewas upon the poetical stage of Sind was a signal for the decline and downfall of the poetry of the School of Gul.

To make a brief mention of the two principal followers of Bewas :

Hundraj Dukhayal, whose pre-Partition poems wre collected in a volume entitled *Sangeet Phool* (1946), was well-known in Sind during the fateful freedom movement as the most prolific writer of national songs as well as their sweetest singer. He began as a poet as early as 1924 when he was only fourteen years old. The poems in *Sangeet Phool* are divided as under : (1) In praise of the Lord, (2) Krishna Pad, (3) Guru Nanak. (4) Praise of Rama, (5) Popular songs, (6) Songs of Love, (7) Umar Marui, (8) Sasui Punhoon, (9) Suhni Mehar, (10) Heer Ranjho, (11) Mumal Rano, (12) Lila Chanesar, (13) Children's songs, (14) *Haqiqi* (spiritual or real) Love, (15) Songs of Freedom. The last-named section is the largest. The poems of Dukhayal easily lend themselves to singing Many of them are occasional and topical and could easily be omitted from a book of permanent reading. The poems in *Umar Marui* section are a rare blend of patriotic feeling and poetic sentiment.

Hari Dilgir's narrative *Harishchandra*, which he wrote following the narrative of *Guru Nanak* by Bewas, contains 'Two words' of blessing from Bewas himself who said that Dilgir, though a young poet, had attained to twenty years of maturity more than his age warranted, and commended his pupil's ripeness and sweetness. Dilgir's *Kod* (Shells) followed one later, with a Foreword by the present writer. Dilgir an engineer and his poems show spontaneity as well as careful construction. He is a good self-critic and places only those poems before the public which are sure to be commended. He has now pursued paths untrodden by his master, but in *Harishchandra* and *Kod* he is so very much like Bewas that some of his poems or at least passages in them might be mistaken for those of Bewas.

Two young Sindhis who showed great literary promise in writing poetry but were cut off by an early death were Tolaram Menghraj Balani and Nirmal Jiwatani (1921-44).

Chapter XII

SINDHI PROSE AND DRAMA IN THE BRITISH ERA

Sindhi Prose grew in the British era. Whatever claims may be made of an earlier origin for Sindhi prose, for all practical purposes the Sindhi prose came to be such only under the aegis of the British. It first developed, in translations and school texts, after the present (Arabic-Sindhi) script was evolved in 1852.

Before the British conquest of Sind (1843), there was no regular script for writing Sindhi. The Muslim, as well as the official class of Hindus, used the Persian characters. The Hindu merchants used a corrupt variation of Devnagri script without vowel signs, which sometimes led to comical misunderstandings. Those who read the Sikh scriptures used the Gurmukhi script. The Hindu Brahmins and those who were learned in Sanskrit went in for the Devnagri script. Before the British conquest of Sind a few books like the translation of the Gospel according to St. Matthew (1825) were printed in the Devnagri script in a press in Bengal.

Spade work by Stack and Trumpp

The spade work for Sindhi prose was undoubtedly the achievement of some devoted Europeans who compiled Dictionaries and Grammars. Wathen's *Grammar and Vocabulary of the Sindhi Language* (1836) has been pronounced to be a work of no merit. Not so *Vocabulary of Sindhi Language* by Eastwick (1843), *Vocabulary of Seven Languages Spoken in Countries West of Indus* by Leach (1843), and, specially, the *Dictionary* and *Grammar* which Captain Stack published in 1849. The distinction which attaches to Captain Stack is also due to the fact that the Appendix to his *Grammar* contains the first specimens of Sindhi prose, in Udharam Thawerdas's story of Rai Dyach.

In an article in the D. J. Sind College Miscellany, in 1908, the Sindhi scholar Bulchand Dayaram pays a high tribute to Captain Stack and Dr. Trumpp : ' Among the pioneers of the movement for the promotion and development of the vernacular of this province, was a notable man Captain George Stack, one of the earliest European scholars of the Sindhi language. He was for

many years Deputy Collector of Hyderabad and as early as 1849 he published an English-Sindhi Dictionary. The total number of such Sindhi words in it was about twelve thousand, and the alphabet in which they were written was Sanskrit or Devnagri. Captain Stack also compiled a Sindhi-English Dictionary. This was edited by Mr. Ellis of the Bombay Civil Service. It was published in 1854. To these very useful compilations he added a Sindhi grammar which is still regarded as a standard work. The native scholars from whom he received most help in the preparation of his dictionaries were two well-known pundits of Hyderabad, Pundit Brahma Sut Chit Anand, and Pandit Jetaram.

'The first attempt at writing a Sindhi Reader was made in 1858 by Trumpp, a German by birth. The controversy regarding the Sindhi alphabet had not yet been settled. The book was, therefore, printed in two alphabets, the Hindus' Sanskrit and the Mussalmans' Arabic. This reading book is a curious and interesting medley. It begins with a translation of the ten commandments, and contains a number of tales somewhat like the fables of Aesop. Then follow the love-tale of Leila and Majnun and slokas of Mengho Bhagat. The first printed edition of Shah Latif's book or "Rasalo" was published 1866 by the same indefatigable scholar. Trumpp followed it by publishing a large and complete Sindhi grammar in 1872, though compiled about ten years before. Trumpp's great attempt at publishing a "critically sifted edition of the popular Sindhi tales and songs" remained unpublished as he applied himself shortly after this to the Sikh Granth.' (Adapted)

Sindhi Prose and Drama 1857-1907-Educational Books

The present Arabic-Sindhi script was formulated in 1852, under the orders of Sir Bartle Frere, but there was great confusion for the next half-a-dozen years. As has already been stated, Dr. Trumpp's Sindhi Reader was actually printed in two scripts. By 1857 or 1858 the policy of the Government triumphed, and the school-going pupils as well as the public began to use the new Arabic-Sindhi script.

Then followed a spate of educational books meant for the convenience of school students and the European officials who had to pass their examinations in the Sindhi language. These cannot be called *literary* works, but a few of them deserve

mention because they furnished the groundwork for Sindhi prose compositions.

The most important compilations of educational texts and subsidiary books were the work of two devoted Sindhis : Nandiram Merani and Udharam Thawerdas. Nandiram was selected, by a test, to be the Government Translator, and he began his work as early as 1852 with *Babnamo*, an infant's Primer. His translation of *Tarikh-Mausumi*, for which he had won a prize, was published in 1854. In the same year he translated *Aesop's Fables* in collaboration with Mr. Ellis, his patron. Books on Drawing, Arithmetic, Geography, Algebra followed in 1854, 1855, 1856, 1861. Udharam was the more gifted of the two and had a sense of style. He was responsible for the first and second standard books, for Sindhi *Grammar* (which underwent many editions), a History of the world (from Urdu), the story of Rai Dyach 1861 (prose as well as verse), and *Mufid-al-Talbin* (Useful guide for students). He collaborated with Navalrai in the translation of Johnson's *Rasselas* in 1868, edited such folk-tales as that of Kamsen and Kamrup (1869), and *Mahir Munir* (1871). Udharam's Sindhi style was quaint but lucid, and his compilations can be enjoyed even at the present time.

Other compilers of educational texts and supplementary books were Pribhdas Anandram, Ghulam Ali, Miran Md. Shah, Mian Mahomed, Alumal Trikamdas, Kauromal Chandanmal (who wrote a History of Columbus in 1862), Pritamdas, Krishna Sastri, and above all, Akhund Abdur-Rahim who collected many folk-tales. Kauromal's work will be reviewed in a subsequent section.

Dictionary compilers were L. V. Paranjpye : *English-Sindhi Dictionary* 1868. Abdur-Rahim : *Jawahar-al-Lughat* (Sindhi-Persian) 1871, Akhund Fateh Mahomed : *Kashif* (Derivatives), Shirt and Thawedas and Mirza Sadik Ali : *Sindhi-English Dictionary* 1875. The compiler who must be remembered with most gratitude by Sindhis was Jhamatmal Narumal (*Viyutpati Kosh* 1886, and Sindhi Grammar 1892). In *Viyutpati Kosh*, a book of only 123 pages, he conclusively demonstrated that most Sindhi words were derived from Sanskrit roots. Another writer, who was of much help to subsequent writers, was Rochiram Gajumal who issued a book in two parts, one on about 500 Sindhi proverbs and their English equivalents, and the other containing half that number of Sindhi proverbs which had no English equivalents but whose translations he made himself. This work

passed through at least four editions. Mirza Kalich Beg issued in 1905 *Lughat Latifi*, a Concordance-Lexicon of the words occurring in Shah.

A work of merit which should be mentioned specially was the Prize translation of *Rasselas* by Navalrai and Udharam made in 1868 or 1870 which long remained a text-book for Matriculation students. The translation is so graceful and yet so faithful to the original that it has become a classic of Sindhi prose. The History of England (1892) by Bulchand Kodumal was in facile style. Kauromal Chandanmal's educational compilations will be noticed in another place.

The appearance of Trumpp's edition of *Shah-Jo-Risalo* in 1866 encouraged Kazi Haji Ahmed to bring out in 1873 a selection called *Muntakhab Shah-Jo-Risalo* which was a text in schools for a long time, and which had the distiction of furnishing material to Dr. Sorley for translation in English verse.

Tarachand Showkiram, Sindhi Translator to the Government, brought out an edition of Shah in 1900 without an Introduction or commentary. Some of the verses in this edition were dropped by Dr. Gurbaxani in his 1923 edition as not being authentic.

Bulchand Dayaram, already quoted above, has paid the following tribute to the Educational Department in Sind, in 1908 i.e. at the end of a half-century of Sindhi prose : 'Here it may be repeated that the Sind Education Department has played an important part in the development and growth of the Sindhi language and its literature. Among them (Educational officers) the names of Ellis, Moore and Fulton deserve special mention. The work of Major Goldsmid stands apart and by itself, and he occupied a special niche in the temple of fame, both as a Sindhi scholar and as a patron of Sindhi scholarship. Mr Narayan Jagannath, though he himself was not a great Sindhi scholar, laid down accurately the lines for very useful work in the Sindhi language. Mr Udharam Thawerdas was another such officer. He was a good Sindhi scholar and he prepared a series of reading books for schools and wrote also a Sindhi Grammar and some manuals in Sindhi for the use of students. Among the later Educational officers Mr. Kauromal did much good work. Mr. Navalrai's best work was his translation of Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas*. Among other Sindhi scholars we must not omit to mention the names of Rev. Mr. Shirt, Mr. Ryland, Mr. Seymour and Mirza Kalich Beg, and Mr. Lilaram Vatanmal. Another

writer of Sindhi of solid attainments of polished period is Diwan Dayaram Gidumal who possesses a great charm of style.' (Adapted).

Bulchand Dayaram points out that the work of these writers lay chiefly in translations, and that the quality of most of the educational publications in this period (1857–1907) ' is on the whole low, and many of them are of ephemeral character ', and that these writers cannot be credited ' with the production of Sindhi literature in its higher sense '. But he admits that ' nevertheless they have paved the way to it ' i.e. literature. If we agree with this statement, a few pages in a chapter on Sindhi prose, specially in the earlier period (1857–1907), have to be devoted to a grateful mention of the labours of these pioneers in the vineyard of Sindhi language and Sindhi prose. Bulchand Dayaram omits the name of John Jacob, probably because this friend of Sindhi people did not succeed (in 1890) in accomplishing his well-meant efforts to make the Sindhis revert to the Devnagri script. If Jacob had succeeded in his endeavours, the results would have been incalculable, not only in Sindhi literature, but in other fields of activity in the life of Sindhis, as well.

Non-educational Translations, and works of fiction

Sindhi prose and drama in the period 1857–1907 consist mostly of translations, from English, Persian, Hindi, Gujarati, and Urdu, and to look fororiginality in them will be a trying task. The works of stalwarts like Kauromal Chandanmal and Mirza Kalich Beg will be examined in a subsequent section, here it will be necessary to mention some other translators who have not been included in the section on educational books.

Omitting the translations of Christian missionaries who translated some books of the Bible in Sindhi (e.g. the *Gospel of St. John* 1853), the first works, to be translated in Sindhi, were from the Hindi of Pandit Bansi Dhar Chiranji Lal. They were The story of Bhambho Zamindar by Ghulam Hussain Kureshi in 1854, and the story of Sudha Turo and Kudha Turo by Miran Md. Shah in 1855. The story of Bhambho was not meant to be an educational text but it was prescribed as a text-book. The translator has contrived to give his translations an air of originality by introducing Sindhi scenes (Ubauro villages) and characters. Bhambho is shown to be an honest, peace-loving, and tactful man, always true to his word. He proves his

sterling character by protecting the interests of orphan Bachal and bringing him up like his own children.

The story of Sudha Turo and Kudha Turo, too, came to be prescribed for students. Two boys are contrasted. Sudha Turo grows up to be a good and great man, while Kudha Turo falls into evil ways and at last lands in a prison.

The orthography as well as the diction of these stories are a little puzzling to the modern reader, but the idiom is worth study.

Hindus paid some attention to the translations of their scriptures. Misir Jaikishen of Rajasthan translated some *Parvas* from Mahabharata and they were lithographed in the first decade of the century. Tulsidas's Hindi *Ramayana* was translated in Sindhi prose by Vasumal Jeramdas.

The Sanatan Dharma Sabha of Karachi translated some books from Gujarati and Hindi, but almost all of them turned on one of the two topics : (i) the evil effect of foreign travel and education upon Indian youth. (ii) the great difference between the traditional, chaste, Hindu woman, and the giddy Hindu woman brought up in the school of European fashions. None of these books had any merit of composition or style to deserve listing or separate attention. This Sabha translated *Shrimad Bhagwat* and such other sacred books in indifferent prose.

Pokardas and Harisingh publishers brought out, in this period, translations of romances and hair-raising stories of necromancers, genii and fairies generally from Urdu books modelled on the *Arabian Nights*. The only work of this kind pretending to any literary merit was *Gul Bakawali* of Ahmed Khan Jalbani, which he translated from the Urdu of Nihalchand in 1890. The prose employed in this translation was a sort of jingling prose which was perhaps meant to be half-verse, half-prose. There were endless references to magic, lascivious accounts of the physical charms of the heroine, and glorification of the bravery of the hero, Tajulmalook. Other terrific romances of this kind were the translations of *Chahar Dervish* (Four Beggars) in 1890 (from Urdu), and *Hatim Tai* in 1894 (also from Urdu), by Haji Imam Bux, who directly translated the *Arabian Nights* in 1899 (from Urdu) under the title of *Alif Laili*. Many readers were delighted with the account of the fabled generosity of Hatim Tai and his six or seven travails in search of answers to questions, the most fascinating of which

was the question about *Koh-i-Nada* (Mountain of Call), the place to which everyone had to run when called, and from which nobody ever returned. The taste of readers turned definitely from these impossible adventures and romances when *Mumtaz Damsaz* appeared in 1909 with its ridiculous necromancer (Bokulmoon), and the equally ridiculous hero with his repertory of *Ism-Azams* or Grand Names. The era of necromancers and fairies ended in 1908 in favour of stories of human adroits called *Ayyars* (crooks or counterfeits).

It is strange that with the spread of English education in this period the *alumni* did not think of translating books of fiction from English. The only translator from English was Hiranand Showkiram, who undertook the translation of Scott's *Talisman* in 1891 but left it incomplete, and Bherumal Mahirchand had to complete it. Sobhraj Hassaram wrote *Sabha-Jo-Singar*, (Ornament of the Assembly), in 1894. Extracts from this book have appeared in some school selections. The language is simple and the style lively. These stories and some other tales were translated by him from Hindi versions of *Panchtantra*.

The one romance that appeared in this period which is still read by students as well as the general reading public was *Gul Khandam* (Laughing Flower) or the romance of Jan Alam and Anjman Ara, by Lutfullah Akhund in 1882. The peculiarity of this book is that it contains verses interspersed in it which show a real poetic talent, and that its prose is elegant and charming. While the incidents in the book are stereotyped and we have the conventional magic, fairies, the game of dice, beautiful women to dally with, and all that, there is real human sentiment in it, and the descriptions are luscious, sometimes too luscious for sensitive palates. *Gul Khandan* is likely to survive if only as a specimen of the taste of a bygone generation.

Pritamdas Hukumatrai's *Ajab Bhet* (Strange Comparison) 1892, portraying the domestic life of the Amil or official class, and the Bhaibund or mercantile community in the Hindus, and carrying an appeal for social reform by 'a humble seeker for reform', has not impressed its readers as a literary work. In its second edition (1910) the author expressed his gratification that reform had actually been achieved in the two decades that had elapsed since his novel appeared.

Journals and miscellaneous works

Journalism made a slow progress in the period 1857–1907 but it had its impact on Sindhi prose. The Sind Madressah, founded in 1885, had in its journal some notable articles from the pen of *Abojho*, better-known as a poet. Shams-ud-din Bulbul also made his mark in this paper, and also in the *Aftab* weekly of Sukkur, which he edited for years. The *Al-Haq* of Sukkur, also, contained articles of interest for Muslims but the Sindhi prose of *Aftab* as well as *Al-Haq* was mostly unintelligible to Hindus, being an admixture of Persian and Arabic words and phrases.

The Hindu journalism began with Hiranand Showkiram's papers *Sind Sudhar* and *Saraswati* (1870). The latter was almost the first magazine to be known to Sindhis. Many of the stirring pieces and anecdotes in *Saraswati* by Hiranand were afterwards collected by Bherumal Mahirchand under the title of *Hirai-Joon-Kanyoon* (Diamond Nuggets). Dayaram Gidumal, who will be noticed later on, was a co-adjutor of Hiranand in these journals though he kept himself behind the scenes.

In the nineties of the last century appeared a weekly paper, *Prabhat* (1891) under the editorship of Lekhraj Tilokchand, which, was instrumental in forming what may be called 'Public opinion' in Sind, and in the first decade of the present century became a power to be reckoned with. An analogous position was enjoyed by the weekly *Sindhi* of Sukkur which appeared in the first years of the present century under the editorship of Virumal Begraj. The Sindhi prose in these weeklies was not distinguished, but it was free from turgidity and abstruseness.

But the paper which was a really literary paper in Sind was the *Jote* which began to appear as a single sheet in Sindhi twice a month in 1896. It was to all outward purposes a Catholic paper, its first editors being a Bengali convert to Christianity, Brahmabandhav, and a Sindhi convert Khemchand Ambritrai (who subsequently edited the English Weekly *Sind Journal*), but the editor who made it the most lively and literary paper in Sind was *Parmanand Mewaram* who edited it from 1899 or 1900 to his death. The first collection of literary pieces from the *Jote* was issued under the title of *Dil Bahar*, and the next under title of *Gul Phul*. A more detailed note on Parmanand Mewaram is given in a subsequent section. *Jote* was a potent force through-

out the British era in moulding the minds of Sindhis in regard to various social and literary problems. Politics was left out of the paper's purview.

The D. J. Sind College *Miscellany* will be noticed separately.

The Sindhi writer of this period who was not a major prose writer and who cannot be roped in as a journalist, or educationalist, or by any other such label, but who has left his mark on Sindhi prose was Kewalram Salamatrai, author of *Gul*, (Flower) *Gul Shakar* (Fragrant candy) and *Sookhri* (Gift). These books were in manuscript between the years 1864–1871 and the manuscripts were published long afterwards in (1905). Kewalram was a stylist if ever there was one. His Sindhi prose may look quaint, nowadays ; it was inspired by such Persian writings as the *Gulistan* of Saadi. He was a moralist, but his didacticism did not irritate. He always illustrated his morals with an anecdote or apologue. His *Gul Shakar* is a collection of hundreds of proverbs and pithy sayings illuminated with examples and illustrations always telling and pointed. He could quote from Persian and Indian languages extensively. The writings of Kewalram were received favourably by the Sindhi Muslims and they could find no fault with his style.

The D. J. Sind College

In the higher education of Sindhis and in the growth of Sindhi prose and drama, the D. J. Sind College, Karachi, which from its inception in 1887 to 1921 was the only seat of higher learning in the Province, and even in 1947 exceeded all the other colleges in Sind put together, in the number of pupils, played a prominent part.

In the twentieth century the D. J. Sind College *alumni* played an important part in the growth and development of Sindhi prose and drama, because nearly all the Sindhi graduates were the product of this College. But even in the first twenty years after its foundation, namely between 1887 to 1907 it was largely instrumental in the growth of prose and drama. Before the D. J. Sind College was established, only a dozen Sindhis or so had taken a degree (mostly from the Elphinstone College, Bombay). After 1887, the vast bulk of Sindhi students who desired to acquire higher education made their way to this College, and their names and careers will be found in the *D. J. Sind College*

Golden Jubilee Book (1939) edited by the present writer. Almost the only Sindhi graduate of note in the pre-D. J. Sind College days was Dayaram Gidumal, the brilliant Sindhi savant and sage.

Besides the imponderable influence exercised upon Sindhi prose and drama by the D. J. Sind College through its students and teachers, two direct arms were flung by the College in the years 1887–1907 to push forward Sindhi prose and drama. The D. J. Sind College *Miscellany* began its terminal issues in 1901, the first editor being the future brilliant Professor and Sadhu, T. L. Vaswani. In the Sindhi section of this magazine almost every article was a gem of prose. A collection of the best articles from this magazine covering four decades was made under the title of *Vichar* (1940) by the present writer, and it can give an idea of the service done to Sindhi literature by this *Miscellany*. In later issues, articles of indifferent merit might have got a place, but in the first issues articles only of standard excellence in verse and prose got a chance of publication.

As for drama, the D. J. Sind College Amateur Dramatic Society founded by Prof. B. J. Padshah in 1894, founded the Sindhi drama, for stage purposes, and largely encouraged the written drama. Between 1894 and 1914, when the Society disintegrated and broke up, under the shadow of the First Great War, at least fifteen plays were staged and published by the College Society.

According to an article written by M. U. Malkani, the last Secretary of this Society, the first plays staged by the Society was Master Jethanand's *Nal Damayanti* (1894) from the *Mahabharata*. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* furnished material for the first playwrights, and then Shakespeare's plays. *Harishchandra* by Lilaramsingh was staged in 1895–1896. *Ramayana* by the same writer was staged in 1898. A section of *Ramayana* was staged under the title of *Rama Banwas* (The Exile of Rama) by Deumal (who subsequently took *sanyas*) in 1897. Plays on social themes were *Mohan Tarka* and *Surjan Radha* in 1895, by Lilaramsingh. Except in the first play there were always some songs provided. Comical interludes and scenes were provided after the main play, generally by Mirza Kalich Beg, of which the best and most literary was *Inquiry Officer* (1896) (taken from the well-known Russian play, *The Inspector General*), and *Nim Tabib and Nim Mulla* (semi-physician and semi-mulla) which provided examples for subsequent farces in Sindhi. Mirza Kalich Beg, of whom a separate mention will be made, was the most

prolific playwright for the D.J. Sind College Amateur Dramatic Dramatic Society. Beginning with a rendering of Kalidas's *Shakuntala* in 1896 he passed on to Shakespeare's plays and adapted the *Merchant of Venice* (*Hasna Dildar*) in 1897, *King Lear* (*Shah Elia*) in 1900, *Cymbeline* (*Shamshad Morgiana*) in 1908 and some other plays of which the last was *Hamlet* (*Prince Bahram*) in 1914. The earlier plays were as a rule more successful than the later ones, *Shah Elia* being his most ambitious literary attempt in the drama. The songs in *Shah Elia* were excellent. The tragic ending in the translation of *Romeo and Juliet* (*Gulzar Gulnar*) 1909 was sought to be averted, but it is no use playing tricks with Shakespeare. And actually the play was not staged. In *Hasna Dildar* Mirza offended the Hindus by making his Shylock a Hindu *bania*. On the whole, the greatest literary success of the Society consisted in the publication and staging of *Kanishi*, rendered from Sheridan's *Pizarro* by Shewasing Ajwani (1902). The author introduced the Gurkhas and Rajputs as the two warring parties, and imparted a literary flavour and realism to the characters and the play, which were absent in the original.

The D.J. Sind College Amateur Dramatic Society played a significant part in the development of Sindhi prose and drama. In the field of the drama it was the pioneer and exemplar for all subsequent attempts in play-acting and play writing. It succeeded in making Sindhi prose colloquial and expressive. Before the publication of the plays of the Society, prose in Sindhi tended to stand aloof from the ordinary conversational speech. But the plays issued by the Society furnished examples of easy colloquial speech without slang.

Four Stalwarts, Pillars of Sindhi Prose and Drama

Finally, in this period, separate mention must be made of four stalwarts whom the present writer has on various occasions grouped together as pillars of Sindhi prose and drama, or as the four wheels that set the lumbering wain of Sindhi prose and drama forward in easy motion. Their lives and their work did not close by the year 1907 or thereabouts, but their most characteristic and best work was done by the year 1907. In the 1857–1907 period they well and truly laid the foundations for prose works and dramatic works in the Sindhi language.

Bulchand Dayaram's article in 1908, from which profuse extracts have been given already, closes with a note of pessimism

after complaining that the quality of Sindhi books produced was low and many of the books were of an ephemeral character. He said that ' what is principally wanted now is to direct the attention and energy of native scholars not to the mass but to the quality of indigenous composition ..... Moreover work ought to be done in various directions and not confined to two or three, as is the case at present, the lack of books in original Sindhi fiction and literary and ethical prose writing being most marked. It is doubtful for instance if one can lay his hands on a single Sindhi novel of standard excellence say even of the excellence of a novel like the Guzarati "Karvan Ghelo".' Bulchand Dayaram had not the perspective which we have now, otherwise he should have noticed such ethical works as Kauromal's *Pako Pah* or Dayaram Gidumal's *Gita-Jo-Sar* or Parmanand Mewaram's *Dil Bahar* and he should have praised Mirza Kalich Beg's *Zeenat*. We, who come after him, must do justice to these four stalwarts and pillars of Sindhi Prose and Drama.

Kauromal Chandanmal Khilnani, the father of Sindhi prose, was born in 1844 in a small village in Sind, and he used to trudge a mile from his place to attend an Akhund's school ; he prepared his lessons at night under the village street-lamp. From there he proceeded to Karachi, for secondary education, but had to leave his studies before he could matriculate. He took up a job in the Revenue Department from where he gravitated to the Educational Department. He became the most prolific compiler of texts for Sindhi Schools and his Readers were the Readers in vogue from 1873 until the first decade of this century. He was Principal of the Training College in Sind for a long time and Translator to the Government. He was a notable social reformer and did much to organise the Panchayats in Sind and to ameliorate the condition of women for whose education he bestirred himself. He died in 1916.

It is not, however, as a writer of educational books and readers that Kauromal is remembered. His name lives for the great service he did to Sindhi literature. He did a distinct service to Sindhi literature by discovering and publicising Sami, the great poet, in 1885.

His first original work in Sindhi was *Pako Pah* (1862) in which he made an impassioned plea for the education of Sindhi women. This essay may well be compared to the essay on *Liberty* by Mill or Morley's essay on *Compromise*. Kauromal was

a Liberal in his mental make up. The main argument in the book is : 'Those people who doubt the utility of women's education and would like to confine the scope of their activity to the kitchen and to domestic duties, and who have a question to ask whether women have to be scribes and employees in Government offices, are like those builders of houses who have no care for the foundations of the house. Every country has its rise or decline, its greatness or degeneration, according to the wisdom or ignorance of its women.'

Kauromal was a pioneer in other fields too. In 1888, he translated Harsha Deva's Sanskrit play, *Ratnavali*, the first Sanskrit play to be translated into Sindhi. It can scarcely be called a happy translation and all that can be said in extenuation of some of the crude and frankly sex-exciting passages in the book is that Kauromal was not equal to the task of the rendering the nuances of Sanskrit drama and poetry into a prose barely thirty years old.

Kauromal was far more successful in his translation of a Bengali author's English biographies of eminent Indian women, under the title of *Arya Nari Charitra* (1905). Indeed Kauromal's Sindhi book is far more readable and idiomatic than its English original. In the short biographies of heroines like 'Krishna Kumari' and 'Aghor Kamini' Kauromal's style rises to eloquence.

He wrote several essays in chaste Sindhi the most famous of which was 'Why have the Panchayats deteriorated ?' and compiled several books on Health, Agriculture, Folk Songs as well as Folk Stories. In the *Sahitya Akademi* publication of Kauromal's select writings (*Sahitik Pushpa*) 44 titles are given of Kauromal's writings until the year 1907, beginning with *Pako Pah* (1862) and *History of Columbus* (1862). They comprise devotional writings like the lives of *Raba Basria the Devotee, Jayadeva, Raja Ram Mohun Roy*, as well as books containing jokes and light literature. Kauromal lived nine years after 1907 but added no writings to enhance his reputation as the Father of Sindhi prose. The most popular of these subsequent publications were translations of some short stories of the Bengali novelist, Bankim Chander Chatterji (*Radha Rani*, *Two Rings*, and *Indira*).

Kauromal was the *first* essayist in Sindhi, and his essays and articles showed the way to a beginner how to be well-reasoned

forceful and effective in writing. A peculiarity of Kauromal's writings is that he began as a writer of Sindhi which commended itself both to Hindus and Muslims but in later writings tended to the employment of more and more Hindi words and phrases. Md. Sidik Memon notes that the terms used in Sindhi in Geometry for Triangle, Rectangle, etc. were Kauromal's inventions derived from Persian.

In life and in his writings Kauromal was simple, unaffected, and yet dignified. He who wants to cultivate a simple unaffected and yet dignified style in Sindhi, even now, must read Kauromal's *Pako Pah* and *Arya Nari Charitra* and the score or so of his selected essays easily available in the Sahitya Akademi's publition, *Sahitik Pushpa.*

Mirza Kalich Beg (1853–1929), second of the four stalwarts of Sindhi prose, has been called by his admirers as ' Aftab Adab ' or the Sun of (Sindhi) literature. Fateh Md. Sewhani, himself one of the major writers of Sindhi prose, has written a poem in his praise in which he says that other Sindhi writers were (dim in light like) stars, while Mirza was the sun and moon in the firmament of Sindhi letters.

Mirza Kalich Beg was the most prolific, diligent, and versatile writer Sind has produced, great in all the three fields of literature, poetry, prose, and drama. He was of Georgian descent and his father was converted from Christianity to Islam and brought to Sind in the days of the Talpurs. Mirza Kalich Beg, in a moment of frustration, once wrote a quatrain to express his regret at being born in Sind, amidst people too crude to appreciate him. He wished that he should have been born in Iran or in Turkey, or better still, at an earlier period, in Egypt or Greece. As a matter of fact, in his own lifetime he was regarded as the greatest man of letters in Sind, and all new writers flocked to him for advice and guidance. He was always too much in earnest, and came down upon frivolity in any shape. Speaking once to the gay audience of the D.J. Sind College he said : ' How can you understand me ? You are habituated to laughter, I am accustomed to tears.'

Mirza Kalich Beg was a student of the Elphinstone College, Bombay, but left without a degree because of ill-health. Even as a student he compiled a book on Persian prosody which learners were eager to read. Mirza was well-versed not only in his own language but in Persian, English, Hindi and other Indian

languages as well. His earliest and most successful play, *Khurshid* (1885) was taken from a Gujarati play.

Mirza Kalich Beg entered the Revenue Department as a superior official, and retired from service in 1910. Most of his good and enduring work was done before that date. His biography has been written by Musafir under the title of *Kurb Kalich*, but it shows more feeling than literary and artistic merit.

It was a characteristic of Mirza Kalich Beg, whether on active duty or in leisure time, to set apart the early morning hours for composition, and it is said that he wrote or compiled 350 works, of which half were published in his lifetime. By providing such a mass of books he helped in the education of the Sindhis and in the cause of literature, in a way which no other Sindhi has ever done. But many books go under his name which one would hardly imagine he could have written. A story goes about that several writers in need of money or recognition brought their manuscripts to Mirza Kalich Beg for correction and collaboration. Mirza Kalich Beg would tolerate no mistake of grammar and idiom (he was very strict, almost faultless in these respects), and after making those corrections would encourage the writers by lending the writings the prestige of his own name. The Educational Department, which would not otherwise have cast a glance at these books, readily accepted them as soon as they saw the Mirza's name on the cover.

A great service would be done if some one could separate the chaff from the grain, and whether in prose or poetry, or drama, give currency to only the worth-while books in Mirza's huge list of books and compilations. Such a book, for instance, as *Ajaib Garaib* (Wonders and marvels), a compilation of some scientific wonders and curiosities, written in 1924, would have no interest for readers of this generation.

Mirza Kalich Beg, in his zeal for literary composition, would proceed to translate any book which attracted his notice, ever so little. He would give his time and energy equally to the translation of such books in English as *Basket of Flowers, Sandford and Merton, Three Homes, Sherlock Holmes Stories, From Poverty to Power*, as to translations of English classics like *Gulliver's Travels, Robinson Crusoe* or to renderings in Sindhi, of Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* (1890) or Bacon's *Essays* (1877) or Al-Ghazali's *Kimiai Saadat*. The only thing that may be said in favour of Mirza Kalich Beg's wholesale and indiscriminate translation of standard works and ephemeral publications, alike,

is that he was feeding a famished people, speedily, with what ever pabulum he could lay his hands upon.

Omitting Mirza Kalich Beg's poetical works which have been mentioned in the preceding chapter, it may be mentioned that Mirza Kalich Beg first burst upon the notice of Sindhis as a writer when he published his translation of Bacon's *Essays* under the title of *Maqalat Al-Hikmat* (Essays of Wisdom) in 1877. Mirza Kalich Beg was able to convey in his translation the terseness, worldly wisdom, and appositeness of the original author without using archaic or elaborate or unfamiliar words and phrases, and he provided for subsequent authors the terminology to be used in abstract writings of a non-religious kind.

Mirza Kalich Beg's triumph in drama came with his *Khurshid* in 1885, a rendering of a Gujarati play, in a prose half-rhymed and yet homely and effective. The audience of those days loved to see kings and nobles strut upon the stage, and *Khurshid* provided these popular scenes and figures side by side with characters and sentiments of a lower order of people. The lyrics in the play were catching.

His greatest success as a prose-writer was in *Zeenat* (1890), the first original novel in the Sindhi language, though some writers have sought to find some original for it as well. Mirza Kalich Beg wrote a novel *Dilaram* a year before *Zeenat*, but it was not an original work. *Zeenat* was a new thing in Sindhi literature. The author said as much : 'This is a newly-planned imaginative story in which the vicissitudes of time and the present conditions are given in homely idiom. There is no trace of genii and spirits, fairies and giants, or of necromancy herein, unlike its predecessors. All the incidents in this book are probable and which can occur in the life of any human being.' Zeenat is a girl who rises to great estate by her virtues. In the earlier part of the novel a picture is given of the life of a genteel Muslim family in the last days of the Talpurs and the early years of British rule, and those who read the novel when it appeared had no doubt in pronouncing these chapters as autobiographical. In the descriptions of the families of Fateh Khan Serai and Ali Nawaz Mogul, Mirza Kalich Beg gives us a peep into his own family and early life. The burden of the book is in a way the same as Kauromal's book, *Pako Pah*, namely that it is necessary to upgrade and educate women if the community is to be upgraded and uplifted. Mirza Kalich Beg, however, did not dare to shock the people of his time and he expresses

himself in favour of *Purdah* for women. The two defects of the novel are the sensational incidents, like the near-drowning of the heroine in the latter part of the book, which do not cohere well with the quiet domestic scenes of the earlier part, and secondly in the conventional characters. The characters are either entirely angelic or wholly devilish. Zeenat is an interesting girl but there is no evolution in her character. She is an ideal girl and ideal woman, that is all. Her ideal and faultless conduct at every juncture only furnishes so much material for the author's frequent moralisings. In spite of these defects *Zeenat* merits special mention as the first novel in the language which has domestic scenes, which gives a picture of life as it was lived in a middle class Sindhi family, at a particular time, and which employs homely idiom and metaphor.

Mirza Kalich Beg's another work of fiction, which can neither be called original nor a translation, was *Rustum Pahlwan* (Rustom the paladin) 1905, the material for which he borrowed from the *Shahnama* of Firdausi, but which he skiifully rendered in a prose narrative. Rustom's exploits, his tragic discomfiture at the hands of his own son Sohrab, and his grievous and other incidents in his life were so dovetailed as to form a single and lively tale, appealing to the taste of those who were accustomed to the tales of giants and necromancers, as well as to those who had cultivated an abhorrence for such things.

Mirza Kalich Beg was also a pioneer of literary criticism in Sindhi. His Life of Shah Abdul Latif (1885) was the first piece of literary biography and criticism in Sindhi, and so too his Shah's Lexicon published many years after that. Mirza Kalich Beg introduced other poets, too, like Shah Abdul Karim, Sabitali Shah, Kasim and Fazil, to Sindhis, and wrote a history of the Sindhi language. Of special value is Mirza's small treatise on Sindhi poetry which was published by the Sindhi Sahit Society in 1915, as also his book on Old Sind in 1925. He wrote on Persian poets like Jalal-ud-din Rumi. The number of his writings on theological themes runs into dozens. He wrote even on the new religion promulgated by Abdul Baha.

Indeed, the interests of Mirza Kalich Beg were wide and varied. His speciality as a writer of prose was that he wrote like a gentleman and like a scholar at the same time ; his prose could teach points of grammar and idiom to the beginners and he could be read with delight by the juveniles as well by the highly educated people. Though he was generally serious he could bend

himself to frolic and fun when writing stories or jokes for children. The reader of Mirza Kalich Beg wonders that he could write so simply and effectively as in his lesson on Health, and at the same time condescend to pedestrian prose, as in the translation of Samuel Smiles' *Self-help*. Mirza was an unequal writer and did not know when he was really great and eloquent, and when he wrote like a tyro who had only learnt his grammar all right.

Mirza Kalich Beg was not only a pioneer in Sindhi drama but he composed the bulk of the Sindhi drama produced by the D.J. Sind College Amateur Dramatic Society. After *Khurshid*, he translated *Shakuntala* of Kalidas in 1896 and rendered some of Shakespeare's dramas for publication and for the stage which have been noticed elsewhere. *Feroze dil Afroz* was a rendering of Lytton's *Night and Morning*. His *Neki Badi* was also a striking play. Mirza Kalich Beg's service to the Sindhi drama also consisted in this that he was the first to write comic pieces and farces in Sindhi. He who would like to enjoy Mirza Kalich Beg's dramatic writings should read *Khurshid* as an instance of his early writings, *Shah Elia* as a specimen of his mature style and weighty writing, and *Inquiry Officer* as a specimen of his humour and farcical writings. One of the choice passages in Mirza Kalich Beg's plays is the letter in the *Inquiry Officer* which the postmaster has abstracted from the mails forwarded by the so-called Inquiry Officer and which paints the village officials in their true colours. If Mirza Kalich Beg could always have written so spontaneously and naturally he would have been unequalled as a writer of Sindhi prose.

Md. Sidik Memon takes a few names of Mirza Kalich Beg's poetic works, prose writings and plays from *Kurb Kalich* (Affectionate tribute to Kalich) 1936, and they cover more than four pages !

Dayaram Gidumal, the maker of modern Sind, and the third of the four great early masters of Sindhi prose, was born in 1857, in a family of affluent zamindars. He passed away in Bombay (Bandra) in 1927. He was the most brilliant Sindhi student of his generation, and Ellis scholar (first in English at B.A.) in the University of Bombay, in 1877. He joined the statutory Civil Service and rose to be Judicial Commissioner of Sind. He declined an offer of a High Court Judgeship and retired in 1911 from Government service.

Between 1877 and 1911 he founded or helped in founding various institutions and societies for the promotion of learning and social reform or service in Sind. He generally did his good work anonymously except when he had to show his hand. In Bombay he founded the Seva Sadan in the company of Malabari. He could not directly take part in politics and journalism, but he was the man behind the scenes in many fields of activity. As a Judge he was known for his erudition and impartiality. At Ahmedabad, where he restored a mosque to its rightful keepers, the Imam of the mosque paid him the highest compliment a Muslim could pay. The Imam said : 'His learning, knowledge of the Islamic law, wisdom and impartiality were such as to make us feel that the Prophet had himself come to adjudicate in our matter.'

Dayaram Gidumal was perhaps the most brilliant and learned scholar and self-sacrificing public worker in Sind in the entire British era. In Sindhi literature he has left his stamp as the writer of the most eloquent prose yet written in Sindhi. No other writer has been able to come up to the eloquence shown in Dayaram Gidumal's Gist of Sami's Slokas (1885) and the Introduction to Mirza Kalich Beg's Sindhi rendering of the Quatrains of Omar Khayyam (1904). His translation or commentary on *Jap Sahib* (1891), his Essence of Bhagavad Gita (1893), and Sindhi rendering of Patanjali's *Yoga Darshan* (1903) are classics of Sindhi prose. All subsequent writers on abstruse and philosophical themes have learnt something from these works in formulating their terminology as well as forming a clear and forceful style. The *magnum opus* of Dayaram Gidumal, The Whips or Scourge of the Mind, has been discussed in a chapter on Sindhi poetry. It may be said of Dayaram Gidumal that whatever he wrote was first-rate in diction as well as style. Even his pamphlets on Women's Education, and Dialogues such as Dialogues between Seven *Sahaliyun* (girls-companions) on Dowry, and domestic problems, will repay careful study. The very titles of these pamphlets called the attention of the readers to an urgent sense of heart-searching and reform.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that in his English biographies of Hiranand (*The History of a Humble Soul*) and reformer Malabari, or in his article on Shah Latif under the pen-name of Sigma, and his spiritual writings under the pen names of Zero and Bijal in *East and West* etc. or in his Introduction to *Chachnama*, he proved himself the only Sindhi writer of

English in his generation to be read with attention and respect

Prof. S. N. Pherwani has written a short biography of Dayaram Gidumal which was published in 1938.

Parmanand Mewaram, the youngest of the four ' pillars ' of Sindhi prose, was born in 1866 and entered Government service in 1884. He was in a Government job for two or three years, then he resigned to turn a schoolmaster and become one of the founders of Union Academy at Hyderabad, known afterwards as Navalrai Hiranand Academy.

From an early age he came under the influence of Christian missionaries and converts to Christianity. The conduct of some priests of Sikh-Hindu religion, to which he belonged from his birth, disgusted him so much that he declared himself a convert to the Catholic form of Christianity, and resigned from the Academy where he had made a name as an able teacher and disciplinarian.

His life was devoted to the furtherance of the Catholic mission in Sind. He joined the editorial board of the Catholic fortnightly in Sindhi called the *Jote* (*Lux*) which had as its motto ' Ad Majorem, Dei Gloriam '. This paper was started in 1896. Khemchand Ambirtrai and the Bengali Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya wrote the English columns, Parmanand Mewaram and Rewachand (subsequently called Swami Animananda) wrote in Sindhi. From 1900, or a little earlier, Parmanand Mewaram became the sole editor and remained as such until his death, i.e. for nearly four decades.

Jote was originally sold for one-pice, and had a large circulation for those days. It reached almost every educated home in Sind and powerfully influenced the ideas of Sindhis. *Jote* eschewed politics, and while remaining a staunch Catholic organ managed to keep more than a semblance of a paper of the widest sympathies in social reform, morals and education. Parmanad Mewaram remained a ' Catholic ' Hindu. The speciality of *Jote* was that the articles in it were lucid, forceful and never descended to slang, vulgarity, and cheap claptrap. The tone of the paper was uniformly of a high order and it was the only paper in Sind which adults could read with avidity, and which at the same time provided wholesome and humourous reading for women and children. Parmanand Mewaram was widely known as the ' Addison ' of Sind, perhaps becuase he was the only writer in Sind who could combine *morality* and wit and write in chaste Sindhi.

Jote encouraged other writers to write in its columns provided they could satisfy the high standard of the paper and instruct as well as amuse their readers. Perhaps the most notable find among these auxiliary writers was the essayist and moralist Wadhumal Gangaram.

In 1904 Parmanand Mewaram collected some of the writings in *Jote* in four volumes under the title of *Dil Bahar* (Heart's Spring). The best writings in *Jote* for four decades were later collected in two volumes (in 1925 and 1936) entitled *Gul Phul*, and those who want to read Sindhi prose at its best in simplicity, lucidity, and wit, can hardly do better than read *Gul Phul* (Flowers).

The greatest service Parmanand Mewaram did to Sindhi language and literature was to devote six years of strenuous work to the preparation of his *Sindhi-English Dictionary* (1910) which is still the standard work of reference for Sindhis. He used to go to fields, lakes and outlaying districts of Sind, and also interviewed men of various professions, and the patients that flocked to the Civil Hospital at Hyderabad, to collect words that had never found their way to previous Sindhi Dictionaries. One sick fisherman from Manchar Lake was able to give him names of fowls and fish unknown to the educated Sindhis. He worked for nearly thirty years on an *English-Sindhi Dictionary* which saw the light in 1933. These Dictionaries require to be revised but they are monuments to the learning and industry of Parmanand Mewaram.

Parmanand wrote some books like *Sindbad*, *Hiro Guloo* (an instructional story), *Lady of Lourdes*, but his prose work is the translation of *The Imitation of Christ* (Thomas-a-Kempis) in 1923. Except Dayaram Gidumal, no Sindhi has written such simple and stately prose as Parmanand Mewaram wrote in this translation, which is treasured by Sindhis as one of the very best half a dozen prose works in the language.

Sindhi Prose and Drama : 1907-1947

The period 1907-1947 was one of great activity in the field of Sindhi prose and drama. There were hundreds of original writers and translators, and to catalogue their names and works would cover a volume. It will do if only the more important writers and significant works are noticed in this place.

India, including Sind, entered on a new life about the year 1907. Lord Curzon's Partition of Bengal had roused the whole country to political consciousness, which was further enhanced by the Morley Minto Reforms. Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ram Tirtha, Aurobindo Ghose and others strove for a resurgent and renovated Hinduism. The Muslims clung to separate electorates and cultivated a separatist mentality which finally led to the Partition of India. Writers of Sindhi prose now did not look to the Educational Department and the outmoded medieval romances for inspiration and guidance.

The taste of the reading public changed. It craved for 'Swadeshism' in politics, as well as literature, with Science at the periphery. The Hindi and Urdu writers who appealed to Sindhis, through translations, were Shiv Barat Lal who wrote in Urdu and Hindi on the uniqueness of the Hindu woman, the chivalry of the Rajputs, and the greatness of our scriptures, and Devak Nandan Khatri, whose *Chandrakanta* made Sindhi readers abandon the old romances of necromancers and giants in favour of *Ayyars* (Crooks or Counterfeits) who could change their shape at will, make anyone senseless through drugs, and revive them with *Lakhlakho*. They had in their belt almost all the articles ready to deal with terrific gadgets and subterraneous treasure-caves. The Bengali novelist who claimed the attention of the Sindhi public was Bankim Chander Chatterji whose *Anand Math* had provided the rallying-cry of *Bande Mataram*. The taste for Rabindra Nath Tagore's works showed itself a few years later, i.e., after he got the Nobel Prize in 1913. Premchand and Sharat Chander became popular in the 'thirties and 'forties.

The translations of Shiv Barat Lal's writings appeared in magazines like Master Harisingh's *Satyawati* and, small books, but none of these translations had any merit as a work of Sindhi prose. Mukhi Sirumal's translations of *Chandrakanta*, *Bhutnath* etc., in the years following 1908, cannot be called literary but they widened the Sindhi vocabulary by acclimatising several words and phrases unknown before, or little used. By 1914 i.e., the First World War, the reading public had been glutted with *Ayyars*, secret committees, scientific contrivances, and skeletons in the cupboard, and were ready for another kind of fiction.

The Bengali translations of Bankim, as also such translations as Gordhan Sharma's of Lokmanya Tilak's book on *Swadeshi*, for which he and two others went to jail (1908), only whetted the

appetite of the public for such books, but even through a great writer of Sindhi prose, like Kauromal Chandanmal, was also one of the translators, Bankim's genious does not shine in Sindhi translations. Some able translator has still to be found to translate such works as *Ananda math* and *Krishna Kanta's Will*.

Two major writers of Sindhi prose who stood outside the mainstream of Sindhi life and lived in the past were Hakim Fateh Md. Sewhani and Nirmaldas Fatechand. Hakim Fateh Md. Sewhani wrote a glowing account of the regime of the Mirs which brought out a reply from Parmanand Mewaram : Would you wish the Mirs back ? Hakim Fateh Mahomed wrote a life of the Prophet (1914) which is still the standard work on his life and teachings in Sindhi. He wrote some stories, too, and books on literary criticism, but his famous book which established him as a major writer of Sindhi prose in the biography of Faizi and Abu-al-Fazl, two brothers who were among the ablest ministers at the court of King Akbar. These two brothers belonged to Sewhan, the place from which Hakim Fateh Mahomed came, and he felt a pride in collecting materials for their biography and writing about them in prose which is redolent of Persian, is always distinguished, and at times exquisite. The passages describing Faizi as Ambassador, and the death of his brother and its effect on Akbar, are gems of prose. No student of Sindhi prose can afford to neglect this book which is a synthesis of Persian-Arabic erudition as well as modern outlook on life. A speciality of this biography is that it is the work of a true Sufi and lover of Hindu-Muslim unity. The book concludes with a hope that Hindus as well as Muslims will resolve the differences that divided them and live together as 'milk and sugar.' This important work in Sindhi prose was published in 1936.

Nirmaldas Fatehchand was also a Sufi and a lover of Persian and Arabic. No Muslim writer has paid such a tribute to the Prophet and his son-in-law and successor, Ali, whom Nirmaldas calls 'Jagat Guru', (World-Teacher), as this Hindu Sufi, nor has any Hindu writer used Persian and Arabic words and phrases so freely and so intelligently as Nirmaldas. He was also a scholar of Hindi and Sanskrit. In the First Great World War he was taken up as a Censor because he was the best linguist in the province of Sind. He translated parts of Firdausi's *Shah Nama* in his magazine *Aina*, which the elect read in the first decade of the twentieth century, but the reader had to keep a dictionary by his side while reading the prose of Nirmaldas. He published

poetic compositions, too, in such papers as the D.J. Sind College, *Miscellany*. He has left behind at least two works, one *Sarojini*, a tale he wrote for the Sindhi Sahit Society, as early as 1914, and the posthumously published *Dalurai-Ji-Nagri* (1944) by which his reputation as a major writer of Sindhi prose can be sustained. *Dalurai-Ji-Nagri* (The City of Dalurai) covers hardly 84 pages, and is followed by three pages of Quatrains and fifteen pages of Glossary. The story is told of the degeneration of Hindu Kshatriya in Sind and their ruler Dalurai (and his brother Sassorrai), and Dalurai's diabolical edict that every girl pass her nuptial night with him in his palace, before joining her husband. This eventually brought on God's wrath, and led to the destruction of the city of Dalurai, and the turning of the river Sindhu from its bed to another terrain. Most of the incidents related in this story or novel are true to legend, some are invented by the author. But his descriptions are vivid and telling. For certain words and phrases the reader must dip into the Glossary at the end. *Dalurai-Ji-Nagri* is a unique book, and no other work in the Sindhi language presents such a true picture of the decline and fall of the Hindu ruling class in Sind in the early days of the advent of Muslims in Sind. The prose of Nirmaldas has often reminded the present writer of the Latinised prose of Sir Thomas Browne.

Besides Hakim Fateh Md. and Nirmaldas Fatechand there were two writers of the old school who cannot be termed writers of the Persian School but whose prose made choice reading. They were both educationists, Bulchand Dayaram (died 1923), and Lilaram Premchand, and they enriched with their writings the departmental paper of the Educational Department and a few other magazines. Bulchand Dayaram's description of Taj Mahal and story of Nur Jahan (1914) show his erudition and culture, and Lilaram Premchand's writings breathe of the spirit of true sufism. Lilaram Premchand did a service to the nascent Sindhi prose by making the first collection of Sindhi prose writings in his *Guldasto* (1907), with the help of Dayaram Vasanmal. It is the best anthology of early Sindhi prose.

A Quartet of masters of prose

Just as there were four 'pillars' of Sindhi prose in the period 1857-1907, there was a quartet of masters of prose, in the

succeeding period. They could be divided in two pairs, each pair related in the same way. The son of one man had married the other man's daughter. All these four men died within the space of a few years.

H. M. Gurbaxani's son married Bherumal Mahirchand's daughter. Jethmal Parsram's son married Lalchand Amardinomal's daughter. Gurbaxani died in 1947, Jethmal Parsram in 1948, Bherumal Mahirchand in 1950 and Lalchand Amardinomal died in 1954. All of them left an indelible mark on Sindhi literature.

Gurbaxani was the most eminent of the quartet. He made his debut in Sindhi literature in 1915 with his novel *Nur Jahan* which was an adaptation of Sardar Jogendra Singh's novel of the same name, in English. But Gurbaxani's novel had 'purple' passages which were not in the Sikh writer's novel. In all collections of the best passages in Sindhi prose Gurbaxani's account of the coronation ceremony of Jehangir, and Jehangir's justice, are invariably to be found. Some passages, such as the lamentation over Akbar's death, are derived from the English original. Gurbaxani's prose at this time was florid, but readers enjoyed it. Eight years afterwards, in 1923, he burst upon the literary horizon of Sindhis as editor of the sumptuous volume number one of Shah's Risalo with an Introduction the like of which was not seen before in Sindhi literature, and a Glossary and a Commentary the like of which were found only in the finest editions of European classics. All told, the publication in 1923 of this first volume of *Shah-Jo-Risalo* was the greatest event that has happened in the century of Sindhi prose, and it is one of the proudest memories of the present writer that he was called upon to write two reviews of the book in English one in the D. J. Sind College *Miscellany*, the other in Sind's English Daily. As usual, there were detractors, chiefly among those who had hitherto hugged to their heart the genuine as well as spurious verses of Shah in the previous editions, and those who were inclined to find only their own brand of so-called Islamic Sufism in Shah, and those who were inclined to read Shah's verses in their own slipshod manner. Gurbaxani annoyed them because he ruthlessly excised the spurious and foreign matter in the previous editions of Mirza Kalich Beg (1885) and Tarachand Showkiram (1900), gave meanings and made comments on Shah's verses like a scholar, and not like a professional Sufi, and restored the Lar (or original)

pronounciation of Shah's lines. Slowly, the animadversions died down, and readers were left to enjoy the beautiful prose of Gurbaxani in his best passage like the characterisation of Marui beginning with 'Marui is a humble village girl. The simple porridge of her village is more to her than the dainties in Umar's palace....' No one in Sindhi had written prose like that before, learned and yet unsophisticated. Long afterwards, when Daudpota, after Gurbaxani's death, claimed that he was not only Gurbaxani's assistant (which fact Gurbaxani had gratefully acknowledged) but that he had actually written the Commentary and the Introduction, it was enough as a refutation to confront him with passages like these the like of which were never to be found in his own declared works. Gurbaxani brought out his third volume in 1930, but unfortunately the last and fourth volume was never issued. Shahwani and Kalyan Advani's editions contain the *Sur* Gurbaxani had not yet dealt with, but their writing is different. Probably, to counter the agitation against him, Gurbaxani wrote in 1934 *Lawari-Ja-Lal* (the stalwarts of Lawari), but no one appreciates this book in India. Gurbaxani's edition of *Shah-Jo-Risalo*, specially the Introduction which was later issued as a separate book is his sure passport to immortality in Sindhi literature. Students of Sindhi will remember Gurbaxani with gratitude, for it was his 1921 report to the University of Bombay which induced the University to introduce Sindhi in College courses.

Gurbaxani's name recalls the name of his senior and teacher, the first Sindhi Principal of the D. J. Sind College, Sahibsingh Shahani, who wrote beautiful articles on Sindhi Grasses, *Chandool* (skylark), and on *Stupid Magistrate* in D. J. Sind College, *Miscellany*, and who adapted Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Two on a Tower* under the titles of *Bilu Khokar* and *Taran Jo Abhiyas* (study of stars), respectively, after his retirement in 1927. There is an old-world flavour in these works of fiction, and a fragrant smell of the countryside, difficult to be met with in other Sindhi novels.

Bherumal Mahirchand, the second of the quartet, tried his hand at both verse and prose, and though he wrote some good verses in the traditional style, in the D. J. Sind College *Miscellany*, he had the good sense to know that he was marked out to be a scholar and prose writer, and not a poet. He made the first Anthology of Sindhi poetry (under the title of *Johar Nazm*) to which Mirza Kalich Beg contributed an Introduction. His

Prose Anthology came in 1929 under the title of *Gulzar-i-Nasr* (Garden of Prose) for which the present writer furnished an Introduction. Bheruma Mahirchand tried his hand at Fiction (*Anand Sundrika* 1910), but beyond the heroine's old-fashioned lectures on an ideal wife's duties, there is not much that is interesting in the so-called novel. He however, completed Hiranand Showkiram's translation of Scott's *Talisman* and also collected his *Hirai-Joon-Kanyoon* (*Diamond Nuggets*). Bherumal's translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Golan-ja-Goondar 1928) was read with avidity. In the field of drama he tried his hand but not with great success. His short plays on a cloth-retailer, and social themes were journalistic ventures spun out in the form of dialogues. His ambitious translation of Shakespeare's *King John* never got staged.

It is as an essayist, with essays on travels, social problems and Sindhi language, that Bherumal commands a distinguished place for himself in Sindhi literature. His distinction as a stylist is that he has no mannerisms, no ' purple ' passages in his works, no unevennesses, and that he is uniformly lucid and graceful, difficult to imitate because there are neither florid passages, nor excrescences in his writings. As a writer of travels, his *Sind-Jo-Sailani*, (*Journey through Sind*) in 1923 and *Latifi-Sair* (The travels of Shah Abdul Latif) 1926, are the finest books of their kind in the language with the possible exception of Allah Bachayo's *Sair-i-Kohistan*. No student of Shah can do without *Latifi-Sair*. Bherumal's articles on *Akh* (Eye) and *Prem* (Love) are probably the best of all his numerous essays, and his *Gharoo Kifayat* (Domestic Thrift), written for the *Sindhi Sahit Society* in 1917, is his best pamphlet. Bherumal's painstaking research into the customs of Sind Hindus (1919), and of their family origins which culminated in two volumes issued on the eve of the Partition, was admirable. But his chief claim to immortality in Sindhi literature arises from the fact that beginning with his treatise on Sindhi Language in 1925 he was able to write his history of Sindhi Language in 1941 which, in Pakistan as well as India, is taken to be the standard work on the subject.

Bherumal's son, Pribhdas (or Harnamsingh), wrote some religious tracts which are forgotten but he has left behind him one of the finest books in Sindhi prose in his translation of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* under the title of *Salik-Jo-Safar* (1943). The translation is *not* literal and was not meant to be literal, and is stuffed with quotations from Shah, Sami, Sachal

and others. But the prose is almost faultless, it is so limpid, flowing and easy. Both Hindus and Muslims can enjoy it. Indeed, it does not look like translation at all. Along with Paramanand Mewaram's rendering of *Imitation of Christ*, it is one of the two devotional books of this period which are translations and do not look like translations, and are models of Sindhi prose.

Jethmal Parsram, third of the quartet of modern masters of Sindhi prose, was born in 1885. From 1902 to 1911 he was a schoolmaster. He resigned his job to protest against compulsory vaccination of children against smallpox, and was a 'stormy petrel ' until his death. He became Sind's greatest publicist and platform speaker, and organiser of Conferences. He was a devout follower of Annie Besant and Theosophy, and Sind's first socialist. He went to jail for an article against British atrocities following the Rowlatt Act, but he did not follow Mahatma in his Khilafat or Non-Cooperation movement. Jethmal Parsram was independent in his convictions and fought for the underdog, especially for the peasants of Sind, and went to any length to expose the high-handedness and nefarious deeds of those in power. He founded many newspapers and magazines, the New Sindhi Library of publications, and helped in the founding of the Sindhi Sahit Society. Jethmal Parsram was a Sufi if ever there was one, and saw sufism even in Shakespeare's sonnets. He did more than any Sindhi writer to popularise Shah and Sachal and interpret them to the common people. He was elected as President of the first Sindhi Literary conference (convened at Shikarpur in 1931), and from 1933 to 1940 was Professor of Sindhi at the National College, Hyderabad, Sind. He was known as a pro-Muslim but he fought Daudpota tooth and nail to preserve the Sindhi alphabet from being turned into an Arabic alphabet, in its vowel-signs. He was a man of the masses, and yet not a demagogue.

Jethmal Parsram was a versatile writer. He was the first to write in English a book on Sindhi mystics and Sufis. He wrote in Sindhi on Shah (1915), Shah's stories (1922), and *Shah Bhitai* (1923), on *Sachal Sarmast* (1922) and on *Sufis* (1921). His book on Sachal is easily the best and most literary and critical work extant on the subject. No one has been able to bring out Sachal's free-thinking and philosophy as Jethmal Parsram. In his translations he was not so successful. His translations of *Hamlet* (1923) and *Faust* fell flat. But his pamphlets for the

Sindhi Sahit Society like that on Bhai Kalachand (a social reformer) 1914, were much appreciated. Jethmal Parsram's rendering, or rather adaptation, of Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* under the title *Poorab Jooti*, in 1923, is one of the great prose works in Sindhi literature. It is a peculiar blend of devotion, mysticism and joy of life, and may be called a prose-poem. As late as 1947 Jethmal Parsram founded *Ruh Rihan* to keep the flame of sufism burning in a province which was going to fall apart with bigotry in politics. Jethmal was one of the first short story writers in Sindhi. His stories exposed the lust and greed of the rich and the mighty. He wrote under the pen names *Soonjho* (Detective), and *Chamra Posh* (Masked Observer).

Jethmal Parsram was a prolific writer and wrote incessantly in Sindhi newspapers and magazines. He was almost the only Sindhi journalist to elevate journalism to the height of literature. His prose is oratorical without being rhetorical, and the courage of his convictions often raises it to eloquence. He is sure of his place in Sindhi literature with his *Sachal Sarmast* and *Poorab Joti*.

Jethmal Parsram gathered round him many political and social workers but he left no 'school ' of writers to propagate his message to the masses. One of his young associates, Amarlal Hingorani, who started a paper *Phulwari* in 1930, won immortality in Sindhi literature by his short stories one of which *Ado Abdur Rahman* (Brother Abdur Rahman) has secured international reputation and is reckoned to be the first notable short story in the language. Ado Abdur Rahman is a true Sindhi sufi, and follows Sachal in saying that he is neither a Hindu nor Muslim. He shames the magistrate, before whom he is rudely interrogated, by asking him if he should not be tried for discourtesy and boorishness, and embarrasses a proud Seth, boasting of his honour and the honour of his women-folk, by questioning him why he has kept his thirty-five year old sister away from marriage, to save some money.

Lalchand Amardinomal, the fourth of the quartet was acclaimed as the Grand Old Man of Sindhi literature in Pakistan, as well as India, at the time of his death in 1954, and his ashes were reverently immersed in the waters of his beloved Sindhu by Osman Ali Ansari and other Muslims who were his admirers and associates. He died in poor circumstances but kept up his sturdy independence to the last. A schoolmaster for a long

time, he was Professor of Sindhi in the Women's University, started by Karve, and was instrumental in getting the University to recognise M.A. degree in Sindhi, and frame a syllabus for it, which no other University had done so far.

Lalchand Amardinomal wrote, steadily, for half a century, Sindhi prose of a kind not attempted before. He eschewed all exotic words, phrases and images in his prose and employed only Sindhi words, familiar to women and the rural folk. His diction was simple, chaste and stately, and many of his phrases were derived from Shah and Sachal. Almost every one of his paragraphs furnished to the reader proverbs and idioms which were not known to him before.

Lalchand Amardinomal sprang into the arena of Sindhi prose as a grown up athlete, with his article on *Hur Makhi Ja* (The Hurs of Makhi) in the D. J. Sind College *Miscellany*, which later on he issued in the *Sindhi Sahit* publications. This account of the famous dacoits of Makhi Lake, whom the whole province knew and dreaded, is one of the finest prose pieces in Sindhi literature ; and it has been used as subject-matter for subsequent novels, but Lalchand's account of Hurs still holds the palm as the last word on the subject. His *Choth Jo Chand* (the Fourth Day Moon) was his first attempt at fiction, and was based on the popular conception that he who has a look at the fourth day moon in the month of *Bado* or *Bhadun* will be the victim of many misunderstandings. The novel was left uncompleted for forty years before it was completed in 1947. The second part did not cohere well with the earlier portion. The first part of *Choth Jo Chand* was full of exuberance and vitality and gave the story of two friends and boy-lovers. His next attempt at fiction, *Kishni-Jo-Kasht*, 1917, issued under the authorship of 'Awatrai Rupchand Manchandia ', was far more successful, but it is hard to believe that it was not a conscious or unconscious rendering of Mrs. Henry Wood's novel *Mrs. Halliburton's Troubles*; he denied that he had got the plot or characters, from the English novel. In 1910 he wrote a book *Mahomed Rasool Allah* (Mahomed the Prophet of God) which met with a mixed reception, the Muslims feeling that he was unnecessarily an apologist for their Prophet, and the Hindus feeling that he was straying from their fold. He wrote *Ram Badshah*, in 1912, on Swami Ram Tirth, whose life and death had electrified the people of Sind and Panjab. His *Shahano Shah* (1914), written for the Sindhi Sahit Society,

was the precursor of his many critical works on Sindhi poets. It was followed by a book on Sachal entitled *Soonharo Sachal* (Beauteous Sachal), in 1916, and a commentary on *Gul* (1916).

Lalchand Amardinomal issued many *Anthologies* and was also a notable translator. He translated *Fabioia* in Sindhi (Sach-Tan-Sadke 1940) but his translation, or rather adaptation, of Tagore's *Gardener* is the one derivative book which has stood the test of time. *Sada Gulab* (Ever-Rose) is a new kind of experiment in Sindhi prose. It has something of the fragrance of Tagore plus the robust delicacy of the personality of the author. Lalchand Amardinomal co-operated with the Muslims in the Educational Department to bring out a new Sindhi Dictionary, and had to leave the work incomplete when he migrated to India. He left incomplete, in manuscript form, a little treatise, *Sindhi Sahit Jo Nichor* (Essence of Sindhi literature). Lalchand's success on the stage with *Umar Marui* (1925) will be noticed in a following section. If any one wants to read Lalchand Amardinomal's one book only to enjoy him as an essayist and prose stylist he should read his *Phulan muth* (1927) or A Handful of popcorn.

Lalchand Amardinomal's best work was done as the founder of *Sindhi Sahit Society* in 1914 (along with Jethmal Parsram) and as the editor of its series of excellent tracts or manuals. The Sindhi Sahit Society played a great part in the standardisation of Sindhi prose and purging it of excrescences, specially during the years when its organising secretary was Saran Anand Thadani, whose early death was a great blow to the Society. During the first half-a-dozen years of its existence the Society succeeded in bringing Mirza Kalich Beg (*Sindhi Shaer*), Bulchand Dayaram, Jethmal Parsram (*Bhai Kalachand*), Lalchand Amardinomal, etc., together, on a common platform, and furnished models for young writers to follow. One might say that Sindhi prose came to be of age with the Sindhi Sahit Society in the days of the First World War. When Lalchand Amardinomal ceased to be the editor, the Society wilted away, and died in the hands of a bookseller in the first half of the third decade of the present century.

Lalchand Amardinomal's prose style was too individualistic and had too many eccentricities to be imitated easily, but his life and works inspired a pupil and associate of his to a notable extent. Assanand Mamtora, his admirer, became a fine essayist, critic, and story-writer, and won an assured place for himself in

Sindhi literature with his novel *Shair* (Poet) which dazzled the Sindhi reading people in 1941. This novel, issued by *Asha Mandal*, contained a Foreword by Lalchand Amardinomal, in which he claimed that *Shair* was one of the very few novels in Sindhi which were original and breathed of the author's personality. He hinted that *Shair* was the product of the author's own travail in the pursuit of Beauty. The best passage in the novel is at the end of the second part which describes a vision of Beauty by the hero as he stands, in moonlight, beside the snow-bridge in Chandanwari in Kashmir. It is one of the finest passages of Sindhi prose, and may be dismissed as a rhapsody by the cynics, but it is a real gem of prose, and deserves to be read by every Sindhi. His short *Ganvaran* (cowherdess) has been translated into English. Assanand Mamtora's stories were among the first in Sind which might be called stories of sex.

Balkan-Ji-Bari—Children's literature

An important development in Sindhi life and letters in the 'twenties was the founding by Shewak Bhojraj of Balkan-Ji-Bari (Children's Guild) in 1925 which has turned to be an 'All-India Children's Association.' It has often been remarked that *Balkan-Ji-Bari* is the only Sindhi word or phrase which has found its way in all Indian languages. Shewak Bhojraj was a schoolmaster in Larkana when he started the *Balkan-Ji-Bari* and later turned to be a journalist and one of the important social workers in India. He is now working quietly in a small village for the uplift of the aborigines. Whatever other claims to eminence Shewak Bhojraj has, it must be recorded here that he has an important place in Sindhi prose firstly because he is the pioneer of Children's literature in Sindhi, and secondly because he is a writer in his own right, as author of two autobiographical novels, *Ashirvad* (1933) and *Dada Shyam* (1924). (Children and parents know Shewak Bhojraj as *Dada*). By founding the magazine *Gulistan*, and other papers of the Balkan-Ji-Bari, Shewak Bhojraj made it possible for Sindhi children to read for themselves instructive and pleasure-affording essays, jokes and stories. In his novels he describes the life of a schoolmaster and gives it a romantic twist. Shewak Bhojraj's prose appeals to the child-mind without there being anything childish in it. Like his Larkana poetic counterpart, Bewas, he believes that literature should convey joy and love of beauty to readers (in his case,

children) and not make them melancholy and pessimistic. In the midst of many reverses and mishaps he has stuck to his philosophy : 'All that happens happens for the best'. His prose has no mannerisms or oddities about it.

The Sunder Sahitya publications also came round in 1924 or 1925 to reinforce Shewak Bhojraj's endeavours to provide wholesome literature for children. Its moving spirit was Fatehchand Vaswani, a Revenue official, who continued to write under the name of his brother Mellaram Vaswani as long as he was in a Government job. The other work that Fatechand Vaswani has done is to popularise the Rajput chivalry and give its rightful image to Sindhis. In this direction his chief work is *Rana Pratap* (1926).

Muslim writers of Sindhi Prose

The Muslim writers were almost conspicuous by their absence in Sindhi prose in the first two decades of the twentieth century except, of cours , old and established writers like Mirza Kalich Beg and Hakim Fateh Md. In the next two decades they appeared in a swarm almost, chiefly through emergence of the Sind Muslim Adabi Society in 1931, and the appointment of U.M. Daudpota as Director of Public Instruction, soon after the separation of Sind from the Presidency of Bombay.

The moving spirit of the Muslim Adabi Society was Md. Sidik Memon, and the first important publication of the Society was an edition of Gul's poems. Md. Sidik Memon was himself an eminent scholar and he has to his credit a Sindhi translation of *Tarikh-i-Tahiri.* and original works. *Zalun-Jo-Tahfo* (A gift for women), a novel, The Cycle of life, *Kamil Rahnama* (Perfect guide) and above all *History of Sindhi literature*, in two volumes, the first of which was written in 1937. This History is of course a pioneering work of its kind in Sindhi. It is not very selective and is a kind of panegyric on all Muslim composers of Sindhi verse of any merit whatsoever. But it shows much reading and industry, and is a great help to all succeeding writers on the subject. With Sindhi prose this History betrays a total ignorance excepting chronicling the first works published by or under the patronage of the Educational Department. As Principal of Teachers' Training College he had access to a good library of Sindhi books, and he made good use of his opportunity. Md.

Sidik Memon shows a good knowledge of Persian prosody and learning, but his prose has no charm of style.

Then there were the two Razaks. Kazi Abdur Razak wrote *Danai-Ja-Sabaq* (Lesson of Wisdom) culled from Persian texts. Abdur Razak Memon wrote a tragic novel *Jahan Ara* (1931). Jahan Ara is an ideal lover and dies on the night her Jahan Khan espouses his royal bride. The novel is full of fine passages and recalls Gurbaxani's *Nur Jahan*, with the addition that Memon's novel contains hortatory passages which are not to be found in Gurbaxani's book. For instance, there is a fine passage in chapter Six drawing a comparison between Men and Flowers, with a suitable moral. Memon's book deserves a careful perusal. It will bring to the readers the aroma of a bygone period and environment.

A writer who could have left an indelible impression upon Sindhi literature, but who did not, was Agha Gulam Nabi who edited the *Risola* of Sachal in 1933 with an Introduction which is full of bombast and which should be cut down at least by two-thirds. An earlier tribute to a Sindhi poet, termed *Kurb Kalich* (Affectionate tribute to Kalich), too, fell flat, and is valuable because of a catalogue of Kalich's works.

The one prose work of genius from the pen of a Muslim in this period was *Sair Kohistan* (Travel in Kohistan) 1942, written by Allah Bachayo. It is not only the best travel book in the Sindhi language but is a model of prose. Sindhi, as understood on the countryside, finds a place in this work as in no other Sindhi book. Accounts are given, of the simple poor hospitable and affectionate mountain-folk of Kohistan, which powerfully move the heart. Some of the passages in this travel-book are so beautiful that they will bear comparison with Kinglake's chapter on the Desert in *Eothen*.

Another Muslim writer of merit in the 'thirties who might have been a great figure in literature, if he had seriously devoted himself to it like his father, was Nadirbeg Mirza, the son of Mirza Kalich Beg whose stories in the pages of *Sindhu* were highly appreciated. The best-known of these stories is the story of *Miss Rustomji*.

And now to turn to the great Muslim scholar, U.M. Daudpota, whose claim to fame is that he not only devoted himself to learning and research but that he surrounded himself with a band of scholars and researchers who are still doing good in Pakistan as well as in India. Ghulam Md. Shahwani, the

translator of Saadi's *Gulistan* under the title of *Gulshan Bahar*, and compiler of an edition of *Shah*, Osman Ali Ansari, author of *Panj* or Five Short Stories in 1937, and some critical essays, Arif Shah Gilani, research worker, A. W. Musavi, writer on Bekas and Bedil, Lutf ulla Badwi, the not very critical but still useful writer on Sindhi Poets, author of *Tazkirah Lutfi*, (1943), Joyo, later to be the editor of the famous Pakistan Review *Mihran,* Nabibux Baloch, who has done so much for research in Sindhi literature, Taj Md. Agha, who translated Saadi's *Bustan* and wrote original articles and books on Shah, Din Md. Wafai (died 1950) writer of historical tales and commentator on Shah, and many other Muslim writers of note now, as well as Hindu research-workers like H. I. Sadarangani in India, were directly or indirectly indebted for inspiration to U.M. Daudpota.

Daudpota (1896–1958) was a scholar of Arabic, Persian and Sindhi and won his spurs by assisting his teacher, Gurbaxani, in the preparation of his monumental edition of *Shah*. He appeared on his own in 1937 with a scholarly edition of Shah Abdul Karim of whom he thought more highly as a saint than a poet. His translation of *Minhaj-ul-Ashkeen* had already appeared in 1934 and his edition of Md. Zaman's *Abiyat Sindi* appeared in 1939. When he proceeded to have the Sindhi vowel system, adopted under the guidance of Premchand in 1905, changed wholesale, he came violently in conflict with Hindu sentiment. He translated in Sindhi and edited *Tarikh-i-Mausumi* (1938) and *Tarikh-i-Chachnama* (1939), but his characteristic prose is to be found in the Introduction to the Anthology *Sarha Gul* (Happy Flowers) which he compiled in 1932 before he rose to a high post. Daudpota had a curious notion that Sindhi literature, except Shah, was of no worth. Further, he was so much obsessed with the greatness of Arabic that he discounted all other languages, including Urdu and Persian, and wanted Sindhi language and literature to be Arabicised. His posthumous *Autobiography* in Sindhi shows lapses of memory and taste.

Hindu writers of prose 1907–1957

The Hindu writers of prose in the period of 1907–1957 were legion, but only a few names of prominent writers and stylists can be mentioned.

The emergence of the monthly magazine *Sindhu* in 1932, under the editorship of Bulchand Rajpal, did much to provide a forum for writers. The like of *Sindhu* has not been seen in Sindhi life and letters. The D. J. Sind College *Miscellany* was necessarily confined to a coterie of students and Professors, *Jote* was a one man show, and so *Gulistan* but the *Sindhu* provided a forum for every Sindhi writer, provided the writing came up to a certain standard of excellence. The Sunder Sahitya publications were mostly translations or belonged to children's literature. The Ratan or Asha Publishing House or Kahani had no publications or articles to their credit beyond translations. As a matter of fact, the sole prose work of standard excellence which came out under the auspices of these miscellaneous magazines or Associations was Mamtora's *Shair*, which was issued early in the forties under the auspices of *Asha* publications.

The D. J. Sind College *Miscellany* articles, live in Sindhi literature because of *Vichar*, the volume of selections which the present writer issued in 1940 and which included his own four articles : *The Pillar of life, The Zest for life, A strange Delight* (Books), *Essentials of Prose.* But there were several other prose extracts in it from the old as well as the new writers.

Before the 'thirties, (and the foundation of *Sindhu*), the following works of merit had appeared in Sindhi prose :—Tolaram Menghraj Balani's *Sikhya Sagar*, 1910, was a book on Vedantism in choice prose, and so too were his posthumous articles on *A Sight of the Waters* 1918 and *Love of one's Land* 1914 ; his early death was a great loss to Sindhi prose. Pritamdas Tharanee's *Jivan* Ved 1921 was an exposition of Keshab Chander Sen's teachings. Chainrai Bulchand wrote finely on Hindu Philosophy in ' The path of a Seeker ' in 1925, Rochiram Sadani wrote good prose of pedagogic kind in *Insan and Insaniyat* (Man and Manhood) in 1923. In 1926 came a Sindhi version of T. K. Shahani's *Life of Gokhale* in English from the author's own pen, and in 1927 Tahilram Assudomal published a book on *Sindhi Worthies* written in pedestrian prose but giving valuable information about Sindhis who should be remembered.

In the 'thirties and 'forties the following were the principal non-fiction prose works :—N. R. Malkani's *Anar Dana* (Pomegranate Seeds) appeared in 1942 (with a foreword from the present writer) and it is an important book of original essays in the language. N. R. Malkani specialised in humerous writing

and in the understanding of the Sind rural folk and countryside as well as Gujarat and its people. The best of his earlier published work, like *Gothani Chahar* (The rural savoury) was incorporated in *Anar Dana*. For Sindhi readers chapters like *Gujarati Garba, Travel in Kashmir* and *Baluch and guns* were refreshing eye openers. Wadhumal Gangaram's *Pangati Inqilab* (Social Revolution) 1940 was written in chaste Sindhi recalling the style of Parmanand Mewaram, in whose *Jote* many of the essays, had already appeared. Gobind Bhatia's essays *Warq* (Leaves) also appeared at the same time (1940) (with a Foreword by the present writer) in which a young man, then in his twenties, treated some really serious topics with a light touch and in a deft manner. The early forties of the present century seemed to be a good time for Sindhi essays and essayists, for half a dozen good books of essays appeared which enshrined good Sindhi prose. *Chingun* (Sparks) written by Tirith Vasant, in 1940, with a Foreword by Hyderbux Jatoi the poet, was a book of merit. The essays on The Message of Shah, the opening essay and *Nano* or Maternal Grandfather, the concluding essay, will remain as classics. Tirith Vasant had vision as well as humour, a combination not usually to be found. He could think independently and write in an assured, forceful manner. Lekhraj Aziz, the poet, also collected his essays in *Adabi-Aino* (Literature's looking-glass) in 1941 in which he expressed his views of men and things perhaps more effectively than in several of his poems. Ram Panjwani and Naraindas Bhambhani, Professors, issued *Adabi Ghuncho* (*A blossom of literature*) in which Ram Panjwani showed breadth, and his colleague intensity, of vision. The essays were well-written. Naraindas Bhambhani made a penetrating study of Shah's Heroines (Surmiyoon) in a book issued in 1944. Lokumal Keswani, another Professor, issued a *Kasoti* or Criterion of Literature in 1946 and raised a stirring controversy. C. L. Mariwala, another Professor wrote essays on Historical subjects in 1946. Raghumal Motwani's book *Gulabi Gul* (Rose Flowers) was not on Flowers or Poetry but was a well-reasoned easy treatise on Mysticism. Two writers on Ancient Sind and Ancient India were Dwarkadas Sharma (1943), and Gangaram Samrat, who wrote with erudition and produced his first volume on *Aryavarta*. Hotchand Thadani collected his brother Uttamchand's speech of 1896 and some articles on the Talpurs and issued *Mirs of Sind* in 1938.

As for works of fiction, Shamdas Dulani wrote his novel or rather romance, *Rani Padmavati*, in 1942, wherein he eulogised Akbar as well as his opponent the great Rajput hero, Rana Pratap, and gave the lie to the many romances that were being written at the time praising Rajput chivalry and condemning Akbar's rapacity and lust. Guli Sadarangani's novel *Ithad* (Unity) which came one year earlier, i.e. in 1941, raised a controversy because the Hindu heroine in her novel married a Muslim ; people said that was not the way to promote Hindu-Muslim unity. Guli Sadarangani had made her debut earlier (in 1938) whth her translation of Tagore's *Gora*. Chandulal Jaisinghani, who has blossomed into a popular novelist, wrote a novel *Prem-ji-Shadi* (Love Marriage) but readers thought the young writer had been too bold in his recording of love and marriage experiences. Ram Panjwani worte *Qaidi* in 1943, *Sharmila* in 1944, and *Latifa* in 1945, the last-maned novel dealing with Muslim life in villages, but these were his early attempts, more essays than accomplished novels. Naraindas Bhambhani's *Vidhwa*, 1943 pleased Sindhis of advanced views who thought that widows should remarry. But his best novel was *Malhin* (woman-gardener) written one year earlier, in 1942. His adaptation of Hardy's *Tess* under the title of *Pap ain Pakizgi* (Sin and Purity) kindled no spark in the readers, as its original did. Other novels appeared in Jethanand Lalwani's *Bharat-Jivan*, his own novel *Municipal Councillor* (1944), Nanikram Dharamdas's novel *Aram Mahal* (Palace of Delight), and J. D. Ahuja's *Rani* or *Queen*, in the year of the Partition of India (1947).

Short Story is a form of literature that has developed in Free India, but it had its beginnings early, as in Jethmal Parsram's stories of *Chamra Posh* in 1923, and came almost to maturity in Nadirbeg Mirza's stories in *Sindhu : Achut,* and *Miss Rustomji*. Amarlal Hingorani's famous story, *Ado Abdur-Rahman*, has been noticed already. The two best writers of short story before the Partition were both Gobinds, Gobind Panjabi who brought out *Sard Ahun* in 1941 in which the best stories were *Ajho* (Shelter), *Lato* (Clothes), *Atto* (Floor) and *Chor* (Thief), and Gobind Malhi, the most important writer of fiction in Post-Partition India, who brought out *Registani Phool* (Desert Flowers) in 1944, in which besides his own stories there were good stories by Bhagwan Lalvani (*Sari* showing cloth

famine), Ram Amarlal, and Sobho Gianchandani, all 'Progressives'. Gobind Malhi's outspoken story *Hari Haqdar* (The peasant, rightful claimant) appeared in 1945 as also his *Shanta*. Other writers of note in Short Story were Krishin Khatwani, Anand Golani, H.I. Sadarangani, D. K. Mansharamani (Ghot Raja—The Bridegroom, the Lord), Sugan Ahuja, Lekhu Tulsiani (*Manjri Kolhin* Low caste woman) and Lachman Rajpal.

Translations of novels and short stories in this period appeared in hundreds. Bankim, Tagore, Premchand and Sharat Chander were the novelists and story tellers most in demand for translation, but not a single translation of their stories or novels merits notice here. The Gidwanis translated certain classics and their prose was notable; M. M. Gidwani adapted Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* (Dukhi Insan) and A.T. Gidwani translated from Kalidasa: *Vikram Urvashi* and *Kumar Sambhav*. Shewaram Lala's Stories from Tolstoy (3 volumes) contained prose which delighted readers.

Sindhi Drama 1907–1947

Several Dramatic societies were founded in Sind in the years 1907–1947 but only one of them attained to any success comparable to that of the D. J. Sind College Amateur Dramatic Society. The exception was the Rabindranath Literary and Dramatic Club of which notice will be taken the last.

Shikarpur had its Dharam Upkark Dramatic Society as early as 1897, with Thakurdas Nagrani as its moving spirit, but no *original* drama was composed or staged by the Society. The Chandka Amateurs Dramatic Society had the guidance and leadership of the great poet Bewas but no important play, except *Nal-Damayanti* could be said to owe its origin to the Society's activities, and even this play of Bewas has not commended itself to his 'school' or others so as to be printed along with his other works. The other plays like *Khubsurat Nagin* (Beautiful snake), though they had the poetic touch of the poet, had no 'dramatic' life in them. Chandumal Khatri's plays like *Manohar Mohini* staged by the Karachi Saraswat Brahman's Dramatic Society (1917), had no literary merit. Nor did Lilaram Tharumal's plays, or Nanikram Dharamdas's plays, staged by their associations such as Hyderabad Dramatic Society have any quality which might make them popular on the stage or in

the Library. Plays like Nanikram's *Frebi Fitna* (a rendering of Marie Corelli's *Vendetta*) or Lilaram's *Be Wafa Katal* (Faithless Slayer) had nothing to commend them beyond a sensational plot. Jethanand Nagrani's *Gamtoo's* plays were amusing farces, but had no literary merit.

It is strange that some of the ablest prose writers tried their hand at translating from English, or writing plays based on Shah, but they did not succeed, except in one or two cases. Jethmal Parsram's translation of *Hamlet* was a feeble attempt, so too Bherumal Mahirchand's translation of *King John* was a failure. Lalchand Amardinomal's plays from Shah like *Sasui Punhoon* and *Suhni Mehar* did not come up to his prose writings. Tirith Vasant's translations of Tagore's *Chitra* or Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* have no dramatic flavour. Kalyan Advani's translation of *Shakuntala* (1943) gives little idea of the genius of *Kalidasa*, Osman Ali Ansari's *Jurm-Be-Wafa* which is a rendering of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and *Gumrah Dost* (Two Gentlemen of Verona), are not very much a success, dramatically speaking.

The successful plays of the period, over and above those of the two principal figures in Sindhi drama (K. S. Daryani and M. U. Malkani), were : Lalchand Amardinomal's(1) *Umar Marui* 1925 performed under the auspices of the Tagore Club which has been more appreciated on the stage and in the Library than any other Sindhi plays (also because of the accompaniment of Shah's verses), (2) *Hik Rat* (One Night) 1936 an adaptation by Lilaram Pherwani of Shah's *Lila Chanesar* (with a twist given to the character of Kounroo, of the invaluable necklace) which was alas ! like the 'Single-Speech' Hamilton's performance, because Pherwani never wrote another play, (3) Ram Panjwani's *Mumal Rano* which has been a moderate success on the stage and in the library (4) Md. Ismail Ursani's command play, *Bad Nasib Thari* (1941) which was written to please the educational authorities, but which pleased a far more extensive audience, with its picture of what a poor Thari has to suffer at the hands of corrupt and 'circumlocution' officials, and with its pleasing twang of Thari dialect and speech.

Finally, the R.L.D.C., as the Tagore Club was familiarly known, and its co-founders K.S. Daryani and M.U. Malkani. This Club played a great part in the course of its short career (1923–31) to produce some worth-while drama. Not all its

products were valuable or edifying e.g. the play *Mat-Heen Nari* or *Woman of Mean Understanding* taken from the Gujarati play *Ekaj Bhool*, in which Tulsi becomes the mistress of Sambhaji, her husband's slayer, to wreak vengeance upon her paramour for the murder of her husband. But as a rule the R.L.D.C. plays were of standard excellence.

K.S. Daryani, the most notable figure in the history of Sindhi drama and film, came into prominence about the year 1923 with two plays dealing with social problems like Deti Leti, the dowry system : *Motia-Ji-Mukhri* (Motia Flower Bud) and *Gulab-Jo-Gul* (Rose Flower). An earlier play was *Galat Fahmi* (Misunderstanding) 1921 based on Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne*. Under the auspices of R.L.D.C. he successfully staged *Mulk-Ja-Mudabar* which was a rendering of Ibsen's *Pillars of Society*, and *Desh-Tan-Sadke* (Sacrifice at the altar of the country) which was derived from Maurice Materlinck's *Monna Vanna*. These were not slavish imitations or derivations but had something of Daryani, too, in them. In the preface to *Desh-Tan-Sadke* he showed himself far in advance of his times when he condemned outright the Rajputs and their customs which were so detrimental to the country's interests : ' These evil customs have done no little harm to the land of Rajputana '. Daryani composed more than a score of plays, not all of which were of importance. *Mat Hin Nari* (1929) has already been noticed. No one of Daryani's plays attained the popularity of Lalchand Amardinomal's *Umar Marui*. But he was the driving force in R.L.D.C.'s activities and was the first to bring home to Sindhis the value of drama and its significance in the life and literature of the province.

Another composer for the R.L.D.C. who took up Ibsen for adaptation upon the Sindhi stage was Ahmed Chagla who wrote *Bhut* (Ghosts), *Desh-Jo-Dushman* (An Enemy of the People), and a play which was the last in the R.L.D.C. repertory, called *Khuni* (Murderer) 1931.

The last to be mentioned, though not the least, is K.S. Daryani's able co-adjutor, M.U. Malkani, the founder, of One Act Plays in Sindhi and an incessant worker for the Sindhi stage for more than half a century. This year too (1967) he has issued a book of plays. His first plays were adaptations from English, *Kismet* (from Knoblock's play of the same name) 1923, and *Ekta-Jo-Alap* (Unity's Tune) from Zangwill's *Melting Pot*,

but he established himself firmly as a playwright with his *Five Little Plays* (1937) and *Pangati Parda* (Social Screen) 1938, four plays. Malkani followed Bernard Shaw in producing ' Plays Pleasant ' in 1937, and ' Plays Unpleasant ' in 1938. His *Tea-Party* in the first volume, which is a comic exposure of the vain efforts of the *Tea-Party* hosts or hostesses to appear as affluent and important, in society, has been very popular. So also the *Ladies' Club*, a one act play in the second volume, which is reminiscent of Sheridan's *School for Scandal*. Malkani's love for the Sindhi stage and playwriting will it is hoped, lead him to write a full-length Sindhi play which will remain memorable and a model for subsequent Sindhi playwrights.

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