CHAPTER FIVE

SHAH ABDUL LATIF'S LIFE AND TEACHING

Shah Abdul Latif is buried in a beautiful mausoleum in Bhit Shah near Hala, north east of Hyderabad/Sind. His shrine, crowned by a graceful minaret, was erected by the Kalhoro prince Ghulam Shah Kalhoro in 1765; it is covered with blue and white tiles as are typical of Hala district; they show flower motifs, and the pillars at the corners seem to grow out of large tulips. Although not outstanding as a work of architecture the building and the adjacent graveyard impress the visitor by their peculiar charm. The ceiling of the entrance hall shows the traditional workmanship of this area: between the wooden framework small brownish-olive-yellowish rectangular tiles are set in, a style found in many saints' tombs in Sind. To accommodate at least part of the innumerable visitors who flock to Bhit Shah in the days of the 'urs, when the memory of the mystic's death is celebrated in the month of Safar, a guest house has recently been built. A cultural center is being developed. Every Thursday evening, till late at night, the few dervishes who still continue the tradition of Shah Abdul Latif sing his poetry inside the compound of the mausoleum.

Contrary to Mir Dard, Shah Latif did not leave any notes about his life or the development of his mystical theories; besides a few dry facts we know about him merely some legends of more or less authentic character. But his poetry is enough to make us acquainted with his personality. This man from a sayyid and Sufi family ingeniously wove together the various strands of Islamic mystical thought and indigenous Sindhi poetry. One hundred twenty five years ago, young Richard Burton wrote in his book 'Sind, and the Races that inhabit the Valley of the Indus:'

Shah Bhitai ... had the disadvantage of contending against a barbarous dialect, and composing for an unimaginative people. His ornaments of verse are chiefly alliterations, puns, and jingling of words. He displays his learning by allusions to the literature of Arabia and Persia, and not unfrequently indulges in quotation. His compositions are all upon subjects familiar to the people, strained to convey a strange idea. As
might be expected, he is more homely and common-place than Ibn Fariz or Hafiz; at the same time, he is more practical, and some portions of his writings display an appreciation of domestic happiness scarcely to be expected from one of his order. Hence his poetry is the delight of all that can understand it. The learned praise it for its beauty, and are fond of hearing it recited to the sound of the guitar. Even the unlearned generally know select portions by heart, and take the trouble to become acquainted with their meaning.\footnote{R. Burton, ‘Sind and the races ...’, p. 203.}

At the same time, the German missionary Ernest Trumpp was working in Karachi to learn Sindhi and published in the 1860's several studies about Shah Latif, culminating in his edition of \textit{Shah jō Risālō} (Leipzig 1866), the first print of the famous collection of poetry, which comprises more than 1200 pages in the manuscript at his disposal. In his remarks about Shah Abdul Latif and the topics of his poems Trumpp, completely devoted to the sober study of grammatical forms and, besides, a strictly anti-mystically minded protestant minister harshly attacked the mystical contents of the \textit{Risālō}; but even he had to admit that the persevering reader will find many verses which amply repay him for the difficult labor of going through the whole text. Indeed, the style of the \textit{Risālō} is extremely difficult and offers problems even to those whose mother tongue is the complicated and melodious Sindhi.\footnote{I have to acknowledge the help of many Sindhi friends whose interpretations, though, sometimes differed considerably. Besides, Dr. N.A. Baloch, Hyderabad, the authority on Sindhi folklore; Dr. Motilal Jotwani, Delhi; and Mr. Ghulam Rabbani Agro, Hyderabad have answered a number of questions. Still, I do not claim that all enigmas are solved, and other translators may as well reach different conclusions.} But while Mir Dard's comprehensive prose and poetry was never made available to a Western audience, Shah Abdul Latif attracted a considerable number of scholars—Indians, Pakistanis, and Westerners—who studied his poetry and offered its contents to the English reading public. Lilaram Watanmal’s ‘Shah Abdul Latif,’ issued in 1889, is still valuable for interesting remarks about Shah Latif’s life and for its useful vocabulary. Most research, however, was carried out in Sindhi. Even after partition, both the Sindhi Hindus in India and the Sindhi Muslims in Pakistan continued their work, which resulted in a number of editions and analyses, such as Motilal Jotwani’s welcome study of Shah Latif’s poetical technique in his recent book
on Shah Abdul Latif. The most comprehensive study in English is that by T. H. Sorley, 'Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit,' which appeared first in 1940 and offers not only a good survey of the Risālō but also a detailed picture of the social and political setting in 18th century Sind; it contains fine, though rather free translations of major parts of the Risālō. Sorley, however, was not a trained Islamicist; some of his usually correct statements must be verified and deepened in the light of history of religions by taking into consideration the development of mystical thought and poetry in Islam. A partial translation in English verse of the Risālō was offered by Mrs. Elsa Qazi, who captured well the form and spirit of the work. Besides, an almost limitless amount of speeches, articles, booklets, and devotional literature was published, mainly in Sindhi, so that one of the leading Pakistani scholars, himself a great admirer of Shah Abdul Latif, could sigh:

Shah was the crown of the Sufis, Shah was a folk poet, Shah was the master of ragas, Shah was a patriot, Shah was a congressman, Shah was a Muslim Leaguer, Shah was Rumi, Shah was Goethe, Shah has produced Hir, Shah has made alive Marui—in short, Shah is the medicine for every illness, Shah is the remedy for every pain. That means, the same thing that has been done to Ghalib and Iqbal we have done to Shah Sahib.  

Indeed, there is always the danger that great poetry will be interpreted by every reader according to his own feelings, and also according to certain opportunist or even political tendencies; and since contradictions cannot be excluded in the verse of a great poet, let alone a religious, or mystically minded, poet, everyone finds in him what he has sought. This is all the more true since Shah Abdul Latif has once called his verses āyāt, 'divine signs,' hence comparable to Quranic verses:

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\text{What you consider to be verses, those are āyāts (Sohṇī VI 25).}
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\[\text{Shāh jō Risālō}\] is, as Sorley has correctly remarked, 'a web of many strands.' They reach from the poet's thorough knowledge of the Quran, of the Prophetic tradition and of Persian mystical poetry, particularly that of Jalaluddin Rumi, to the folksongs of Indian villages. A few Hindu traditions are also preserved, for

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4 Sorley, 'Shah Abdul Latif', p. 236.
some of the stories which form the basis of the mystical interpretations are of Hindu origin. One may also admit of some Balochi influence, understandable in the light of historical events; but there was certainly no relation with Urdu poetry which was just emerging in northern India during Shah’s lifetime. Similarities in structure and imagery with Panjabi mystical folk poetry, which reached its apex with Bullhe Shah during exactly the same period, are, of course, conspicuous. Many later Sindhi Sufi poets, mainly those of Baloch origin, used also the northern dialect of Sindhi, Siraiki, which forms the transition to Panjabi; thus, the imagery of both, or rather all three, linguistic areas is very closely related, as is to be expected from the inhabitants of predominantly rural provinces.

Shah Abdul Latif’s Risālō consists (in the excellent Bombay edition) of thirty chapters, Sur, which deal with different topics. Each of them is named according to the musical mode in which it is sung, and which points to the contents. Each Sur has a number of chapters, consisting of irregular numbers of verses in Indian meters; each chapter closes with a wa‘ī, that is, a longer poem with one main line which is repeated, in singing, after every line of the poem. Many Surs rely upon well-known folk tales, as is the case in the Panjab, too. Some of these stories have a historical basis and can be dated back to the 14th and 15th centuries; those belong to Shah’s favorite topics. Without entering into a detailed description of the stories, which were known to everyone, Shah singles out some particularly impressive moments to develop his teachings about suffering and love so that even very worldly heroes and heroines are transformed completely into symbols of the Godseeking soul.

The sequence of the Surs is, according to the Bombay edition, as follows:

Kalyān, a purely mystical song, begins with a deep felt hymni-

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6 The poetical form is reminiscent of many of Kabir’s poems, and of the poetry of the Adī Granth. A number of ragas used in the Risālō are also used in the Adī Granth (see F. Trumpp’s introduction to his translation).
tical praise of God, the One, who manifests Himself under different forms. But to reach Him, the seeker has to undergo much tribulation, and the following parts contain a detailed description of various ways of suffering in the path of God and of enjoying the affictions. These ideas are continued in *Sur Yaman Kālyān*, musically a derivation from the first Sur, and like it belonging to the evening rāgs, which are supposed to give the heart peace. In both Surs the traditional Sufi ideals are explained (see Ch. VI).

*Sūr Khanbhāt* is a night melody, so that the allusions to moon and stars as weak reflections of the friend’s loveliness are most fitting. It deals with the journey of the camel toward the most beautiful and radiant beloved, and contains lively remarks about the restive camel’s habits, typical for a poet who lived in a camel breeding society: the camel is, of course, the symbol of the lower soul which has to be tamed and driven towards the beloved, be it the Prophet, or God Himself; there, it will no longer stick to thorns and thistles in which it indulges on the road, but will enjoy the green garden of paradise.

The following two Surs, Sarirāg (an afternoon rāg) and Sāmūndī, are connected with the dangers of seafaring: in the ocean of this world the boat has to be guided by the ever-aware pilot, the true mystical guide, or by the Prophet himself. The fragile boat ‘man’ requires sails made of sincerity and right action, and the cargo should be prayers (Sr. VI 11) so that it may reach safely Port Aden, which name points both to the Arabian city and the paradisical ‘gardens of Eden.’ The various stages of sailing to Ceylon are described—a true ‘passage to more than India’—from which the lucky merchants may return with pearls and spices. But, alas! today only a few faithful dealers in jewels are found, and most of them offer cheap beads instead of precious pearls. The events are seen through the eyes of the lonely, desperate wife whose husband had gone out into the dangerous sea to perform the journey of the soul through the raving waves of this world in the hope of heavenly reward; her complaints, partly utilizing the vocabulary of the Sassui-circle, are very amorous and sweet. The melody of Sāmūndī is an indigenous Sindhi folk song.

The topic of the sea, or river, with its whirlpools and sandbanks forms also the center of the next *Sur*, which bears the name of Sohnī, ‘the Beautiful,’ ‘who died swimming.’ This is a
tragic love story which reverts the classical motif of Hero and Leander: here, the heroine Sohni, unhappily married to a man whom she despises, swims every night to the island where her beloved Mehar grazes the buffalos. One night her sister-in-law replaces the jar, which she uses as sort of a swimming vest, by a vessel of unbaked clay, and she dies in the whirling waves. Shah begins the story in the most dramatic moment, when the young woman cries out for help in the cold river, attacked by crocodiles. The whole chapter is merely an extension of this dreadful and yet hoped for moment, when the vessel of her body breaks and she, faithful to her pre-eternal love-covenant with Mehar, will be forever united with the friend through death.

Sohni is one of the favorite folk tales in both Sind and the Panjab. But even more famous is the story which Shah Latif has made the subject of the following five Surs and which is alluded to in many other verses of the Risālō. It is the intriguing story of Sassui (Abrī, ‘the weak one,’ Ma‘ dhūrī, ‘the helpless one,’ Dēsī, ‘the native one,’ Köhyārī, ‘the mountaineer,’ and Hūsainī, in the tragic melody of the dirges in Muharram). Sassui, a beautiful girl, was found by a washerman in Bhambhore, who adopted her. The fame of her beauty spread widely, and eventually even Punhun, the Baloch prince of Kech, decided to see her. At the end of numerous complicated adventures he stayed with Sassui, but his relatives came one night, made the couple drunk, and carried away Punhun on their speedy camels, while the young woman was fast asleep. Shah’s chapters deal with her search for the beloved: following the tracks of Punhun’s camels, she runs in despair through desert and forests where blue snakes and other frightening creatures live (Abrī II 9):—snakes are here, as in traditional religious imagery, symbols of the devil from which, as Shah says elsewhere, the peacock-like Yogis keep aloof, or rather, kill it (Karāyīl II). Even the wild animals and trees and birds begin to share her grief and cry with her. Eventually she perishes on the road. This tragic story becomes for Shah the parable of the seeker on the mystical path who undergoes all kinds of tribulations in the quest of God whom he will find, at

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7 R. Burton has given the contents of most of the Sindhi folktales in his book on Sind; recently, the most famous tales with their variants have been published by the Sindhi Adabi Board, Hyderabad. There are also some 19th century English translations available.
the end of the road, in his own heart, and Sassui, roaming in the
wilderness and talking to the beasts, becomes something like
a feminine counterpart of the Arabic Majnun who, demented by
his longing for Laila, is taken by the mystics of the Persian and
Turkish tradition as the paragon of the true lover: he, too, expe-
riences his unity with Laila when he is almost dying after years of
yearning in the desert.

The following Sur has again a traditional story as its back-
ground, e.g., that of Lilà Chanèsar, which can be dated back to
the time of Jam Chanesar, one of the Summa rulers in 14th cen-
tury Sind. It has often been retold in Sindhi and Persian. Chanesar’s
wife, the spoiled and pleasure-loving Lila, is enticed by another
woman by a necklace worth 900,000 rupees to allow the former
owner of the necklace to spend one night with Chanesar. Furious
that he had been ‘sold’ Chanesar divorces Lila, and she has to
undergo a long process of purification until she is once more
acceptable in her husband’s presence. Shah tells only her suffer-
ing and pining, and describes how the queen has to become a
slave in order to be accepted by the Lord. Another folktale of
similar character is that of Mûmal Râno which forms the basis of
the following Sur; it originated in Lower Sind some time in the
15th century, and tells the adventures of Mumal, a beautiful and
dangerous, courtesanlike woman, and her lover Rano. Rano,
wrongly assuming that she has cheated him one night, leaves her
alone. Eventually, after a long period of waiting, the loving wom-
an is purified and united with the beloved, whose light she knows
and recognizes everywhere.

Sur Mârûî goes back to a historical event in the 14th century;
the home of the heroine is located in Thar desert, where the
mighty Omar of Omarkot kidnapped her. But the lovely maiden
refuses to become the nobleman’s wife, as much as he tortures
her, and eventually is sent back to her beloved village to which
she had remained faithful even under the heaviest pressures.

As I have come here, thus I will go to them. (Mûr. VI 1)

Sur Kâmôd relies upon another historical event. It is the fa-
mous tale of Prince Jam Tamachi’s falling in love with the charm-
ing fishermaid Nuri (15th century). Nuri makes the prince happy
by her perfect surrender and obedience which causes him to raise
her above all the other queens: she is the naf s muţm a ʻinna, ‘the
soul at peace' (Sura 89/27), returning to her Lord. Kāmōd is one of the most peaceful Surs, to be sung at the time of early afternoon, when one dozes on a big Sindhi swinging bed. It is the only Sur that sings of fulfilled love and happiness, not of burning love and hopeless search.

The very short Sur Ghāṭū takes up once more the theme of the world or nafs under the image of the dangerous, merciless sea with its monsters which swallow the fishermen, and the Sindhi reader will remember the story of brave Morirro who slayed the whale that had killed his six brothers.

_The fishermen got deep into the whirlpool and killed the shark of desire._

_Now their eyes beam with joy._ (I 15)

But there is also much realism in the description of the dangerous current in the coastal area near Karachi between Clifton and Manora.

_Sur Sōraṭhi_, edited and translated first by E. Trumpp, is built upon a Hindu tale from Girnar, Gujrat, according to which King Diyaj offered his head to the minstrel who had enchanted him by his music. Trumpp has retold the complicated and most abstruse details of this story not sparing with sarcastic remarks. At the end of his introduction he concludes:

It is barely necessary to say a word about this black aspect of Indian life, which can find certain consolation only in individual extinction. Those local tales are for us important in so far as we learn from them something about Indian thinking and life style at a time when there are barely any historical reports available. The outlines which this tale offers us are indeed melancholy enough and show us Hinduism in its complete decomposition and deepest moral decline; it is a picture of crime and absolute obtuseness, nothing else. We can very well recognize from the Muslim elaboration of an originally Hindu tale how much even the strong monotheistic deism of Islam has become modified and corrupted in Sind, as in other parts of India, by its contact with Hinduism. Suicide, for instance, which is contrary to the ideals of Islam, is called here ‘an enjoyable action’... We have already alluded to the fact that in Abdul Latif’s hands this whole tale has got a Sufic tinge and will be understood in that way. The bard who plays on the heart’s harp, is the _murshid_ who enthralls the heart so much and fills it with such great longing for its origin that it sacrifices everything (though after much opposition and hard struggle with the material body which always drags it down into the sensual world) and at last
even gives up the individual life in order to revel in endless nothingness, being freed from the fetters of matter. The language abounds in grotesque images the meaning of which is more than doubtful even to the natives; on the other hand, there is no lack of many empty alliterations, as is the case in all Sufi compositions; the thread of thought is at times long winded and agressive, and the intellectual poverty of modern Indian poetry is covered by an idle jingle of words.\(^8\)

Part of Trumpp’s criticism, however, is born from the fact that his manuscript of the *Risālō* was hopelessly confused so that the sequence of events is without any logical order. Nevertheless, even the unprejudiced reader will have some difficulties in appreciating the description of the generous ruler who offers his head to a bard who, in the full original story, was destined to kill him according to his horoscope; but for Shah, self-surrender at the bidding of the mystical beloved, and the heavenly quality of music is the central theme of this *Sur*.

From the world of Hindu legend the poet returns to Islamic subjects in the following two *Surs*: *Kēdaro*, an old mourning melody, is devoted to the martyrs of Kerbela who were slain, lead by the Prophet’s grandson Husain, on 10 Muharram (10 October) 680 by the forces of the Omayyads. *Sur Sārang*, the rainsong, ingeniously blends the traditional Indian imagery of waiting for rain with the veneration of the Prophet. (See pp. 256 ff).

*Sur Ásā* belongs to the sweetest chapters of the *Risālō*; it is filled with mystical wisdom and poetical imagery, but does not rely as much on folk tradition as some other *Surs*, whereas *Sur Rīpa*, a short song, describes in impressive images the longing of the lonely wife for her husband.

*Sur Khāhōri* is written in praise of the Yogis who walk from the village of Ganji Takar near present-day Hyderabad to the sacred mountain Hinglaj (an ancient Shiva sanctuary in Balochistan) and suffer every possible discomfort. They are further described in detail in the long-winded chapters of *Sur Rāmakalī*, which constitutes for the historian of religion one of the most interesting parts of the *Risālō* (see pp. 219 ff.) Inserted between the two songs in praise of the Yogis as ‘perfect men’ is *Sur Barvō Sindhī*, written to a lovely evening tune, which expresses the deep veneration of the poet for his beautiful and mysterious,

\(^8\) E. Trumpp, Sorathi. ZDMG 17/1863.
powerful and mild, divine lord, utilizing, toward the end, again the theme of Sassui.

A topic which is not rarely found in the poetry of Sind and the Panjab is the spinning of cotton, one of the most important occupations of women. This is the theme of Kāpā 'iti, which name points to traditional folk melodies sung by the womenfolk while spinning. Here, the connection between the spinning woman and the soul which is busy with the constant recollection of God is obvious; and the Quranic imagery of God as the merchant who buys man’s soul is extended to the idea that the cotton thread, e.g., the heart, has to be refined and prepared with utmost care so that the spinning soul will not be rejected by the merchant.  

In Sur Pūrab, ‘East’, the poet describes the feelings of the loving woman who sends out the crow to find out how her beloved is; the crow, kāng, is the typical messenger bird in Sind, as was the pigeon in high Persian poetry, and its importance has often been underlined in Sindhi folk songs and mystical poetry. But out of this first touching verse Shah turns once more to the Yogīs and warns them not to make false pretenses in yogidom. The theme of the soul-bird—of which the crow is a variation—is taken up in extenso in Sur Karā 'il, the song of the swan who is admonished not to fly and dive with the other, unclean birds, but continue to feed on pearls.

In the following Sur, Pīrbaṭī, ‘Early Morning’, man’s soul is seen as a wandering minstrel who is kindly treated by the ruler of Las Bela, the representative of the Almighty Lord. Sur Dahar gives in its first chapter a fine description of the dried-up tree, a common sight in the valley of the ever shifting Indus and its tributaries, but also a sight which leads the poet to a praise of the Prophet’s kindness in the second part while the Sassui imagery is utilized toward the end. Sur Bilāwal (I, II) contains a number of historical allusions to the powerful rulers of Sind who in the end appear to be symbols of Muhammad’s grace and munificence. A little joke about Shah Latif’s friend and servant forms the last chapter of this Sur; he, though ‘stinking’, ‘a glutton’, ‘ugly’,—to mention only a few of his epithets—becomes purified in the rose-water-like company of the master. Sur Bilāwal is probably the

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9 For the spinning motif in Panjabi cf. L. Ramakrishna, ‘Panjabi Sufi Poets,’ p. XVII.
most difficult one to appreciate for a non-Sindhi reader.

Shah Abdul Latif’s poetry is the first apex of a long literary development, the beginnings of which we cannot properly distinguish. Sind, as other countries, had, and still has, a big treasure of folk poetry, ballads, and working songs; folk tales are located in the different parts of the country, be it the hill slopes of Balochistan, the desert region of Thar Parkar, the fertile plains that were watered by the Indus, or the shifting creeks near the Indus mouth. It seems that in Sind, as in other parts of the Muslim world, the Sufis are responsible for the development of the spoken language into a literary one. The first verses we know in Sindhi were composed by those mystics who migrated from their homeland to Burhanpur in Central India, and are reported to have used little verses in their mother tongue during the sessions of mystical concerts when music and dancing were in full swing. That was shortly after 1530. At the same time, the first known major poet of Sind wrote mystical verses out of which seven are still extant. It is the mystically inclined Qazi Qadan of Sehwan (d. 1551), a follower of the Mahdi of Jaunpur (d. 1505) whose success in the Lower Indus Valley had been remarkable and whose thoughts were apparently transmitted to Akbar through his literary friends Abu ’l-Fazl and Faizi, the sons of the Mahdi’s follower, Muhammad Nagori. Qazi Qadan’s poetry has all the ingredients of later Sufi verse: the lines are short and express mystical hints in a dense grammatical construction. His verse:

\[ \text{Lōkān sarfū 'nahwū, mūn mutāli' u supriānū} \]

(Leave the people with grammar and syntax, I contemplate the Beloved),

has become almost proverbial and is echoed throughout the centuries in poetical variations. Qazi Qadan’s tradition was continued in the country; Shah Abdul Latif’s great-grandfather Shah Abdul Karim of Bulri (1536-1623) is the most important figure in the next century; in his Persian malfūzāt 93 verses in Sindhi are preserved, which contain all the ingredients of later mystical poetry. He seems to be the first one to use allusions to Sindhi folk tales in his verses, thus to Sassui:

10 A.S. Bazmee Ansari, ‘Sayyid Muhammad Jawnpuri and his Movement,’ gives a good introduction.
Nobody ever took with himself
two things at once from Bhambhone,
Yearning for the beloved,
and attachment with one's world. ¹²

Shah Latif has inserted some of his ancestor's lines into his own poetry. Tender lines speak of the swan that dives for pearls, but sketch also miniature pictures of village life:

Like a jar poised on woman-water-carrier,
and a bird on the water,
Our beloved in the same way
has been close to our soul. ¹³

After a number of minor poets a step forward in the development of Sufi poetry was made by Miyan Shah 'Inat from Naspur, a Sufi of the Qadiri order which was introduced in the Indus Valley in the late 15th century. He died in the beginning of the 18th century. His poetry, which foreshadows Shah Abdul Latif's verse, was the first to be arranged in 19 Surs, and was therefore called a Risālō.

All these poems are extremely difficult to disentangle due to the density of the language, which allows of most complicated and not always very transparent combinations of grammatical forms. Alone the fact that the unique beloved is often referred to as 'the friends' or other plural constructions, makes a proper translation difficult, although we may think of the Persian use of ishān 'they' as honorific title for a mystic, especially in the Central Asian Naqshbandi tradition.

Shah Abdul Latif's Risālō is no exception. Some of its verses almost defy literal translation, all the more since the poet was very fond of alliterations (very much to Trumpp's dismay!) and sometimes changed the form of words according to the exigencies of a more poetical style and also to the harmonious flow of the music, for the Risālō is meant to be sung, not to be theologically and grammatically dissected. One should never forget that his poetry, as that of his predecessors, grew out of folk songs; and folk poetry, particularly that sung by women, has a peculiar style, using many terms of endearment which are otherwise rarely

¹² Jotwani, l.c. Nr. XVII.
¹³ id. Nr. XIII.
found. Thus the beautiful closing verses (wāʾi) in Sur Mārūi 1, which the homesick girl sings, are in their approach reminiscent of some bridal songs which the recently married woman sings when she longs for her paternal home and misses the care of her parents and playmates.¹⁴

My heart is in the village ... Could I go home! ... Could I die in Malir ...!

Shah Latif loves to show his heroines as they tenderly address their beloved in terms of endearment, Punhun becomes Punhal, Kohyāri, ‘mountaineer,’ Köhyārial (Abrī IX 12), just as Arabic mystical poets such as Ibn al-Farid had a predilection for diminutives. The Sindhi girls call the messenger bird kāngal, or kāngrrō (‘dear little crow’), and Shah Latif in general, largely uses the diminutive ending -rrō, -rrī as formative element to express the true feminine way of speaking. Now and then we meet strange forms for originally Arabic or Persian words; thus jihāj (Sar. I 12) for jihāz, ‘ship,’ a pronunciation still typical of the Sind-Gujrat and Panjabi area, where j and z are often interchanged. Arabic broken plurals are treated like Sindhi singulars; the rhyme follows, as in the works of his contemporaries, the actual pronunciation, not the Arabic writing system;¹⁵ words can be changed for the sake of rhyme. Some chapters contain a whole repertoire of Arabic expressions, often strangely mixed with Sindhi verbal constructions,¹⁶ and we even find a surprising allusion to Arabic grammatical terminology to explain the interplay of ‘proximity’ and ‘being broken.’¹⁷ Charming wrong etymologies, as are a peculiarity of popular Sufi poets, are also found; thus, when the sailing boat, ghurāb, is connected with gharīb, ‘foreign, forlorn,’ or the word for darkness, tenebrae, andhōkār, is spelled hindūkār: a reminiscence of the equation Hindu- = black, which

¹⁴ Cf. A. Schimmel, ‘Hochzeitslieder der Frauen im Industal’, an article based on Dr. N.A. Baloch’s edition of the Gghīch in Sindhī.
¹⁵ For instance tayyūran, wukūshan (Abrī I 11), ‘abath rhymes with habas, jawāb is made jabāb to rhyme with kabāb (Kal. III 6), in Kam. I mahrām and mahrūm are confused.
¹⁶ Thus in Kōh. I, where Arabic forms like qum ‘rise’, ijlīs ‘sit down’ and others are found.
¹⁷ Kasarati aḥē qurba mē, idghām mē ʾrāb (Sohn. I wāʾi): In approximation there is multiplicity, in doubling a consonant by tashdid, inflection.
occurs so frequently in Persian and Turkish traditional poetry (Abri II 10). Now and then, other languages are mentioned:

They carry Punhun, speaking Balochi (Dêsi II 9),

where 'Balochi' is the language of the foreign invaders, incomprehensible to the poor Sindhi woman.

One who has learned Persian is addressed in Asâ IV 23. Pre-Islamic ideas are natural in literature that draws upon Hindu tales; thus Sassui is sometimes called a hânbhañ (Abri I 10), a 'Brahmin girl,' or is praised because she is becoming a yogini (Abri III 10); the heroines also speak of the funeral pyre (thus Sâm. I 8)

On the whole, the vocabulary of Shâh jô Risâlô is pure Sindhi and contains numerous technical terms from seafaring, fishing, milking, churning, spinning and hunting, in short, from all those professions which were common in the country. It is fascinating to watch how Shah Abdul Latif succeeds in blending this popular tradition with that of Islamic mysticism.

There are many allusions to the Quran and the Prophet (see Ch. VII), but one can agree with Sorley that 'it would have been sufficient for the author of the Risâlô to be acquainted with Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi's Mathnawi alone.' Indeed, Rumi's influence on the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent cannot be overrated. The poet-saint of Panipat, Bu 'Ali Qalandar (d. 1327), is related to have met Maulana Rumi; his mathnawis clearly show traces of Rumi's work. As early as in the 15th century, 'the holy brahmin recited the Mathnawi' in East Bengal. Commentaries of the Mathnawi are available not only in numerous Persian works composed during the Muslim rule (even illustrated copies of this 'Quran in the Persian tongue' were produced during the sultanate period in Delhi), but also in numerous indigenous idioms; the work was partly or in full translated into many native languages. Rumi's style of writing deeply influenced the poetry

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18 Cf. A. Schimmel, 'Turk and Hindu', in IV. Levi della Vida Conference, 1975, for the motif of the 'black' Hindu.
19 A. Schimmel, Mevlâna Rumi'nin Şark ve Garp'ta tesirleri; the problem will be discussed in detail in my forthcoming book on Rumi (Persian Heritage Series).
20 Bu Ali Qalandar of Panipat (d. 1327) is supposed to have visited Konya; his Persian mathnawis show clear traces of his being acquainted with Rumi's Mathnawi; see H.S. Tafhimi, Bu Ali Qalandar, Ph. D. thesis, Karachi 1975.
21 Enamul Haq, 'Muslim Bengali Literature,' p. 42.
22 In the National Museum Delhi, seven miniatures, ms. 48.6/15.
in these tongues, and his Mathnawi was known to the broad masses as much as it was loved and recited at the Mughal court in Delhi, and served the Kalhororo prince to gain back the sympathies of Shah Abdul Latif. Not only Dara Shikoh, the mystically minded heir apparent of the Mughal Empire largely relied upon Rumi’s poetry in his own writings; his brother Aurangzeb, too, used to shed tears when listening to a touching performance of Mathnawi recitation. In Sind there were many pious who, by their recitation of the Mathnawi, ‘kept the marketplace of union warm’, and Rumi’s work was quoted by stern Naqshbandis as much as by members of the more emotional orders.

In several verses of Shāh jō Risālō the reader is immediately reminded of Rumi’s sayings, particularly in Sur Yaman Kalyan V (see p. 206 f.). The poet speaks of the reedflute, known from the first verses of the Mathnawi, to explain Sassui’s longing, when she cries in separation from Punhun just as the flute complains, longing for home for her reedbed:

The cut-off [flute] wails and the [half-]killed woman cries—
That one remembers having been [one with] the tree, this
one longs for her beloved. (Ma‘dhdh. VI 19)

Ever clearer is another verse:

As grass and straw, being cut, complain,
suddenly the sigh of the pain of the beloved comes (BS I 2)

Sur Asa (III) contains an allusion to the story of the blind and the elephant which, though popular long before Rumi, has gained special fame thanks to his version in the Mathnawi:23 the outwardly blind cannot grasp reality in its wholeness; they touch only small parts of the whole elephant, while those who are inwardly blind, that means: who have closed their eyes to the world and what is in it, will find the source of unity. When the poet says that finally no ‘I’ is left in the castle of the Kechis who, being Punhun’s people, represent The Beloved, one sees the connection with Rumi’s tale about the lover and the beloved: when

the lover, after maturing in the fire of separation, is finally allowed to enter the house of his friend, for he has left his I, and there is no room for two I in this small house. 24

The most touching, for most unexpected, quotation is that in Sassui’s story (Abrī I 8), where one of the deepest lines from the Mathnawi (Vol. I 1741) is translated in simple Sindhi:

Not only the thirsty seek the water,  
the water as well seeks the thirsty.

To be sure, the idea of the mutual longing of God, the fountainhead of grace, and the soul that yearns for this source of love, was known to the muslim mystics long before Rumi; the Quranic word ‘He loves them and they love Him’ (Sura 5/59) could easily be taken as proof for the truth that God’s love precedes man’s love. It formed the basis of great mystical poetry until Shah Latif applied it to his heroine who almost died from thirst in the desert hills. How would she undergo these tribulations if not the beloved were longing for her and attracting her until union is achieved?

One may ask to what extent Shah Abdul Latif’s musical imagery was influenced by Rumi. The expression that all veins have become a rabāb (Kal. III 6, Ripa I 21) on which pain and grief play their tunes, is not rare in traditional Sufi poetry. But once perfection is reached, ‘their veins play the melody of He is One’ (Asā IV 47). The overwhelming power of music is best represented in Sur Sōrāthi: a cruel Hindu story is transformed into a praise of the heavenly harmony for which the soul leaves everything on earth.

With your fiddle’s bow  
you have cut my heart at night (Sūr. IV 3).

The same idea occurs in Rāmakali (I 19ff), where the poet praises the fiddles of the Yogiś, those ‘golden instruments’ by which man is induced into a wonderful state of mind. Even the murli, the snake charmer’s instrument, is mentioned in this connection; this wind instrument can indeed produce strange effects by its heart-rending sound. The skillful application of the various classical Indian tunes and Sindhi folk melodies to the contents of the

24 Mathnawi I 3056-64.
Risālā is remarkable. Once Shah alludes to his technique of blending his topics: Sassui says that 'the Husainian mode' should be sung for her, which is the melody used for marthiyas for the martyrs of Kerbela (Hus. VI 10): thus he connects here the martyr's love with the Prophet's suffering family, for in their afflictions, too, Divine Love manifested itself.

Shah Abdul Latif follows the traditional imagery of Sufi poetry by devoting one of his Surs, Karā 'il, to the swan. Bird symbolism was common in the Islamic world since long; the time-honored image of the rose and the nightingale became almost a catchword to denote the character of Persian poetry. The soul as a bird is an age old symbol in many early religious traditions in East and West. Sana'i of Ghazna (d. ca. 1131) ingeniously interpreted the 'Litany of the birds' in one of his great Persian qasidas, 25 half a century before his Khorassanian compatriot 'Attar produced the masterpiece of this symbolism with his Mantiq ut-tair, The Bird's Conversation. He tells the journey of the birds who eventually, after passing through the seven valleys, discover that they themselves, being si murgh, 'thirty birds,' are the Simurgh, the King of Birds; the purified soul recognizes at the end of the road her essential unity with the Divine. Shah Latif may have inherited his bird imagery from his Muslim predecessors; he could also, as he indeed did, go back to the Indian legends of the swan, or wild goose, who dives only into the clearest water in order to find a pearl, while herons, cranes, and other water-fowl are content with the dirty water the world offers them, an image often used by Kabir. Sur Karā 'il uses this idea to admonish the seeker's soul to imitate the noble bird's example and not to follow the lower birds.

When, meditating, you have looked only once towards the swans,
You will never again make friendship with the cranes (Kar. I 12).

Rumi had expressed similar ideas in the context of nightingale and raven, falcon and crow respectively: the nightingale longs for the eternal rose garden, the falcon for his master's fist, while raven and crows are bound to the hibernal world of the material

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25 Sana'i, Diwān, p. 30-35.
senses. The imagery of the swan must have been popular in Sind for a long time, for Abdul Karim uses it more than a century before his descendant Latif:

*A swan feeds on pearls,
he dives deep down,
He who plays in the shallows,
is only an ordinary bird.*

At the end of the same *Sur*, Shah Latif introduces another allegory known from the Indian tradition, e.g., that of the black bee which becomes enamoured by the blue lotus. The miracle of true love is that the bee in the sky and the flower on the water are united by its attraction.

As much as Shah Latif is a faithful follower of the Sufi tradition, his poetry would certainly not have attracted the Sindhi speaking people for more than two centuries, had he only dwelt upon highly mystical topics, and offered them the kind of pious high-falutin that not a few among the mystical writers used to prepare. In his use of everyday imagery he is, in a certain way, comparable to Maulana Jalaluddin, who, too, could be inspired to fly to celestial heights of mystical love poetry by almost everything in the world, be it the kitten-like white buds in spring or a rag-dealer who buys old outworn shoes; the colorful but dead pictures in the bath house or the behavior of naughty little children who refuse to go to school. Like Rumi, though on a smaller scale, Shah Latif enjoys to describe everyday sceneries and offers in his verse a vivid picture of the conditions of the Sind countryside during the early 18th century. We admire Lila, the elegant and spoiled lady, on her swinging bed (these colorful, laquergold beds are still a specialty of Sind); drums and kettle-drums are beaten at her door. We watch the wife of the seafaring merchant who binds pieces of cloth on sacred trees and pours fragrant otto and oil on the waves of the Indus to secure her husband’s safe return (Sam. V 2): still in our day the trees near Sindhi shrines are decorated with many pieces of cloth, preferably red, in the shape of little flags or tiny cradles, which are attached there for the sake of a vow, as it is usual almost everywhere in the Islamic world.

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36 Jotwani, 'Shah Abul Karim,' p. 13; see also Ch. Vaudeville, 'Kabir', esp. Nr. 10, p. 206, and Nr. 18, p. 256; J. Parsram, Sufis, p. 171
Shah Latif alludes to the custom of cutting off the nose of shameless people and describes a person without any shame by saying:

*When you have a hundred thousand noses, what is the use in cutting one of them?* (Mum. VIII 25),

That means the person is so wicked that he, or she, cannot even be properly punished. Then, again, we find picturesque descriptions of scenes and persons; such as of the wandering Yogi:

*Yesterday we met a Kapari, a begging Babu, a Swami with a shawl around his head, a beautiful rosary, seeing and showing, with wounded heart there came a faqir.*

*Yesterday we met a Kapari, a radiant moon (māh-i munīr), Awakening inspiration and pain of separation came the faqir, the Yogi ..*

*Yesterday we met a Kapari, a Babu, dust-colored, a green shawl over his shoulders, a Swami with a golden rosary ...* (Mum. I 1, 2, 4).

Mumal herself, the heroine whose beauty has completely bewitched the poor Babu, is described as wearing ‘dresses like roses, and shawls on their heads like fresh betel leaves’ (Mum. III 1-2); her hair is perfumed with jasmine oil, her body with ambra; so that even the bees are intoxicated when she washes her hair. One almost sees the glittering of her and her girl friends’ silver and gold ornaments.—There are touching flash lights which reveal more of real life than long descriptions, thus the remark about the way the poor inhabitants of the Thar (whose coarse, red woolen blankets are so much better than silk and velvet, Mar. III 1 ff) 27 will feast when the imprisoned Marui will return: ‘All will drink milk!’ (Mar. IV 2). Only when one has seen the Thar covered with green after copious rains one can appreciate Marui’s description of her village and the various grains and berries which are found, then, in the desert region (Mar. IX VII) The helpless young woman, who shivers in the northern wind because she has

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27 Mitthi in the Thar desert is still famous for the handwoven and hand-dyed fabrics, in which a dark red and brown are most conspicuous; the area produces also beautiful flat-woven rugs.
no proper quilt is seen very realistically, as much as she is converted into a symbol of the soul. Other, more elaborate pictures, are those in Sur Sārang which describe in detail the activities in the countryside when the rainy season begins.

Shah Latif is also well aware of dramatic effects. Not only that he usually begins his chapters with a heart rending outcry of the heroine at the most crucial point of her life; he also gives poignant descriptions of the mental state of these women: the blood that drops from Sassui’s eyes has soiled her spinning-wheel and distaff (Ḥus. II 11). The desolate young woman is shown as she runs through the desert while the sun sets behind the thorn bushes and trees (Ḥus. I 8-11), a scene which can be appreciated by those who know the glowing evenings at the western border of Sind, when all of a sudden, darkness overtakes the wayfarer, and nothing is left but the sounds of a few animals. But the suffering of the lovers seems to be necessary for the continuation of life:

In the lover’s heart clouds, in the eyes raindrops (Ripa I 17).

Maulana Rumi often used this image to express the hope that his weeping might awake the flowers of grace in his friend’s heart. Shah Latif is more practical:

By weeping have I given color to the poor trees (Ripa II 3)

He does not express the hope for supernatural events, but simply thinks of the dried-up trees which may be refreshed by the abundant rain of tears (as they will be quickened by the rain of grace, so vividly described in other Surs).—Shah uses also an image known to the Indo-Persian poets for a long time:

What you see at dawn, that is no dew, o man!
You see the tears which the night has shed seeing man’s sorrows. (Ḏh. III 16).

It becomes fresh in his verse because he connects the dew—in the Persian tradition generally regarded as ‘tears of the nightingales’—with the theme of the lonely woman.

Sur Ripa contains some particularly interesting descriptions of the lover’s activities: (II 8.9.): the lover’s heart is so mixed with the thought of the friend as water rushing down from a watermill is mixed with the earth; and the seeker moves the thought ‘How
can I reach my friend’ in his mind like a boatsman wriggling with his boat around in the water (one can still see this kind of flat boat on the Indus). In the same Sur (II 13-15) Shah Latif uses the potter’s kiln as a model for the lover’s correct behavior: burning all day he is not supposed to show any signs of heat or smoke in order not to divulge his secret; for the vessel can be baked only when the flames are covered. Silence is the prerequisite for maturity. One century later, Ghallib in Delhi would sing, alluding to Abraham’s fate in the blazing pyre:

It is said that Abraham did not burn in the pyre—
Look, how I can burn without flames and sparks! 28

The expression that love, or the beloved, causes the fire of a hot bath (hamām) to burn in the soul, belongs to this group of images (Abri VI 1, Rām. I 2); the bath-imagery is also frequent in Maulana Rumi’s poetry. The idea to make a thief the ideal master for the lovers is not quite original either, but it is still impressive: to lie awake all night, to be silent and stealthily reach one’s goal: is that not the way the lover should behave in order to grasp the precious pearl of union? The moment a sound is uttered, union will become impossible.

When Shah Abdul Latif resembles Rumi in the use of everyday images he also resembles him to a certain extent in his way of shifting his images. The reader of Rumi’s Mathnawi is often surprised to find the same figure representing now a positive, now a negative aspect, and sometimes tales end quite differently from what logic would expect. Shah Abdul Latif is not free from such defects either, if they can be called ‘defects’ in the sense of classical poetry. The introduction of the image of the oyster which patiently waits for the drop of April rain that will grow in her into a pearl is certainly no ‘logical’ in the description of an inhabitant of the Thar desert (Mār. V 14-16), as much as the image is fitting for Marui’s general attitude and was used by poets like Kabir, too, in praising the faithful young wife who waits for the blessed raindrop 29. Likewise, a reader not acquainted with Sindhi folk poetry will be surprised to find allusions to letter writing in Marui’s sighs:

28 Ghallib, Ghazaliyāt-i Fārsi, Nr. 78.
The ink (e.g., the tears of blood) is in my hand, bring some paper!
The tears do not allow me to write as they fall on the pen
(Mär. II 4)

But this topic, imitating a standard topos of high poetry, is general among the Sindhis, so that most of the girls who never learned how a pen looks or knew even a single letter always complain that they do not receive letters from their friends, or want to write toward their families. This topic occurs also often in wedding songs. The invocations of the crow who serves as messenger instead of the ‘classical’ pigeon is, then, elaborated most charmingly: the longing girl promised the crow even to wind gold around its feathers provided the bird gives her some news from her beloved (Pür. I 8).

Strange changes of the acting and suffering subject are also found in some places, thus in Mūmal Rānō which is, on the whole, one of the most picturesque chapters of the Risālō. In the beginning, Rano’s longing is kindled by the Babu, so that he decides to hurry to the palace of Kak, as the wa‘ūrī dramatically describes. The description of beautiful Mumal, with her hatchet-like eyes and arrow-like eyelashes, who, Turandot-like, kills so many longing strangers that the tombs of her sacrifices form a whole graveyard outside Kak, (Mūm. II 2) is completely in harmony with the usual description of the ‘cruel beloved’, so often extolled in Persian and Turkish poetry, and also described in many of Shah’s own verses. But after the introductory chapter the scene changes, and Mumal, deserted by Rano, who misunderstood a joke of hers, turns into the complaining soul who sees in Rano the ideal leader, the representative of God, and eventually it is she who finds Rano and Kak and the palaces in her own soul, expressing, then, the final happiness of identification of lover and beloved in a touching song. A modern reader would expect that Rano would need purification after his mistake. But it is always the woman who has to suffer. And thus, Mumal had to be fitted into Shah Abdul Latif’s general imagery, which means, that she had to represent the searching soul.

This leads us to the most outstanding characteristics of Shah’s poetry: in his work we find a symbolism which, alien to the traditional Arabo-Persian mystical love poetry, is taken from the
Indian tradition. In the poetical language of early Sufis of the
Arabic speaking world, such as Dhu 'n-Nun and Hallaj, there is no
trace of worldly love. Later, in the finest poems of the Arabic
mystical tradition, e.g., those by Ibn al-Farid (d. 1235), but also
in the charming *Tarjumân al ashwâq* of his contemporary, the
Magister Magnus of theosophical mysticism, Ibn 'Arabi (d.
1240) the language shows the soul as a man who longs for the
divine beauty as revealed most perfectly in woman; hence these
poets use the names of traditional heroines of pre-Islamic poetry,
such as Salma or Hind to point to the Divine Beloved. In the
Persian tradition, on the other hand, the two lovers are generally
imagined as male; the allusions to the fresh 'green' down of the
young moon-like friend and similar features leave no doubt about
the sex of the beloved object. One feminine figure, that of Zul-
aikha in her longing and pining for Joseph, appears in the Persian
and Turkish tradition, where Joseph becomes the paragon of
charm and manifestation of Divine Beauty, and Potiphar's lustful
wife, purified by unceasing repentance, is transformed into a
longing mystical soul who eventually reaches the beloved. In the
Indian tradition, however, the soul is always represented as a
seeking female, and the beloved, or husband, represents God; the
seeker-poet identifies himself with the *virahini*, the longing young
wife, of the folk-songs.  

This imagery is not only found in
Hindu mythology and legends, but permeates likewise the Muslim
poetry in the native languages, beginning from early Ismaili
poetry in Sind and Gujrat to the first examples of mystical Urdu
writings in the 15th and 16th centuries in Southern India, and it
became the central topic of Sindhi and Panjabi folk mysticism.
As we saw (p. 89) even a highly sophisticated 18th century
mystic like Nasir Muhammad Andalib used the tradition that it is
almost women's duty to prostrate themselves before their hus-
bands, a tradition which modern Sindhi interpreters of the *Risâlô*
also quote with great delight. To understand this symbolism bet-
ter we may remember that in early ascetic Sufism the lower soul,
*nafs*, is usually seen if not as an animal then as a woman; since
the noun 'nafs' is feminine, this equation was easy, and belongs
to the favorite images even in high Persian poetry. But this crude
symbolism is refined in the Indian tradition, of which Shah
Abdul Latif's poems offer a perfect example.

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30 id. p. 146.
His male heroes are of noble origin: Punhun is a Baloch knight, while Sassui is only a washerman’s (adopted) daughter. He is used to musk, she is stained with soap (Dēsī IV 15). Rano is a Rajput, member of the warrior class, who is attracted by the courtesan Mumal; Tamachi is the ruler of Sind who elects a fisher-maid as his consort. Even Mehar, who temporarily serves as a buffalo keeper, is of higher social standing than Sohni, the potter’s daughter. In a few places the heroines feel like being burned on the funeral pyre after losing their beloved. The lot of the deserted woman is touchingly described in various chapters of the Risālō, most beautifully in Sur Ḍahar, where the author’s prayer to the Prophet, who covers the sins of his people in his limitless kindness, leads to the sorrows of the woman who, aware of her sins, implores the help of her heavenly husband—the nafs is shown on her way to purification:

_Make some turn, o husband, to the hut of me, the lonely one,_
_Darling, covering me, sweetheart, under your hem!_ (Ḍah. III 1)

But the young woman is told by the poet that she will certainly not find her husband by sleeping, or by turning to others;

_To turn to others and fight with the husband,_
_is like leaving the wheat and gathering empty husks_ (Ḍah. III 7).

The soul that turns towards objects of worship besides God will never be saved—the One Beloved is necessary for her salvation. God is the sattār, The Covering, who covers the lonely woman with his grace, provided she repents and implores him.

Breaking the appetites of the nafs is the seeker’s duty. Even the grande dames of the folk tales, Lila and Mumal, have to be converted into humble slaves: Lila is called _maʿ dhūrī_, ‘helpless’ (Lila I 1), and thus equated with Sassui, who often sings of her wish to become a humble slave-girl

whose hair tufts are in the hand of the Balochis (Kōhy. III 10),
a servant-maid

who would love to put the dust of their feet on her limbs (Dēsī III 9).
If these ladies can at all obtain the forgiveness of the Lord then only through patience and by crushing their pride and their haughtiness, typical manifestations of the untamed nafs; they have to remain constantly awake remembering their beloved—as the Sufi has to spend his nights in the dhikr (recollection) of God. The model case of an ideal woman in her sublimated state as nafs mutma‘inna, ‘Soul at peace’ (Sura 89/27) is Nuri, the fisher maid (mōhānī), who admits time and again that she, belonging to the low gandri caste, was full of faults before Jam Tamachi took her into his castle. The Mohana traditionally belonged to the lowest social strata in Sind, and their women were noted for beauty and not too strict morals. The story of Nuri Tamachi as told in Kāmōd may contain a reminiscence of the Indian tale of the Princess with the fish-smell, but it can also be explained in the Sufi tradition as an inverted form of the oft-used Persian theme of Shāh ū gadā, ‘King and Beggar’, or, on a higher and even historical level, of Mahmud and Ayaz. Just as the warrior king and conqueror of Northwest India, Mahmud of Ghazna, was completely enchanted by the obedience and loving veneration of his Turkish officer Ayaz so that he became ‘the slave of his slave,’ thus Tamachi enjoys Nuri’s modesty and obedience. There is not a trace of coquetry (nāz) in Nuri; she is all niyāz ‘petitioning,’ (a word, which, by the way, is often used in the Mahmūd Ayāz story for the sake of its fitting rhyme). Enthralled by her softness, the Lord covers her and all those who belong to her with unending kindness:

Whether Kinjhar lake, whether Byzantium—it is full of graces (in‘āmī) (Kām. I 16).

Nowhere else in the Risālō is the character of the king as representative of God expressed as clearly as in Kāmōd, where the Quranic words about Allah are applied to him, whose throne is kibriyā, ‘Divine Grandeur.’ What a miracle that this wonderful king covers with his grace an insignificant, low caste girl like

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31 M. Eliade, ‘Die Religionen und das Heilige’, p. 242
32 For the whole problem cf. H. Ritter, ‘Das Meer der Seele’; the topic King and Beggar, prominent in Ahmad Ghazzali’s Sawānīh, has been discussed by H. Ethé, ‘König und Derwisch, Romantisch-mystisches Epos vom Scheich Hilali’, 1870, and ‘the tradition of Mahmud Ayaz in the early period by Gertrud Spies, ‘Mahmud von Ghazna bei Farid ud’ din Attar’, 1959.
Nuri! The quintessence of this story, and essentially of all the stories in the Risālō, is this: O heart, be obedient, realize the relation ‘abd - rabb, ‘slave and Lord’; then you will be called to enjoy complete peace in the loving embrace of the divine beloved (Rumi would say ‘like the falcon who, after long digressions, eventually turns home to the Sultan’s fist and rubs his head at the master’s breast’).  

There is no end to the sighs of deserted women, of the outcries of lonely souls, in Shāh jō Risālō. They feel the nails (mīkh, mīk) of love in their hearts which fix them to their beloved, and call out:

If you should come once, remembering me, o beloved, I would spread under your feet my eyelashes, and lay my hair on the ground,
O beloved, I shall spend all my life in seeking (BS I 6).

There is no end to true love, because there is no end to the beauty of the Beloved, as already Dhu ḫn-Nūn and later Abu Hamid Ghazzali had stated.

His dream-image has intoxicated my mind (BS I 21).

His beauty is alike to the green garment of the soil (Ripa II 7); when he walks out of his house earth and heaven are delighted, and the houris stand in silent admiration and confusion ‘in full etiquette’ (BS II 6, cf. Ḫūs. II wāʾī). One may detect here an allusion to the Prophetic tradition ‘Verily God is beautiful and loves beauty,’ a favorite hadith with the Sufis, which may also be intended when Marui, after months of imprisonment in Omar’s castle, complains that she has lost her beauty and dares not go back to the Marus, who are so beautiful that only the lovely ones are acceptable in their presence (Mar. V 1-10): the soul sullied by the dirt and dust of this world, has to undergo thorough purification before she is allowed to return into the presence of the eternally beautiful Lord.

The topic of khwāb-i ghaflat, ‘sleep of negligence,’ is central in Shah’s poetry. Not only Sassui has to undergo punishment because of her sleep, the lonely wives in Ḍahar III and Ripa II likewise complain, or are scolded by the poet, that they have lost their husbands because they stretched out their feet in their beds.

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33 Diwān-i Kabīr ed. Furuzanfar Nr. 1353, Mathnawi II 1131 ff.
Had Sassui not slept comfortably, how would the Balochis have carried away her beloved? But the same warning can be applied to the seafaring merchants as well (Sar. III 20); every moment of slumber can cause damage to the boat. And will there not be enough lonely nights in the grave? Why then, spend the few nights of life in sleep instead of enjoying the friend’s sweet discourse (Dah. III 17)? This constant admonition to remain awake is derived from the classical Sufi tradition: the mystic is called to remain awake and to remember the Lord, by performing the nightly prayers or constant dhikr, as it was Sufi custom from the very beginning of Islamic mystical life. The nightly vigils were always considered a great boon for the lovers, for in these lonely hours they could continue spiritual conversations with the divine Beloved, dialogues, which cannot be properly translated into human words.

Is there any meaning in staying in one’s shabby hut or in the deserted village? No, the soul has to leave this world, and has to enter the tariqa, the Path, to perform the pilgrimage, as it has been described by so many mystical poets in East and West, be they Attar in his Manṭiq ut-tair, or J. Bunyan in his Pilgrim’s Progress.34 When Sassui bursts out into the words:

I will put fire in Bhambore! (Hus. IV, wā ’i),

she expresses in a fitting symbol her wish to forget completely her worldly attachments. Bhambore, where the beloved had once appeared to her, is of no use without him: the world can serve, for a short while, as the place of Divine manifestations, but once the soul is deprived of this vision due to her own laziness and heedlessness, it is impossible to find the beloved in this place; one has to cut off all worldly relations and joys and to enter the narrow road that leads into the wilderness. Only those who are completely naked, and do not carry any burden with them, can cross the mountains and reach Kech (Ma’ dh. II 8). Indeed, the major part of Shāh jō Risālō consists of a praise of the path, and of the never ending travelling of the lovers. The Sindhi poet stands here in the line of Attar’s successors—similar to the birds in Manṭiq ut-tair, Sassui crosses deserts, mountains and valleys:

34 The subject of the mystical journey is central to almost all traditions; cf. the relevant passages in E. Underhill, ‘Mysticism’, and every study on phenomenology of religion.
To travel after Punhun, that is my happiness (Ma' dh. III 1); and the seeker who was enchanted by the Yogis, the true saints, tries to follow them to the inaccessible heights of Mount Hinglaj. The heart is restless like a camel (Ripa I 14); Sur Khanbhāt is a perfect description of the journey of the soul toward the Friend. Shah Abdul Latif dramatically describes the attempts to bring the stubborn camel-soul on the right path, and to make him move faster by reminding him of his noble pedigree and promising him golden reins and fine trappings; but the ignorant creature prefers to graze on saltish desert plants instead of eating the sandalwood by which the impatient rider tries to cajole him. But eventually the camel, reaching the garden of the Friend, becomes precious, and is, again, a representative of the soul at peace (Sura 89/27). This is a common image in mystical poetry; Maulana Rumi has written dozens of charming verses in which he represents the human soul by a camel, preferably an intoxicated camel, which is so enchanted by the friend’s beauty, or his sweet song that he does not even feel the burden of duties on his back. Likewise, the restive horse is a typical image of the soul on her way towards God, and Shah even introduces the Persian khar, ‘donkey’ for the nafs, the lower instincts (Lilā I 6), a word that is used more than any other term in Persian to denote the dirty ‘flesh.’

The soul is supposed to undergo the afflictions on the road in perfect patience. But there are moments when Shah Latif seems to forget the goal of the journey, namely, union with the beloved, and becomes lost in the quest for quest’s sake:

I will seek, I will seek, I will not find—!

Thus says Sassui, in the moment of most painful journeying, and the poet uses exactly the same expression when he speaks of his search for the Yogis who, thus, become a counterpart of the Balochis: both are symbols for the Perfect Man through whose whole being radiates the perfection of the eternal beloved (Hus. VI, 3-4, Rām. I. 18). For while the beloved is only ‘in the eyes’ in the moment of union, he occupies the whole heart and mind during separation and is, hence, even more ‘real’ than in union

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(Hus. V 12). With such words, Shah Abdul Latif is close to a feeling that was expressed, time and again, by the great representatives of 'personal mysticism' who knew the secret of:

The endless torment
of love unfulfilled,
the greater torment
of love fulfilled,

as T. S. Eliot has put it, and as Muhammad Iqbal, following Ghazzali's interpretation of infinite longing, has proclaimed in our day in the Indo-Muslim world. In the moment of union, there remains nothing but a 'Thou' without distinction, or the Divine 'I' without any trace of the human 'I', while love can be felt and experienced only as long as the search e.g., the feeling of duality continues. This search, however, usually leads to the discovery that it is useless to pass through outward roads, to overcome outward distances: the path leads through the forests of the soul (Abrī III 12), into man's own heart.

Go with the heart toward the beloved, do not cut distance with the feet,
Do not ask for the way in the hills, come spiritually, o Sassui! (Abrī III 12)

When finally the tree 'Existence' is cut, then union is possible, and according to the Prophetic saying 'Who knows himself knows his Lord' the seeker will find, eventually, his beloved in himself, 'radiant as the moon,' as Rumi experienced it at the end of his search for his lost friend Shams-i Tabrizi.

Shah Abdul Latif knows that all the adventures his heroines have to undergo are destined from pre-eternity, as he often says with allusions to the God's creative act and word (see p. 243). The goal of the lover is, in true Sufi tradition, to go back to the moment before God spoke his first word, to the time when man was as he was before he was, before the pre-eternal unity was split into a Divine 'I' and a human 'Thou'. Sound and echo, which came into existence by God's address to the souls, point to that duality behind which the longing soul wants to return (Kal. I 19 ). The human 'I', that means the claim of independent per-

36 A fine analysis of this attitude in R.C. Zechner, 'Hindu and Muslim Mysticism', p. 135 ff.
sonal existence, is the true enemy of man, for, as the Sufis formulated as early as in the 8th century, 'Only God has the right to say 'I'. ' The seeker is mislead by the misbehavior of the Ego that behaves as though it were an independent reality, an act which almost amounts to *shirk*, associationism, e.g., to see partners, secondary deities, besides the One God. But even this gravest sin can be forgiven, as Shah contests, with God's Quranic promise (Köh y. III *wā'ī*).

There are innumerable ways to purify the soul so that it returns to the beautiful Lord in complete purity. Not all souls are as heroic as Marūr, who endured the imprisonment in Omar's colorful castle, the symbol of the world with its temptations; that is why she, after spending her days and nights in weeping, and refusing to accept any of the ruler's blandishments, was granted return to her eternal abode, the pasture ground of the shepherds in Malir, which in its simplicity contrasts so strongly with the world that is decked out fair.

It is the duty of the mystical guide, as representative of the Prophet, and finally of God, to help the soul in this process of purification. For 'without the beloved, Sohni is unclean,' and his company is for her like a ritual bath that takes away impurity (*najāsat*) from a woman (Sohni. Mut. 2,3). We know from classical Sufism that the Pir's methods were often harsh and even cruel, particularly for those who were used to a more tender way of education. Shah Latif therefore compares the mystical beloved in the context of the circle of Sassuī the washerwoman to the washerman who mistreats the laundry with his stick (BS II 11 ), a sight well known to every inhabitant of India and Pakistan, but also not far from Jalaluddin Rumi's description of the beloved as a bleacher who deals with the laundry. The mystical beloved can also be a dyer, who first casts the dirty soul into a decolorization chemical to clean it from spots of sin and colors of attachment, and then puts it into the vat with the true color (Köh y. IV 10) in order to give it, as Rumi says in a similar image, the *ṣibghat Allāh* (Sura 2/132), the 'coloring of God'. Or the master is a blacksmith who puts the iron ore into the furnace to melt and purify it, then mistreats it with a hammer,

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37 See F. Nwyia, 'Exégèse coranique et langage mystique', p. 249 about al-Kharraz.

38 *Mashnawi* II 1345.
bellows, and cold water until it becomes fine and useful steel (YK I 17). Only after such a procedure the same master can join the seeker’s soul with that of the beloved, just as the blacksmith joins two links of a chain together so that they can never be separated again (BS II 5). The beloved may also be compared to the elixir by whose touch iron is transformed into gold (Pirbh. I 25). The nafs ammâra, which incites to evil (Sura 12/53), e.g., man’s lower instincts which call to laziness, pride, haughtiness, or greed (as in Lila’s case when she ‘sold’ her husband for a diamond necklace) has to be broken: shikast, ‘being broken’ is one of the most important terms in later Sufism. Sohni experiences this ‘being broken’ when the vessel dissolves in the middle of the torrent and she is drowned: the symbolism of the body as ‘a jar of unbaked clay, taken with one on a journey’ is common to the Indian tradition. ³⁹ Shah’s account of Sohni’s story is almost an exact exteriorization of what Maulana Rumi had described in one of his most ecstatic ghazals, ⁴⁰ singing of the ‘wave of alast’ which shatters the vessel of the body and destroys it so that it is eventually united with the ocean (Sohn. V 11). All of Shah’s heroines are told that:

The lover was joined to her by pain,  
the sweetheart was not joined to her by pleasure (Abru VIII 14),

and that the only thing that is required on the long way towards the beloved is suffering. Hence the imagery of the physician: the beloved both gives the pain and cures it (YK I 1ff), for only he who has wounded the heart can heal and restore it. The Yogis are models of this behavior, which seems so contrary to every human wish: for them, hunger is a feast, just as for ordinary people fastbreaking is the feast par excellence, and what others would call illness and pain is joy for them:

What is pain itself, that is the peace of the soul (Kal. III 6).

Sometimes one feels like reading a Sindhi translation of Shah’s contemporary, the Christian mystic G. Tersteegen’s (1697-1769) hymn ‘Kommt, Kinder, lasst uns gehen ...’ in which the Path is described so beautifully:

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³⁹ Cf. Vaudeville, ‘Kabir’, Nr. 15, p. 239.  
⁴⁰ Diwân-i Kabîr Nr. 463.
Geht's der Natur entgegen,
so geht's gerad und fein!
Die Fleisch und Sinnen pflegen
noch schlechte Pilger sein.
Verlasst die Kreatur
und was euch sonst will binden;
lasst gar euch selbst dahinten:
es geht durchs Sterben nur.

or some other poets of German 18th century Pietism who sang about the marvellous results of suffering which 'collects the senses ... and is like angels' guardianship ...', asking 'Suffering, who is worthy of you?' Indeed, it would not be difficult to bring close parallels to Shah's 'path of suffering,' as it had been developed by the Sufis in Hallaj's succession, from Christian hymns about the *imitatio Christi* in meekness and glad acceptance of pain.

In Shah Latif's poetry, however, this emphasis on suffering leads to most cruel descriptions of the fate of the lover, faithful to the tradition of Indo-Persian mystical and profane poetry. In *Kalyān*, the most purely 'mystical' song in the *Risālō*, the initiate is told to roast his flesh over the skewer (II 10). The knife with which the beloved cuts his throat should be blunt so that he feels the friend's hand a bit longer (II 12)—an idea often repeated by the court poets of India during the 17th and 18th centuries, who indulged in descriptions of this kind, as remained very much alive even during the 19th century in Ghalib's Urdu verse. The beloved kills poor Sassui 'like a little goat' (Kōhy. IV 9), and her designation as *qarībānī*, 'the near one', may well be intended as a pun on *qurbānī*, 'a sacrifice,' for all lovers are sacrificed like animals slaughtered at the festival of pilgrimage. A very naturalistic feeling of the importance of shedding blood in order to make the divine Lord and beloved happy permeates this poetry—: again, who would not think of the *Blut-und-Wunden* poetry of the Christian Church, if one does not prefer to turn to sacrifices at Indian temples and shrines? Shah Latif therefore does not hesitate to describe how limbs and heads are being cooked in a kettle (Kal. II 26); one is reminded of Rumi's verse that the beloved is a butcher dealing in lovers' hearts and livers,41 not to mention the

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41 id. Nr. 1600.—A typical example of this attitude is a Persian quatrain, attri-
innumerable verses in Persian and Turkish poetry where the hearts and livers of wretched lovers become roast-meat (kabāb).

The imagery of corporeal pain is particularly strong in the Sassui circle:

*When the wild beasts eat my flesh, then my bones go to the friends* (Dēsī I 26).

She wishes that the crows of Kech, where her beloved dwells, may pluck and eat her flesh (Abī X wā 'i), or else, that the dogs of Kech should eat her (Ma' c dh. I 1), an image which leads the poet to the idea of the soul-dog. But the lover has other wishes, too, in order to suffer even more. In ecstatic longing the woman calls out:

*I will take my heart out so that the crow eats it before the friend, so that he says 'Who is the sacrifice,' qurbāni?* (Pūr. I 12).

Many of these sighs of burning passion remind the reader immediately of the legends of Husain ibn Mansur al-Hallaj who said, when speaking of God 'Kindness is from Him, but suffering is He Himself.' Indeed, we may assume that the image of Hallaj, who had wandered through the Indus Valley in 905, has impressed the poets of this part of the Islamic world even more than elsewhere. 42 His name and fame as the martyr of love was known all over the Muslim countries, particularly in the countries with Persian tradition, where the word 'Mansur' has become a cypher for the claim of having attained union. Did he not ecstatically say: Anā 'l-haqq, 'I am the absolute Truth'? But this word (which was not, as legend has it, an enthusiastic cry but the quintessence of his thinking and feeling) made him also the model case of the lover who divulged the secret of love and therefore had to be

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punished. Shah Abdul Latif is only one of the numerous poets in Sind and the Panjab who have alluded to his sayings and, even more, to his suffering: wherever in this poetry the gallows are mentioned, we can see the shadow of Hallaj, for whom the gallows were the final station on his way to the divine beloved. The gallows are, as Shah Latif says (Kal. II 6 sequ.), the bridal bed for the lover,\(^{43}\) the place where he can enjoy union with the beloved, as Sindhi folk poetry still sings in touching variations of the same theme; hence, the wayfarer is called to 'climb on the gallows tree a hundred times a day.' Sassui, the roaming lover, belongs to the same group of initiates who are asked to sacrifice themselves:

You will climb upon the trees, becoming food for the vultures—
Sassui has climbed on the gallows (Ma‘dh. VII 11).

The arena of love (mahabbata jō maidān\(^{4}\) ), one of Shah Latif's favorite expressions, is the place where the seekers can prove their spiritual maturity:

In the arena of love do not think of the head—
Climb on the beloved's gallows that you may become healed;
Love is a dragon; those who have been devoured know that! (Kal. II 17,15. sequ.).

Hallaj's word anā 'l-haqq, usually interpreted by Muslim poets to mean 'I am God', in a pantheistic sense, was the motto for thousands of ecstatic mystics throughout the centuries; it occurs also in Shāh jō Risālō. But contrary to his younger contemporary, the enthusiastic hymnodist Sachal Sarmast, and later Sindhi folk bards Shah only covertly alludes to the famous saying:

Water earth stream—one cry;
Tree bush: one call: 'I am the Truth!
The whole country is filled with Mansurs—
how many of them wilt Thou have executed (Sohni IX 1-2)??

\(^{43}\) In a Sindhi folksong I once heard the expression āū lagan for Hallaj's death on the gallows; that means: the moment when bride and bridegroom hit seven times each others' head. The same term occurs in Kal. II 16 for the lover who should be as lovingly close as a bride to those in whose hand is a knife.
The last line of this verse has become almost proverbial and prefigures numerous verses in Sachal’s poems when he goes on specifying the names in the long lines of martyrs who have been slain by their Divine beloved. Shah Latif is more careful and less outspoken in his allusions when he continues his musings with stating the essential Unity of Being in a traditional image:

All the waves here:  
a hundred thousand dresses,  
but the water is one (Soňi IX 3).

And it is this unity which Soňi realizes in her final annihilation in the river. Only once more a statement similar to that in the Soňi story is repeated, this time in connection with Sassui:

Everything is Thou—  
why doest thou give the sentence [to death]? (Abri V 1).

It may be mentioned at random that the symbolism of Moth and Candle, mentioned in the Risâlô only once or twice, though a standard topos in classical Persian poetry, goes back to Hallaj. But also the description of the unlucky lover, which was used by Hallaj to depict Satan’s sad fate and was then applied by later generations to himself, is found in an almost verbatim translation in Asâ IV 38-39:

God cast him into the ocean, the hands tied—  
And said to him: Beware lest you become wet! 44

The predicament of Satan who was called to prostrate himself before Adam and yet knew that he had to obey God’s eternal order that nobody but He should be worshipped, is expressed here in a simple and poignant image. In fact, the Hallajian image of Iblis was taken up by Shah Latif (see p. 210). Even more pertinent to the general mystical symbolism of the Risâlô and its emphasis on sacrifice is Shibli’s dream about Hallaj’s death in which God proclaimed that He, or His beauty, would be the bloodmoney for those martyred on the Path: Sassui is consoled with these words (Abri XI 6, Ḥus. IX 20 f). The fate of the martyr mystic of Bagdad becomes a model for Shah’s heroines who pray, as he did, that God might take away the ‘I’ that stands as a veil between the lover and the beloved.

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Even the eyes are a veil, for they are *majāzī*, ‘metaphorical’, while God, the Eternal Beauty, can be seen only with the ‘true’ eye of the soul: only *haqīqī* eyes can see *haqīqat*, Reality and Divine truth (Asā III 1). We may think in this connection of the Turkish expression *gözünden kiskanmak*, ‘to be jealous of one’s own eyes’ which expresses well the attitude of the lover who feels that even the eyes which see the beloved are still an unnecessary medium between the heart and the friend, an idea taken over from Persian love-mysticism of the Ahmad Ghazzali school.\(^{45}\)

When the poet once threatens his eyes which see anything besides the friend by telling them that he would tear them out to feed to the crows with them (Asā II 1-4), he probably thinks of the Quranic word ‘Whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God’ (Sura 2/109), which was one of Dard’s favorite verses, too. Those who are blind, e.g., whose spiritual eyes have not yet been opened, see only forms and small details; they feel with their hands and do not see with true eyes (Asā III 31), as he says in the story of the blind and the elephant (Asā III 26 ff); but the leaders, endowed with insight (*bašīrat*) see the elephant in reality, *fi’l-haqīqat*. But there is another blindness as well: when Shah Latif advises his followers to ‘become blind’ in order to see the vision of the beloved (Abī XI, Ripa I 25) one is reminded not only of the underlying story in the *Mathnawi* but likewise of Rumi’s story of the Sufi (it was originally Rabi‘a al-Adawiyya) who, lost in meditation, did not look at the gardens in spring, for ‘the garden and flowers are inside:’\(^{46}\)

*Black night, white day—this is the light of the attributes—: where there is the Friend’s presence, there is no color nor form* (Khāh. III 15).

This is the axis around which Shah Latif’s poetry moves as much as does Dard’s mystical system. He, therefore, uses also the old maxim of Sufism, that one should make one’s heart a mirror in order to see the friend in it (Sohānī VII 12); but while the mirror

\(^{45}\) The 15th chapter of Ahmad Ghazzali’s *Sawāniḥ* deals with this problem, which became central in later love lyrics.

\(^{46}\) *Mathnawi* IV 1359 ff. The story goes back to Attar’s *Tadhkirat al-auliyyā* and is found also in his *Musibatnāma*. 
imagery is frequent in traditional Persian mystical poetry, and belongs to Dard's central symbols, it was apparently less popular in a rural environment.

All the way through the chapters of the Risālō the importance of the mystical leader is implicitly understood. In many cases it will be difficult to decide whether the beloved represents God, the Prophet, or the Pir. Only in a few places the mystical guide is mentioned overtly as a conditio sine qua non for the seeker, and in Sarirāg he assumes the figure of the pilot who leads the boat safely through the ocean of this world so that its precious cargo cannot be plundered. However, as much as the necessity of the Pir is understood, Shah Latif never indulges in deliberations about his veneration or the duties of the initiate towards him: only in poetical allusions he introduces his listeners to the mysteries of the Path.

What, then, is the message he wants to convey? Is it only a clever play with inherited forms, the skilful use of traditional songs and tales as vehicles for generally accepted ideas in the Sufi tradition? He certainly did not call his listeners to rebellion against the outward forces, or to the formation of a closely knit mystical community. His mysticism is individualistic, and has as its center only one story: that of the return of the loving soul to her Lord.

Shah Abdul Latif dwells particularly on one aspect of this age-old story, e.g., the transformation and sublimation of the lower soul, the nafs ammāra, into the higher soul, muṭma ḍinna. All his heroines undergo this process. Lila, the proud and worldly grande dame suffers in the process of repentance: her nafs becomes lawwāmā, 'blaming,' (Sura 75/2); until she is completely broken so that she may be accepted once more in the presence of her husband. Mumal, the bewitching and self-conscious lady, experiences for the first time the pangs of love, and after long days and nights of weeping she eventually realizes Rano's constant presence: everything is covered by the moonlike radiance of his beauty. To her final experience, as to that of many of the heroines, the Quranic word 'There are signs on earth, and in yourselves—do you not see?' (Sura 51/21) can be applied. Marui is the immaculate soul in the worldly prison; cut off from her primordial home, she sings out her longing like the reedflute that is cut off the reedbed, and is reunited with her beloved because she had
remained faithful to the pre-eternal covenant of love; she is, in a
certain way, a spiritual sister of Nuri [who has already reached
the station of the ‘soul at peace’, after leaving her lowly back-
ground]. Sohnì knows of the power of love which makes every-
thing easy:

_The stream fast, the canals strong—_
_ where love is, there is the current weak_ (Sohnì. I 1)

Thus, she crosses the ocean of the world and will be united with
Mehar in the eternal ocean of Unity, once her vessel is broken.
But Shah’s favorite heroine, almost his _alter ego_, is Sassui, who
burns in constant searching between the fire of separation and
the fire of the desert (Hus. II 1), and whose ‘dowry are the stones
of Mount Pabb’ (Hus. X 27).

_The first and the last is to walk to my beloved_ (Abri I 1).

Sassui is certainly the most dramatic figure in the _Risālō_. It is in
her story that Shah Latif reaches the culmination of his mystical
teaching: having ‘drunk the cup of thirst’ she experiences that
the water, too, longs for the thirsty; she recognizes Punhun’s
followers even in the angel of death, and at the end of her road,
she begins to sing out her pain:

_Oh voice in the desert, as though it were a wild goose:
A call from the water’s depth—_
_ it is the ‘Ah’ of Love_ ...

_Oh voice in the desert, like a fiddle’s melody:
It is the song of love—only ordinary people thought
 it to be a woman’s voice_ (Ma‘_dīh_. VII 21, 22).

The voice of love: the loving woman has been transformed com-
pletely into love. She has thus achieved the highest mystical ex-
erience, to which H. Corbin points in his analysis of Ruzbihan
Baqlí’s work, 47 namely, the transformation of the lover not only
into the beloved, but into the principle of love, which embraces
everything. In this simple looking verse one feels more than any-
where else the true depth of Shah’s own experience. Seen under
this aspect of the soul’s transformation into love, every suffering
on the Path becomes easy and even Mount Pabb cannot show its

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strength before Sassui who, forgetting her body like gazelles, and flying like an eagle, goes to the beloved (Desi V). The process of purification, painful as it may be in the first moment, becomes a constant joy for the lover who is sure that he will be united, one day, with the eternal source of life and that means, for him, of love.