

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Khatam Sharif

سلطان باهو

In honour of the venerable

Sultan Bahu ق

***Adhee laanat duniya taen, saaree duniya daaraan Hu
Jeyn raah saahib kharach na keetee, leyn ghazab deeyan maaraan Hu
Peyovaan kolon putar kuhaaway, bhath duniya makaaraana Hu
Tarak jehnaan dunyaa theen keetee, Bahu, leysan baagh bahaaraan Hu***

*Half the curses on the world, and all of them on the worldly
Whoever does not sow in the path of the Lord will reap the lashes of torment
Burn, evil world, which causes fathers to sacrifice their sons!
Those who give up on this world, Bahu, will gain gardens of paradise*

Introduction

Wise is he, who is not afraid of death, but of life itself. However, such insight is not forthcoming so easily, due to the attachment one has to the physical world (*duniya*). It is this *duniya* that is the major impediment for people in attaining any form of spirituality.

To let go of *duniya*, a seeker requires the assistance of a master; the spiritual saint who advocates a life of purity by turning the seeker's attention to the hereafter (*akhirah*). The master will prescribe practices and give guidance which will lead the seeker to detachment of this world. Emphasising that Love of Allah Almighty is the highest objective, they will make the seeker aware that he must attain spiritual death before the physical death occurs, which is based on the saying of *Rasulullah* ﷺ, "**Die before you die!**"

The Sufi saints, such as Sultan Bahu ق use many mediums to convey such teachings. Sultan Bahu ق has used poetry as a means because of its ability to convey his ideas of Love and Detachment in a manner that is seductive as it is instructive. The effect of such poetry is that it is recited generation after generation on the tongues of both the elite and the masses with great aplomb, joy and love. His poetry becomes accessible to all in a literary and artistic form, through the use of metaphors of daily Punjabi life which are a recurring theme throughout. Bathing, washing clothes, fetching water and meeting mystics or *faqirs*, all become scenes to convey the central concepts of his teachings.

Not surprisingly then, Sultan Bahu's ق fame is almost entirely due to his Punjabi poetry, called the *Abyat*. This work is arranged in alphabetical order by the first letter of the Arabo-Persian alphabet and is regarded as one of the greatest literary treasures of Punjabi literature.

Life Background

Information about the life of Sultan Bahu ق is scarce in comparison to other Sufi figures. However, the only substantial account of his life is found in the *Manaqib-i Sultani*, written six or seven generations after Sultan Bahu ق by his descendant, Sultan Hamid ق. According to this text, Sultan Bahu ق was born in 1630 (1039 *Hijri*) during the final years of the reign of the Mughal ruler Shah Jahan in the town of Shorkot, located between Multan and Jhang in modern day Pakistan.

His family is from the *A'wan* tribe and so his lineage traces back to Sayyiduna Ali ؑ. His father, Sultan Bayazid Muhammad ق, a *Hafiz-e-Qur'an*, was a pious and learned person who had some degree of influence with the Mughal government. In recognition of his esteemed military service he was given charge of a fort in Shorkot. His marriage was to a saintly lady named Bibi Rasti ق whose name reflected her state since Rasti meant to be rightly guided. Sultan Bayazid ق was not oblivious to his wife's state and considered it his good fortune that although he was still partially attracted by *duniya's* charm, his saintly wife on the other hand was completely detached.

It was in fact Bibi Rasti ق who gave the overtly mystical name of Bahu to her son, which means 'With Him' or 'The one who is with God'. This Sultan Bahu ق kept as his pen name to which his disciples added Sultan. His full name is Sultan Mahmud Bahu ق but he is commonly referred to as Sultan Bahu ق. His mother had chosen the mystical name in the hope that he would become one of Allah Almighty's special servants.

*My mother named me Bahu, hoping I would turn out to be the one who is with God.
Turn Bahu backwards; the word is Wahab (Grants a lot)*

Miracle Child

Whilst in infancy and on the eve of the month of *Ramadhan*, Sultan Bahu ق refused to take milk from his mother. His father became concerned and beckoned the doctor who found nothing physically wrong with him. The child abstained from milk throughout the first fasting day until it was *maghrib* when he eventually drank. The same pattern occurred the following day and again his father was worried but Bibi Rasti ق calmed him saying, "*Do not worry; our son is keeping the fast.*" This news quickly spread among the locals, who began to visit the house with a view of gaining blessings from this special child.

The miraculous incidents did not cease at infancy but continued throughout his life. When he was old enough to walk, he would accompany his maid to the bazaar where his mere glance would have the local Hindus running for cover. Any non Muslim who saw the *nur* emanating from his eyes instantly denounced his belief and accepted Islam. After further similar incidents, the Hindus complained to Sultan Bayazid ق about his son. Sultan Bayazid ق

asked, "What has my son done? He is at such a tender age." The Hindus protested, 'He is taking away people from our belief. When your child looks at a Hindu, he turns them into a Muslim. This cannot continue; you must do something.'

It was agreed that the best course of action would be for the child to be accompanied through the bazaar at designated hours, so the Hindus would have ample time to leave. The maid followed the instructions ardently but through no fault of hers, some forgetful Hindus would still be in the bazaar and hence fall prey to the heart piercing sight of Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. Following further discussions with the Hindus, Sultan Bayazid رحمۃ اللہ علیہ agreed to attach bells on his son's ankles so that the Hindus could hear him approaching. Despite all these efforts, hundreds of people became Muslims through the mere glance of Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ.

Bibi Rasti: His Mother and Shaykh

*May Allah's endless Mercy and Compassion be upon my mother 'Rasti,'
Rasti was the one who is rightly guided, the one who is on the right path.*

Bibi Rasti رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was a pivotal figure in the life of Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, especially so when his father passed away whilst he was still but a child. Financially they would remain secure due to the large inheritance left by his father. It was clearly evident that this child was extraordinary and his mother recognised this fact. After his father's death, his mother supervised his formal education and spiritual training. Bibi Rasti رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was aware that there were many dangers in the attraction to *duniya* and that many people live their entire lives in pursuit of the pleasures of this world. Therefore she took it upon herself to wean her son off the physical world and towards the spiritual world.

During the early years of his life, Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ observed his mother passing through various stages of the spiritual path. Bibi Rasti رحمۃ اللہ علیہ would often sit against a rock surrounded by large trees and bushes, where she would go into seclusion and be absorbed in the remembrance of Allah Almighty. This place has been preserved and is often visited by people today. And so his mother was not only his first teacher, but also his guide.

Such was the high esteem that Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ had for his mother, that on one occasion he became overwhelmed and exclaimed, "You have been my teacher and guide; please give me *bay`at*. Bibi Rasti رحمۃ اللہ علیہ replied, "My son, I have given to you all my prayers. I am not in a position to give you *bay`at*. You must look for a *murshid*."

The Search Begins

In his early years, Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ had all the worldly things available to attract him to the pleasures of this world. He had married and being a sole inheritor, he could afford to live the life of a rich man or even aspire to become a courtier in the Mughal government. However, the guidance of his mother had resulted in him having no interest with matters of *duniya*. He acted upon his mother's advice and made a conscious effort to find a master who could further extend his spiritual prowess. As would become his custom throughout life, he would often visit shrines of holy men. On one occasion he was performing *muraqabah* at the shrine

of Shaykh Zakariyya Multani ق, when the Shaykh himself appeared in front of him. He spoke, saying *“I have received orders from Ghawth al Azam ق to look after you. What do you want?”*

It was no coincidence that the Shaykh had mentioned Ghawth al Azam Sayyiduna Abd al Qadir Geylani ق. According to sources, from a very early age Sultan Bahu had a strong love and connection with Ghawth al Azam ق and according to other *ruwaiyats*, he received *Uwaysī baiy’ah* even before he went in search of a physical Shaykh. In his poetry he lavishes praise on Ghawth al Azam ق, often referring to him as his spiritual guide.

So it was no surprise that the one who he had taken as his spiritual guide was looking out for him. Sultan Bahu ق answered Shaykh Multani ق, *“Master, I do not require anything, I have come with the intention to do your ziyarat and now I have seen your blessed face; my wish has been granted.”* Shaykh Multani ق responded, *“You cannot go empty handed; ask for something.”* Sultan Bahu ق then asked, *“Can you grant me the hand of some noble person in this city.”* Shaykh Multani ق nodded his head in acceptance and saying, *“Inshallah”* disappeared from sight.

Sultan Bahu ق made *du’a* and then left in the direction of the river, where he performed ablution. Once completed, he turned away and his gaze fell upon a beautiful woman who had been standing behind him. Moving his gaze to the floor, he asked, *“Why are you here? What do you want with me?”* She replied, *“I have followed you from the shrine. I am the daughter of a Hindu but for many days I felt discontent with worshipping idols. I was aware that people of all faiths sought solutions to their problems at shrines and so I came here. But when I saw you leaving the shrine, I was dazzled by the light on your face, which has now led me to denounce my faith and accept yours.”*

It did not escape Sultan Bahu ق that this was all due to the blessings of Shaykh Multani ق. He taught the woman the *kalimah* and before an audience took her as his wife. Accompanied by her, he returned home to Shorkot.

Unbeknown to his new wife was that she was to be the fourth wife. The other three were waiting for his return in the courtyard of their home, stood alongside Bibi Rasti ق who already knew about his new marriage. She had *kashf* (inner knowledge) and so had already reassured the wives, *“Though he returns with another wife, do not take it to heart; my son is a wali and through him you will be saved from hell fire.”*

When Sultan Bahu ق entered the courtyard and met his mother, she said to him sternly, *‘Bahu, do you just want to collect wives or is there something else you are supposed to be doing in this life.’*

Taken aback by the harsh welcome, he spoke softly, *“Mother you know my state and I am trying my utmost to find a Shaykh, but what can I do if Allah gives me a gift?”*

Bibi Rasti ق replied, *“You cannot attain ma’rifat (gnosis) unless you have a Shaykh. A person should have aspirations when looking for a Shaykh.”* Sultan Bahu ق asked his mother for an indication and Bibi Rasti ق informed him, *“I smell your Shaykh from the east.”*

***Je Rabb nahaatiyaan dhotiyaan mildaa, mildaa daduaan machiyaan Hu
Je Rabb mildaa mon munaayaan, milda bheydaan sasiyaan Hu
Je Rabb jatiyaan satiyaan mildaa, mildaa daandaan khasiyaan Hu,
Rabb unhaan noon mildaa, Bahu, niyataan jehnaan deeyaan achiyaan Hu***

*If the Lord were found by bathing and washing, He would be found by frogs and fish
If the Lord were found by having long hair, He would be found by sheep and goats
If the Lord were found by staying awake all night, He would be found by the cuckoo
If the Lord were found by being celibate, He would be found by gelded oxen
The Lord is only found by those, Bahu, whose intentions are good*

He did not remain at home for long and so set off towards the east in search of a master. From people he met on the way he was told of a Shaykh who performed great miracles and due to his miracles his village located near the banks of the River Ravi was known as Garh Baghdad (in honour of Ghawth al Azam). Sultan Bahu ق located the *khanqah* of this miracle man and he sat quietly amongst the crowd whilst the Shaykh delivered a speech. He noticed that near the Shaykh was a large cauldron of water boiling over the fire. After the speech the Shaykh instructed the people to place their hands in the cauldron. As they did this, the people attained *kashf*.

Sultan Bahu ق chose not to join the line of eager people, all waiting to attain *kashf*. The Shaykh noticed this behaviour and approached Sultan Bahu ق inquiring about his reason for the visit and why he refrained from placing his hand in the cauldron. “*I came here in search of a master. I do not believe I will gain much from placing my hand in the cauldron. I am after something else,*” informed Sultan Bahu ق. The Shaykh, Shah Habib Ullah ق then advised him to stay for awhile in the *khanqah*, to which he duly obliged.

Although he was a guest, he was assigned a task, to refill the drum with water from the river. Usually it would take twelve trips to fill up the drum but Sultan Bahu ق was amazingly able to do it in one attempt. Impressed by this miracle, the people reported the incident to the Shaykh who immediately summoned Sultan Bahu ق before him.

“*Young man, do you have wealth and property?*” asked Shah Habib ق. He replied in the affirmative to which the Shaykh rebuked, “*You cannot achieve anything because your focus is on your wealth and property. Go and rid yourself of these belongings.*”

Sultan Bahu ق returned home to an expectant family who with the help of Bibi Rasti ق were already aware of his intentions. She had told his wives to gather all the jewellery in the house and to bury it in the ground. Sultan Bahu ق first spoke to his mother, “*I have found my Shaykh but he has set me a task; I must get rid of my worldly belongings.*” Bibi Rasti ق replied, “*Then obey your master.*” He went into the room and took a gold ring from his son’s finger but apart from this he could not find anything else in the house. His wives remained silent and stayed close to Bibi Rasti ق; he asked “*What have you done with the jewellery? I can smell it. I know it’s here somewhere!*” He eventually found it and after unearthing it, gave it all away to the poor.

He returned to his Shaykh with the hope of attaining *bay’at*. However, Shah Habib ق refused to give it to him, saying, “*You still have chains around your feet!*” Sultan Bahu ق asked,

“What does that mean master; how do I cut those chains?” “Those chains are your wives; you cannot travel this path with four wives. Go, free yourself of this”, replied Shah Habib ؒ.

Once more, Bibi Rasti ؒ was aware of her son’s intentions prior to his return. She instructed her daughter-in-laws to sit behind her fearing that he will give them all *talaq* even before he has spoken to her. As Sultan Bahu ؒ entered the house, the distress on their faces was clear but they remained hidden behind their mother-in-law.

Bibi Rasti ؒ quickly spoke, *“I know why you come. However there is no reason for you to divorce your wives, as they are not an obstacle in your path. They are all willing to forgive their rights on you; you have only to fulfil the rights of Allah, so go and seek the truth.”* He turned to his wives and asked if they were willing to waive their rights to avoid being divorced; they gladly agreed.

Pleased that he had performed all that had been asked of him, he quickly returned to the Shaykh. Upon arrival Shah Habib ؒ enquired, *“Have you attained what you were looking for?”* Sultan Bahu ؒ replied, *“With all due respect master, I attained these maqams when I was an infant.”* After listening to this reply, Shah Habib ؒ disappeared from sight and hid in another realm. However, Sultan Bahu ؒ followed Shah Habib ؒ into that realm and found him disguised as a shepherd.

Shah Habib ؒ realised Sultan Bahu’s ؒ potential and conceded, *“My son, your spirituality is very high and I must surrender. You have such capacity that only my Shaykh can guide you. You must journey to Delhi to meet him.”*

Shah Habib ؒ acknowledged that unlike the *murids* that had come to him previously, Sultan Bahu ؒ was already aware about the reality of *duniya*, and had already undergone detachment from it. It was for this reason Shah Habib ؒ surrendered as he had never come across a *murid* who would so readily give up his possessions and wealth.

Duniya

***Duniya dhoondan waaley kutey, dar dar phiran heyraanee Hu
Haddee utey hor tinhaan dee, lardyaan umar wahaanee Hu
Aqal de kotaah samajh na jaanan, paey waloran paanee Hu
Baajhon zikar Rabbey de Bahu, koree raam kahaanee Hu***

*Seekers of this world are like dogs, wandering from door to door in wonder
Their attention is riveted on a bone, their lives wasted in bickering
Short on intelligence and unable to understand, they set out in search of water
Apart from recollection of the Lord, Bahu, all else is idle chatter*

At the mere mention of the word ‘*duniya*’ the immediate response of people is to identify it to involve something materialistic. And so, it is commonly associated with the amount of wealth possessed or with family and children. Yet, when this matter is considered, it becomes apparent that amongst the personalities of the Prophets and *Awliya*, some were very wealthy, others married many times, and others had many children; yet all of them were

detached from *duniya*. This makes a person aware that there must be more to *duniya* than meets the eye, and further contemplation is required to know about its reality.

The practice amongst people to evaluate the worth of everything contained within the physical world, demonstrates the lack of thought given to understanding *duniya*. People not only place a monetary assessment on personal wealth but also view relationships and dealings with people in much the same manner. As people are preoccupied in evaluating matters of the physical world, *duniya* conceals itself and people perceive it as harmless. However, in reality it is *duniya* that is 'pulling the strings' and causing them the biggest harm in both this life and in the hereafter. Therefore, it is important for people to give due consideration to the value *duniya* holds.

Allah Almighty revealed the value He placed on *duniya* following the episode when Sayyiduna Adam (as) took a bite from the apple. Sayyiduna Adam (as) inhabited heaven and after he took a bite from the apple, he felt such heaviness inside his stomach, that he immediately felt a need to relieve himself.

Having never experienced such a feeling before, Sayyiduna Adam (as) was unsure about what to do. Heaven was a place of purity and sanctity and it would not be befitting that it be used as a place to relieve oneself. Allah Almighty ordered His angels to escort Sayyiduna Adam (as) to such a place which would be appropriate; that place was *duniya* and so the value of *duniya* became apparent.

Further confirmation of the value of *duniya* was revealed by *Rasulullah* ﷺ who mentioned that Allah Almighty has not created anything which He disliked more than *duniya* and that ever since its creation, *duniya* has been suspended between heaven and earth and that Allah Almighty has never looked upon it.

On one occasion, *Rasulullah* ﷺ went through the market with people on both sides of him and passed by a dead body of a deformed sheep. He took the deformed sheep by its ear and asked, "*Which of you would like to have this for a dirham?*" The people said, "*We would not like to have it for anything. What would we do with it?*" He again asked the people, "*Would you like to have it?*" and they replied, "*By Allah, even if it was alive, it would be defective since it is deformed, and now it is dead.*" *Rasulullah* ﷺ said, "*By Allah, this world has less value with Allah than this has with you.*"

Becoming aware of the value Allah Almighty and his Beloved Messenger, *Rasulullah* ﷺ have placed on *duniya*, gives rise to the question, why does it hold no worth?

The justification of such value lies in the fact that when people fall in love with *duniya*, the link between them and Allah Almighty is cut. When this happens, Allah Almighty has no alternative but to hide His Beauty from such people. By veiling the Glory of God to such people, the distinction of right and wrong is also taken away and so people transgress.

A mystic illustrated how *duniya* creates this veil by holding a coin and saying, "*Indeed, this can blind a person.*" People asked, "*How is that so?*" and he held the coin next to his eye and say, "*Look, you cannot see beyond it.*"

This veil makes a person forgetful, and so on the Day of Judgement when a person addresses the Almighty, Allah will respond, *“Do not call Me today. Duniya was the place to remember Me, not here. There despite many reminders; you forgot Me.”*

Perils of duniya

Duniya does not just stop at making people forget their relationship with their Lord; the guile of *duniya* is such that it tricks people into forgetting the most simple of things. *Rasulullah* ﷺ mentioned, *“When a person awakes and duniya is the main priority for him, Allah has no dealings with him. Then four things happen to his heart as punishment. He will have worry which will never leave him, preoccupation so he will never have a free moment, poverty which will never reach satisfaction and hopes which will never be realised.”*

It is said that the love of *duniya* is the biggest sin that will be committed as it makes people live a life of ignorance; forgetting everything associated with Allah Almighty. People who fall in love with *duniya* become occupied with fulfilling their hopes towards *duniya*, but *duniya* tricks such people leaving them unsatisfied. These desires make people go to extreme levels in order to earn *duniya*, and in that process people are ultimately humiliated.

The last condemnation from the cursed *duniya* is preserved for the hereafter when *duniya* will appear in front of all human beings in the form of a feeble hideous looking woman, with no teeth, evil blue eyes and a thin stomach. When people will see this ugly woman, they will become frightened and shout out, *“Who are you?”*

They will be told this is *duniya*; the same world that they had pride over, the same world they killed one another for, the same world over which they were envious of one another; the same world that family ties were broken over. Then Allah Almighty will order His angels, *“Throw this old woman in to hell!”*

The ugly woman will then speak, and say, *“My Lord, what about my lovers; many people spent all their lives worshipping me; where are they?”* At that point Allah Almighty will say, *“All those who loved her, take them there as well.”*

Detachment from duniya

The likeness of the life of this world (duniya) is that of water which We send down from the sky, which then mingles with the plants of the earth to provide food for both people and animals. Then, when the earth is at its loveliest and takes on its fairest guise and its people think they have it under their control, Our command comes upon it by night or day and We reduce it to dried-out stubble, as though it had not been flourishing just the day before! Thus do We make Our Signs plain for people who reflect. (Yunus10:24)

Duniya has been described as a pre-eternal secret, so convincing it is in tricking people. However, when the true value of *duniya* is considered and its perils taken into account, a person can then come to the conclusion that *duniya* is attempting to remain a mystery. In

reality, it is an illusion as it does not exist itself but is formed by the attachment one has with the physical world.

This is as when people are attached to anything, it makes them forgetful towards Allah Almighty. If this forgetfulness lasts for even a moment's breath, then that very breath becomes *duniya*. On the other hand, if like the Prophets and *Awliya* each and every breath is taken in awareness of Allah Almighty, then even if one had vast wealth and lived a life of comfort, not one moment would be considered *duniya*.

Having realised the value of *duniya* and the consequences of the illusion it creates, one becomes aware that it is not possible to be attached to the physical world and gain attachment to the hereafter. Henceforth, one realises a choice has been presented; live a life in attachment to the physical world and be prevented from attaining spirituality, or undergo the quest for death before dying and attain spirituality.

***Din tae duniya sakkiaan bhaenaan, aqal taenun samjhaenda Hu
Dovaen iks nikaah vich aavan, sharah nahin farmaenda Hu
Jivaen ag tae paani ik than, vaasa nahi karaenda Hu
Dohin jahaanin nuttha, Bahu, daawa koor karaenda Hu***

*Religion and this world are blood sisters; intellect did not teach you this
That both should be betrothed to one person; the law does not permit this
Just like fire and water which cannot stay in one vessel
He is deprived of both worlds, Bahu, who makes false oaths.*

Knowing the value of *duniya* is opposite to that of *din*, it can be assumed the one who settles for this physical world becomes forever trapped in its enticement and must be insane. No form of worship can be enjoyed as there is no attachment towards Allah Almighty and so such a person becomes one of the many known as 'people of *duniya*.'

Such is the curse upon such a person immersed in *duniya*, that Imam e Rabbani warned, "Association with people of *duniya* is poison; a sensible person will run away from such people as they do not only harm your body, but destroy your soul by taking away your iman. Do not even look at their faces for they will put you into sleep forever and take away your passion for Allah Almighty."

Association with such people is not the only poison *duniya* uses to pollute the intention of those trying to connect with Allah Almighty. When people try to follow the right path, attempting to avoid the pitfalls of *duniya*, it responds by tempting people, and offering itself to them. To be able to completely detach from *duniya* and decline its offerings is impossible for people on their own accord as they do not have the capacity to reject such trials and tribulations.

Those who possess such capacity are respected by *duniya* as they possess no greed towards the physical world and have attained a spiritual death. Thus *duniya* wishes to serve them, but is discarded as exemplified in the incident when *duniya* arrived at the doorstep of Hadrat Abu Bakr al Siddique رضي الله عنه saying "Please, please accept me; I have come to serve you." Hadrat Abu Bakr al Siddique رضي الله عنه rejected it saying, "What have I to do with you when

Rasulullah ﷺ did not accept you.” Duniya then went to the house of Hadrat Umar ؓ in search of acceptance but was met with a stick and beaten by Hadrat Umar ؓ and told to go away.

As in any affair, when someone wishes to learn a particular skill or trade, they approach a person who is a master in that skill, and the masters of rejecting *duniya* are the people of Allah (*Awliya*). Sayyiduna Ghaus al Azam ؒ highlight the importance of meeting such people saying, “Shame on you that did not find some pious God fearing ascetic person who could have taught you wisdom and knowledge and corrected your characteristics.”

***Jo dham ghaafal so dam kaafar, murshid eyh parhaayaa Hu,
Sunyaa sukhan geyaan khul akheen, chit mawlaa wal laayaa Hu
Keetee jaan hawaaley Rabb de, eysaa ishq kamayaa Hu
Maran ton aggey mar gaey Bahu, taan matlab noon paayaa Hu***

*“Whoever is heedless for an instant is a disbeliever in an instant,” so said my guide
My eyes opened on hearing these words, and I turned my attention to the Lord
I put my life in His trust; such is the love I gained
I died before dying, Bahu, only then did I find my purpose*

Since the *Awliya* are the protectors of *iman*, it is their role to guide the hearts of people away from *duniya*, and connect them to the spiritual path. However, such is the curse of *duniya*, that the greed instilled within people pollutes their intentions, even when they visit a *wali*.

A disciple once went to visit Shaykh Bu Ali Shah Qalandar ؒ and complained that since he had last come to visit, his situation had become worse and the *dhikr* the master had instructed him to recite was not helping. The master replied, “Oh foolish one, the *dhikr* of Allah is like soap and *duniya* is dirt; when you rub the soap, it cleans the dirt. Although you seek more dirt, when you read His name, it cleans the dirt, it does not attract dirt.”

Whilst the role of the master is to free the seeker from the physical world, the seeker also has a responsibility in that he must follow the instructions of the master, and show extreme obedience and dedication so that detachment is attained. The master will give specific instructions for the seeker to follow so that detachment is achieved without suffering from the severity of the trials and tribulations.

Throughout the poetry of Sultan Bahu ؒ, one finds couplet after couplet in reverence towards his master, stating that it is almost impossible to attain advanced mystical states without the help of such a master.

***Kaamil murshid eysaa hovey, dhobey waangoon chatey Hu
Naal nigaah de paak kreyndaa, sajee saboon na ghatey Hu
Meylyaan noon kar deyndaa chitaa, zarah meyl na rakhey Hu
Eysaa murshid hovey, Bahu, loon loon de wich wasey Hu***

*The perfect guide thrashes one like a laundryman beats clothes
He purifies with his gaze, and he soaks one in bleach and soap
He makes the dirty white and does not leave a speck of dirt
One should have such a guide, Bahu, living in every cell of one's being*

Meeting His Master

Once Sultan Bahu ؒ had received instructions from Shah Habib ؒ, he made preparations and along with his close companion Sultan Hamid ؒ, set off from Punjab towards Delhi. During this journey he was blessed with meeting many saints. Shah Habib's ؒ Shaykh was Sayyid Abdur Rahman ؒ, a renowned *Qadri* master in Delhi. It was his daily practice to give guidance to his *murids*, and on this particular day he mentioned, "Today there is a special person who is coming to meet us. Go and greet him outside."

Sayyid Abdur Rahman ؒ gave a detailed description of this special person so when his *murids* noticed Sultan Bahu ؒ enter Delhi, they realised he fitted the description. Sultan Bahu ؒ and Sultan Hamid ؒ were invited to come and meet Sayyid Abdur Rahman ؒ immediately. Upon arrival, Sayyid Abdur Rahman ؒ took hold of Sultan Bahu's ؒ hand and took him in to his private chamber, where he gave him *bay`at*.

Since Sultan Bahu ؒ was already detached from *duniya*, his advancement on the spiritual path was instant. He sought to test his new found spiritual power, and so whilst in the *bazaar* he focused his *tawajjuh* on the Hindus and Sikhs and so powerful was his *tawajjuh* that instantly they became Muslims.

The *murids* became aware of his antics and were quick to report his abuse of power to the Shaykh who was saddened to hear this news about his new *murid*. He summoned Sultan Bahu ؒ to his chambers and asked of him, "What is this I am hearing about you?" Sultan Bahu ؒ replied, "Master, when a woman goes to the bazaar to buy a utensil, she first tests it to see if it will last. If a boy goes to buy a bow or an arrow, he tests the flexibility. Master, you said you have given me *faqiri*, so I thought it was only right that I too test it." Sayyid Abdur Rahman smiled at the response and his disappointment turned to happiness.

Sultan Bahu ؒ surrendered both his body and soul to his master. In doing so he achieved the freedom to traverse the path and on the instructions of his master, guide others. Whilst the principle of *duniya* is selfishness and regard for oneself, Sultan Bahu ؒ was aware the purpose for his existence was to serve his Lord by guiding people to salvation. And so in the manner of the King of Abstainers amongst the Prophets, Sayyiduna Isa ؑ who never settled down and was forever wandering from place to place, Sultan Bahu ؒ lived in the world as if he was a traveller, enjoying solitude, and fulfilling his purpose of detaching people from the attractions of the world.

His Travels

Sultan Bahu ؒ spent almost all his life in travelling, sometimes in hilly regions and at other times in the deserted forests and jungles. He travelled mainly in the Saraiki and Baluchi regions of the Punjab, where he would spend his time meditating in peace and in guiding the people of the regions who came in contact with him. In these travels he encountered people from many walks of life and through his teachings and actions, guided their hearts away from *duniya*.

During one of his journeys, his mere glance at a young boy sent the boy into a trance. The young boy said to Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, *"I want to follow your path"* and at once left his daily job as a shepherd and became a *murid* of Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. The young boy would become known as Sultan Nur Rang رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and through this blessed association and service towards his master; he would attain a high level of spirituality.

On another occasion, Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was in the Dera Ghazi Khan region, located near the east bank of the Indus River. Here he stopped at the village of Chabri to visit the shrine of Shaykh Ilyas Uddin رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. In this village, it was the practice of a very pious lady to offer hospitality to all travellers. As the lady was busy with preparing food for the travellers, her child began to cry. The lady turned and said to Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ who was sat nearby, *"Baba I can't work with her crying, please rock the cradle."*

He began to rock the cradle, repeating *"Allah Hu"* with each swing, and the child became quiet. When the lady had finished cooking, she thanked Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. He replied, *"I have not been making her listen to nursery rhymes; I have put something in her heart."* Later, when this child grew up, she was intoxicated in the love of the Almighty. Her name was Bibi Fatimah رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and even today, thousands of people visit her shrine, situated in Kasbah Fatha.

Along with his ventures to remote rural areas, staying amongst the simple people who were semi-literate, Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ also visited the urban areas, coming into contact with nobles. On one such occasion, he had travelled to the Sanghar district, located in the centre of Sindh. Whilst he was sat in the mosque, a young boy aged seven entered; the boy looked at him and remained there throughout the night. In the morning, the boy's relatives found out he was at the mosque and came to take him home, but still the boy would not go.

The father of the boy was a local *buzurg* and a wealthy land owner named Budan Shah رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. He came to see Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and mentioned his predicament; *"Master, please give him permission to come home. I have married twice and he is the only child of my first wife. She is in tears."*

Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ mentioned that since the boy was now linked to him, it had now become his duty to look after the young boy. Budan Shah رحمۃ اللہ علیہ returned home and mentioned the situation to his first wife. Although she was devastated, she knew that etiquette did not allow her to dispute the decision of a saint. She instructed her servant to say to Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, *"Allow me too to stay with my son, Lal Shah. I have nothing else in the world apart from him."*

Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ did not grant her permission, mentioning it would not be befitting a noble lady to leave the sanctuary of her home. He instructed her to read *Surah Muzamil* and informed her to beseech Allah Almighty. As she followed the instructions of Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, Lal Shah's mother رحمۃ اللہ علیہ lost interest in the world and became attached to Allah Almighty.

Sultan Bahu left Sanghar accompanied by Lal Shah رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, who despite his noble background did not complain that all he had was a cloak, which he would wear in the day and use to sleep in, at night. Lal Shah رحمۃ اللہ علیہ would remain in the company of his master for thirty years; serving with devotion and dedication. Having served for such a length of time, Sultan Bahu رحمۃ اللہ علیہ said to him, *"My son, your journey is finished. You have never once asked for anything. Now you can ask, so I may grant you something."*

Lal Shah ؒ was overwhelmed, and could barely speak; he said, *“Master, all I ask for is a keepsake so that it eases my pain when you are no longer in front of me.”* And so, Sultan Bahu ؒ gave Lal Shah ؒ his *miswaak*. A hundred and fifty years after this incident, the grandson of Sultan Bahu ؒ did *ziyarat* of that very *miswaak*; he remarked, *“The miswaak was so fresh, one would assume it was as fresh today as it was back then.”*

During one journey, Sultan Bahu ؒ was accompanied by his devoted companion and *murid* Sultan Hamid ؒ. They arrived in the suburbs of Bhakkar and were about to settle on a hill top, but after a moment’s pause, Sultan Bahu ؒ did not sit down. Sultan Bahu ؒ noticed the look of surprise on his close companion’s face and explained, *“We have no need to settle here; this was the dwelling place of a cruel person.”*

They walked down to a deserted area of land and settled there. Here Sultan Bahu ؒ lay down, resting his head in the lap of Sultan Hamid ؒ. When Sultan Hamid ؒ saw that dust had covered the clothes and body of his beloved master, in his heart, he felt much pain and anguish. *If only I had some wealth so I could make a soft bed from silk and provide comfort for my master,* he wished.

At that moment, Sultan Bahu ؒ immediately raised his head. He looked up at Sultan Hamid ؒ and told him to close his eyes. As soon as he did so, Sultan Hamid ؒ saw himself in a beautiful garden and noticed an attractive lady sat there. This lady was covered with gold jewellery and she made her way towards him, and said, *“Many seek me but I have come to you; marry me and make me your wife.”*

Sultan Hamid ؒ declined her offer, ordering her to disappear from his sight; *“Be gone with you! Do not bother me, I am in the presence of my master and you are trying to distract my focus.”*

And so the vision ended and Sultan Hamid ؒ opened his eyes and informed Sultan Bahu ؒ about what he had seen. Sultan Bahu ؒ stated, *“Hamid that attractive lady was none other than duniya, she was offering herself to you, why did you not accept her?”*

Sultan Hamid ؒ answered, *“Master all I ask from Allah Almighty is your pleasure.”*

“Then be content with whatever Allah Almighty sends. Hamid, glad tidings! Faqr e Muhammad (S), true spiritual poverty shall never part from your family; as you refused duniya.”

His Legacy and Conclusion

Having realised the value the physical world holds, it is necessary that the seeker removes its shackles, or remain forever imprisoned as one of the ‘people of duniya.’ Allah Almighty has forewarned He never enters the hearts of such people and that they will be subjected to humiliation both in this world and in the hereafter. The solution for detachment to the love of *duniya* lies in the association of the *Awliya* as illustrated in the narratives of the travels of Sultan Bahu ؒ; it is only the man of Allah who can free the seeker from the attachment to the physical world.

However, when one looks around the world today, there are many disciples who have an association with men of Allah, but sadly remain firmly rooted within *duniya*. This is because the *murid* also has a role to play, as shown by the devoted *murids* of Sultan Bahu ؒ. One must acquire the devotion and sincerity of Lal Shah ؒ in serving his master; and have the good intentions to serve people like the pious lady who was hospitable to travellers. Above all it is the requirement of love for the guide that is required, as displayed by Sultan Hamid ؒ, which make possible surrendering before one's master and having the ability to reject *duniya*.

It is for this reason that within the mystical couplets of Sultan Bahu ؒ, particular attention should be placed by the *murid* on the importance of surrendering both his body and soul to his master; only then can a seeker be successful in realising the purpose of life.

Sultan Bahu ؒ spent all his life teaching and guiding people to the salvation of the spiritual world. Such was his selflessness, that he took spiritual blessings door to door to many tribes not only in the well populated areas, but also in the remote countryside areas and deserts of his region.

Sultan Bahu ؒ excelled as a mystical poet and he wrote one hundred and forty works in a number of languages, of which twenty-six exist today. Neither the date nor the reason for his return to Shorkot is known. The *Manaqib-i Sultani* states that he had eight sons, daughters are not mentioned, and never again left the section of the Punjab from which he came. He died in 1691 and was buried outside Shorkot at a place called Qilaqahrgan. In 1775 the Chenab River changed course and threatened to wash away his grave, whereupon his coffin was dug up and moved to its present location, where his shrine functions as a pilgrimage site for people from all over the Punjab and beyond.

From his shrine and through his poetry, he continues to give guidance, support and blessings as he did throughout his lifetime. As it is those who succeed in the quest to die before dying that live for eternity, Sultan Bahu ؒ also lives like many a saint in the heart and soul of people; but also in an influential manner, on the tip of many a tongue.

***Alif Allah chanbey dee bootee, man wich murshid laaee Hu
Nafi asbaat da paanee milyos, har ragey har jaaee Hu
Andar bootee mushk machaayaa, jaan phulan tey aae Hu
Jeevey murshid kaamil, Bahu, jeyn eyh bootee laaee Hu***

*The guide planted God's jasmine plant within me
He watered my veins with "negation and affirmation"
Blossoming, the bush spread its fragrance through me
Long live my perfect guide, Bahu, who has planted this shrub!*

Al Fatihah