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THE LITERARY CRITIQUE OF ISLAMIC POPULAR RELIGION IN THE GUISE OF TRADITIONAL MYSTICISM, OR THE ABUSED WOMAN¹

BY

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The use of contemporary literature as a source for the reconstruction of religious and societal conditions and discourse has been neglected by orientalist thus far. It is only very recently that a change in this regard has been observed; even social anthropologists have increasingly begun to consider literary contributions in order to illuminate the social structure of Muslim societies and the cultural articulations of their intellectuals and activists. Indeed, modern Muslim literature is full of statements about society which implicitly or explicitly value the Islamic tradition, especially with regard to mystic culture and the popular piety connected with it. In an early and, as far as I can see, little noted contribution, Rotraud Wielandt drew upon modern Arabic literary texts for a valuation and assessment of Islamic folk piety.² Central concerns of that article were the veneration of holy men as the “embodiment of an elevated wisdom”, as well as postulates pertaining to modernization and enlightenment. Ostensibly, contemporary literati and Muslim reformist activists do propagate reformist ideas; nevertheless, one may pose the question whether these forces are not still bound up with norms and symbols which are rooted in a long tradition. Esoteric ideas and mystical organizing principles are for that matter also observable in the religious political community of the Muslim Brethren and other similar organisations.

¹ I am grateful to Christian Szyska, Nita Kumar, Ulrike Freitag, Kallé Amthauer, Charles Earle, F Muhammad Malik and other dear friends for their most valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

² See R. Wielandt: “Die Bewertung islamischen Volksglaubens in ägyptischer Erzählliteratur des 20. Jahrhunderts”, in *Die Welt des Islams*, 23/1984, pp. 244–258.

Apparently, the delineation of traditional poetic topoi has thus far been regarded as a feature of “reform literature”. However, the situation seems to be more complex, and one may ask if this rather unilateral typology shouldn’t be abandoned.

In the following I would like to show how mystical tradition and veneration of holy men—and in this context especially gender problematics—are perceived in contemporary literature and how old and handed-down ideal patterns and symbols lie hidden behind reformist-aesthetic perceptions. The specious contradiction between reform postulates and traditional discourse is especially evident in modern Urdu literature, which is most popular in India and Pakistan, but also enjoys quite some popularity in Great Britain and North America. Before I turn to this literature in detail, some words about the meaning of the veneration of holy men and the shrine cult in South Asia as well as about the development of the Urdu short story are in order.

Shrine Cult in South Asia

Much has been written about shrine cult, and it is well known that this phenomenon is widespread in the Muslim world.³ Here the cult surrounding the personality of the Prophet Muhammad is elaborated in its perfection.⁴ South Asia in particular seems to be imbued by this popular culture. Spencer Trimingham comments: “Indian Islam seems to have been essentially a holy-man Islam”.⁵ The cult of the holy man (*pīr*) and the associated folk piety is particularly evident in the countryside, where major landlords and land concentration are crucial features, especially in Punjab and Sindh. In many cases, the local *pīr* represents the local landlord or is at least

³ See, e.g., V Crapanzano: *Die Hamadsa*, Stuttgart 1981, E. Gellner: *Saints of the Atlas*, Chicago 1979; M. Gilsenan: *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt*, Oxford 1983; I. Ahmad (ed.): *Ritual and Religion among Muslims of the Sub-continent*, Lahore 1985, esp. the contributions by K. von Schwerin, P. Jeffery, and B. Pfeleiderer; also Chr. W. Troll (ed.): *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance*, Delhi 1989; see also my review in *Die Welt des Islams*, 32/1/1992, pp. 161–164.

⁴ For the position of the Prophet see, e.g., A. Schimmel: *And Muhammad is His Messenger*, Chapel Hill, NC 1985.

⁵ J.S. Trimingham: *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford 1971, p. 22.

closely related to him (personal union). He guarantees the local villagers participation in the divine blessing (*baraka*), which is tied to strict obedience (*uṭāʿa*) and the self-sacrifice of the followers in favour of the *pīr* (*baīʿa*; literally the buying of the soul of the adept or disciple by the saint; also used for allegiance). For the local population, the holy man thus represents the moral authority. This moral authority creates distance and a certain fear among the followers on the one hand, but can be realized through selflessness and devotion on the other. Authority is regenerated and stabilized through cyclically repeated rituals which have an affirmative character for the local population, are based on a normative consensus, and convey a collective identity. The profane world of the followers is hereby overcome, a sense of social security and collective identity is provided, and social differences are erased, at least ritually. In fact, popular religious ideas are so deeply imbued in the minds of the local population that people are looking for and find a source of satisfaction in an organized associational life with “fraternal certitude and security” in mystical institutions.⁶ The tomb of the holy men and its drama provide this refuge and experiential unity. It therefore often fulfills an integrative function for the population.

For it was through its rituals that a shrine made Islam accessible to nonlettered masses, providing them with vivid and concrete manifestations of the divine order, and integrating them into its ritualized drama both as participants and as sponsors.⁷

Of particular importance are the ritual periods, when secular time is transformed into sacred time and when shrine visitors are transported into a “liminal” state of oblivion:⁸ the annual feasts (Arabic: *ʿurs*; literally marriage, i.e., the soul’s union with the beloved: God). The identity-giving institution therefore has therapeutic,

⁶ See D.F. Eickelman: *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*, New Jersey 1981, p. 228.

⁷ R. Eaton: “The Political and Religious Authority of the Shrine of Bābā Farīd”, in B.D. Metcalf (ed.): *Moral Conduct and Authority: The place of ADAB in South Asian Islam*, Berkeley 1984, pp. 333–356, here p. 334.

⁸ See V. Turner: *Process, Performance and Pilgrimage*, New Delhi 1979, p. 97; E. Gellner: *Leben im Islam*, Stuttgart 1985, p. 80. For similar motifs see, e.g., P.M. Currie: *The Shrine and Cult of Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishtī of Ajmer*, Delhi 1989, pp. 130ff.

social, economic and political significance; and in contrast to mosques, it also provides an alternative source of communication and identity, particularly in the rather monotonous lives of peasants and for women.⁹ Here sick persons can be healed, destitutes find shelter and refuge, and in political crisis sanctuaries can be used as catalysts for mobilisation. Since a variety of activities—also so-called “un-Islamic activities”—take place around these centres, and because they also often represent the last refuge of marginalised social groups, the shrines can be regarded as microcosms of local Islam.

The holy man, the enlightened one and his descendants—the *sajjādah-nashīn* and administrator (*mutawallī*, *mujāwir*)—exert absolute authority, and the believing villagers and the illiterate are, with the passage of time, often regarded by the shrineholders as servants or rather as slaves. In fact, there is a significant contradiction between a postulated ritual equality and the practised hierarchy. These developments have given rise to considerable criticism from many quarters, from orthoprax and reformist scholars, as well as from the colonial sector. Muslim modernists have referred to these developments in ideological terms as *pirism*.¹⁰

Criticism of the Shrines

The peculiar forms of shrine cult were pilloried at a fairly early stage. One of its first outspoken critics was Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328),¹¹ who is even now often referred to as an authority on this subject. Reformist movements in the 18th century also condemned

⁹ For the important significance of shrines for women, see, e.g., P Jeffery: *Frogs in a Well, Indian Women in Purdah*, London 1979; F Mernissi: *Die vergessene Macht: Frauen im Wandel der islamischen Welt*, Berlin 1993, herein “Höhere Mächte und eigene Stärke: Frauen, Heilige und heilige Stätten”, pp. 49–66; R.A. Fernea/E.W. Fernea: “Variation in Religious Observance among Islamic Women”, in N.R. Keddie (ed.): *Scholars, Saints and Sufis*, Berkeley 1972, pp. 385–401, N. Tapper: “Ziyaret: gender, movement, and exchange in a Turkish community”, in D.F. Eickelman/J. Piscatori (eds.): *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, London 1990, pp. 236–255.

¹⁰ Especially Muhammad Iqbal; see, e.g., A. Schimmel: *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam*, München 1992(2), pp. 43, 338, 572f.

¹¹ See, e.g., Muh. U Memon: *Ibn Taymiyya's struggle against popular religion, with an annotated translation of his Kitāb iqtidāʾ as-sirāt al-mustaqīm mukhālifat asbāb al-jahīm*, The Hague 1973.

what they called the exploitative and parasitical shrine cult and the monopoly of landed property mostly stemming from the ideology of the “feudal” system. The reformists demanded a purification of Islam from local notions and rituals, and they postulated mystic reform.¹² This reformism, however, appealed mostly to restricted urban groups that adhered to the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (*sunna*) in a scripturalist sense. Their reformism was designed mainly to legitimise their new social status as traders, bankers and representatives of “scribal groups,” and to express an emancipatory world view.¹³ The prevalent syncretism reflected in popular Islam and in “un-Islamic” practices could, however, not be crushed entirely, even if it was discussed critically in literary circles.¹⁴

Colonialism adopted this critique and developed it further into a comprehensive attack on the “Orient” with the objective to legitimate colonial power and pushing through its notion of modernisation. It perceived local Islam as a backward, fanatic, and obscurantist religion characterized by superstition. To Westerners, Islam had to be reformed and modernized: cults and “strange” patterns of belief were best abolished. This criticism seems to have had a decisive impact on those social groups which were directly exposed to the colonial system. The 19th century urban reform movement in India and elsewhere in the Muslim world was very much connected with this colonial expansion and encroachment on the minds of Muslims.¹⁵

¹² However, it is still not clear to what extent reformers like Shāh Walī Ullāh really criticized shrine cult; see, e.g., M.A.H. Ansari: “Shah Waliy Allah attempts to revise Wahdatu’l-Wujūd”, in *Islamic Quarterly*, 1984/28, pp. 150–164; J.M.S. Baljon: “Shah Waliullah and the Dargah”, in Troll (ed.): *Muslim Shrines in India*, pp. 189–197; see also now Muhammad ‘Ashiq Puhliṭī (ed.): *al-qawl al-ḡalī; malfūz Hadrat Shāh Walī Ullāh Muhaddith Dehlawī*, translated and annotated by Taqī Anwar ‘Alawī, Lakhna’ū 1988, which is a collection of rare *malfūzāt* of the reformer particularly on this issue.

¹³ See, e.g., P. Gran: *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840*, Texas and London 1979; D. Washbrook: “South Asia, The World System, and World Capitalism”, in *Journal of Asian Studies*, 49/3/1990, pp. 479–508.

¹⁴ See, e.g., some of the verses of Saudā and Mīr Taqī Mīr in R. Russell/K. Islam: *Three Mughal Poets*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968, and in Ahmed Ali: *The Golden Tradition*, New York/London 1973.

¹⁵ See, e.g., A. Hourani: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939*, Oxford 1967

A New Literature

With colonialism there was an emergence of new social classes that ostensibly found themselves caught in the polarity of “tradition” and “modernity”. These forces may be regarded as having some form of intermediary societal status.¹⁶ Some of them gradually tried to find new ways to articulate their specific cultural content. Their reaction to both the colonial system and traditional values can be traced in several areas: besides Islamic education and economic transactions, literary production also witnessed a significant shift.¹⁷ Thus, traditional styles and literary genres such as *dastān*, poetry, and elegies slowly gave way to new literary production. Accordingly, by the end of the 19th century, a growing prose element can be discerned, while realistic and sociopolitical writings were beginning to appear. The new urban literary culture was characterised by novels and autobiographical accounts which reflected, among other things, didacticism, political activism, and psychoanalysis. They also raised the gender problem and bi-cultural issues. The only traditional mode of literary communication that really survived was the *ghazal*. In addition, the colonial printing press introduced in the 19th century had a decisive impact on Urdu literature.¹⁸ In this way, new themes and styles were popularized over large areas.

¹⁶ See, e.g., the discussion and bibliographical notes in S.J. Malik: *Islamisierung in Pakistan 1977–1984; Untersuchungen zur Auflösung autochthoner Strukturen*, Stuttgart 1989, ch. I.

¹⁷ Similar tendencies can be observed in the Middle East.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Muhammad Husain Azād: *Ab-e hayāt*, Lakhna²ū 1986 (reprint); S. ‘Abd al-Hayy: *Gul-e Ra‘nā*, ‘Azamgarh, 1342/1923; Jamīl Jālibī: *Tārīkh-e adab-e Urdū, II (āthār-wīn sadī)*, Lāhawr 1987(2); M. Garcin de Tassy: *Histoire de la Littérature Hindoue et Hindoustani*, 3 vols., Paris 1870–71, Wiqār ‘Azīm: *Dastān sē afsānē tak*, Karāchī 1966; ‘Alī ‘Abbās Husainī: *Urdū Nāwal kī tārikh awr tanqīd*, ‘Alīgarh 1990; R. Russell: “The Development of the Modern Novel in Urdu”, in T W Clark (ed.): *The Novel in India*, London 1970, pp. 102–141, Muh. Sadiq: *A History of Indian Literature*, London 1984(2); A. Schimmel: *Classical Urdu Literature from the Beginning to Iqbal*, Wiesbaden 1975; U Rothen-Dubs: *Allahs indischer Garten*, Frauenfeld 1989; R. Russell: *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature. A Select History*, London 1992; Al-e Ahmad Sarūr (ed.): *Urdū Adab, Hasrat Nambār*, ‘Alīgarh 1951, Shaista A.B. Suhrawardy: *A Critical Survey of the Development of the Novel and Short Story*, London 1945; Samī‘ Ullāh: *Unīs-wīn Sadī men Urdū ke tasnīfī idāre*, Faidābād 1988; G. Chandan: *Jām-e Jahān Numā (Urdū sihāfat kī ibtūdā)*, Dehlī 1992; Nādir ‘Alī Khān: *Hindūstānī Press, 1556–1900*, Lakhna²ū 1990.

Against the background of the world economic crisis, emerging European and Japanese fascism and nationalist movements in colonial regions, another brand of literature emerged: social realism. Its young writers tried to enrich, to modify, and to legitimise their own culture—which was a mixture of “tradition” and “modernity”. Of special importance in this context is the short story, which seems to have developed only in the first quarter of the 20th century. Influenced by Western and Russian models, it quickly became one of the most popular literary genres in contemporary South Asia, as well as in the Arab and Persian world.¹⁹ This medium seemed to be the most suitable approach by which to display a new self-statement vis-à-vis the colonialists. It also reflected to some degree an intellectual confrontation with Europe in that it seemingly introduced nomenclatural changes in colonial ideas and concepts, created neologisms, and reinterpreted values important to Indian environment.²⁰ Naturally, the literary reformers sharply attacked indigenous traditional structures as well. However, their criticism of their own culture required them to perceive an inherent Oriental backwardness or non-development. Therefore, they propagated modernization, usually rejected traditional norms and old established patterns of order, and postulated an emancipatory world view, e.g., *al-hadm wa al-bnāʿ*, destruction and reconstruction, like that in Egypt.²¹ In the Indian tradition, they simultaneously regarded themselves as the “inheritors of the best tradition of Indian civilization”,²² as reformers who could resist the spirit of reaction, e.g., fascism, exploitive colonial power, and the traditional establishment. Thus, the reformists took positive recourse to well-known

¹⁹ See, e.g., S. Hafiz: *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature*, London 1993; see also J. Brugman: *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt*, Leiden 1984; R. Wielandt: *Das erzählerische Frühwerk Mahmūd Taymūr*, Beirut 1983; and J. Rypka: *Iranische Literaturgeschichte*, Leipzig 1959, pp. 344ff.

²⁰ The underlying orientalist approach may, however, be questioned; it seems problematic to maintain, that these new social formations were unilaterally inspired by colonialism. It seems, that they not only recurred to a long indigenous tradition, they also inspired the colonial power.

²¹ See Hafiz: *Genesis*, p. 216.

²² C. Coppola in C. Coppola (ed.): *Marxist Influences in South Asian Literature*, 2 vols., Michigan 1974, I, p. 7

traditions of the literary discourse that were grounded in the Islamic world view. However, their definition of themselves as an avant-garde was based primarily on their having studied in Europe and on their claim of sole agency vis-à-vis the masses.

For that period, at least two main currents can be delineated in South Asia. On the one hand, the *Bihishtī Zewar* (Heavenly Ornaments) written by the well-known Muslim scholar, sufi and divine—Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī (d. 1943)—suggested conventional middle-class manners to the Muslim female.²³ On the other hand there were the so-called “progressives”.

The rise of the Urdu short story is said to have begun with an anthology called *Angāre* (Burning coals) although several Indian writers were already well known for their short stories. *Angāre* was published in 1932 in Lucknow by four young Urdu writers who had been in England for some while. In their short stories they dealt with current social and religious conditions in South Asia, particularly the position of women and the power of religious dignitaries. Their debauchization was rather designed to shock through the use of such literary devices as crude language, internal monologue, and stream of consciousness. Their offensive approach caused strong and widespread protest from traditionalist quarters as well as from British masters.²⁴ Consequently the anthology was banned some months later, and since then it has not been republished in Urdu.²⁵ But what is most important in this context is that these writers, together with others, spearheaded the establishment of the *Progressive Writers’ Association (PWA)*, which first came together in Aligarh and soon

²³ See, e.g., B.D. Metcalf: *Perfecting Women: Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī’s Bihishtī Zewar; a partial translation with comments*, Berkeley 1991. Although the voluminous book is most popular in South Asian Muslim households, its publishing date is still not known.

²⁴ See S. Fayyād Mahmūd (ed.): *Tā’rikh-e Adabiyāt-e Musalmān-e Pākistān o Hind, X, 1914–1972*, Lāhawr 1972, pp. 436f; Anwar Sadīd: *Urdū adab kī tahrīken; ibdetā’ī-e Urdū se 1975 tak*, Karāchī 1991(2), pp. 484ff; C. Coppola: “The Angare Group: The Enfants Terribles of Urdu Literature”, in *Annual of Urdu Studies*, No. 1, Chicago 1981, pp. 57–69.

²⁵ Interestingly, the anthology was reprinted in Hindi only recently, but the controversial passages, e.g., those hinting at sex and religious abuses, were omitted. Moreover, several important Persian and Arabic words were replaced by Sanscrit idioms.

was constituted in London. It launched its first all-India meeting in 1936 under the chairmanship of Premchand (1880–1936), who was famous for his social-realist stories on rural India. As a result of internal ideological tensions, the movement split up after some years.²⁶ But it had a most important impact since it had its roots in the South Asian tradition and paved the way for a critical and realistic approach towards literature as a vehicle by which to bring social predicaments to light. Hence, it had a strong effect on Urdu. It is interesting to note that even the movement of *adab islāmī*²⁷ and its predecessor, the *ḥalqah-e arbāb-e dhauq* (Circle of Possessors of Good Taste), which was established in 1939, developed in reaction to this new literature.²⁸

It is not my purpose here to go into further details about this most interesting organization, the *PWA*. Instead of providing a general overview of contemporary literature and the living tradition in it, I will concentrate in the following on an early representative of the *PWA*, Aḥmad Nadīm Qāṣimī.²⁹

²⁶ See Khalīl al-Rahmān Aʿzīmī: *Urdū meñ taraqqī pasand adabī tahrīk*, ʿAlīgarh 1972; Coppola (ed.): *Marxist Influences*; Khūzar H. Ansari: *The Emergence of Socialist Thought among North Indian Muslims (1917–1947)*, Lahore 1990; Sudhī Pradhan (ed.): *Marxist Cultural Movements in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936–47)*, 3 vols., Calcutta 1985(2); *Essays on Premchand*, in *Journal of South Asian Literature (JSAL)*, 21/1986.

²⁷ In *adab islāmī* man and his interaction with God are supposed to be of prime importance. The main target of its critique was the agnosticism and obscenity as propagated by the *PWA*.

²⁸ For these movements see, e.g., Sadīd: *Urdū adab kī tahrīken*, pp. 554–617, 618–628; Mahmūd (ed.): *Tāʾrīkh-e Adabīyāt*, pp. 399 ff. An academic enquiry into these movements and their interactions is greatly needed.

²⁹ Other important writers of this tradition are, e.g., Saʿādāt Ḥasan Manto, Intuzār Husain and ʿIsmat Chughtāʾī; for them see, e.g., L.A. Flemming: *Another Lonely Voice: The Life and Works of Saadat Hasan Manto*, Lahore 1985; Intuzār Husain uses traditional symbolism very consciously; see Muh. U Memon: “The writings of Intuzār Husain”, in *JSAL*, 18/2/1983; Memon: “Partition Literature: A study of Intuzār Husain”, in *Modern Asian Studies*, 14/3/1980, pp. 377–410; Memon: “Reclamation of Memory, Fall, and the Death of the Creative Self: Three Months in the Fiction of Intuzār Husain”, in *IJMES*, 13/1/1981, pp. 73–91; Memon: “Shiʿite Consciousness in a Recent Urdu Novel: Intuzār Husain’s *Basti*”, in C. Shackle (ed.): *Urdu in Muslim South Asia; Studies in Honour of Ralph Russell*, Delhi 1991, pp. 139–150. For ʿIsmat Chughtāʾī, see her *The Quilt & Other Stories*, New Delhi 1990; Latif Khalid: “Ismat Chughtai—Personality Sketch”, in *Mahfil*, 8/2-3/1972, pp. 189–194; Ansari: *Emergence*, passim.

Following a biographical sketch of his life and his activities as a progressive writer, I would like to examine his literary expertise and his stand vis-à-vis traditional institutions, specifically shrines, by summarizing one of his latest short stories, thereby illuminating elements of Islamic mystic culture veiled behind a critique of the shrine cult. Thus, it will become clear in how far reformist writers are affiliated with Islamic tradition. At the same time the story shows the abuse of women and also the disturbed political emancipation process.

Aḥmad Nadīm Qāsimī

For analytical purposes, Qāsimī may be called a representative of the above-mentioned intermediary group, a label which may be derived from his biography. The tussle between “modernity” and “tradition”, particularly in rural society, finds articulation in several of his short stories; because he makes rural society the prime object of his stories, he is called the Premchand of Pakistan.³⁰

Aḥmad Nadīm was born in 1916, the son of the mystical leader of a village in the district of Sardogha/Punjab, where shrine cult is most popular. As a *pīrzādah* he experienced family quarrels which were directly connected with the tomb to which his ancestors were attached. He enjoyed traditional as well as formal education, and in 1934 finished his B.A. at Punjab University.

Before partition Nadīm had already worked as an excise subinspector and as a journalist, and was, thus, more or less drawn away from the traditional sector of society. He established literary journals and supported the demand for the establishment of an independent Pakistan. After partition he became general secretary of the

³⁰ For Ahmad Nadīm Qāsimī see Sajjad Shaikh (transl.): *Selected Short Stories of Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi*, Karachi 1981, *Afkār: Nadīm Nambār*, Karāchī 1975; *Herald*, 18/2/1987 (Karachi), pp. 147–152, J. Malik: “Urdu Kurzgeschichten”, in *Pakistan: eine Dokumentation des SÜDASIENBÜROS*, Wuppertal, März 1989, pp. 86–91, and “‘Sultan’, Kurzgeschichte aus Pakistan”, in *SÜDASIEN*, 2–3/1990, pp. 60–65. For a definite study see Fateh Muhammad Malik: *Ahmad Nadīm Qāsimī: Shā‘ir awr Afsānahngār*, Lāhawr 1992, who brings Qāsimī’s writings in line with the political development in Pakistan. For a review of Malik’s work see, e.g., Gilani Kamran in *The Nation* (Lahore), 28.9.1992.

PWA of Pakistan, a post he held until 1954, when the organisation was declared unlawful. It was only in 1987 that the *PWA* was formally reestablished; due to internal fractiousness, it faded away, however. In 1963 Qāsimī began to establish himself as a national writer and was supported by the government. Since 1974 he has been chairman of the *majlis-e taraqqī-e adab*, Lahore, an all-Pakistan literary institution.

Nadīm took up the progressives' tradition of criticising existing "feudal", often religiously legitimated structures. In his stories he showed how the gender problem, social stratification, the caste system, and suppression work hand in hand in contemporary rural areas.³¹ Therefore, he is known for his strong condemnation of the existing, traditional, order, that also may hamper democratic developments; his stories and poems were often reprinted, like the short story *Bain*, meaning "dirge" or "lament" but also "separation". It was written in 1983 and seems also to reflect his own traumatic experiences as a *pīrzādah*. The story found some resonance due to its ostensible political message; it was translated into European languages.³² It is said, that in "dirge", a shrine administrator who was on good terms with the ruler of Pakistan of the time, Diyā' al-Ḥaqq, was to be discredited. Thus, the story implies a critique of the political culture based on authoritarian and quasi-military system. However, the story elaborates upon the shrine cult in a literary-

³¹ Qāsimī's short stories were published as *Ghar s̄ ghar tak*, Rāwalpindī 1953; *Bazār-e Hayāt*, Lāhawr 1955; *Berg-e Hennā*, Lāhawr 1959; *Kapās kā Phūl*, Lāhawr 1986(4); *Nilā Patthar*, Lāhawr 1980. For short stories dealing particularly with religion and religious dignitaries see, e.g., his "al-hamdu lillāh", in Qāsimī: *Sannāta*, Lāhawr 1959(2); on shrine cult see, e.g., Qāsimī, in Ahmed Ali (ed.): *Selected Short Stories from Pakistan*, Islamabad 1983, pp. 21ff; Ghulam Abbas, Kakor Patti and Sarakat Osman, in Rolf Italiaander (ed.): *In der Palmschwenke, Pakistan in Erzählungen*, Herrenalb 1966, pp. 142ff, 258ff, 312ff; Patras, in Rothen-Dubs: *Garten*, pp. 296 ff. Similar views are presented by contemporary Arab writers; see, e.g., Wielandt: "Bewertung"

³² See Ahmad Nadīm Qāsimī: "Bain", in Muhammad Yār (ed.): *Muntakhib af-sānē, 1983-85*, Rāwalpindī 1985; the Urdu text has been rendered by me into German with some annotations; see "'Todesklage', Kurzgeschichte aus Pakistan", in *SÜDASIEN*, 10/7-8/1990, pp. 56-62; an English translation by Shelah S. Bhatti can be found as "A Lament", in *Pakistani Literature* (Islamabad), 1/1/1992, pp. 81-88.

aesthetic way and also reflects the inherent romantic mysticism of the author, who himself hailed from a mystical family traditional. It is this dimension of the story which has hitherto been neglected.

The Sanctuary of Shāh Daulah

“Dirge” deals with the activities in and around the *dargāh* of Shāh Daulah Daryā’ī in Gujrat. Before reproducing parts of the short story and analyzing it, it seems important to provide some basic information about this sufi and his tomb, which was taken over by the Pakistan Auqaf Department in the 1960s.³³ I shall focus on the famous cult attached to it, a cult to which Nadīm’s story does not, however, refer directly.

The information that follows is based on historical and biographical accounts as well as on *malfūzāt* literature (speeches and utterances of the holy men),³⁴ and it has been extracted from, among other works, Ibbetson’s *Glossary* and the work by Sharīf Kunjāhī.³⁵ According to these sources, Shāh Daulah—birth name Qāṣim—lived in Mughal times and died at an advanced age around 1087/1676 in Gujrat. His ancestors were Afghans, but it is also claimed that he was a Sayyid. After a turbulent childhood he became supervisor of the treasury of a local official and also worked as a mendicant and an ordinary labourer for some time. He then spent twelve years at the feet of a Suhrawardi sufi, but it is also recorded that he was initiated into the Qadiri order. Due to some disputes with the local

³³ For the activities of the Auqaf Department see S.J. Malik: “Waqf in Pakistan; Change in Traditional Institutions”, in *Die Welt des Islams*, 30/1990, pp. 63–97

³⁴ The most important function of this literature for the reconstruction of medieval social history has been discussed, e.g., by Khaliq Ahmad Nizāmī: “Malfūzāt kī tārikhī ahammiyat”, in Mālik Rām (ed.): *Arshī Presentation Volume*, Delhi 1961, pp. 3–15; S.H. Askari: *Maktub & Malfuz Literature as a Source of Socio-Political History*, Patna 1981, Z.A. Desai: *Malfuz Literature as Source of Political, Social & Cultural History of Gujarat & Rajasthan*, Patna 1991, B.B. Lawrence: *Sufi Literature in the Sultanate Period*, Patna 1979; J. Paul: “Hagiographische Texte als historische Quelle”, in *Saeculum*, 41/1/1990, pp. 17–43.

³⁵ D. Ibbetson/E. Maclagan: *A Glossary of Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and the North West Frontier Provinces, I–III*, Lahore 1911–1919; Sharīf Kunjāhī: *Hadrat Shāh Daulah Daryā’ī Gujrātī: Hayāt o ta’līmāt*, Lāhawr 1985.

people of Sialkot, he migrated from there and, after some years, moved to Gujrat “in obedience to divine instructions. . . . During his life he devoted himself to works of public utility (hence his *laqab* Daulah, wealth; J.M.) and the construction of religious buildings”, especially bridges—hence his *laqab* Daryāʿī. He was popular among “Muslims as well as Hindus, became famous for his miracles and received large gifts” in kind, but refused to accept land grants. The colonial sources are of the view that through his charismatic gifts (*karāmāt*) Shāh Daulah was able to control female infanticide, which was widespread in the Jammu State at this time.³⁶

Shāh Daulah’s shrine is particularly known for its Chūhās or Rat-children, who are without understanding or the power of speech. After some initial training they are passed on to a *faqīr* and made to beg in the name of Shāh Daulah. According to colonial sources, the story goes that

Shah Daula, like other saints, could procure the birth of a child for a couple desiring one, but the first child born in response to his intercession would be a Chūhā—brainless, small-headed, long-eared and rat-faced. The custom used to be to leave the child, as soon as it was weaned, at Shah Daula’s *khānqāh*, as an offering to him. After the saint’s death the miracle continued, but in a modified way. Persons desiring children would go to the saint’s shrine to pray for a child, and would make a vow either to present the child when born or make an offering to the shrine. In some cases, when the child was duly born in response to the prayer, the parents neglected to make the promised gift. Upon this, the spirit of the offended saint so worked on the parents that the next child born was a Chūhā, and all subsequent children as well, until the original vow was fulfilled.³⁷

Several scholars have tried to explain the evolution of this tradition. Some argue that the bad conscience of parents, particularly mothers, set free certain chemical reactions that caused this peculiarity.³⁸ Others claim that it was the lack of regular income at the *dargāh* since no land was attached to it. This resulted in the holy men’s total dependence on the alms and offering of the followers while it was also suspected that the followers (*murīdūn*) were involved

³⁶ Cf. Ibbetson et al.. *A Glossary*, p. 631.

³⁷ Cf. Ibbetson et al.. *A Glossary*, p. 630.

³⁸ See, e.g., Kunjāhī: *Hadrat Shāh Daulah*.

in traffic in women.³⁹ However, in contemporary and even later *malfūzāt* and biographical accounts there is no mention of the *Chūhā* cult.⁴⁰ It therefore seems likely that this cult arose only later, by the end of the 19th century—after the shrine had been reconstructed (1898). The editor of *Indian Antiquary* points out that these were the extreme forms of the cult and “that a band or order of *faqīrs* make a living out of a certain class of local microcephalous idiots, and the convenient existence of an important shrine”. He goes on to say that

the absence of landed property in possession of the band, or any recognized right to succession to the leadership, and the entire dependence on the earnings, in turn dependent themselves on the gullibility of the “faithful”, all make it almost certain that Bhāwan Shāh (a *murīd* of the Shāh; J.M.) took the opportunity of the (then recent) decease of a well-known ancient and holy man to find a sacred origin for the unholy traffic of his followers.

But (there is) no ground for supposing that he (the Shāh; J.M.) had anything to do personally with the poor idiots now exploited by the sect, band, or order of *faqīrs* that have fastened themselves on to his name.⁴¹

Because of the economic needs of the shrine holders, it is also suspected that these children are “artificially produced after their birth as ordinary infants”.⁴² The sanctuary of Shāh Daulah thus has a particular reputation—fertility, justice and punishment—which, however, does not keep people away from regularly paying homage to the spirit of the holy man and his successors; even the nationalization policy of the Auqaf Department could not totally change the perceptions deeply rooted in the minds of the rural population and the authority exercised by the shrine administrator, the *mujāwīr*, who ideally represents state power.

Even if the cult of *Chūhās* is fascinating in itself, *Bain*, to which I will turn in a minute, hardly takes it into account. The author does not mention the *Chūhā* cult explicitly, but uses the sanctuary as a means by which to point to the corruption of the shrine holders, in

³⁹ See Ibbetson et al.. *A Glossary*, p. 630.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Kunjāhī: *Hadrat Shāh Daulah*.

⁴¹ Ibbetson et al.. *A Glossary*, pp. 636f.

⁴² Ibbetson et al.. *A Glossary*, p. 637. For this shrine see also the film “Von Müttern, Mäusen und Heiligen”, directed by Sabiha Sumar, ZDF, October 17th 1994.

particular the *mujāwir*, to the myth created and perpetuated around hereditary holy men, to rape and exploitation of women as well as to the decayed political establishment. The story, however, also reverts to complex mystical symbolism and the semantic connotations which seem to lie beyond grammatical speech and thus address the subconscious, in this way determining people's actions. And, as will be seen, fear plays an important role in tying the local population to the tomb.

Durge and Shāh Daulah

The content of *Bain*, a frame story, is quickly narrated: By means of an internal monologue, a mother informs us about the feelings, pains, and fears which she and her husband—a poor Punjabi peasant—went through during the preceding sixteen or seventeen years. The mother is overwhelmed by the birth of the first child, a daughter. Rano, a diminutive form for princess, is flown around by divine light. The father, however, is sceptical, because he knows the dangers involved in bringing up a beautiful girl. At the age of five, Rano—like the other children—is sent to *Bībījī*, the teacher, to learn to recite the Koran at her feet. Soon it becomes known that her voice is also of an extraordinary beauty, so that in a short while she becomes the leading reciter. Even the *mujāwir* of the shrine nearby is overwhelmed by the girl. The mother only becomes aware of Rano's maturity when the girl receives a proposal from some relatives. On this very day, however, the shrine administrator says that the girl Rano should be brought to the *dargāh* and should recite the holy Koran there for three days. This, he adds, Shāh Daulah had ordered in a dream.

Different legends had developed around the shrine, and it had become an institution of justice, symbolized by the holy hand of Shāh Daulah which, in order to judge, would rise from the grave. Out of respect and fear of the punishment threatened by the holy man, the parents and the child at once embark for the sanctuary. The camel journey to that place becomes a wonderful cosmic experience. After reaching the *dargāh*, Rano remains while the parents go back home. Returning to the holy place three days later they see Rano in a desperate state. She is waiting for the holy hand of Shāh Daulah.

Only if the hand shows up and justice is done can she return, a litany she often repeats. It is said that she is possessed by a wicked ghost. In the course of the story Rano becomes weaker and finally dies. The story ends with a description of nature as in the beginning, Rano in the arms of her mother, under the tree of life. What has happened and how did the death of the girl come about?

Mystical Dimensions of Bain and Gender

In terms of its action, *Bain* draws a picture of the complex hierarchical world of shrines and their milieu as well as of the social stratification and stigmatization of female children and their exploitation and evident rape by male authorities, even in a surrounding which is more or less a female domain, the shrine.⁴³ It also displays how aspects of folk religion work in South Asia, and how legends surrounding holy men and holy places develop and are perpetuated. *Bain* provides rich data about the complex hierarchical shrine world (*pīr*, *mujāwir*, *khādim*, *bībī*, etc.) and its background, about the mystical tradition as well as about the belief in the holiness of shrines, the institutions of collective identity, and above all of “justice”. It shows that the shrine cult has become a falsehood void of any mysticism, or, in other words: shrine cult as an expression of corrupt political power. Behind the story, however, lies mystical cosmology and symbolism, which I would like to illuminate by drawing on sufic terminology.

The story can be divided into two main parts: while the first deals with the period of Rano’s childhood and her esoteric experiences (see column 4 of diagram),⁴⁴ the latter leads us into the dark world of the exploitative shrine cult, that results from the girl’s maturity and her initiation into the female world. The juncture of these two parts—childhood and maturity—is elaborated by the mystical journey, a climax of the story.

Bain acquaints the reader with the perceptions of *taraqqī*, the mys-

⁴³ However, it should be pointed out that the power in shrines is usually held by men.

⁴⁴ It should be made clear that the diagram illustrates this first part of the story only

tical ascent, and with its symbolic dynamism, which is taken advantage of by the enigmatic *mujāwir*. The idea of illumination—*ishrāq*—and of emanation are touched upon, however, without explicit mention. Both mystical elements stand in the tradition of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240), who further elaborated the idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the unity of being.

Even the damaging of Rano's forehead, e.g., seems to point to her being chosen from amongst the villagers as a profound leader. The illuminated girl with supernatural quality is imprinted (*dāghdār*) by a crescent, initiated so to say, and thereby dignified. Her beauty and her lovely voice are attributes of the enhanced position she has achieved on her own and which is gradually elaborated and refined, in the sense of spiritual degrees of the soul or the mystical ascent (see column 3 of diagram). The unity of being—*waḥdat al-wujūd*—becomes evident when she submerges into the cosmos, when time stands still and space becomes sacred, when everybody and everything listens to her saintly voice. The shrine administrator also witnesses the divine gift when visiting the village. He identifies her voice—a kind of exclamation—*faryād*—or a longing for blessing and for purification of her—lower—self—*al-nafs al-ammāra*,⁴⁵ so to speak, with the fluttering (*pharphaḥat*)⁴⁶ of angels' wings. At this stage her recitation (*tilawat*) may already be regarded as a kind of *dhikr*, which receives stronger meaning with incantation (*chhūh-mantar*), as an expression of inhaling and exhaling the holy words. In this way she purifies her blameworthy soul—*al-nafs al-lawwāma*—and thus sets out on her journey for the path of gnosis. Her soul is inspired—*al-nafs al-mulhama*, Rano represents *baraka* and bestows life: “women used to come to you with their dishes and utensils filled with water . . .” to be blessed by her. Here it also becomes clear that the *dargāh* is a female domain, at least in quantitative terms—in contrast to mosques, which are frequented by men.

By now Rano has left the stage of *sharīʿa*—the exoteric revelation or the profane Islamic law—and is on the *ṭarīqa*—the mystical path.

⁴⁵ For the sufi technical terms used in the following see, e.g., Shāh Khālid Miyyān Fākhīrī: *Iṣṭilāḥāt-e tasawwuf*, Karāchī 1990; Trimmingham: *Orders*; Schimmel: *Dimensionen*.

⁴⁶ Only the words in parentheses are given in the original text of *Ban*.

Exoteric—*sharīʿa*—and esoteric—*ṭarīqa*—as well as *ḥaqīqa*—the truth or reality—are three levels of the cosmic evolution which connect the different spheres of existence or nature (see columns 2 and 1 of diagram). Thus, she is able to act as a holy being by practising miracles (*karāmāt*), again illuminated by divine light (*nūr*). But with her advancement to puberty, she gradually becomes subject to societal conventions—or totalitarian power which destroys the democratic process.

Accordingly, the girl's maturity or sexualization and the marriage proposal coincide with the anniversary of the holy man's death, *ʿurs*, the unification of the *pīr* with God. It seems that she is going to be married to the spiritual authority, when already "all you possessed you had given away in the name of the Lord (*maulā kī rāh*)", e.g., the holy man. A dream—a popular way of conveying messages and legitimising actions⁴⁷—authorizes the *mujāwir* to bind Rano to the sanctuary, "otherwise" he added, "Sānʿin Daule Shāhjī would put all villagers to fire and ash (*bhasam karnā*)". This is the factual mystical initiation so to speak; she becomes a follower (*cheli*) or *murīd* of the *dargāh*. This initiation is, however, done in a kind of *Uwaysi* tradition or through the spirit of the legendary *Khidr* rather than in an act of a formal *baiʿa*.⁴⁸ No *silsila* (chain of spiritual descent) is referred to which would legitimise the spiritual position of the *murshid* and the *murīd*.

One also learns that fear is the prime motivational force inducing the villagers and adepts to be loyal to the moral authority. The affiliation with the shrine and its representative is deeply entrenched in their minds and their identification with him seems to produce a strong fear of being punished if they do not obey. Because of this identification the villagers must experience a feeling of destroying

⁴⁷ For the significance of dreams in the mystical context see, e.g., G. v Grunbaum/R. Caillois (eds.): *The Dream and Human Societies*, Berkeley 1966; Umar Azam: *Dreams in Islam*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 1992.

⁴⁸ For the *Uwaysi* tradition see Schimmel: *Dimensionen*, pp. 53, 135, 157, Trumingham: *Orders*, pp. 12f, 187; A.S. Husaini: "Uways al-Qaranī and the Uwaysi Sūfis", in *Muslim World*, 57/1967, pp. 103–113; also now J. Baldick: *Imaginary Muslims: The Uwaysi Sufis of Central Asia*, London 1993. For *Khidr* see Schimmel: *Dimensionen*, pp. 35, 157f, 241, 286, 376; Trumingham: *Orders*, pp. 42, 63, et passim; *EI(2)*, IV, pp. 380–383; H. Elboudrari: "Entre le symbolique et l'historique: Khadir immémorial", in *Studia Islamica*, LXXVI/1992, pp. 41–52.

both themselves and the mystical leader in the event of disobedience. Thus, the personal union with the holy man is a crucial link between him as the unique authority and the obeyer, an identity which is established and perpetuated by means of myths, legends, miracles, and social as well as mystical affiliations. Precondition for that is that the actors belong to a common semantic household:

the upper part (*sar hāne kī ṭaraf se*) of the holy grave opened and the pīr stretched out his holy hand (*dast-e mubārak*). The culprit then was drawn to the shrine (*mazār sharīf*) from wherever he was, laid his neck into the holy hand of the Sānʿīnī (e.g., the pīr) and died on the spot (*dher honā*). Thereafter the holy hand disappeared into the holy grave and its fissures closed as if they had never been opened. Therefore, nobody dared to neglect Sānʿīn Daule Shāh's orders.

Fear also draws the parents and the daughter to the tomb. The climax of Rano's mystical experience is developed in the journey to the holy place, on the back of a camel, and the end of the journey symbolizes the transition from the *unio mystica* to the institutionalized world of shrines. This part of the narration reminds the reader virtually of the *riḥla* of the *qaṣīda* in ancient Arabic poetry or of a classical divine and mystical journey in which the spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*) are experienced by the soul of a novice, or of the ascent of the Prophet Muhammad (*miʿrāj*).⁴⁹ This may be illustrated in the following passage:

On the very next day we embarked for the *dargāh*. I sat on one side of the saddle, and you, my darling, on the other, while your father sat in the centre. . . As soon as the camel started to move, you began to recite the holy Koran. My dear sweetheart, my pure girl, I saw with my own eyes that wherever the camel passed, people flocked to us from far. They accompanied us crying and saying "Praise the Lord, praise the Lord". Flocks of birds, swallows and pigeons approached the saddle. They dived down to the camel as if they were drinking the nectar (*sharbat*) of the voice of my little daughter, danced and then swam far away . . . Heaven came to my mind when your father, bending over the saddle, whispered into my ear: "Look up, what luminous (*nūrānī*) birds are these flying along with us? I have never seen birds like these in this area, as if stars were sparkling on their feathers. They look like angels (*farshite*) coming from heaven!" And,

⁴⁹ For different concepts of journeys and travels in the Muslim context see, e.g., Eickelman et al. (eds.): *Muslim Travellers*.

my darling (*ānkhon kā nūr*), even I, your illiterate mother, can swear upon my oath that these were really angels, as if little innocent children had wings and were fluttering through the air. They had come to listen to my purified (*pahaunchī hū?ī*) daughter's holy recitation.

Rano had become mature, sitting on the same level as her mother. The family now left the material or human world, *‘ālam al-nāsūt*, and entered a divine atmosphere, the world of angels or of intelligible substances, *‘ālam al-malakūt*, which is perceived only through spiritual insight or a separation, *Bain*, from the material world. Here everything becomes united with spirituality. It seems that during the journey the girl also reaches the world of spiritual existence or power, *‘ālam al-jabarūt*, which lies beyond external forms and in which the divine orders and powers are located. This stage results from deeply experiencing divine nature. The soul flows into tranquility—*al-nafs al-muṭmaʿinna*—and consequently becomes contented—*al-nafs al-rāḍiya*. One has the impression that, during the journey, Rano really witnesses the image of God or divine nature—*‘ālam al-lāhūt*—when the worlds unite with her and the all-embracing harmony calls up associations of paradise. Her soul is approved, so to speak—*al-nafs al-marḍiya*; she experiences the stage of *ḥaqīqa*, the ultimate goal, in which her soul becomes illuminated in perfection—*al-nafs al-kāmila*, obviously before she has reached the shrine.

So far Rano is still a child, free and innocent, and has attained the highest mystical stages. The latter part, however, deals with her physical and metaphysical exploitation, for her saintly experience is now seen in contrast to the dark world of shrines. The shrines can be interpreted as the traditional society at large which grasps the maturing girl and binds her to narrow and suffocating societal claims. It is this institutionalized form of mysticism that casts gloom over and destroys her luminous life in spite of her mystical perfection, or—in political terminology—the liberal democratic culture stands in contrast to the totalitarian military domination.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ The girl's age of sixteen and seventeen years may remind of the era between 1962 and 1979. 1962 witnessed the lifting of martial law under Ayyub Khan: "the basic democracies order was incorporated into the constitution which now ideally provided for a federal system of government and an all-powerful president to be elected by the basic democrats" while in 1979 the military had finally reestablished

Reaching the tomb we witness a kind of a bargain between the parents and the *mujāwir*, like the *mahr*, the bride-wealth: the parents are declared dwellers of paradise (*jannatī*—without intercession of any authority) by the shrine administrator. In response they leave the child—e.g., present (*ni^ḥmat*)—as a trust (*amānat*) at the *dargāh*. With this bargain Rano, the little princess, virtually becomes a slave, bound to the “holy” place. During the *ḥurs* the girl falls victim to the corrupted society. Her chapped lips with their bloody scurfs, her tangled hair without the *chādar*, and her desperate wait for justice (*inṣāf*) and judgment (*faiṣala*) point to a forcible defloration and desecration. Her mouth and her voice, with which she established the unique connection with the mystical world, are now deformed and abused.

In her agony she is “possessed” by ghosts (*jinn bhūt*), as the *dargāh* family opines, in a manner reminiscent of institutionalized witch-hunting. During her lonely struggle, a struggle to attain justice and purify her soul, she becomes extremely weak, similar to a kite (*patang*) whose cord has been cut and who rambles through the air without any destination.⁵¹ This tussle reminds one of the *mujāhadat al-naḥs* or the concept of *tafriqa* and *jam^ḥ*—diversity or separation and unification—in the context of the emanation concept, and of the longing for salvation.

As an abused virgin Rano feels herself spoilt and guilty. Trusting in God she waits patiently for the hand of the holy man to redeem her from her stigma, purify her soul, and do her justice:

You did not even think of covering your hair when you saw your father. Your colour became sandy and you began to cry and to shout when you recognized us: “Don’t come nearer to me, father, keep away from me, mother! I will stay here now, I will stay here as long as the shrine of Sān^ḥin Daule Shāh does not open and his holy hand does not appear. I will stay

its political authority; see Ayesha Jalal: *The State of Martial Law: The Origins of Pakistan’s Political Economy of Defence*, Cambridge 1992(2), pp. 302f.

⁵¹ In South Asia the tradition of kite flying or better kite fighting is most popular. The cord of the kite is produced in a very sophisticated way and incorporates, among other things, fine pieces of glass. The aim of flying kites is to cut the cord of the other kite flyers, by complicated movements. See, e.g., Abdul Halim Sharar: *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, trans. and ed. by E.S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain, Delhi 1989 (reprint), pp. 130f. Nadīm Wahīd, Adam Nayyar: *Patang Bāzī*, Islāmābād 1988.

here until a settlement (*faisala*) is made. I will stay here until justice (*insāf*) is done and the shrine opens. If it does not open today it will open tomorrow, after a month, after one year, after two years. The shrine will definitely open at some time and the holy hand will definitely appear. Then I will myself return to my father and mother and will arrange their shoes neatly my whole life long and will always wash their feet and drink the water. But now, now I will not come. I cannot come now. I am bound, tied up (*bandhī*: female slave). I am destroyed”.

Raṇo stays at the shrine day and night; before submitting to the final judgment, however, she tries to stand up against the *mujāwir*, the representative of malignity, in his own tradition: the stones the unfortunate (*bad naṣīb*) daughter threatens to throw at him are those of Shāh Daulah, who is still the prime authority to her and who reflects the embodiment of the sacred.

The next stage of Rano’s “obsession” gradually displays her approaching death. It is symbolized by her flinging the skirt presented by her parents—as a last attempt to call her back from the shrine—into the burning coals of the public kitchen (*langar*). This skirt, this last connection with her lived mystical world, has, indeed, no proper place at the shrine. Later her father repeats a quite similar act: he indignantly throws the shroud (*kafan*) sent by the *mujāwir* into the burning coals of the fire heating the water for the great ablution (*ghusul*). The institutionalized mystic can merely present Rano this skirt, the shroud. The action of the father, who also complained (*faryād karnā*) about the alleged obsession of his daughter, is a clear denouncement of this way of shrine cult.

The attempts of the parents to free their child fail. One night they are called to the *dargāh*, but now the world seems to be turned upside down: whereas in the beginning Rano was sitting at the top end of the grave, now she lies at its bottom end, at the feet of Shāh Daulah, in the candle-light (*chvrāgh kī raushanī*). Her illuminated eyes have turned grey and had stuck fast, the lips were trembling slightly and she said in a very feeble voice:

My dear parents. Who knows why the grave does not open? Even though there was no justice, at least the case has been decided. I do not care if I am the culprit. Sān’īn Daule Shāh, you made me wait too long, though. Now, when on the day of resurrection we will all assemble and be presented before God-before-God—God! Thereafter you became silent and since then you have remained silent.

She has passed from freedom and liberty—or political self-development—into the compulsions and constraints of the society—or political suppression—that not only deformed her individualism but destroyed her existence, her being found, *wujūd*:

And now, my sweetheart, my pure and good, my clean and innocent daughter Rano, come and let me kiss the extinguished moon on your forehead one last time. See how the purple blossoms of the common bead-tree smell. And the squirrels are playing on the tree of life, running from its stalk up to its top. The wind blows gently as if young shoots were bursting forth even from the centuries-old dry wood. Everywhere around there is the hum of your recitation and the smell of the burning of the shroud sent by Sānʿīn Ḥadrat Shāhjī (e.g., *mujāwir*) is spreading everywhere. And I am full of pain now, a pain which I experienced when I gave birth to you.

Hence, the “separation” concludes tragically—from the material and mystical world and also from the mother, under the tree of life, the leaves of which are used for funeral rites. Indeed, Rano did not even get the chance to grow into the role of a free woman; instead, she died into the role of a subject female; she died a societal death. Still, the blossoms, shoots and the smell all hint—although very subtle—to some kind of hope, e.g., the democratic principles may have survived, taking command of the political culture very subliminally.

Conclusion

In Qāsimī’s story “dirge” or “separation” there is no discussion of using children for economic purposes. Neither does one find direct hints of the female infanticide which was supposedly prevalent at this shrine in former times. Nor is the rat-cult mentioned. However, it is implicitly clear, that Rano was the first and only child born after a long time but was—obviously—not presented to the *dargāh*, although the parents must have paid homage (*salām karnā*) to the sanctuary and they must also have prayed for a child. There are also clear instances of traffic in women or girls and of societal infanticide, a phenomenon widespread not only in South Asia.⁵²

⁵² For Egypt see, e.g., Nizār Qabbānī: *al-aʿmāl al-shiʿriyya al-kāmila*, Beirut 1983: *Yaumiyyātu imraʾatun lā mubāliya*, pp. 575–640; Stefan Wild: “Nizār Qabbānī’s Auto-

Thus, *Bain* stands in the reformist tradition: mysticism is accepted,⁵³ the veneration of holy men, however, is repudiated as unlawful innovation, e.g., *bid'at*: cult-mysticism—or totalitarian system—should be abolished because it would restrict individual—or democratic—freedom, would call for the radical submission of the novices (Rano)—citizen—under the shaikh (*mujāwir*)—ruler, and would therefore deviate from the right path—or the liberal polity. The story of a woman abused at a sanctuary points out this demand very clearly, though in allegorical terms. In a certain sense an abuse of mysticism may be observed as well.⁵⁴ Claiming this kind of radical dissolution of autochthonous structures or the modernization of cult or tradition is also discernible in radical Islamic and “progressive” movements but also in “quietist” associations. All of them refer to the golden age of pristine Islam respectively Islamic mysticism. Such demands, are, however, at the expense of the vast majority of the population, especially women, who find an alternative institutional and communicative framework in the shrine cult.

In this way the contradiction mentioned in the beginning becomes obvious: even if many contemporary literati publicly argue against this kind of mysticism or shrine cult, which displays feudal and undemocratic structures, they still use—as has been shown paradigmatically with *Bain*—traditionally known and accepted patterns of cultural articulation.⁵⁵ In this way they adhere to a common symbolic framework and a common semantics. In order to make discernible the latent and hidden meanings that lie behind the profane action, the stories must, however, be marked in their complexity. *Bain* offers this symbolism and thus reflects the wealth of mysticism. The theoretical placement of modern literature into a literary historical and sociological context, which still has to be elaborated, should take into consideration this dimension.

biography: Images of Sexuality, Death and Poetry”, in: Roger Allen et al. (eds.): *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature*, London 1994, pp. 200–209.

⁵³ Mysticism, as it was propagated by early sufi masters like Hasan al-Basrī and al-Hallāj.

⁵⁴ In a certain sense one may also detect Qāsīmī abusing Rano: for his supposedly political message.

⁵⁵ E.g., Intizār Husam consciously makes use of Islamic and especially Shiite topoi as a quarry for his short stories.

Rano's mystical path

1	2	3	4
Spheres of existence	Stages of cosmic development	Spiritual degrees on the path	Development in the text
the world of the Godhead (^ʿ ālam-al-lāhūt)	↑ h a q ī q a (essence)	↑ perfect soul (al-nafs al-kāmila) approved soul (al-nafs al-mardīya) contented soul (al-nafs al-rādiya)	↑ cosmic unity end of journey camel journey Koran recitation*
the world of power (^ʿ ālam al-jabarūt)	t a r ī q a (esoteric)	tranquil soul (al-nafs al-mutma ^ʿ inna)	start of camel journey, maturity
the angelic world (^ʿ ālam al-malakūt)	s h a r ī c	inspired soul (al-nafs al-mulhama)	baraka initiation through mujāwir's dream
the world of humanity (^ʿ ālam al-nasūt)	a (exoteric)	unregenerate soul (al-nafs al-ammāra)	Koran recitation early childhood

* Koran recitation at this stage of mystical experience is according to classical mystical ideas additive and non-developmental. It "spoils" the mystical ascent and makes development rather circular.