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Celebrating Death and Engaging in Texts at Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's *Urs*

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The Šūfi shrine of the eleventh-century shaiikh ‘Alī ibn ‘Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwiri (d. 1070), commonly referred to as Dātā Ganj Bakhsh (“The Master Bestower of Treasure”), is one of the main religious centers for Pakistani Šūfi activity. Al-Hujwiri’s shrine is associated with other eminent historical Lahori spaces; it faces Shāh Jahān’s Muḡhal Badshāhi Masjid and it connects to the main road that leads to the older section of Lahore that contains the tomb of Maḡmūd Ghaznavī and Wazīr Khān’s Masjid. Al-Hujwiri’s famous Persian Šūfi treatise *Kashf al-Maḡrib* is still widely published in Lahore and is very popular among Šūfis who use it as an instructional guide in Šūfi spirituality.¹ Šūfi shaiikhs and *murīds* in Lahore who belong to one or more order make the claim that *Kashf al-Maḡrib* is one the most fundamental Šūfi manuals for inner awakening, and is an essential text to be included in any collection of Šūfi classics. As a significant text in Šūfi historiography, there is an intriguing connection between this text and modern Šūfi practices of worship, spiritual guidance, and the process of unveiling the veils.

Throughout the year, Dātā Ganj Bakhsh’s shrine attracts thousands of believers who come to the tomb, one of the oldest sacred Šūfi shrines in the area, for religious observance, spiritual purity, and the celebration of the Shaikh. As is true with many religious sites and rituals, the shrine seems to be transformed in a kind of sacred time to another level of holy ground that is filled with spiritual devotion. During the extraordinary celebration of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh’s death festival, or *urs*, which is held every month during the third week of *Ṣafar*, the shrine is electrified by thousands of pilgrims who dedicate themselves in worship, remembrance rituals, and intensive

prayers.² During the 1998 and 1999 *'urs* festivities, the Dātā Ganj Bakhsh Executive *'urs* Committee estimated that approximately six to seven hundred thousand pilgrims visited and participated in the *'urs* celebration.³ While the shrine is a place for Sūfi spiritual devotion, with Dātā Ganj Bakhsh as the center of that devotion, during the time of the *'urs* the shrine becomes the locus of special activities for pilgrims who come to be present with the Shaikh.

The annual *'urs* is an expensive production that is broadcasted on Pakistani television, radio, and over the Internet.⁴ It is a high profile social and religious event to which members of other Sūfi orders and Muslim groups travel from all parts of the country to be included. In addition to the Sūfi participants, other pilgrims present at the *'urs* include social activists, politicians, technocrats, academics, poets, artists, businesspersons, musicians, and observers. Some social activists and politicians occasionally present lectures or press conferences to promote their particular cause while receiving blessings from Dātā Ganj Bakhsh. For such people, the message and teachings of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh is less important than the social status and future prospects that come with being apart of a community that produces a popular cultural, social, and religious event like the *'urs*.⁵

Rather than an extensive analysis of the intersection between the secular and the sacred in the shrine world of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh, this essay is concerned with the ways in which Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's sacred space interfaces with the text of *Kashf al-Mahjūb* in the context of modern Sūfi devotion, and how this text is alive in the enactment of many Sūfi rituals and devotions throughout the religious phenomena of the *'urs*. This essay further seeks to illustrate the way space is specially transformed to meet the unique needs of *'urs* ritual, worship, and the influx of a non-Sūfi population. Sūfis who observe the *'urs* rituals find in them a celebration of the reunion of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh and God. Thus, the text functions to maintain its instructional authority in practice.⁶ For Sūfis and non-Sūfis, the *'urs* provides a moment of sacred pilgrimage; for devout Sūfis, it is the moment when they welcome the presence of the Sūfi Shaikh and celebrate his spiritual company in every ritual.

The Phenomenology of Sūfi Worship at Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's Shrine

During the *'urs* celebration, pilgrims typically observe the Sūfi etiquette of conduct (*ādāb*), although the enormous number of people present at

the shrine necessitates that it be loosely followed. For instance, faithful Sūfis wear modest clothing, covering their heads and arms, and enter with the right foot while reciting a sūra from the Qur'ān. Once on the grounds of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's shrine, the *ādāb* is to never have one's back facing the tomb, when moving away, one should face the tomb at all times.⁷ These types of *ādāb* at the *'urs* are not always recognized because of the diversity of pilgrims who go there with different backgrounds, religious affiliations, and spiritual agendas. Many non-Sūfi pilgrims will enter without head coverings and not know which Qur'anic sūras to recite on the grounds of the shrine.

While Sūfis of the Naqshbandiyyā and Chishtiyyā orders may have similar *ādāb* practices on the shrine grounds, their *ādāb* are distinct and identifiable.⁸ For example, Chishti Sūfis revere Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's tomb as the primary space for performing prayers and reciting the Qur'ān, the second most important space for them, if not equal to Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's tomb, is the designated space where Khwājā Mo'in ud-dīn Chishtī (d. 1236) came to pray and contemplate *taẓawwuf*. Naqshbandi Sūfi shaikhs unquestionably agree that the space surrounding the tomb is sacred, but they hold their gatherings and display their *ādāb* at the opposite northern end of the tomb. On the one hand, these differences in *ādāb* reflect the diversity of Sūfis present at the *'urs*, who use the common space in different ways while accepting and tolerating the practices of other orders.⁹ On the other hand, it demonstrates how Sūfis and others are able to share the common sacred moment of the *'urs* to build a united community that performs ritual, prays, and interacts with each other in mutual respect.¹⁰

The five daily prayers and Friday *jumātā* prayers are regularly conducted on the grounds of the shrine of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh, adjacent to the tomb. The prayers are open to the general public and are not exclusively for Sūfi Muslims. However, it is in the space immediately surrounding the tomb of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh where Sūfi religious activity is practiced and easily noticeable. While the prayers are held in the masjid at assigned times, Sūfis and pilgrims seeking spiritual unity through Dātā Ganj Bakhsh can come at any time during the day or night for prayers and veneration. Upon entering the shrine, it is customary to first pray two *raka'āt*s or prostrations in favor of the Sūfi Shaikh. There is no doubt that the prayers are always for God, as praying or prostrating to the Sūfi Shaikh would amount to the act of *shirk*, or association of partners with God. But in these extra prayers, believers often thank God for being present with His selected friend, or "*Wala'ya -Allah*."¹¹ Believers are grateful to God first and foremost, and then to Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's invitation of hidden trea-

sure' (*da'wat-e da'ima*) which allow them to be present at the shrine. It is this invitation that distinguishes the believers who enter the sacred grounds of the tomb from those believers who never get the opportunity to have such relationship with the Šūfi Shaikh. For Šūfis and spiritual pilgrims of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh, the fact that they are prostrating on the grounds of the shrine means that the invitation was originally transmitted from Dātā Ganj Bakhsh to God, who then ultimately brought the individual to the shrine.¹²

After removing their shoes, pilgrims enter the shrine whispering words of thankfulness and bearing offerings in their hands. These words of thankfulness may take the form of either verses from the Qur'ān or, more likely, praises in the vernacular language. With the assistance of the shrine's volunteers, pilgrims are guided to stand in line. While gender mixing is permitted outside of this space, there are separate lines for men and women to greet Dātā Ganj Bakhsh. Pilgrims stand in line patiently waiting to offer garlands of rose petals, satin sheets with Qur'ānic verses embroidered on them, or handfuls of local currency for the *salātm*.¹³ Standing in line is not the time for spiritual reflection, as the pilgrims are constantly approached by poorer visitors seeking charity and by other pilgrims distributing sweet condiments. For pilgrims, the movement of the line toward the center of the shrine is a preview of the spiritual activities that comprise the pilgrimage. At the moment of reaching the window (*chawkā*) of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's tomb, pilgrims are greeted by a volunteer who instructs them to bend downward while reciting Qur'ānic verses, and reminds them that this is the perfect time to request personal favors from Dātā Ganj Bakhsh.¹⁴ Returning to the erect position and standing up facing the *chawkā*, pilgrims then pitch money, flowers, or the decorative satin sheet on top of the marbled tomb. Since the window acts as a physical wall restricting pilgrims from touching Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's tomb, volunteers stand inside assisting pilgrims with ritual offerings and the placing of the satin sheet over the tomb.

The Šūfi Devotional of *Dhikr*

At Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's tomb, Šūfi shaikhs confirm the idea that the discipline of remembering God (*dhikr*) is stated in numerous Qur'ānic verses. Particularly popular with many shaikhs and murids at the shrine is 25:9, "Truly it is We who have revealed the scripture (*al-dhikr*) and We are its Preservers." Šūfis at Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's shrine use the term *dhikr* generally to mean reflecting, meditating, and bringing oneself closer to God through spiritual exercise.¹⁵ One popular Šūfi shaikh in Lahore often found at Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's shrine surrounded by disciples is Hakim

Muhammad Mūsa, who defines *dhikr* as "returning to God, and the best form of *dhikr* is reading the Holy Qur'ān in order that you experience the way the words take you back to the Creator."¹⁶ That is to say, any real self examination (*mubāsaba*) that leads to a meaningful encounter with God begins with the recitation of the Qur'ān. Hakim Muhammad Mūsa stresses the significance of removing blinders when reading the Holy Qur'ān to truly see how each verse speaks to the individual. For Hakim Muhammad Mūsa, *dhikr al-Qur'ān* is the starting point for remembering God and meditating oneself back to Him.¹⁷ During the day, Qur'ānic recitation is broadcast over loud speakers by professional Qur'ānic reciters hired by the shrine administration. At night, concentric circles form around the best recitors, who provide their interpretation and meaning of the reading. Pilgrims seeking a peaceful moment with the text can find a secluded area to read the Qur'ān on a carpeted floor on the northeastern side of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's tomb.

In addition to *dhikr al-Qur'ān*, within the main plaza of the shrine, most pilgrims are involved with specific techniques of breath control, directing the breath toward the heart, repeating the names of God, and cleansing their thoughts by gradually reciting the *shabārah* more and more loudly.¹⁸ Within Hakim Muhammad Mūsa's circle, pilgrims listen attentively to his elucidation of three types of mandatory *dhikr*. First, all serious spiritual aspirants need to do *dhikr* with their tongue and ask Allah's blessings. The second *dhikr* consists of purifying the heart to make space for God. Third is the type of *dhikr* built upon love (*mubāhabah*); it draws upon God's self-disclosure (*ḡirr*) to the spiritual seeker. In a more energetic and dramatic tone, Hakim Muhammad Mūsa shouts, "It is here where the Spirit of God provides a vision, a direct vision of light and eternal love!"¹⁹ With hands waving to the sky, his immediate *murids* emphatically respond with the praise *subhāna Allāh* ('Praise to God) and *dhikr be Allāh ka nasta bai* (*Dhikr* is the only path to Allah). The Hakim instructs his *murids* to put their hands on their thighs, close their eyes, and concentrate on their hearts as he initiates a vocal *dhikr* of *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* ("There is no God but God"). The *dhikr* of *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* becomes a synchronized group chant with the leading *murid* orchestrating the tone and direction of the *dhikr*. Like the conductor of a symphony, the leading *murid* supervises the *dhikr* of *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* so that the bodies are cleansed for God's companionship. With each low sound of *Lā* comes a stronger pitch of *ilāha illā* with even a deeper tone on *Allāh*. The reverberation *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* needs to penetrate all parts of the body, until the heart is completely full of nothing but God. The power of this invocational

tion is such that one is entirely consumed with *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* and all passing thoughts are negated by the *dhikr*. As the *dhikr* comes to its final chant, Hakim Muhammad Mūsa's voice guides the pilgrim's journey to God, and eventually his is the last voice to recite *Lā ilāha illā Allāh*.

The *Mahfil Samā'* and Devotional Music

The use of music and dancing as a means of spiritual enlightenment has been one of the most contentious issues in Sufism. Such Sufi orders as the Suhrawardi, Qādiri and the Naqshbandi are critical of the use of music; nevertheless, listening to and performing Sufi devotional music (*qawwālī*) is a central event of the *'urs*. The *'urs* Executive Committee understands the attraction of *qawwālī* performances (*mahfil samā'*). An impressive stage is built beforehand with glittering and flashing decorative lights on which Pakistan's most prominent *qawwālī* groups perform; each group is carefully scheduled for the evening or day based on the popularity of their *qawwālī* poetry.²⁰

The celebrations at the shrine begin with Qur'anic recitation and singing poetry honoring the Prophet (*nashīd*). Once a *qawwālī* group takes the stage, it is customary for them to begin with a song praising God (*ḥamd*) then proceed with a *na'* and afterwards successive songs praising Dātā Ganj Bakhsh.²¹ During the *'urs* celebration, *qawwālī* is the main communal ritual in which pilgrims and visitors alike are dazzled by spiritual poetry. In its form and structure as an assembly, it is an impressive celebration of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh.²² *Qawwālī* as devotional music brings an appreciation of the divine and all of the manifestations of the sacred that are present at the shrine. In accordance with *dhikr*, *qawwālī* music is also repetitive both poetically and rhythmically, which reinforces the importance of establishing an inner habitual devotion.²³ The main purpose of the chanters is to bring the pilgrims to and from a spiritual journey that encompasses moments of ecstasy (*wajd*). These moments of *wajd* are deeply transcendental experiences, and may involve intimate dialogues with either Allah, the Prophet, or Dātā Ganj Bakhsh himself. Not only can a successful *qawwālī* group stir up the hearts of the pilgrims to see God, but they have the ability to use the *qawwālī* to evoke a passionate vision and a spiritual experience with the divine. Pilgrims enraptured by the *qawwālī* music either dance or shower the *qawwālī* party with money or hand them boxes of sweets to show appreciation of the recalling the God's presence. For pilgrims not affiliated with any Sufi order and without spiritual training in *tasawwuf*, *qawwālī* also can be a vehicle for spiritual ecstasy and experiencing divine revelation.

The *mahfil samā'* is the most unifying communal event at the *'urs*, as well as the most distinctive feature of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's shrine. The devotional music brings numerous groups of Sūfis and non-Sūfis to celebrate the reunion of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh with God, reasserting the uniqueness of the shrine's legitimacy in their particular practice of *tasawwuf*.²⁴ The *qawwālī* music is an important way for the shrine to connect and design the spiritual journey of the pilgrims, who in return show their affection with offerings.

Uncovering Veils in the *Kashf al-Mahjūb* Text and in the *'urs*

For many visitors, the *'urs* functions as an important cultural and social event that should not be missed. For the majority of Sufi pilgrims, however, it represents a time to express in external ways their deep commitment to *tasawwuf*.²⁵ This affirmation of faith is larger than the celebration of a single shaiikh's reunion with Allah; it is the deeper insight and practice of what it means to be living in search of Allah's self-disclosure. The *'urs* is one component of a greater lifelong journey of discovering the sacred and encountering Allah. Regardless of where a Sufi might be along the inner path, the *'urs* is a time to assert an experience of encountering Allah. Al-Hujwiri's *Kashf al-Mahjūb* presents a detailed account of Sufi theories and practices. This text is the most important work to be read by modern-day Sūfis in Pakistan. The abundant visibility and reading of the *Kashf al-Mahjūb* in and around the shrine clearly shows its vitality in both the Sufi and the non-Sufi culture.²⁶

Aside from being available in numerous editions, the *Kashf al-Mahjūb* is used publicly during the *'urs* in circles of discussion (*ḥalāqa*) on the shrine's grounds, where Sufi shaiikhs or their prominent *murīds* read short passages out loud to pilgrims. Unlike Qur'anic recitation, Sufi shaiikhs use this time of reading of the text as an opportunity for pilgrims to question the inner meanings of the passages. Pilgrims then take the opportunity to raise questions with the shaiikh about his interpretation. This joint intellectual and spiritual engagement with the text among Sufi shaiikhs, *murīds*, and pilgrims is a process of mutual discovery of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's *tasawwuf*.²⁷

Uncovering the Third Veil: Faith

With each reading of the *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, the Sufi reader hopes to unveil the "veils of life." It is further assumed that "unveiling the veil" can

enhance one's faith, piety, prayer, fasting, charity, and etiquette. Reading the text is always done in a public *ḥalāqa*. Often, the following passage is commonly read out loud: Faith is *tasawwuf* and the acknowledgment and acceptance of God's works. Who ever may know Allah knows him by one of His Attributes, and the most prestigious of His attributes are three kinds: those connected with His beauty (*jamāl*) and with His majesty (*jalāl*) and with His perfection (*kamāl*).²⁸ Another reading on faith highlights human error as it pertains to the knowledge of Allah; "Human beings do not know Allah except through the knowledge that Allah gives them. Faith is essentially the act of humans connecting to the guidance of Allah, as He said in the Qur'an 6:125 'Who ever Allah wishes to lead right, He will open his breast to receive Islam and who ever He wishes to lead astray, He will make his breast strait and narrow.'²⁹

The readings selected from the *Kashf al-Mahjub* must meet a few basic conditions, one of which is that they be supported by the Qur'an or *ḥadīths* of the Prophet.³⁰ In order for listeners to take the text as a serious learning manual for *tasawwuf* spirituality, passages need to be validated by historical texts believed to be infallible and referred to by recognized historical Ṣūfī figures. The instructor may decide to choose a short simple narrative or more advance theoretical sections on *tasawwuf*, depending on the level of his own training in *tasawwuf* and his ability to understand the degree of readiness of the pilgrims sitting at the *ḥalāqa*. The following passage is usually recited: "In short, faith is really the absorption of all human attributes in search of Allah. In the holy Qur'an 27:34, it states, 'Kings, when they enter a city, they ruin it.' But, when *tasawwuf* is established in the heart of the Ṣūfī, the world of doubt is absolutely destroyed."³¹ It is to be noted that the emphasis on faith is meant to help pilgrims at the 'urs to see themselves as active seekers of Allah's knowledge. Here, faith is established as an integral element in *tasawwuf* by which one is capable of accessing the attributes of Allah. This view holds that faith is guided by Allah alone.

Uncovering the Fourth Veil: Purification and Repentance

During the *ḥalāqa* meetings, Ṣūfī shaykhs and *murīds* read passages referring to the unveiling process of *tasawwuf*, as well as the minute explanations made by Dātā Gaṇj Bakhsh. This guarantees a textual, historical, and spiritual continuity at the shrine, with the Ṣūfī shaykhs and *murīds* serving as the modern guardians of Dātā Gaṇj Bakhsh's *tasawwuf*. Such

Ṣūfī authorities as al-Muḥāsibī (d.857) and Bayezid Bisṭāmī (d. 874) have discussed the esoteric merits of repentance (*tauba*) and purification (*ṭabarrat*) as the initial steps toward union with the divine. Instructors stress Bakhsh's interpretation of the subject, and often recite the following passage: "Repentance (*tauba*) is the first station for spiritual pilgrims on the way to the Truth, just as the purification (*ṭabarrat*) is the first step for those who desire to serve God. In the Qur'an, sūra 66:8 states, 'O believer: turn to Allah in repentance.' *Tauba* really involves the turning back from what God has forbidden through fear of what He has commanded."³²

In the same *ḥalāqa*, a teacher may read a passage which elaborates the Prophet's practice of *tauba* and *ṭabarrat*, and the way they were embodied in his followers' life. Adepts usually recite the following from *Kashf al-Mahjub*: "The Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) said repentance is the act of returning. The respected Imām Junāyid al-Baghādādi (May Allāh be pleased with him)³³ takes the view that repentance consists in forgetting the sin. For great scholars like the imām, the main argument is that the sinner is a lover of God, and in contemplation, it is wrong to remember sin for remembrance of sin is a veil between God and those who contemplate Him."³⁴

In discussing the idea of 'uncovering the veil', the *murīd* cites concise passages from the text relating to the real implementation of *tauba* and *ṭabarrat*: "Repentance is of three kinds: (1) from understanding what is wrong to what is right, (2) then moving toward a better understanding of what is right to what is more righteous, (3) and finally, moving selfhood to Allah. The first kind is the repentance of the ordinary people; the second kind is the repentance of the elite folks; and the third kind of repentance belongs to the degree of Divine love (*mubabbat*)."³⁵ In the same manner that the different levels and understandings of *imān* are explicated, the *murīd* points out how *tauba* and *ṭabarrat* are also separated by the level of understanding and of *tasawwuf* practice.

Uncovering the Fifth Veil: Prayers and Love

During the 'urs, numerous *ḥalāqats* are conducted on the subject of 'unveiling the veil', and prayers and love. Each *murīd* follows a particular method in dealing with the subject of prayer and love. Some may read the order of the text, passage by passage, while others may browse through sections they consider to be the main points. The decision of which sections to read and how long to run the *ḥalāqa* depends on the *murīd*'s ability to sustain the interests of the pilgrims. Many of the *murīds* begin

with Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's commentary on the origins and function of prayer in *tasawwuf*. "Prayer (*namāz*) means remembrance of God and submissiveness to Him only, but in the legal use of the term it is associated with the five prayers that God has ordered to be performed which also involves certain conditions. These are the conditions for *namāz*: (1) They are be purified outwardly from filth and inwardly from desire. (2) That one's outward garment should be clean and one's inner garment should be lawfully acceptable. (3) That the place where one purifies one's self should be outwardly free from pollutants and inwardly free from sin. (4) That one turns outwardly toward the *qibla* which is the Ka'ba and the inward toward the *qibla* which is the Throne of Allah, which is the mystery of Divine contemplation. (5) That we stand outwardly in the state of power (*qudrat*) and inwardly in the garden of proximity to Allah (*qurbat*). (6) That one have sincere intention to approach Allah. (7) Saying 'Allah Akbar' in the station of awe and annihilation, and standing in the abode of union, and reciting the Qur'ān reverently, and bowing the head with humility, and prostrating one's self with sincerity. To make the profession of faith with deep concentration, is to salute the annihilation of one's attributes."³⁶ A listing of conditions of *namāz* is a thorough way of analyzing each point. A mistake often made by *murīds* is focusing upon their own points and neglecting to conduct open discussion in the *halāqa*.

Some instructors use shorter passages to make their point and to highlight Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's analysis of *tasawwuf*. They use the following: "Bowing oneself in prostration forces humility and the prostration of the head brings about self-knowledge, and the profession of faith is an intimate statement. Real salutation takes the place of detachment from the world and escape from the problems of stations."³⁷ For *murīds*, the *halāqa* is a perfect and intimate setting in which to bring about an 'unveiling' for pilgrims. They anticipate that members sitting in discussion will raise perennial problems in *tasawwuf* practice, and then demonstrate how the text of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh resolved those issues a long time ago.

During the *halāqa*, a *murīd* is careful to choose passages of the text which are supported by the Qur'ān and sunnah. This gives legitimacy both to the text and to the *murīd*, who functions as an authority figure on specific texts and on the larger tradition itself. One popular passage often read in public says, "Prayer is mostly performed by those who are engaged in self-mortification or who have attained to steadfastness (*istiqāmat*). The glorious Qur'ān states in sūra 2:160, 'Some men take idols beside Allah and love them as they love Allah, but the believers love Allah best.' As regards those who possess 'states' (*ahwāl*), their prayers, in the perfection of

ecstasy, correspond to the 'station' of union, so that through their prayers they become united. The holy Prophet (pbuh) said: 'In prayer lies my delight.'³⁸

In these lectures and circles of discussion, the 'unveiling of the fifth veil' is a complicated task for the *murīds*, who need to determine the best approach in connecting with the pilgrims. Getting bogged down with etymologies, legal history, and the listing of numerous conditions is generally not a good approach for the *murīds*. Experienced shaikhs and *murīds* know that the elements of *tasawwuf* cannot be communicated merely through a cerebral discussion. Rather, the group at the *halāqa* must be transformed by the experiential nature of the talk and text.

Uncovering the Fifth Veil: the *Hajj* and Contemplation

During the 'urs, *murīds* discuss the inner meanings of pilgrimage as interpreted by Dātā Ganj Bakhsh. *Kashf al-Mahjūb* states that God's original purpose in ordering people to perform *hajj* is more concerned about inner reflection and meditation than embarking on a physical journey to Arabia. For example, the text states, "The reality of things, the true object pilgrimage is not to visit the Ka'ba, but to obtain contemplation (*mushābada*) of Allah."³⁹ Again, the text cites a *ḥadīth* in support of the idea of *mushābada*: "The Prophet (pbuh) said, 'Worship God as though you see Him, if you do not see Him, He certainly sees you.'⁴⁰

These readings reflect the ongoing historical tensions between the supporters of 'urs activities at the shrine and proponents who believe that *hajj* to the Ka'ba is the only sacred pilgrimage in Islam. By reinforcing the Qur'ānic order of *hajj* as truly being a contemplative event, then the 'urs and the activities at the shrine become a legitimate territorial substitute for the *hajj*. If the intention of the Qur'ān is to highlight the importance of contemplation in one's life, then Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's shrine is the place where pilgrims can attain a high level of spiritual concentration.⁴¹ One popular reading from the text is, "Our wishing is the greatest of the veils that hinder us from seeing Allah. This is because we love our existence self-will, and self-will is disobedience. Disobedience is a veil. When self-will vanishes from this world, contemplation is attained, and when contemplation (*mushābada*) is firmly established, there is no difference between this world and the next."⁴²

Uncovering the Eleventh Veil: Musical Listening—*Sama'*

Qawwali performances contribute to a central unified *urs* ritual in ways that are especially important for pilgrims who do not belong to a Šūfi order. *Murīds*, therefore, are particularly vigilant in arguing for the legitimacy of *qawwali*.⁴³ It is argued that music performance (*sama'*) is accepted by the Qur'ān and sunnah, which made it possible for the Šūfis to indulge in it. In unveiling the question of *sama'*, *murīds* discuss how devotional music is not a genre in itself but an extension of the recitation of the Qur'ān and all of the melodic poetry within the Qur'ān. "The most beneficial Šūfi devotional music to the mind and most delightful to the ear is that the Word of God, which all believers and unbelievers, human beings are commanded to hear."⁴⁴ This is supported by a *hadith* which says, "It is permissible to hear poetry. The Prophet (pbuh) heard it, and the Companions not only heard it but also spoke it. He (pbuh) also said "Some poetry is wisdom."⁴⁵

At almost every *urs*, there is a *halāqa* sponsored by the shrine authorities solely dedicated to the discussion of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's views on *qawwali*. It is a detailed account of the chapter on *sama'* and the way it should be understood in the modern period. First, the *murīd* assigned to read in the *halāqa* begins with Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's categories of classes of musicians: "Šūfi musicians may be divided into two classes: (1) Those who hear the spiritual meaning, (2) Those who hear the material sound. Listening to sweet sounds produces a spark of the substance molded in human beings."⁴⁶ Second, the *murīd* gives an overview of past Šūfi shakhhs who debated the same issue and the way in which Dātā Ganj Bakhsh made his conclusions based on their arguments. For example, the *murīd* reads the following section: "The respected Shaikh Dhur'ī Nūn Misrī (maph) said that devotional music has a Divine influence that stirs the heart to seek God: those who listen to it spiritually become closer to Allah. This respected Šūfi Shaikh did not mean that *sama'* is the cause of becoming closer to Allah, but he meant that the music listener should hear the spiritual reality, not the mere sound, and that the Divine influence should sink into the heart to stir it up. Obviously anyone who sits in the *sama'* and follows the truth will experience a revelation, but the person who follows his lower soul will be veiled."⁴⁷

Any instructional reading for pilgrims consists of elaborating Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's proper elements of guidance for *sama'* and the boundaries that need to be respected. The *murīd* may read the subsection entitled "The

Conditional Rules on *Sama'*" to demonstrate Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's concern about possible abuse in performing and listening to devotional music. One main reason the *murīd* focuses on *sama'* is to ensure that the pilgrims understand the proper *ādab* in a *sama'* setting, and make it clear that Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's shrine maintains those boundaries strictly. One important passage from the *Kashf al-Mahjūb* says, "It is necessary that a spiritual director should be present during the performance, and that the place should be cleared for the common people, and that the singer should be respectable person. The heart should be emptied of worldly thoughts, a that the disposition of the musician should not be distracted by humor."

The *murīd* begins with the passages that discuss the conditions for singers at a *sama'*: "You (the Šūfi singer) must not exceed the proper bounds of devotional music until it manifests its power, and when it has become powerful you must be agitated, and if it calms, you must be calm. You must be able to distinguish a strong natural impulse from the strenuous work of ecstasy (*iwajid*)."⁴⁹ Once this is clearly understood by members at the *halāqa*, the *murīd* proceeds to discuss the boundaries for listeners at the *sama'*: A passage often read out loud is, "The listener must have enough perception to be capable of receiving the Divine influence and of doing justice to it. When Allah's might is manifested on his heart must not try to repel it, and when its force is broken he must not try to attract it. While he is in a state of spiritual emotion, he must neither expect anyone to help him nor refuse anyone's help if it be offered."⁵⁰

Conclusion

The *urs* at Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's shrine is a complex celebration of various communities, Šūfi and non-Šūfi, who attend for a variety of reasons connected to their spiritual or secular agenda. For the average pilgrim, celebration is an important cultural, social, and political event that can be ignored. For Šūfis, this is a sacred moment in the year to rejoice over Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's union with Allah. The *urs* allows Šūfi pilgrims to practice outwardly their faith of *tasawwuf*, but also bring another opportunity to welcome the Šūfi shakhhs's spiritual company in each ritual.

The *urs* provides an arena in which both Šūfi and non-Šūfi pilgrims preserve and perform the rituals required to celebrate the shakhhs's presence in worship, *dhikr*, *qawwali*, *salām*, ritualistic prayers, Qur'ānic recitation, and in the *halāqats*. All of the *urs* rituals are meant to aid in spiritual journey of the pilgrims so that they attain proximity to either the divine, the Prophet, or Dātā Ganj Bakhsh. All of these religious events,

whether in a collective *dhikr* or in an intellectual *halagā* setting, are meant to remove that which blinds one to transcendental experiences. The *ʿurs* phenomenon is completely a *tasawwuf*/enterprise, which must touch every sense of the body in order it to be truly understood.

Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's *ʿurs* is based not only on rituals and instructional *halagāt*, but is also a religious phenomenon that interfaces with the text of *Kashf al-Mabjūb*. The reading, lecturing, and debating of the *Kashf al-Mabjūb* by *murtad* demonstrates the liveliness of the text with the larger *ʿurs* event. One of the reasons for its continued popularity in contemporary Sūfi literature is that it is still used as a Sūfi manual for spiritual enlightenment. The text is not an isolated manual to learn by oneself or even an esoteric writing that needs to be demystified. It is a text in which a community of pilgrims experiences a process of discovering and lifting the veils. Along with the *ʿurs* rituals, the *Kashf al-Mabjūb* is a significant resource for pilgrims to better understand *tasawwuf*. In this way, rituals are performed by pilgrims who comprehend the complexities of the *ʿurs* and, more importantly, pilgrims are further connected to Dātā Ganj Bakhsh's shrine and to his text.

Endnotes

1. Numerous copies of *Kashf al-Mabjūb* in Urdu can be found in almost every bookstore in Lahore. These two translations by Muhammad 'Abū Chirāch (Lahore: Nazir Publishers, 1991) and 'Ulama Fazal ud-din Gohar (Lahore: Zia al-Qur'ān Publishers, 1989) are better translations. Also available are the reprinted works by edited by Valentine Zhukovski (Leningrad: Dar al-'Ulūm Ithad Jamahir Shihawi Sūsiyālisi, 1926) and Reynold A. Nicholson, (London: Luzac and Company, 1967 and 1970).
2. The cleansing of the tomb or *ghusul* with rose water begins on the 9th of Muharram prior to the beginning of the *ʿurs* and is washed completely for forty days, see Muhammad Din Kalim Qadiri, *Halat wa Rifāʿat Dātā Ganj Bakhsh* (Lahore: Noori Book Depot, 1979), 129-30.
3. Based on an interview with the Chief Executive of the *ʿUrs* Committee, Shaikh Abdur Rahman Ibrahim Sahib in June 1999, Lahore.
4. The two official Pakistani Television stations, PTV1 and PTV2, will air *qawwālī* concerts, *hamd*, *naṭiyā*, and the rituals of dignitaries. While <http://www.pak.gov.pk> will give brief accounts of the day's activities.
5. For studies on shrine activities see, P. Lewis, *Prs, Shrines, and Pakistani Islam* (Rawalpindi: Christian Study Centre, 1985); Farhan Nizami, "Madrasahs, Scholars, and Saints: Muslim Response to the British Presence in Delhi and the Upper Doab 1803-1857" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1983); Harald Einzmann, *Ziārat und Pre-Muridi* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1988), 115-38; Liyaqat Hussein Moini, "Rituals and Customary Practices at the Dargah of Ajmer," in *Muslims Shrines*, ed. Christian Troll

11. For Sūfis, to celebrate the shaiikh's unique status with God "The Friend of God supported in many places in the Qur'ān, for example, in surā 10:63 it states "The friend God—for them there is no fear, neither do they grieve." For more see Carl Ernst, "Mystic Language and the Teaching context in the Early Sūfi Lexicons," in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven Katz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Abū Nasr as-Sarrāj *Kitāb al-humayfi tasawwuf*, ed. Reynold A Nicholson (London, 1914); Michael Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Propherhood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ʿArī*, tr. Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993); and Bernd Radtke, "The Concept of Wilāya in Early Sūfism," in *The Heritage of Sūfism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqah Nimatullahi Publications, 1993).

12. See Nur Ahmad Maqbul, *Khazina-yi karam* (Karachi: Kirmanwala Publisher 1978); and Shan Qalandar, *Tasawwuf was Sāfi*, tr. Chaudhry Muhammad Yusuf Suhrawardi (Lahore: Muhammad Press, n.d.). For more on the relationship between the Sūfi Shaiikh and God see Gerhard Bowering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Qur'anic Hermeneutics of the Sūfi Sabīʿ al-Tustarī* (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1980); Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80-101; Simon Digby, "The Sūfi Shaiikh as a Source Authority in Mediaeval India," in *Islam et Societe en Asie du Sud*, ed. Marc Gaborieau (Paris: Ecole des hautes études en Sciences Sociales, 1986), 57-77; Ahmad Siddiq, *Zi-Mabjūb* (Gujranwala: Bazm-i Tawakuliyya, 1977).

13. For more on pilgrim visitation rites see also Muhammad Din Kalim Qadiri, *Halat wa Rifāʿat Dātā Ganj Bakhsh*.

14. There are three main windows to the tomb and each window has a volunteer guide pilgrims and ensure that the line moves regularly. These volunteers are representatives of the shrine and are viewed by pilgrims as guardians of the window; liaisons to the shrine authority.

15. For works on *dhikr*, see Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-Aḍḅkar wa'l-dar'at* translated by K. Nakamura as "Book of Invocations and Supplications" (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1990); *Kitāb Dhikr al-mawr wa mā bardā*, translated by T. J. Winter, "The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife" (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1989); Margaret Smith, *An early mystic of Baghdad: a study of the life and teachings of Ḥārī +sā al-Muḥasibī*, AD 781-857 (London: Sheldon Press, 1977 reprint); and Annemari Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: South Carolina Press, 1975).

16. Two valuable essays on Qur'anic recitation and piety are by Frederick Dent "The Adab of Qur'ān Recitation: Text and Context," in *International Congress for the of the Qur'ān*, ed. Anthony Johns (Canberra: Australian National University, 1981), 14 and "Exegesis and Recitation: Their Development as Classical Forms of Qur'anic Piety," *Transitions and Transformations in the History of Religions: Essays in Honor of Josep Kitagawa*, eds. Frank Reynolds and Theodore M. Ludwig (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 91

17. This *dhikr* is not only restricted to just reading the Qur'ān but as Hakim Muhammad Mūsā repeatedly stated that it is equally important to hearing the sacred recitation from professional Qur'anic reciters at the shrine. This attitude reflects a historical Islamic view of using all of the human senses to experience God. For more see, William Greene, "The Spoken and the Written Word," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* (1951): 23-59; and William Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture and the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); especially, Graham's "Qur'ān as Spoken Word: An Islamic Contribution to the Understanding of Scripture," in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, ed. Richard C. Martin (Tucson University of Arizona Press, 1985), 23-40; and, André Louf, "The Word Beyond Liturgical *Gisterian Studies* 6 (1971): 353-68.

18. To learn more on techniques of *dhikr* see an excellent resource by Maybud *Kasf al-asrar wa uddat al-abrar*, ed. 'Ali Asghar Hikmat, 10 vols. (Tehran: Intishārāt Danishgāhi, 1952-1960): II, 375-99; and Mir Valiyuddīn, *Contemplative Discipline in Sufism* (London: East-West Publications, 1980).

19. These three types of *dhikr* are also found in the following texts: Abū Bakr Muhammad al-Kālābādī, *Kitāb al-tarīq fi-madhab abī al-tasawwuf* (Cairo: Makta al-Khanjī, 1934); Abū Nasr as-Sarrā, *Kitāb al-ḥummaʿ fi-tasawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (London, 1914); Abū'l-Qasim 'Abdulkarīm al-Qushayrī, *Al-risāla al-qushayrīyya fi-tasawwuf*, 2 volumes, eds. 'Abdulhalīm Muḥmūd and Mahmūd b. Ash-Sharīf (Cairo: Matbat al-Hassan, 1974).

20. A good ethnographic study on *qawwali* structure, ritual, and its performance context see, Regula Burchardt Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

21. The order of *qawwali* musicians to sing at the *urs* is determined by the *Urs Samāʿ* Committee, but as to which songs are to be sung are entirely decided by the *qa* singers themselves. If a *band* and *naḥiyā* song have already been sung by previous singers, then most likely those poems are passed over for their own recognized *qaww* songs. The *qawwali* songs do not necessarily praise Dātā Ganjī Bakhsh but other significant recognized figures like: 'Alī ibn Abī Talīb, Baba Farīd Ganj-e-Shakr of Pakp; Khwāja Moin ud-dīn Chishī, and Lāl Shāhbaz Qalandar. Also, at the *urs*, *qawwali* mu not only restricted to Sufi devotional music but may include popular folklore music ar poetry written by renowned poets like Bullāh Shāh, Muḥammad Iqbal or Fez Ahmād F

22. For more on *qawwali* performance structure and etiquette procedures see Qureshi, especially chapters 4 and 5.

23. See Hiromi Loraine Sakata, "The Sacred and the Profane: Qawwali Represented in the Performances of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan," in *The World of Music* 36 (1994): 86-95 and, Jean During, *Musique et extase: Tradition mystique dans la tradition soufie* (Pa Albin Michel, 1988).

24. On shrine authority and politics see, Katherine Ewing, "The Politics of Sufism: Redefining the Saints of Pakistan," in *Journal of Asian Studies* 42/2 (February 1983): 2 68; Arthur Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise the Mediating Sufi Shaikh* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998); Hafī Rahmān Chaudhry, "Traditional and State Organizations of the Shrine of Bari Imam," *mushtar* 36/3 (1994): 85-104; and, Aḥar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 2 v (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983).

25. I have not seen any popular cultural studies on Dātā Ganjī Bakhsh's *urs*, how every year it is common for popular newsmagazines and newspapers like *Akbar-e-Jal Jang*, *The Muslim* and *Dawn* to print nominal stories on the *urs*.

26. For works on rituals and texts see, Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. and tr. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Ary A. Roest Crolius, *Thus Were The Hearings: The Word in the Experience of Revelation in Qurʾān and Hindu Scriptures*. Documenta missionaria, 8 (Rome: University Gregoriana Editrice, 1974); and, S.J.P. van "The Bible in Liturgical Use," in *Cambridge History of the Bible* 2:220-52.

27. Pilgrims who were not convinced with these statements were reassured by Hakīm Muḥammad Mūsā that even if one does not recognize this experience, this bac forth discovery mirrored the individual struggle with one's own worldly desires and encountering the path that leads to God.

28. *Kasf al-Mabīh* (Hereafter cited as KM.) Urdu translation by 'Ulama Fazal dīn Gohar (Lahore: Zia al-Qurʾān Publishers, 1989), 389-90.

29. KM, 393.

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