

A lifetime encounter with Sain Zahoor ~Part 2

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Contd..from Part 1

I repeat, these two days were like a trip to the world of Bulleh Shah, his life and philosophy in the company of Sain Zahoor.

Having been over awed by his deep mystical eyes, I had to gather some courage to ask him all the valid and invalid questions I had in my mind.

For most of the questions I pounced at him, he bounced the answers back with verses from Bulleh Shah's poetry .

I began with an inquiry about the details of how his life began as a devotee, and he remarked that it was destined. He had a great passion for singing sufi songs from a young age, despite the opposition from his peasant parents.

It was his 'famous dream' of a hand calling him, that took him at the age of 10 from one Sufi shrine to the other all over Pakistan for next 7 years. At last some indications made him realise that the hand was from a Dargah (shrine) at Uch Sharif. From there he was ordered to go to the Shrine of Bulleh Shah at Kasur, and reside there.

Learning about Bulleh Shah's life, he said , he was astonished to know how similar he was to Bulleh Shah in terms of his love for music and it's opposition from his family.

He recalled how he was first noticed by the professor cum TV producer Dildar Bhatti, on the shrine of Lal Hussain and was called to sing on PTV. The first words that were aired were:

**Na Kar Bandeya Meri, Meri,
Na Teri Na Meri,
Char Dinan Da Mela, Duniya
Pher Mitti Di Dheri**

*(Do not indulge in self,
Life is neither yours nor mine.
It's a 4 day trip and then shall all be a mound of earth.).*

He mentioned of the honour he was given as the best folk singer by BBC for the year 2006, an Award in France and a Presidential Award in Pakistan, but what he really takes pride is in how he converted two Japanese boys to follow the path of Sufism and Islam.

He talked of the selflessness one needs to have in devoting one's life to Sufi singing.

On a question of the purpose of sufi music—he mentioned that music was Sufi's innovative method to attract common man towards the path of peaceful religion. It served the purpose to diffuse the inter-communal tensions and the hegemony of the orthodox religion that existed in the 16 th or 17th century. He said the music was like a magnet for those who wanted to escape from hatred and were attracted to peace and love. .

He said that even in todays world where there is hatred widespread everywhere, he wishes to contribute for world peace, his bit, through Sufi music, like a drop in the ocean.

Quoting Bulleh Shah he remarked, the essence of his life was to spread the message of love:

**Masjid Dha Day, Mandir Dha Day
Dha Day Jo Kujh Disda
Par Kissay Da Dil Na Dhawee(n)
Rub Dilaa(n) Wich Wasda**

*Tear down the Mosque, tear down the temple
Tear down every thing in sight
But don't (tear down) break anyone's heart
Because God lives there*

While talking, came up the fact that he was unlettered, and when I asked if he did he think that education would bring more awareness and openness in the minds of those who spread hatred he remarked:

**Parrh Parrh Aalim Faazil Hoya
Kaddi Apney Aap noo Parrheya hi nahin
Jaa Jaa Warda Mandir Maseetaan
Kaddi Mun Apney Vich tun Wardeya ee Nahin**

*Reading books over and over you want to be a learned man
but you never study your innerself.
You run to enter mosques and temples*

but you never enter into your innerself.

He took out a paper from his pocket remarking, “This is my ‘parhai’ (literacy)”, and he tried to read some meaning out of those pictures. It was



beyond me, perhaps because I was illiterate in that language.

On asking about his travels he said that his music has taken him to over 35 countries explaining it simply as “ 5 passports have been filled up with stamps and visas for different countries.”

I asked him of the place that he liked to visit the most?

He remarked with a diplomatic smile:

“Chal Way Bullehya Chal O’thay Chaliyay

Jithay Saaray Annay

Na Koi Saadee Zaat PichHanay

Tay Na Koi Saanu Mannay “

O’ Bulleh Shah let’s go there

Where everyone is blind

Where no one recognizes our caste (or race, or family name)

And where no one believes in us

I asked: **“Is really any such place on Earth? “**

He retorted: **“Why do you need a place on land, if your heart is that place, where you do not differentiate ? Is it not enough ?”**

As the time passed and my audacity to ask him personal questions increased, an informal Sain Zahoor with a great sense of humour emerged out too.

While talking to him, I could not meet his gaze. I was staring at his ektara, which he calls tumba.

He remarked: **“I think you like my tumba more.”**

It was embarrassing, but I retorted without a second thought **“Yes, I like it a lot”.**

And so he offered to teach me how to hold and play it. It was his idea to click a picture with the tumba in my hand.

We talked about his family and his sons, two of whom were part of the orchestra and the third one sings independently.

I was keen to know about his wife, and asked him if he took his wife with him on the tours.

He just smiled and nodded a ‘No’.

“Doesn’t she get angry on your frequent trips and you don’t take her”, I complained.

He smiled and said : **“ I have learnt from Bulleh Shah, how to appease her.”**

“How?” was my obviously inquisitive question.

He narrated with a naughty sparkle in his eyes: **“ I sing to her:**

‘Bas kar ji hun bas kar ji,

Ik baat asan naal has kar ji.’

and my old lady smiles.

I found the verses very intriguing, so he offered to narrate the whole poem, which indeed was beautiful. And I share the first stanza here...

Bas kar ji hun bas kar ji,

Ik baat asan naal has kar ji.

Tuseen dil mere vich vasde ho,

aiven saathon duur kyon nasde ho.

Naale ghat jaadu dil khasde ho,

hun kit val jaaso nas kar ji.

Bas kar ji hun bas kar ji,

Enough! Now enough!

Smile! Speak to me!

You inhabit my heart.

What is the use of running away?

what is the use of running away:

Using magic, you pulled my heart toward you.

Whom do you run toward now?

Enough! Now enough!

I couldn't help ask: **“Did Bulleh Shah also appease his wife by this poetry?.”**

“No he was never married, but he loved his Master Inayat Qadri like a woman loves her beloved.”

And he narrated the interesting story of how Bulleh Shah has once faulted in front of his master by being 'snobbish' referring himself as 'Syed Bulleh'. The master felt offended and disowned Bulleh Shah as a disciple. And his master had set extremely high standards for his disciple, he would not agree to any easy means of appeasement.

Since Bulleh Shah knew appeasing his beloved was no easy task, he dressed himself like a woman, adorned the nath (nose ring), wore ghungroo (ankle bells) and hid behind a veil.

“Why did he have to become a woman?” I asked.

He said **“He wanted to show his master that he had given up all his masculine ego and acted like a helpless woman.”**

Bulleh Shah sang and danced in front of his master, till the master's heart melted . He recognised, this extreme devotion could be from none other than BullehShah, so he asked : **“Are you Bulleh?”**

From behind the veil came the reply: **“No master, I am Bhullah(the defaulter).”**

He narrated the words which Bulleh Shah used during the appeasement:

Tere ishaq nachaya kar ke thia thia

Tere ishaq ne dira mere ander kita

Bhar ke zehar piala, main taan aape pita

jhabde bohrin we tabiba, nahin taan main mar gai a

Compelled by love, I dance, I dance.

This love has set up camp inside me.

I Physician, come back! my life is ebbing away.

It is I who filled the cup with this poison and drank it.

Come back right away, else I will surely die.

Compelled by love, I dance, I dance.

As the time for the group came to pack up and leave for the Hotel, I joked: **“Sain, are you taking back my tumba?”**

He smiled and said: **“Come to Pakistan, I will give you an identical one, but the condition is that you will have to learn to play it.”**

He did not give me the ektara, but the time he gave to answer my unending questions and the interest with which he offered to answer my queries about him, his poetry and Bulleh Shah, I shall cherish for rest of my life.

Ektara will remain as mine in the memories and the pictures, for sure 😊



