

THE SHAIKH WRITES:

(Following is the translation of extracts from the book "Asraar e Asra'a" by our Shaikh Dr. Shah Meerza Ikhtiyar Hussain Kaif Niazi)

By: Muhammad Tauseef Ansari

"Wama Arsalnaaka Illa Rehmatallil A'alameen" (Quran 21:107)

And We have sent You none except as Rehmat for the A'alameen.

The translation of the verse has purposely been done in a way so as to keep the words of Rehmat and A'alameen intact. Let's discuss the three important words which are Arsalnaaka, Rehmat and A'alameen in the reverse order.

A'alameen: A'alameen is commonly translated as 'worlds'. This word however needs to be translated as encompassing all the creation and the complete universe. In fact the word A'alameen includes both time and space. With respect to time, A'alameen includes past, present and future of this world and the world hereafter (the completeness of this aspect of the word will be better explained by the limits of infinity to eternity). A'alameen with respect to space includes all places that exist near and far, places that existed, that still exist and will exist. Thus A'alameen covers all the creation of Allah, all the places possible and all the times possible that can be envisaged by our limited mind; and those that are beyond its capacity. When Prophet (SAW) is called as Rehmatallil A'alameen, then he is, was and will be Rehmat for everyone, everywhere and at all points of time. Who can better explain A'alameen than Allah Himself! He pronounces Himself as the Rabbul A'alameen in the first verse of the Quran while stating the same A'alameen for His dearest Prophet (SAW). Thus for whichever A'alameen Allah is the Rab, for the same A'alameen, Prophet (SAW) is the Rehmat. Also to be noted is that Prophet (SAW) is Rehmat not just for 'Muslimeen' or 'Momineen' or any particular race or creed. His Rehmat extends to all the mankind and every single particle of the universe is within the folds of his Rehmat.

Rehmat: Rehmat is commonly translated as mercy. Rehmat is derived from the word Rahim meaning merciful. Rahim, as one of the names of Allah has a synonym Rehman that at times, is used interchangeably. However Rehman is translated as Benevolent as compared to Rahim. A subtle difference between these two qualities of God can be explained by an analogy. Allah is Benevolent to all the mankind. Whoever may the person be, He is providing food for all the people regardless of their faith let alone any race or creed. Thus He is Rehman for all the mankind. In addition to that, He has endowed a guide like Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to the

followers of Islam reflecting His Rehmat which is a specific act of being merciful with a shade of love in it.

Arsalnaaka: Arsalnaaka is translated as sent or delivered. This word shows his (SAW) existence in timelessness when the Prophet was sent to the A'alameen as Rehmat. It describes his (SAW) presence even before his physical lifespan. Allah uses the word "khalaaqna" in Quran meaning created when He mentions the creation of universe, angels, jins and human beings, but uses the word "Arsalnaaka" for His beloved Prophet (SAW). Another point to be noted is that "khalaaqna" is used for the creation of the ordinary human beings while Prophet (SAW) was 'sent' unlike ordinary human beings. Another observation that comes out of this word is that if someone (in this case Allah) is sending someone (in this case Prophet SAW) then the being sent has to be with the sender in the first place from where it is sent. So the Prophet (SAW) was sent from Allah while a Hadith explains that "He was there alone when nothing existed" (Bukhari).

So Allah not only expresses the quality of Prophet (SAW) through this ayat but also praises him as being Rehmat for His creation. Allah alone can justify the level of praise which Prophet (SAW) is entitled to as He has himself proclaimed in Quran 94:04 that Prophet's (SAW) zikr has been exalted.

Extract from a Na'at by the Shaikh:

Woh jo ho kay basher bhe basher na hua; aisa tou basher koi bhe nahin
Who jo noor e khuda, mehboob e khuda; aisa tou basher koi bhe nahin

(Ordinary man in appearance but actually not; there is no one like him
The divine Light and God's Beloved; there is no one like him)

Maeraaj mein kitna qurb hua, qousaen ka perdah daal diya
Uss per bhi kaha phir 'aou adnaa'; aisa tou basher koi bhe nahin

(The degree of nearness during Ascension veiled under the metaphor of arches
And the distance is described being much less than that; there is no one like him)

Kiya Kaif Kahay aur kiya likhay, haan bus yehi kehna kaafi hay
Aisa tou basher koi na hua, aisa tou basher koi bhe nahin

(What can Kaif render in his praise as it is enough to say

There never was, is or will be anyone like him)

ED's NOTE:

So here it is ... the third issue of our newsletter. The efforts of the contributors are praiseworthy as they took some moments out of their precious time to be a part of this. This is a continuing effort to bring to fore not only the hidden talents but the ideas, experiences and thoughts of the people on a common platform. Let me convey happiness and pleasure of the patrons when they see the bouquet of various flowers having different fragrances and colours materialising in the form of this newsletter.

We have also received accolades from other people who have browsed our website and have not only lauded the efforts but also highly praised the contents. Every one of us has a creative being hidden inside us and this creativity is always longing to express itself. Let this forum be the canvas where you can paint your words with whatever colour you want. All for one and one for all.

While a detailed account of Urs held at Khanqah e Aghaia is included later in this Newsletter, the most important and noticeable thing during these events is the immaculate handling of the operational issues by the peer-bhais (brethren of the order). Having had the opportunity to visit a few other khanqah's in the company of our Shaikh, I have observed that the arrangements, the operational modalities and the timely accomplishment of deliverables in our silsila are unmatched. Hats off to the team of devotees who, out of sheer love, are ever ready and actually do actively participate in organising and carrying out the events so beautifully. Everyone contributes to the best of their capabilities out of sheer love.

A similar scene and display of love was evident in Jabalpur, India where our Shaikh went and participated in the Urs ceremonies. People from near and far were there to get their share of blessings. The ambiance was filled with love & devotion and the devotees were treated with food for soul. Saleem 'Jhankaar' was the qawwal who came all the way from Gawaaliyaar and beautifully rendered Sufi poetry in Hindi, Urdu and Persian. The management of affairs of the Urs was excellent.

Let's pray that these efforts and contributions, of every sort, continue under the aegis of the patrons and may we all benefit from their guidance and cultivate the love within ourselves.

Talib

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

By Rumi Ikhtiyari

It is said in the Quran:

‘Say: He is Allah, the One and Only’ (112:1)

The very foundation of Islam rests on *Kalima-e-Tauheed* where Oneness of Allah has been emphasized in its purest form. It states, ‘*La-ilaha illAllah* - There is no God but Allah’. This testimony of Allah’s Oneness has a power of transforming human life to its optimum potential. The underlying principles of all methods of worship in Islam originate from this understanding of Allah’s Oneness.

It is written in the Quran: ‘I have not created the jinns and humankind except they worship Me.’ (51:56)

‘Worship’ needs to be understood in context of this verse, as it determines relationship of creation with the Creator. Ordinarily, certain physical disciplines are required for a worshipping Muslim during Praying, Fasting, Charity and Haj. However, more importantly than anything else, it is the correct intention (*Niyat*), which is a pre-requisite to any such act. There is a *Hadith*:

Inna mal aamal-u-bin’niyyat – Actions are judged by intention.

A worshipper can perform outwardly worshipping acts in a perfect way, but only correct intention leads to inner transformation otherwise such acts remain superficial. For such a worshipper, it is said in the Quran:

“So woe to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers” (107:4-5)

Salaat (prayer) for instance, which is considered to be the most important form of worship in Islam, starts formally with ‘*Niyat*’. Once *Niyat* is established, the worshipper then concentrates towards the act of *Salaat* itself where he is supposed to negate every object of his attention to reflect upon Allah while reading verses from Quran. During the act of *Salaat*, he faces Kaaba that is also known as the house of Allah. Here, a question arises; can Allah be restricted to a specific place when it is said in the Quran:

‘He is with you wherever you are.’ (57:4)

To a Sufi, outward house of Allah is symbolic in nature and inwardly denotes ‘*qalb*’ i.e. the spiritual heart in the light of *Hadith e Qudsi*:

‘The heavens and the earths cannot contain Me, but the heart of a *Momin* (true believer) can!’

Although Kaaba is outwardly a symbol of heavenly abode, yet it beats within. ‘*Hadith e Ihsan/Gabriel*’ substantiates to this fact too which states: ‘Worship Allah as you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, then indeed He sees you.’ (*Al-Bukhari and Al-Muslim*)

Now, ‘seeing’ from the physical perspective has its limitations. From the vantage point of a worshipper, eyes can only see from and up to a certain distance while Allah is not a distant or a confined object as it is given in the Quran:

We are nearer to him than his jugular vein. (50:16)

Allah is All-Encompassing. (2:115).

Accordingly, ‘seeing’ by Allah cannot be taken in a literal sense either, when distance is nowhere to be found between the Creator and the creation. In such a relationship, ‘Seeing’ can only imply *tasawwur* i.e. ‘in the presence of Allah’. Basically, a worshipper is being asked to develop a deep understanding of Allah’s presence everywhere through his acts of worship. Therefore, for such a worshipper, ‘*La-ilaha ill Allah* takes the meaning of *La-moujoud ill Allah* i.e. Nothing exists but Allah. Consequently, worship (*Ibadat*) transforms into awareness (*Irfan*) leading towards the recognition of One and only One Allah as per the covenant mentioned in the Quranic verse

7:172-And (remember) when thy Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their reins, their seed, and made them testify of themselves, (saying): Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea, verily.

A *Hadith e Qudsi* also points towards the same covenant:

I was a hidden treasure and wanted to be recognised, hence created the creation.

To put it in a nutshell, Worship is nothing less than recognizing Him; to know Him and to find Him in every detail of life. All such sincere acts of worship take a worshipper to that height, where he is able to feel the presence of Allah in his day-to-day life. Allah’s awareness in his life becomes so profound that at times, he even forgets and loses himself ready to be discovered by Allah’s Majestic presence.

Having deliberated this, the importance of physical acts of worship cannot be ignored as true Sufis perform these acts of worship as required by Sharia i.e. Islamic Law and their *fiqh* i.e. schools of jurisprudence. The Sufis, however, consider them to be a means of reaching the goal and not the goal itself.

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (RA) says in his *Masnavi*: “Our Lord has decreed ‘Prostrate, so you may draw near’. The Prostration of our bodies is a cause for our spirits to draw near to God”.

God says to Moses in *Masnavi*: “Ways of worship are not to be ranked as better or worse than one another, its all Praise; its all right. Its not Me who is glorified in acts of worship; it’s the worshippers.”

OF LOVE AND RESPECT

By Asim Mirza

“All is fair in love and war” ... a cliché that follows us all. Love begets love and leads one into becoming a caring and loving human being as well. The basic doctrine of *Tasawwuf* is love for the Shaikh that culminates into the love for the Prophet (SAW) and Allah. Across the globe, wherever the Sufi path is traversed by the devotees, people have expressed their love for their Shaikh in all possible ways. The beloved also holds a very prestigious position in the eyes - and heart - of a lover. This automatically places the beloved on a pedestal of respect also. The fine line which exists between love and respect sometimes plays an important role in the lives of the lovers. In the case of a spiritual order the spiritual development of lovers i.e. the *salikeen* depends on both these aspects. A very beautiful amalgam of love and respect is evident in this case.

Why go far in search of the examples, we have our very own *silsila* where love is deeply rooted in the hearts of *salikeen* and has been inculcated by the love and blessings showered on us by our Shaikh. Each and every one of the devotees in our *silsila* can claim that the Shaikh loves him/her the most. This attribute has been passed on through *silsila e Niazia* to Hazrat Shah Meerza Agha Muhammad (RA) where it excelled and has been carried forward in its true spirit by the Sufi masters who followed. The *salikeen* of Aghaia *Niazia* order have not only developed formidable love for their Shaikh but they have also sustained the legacy of respect.

With our Shaikh as the guide and an example, the respect shown by the *salikeen* is again a mark of its own. Yet sometimes, the boundaries of respect are “stretched” when love takes precedence and roots itself deeply into the heart of a *salik*. When love triggers the action of a lover, the only motive - and desire - behind all his action is to do his best for his lover. He does not think with his mind rather acts upon the notions of emotions. An evident example would be the life of Prophet (SAW) when a *sahabi* pronounced that once *Huzoor* (SAW) had accidentally bruised him on his back and he has the right to inflict the same upon the Prophet (SAW). The other *sahabas* were astonished but Prophet (SAW) - being ever knowing - consented. The *sahabi* asked him to take off his shirt so that he can fulfill his responsibility. When Prophet (SAW) did that, he fell upon the back of Prophet (SAW) kissing it with all his love and rubbing his face and eyes on it. He then explained that he so much wanted to kiss Prophet’s (SAW) back that he resorted to exaggeration and misrepresentation to fulfill his objective. (*contd. on the next page*).

HAMD (poetry in praise of Allah)

by Saleem Nizami Ikhtiyari (Jabalpur)

'Poetry', as such, uses words to convey subtle experiences that exist beyond words. It emerges as a wonderful paradox of wordless words creating a beauty of its own and charms the readers to the extent of experiencing ecstasy. It is the expression of deepest emotional states whether in relation to physical dimension or spiritual realm. Sufis in particular, who consider material world just a passing phase in the journey towards the ultimate, keep their focus of life inwards as their beloved exists within. For them, poetry occurs as the expression of the inner self that explodes with joy after finding beloved close to the heart and then a song of celebration surfaces up in a rhythmic word pattern, giving rise to the most beautiful poetry. Many Sufis like Hazrat Jami (RA), Hazrat Moulana Rumi (RA), Hazrat Fareeduddin Attar (RA), Hazrat Fakhruddin Iraqi (RA), Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (RA), Hazrat Qibla Niyaz Be Niyaz (RA) etc. have written extraordinarily beautiful poetry. Likewise, poetry of our Shaikh Hazrat Dr. Shah Meerza Ikhtiyar Hussain Kaif Niazi appears parallel to the classical Sufi poets except the style that at times appear more modern. His work is original, lucid, appealing and beautiful. His every creation is a masterpiece in itself firmly grounded in the teachings of Quran and Sunnah as can be seen in the following HAMD, which is translated below. It is a masterpiece of art, love and devotion.

*Kya ho ta'reef Teree ae mabo'od
Misl Tera jahan mein hai mafqood*

In what way, can we ever admire you
O Allah?

When, none of your similitude exists in the
universe.

This is in reference to the Quranic verses:

42:11 - There is nothing whatever like unto Him.
112:4 - And there is none like unto Him.

*Kaun hai Tu kahan hai kaisa hai
Aqal kay rastay yehan masdood*

How to know you? Where to find you? How
to recognize you?

Road of intellect is blocked here.

We understand things when we see them in
shape, size and form. To find Allah through
intellect is like asking an answerless question.
This refers to the Quranic Verse:

6:103 - Vision comprehends Him not

*Fehm-o-idrak say Tu balatar
Be-chugun, be-misal, la-mehdud*

You are beyond understanding and intellect.
You are formless, incomparable & limitless.

Allah-Rabbulizzat is beyond our senses in the
light of Quranic verse:

23:91 - Glory to Allah! (He is) free from the (sort
of) things they attribute to Him.

*Kun kaha Khud say Khud hua zahir
Doosra kaun tha wahan maujood*

He said to Himself – Be! And became
manifested.

Who else was there besides Him?

This refers to Quranic verse:

3:59 - Be. And He was

*Naam teray ba farq-e qaed haen sub
Ho Muhammad(SAW) ya Hamido-Mehmud*

All names are Yours with contrasting
diversity.

May it be Muhammad, Hamid or Mahmud.

Hamid means admiration of Allah-Rabbulizzat
while Muhammad literally means one who is
admired greatly. Mahmud means admired so
greatly that He becomes admiration Himself.
This refers to the Quranic verse :

20:20 - Allah - there is no god but He; His are the
very best names.

*Qurb itna qareeb az rug e jaan
Dour itna nazer say hae mafqood*

So near, that nearer than the jugular vein.
Yet so far that beyond the limit of vision.

Allah-Rabbulizzat is simultaneously closest
yet farthest; hence we can not see Him. This
refers to Quranic verse:

50:16 - We (Allah) are nearer to him than (his)
jugular vein

*Sara alam hai ek fareb e nazar
Juz tere koi shay nahin maujood*

The universe is a delusion
Nothing exists except You.

Our Shaikh says that this physical world is
not real rather a quick succession of events
makes it appear so. In reality, nothing exists
but only Allah-Rabbulizzat. This refers to
Kalma e Taiyyaba - La ilaha illallah which
translates to La maujood illallah meaning
'nothing, but Allah Rabbulizzat exists.'

*Houn girah lakh jaisay dhagay mein
Ek teri zaat ka hai sara wajood*

Like innumerable knots in the thread,
Every appearance in actuality manifests your
presence.

Just as reality of knots is a thread, likewise
reality of every object is nothing but Him.
This refers to Quranic verse:

28:88 - Everything will perish save His
countenance.

*Tu hee her rang her libaas mein hae
Kaheen Abid hae khud kaheen ma'boud*

You are in every colour and in every guise.
Somewhere a worshipper and elsewhere
being worshipped.

This refers to Quranic verse

57:3 - He is the beginning, He is the end, He
is the manifest and He is the hidden.

*Tera ferman khud hae un-fusekum
KAIF mein bhi zaroor hai mojud*

You say "I am are within yourself".

KAIF must also be carrying that presence.

This refers to Quranic verses:

51:20&21 - The earth is full of signs for those
who are certain. And within yourselves; do
you not see?

With the passage of time, Hamd as an
important genre of poetry has evolved with a
major contribution from Sufi poets who have
rendered poetry in three significant languages
prevailing in the subcontinent i.e. Urdu,
Persian and Arabic.

OF LOVE AND RESPECT

... (contd. from previous page)

Allama Iqbal has rightly put it in his asha'aar
as follows:

*Lazim hay dil k paas rahay paasban e aql
Laikin kabhi kabhaar isay tanha bhe ch-hoR
dae*

(Intellect should guard one's emotions but
sometimes emotions should be left
unguarded)

*Bay Kahater kood parra aatish e namrood
maen ishq*

Aql hay mehew e tamasha lub e baam abhi

(Referring to the incident where Moses (AS)
jumped into the big fire set ablaze by Pharaoh
Namroud: Love fearlessly dived into the river
of fire while intellect is still on the verge of
analysis)

However a lot of emphasis is placed on
observing the etiquettes (*Adaab*) of the
gathering where one is required to follow set
of procedures to contemplate on his inner self
and gradually move towards the goal of
annihilating one's ego. This channelises
devotees' love into a stream of effort to reach
his goal. The exercise of contemplating on
the inner-self and annihilating one's ego for
the beloved has been rendered beautifully by
Hazrat Zaheen Shah Tajji (RA):

*Seekh Zaheen k dil say jalna, kaahay ko her
shamaa pay merna
Apni aag mein khud jal jaaye, tou aisa
perwana bun ja*

(Don't annihilate yourself in any fire, learn it
from Zaheen's heart

Be the moth who burns itself in its own fire)

RUMI's CORNER

Rabi-ul-Awwal is the third month of the Islamic calendar that literally means first month of the spring. It is considered, one of the most significant months in the Islamic history as Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born on 12th of *Rabi-Ul-Awwal*. With his advent in the physical realm, *Kalima-e-Tauheed* also entered its final phase by taking the form:

La-ilaha ill Allah Muhammad ur Rasul Allah

There is no God but Allah Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.

It is interesting to see how people of different schools of thought see Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from their respective perspectives. According to one group, he was only a deliverer of the divine message and for another; he was just a ruthless warrior or at the best a statesman. Such darker shades of opinions that try to eclipse *Mah-e-Moneer** (Radiant Moon) simply lose luster of authenticity without ever dimming the *Noor-e-Mobeen** (Manifest light).

Then, there are people who see another Muhammad (pbuh):

Muhammad - who is love incarnated when several of his companions would not allow Prophet's ablution (*wudu*) water to fall on the ground rather drink it or apply on their faces.

Muhammad – whose love compelled Hazrat Owais Qarni (RA) to break all his teeth, when he heard that Prophet (pbuh) lost a tooth in Ghazwa-e-Uhad. Strangely enough, they never met in person with each other.

Muhammad – a loving grandfather who would prolong prostration (*Sajdas*) in *Salaat* if his grandsons were sitting on his back.

Yet, there is another Muhammad (Pbuh) who is a lamp of divine radiance (*Siraj-un-Munir*) that has given birth to the ecstatic spiritual path of the Sufis. No doubt, like the origin of the name 'Sufi', there have been numerous theories about the Sufi path itself. It has been traced back from Neo-Platonism to Judaism and from Christianity to Bhakti Sadhus, but any impartial study can easily find the distinct features of the Sufi path originating from the teachings of Muhammad (pbuh). The meditations of the Sufis in general are based on Quranic verses which they practice besides regular methods of worship. This has given rise to a culture of Sufis with a distinct flavour of its own. Our Shaikh says in one of the *Naats* [praise of Muhammad (pbuh)]:

*Jaana-e-jahan hein Aap mataae jahaan hein Aap
Ashiq Khuda hai jiska woh janaan-e-jaan hein Aap*

Soul of the Universe you are, Essence of the Universe you are!

God even loves you, Such a beloved you are!

- Rumi Ikhtiyari

(*Prophet Muhammad – SAW)

SUFISM: THE JOURNEY

by Samer Imran

Sufism is the mystic branch of Islam. There isn't a consensus about the origin of the word. Some scholars opine that it refers to those who belong to the "*saff*" or the line in which believers stand for prayers. Others are of view that it refers to Cleanliness of heart "*Safa*" because purity of heart is a highly recommended aspect of human existence. Yet another word that Sufism is thought to be derived is the coarse apparel of wool "*suf*" worn by the Sufis as it was preferred by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

There may be a difference of opinion about the origin of the word but the common objective of the practice is to achieve nearness to God. It was adopted by those who curbed their carnal desires to reach a harmonious existence as per the dictates of the Supreme creator. Sufism is the essence of Islam and its roots are in Quran and the life of the Prophet (PBUH). For the sake of explanation it has been compared to a fruit where shariat is the peel or the outer portion of it and Sufism is the pulp inside the peel. A fruit is complete when both the parts are there. Formalisation of practices of Sufism can be traced back to the second Hijri or 822A.D when Islam started losing its pristine values as the adherents of Islam became engrossed in the worldly affairs. Sufism in the contemporary times has attracted a lot of attention because it is thought to be the common ground on which all the religions meet. It should be noted that Mysticism has its presence in most of the religions of the world but it cannot be read out of its context.

Sufism has been flexible enough to adapt to the diverse cultural, behavioural, geographical and even climatic conditions. We can see that Sufism of different period and places had different nuances. The Sufis of Baghdad have subtle differences from that of the Sufis of later period like that of Junaid Baghdadi (RA). The early Sufis had a strong tendency towards renunciation of the worldly desires.

Many of followers of this path adopted poverty as means of penance of their vices. There was an emphasis on achieving *Ilm-e-batin* (knowledge of the introvert) as the knowledge of the soul was concomitants with efforts to reach a sublime bliss. The ultimate goal always being nearness to Allah. It was also a period of vast exegesis being written to explain the meaning of Quran and Sunnah.

One of the most difficult aspects of Sufism is to detangle the mesh of fable from reality. Let's take the case of Rabia Al Adwaiyya (RA) 801 A.D. Her love for God was so intense that she saw the existence of the Heaven and the Hell as unnecessary as people

tend to worship God not for His nearness or love but from the fear of Hell and the desire to enter the Heavens.

I began my conjugal life in a family deeply engrossed in the practice of Sufism. Their humility and the ideology of spreading the message of love and peace struck me. My journey into Sufism began with intellectual forays which were followed by a visit to the shrines of the saints to gain a first hand experience of the place inhabited by these personages. The latest one being the Urs ceremony of Hazrat Shah Meerza Agha Muhammad (RA) in Jabalpur, India.

We landed at the Indra Gandhi international airport in Dehli and were taken to Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia's (RA) shrine. We first paid homage to Hazrat Ameer Khusroo (RA) at his shrine as Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia (RA) had desired that all those who come to his shrine must first pay their homage to Hazrat Ameer Khusroo (RA). Ameer Khusroo (RA) was son of a Turkish officer and is renowned for his Persian and Hindi poetry. He was employed at the Delhi court. He is also credited with being a musical innovator & performer and was deeply respected and loved by his sufi mentor Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia (RA).

I was looking forward to see Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia's (RA) shrine because he is one of the most famous saints of the Indian subcontinent. He is called "*Mehboob-e-Ilahi*" meaning the beloved of God whose austerity, piety and love for the common man knew no bounds. He was the disciple of Hazrat Baba Fareed Shakrganj (RA) and was ordained by him not to borrow anything from anyone. He further instructed him even to love his enemies. There is a famous anecdote that once some of his enemies spread thorns on his path. He knowingly walked on them and prayed that thorns may turn into flowers in their graves.

The ambience, the filth and the squalor and the beeline of the greedy beggars running after the devotees made me ponder that this is a misrepresentation of the teaching of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia (RA). Everything from the descendents i.e. the pirezadas with hands studded with rings asking for nazar to the ambience seemed to be poles apart from the teachings of the man who lay in that mausoleum. Disheartened that my expectations were dashed to the grounds I left the place with a heavy heart. We reached the Delhi's Niazamuddin Aulia railway station and we boarded the train for Jabalpur, our final destination. There was an obnoxious smell of urine at the station and the train was also not up to my expectation. We were allotted seats in different compartments, there was no proper place to even sit and relax, and this second class A.C compartment was over flowing with people. Seeing our worried faces that how will

we travel, Imran and Tauseef talked with the ticket checker and we got seats together in the first class AC cabin. Finally, we all got settled in our compartment and started chatting and sharing past visit experiences. The rhythmic movement of the train reflected the fear and hope of experiencing spirituality in my thoughts. We reached Jabalpur and I anticipated a similar scenario in the mausoleum of Hazrat Meerza Agha Muhammad (RA).

A surprise awaited me at this small nondescript town. The tranquility, the serenity and the cleanliness of the surrounding of the mausoleum stirred my spirits. It invoked a spiritual quest of the real essence of life. My inner being went on a spiritual voyage. The image of the saintly figure that inhabited the place filled my thoughts.

The anecdote somehow came to my mind that once during Muharram, multitude of devotees thronged the shrine of Hazrat Meerza Agha Muhammad (RA) for *sabeel* of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA). Due to rationing, sugar for the milk/sharbat soon finished, Hazrat Meerza Murtaza Hussain (RA) felt sad and went inside the shrine of Hazrat Meerza Agha Muhammad (RA) and locked the door and cried profusely and prayed to him to intercede to God to save his honour as he would not be able to serve the guests of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA). When he came out he had flowers in his hand which were thrown in the well. The water of the well sweetened for the preparation of *sabeel* for distribution to the believers who thronged the place to pay respect. The incident was quite famous and was widely narrated.

My spiritual voyage brought me to the conclusion that the panacea to all human problems is that man should rise above the worldly preoccupation and subsume ourselves in divine love. We should break the rituals that reach the essence of the prayer. The biggest dichotomy that I observed is that people who professed to follow Sufism have entangled themselves in the rituals of offering flowers and singing praises of the saints instead of following the footsteps of the saints. Most of the saints kept fast through out their lives. It would be very difficult to find individuals doing so today.

Most Sufis had a frugal lifestyle. Simplicity was their punch line. Charity was the characteristic of every holy personage. They forgave even their enemies. We have forgotten all these saintly qualities and think that mere lip service is enough.

I left the place with a resolve that I will try and at least try to follow charity and austerity and love of human being which is concomitant to divine love in my life as this to me is the real essence of "*Tasawwuf*".

URS CEREMONIES AT KHANQAH by *Sheeza Asim*

Merya bannay ki baat na poocho, Sakal bun phool rahee sirsoun, Murshid o rehnumaa haen aap, Chaloo ae re sakhee moray pe ke nager, Ber sareer e dil, Hum ko yaan der der phiraaya..... Indeed, the whole qawwali depicted the inner feelings of every salik o talib present at this year's Urs of Hazrat Dr. Meerza Murtaza Hussain (RA). "Sirsoun" (mustard) was really at its full bloom.

Chashm e Saqi kay aser say ab seraapa Kaif hoon
Bay piyae hi har qadam par jhoomta jaata houn maen'

(The eyes of beloved have enchanted me into an ecstasy

Not a single drop of wine have I tasted yet I stagger on every step)

The year 2009 emerged as a happening year for all of us. With the blessings of our Shaikh, the activities related to and at 'Khanqah' are on the rise with increasing participation from all the devotees. The launch of our website, issue of quarterly newsletters (both English and Urdu versions), the beautiful experience of initiating and managing a *Sabeel* during Muharram, structural developments, a very well arranged and organized ceremony of Urs of Hazrat Doctor Meerza Murtaza Hussain (RA) and the most recent Fatiha e Mehboobeen i.e. the combined Urs of Mehboob e Subhani Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jeelani (RA) and Mehboob e Ilahi Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia (RA).

The Urs ceremony of Hazrat Dr. Meerza Murtaza Hussain (RA), was held in February 2009 at the Khanqah. All arrangements were made and the tasks carried out very smoothly. The pre-Urs meeting finalised the arrangements and distribution of the responsibilities. Other key tasks like distribution of invitations, seating, lighting and sound arrangements, serving of *tabarruk* as dinner and the final conclusion of the ceremony including the winding up of all the arrangements were carried out in a very systematic and orderly manner. This not only helped manage the whole function well but also ensured facilitation of the attendees at the venue. Abdullah Niazi Qawwal rendered all the *kalaams* (poetry) beautifully. *Lungar* (food) was prepared at the Khanqah and it was delicious as usual.

The Urs of Mehboobeen was arranged at Khanqah also and there was again a huge turnout of devotees. The Urs was again immaculately arranged. Abu Muhammad Farid Ayaz ensemble was there to render the qawwali. Being the combined Urs of the two great Sufi saints, the qawwalis focused on the manqabats (eulogy of the saints). The qawwali was followed by the recital of Shijra (the lineage) for both the Chishtia Niazia

Aghaia order and Qadria Niazia Aghaia order. The salikeen listened to the recital which served as a refresher for the devotees and reminded them of the saints that have guided many onto the path of love of Allah and the goal of nearness to Him.

Slowly but surely, it has become a routine now, that a large number of the devotees gather at Khanqah on the night before any major spiritual ceremony and participate in the pre-arrangements of that function. On the occasion of Urs of Hazrat Dr. Meerza Murtaza Hussain (RA), the colors of the gathering on the night before the actual Urs were enhanced when our Shaikh blessed all workers with His presence. The enthusiasm of all workers and everyone was worth seeing as their glowing faces reflected their inner joy. The participants were served tea, accompanied with refreshments during the break, which they enjoyed in the company of their Shaikh who stayed there till late.

During these preparations, the coordination and cooperation among all the workers was very evident. This helped completing the arrangements timely and enthusiastically.

The venue was brightly lit during the actual ceremonies of Urs and the arrangements won appreciation of almost all the attendees. Everything was perfect and the ambiance just right for the spiritual experience. The whole Khanqah glittered with lights and oil lamps (diya), and above all by the Presence of our Shaikh which added glowing warmth to the whole atmosphere.

Shah Latif Bhattai, the Sufi poet of Sind emphasizes on importance of ones beloved:

Aayho Sha Lateef kahay hai
Tu sunn ray sakhee,
Mera husn o jamaal,
Mera haar singhaar,
Mora Saajan hai.

Shah Latif says
O hear my friend
My beauty
My adornment
Is my Beloved

Waari jaoon oos gali pay,
Guzray jahaan say pyaar .

I sacrifice myself on the path
Where my beloved has sauntered

Aayho Sha Lateef kahay hai
Tu sunn ray sakhee,
Mera husn o jamaal,
Mera haar singhaar,
Mora Saajan hai.

Shah Latif says
O hear my friend
My beauty
My adornment
Is my Beloved