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THE MOHAMMEDAN SAINTS OF THE WESTERN PUNJAB.

BY MAJOR AUBREY O'BRIEN, C.I.E.—Deputy Commissioner, Punjab.

ON the question of saints in general, the Western World has become more or less sceptic as to the power of individuals within its midst to intervene between man and God, and, at most, acknowledges the existence of saints of bygone times, salving its conscience with a remark on the degeneracy of modern days in which saints are unable to flourish.

This point is not one for discussion here, but, at any rate, the inhabitants of these isles are nowadays loth to admit any spiritual superiority of man over man. Not so on or near the Indus. There, reverence is paid both to the shrines of the departed saints, to the living descendants of those saints, and to people of the present day who have the qualifications that go to make up a saint. The Mohammedans of the Indus Riverain are singularly lax and unobservant of the ordinances of their faith. Among the Balochis, for instance, it is considered in some tribes sufficient if the chief keeps the fasts and prays all the prayers on behalf of his tribesmen. Other tribes are still very much linked with the Hinduism they once professed, but all alike are sunk in the most degrading superstition, and are in the most abject submission to their spiritual pastors or Pirs. The ancestors from whom the present Pirs derive their hereditary holiness were, of course, of very many types. Some were great preachers, great proselytizing missionaries, some were notable for their asceticism, or for excessive display of certain virtues, such as generosity. The Pirs of the present day are equally varied in quality. Some are quiet hermits, others active preachers; some take a useful part in the secular affairs of the neighbourhood, some are mischievous stirrers of trouble, and some are charlatans pure and simple. But it may be said clearly that the ordinary rustic looks to them not for holy conduct but for magical powers, and it is in virtue of their supposed powers to bring good or ill that they are respected.

Of course, the outlook of the people towards them varies from place to place.

It is just as well in these matters not to look at the customs of men with the eye of the educated European or even with the eye of the educated Mohammedan, but to try to put oneself in the position of one who thinks like a humble rustic of the Western Punjab.

I have tried in this paper to reduce, as far as possible, the material taken from other sources, but I cannot resist quoting the graphic description by Sir Herbert

Edwardes of the state of Pirs and people in the border district of Bannu in 1848. He writes :—

“ A well-educated man will in all probability be religious, but an ignorant one is certain to be superstitious.

“ A more utterly ignorant and superstitious people than the Bannuchis I never saw. The vilest jargon was to them pure Arabic from the blessed Koran, the clumsiest imposture a miracle, and the fattest Fakir a saint. Far and near from the barren, ungrateful hills around, the Mullah and Kazi, the Pir and the Sayad descended to the smiling vale armed in a panoply of spectacles and owl-like looks, miraculous rosaries, infallible amulets, and tables of descent from Mohammed. Each new-comer, like St. Peter, held the keys of heaven ; and the whole, like Irish beggars, were equally prepared to bless and curse to all eternity him who gave or him who withheld. These were ‘ air-drawn daggers ’ against which the Bannuchi peasant had no defence. For him the whistle of the far-drawn bullet, or the nearer sheen of his enemy’s sword, had no dangers ; blood was simply a red fluid ; and to remove a neighbour’s head at the shoulder as easy as cutting cucumbers. But to be cursed in Arabic or anything that sounded like it, to be told that the blessed Prophet had put a black mark against his soul for not giving his best field to one of the Prophet’s own posterity, to have the saliva of a disappointed saint left in anger on his doorstep, or behold a Haji who had gone three times to Mecca deliberately sit down and enchant his camels with the itch and his sheep with the rot—these were things that made the dagger drop out of the hand of the awe-stricken savage, his knees to knock together, his liver to turn to water, and his parched tongue to be scarce able to articulate a full and complete concession of the blasphemous demand. In learning scarcely any, if at all, elevated above their flocks ; in garb and manners as savage ; in no virtue superior ; humanizing them by no gentle influence ; shedding on their wild homes no one generous or heart-kindling ray of religion—these impudent impostors thrived alike on the abundance and the want of the superstitious Bannuchis, and contributed nothing to the common stock but inflammatory counsel and a fanatical yell in the rear of the battle.”

This opinion of Sir Herbert Edwardes is fully supported by the proverbs of the people themselves.

The dwellers on the banks of the Indus are not in quite as bad a condition as the population of Bannu ; but still my father, the late Mr. E. O’Brien, I.C.S., was not far wrong when he wrote of the people of Muzaffargarh, that “ their feelings of worship are entirely diverted from the Divine Being to their spiritual guides.”

And yet, though every peasant must have a Pir, few take much trouble over the selection of any particular one. In places, for instance, they are chosen by writing the names of several on scraps of paper and taking the first that happens to sink in the water into which they are thrown. Thus it is not essential that saints should be of known piety. They are ‘ approved because of their magical

powers and not for their spiritual qualities. Once selected they take good care to collect an annual fee from those who become their disciples, visiting any recalcitrance with terrible threats and abuse. Moreover, they obtain money on all possible occasions by providing charms and amulets to obtain every object and to avert every calamity. There are, for instance, charms to keep off the evil spirits and to avert the evil eye, and amulets to enable a wrestler to win his bout, or to aid a housewife in making butter.

It is a little difficult to enter into the religious beliefs of other people, especially if they are in a different stage of civilization from our own, but the general idea of our riverain folk seems to be that the Deity is a busy person, and that his hall of audience is of limited capacity. Only a certain proportion of mankind can hope to attain to the presence of God; but when certain individuals have got there, they may have opportunities of representing the wishes and desires of other members of the human race. Thus, all human beings require an intervener between them and God, and this necessity is extended to the saints themselves. For instance, I came across the biggest saint of the Dera Ghazi Khan District driving in a phaeton along a road usually unfit for traffic owing to the hill torrents, but which had been made passable for that occasion only by the exertions of his disciples. He had with him his own spiritual adviser, a saint of quite moderate rank in another district. It certainly puzzled me to see him with this smaller man; but I suppose no one must knock at the door of heaven for himself, even if he has the right to knock on behalf of others.

The idea that one must attain merit through the medium of others is not restricted to India. Only recently, Major Sykes has told us how it is said in Persia that Moses adopted Khwaja Khizar as his Pir, and was instructed by him. I cannot stop to reconcile all the legends about Khwaja Khizar, the Zinda Pir, or still-living guide, known also as Elijah, God of the Indus, etc., but the reference is very interesting because it is paralleled in the legends of Bala Shah, the Mohammedan version of Lal Beg, the patron saint of all the sweepers. This Bala Shah, otherwise Bal Mik, and formerly Val Miki, a real Hindu reformer and the poet-author of the Ramayana, was, according to the Chuhra Sweeper legends, high exalted in the court of heaven for creating the earth after calling on Khwaja Khizar to aid him.

However, this is a digression, but the fact is that the saints are a very important item in the rural economy of the Indus Valley. All the districts that border on the Indus are thickly dotted with shrines, tombs of the sainted dead; and these tombs vary in dignity from the great mausoleums of men of renown to the heap of stones surmounted by a pole and a rag of some minor beggar. And to the shrines of the saints, thousands upon thousands of devotees resort, in the hope of gaining something on the sacred soil. So far there is nothing contrary to European ideas. Shrines have existed through the ages, and pilgrimages to them have been supposed to produce various results. But there is one thing that differentiates the two areas. In the West a saint might become a saint by various qualifications—

piety, asceticism, or even, as in the Indus Valley, on account of reputed magical powers. But their virtues died with them. The saints of Europe were celibate, but the Mohammedan saints of the Indus are not. It is easy, therefore, to understand how the belief in saints has been fostered and kept alive to a much greater extent in the Indus Valley than in the British Isles.

Here, then, I must point out that among saints there is a constant battle as to the laws that govern the descent of sanctity. The eldest son, wherever possible, tries to maintain the rights of primogeniture. The younger brethren, on the other hand, argue that holiness descends according to the customary laws of inheritance, by which all share alike in the sanctity as in other forms of property. The latter win in most cases, although sometimes the eldest is accepted as the chief, the Sajjada Nashin, the Sitter-on-the-Prayer-Carpet, and is allowed small extra dues similar to those enjoyed by the headman of the village. Sanctity is so lucrative that, as in the case of other money-making concerns, disputes are frequent. Brother quarrels with brother, or an uncle of a junior branch usurps the right of a youthful nephew. Then, again, the saints near the Indus make tours round those disciples who live at a distance, and, although they try to adjust matters by dividing up their begging-beats, or by arranging that each should take separate turns, still one constantly hears complaints of the grabbing of disciples or of men going on circuit in the wrong order. As is natural, if the holy family is at all prolific, the difficulties and quarrels are largely increased, and curious consequences ensue, such as Government managing a Mohammedan shrine with the assistance of a Christian Deputy Commissioner and a Hindu revenue subordinate.

I do not wish to give a mere guidebook description of our saints taken from gazetteers and census reports, but, before passing on to accounts drawn from more personal knowledge, I will recapitulate, for the benefit of those not in touch with the subject, some of the miracles and features of the leading saints and of their shrines.

Saints have raised people from the dead, have transported pilgrims journeying to their tombs across the Indus on a prayer carpet, and have brought to life a number of kids already eaten by a band of Fakirs. There was a saint who mended the broken leg of a camel. The camel did not gain much thereby, because the King of Delhi sent for it and killed it to have a look. On viewing the miraculous rivets in its leg, he sent four mule-loads of money as an offering to the saint, but neither the camel nor its owner appear to have had any more interest in the proceedings. There was once a saint who rode on a wall with a snake as a whip, and there was another who sailed the Indus in a stone boat. If you don't believe the latter story, you will find the stone boat—on dry land—by the Indus to this day. There have been saints who could ride tigers and handle snakes, and one whose hand would occasionally come out of his tomb for forty years after his death. One rode home for some distance after his head was cut off, while another saved a boatload from sinking in the river. There was a saint who sent the river seven miles away: that is a comparatively easy job. It has recently been the misfortune of many people

to watch the Indus walk bodily across country, eating up fields, groves, gardens, hamlets and finally the town of Dera Ghazi Khan, which housed twenty-one thousand inhabitants. The same saint removed all the flies, and, if he had done so permanently, he would certainly have deserved his honours. But he brought them back a thousand-fold, and those who know what flies can be like in the East will feel that his sanctity worked on unsuitable lines. Then there was the great Saint of Multan who, unable to get firewood free from an unappreciative public, brought down the sun nearer to that city in order to broil his fish. And those who have served in Multan, or in the valley of the Indus not far from it, know well that the sun seems nearer the earth in that region than elsewhere.

Then again the Shrines of the Holy have various qualities. One is specially good at curing the bites of mad dogs, another gives success in litigation—and our peasants are sadly litigious folk. Another is good for toothache, a bath of sand near a fourth shrine will cure boils, and a fifth is useful for promotion of the growth of beards. A branch from the trees of one shrine is taken home to drive away cobras, and here I must point out that one advantage which rests in saints and their shrines is that they encourage the growth of groves of trees—distinct assets in an arid area.

One might continue this recapitulation for a long time, but this will give a rough idea of the powers of some of the holy men. They have, however, their limitations in popular belief. Thus the proverb goes: "If an ass can carry but $2\frac{1}{2}$ maunds, can Sayad Jalal make him carry five maunds?"

Then again, while saints of high degree are of value on great occasions, it is as well in less important matters to call on the name of some petty local hero:

"Inside Bahawal Hak, outside Kutb Farid;
But if you want a thing done in a hurry, call on Shadna Shahid."

That is, though the great saints of Multan and Pakpattan are great indeed, the local martyr, who may have been killed for running off with his neighbour's wife, may have more efficacy in the courts of heaven in petty matters. As a parallel to this, when a tent-pegger in Mianwali starts off on his run he makes his horse plunge forward to the cry of "Ya, Allah!" but as he thunders down close to the peg his cry changes to "Aili! Aili! Aili!" or "Oh, Ali!" The nephew of the Prophet was reputed to be a great athlete, and is therefore likely to aid in striking a peg.

It will be readily understood that people with beliefs such as have been described are ready to explain all kinds of occurrences, not understood by them, by reference to the influences of some spirit or saint. Thus the spirals of sand, known as dust devils, are supposed to contain within them a sprite known as Bhai Pheru, or Brother Twirler. This Brother Twirler has been explained as a Brahman, who became the devoted follower of the great saint Sakhi Sarwar, and was granted magical powers. So again I passed a large boulder in a ravine in the Baloch hills, which was obviously an object of reverence, and was shown the foot-

prints of the blessed Prophet—two strips of yellow sandstone in the grey sandstone rock.

In the administration of the country it is impossible to ignore the ideas or beliefs of the people or the religious personages, any more than we can disregard the opinions of their chiefs and leading men. These religious gentry, whether virtuous or otherwise, possess great influence, and in dealing with the people it is necessary to use all men of influence as far as possible to aid in the administration.

As a typical instance of how such men can be of value, I may call attention to the occasion when, in Dera Ghazi Khan, a Baloch notable in a fit of excitement carried off into the hills Captain Grey, the Deputy Commissioner of the time. He was pursued by a mixed force of soldiers and Baloch chiefs with their retainers, but it was an influential Pir who was sent forward to show him the error of his ways and who ended the matter without bloodshed.

Now I come to the more personal side of my paper, in which I will try by description of actual experiences to bring home to you more clearly our people, their beliefs, and their saints. I have used one personal note below, because actual living examples are likely to bring points home with more emphasis than if abstract cases are described.

One thing very noticeable about the saints of the Indus Riverain is that the founders of the holy places were, as Mr. Arnold brought out so clearly in the *Preachings of Islam*, mainly Shia missionaries, who came up the river by peaceful penetration. Years after there were those successive waves of conquerors, all Sunnis by faith, who bore across the Indus in various places and induced conformity with their own ideas by methods connected in our minds with Philip and Mary. But heredity counts for a great deal, and so we find that, under our tolerant sway, men of the saintly classes are constantly reverting to Shia ideas. As a rule they do not announce their change so aggressively as to alienate their Sunni disciples; but occasionally conflict occurs, especially where the secular interests of religious superiors clash with those of the laymen around them.

As an instance of this I must mention that among the Pathans of the Mianwali district Jack is as good as his master, and everyone thinks he is entitled to have a say; so one day I found a mass of men waylaying me at a railway station, where the trains stop for twenty minutes. All talked simultaneously at me, obviously desiring to inform me of something. I caught such remarks as, "He wants to starve us"; "They would kill me but for fear of your honour"; "We are dying and our children are already dead."

From this I gathered that there were two parties to the dispute, but during all those twenty minutes I never heard a coherent statement bearing on the facts, and as neither side was allowed to tell the story for more than one-half sentence at a time, and there were no outsiders present who knew about the affair the train steamed on, leaving me no wiser than before. I, of course, heard all about it later, and had plenty of trouble over it, and it appeared that the Pathan tribesmen had

granted to a Sayad family certain superior water rights which they wanted to take back because the Sayads had taken to heretical notions. Unfortunately, the rights of the latter were duly recorded in the Government records, and had been the subject of litigation, in which Mr. Longworth Dames, as Divisional Judge, had given them the support of the law; but it was very clear that but for the strength of the British power the heretics would have been ousted from their position.

The very town of Mianwali, which gives its name to the first district that I had the good fortune to hold, means the place of the holy men. Their progenitor won his name, apart from other deeds, from his power of prophecy. Not properly treated by the Saddozai Nawab of Dera, he foretold the fall of the great desert fort of Mankera into the hands of the Sikhs, and the prophecy coming true his prestige was greatly enhanced, and his descendants are able to make a fair income on the sale of amulets, breathing on the sick, and other recognised methods.

In this district, in the middle of the desert that lies between the Indus and the Chenab, I came across a tribe of graziers and camel owners who did not clip their moustaches. These in our country were obvious rarities, so I enquired of their religious beliefs, their saints, etc., and was told that they were disciples of the Mian Serai of the Dera Ghazi Khan District. I was further told that when they slew an animal for food they did not do so in the name of God, as all good Mohammedans do, but in the name of their Mian. Now you can imagine that I expected when I was posted to Dera Ghazi Khan to find that the Mian Serai was a saintly ascetic of a high order. As a matter of fact he turned out to be a very much impoverished nobleman, whose claim to greatness lay not in his piety but in his descent from the Kalhora Kings of Sind. His spiritual dignities had remained with certain classes, isolated in the desert, long after his temporal power had disappeared.

Some of those looked up to by the people as saints are, no doubt, pure charlatans, and live on the credulity of mankind. I had under me a revenue official, himself a Sayad, and had frequent discussions with him as to the impossibility of any human beings on this earth having supernatural powers beyond those of ordinary men. He of course disagreed with me, and especially wanted to show me a great Sayad, one, Bahar Shah, who, he declared, would convince me that angels, jinns or spirits aided the mighty. He told me many stories of the power this man had. The only one I can remember is, that he could send his begging bowl across the open, and, while all sat, it would come back to him from the threshing floor, full. However, as so often happens to the unbeliever, the opportunity for my seeing him never came. I spoke one day to the Deputy Commissioner of an adjoining district, a Hindu officer of distinction, and was enlightened.

"I know the man," he said. "He is an uncommon good conjurer."

I learnt from this Sayad Tahsildar much about the local ideas. He was filled with the sense of proportionate magical powers possessed by different individuals.

This power, which we call "Barkat," is a power that varies according to the rank and dignity of each person, and also with the special merits which he may have obtained by virtue of his descent, or his own qualities. The word "Barkat" is one constantly in the mouth. Lieutenant-Governors, whose arrival in an arid area synchronizes with rain, are more likely to go down with honour to posterity than those who have confined themselves to prosaic improvements for the benefit of millions. Well, my Tahsildar was always in search of "Barkat," and this especially applied to the irrigation arrangements over which he was in charge. The Indus has been moving westward, and, incidentally, has eaten up practically the whole town of Dera Ghazi Khan. Naturally, this westward trend caused the inundations on the east bank to fail to reach the areas they fertilized in the past, and, consequently, the works constructed by the farmers themselves from year to year, under official supervision, became of more importance. The Tahsildar was very keen constructing an enormous dam on one creek which he called after me, a minor dam and a cut which he called after himself, and other constructions named after the leading squires. I chaffed him about this habit of his, but he explained how other cuts had silted up, but that the auspicious name of Mr. S. S. Thorburn, an officer who rose to high rank in the Punjab, had kept a channel called the Thorburn Wah open to this day. I therefore let him have his way as it seemed to improve his energy, but humouring him thus led to a very severe day. One year, irrigation failed altogether, so that some sixty thousand acres in the south of the district had not had a drop of moisture by July 25th (the inundation season is from May till August). The Tahsildar therefore turned out the countryside in accordance with a plan matured by us in the winter, but postponed in the hope of a high river; and in ten days he dug a cut, one and a-half miles long, fifty-five feet wide, and four feet deep from one creek that was running to another large one which had lost its head. He cut it but he did not open it, though all the country was thirsting for water. He wrote and wired to me twice daily. I, with Mr. Bolster, then Assistant Commissioner, was enjoying a short spell of comparative cool on a low hill, and we were very reluctant to move merely for a formal ceremony. The Tahsildar stuck to his guns, and implored our "Barkat" at the opening ceremony. Distances are great and trains are slow, but after a thirty-mile road journey and six hours by rail we arrived at a rest-house. Then starting next day at 3 a.m., we rode fourteen miles to the site of the cut. Musicians and poets were there who sang and declaimed the glories of ourselves, the Tahsildar, his assistants, squires, squireens and themselves.

Then the Mayor kicked off. I mean that Mr. Bolster and I took mattocks in our hands and cut at the dam till the water began to trickle. It was then demolished amidst much praying and cries of "Dum Bahawal Hak-a-a," or invocations to the great patron saint of Multan. Any who know what July 25th means in the Western Punjab, can realize that it was of no use to attempt to go back in the heat, and we had to lie up all day in a squireen's house. He did his best to make us comfortable, but when, after pushing forth in the comparative cool of

six p.m., we did our journey back to the rest-house, we were weary folk. Still the "Barkat" came off because there was a strong scour from creek to creek, and the cut that was christened by the auspicious name of the Bolishter Wah after Mr. Bolster, not only saved the situation that year, but continued to be of value as long as we knew it.

I discussed more than once with this officer the necessity of having a Pir or Murshid, a spiritual adviser, a guide to the right path, etc., and pointed out that if the Deity was All-Knowing, All-Powerful and Omni-Present, He could have no need for any intermediaries. After arguing for some time, he hit off an idea which he thought would appeal to me.

"Sahib," he said, "you are the Deputy Commissioner, the Head of the District, and all local affairs are in your hands. In order to know everything and to superintend everything, you have to be very busy. I am fairly high among your subordinates, but even I cannot invade your room at any moment. I have to go to the doorkeepers, and they lead me to your presence if you are at liberty."

The argument may not appeal to all, but it is easy to understand. It may also account for the neglect that is often shown to the moral qualities of holy men. Doorkeepers may be, and very often are, very corrupt lictors, but as leaders to the threshold of the Deputy Commissioner they must be taken as they are. So if men, either in themselves or through their ancestors, have the reputation of being mediators before the throne of God, what matters their personal conduct as long as their power is supposed to remain? Another view of the same idea is that these saints are windows through which the light of heaven shines, and, even if windows are sometimes dirty, ordinary mortals must be content with such light as they may get through them.

It is extraordinarily hard to realize the position of these holy men, and yet they cannot by any means be left out of account. Wearied once beyond measure by the incessant squabbles of a trio of holy brothers, who were battling over the eternal question of the supremacy of the elder, I asked the chief, who with his tribesmen was a disciple of theirs, why he did not throw over the lot who, in the quarrels, had revealed most unsaintlike characteristics. He admitted all their shortcomings, but said, "How can I give up those whose ancestors were guides to my ancestors?" Somehow or other, these men, virtuous or non-virtuous, had acquired for him and most of his tribe, hereditary rank as doorkeepers to heaven, and they will continue to retain that rank until the sanctity becomes quite dispersed, or to use the other metaphor, till the window is so obscured as to let through none of heaven's light. On the other hand, there were those who told me that the old chief, by no means a pattern of all the virtues himself, fostered the disputes among his saints to prevent them from attaining too much power within the tribe.

The town of Dera Ghazi Khan, an important place near the Indus, has been entirely washed away by that destructive river. It was interesting to listen to the townspeople as the river approached. They all hoped to be protected by various

holy places. "Shah Husain will turn it back." "It has come to salute the Kazi and will then return." When the Kazi's house was gone, some said, "The Kazi was a bad man. Now it has eaten his house it will be satisfied." For the Hindus, the Temple of Shiv was to work the necessary marvel. But shrine and temple, Kazi and Gosain, have all been dispossessed and no miracle ever took place.

I asked, one day, of one of my principal subordinates in Mianwali whether he knew of any miracles that had happened in recent days. His answer was that a squireen of the Mianwali district was crossing a creek of the Indus on his way to the great Shrine of Taunsa in the Dera Ghazi Khan District. His pony sank in the yielding mud, but, as he was thrown off by the plunging animal, he cried to the saint to help him. The lightened animal once his weight was off, scrambled through all right, and the man went rejoicing towards the shrine. Ferrying across the Indus proper, he was no doubt not reticent, and when, after a rest, he presented himself at the shrine, he found the holy man with a bandage on his hand.

"Oh, Mahmud Khan!" he said, "it was well you called on me. I placed my hand under your horse's hoof, and, despite these injuries, I saved you."

My informant and the countryside seemed to have quite accepted the miracle, and I did not ask him why a man able to stretch his hand eight miles need have been hurt at all.

I came in conflict with the reverend gentleman in charge of the shrine referred to in the story just given. He had taken an active and offensive part in local affairs, and was generally making himself a nuisance. The method by which I showed displeasure was by refusing to visit the shrine of his ancestor when I passed next time on tour. Many emissaries, including two Baloch chiefs, came to me to point out that even lieutenant-governors always visited the shrine and its custodian. My answer was that holy men were holy men, but that gentlemen who interfered in secular matters should call on the head of the district. I went away and the rebuke told. For some time he behaved very well, and on my next visit he paid me a call. I gave him a friendly piece of my mind, visited his shrine, and thenceforward we were on fairly good terms.

It was in his house that I saw a scene that brought home realistically to me the position of these men. As I turned the corner of the verandah, I saw a very plump, overfed son of the holy man, whose sprouting beard was being stroked by a wild Pathan of the most uncivilized type. The lad lounged on, quite unconcerned, but the Pathan clung to him, stroking his back or beard and was obviously in the hope that "some virtue might come out of him."

The saint was a queer admixture of luxury and humility. He always spoke of himself as "This mean one," "This beggar," or, for effect, "This servant of the threshold of God." He had, however, a magnificent house and ostentatious garments. The provision of this was supposed to come miraculously, as also the food with which pilgrims were fed on a standard dietary for each different day. But, of course, as every pilgrim of any status left generous gifts behind him, there was not much miracle.

I was, unconsciously, the cause of loss to this saint, because, at the request of a family of Pathan chiefs of Mianwali, I took over the management of the estate of one of them under the Court of Wards. While this gentleman would never pay his debts, he had the habit, among other extravagances, of sending whole boatloads of grain to this very Pir. Naturally, therefore, when Government managed his estate these benevolences ceased, and attention was paid to reducing debt.

The greatest shrine in the Western Punjab is that of Sakhi Sarwar in the Dera Ghazi Khan District. This is situated in the most desolate situation imaginable. It requires a journey across a desert to reach it, and lies against seamed and fissured barren hills. Although the shrine is that of a Mohammedan saint, the sanctity of the spot must date back long before Mohammedanism. On no other grounds can the cosmopolitan beliefs professed there be accounted for. Men, women and children, Sikhs, Hindus and Mohammedans alike, come from all districts in the Punjab. There are traditions to suit each, and all are welcomed by the Mohammedan servants of the shrine. These include a company of old women who represent the wife of the Holy Man, and collect from the female devotees. I will not, however, dwell much on Sakhi Sarwar, although he is the greatest personage of the Indus Valley, because so much has been written about him already, but will conclude with a description of the shrine of Lal Isan at Karor.

It was of this mausoleum that I was the trustee and manager on behalf of a company of squabbling modern descendants of a saint who obtained name and fame in the Middle Ages.

The Urs, or the Accession of the throne of God, that is, the death of this Holy Man, took place, unfortunately for district officers, in August. In that month people from all the districts round repair to the shrine for a full week's picnic. The main object is, of course, religious. They come to vow or repay their vows, and to perform various ceremonies on the holy ground. Little children are brought that their first hair may be shaved off, and, wrapped in the skin of a sacrificed goat, be buried as an atonement for the life of the child. Barren women come with toy cradles to pray for children. Mothers bring gifts in return for the inestimable boon of male offspring. Men hang up bolsters in the hope of obtaining wives by purchase, theft or otherwise, and others hang up bolsters with prayers to the saints to aid them in retaining the women they have abducted, and bolsters are also brought by women in prayer or thanksgiving for children. In like manner cowbells are suspended from the trees near the shrine by various persons; persons who have recovered lost cattle, or those whose cattle have been cured of disease, come along with thieves who have managed to steal cattle already, or who are hoping to bring off a successful coup. In fact, it may be said that all that makes up the life of our peasants forms a possible cause for a visit to the shrine.

A great feature is the casting out of devils in the name of Apollos. It is mainly the women that become possessed of devils, though occasionally a man is taken that way also. The method of exorcism entails much rocking of the body in

time to the beatings of a small drum until exhaustion and the holy ground combine to do their work. There is a good deal of humbug about this, and, indeed, it is known by the expressive term of "playing at jinns," the genii or familiar spirits of the Arabian Nights. A visit to a fair is a great event in a woman's life, and if she thinks she is not likely to get permission to go, she is apt to invent a jinn that must be cast out.

The fair here, as elsewhere, is the occasion for all kinds of sports beloved of the countryside—racing for horses, donkeys, camels and men, and, finally, a magnificent game called *doda*, a kind of hare and hounds, which is watched by some twelve thousand enthusiastic spectators, all male. It is a game which Rugby footballers might well train on, but I must not wait to describe it here. I will therefore conclude with the hope that I have given a rough idea of one phase of the religious beliefs of the people among whom I have lived so long.