

Religion had always been a secondary priority for the people of the Sindh and for them their tradition, culture and to be connected with their land and not migrating to other places is being their top priority.

At the time of the Arab invasion of the Sindh the ruler was a Brahmin and the majority population was the Buddhist. After the defeat the local people started converting to the Islam but did not change their old customs like folding hands while greeting. When the Ismaili preachers came to western India they communicated with the people in their local languages and cultures. In Sindh their religious poetry called “Ginan” declares Ali as the tenth avatar of the Krishna. Following the Hindu traditions the Sindhi Muslims started praying the river Indus which continues till today, they planted papal trees and hang the bells on the entrances of the Dargahs. Many Sufis of the Sindh had their Hindu companions and the Sindhi Hindus by calling the Muslim Sufis as their *murshid* adopted their poetry as Bhajans. Till today many followers of the Sufi traditions with the Muslim background consider the Hinglaj *yatra* as their one of the destinations towards the Beloved. Almost all Sufis, Bhaghats, Sanats and Rashis in Sindh have two names, one showing him a Muslim and other one as Hindu but never had been cause of rift among their followers.

The leading Sufi poet of Sindh Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai was born in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was the time when after a long period of the foreign occupation the Sindh had a local Samma family rule. The scholars of that period were divided in two major groups. One led by Makhdoom Bilawal who on the charges of discretion of the Koran was killed under a fatwa and the second group was led by Qazi Qadan who later became the Qazi of Bhakhar under the foreign invader Shah Baig Arghun. In coming years Qazi was ideologically followed by Hashim Thattvi. Both Qazi and Hashim were orthodox Muslims who promoted the hatred against the Hindus and allegiance to the rulers. Meanwhile the first group, followed by Makhdoom Moeen Thattvi, Shah Latif and Shah Inayat Shaheed, promoted the harmony among the people especially of the deprived classes. Shah Latif emerged as the poet in the period when the hot debates on the religious issues were going on and on other hand the peasant movement led by Shah Inayat

making its marks. Religiously educated from Daccan, Delhi, Burhan Pur and Baija Pur Shah Inayat was given a sword on his graduation by his teacher Syed Abdul Mulk by saying "you are my one of the best students and seeing your concern for poor and deprived people I can not see a more proper gift for you then this sword but how you will pay for this gift?" On that Shah Inayat by bowing his neck said by this. After the graduation some 500 fakirs including Nimano Shah Dehlvi and Sulaiman Hindi moved to sindh with him. On their way back many more hundreds of the wretches of the earth joined them and they settled at the Miran Pur, where they started a collective farm under the slogan of "land belongs to who tilts it" on that he was given title of "the Sindh's first Socialist Sufi" by Syed Sibte Hassan. For the arrangements and approaching more like minded people there was an elected council under Shah Inayat.

With the support of the local feudal molvi Hashim Thattvi contacted the administration complaining against Shah Inayat that he was instigating the people on rebellion through occupying the land of zamindars and was accepting the non Muslims specially the low caste Kolhis and Bhils in his fold. With the consent of the administration the feudal organized attacks on Shah Inayat's commune and in first of such attacks about 30 of his companions were killed. Attacks continued and enhanced when Nawab Azam Khan a close aide of the Mughals became governor of the Sindh whose army attacked the Miran Pur commune in the October 1717 but failed to conquer the city so cordoned off it which continued till the December. In the last week of the December they approached Shah Inayat and took oath on the Koran that they want to negotiate and settle the issue. On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1718 Shah Inayat was produced before the governor and on 7<sup>th</sup> January he was sent to death by chipping off his neck.

Shah Latif was 37-38 years old at that time and had met Shah Inayat couple of times and was influenced by him. Shah Latif registered his protest and disliking against the religious extremism promoted by Hashim Thattvi through a declaration prepared by him and issued by the ruler which restricted the mourning the war of Karbala, forbade the playing the musical instruments, restricted the Hindus from celebrating Holi, Devali and other occasions and restricting women from visiting graveyards and gardens. Shah Latif

mourned the Karbala martyrs with Shah Inayat's comrades, started Samma (musical recitation of poetry) and invented a musical instrument called Tambooro, joined Sanyasi, Kanpat Kaprhi and Bhaghti groups of Hindus and visited their sacred places including the Hinglaj with his friend Madan Bhaghat who himself was a good Sindhi poet, invited a female singer Gulan to his place to perform. He chose many of his characters from the Hindus. Almost all of his main characters were women and most of them fallen in love some even doing so while married to someone else.