



Entrance to the mausoleum of Pir Hassan Shah

Legends unexplained

Lahore
Nobon
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SAJID ABBAS visits a mausoleum built around the grave of a holy man who passed away some four centuries ago and relates the history associated with him

There is literally no end to the number of places of interest in Lahore. One can find an interesting landmark, inscription, or edifice in practically every street or lane of the old city along with somebody around who usually is more than glad to tell one about the monument or the building. Whether the information is correct or concocted is besides the point.

The phenomenon is not confined to the walled city alone, one can find something similar going on in the suburbs, too, especially where an old tomb or structure exists.

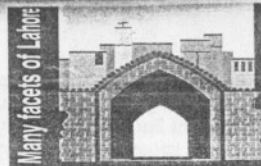
Behind the Qilla Gujjar Singh Police Station and the property of the Punjab Boy Scouts Association, there is an old mausoleum, reconstructed not long ago

and located in a fairly large yard, dotted with a few banyan trees. The compound is amidst a number of houses on three sides and a street to its north. In the mausoleum rests a person now called Pir Hassan Shah Wali Suharwardy Qadri but till a few decades ago he was known by his age old popular name, Hassu Taillee. Chronicles written till a century ago refer to him by that name. The name inscribed now on his tomb is a twentieth century proposal. Though, strictly speaking, he was not a Syed as his present title suggests, the holy man earned his living as a grocer, retailing vegetables in the beginning, later on he changed his line to selling corn. He changed his line of trade a second time when, he is said to have reverted to his ancestral profession. He had his shop in Chowk Jhanda, a busy spot in the old

city in a place where the northern precincts of Lohari Darwaaza and the Mori Darwaaza merge into each other. The place is a centre for trading in cotton wool, grain and spices.

According to the legend associated with him, the God-fearing and holy man was reputed to be a very honest person and used to take extra care to give full measure while dealing with his buyers and selling to his customers, quite unlike the other shopkeepers of the area who indulged in measuring short and were prone to cheating unsuspecting customers. In this he was said to be following the instructions and teachings of his mentor, Shah Jamal.

It is said that he had left a balance and a set of weights for the use of his customers who were allowed to weigh their purchases to their satisfaction. It is



said that, in case a buyer cheated and took more than the required weight, he used to lose the extra amount by the time he reached home. Any body weighing not more than the proper amount found some gain in weight, instead. Old chronicles mention that the business of the corn merchant prospered so much that he had the weights of his balance, cast in gold!

Once when he went visiting his mentor, the latter asked him to throw away his (golden) weights. Another version of the story says that his mentor asked him to melt the gold and silver coins that he had accumulated over the years, into large lumps and throw them away. In either case, Sheikh Hassu, the corn merchant of Chowk Jhanda, took the golden weights or the lumps of gold and silver and threw them in the Ravi.

A couple of days later, after he did so, a potter was crossing the Ravi when his foot struck against something hard, making him fall on the lump of gold in the river. The potter dug the lump out and recognising it to be the weight used

by the honest corn merchant of Chowk Jhanda, brought it back to the latter, who, in turn and without delay, made for his mentor to relate what had happened. 'Yes, an honest and clean deed is never wasted' explained the merchant's mentor 'see, even the river hasn't devoured your gold, you have been rewarded'.

Another legend associated with Pir Hassan Shah alias Sheikh Hassu goes on to mention that once he was weighing a large quantity of corn. According to custom, which even prevails today, the dealer or shopkeeper keeps on repeating the number of time he uses the balance to measure, lest he forgets the number of times he has weighed. One, one, two, two, two and so on. When he reached thirteen and was

repeating thirteen, thirteen, thirteenth, he was approached by somebody, perhaps another customer. Now, thirteen in the local language is 'tayra' or 'tayran' which also means 'yours'. Sheikh Hassu is said to have slipped into a state of trance, thinking that he was repeating a word which meant 'yours, O lord I am yours', and became more of a recluse after that event. He is said to have changed his line of trade, too, and started selling oil, instead. Since that time and afterwards all the oil millers and oils sellers became his followers and devotees.

Pir Hassan Shah Wali Suharwardy Qadri alias Hassu Taillee, is said to be a contemporary of Shah Hussain, popularly known as Madho Lal Hussain of Baghbanpura. Both of them were said to be great friends, but their friendship was due to an incidence that took place

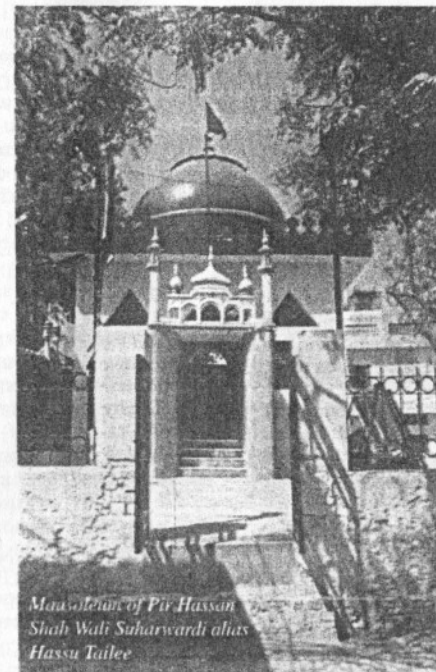


Tombstone of Hassu Taillee's grave

in the life of the former. It is said that Shah Hussain used to pass by the shop or abode of Sheikh Hassu in Chowk Jhanda while on his way to the mausoleum of Syed Ali Hajvery alias Data Ganj Bukhsh. Shah Hussain was the habit of talking loudly and used to create quite a commotion in places which were in his way. Everybody could be certain of his presence, for, he used to address them in a loud and friendly way. Once Sheikh Hassu, asked him not to be so loud while passing by the latter's place. Shah Hussain continued in his habit paying little heed to the Sheikh's request.

Sheikh Hassu was reputed to find himself, in his dreams, to be amongst the privileged who were allowed to be present in holy gatherings. Once he dreamt that a child, in such a gathering, came to him (Sheikh Hassu), sat down in lap and started playing with his beard. In process he plucked some whiskers.

A few days later Shah Hussain passed by the place of Sheikh Hassu, again shouting and talking loudly in his usual way. The latter reminded him of his earlier request to be a bit quieter. Sheikh Hussain stopped and produced a couple of whiskers which Shah Hussain recognised right away to be ones that the child had plucked. That was the moment when friendship between both began, in earnest.



Mausoleum of Pir Hassan Shah Wali Suharwardy alias Hassu Taillee