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# Formulating Religious Identity in Pakistan and Abroad

\_\_\_\_\_ Rukhsana Qamber  
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## Abstract

*States, like individuals, have multiple identities that transmutes over time. They also undergo political swings that may broadly be described as centrifugal and irredentist. When the Centre overwhelms its components, whether provinces, states, autonomous communities or other political units, it exhibits varying degrees of authoritarianism and may border on the fascist. Defining the national identity or national values assumes primordial importance. When the federating components become strong the rigid contours of discourse on national identities softens to incorporate regional and so-called folkloric voices. History books, specifically textbooks on national history, are re-written to reflect the transformed statist view of the national identity. In Pakistan the texts have never digressed far from the central notion of an Islamic identity, no matter how liberal or how conservative the regimes may project themselves to be.*

A dominant discourse among Pakistanis seeks to anchor the national identity to Pakistan's dominant religion and heated debates occur in academia and among the general public about the nature of the country's identity and the role of religion in its politics.<sup>1</sup> However, states, like individuals, have multiple identities and Pakistanis, rent by insecurity about the *raison de être* of their country, seldom pause to explore the multiplicity and the richness of their diverse identities. This paper explores the religious aspects of Pakistan's identity and attempts to establish its uniqueness in temporal and spatial terms.

Not only are states' national and regional identities layered, they also transmute over time. Furthermore, these multiple identities undergo political swings that may broadly be described as centrifugal and irredentist. Usually, when the Centre overwhelms its components, whether provinces, states, autonomous communities or other political units, it exhibits varying degrees of authoritarianism that may border on the fascist. Defining national identities, or national values, assumes primordial importance. When the federating components become strong, the rigid contours of discourse on national identities softens to incorporate regional and so-called folkloric voices. History books, specifically textbooks, are re-written to reflect the state's transformed view of a single and unified national identity. In Pakistan the texts have never digressed far from the central notion of an Islamic identity, no matter how liberal or how conservative the regimes project themselves to be.

Notions of national identity, particularly in the plural, tend to permutate beautifully outside the borders of the state. People carry with them ideas of their home that were formed or received (i.e., inculcated from their elders, from school, etc.) through practice before their departure from the homeland. Though individuals often reinvent these ideas to justify themselves in the new environment, they retain customs, terminologies and practices that may have long ago been abandoned or "modernized" in the home country. Religion, however, remains a grounding principle among Pakistanis abroad, whether as a defining feature or as a foil in attempts to transcend the old ways and assume fresh identities.

The varied changes in the religious expressions of identity are, therefore, a rich field for research both within Pakistan and abroad. Most of the research for this paper was started during a three-year period at the University of Barcelona and re-examined in 2006. The changes over time and across space in identity formation comprise the focus of the investigation. Religion plays a key role in the various layers of Pakistani identities and forms a point of departure from descriptions of other national identities.<sup>2</sup>

Identity is a complex concept as it is multiple, it changes over time, and it adapts to socio-political circumstances. It is even more complex in the Pakistani context as we continue to debate whether there is or there is not a distinct Pakistani identity. Two fundamental issues must be resolved before turning to the salient concepts in identity formation in Pakistan, i.e., what constitutes the Pakistani identity and whether Islam was spread by the sword or by the teachings of its saints. The first issue concerns the notion of a

separate identity: Is there a Pakistani identity or is there a larger South Asian identity that is based upon shared language, customs and history? For instance, the main ingredients of national identity – language, customs and shared history – spread across Pakistan’s political borders: East and West Punjab, Indian and Pakistani Sind, Greater Balochistan straddling the Iran-Pakistan border, the Pashtuns separated by the Durand Line and the UN-monitored Line of Control between Pakistani and Indian Kashmir. This issue of divided nations is resolved for Pakistan when considered from another perspective, that of the riverine civilizations, specifically the Indus Valley people taken together loosely.<sup>3</sup>

The second issue, again divided into two parts, relates to the opinion whether Islam was taught to the Indus Valley people by the sword or the saint. Sword proponents envision strong, conquering Aryans, proud, manly and warrior, comprising a martial race. Saint proponents dismantle gendered readings of history in the Indus region and examine the saints’ struggle to gently propound the fundamental of Islam in the local languages and through local customs. The sword alone could not have caused lasting conversion, neither in the Indus Valley nor elsewhere in the world, such as the Guadalquivir Valley in Spain where, within the span of only six years, Islam spread to the northern borders with France and endured for 800 years. It was eradicated by the combined forces of the budding Spanish state and the Holy Inquisition through the means of concerted war, enslavement, imprisonment, torture and death by burning at the stake. In short, the Word of the Quran, rather than its sword, caused more revolutionary and lasting change in Europe and in South Asia.

The Islamic mystic saints traveled overland and mostly entered South Asia from the region of Central Asia. They went down the mighty Indus and brought along not only their religion but also their architectural styles, trade products, and culture, such as stitched clothing, i.e., the *shalwar-kameez*, as did the earlier conquerors and travelers.<sup>4</sup> The saints preached equality, including gender equality, to the caste-ridden people, religious tolerance and respect for women in an area accustomed to practices like *sati*. They were not able to eradicate caste differentiation or bring about gender equality but the saints did leave their own indelible mark on South Asian Muslims.

## Romance or Mystic Epic

The mystic saints who helped to spread Islam in South Asia perceived no harm in explaining their religion in the local languages. They adopted the highly popular and effective local pedagogic method of teaching morality through folktales. It was, after all, a contemporary secular style popular in renaissance Europe, particularly Italy. Before delving into the epic poems we may note that the Indus Valley also had its share of secular romances. For instance, the Pashtuns are familiar with the romance of Durkhaney and Adam Khan.

“Known as the Pashtun ‘Romeo and Juliet,’ this romance is about the young Durkhaney and Adam, who fall in love without their families consent. Durkhaney’s father intervenes to promise his daughter to a cousin, who is a socially more appropriate suitor. Adam Khan finds the refusal a blow to his honor and in order to reinstate his reputation, he abducts Durkhaney. In the meantime, Durkhaney’s cousin, to whom she had been promised by her father, is now angry and in turn attempts to abduct her back from Adam Khan’s house. A battle ensues in which Adam Khan perishes and the cousin carried away the bride. When Durkhaney finds out about Adam Khan’s death, she rushes to his grave, swoons, and grieves to death.<sup>5</sup> Oral tradition related that the grave opens up and the two lovers lie buried in the same grave. Memuney’s murder is another such story from the frontier province. A Punjabi classic along the same secular lines is the well known saga of “Saiful Muluuk.” The tales of Durkhaney, Memuney and Saiful Muluuk contain little religious instruction.

The epic that perhaps best represents identity politics in the Indus region – hotly debated for its secular or sufi connotations - is the Sindhi story of Marvi. The story expresses unparalleled loyalty to the land, invoking the name of Malir, its customs and foods, including its poverty, which at every opportunity is presented by its famous poet, Shah Abdul Latif Bhatai. The story of Marvi is also unique because it does not really have a hero. Marvi loves her fiancé but he is often subsumed under her longing for her people, whom she calls Maroo. The principal male character, King Umer, turns out to be a benevolent sovereign and becomes Marvi’s adoptive brother at the end of the poem that invokes God in the Arabic language at various opportune junctures.

Like all epics, a synopsis of the long poem of Marvi can be made briefly. Marvi is a poor herder’s daughter in the village of

Malir and is engaged to Khet. However, her beauty attracts the unwanted attention of Phog, a village lad who had known her since infancy. When Marvi rebuffs him, Phog becomes spiteful and seeks revenge through King Umer. The King is a well-known womanizer. Phog's report of Marvi's exceptional beauty intrigues King Umer and comes disguised to Malir to see the truth of Phog's words. One glimpse of the dusky damsel, and Umer becomes infatuated with Marvi. He is determined to carry her away to his fine palace in the city of Umerkot. King Umer finds his opportunity when Marvi slept in late one day and consequently had to go alone to fetch water from the village well. The King seizes his chance and successfully abducts Marvi.

Returning to his palace, Umer at first allows Marvi to rest alone. Later he enters the room where she is confined and, unexpectedly for the King – because he thought that she would be delighted by his palace and his servants' attention - beholds her weeping inconsolably. During the days that follow, Marvi continues to pine for her home. Eventually Umer takes pity on her and decides to win her heart. He tries all kinds of persuasion: he showers her with fine clothes but she spurns them in favor of her *ajrak chador*. He gives her rich food but she prefers the coarse grains of her village. Umer imprisons and tortures Marvi, but she holds fast onto her loyalty for her land, her people and her fiancé. Finally, Umer relents and returns her to her homeland and her fiancé Khet – but Marvi had already predicted her reception.

Khet and her people suspect her loyalty and her virginity and turn away from her. When King Umer hears of Marvi's ill treatment by her beloved people, the Maroo, he marches to her rescue. However, Marvi remains ever faithful to her people and stops Umer's attack. The Maroo then decide to put her to a test of loyalty. She is made to walk bare foot across burning coals holding a red-hot iron bar and she emerges unscathed. Umer too decides to undergo the same test by fire and he too emerges unscathed, doubly proving Marvi's innocence and his own.

Some scholars term the story of Marvi, and the other epic sufi poems, as folk romances or national epics. Dr. Fehmida Hussain (currently occupying the Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai Chair at the University of Karachi), questions the symbolic nature of the tale and its main characters. She is particularly critical of Marvi's religious symbolism. If Bhitai had used the prism of symbols, according to her, he should assign value to all the main characters in the story. So, if Umer represents the materialistic world and Malir stands for

paradise, the village ought not to be poor and beset by natural disasters. If Marvi represents the people of Sind “restless for freedom but sad about the indifference and carelessness of her folks,” Khet ought to represent somebody but he does not. Also if Marvi represents Sindh oppressed by its rich, then who are the Maroo, the people of Malir? They may be oppressed but they are free in their beloved village.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Hussein concludes from her questions that “Marvi” is an epic romance rather than a mystic sufi tale.

The story of Marvi does, however, have strong religious connotations. It is particularly evocative of religious, evangelical underpinnings because it spreads the Word of Islam in an entrenched Hindu milieu.<sup>7</sup> The writings of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (1689-1752) are open to both the above interpretations that argue for secular or sufi symbolism.

واجھائي وطن کي ساري ڏيان ساه،  
 بُتُ منهنجو بند ڀر قيد مَ ڪريجاھ،  
 پرڏيهائي پرينءَ ري، ڏاز مَ ڏريجاھ،  
 ٿڌي وسائج ٿر جي مٽي مٽيءَ مٿاھ،  
 جي پويون ٿئي پساھ، ته نجان مڙھ ملير ڏي.

Craving for my homeland I may die  
 A king! Don't bind and bury me here  
 Do not lay my body in this alien land  
 Away from my folks and friends  
 If I breathe here [the] last  
 Send my body to Malir fast  
 To cover my coffin with its scented soil<sup>8</sup>

The above mentioned lines, standing alone, are intensely nationalistic. Marvi yearns for her homeland, her family and friends, and even for the dust of her beloved village of Malir.

پيھي جان پاڻ ۾، کير رُوح رھاڻ،  
 نڪو ڏونگر ڏيھ ۾، نڪا کيچين ڪاڻ،  
 پنھون ٿيس پاڻ، جان سسئي، تان سور هئا.

Seeking my inner soul,  
 As I pondered  
 There was no hindrance,  
 Not even a rock  
 Forgetting myself  
 I found out  
 I was the beloved  
 Whom I had sought.<sup>9</sup>

The above cited lines are equally emotional as the in the first quotation and are intensely mystic. They clearly express the sufi journey of a true lover, the ordinary human being, seeking the Beloved, the Almighty. The journey towards Love leads the sufi to discover Eternal Truth: God is everywhere, and especially to be found in the heart of the true seeker of Truth/Love.

مَنَدَ ٿي مَنڊل مَنڊيا، آيو جُهڙُ جهاڻي  
 هڪ آرزان اَن ٿيو ٻيو مَڪڻ مَنجھ ماڻي،  
 ڪَلمي سين ڪاڻي، لائمر گسَ قلوب مان.

This blessed rain is upon us  
 A harbinger of the season  
 Casting away hunger and pain  
 So my heart too shall shatter  
 Shadows of darkness and despair  
 With the strength of the remembrance  
 Of the Lord's benevolence  
 And affirmation of His one-ness<sup>10</sup>

Bhitai's main goal appears to be preaching that there is only one God. This was a radical message for the Hindu majority of Sindh who believe in a pantheon of deities. The last lines quoted, exhibit supreme respect and sensitivity to other religious beliefs in Sindh, in the Indus Valley. One may also note that the noted German scholar, Annemarie Schimmel viewed these lines as expressions as a turning to the Prophet who, like the rain, is sent as "mercy for the worlds," Sura 21/107.<sup>11</sup>

Many epic poems of the Indus Valley, whether considered as folklore or mystic, are symbolic of the spiritual journey. Almost all these narratives describe human life as a journey, preferably a journey along the straight road of Islam, culminating in the destination of meeting the Almighty. The goal of the worldly journey of a person in love is union with the Beloved, i.e., God. The travels of this world end in materialistic death and spiritual birth, or a new life of Love. The mystic union can only occur after death. The path to love is fraught with dangerous hurdles and numerous distractions. The authorities are the prime hurdles, amongst the human and natural obstacles encountered that obstruct a person's worldly journey towards the Beloved. Thus, the test of a folktale that rises to become a sufi narrative lies in its ability to spread the Word of Islam. It becomes a truly mystic tale when it identifies society's oppressive authorities and teaches ordinary people how to contest oppression through the guidance of the Quran.

A description of this narrative style can be discerned in the Quran itself. It calls the human spirit, or soul, as the *nafs*. A person's life journey is the inner struggle to overcome the vanities of the materialistic world or, put in another way, rise above the demands of the ego. The Quran points to the "journey" or development of the soul-*nafs* at various instances, and taken together, they appear in sequential (though unevenly spaced) manner.

The first important description of the *nafs* is in Sura 12/59 of the Holy Quran where the soul is called *nafs ammara*. This is the basic stage in the development of the soul. The soul in Islam, as in other religions, possesses the female gender.<sup>12</sup> In most religions the female soul is treated as inferior to the male spirit/mind. The *nafs*, to many Sufis, is like a disobedient woman who distracts the spirit/mind on its path to God. In the form of *nafs ammara* the soul is like an evil woman. The second description of the *nafs* is in Sura 75:2 in the form of *nafs lawwama*. The Quran uses the term *nafs lawwama* to denote the human (female) soul in its second stage of



development. It has, nevertheless, negative connotations as it represents one who blames others for being seduced by evil. At this middle stage of its development, the soul is like a wayward, beguiling woman who leads the sufi, or seeker of Divine Knowledge, astray from the path of Islam.

The third significant description of the *nafs* occurs in Sura 80/27 where the *nafs mutma'ina* achieves supreme contentment as the soul-at-peace. It is now fully developed, capable of discerning right from wrong, and engaged in active struggle to achieve Divine Love. It is *nafs mutma'ina* that prevails in the sufi narratives of the Indus Valley and its presence distinguishes the local cultures from other Islamic and non-Islamic mystic narratives.<sup>13</sup>

We may witness the application of these Islamic principles to the story of Heer and Ranjha. It is the woman Heer who primarily fulfills the criteria for converting the old Punjabi epic into a sufi narrative. Heer identifies society's oppressive authorities, teaches ordinary people how to contest oppression through the guidance of the Quran and most clearly spreads Islam by demonstrating the strength and validity of its message. Heer unequivocally identifies society's numerous oppressive authorities. The authorities or institutions such as the family (that wants to expand its power through kinship ties), traditions (such as arranged marriage), the King and his policeman or *kotwal* (whose normal mode is to practice favoritism), the judiciary or *qazi* (who dole out injustice), and above all, the corrupt custodian of the mosque, despised as the *mullah* or *maulvi* by Ranjha, the traveling lover or sufi – seeker of Divine Knowledge. Heer is also a sufi and she identifies each unjust, ignorant, worldly authority in her life's journey and overcomes the numerous hurdles through Quranic injunctions. Only those persons are pure – or Muslim – who remain steadfast in the straight path towards divine love.

The test of an epic as symbolically sufi, therefore, lies in its ability to teach Islam in the local languages and through the medium of local traditions. In this sense, Heer-Ranjha is a classic sufi story rather than mere romance. Marvi, Sassi-Punhoo and Sohni-Mahival also fall into the same category, as do the Persian Shireen-Farhad and the Arabic Laila-Majnu.<sup>14</sup> In fact, the sufi tales of the Indus Valley pre-date the advent of Islam in the region and may be called Hindu tales but their Islamic appropriation converted them to sufi narratives.<sup>15</sup> The pedagogic method of the sufi tale in fact constituted a distinctive religious identity for the people of the Indus valley.

However, most people usually relegate these mystical, evangelical stories to the field of folklore and the rural setting. However, the rural population of Pakistan even today exceeds its urban residents and the icons and ideologies that prevail in the villages are of importance to gender relations and identities in the country. More important, many geographic regions possess their own central Sufi traditions that provide a sense of local identity within the Islamic context. These regional traditions express gender roles and serve the purpose of reproducing and teaching these traditions to the people. The pedagogic methods are of varying kinds such as formal written texts, impromptu additions, improvisations, recitations, songs, *qawwalis*, live drama film, video and TV representations, and many more methodologies.

The mystical sufi story of Heer and Ranjha embodies a whole range of pedagogy.<sup>16</sup> It revolves around the gendered relationship of the protagonists and it is central to the theme of Islamic identity. Above all, the narrative is about seeking knowledge and applying it in a well thought out and activist manner. The best knowledge to be acquired is knowledge about Islam and, according to these sufi stories, the most worthy endeavor of a person is to spread it among the common people of the Indus Valley.

In the story, the woman Heer clearly emerges as the brains of the pair. She is the one who discerns their future course of action and she is the one who initiates the action. The man Ranjha usually merely waits for divine inspiration. Heer knows her rights as a woman and as a Muslim and her words serve to teach these feminist rights within the Islamic ambit. For instance, in one of her most widely quoted lines, Heer announces that her forced marriage, or *nikah*, was not valid in Islamic law. She was an adult woman and her consent was fundamental to the marriage but neither her family nor the religious authorities obtained it before declaring her married to a person selected by her father. Heer goes a step further and critiques the concept of guardian or *wali* and makes it clear that he cannot usurp her Islamic right to a free choice of her life partner. She even goes as far as to openly declare that her decision to reject her forced marriage and live with Ranjha, the man of her personal choice. Heer demonstrates female agency in meeting Ranjha even on her wedding day, with the support of her female friends and by not allowing her husband to touch her. She instructs the common folk who hear her story about their right when she states that her decision, expressed publicly, is her *nikah*, the legal expression of the *Sharia* or Islamic law. At the same time, Heer defies all kinds of

unjust authority: family and tradition (arranged marriage), the *panchayat* or village council, the *kotwal* or police, the civil judge *qazi* and the *maulvi*.

Ranjha also defies the *maulvi*, by playing his flute in the mosque, elevates the place of music and is at harmony with nature. He exposes the cleric's false and base moral pretenses. Ranjha also is an animal lover, especially the ugly buffaloes grazing on the banks of the Chenab in the heart of the Punjab. He exerts supernatural power over the beasts. His music soothes the buffaloes and they produce extraordinary amounts of milk. Without Ranjha, their owner could not control them. Ranjha also promotes profound inter-religious respect and understanding as his guru was a Sikh. When the lovers finally meet again and flee to Multan, the police arrest them and the judge or *qazi* uphold his decision. Thereupon nature aids the escaping pair and spontaneous flames engulf the city, In desperation, the *qazi* has to seek Ranjha's pardon. The families of the two lovers recognize the importance of the official decision. They accept their engagement and agree to marry them with a grand public ceremony. However, they subvert their marriage by poisoning Heer.

The story of Heer-Ranjha is recounted in a special style, yet every person reads Heer in his or her own manner and, in fact, reserve the right to embellish the story to suit the personal message he or her wants to convey to the audience. It is education at a mass and popular level, in the vernacular dialect, and it changes over time in its subsidiary messages and in its form of teaching and conveying the message of human rights and feminist rights in Islam. It represents unique pedagogy, in the text, the delivery and the outcome. One may argue that another mystical story, that of Marvi, the Sindhi sufi icon, is an even more singular female and feminist story than Heer-Ranjha because it contains is no authentic male hero.

Generally speaking, the Pakistani intelligentsia accepts the epic tale as sufi narrative and as an expression of Pakistani Islamic identity. This is certainly true of the university and the private media, such as magazines and newspapers. Radio, a recently reinvigorated media in Pakistan, too reinforces sufi traditions through its broadcasts of *qawwalis*, sufi-rock, *naats*, and so forth. Television provides a more complex scenario generally accepting sufism but also providing more culturally-stripped fare in its religious programs. The State, by its institution of a Sufi Institute in late 2006, made a U-turn from the 1980s to provide a "soft image"

of Pakistan. State-run television, has transcended a quarter-century and more divide between state as representing orthodoxy bordering on Wahabism and the people-based religious permeability of the sufis. This about-face by the State has, thus, also overturned the traditional governmental attitude in Pakistan to support orthodoxy, centralization of power and obstructing civil society's preference for sufi ways. Such methods are highly critical of unjust and totalitarian concentration of power. At the same time, private-run TV has tended to assert its independence from state policies by adopting western and Indian icons rather than by developing alternate indigenous voices. When push comes to shove, all, including Begum Nawazish Ali, turn to a religious identity.<sup>17</sup> This reflective turn to religion and orthodoxy is highly applicable to the Pakistanis who live in other countries.

### Diaspora or Hijrat?

It is academically fashionable to call Pakistanis living abroad as the Pakistani diaspora. The term, however, has deep religious significance that has little to do with Islam.<sup>18</sup> It is the Bible's Old Testament curse for the dispersal of the Jews to foreign lands until such time that their Messiah leads them to their holy land. For Muslims, immigration is an even deeply rooted concept but with a far more positive connotations. The Prophet (PBUH) was invited – not banished – from Mecca to Medina. The Medinites wanted to hear of the new religion first hand from the Prophet. In this sense, *hijrat* is a reward for the Muslim quite unlike the punishment of diaspora for the Jews. It is a celebratory welcome of the people of Medina that made the year of the *hijrat* the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

*Hijrat* quintessentially means migration to spread the Word of Islam. It also means the migration of Muslims who intends to and continues to be practicing Muslims in their new environs. The term *hijrat* cannot be applied to Muslims who give up their religion when they move to a new world, especially the modern industrialized, so-called secular world. *Hijrat* is the verb and *mohajir* the noun for immigration/immigrant. Muslim immigrants to Europe mostly constitute *mohajirs* because as soon as they can, they establish Islamic communities, attract converts to Islam and create greater inter-religious understanding than was otherwise possible. Immigrant communities in general, and Muslim immigrant

communities in particular, form fascinating socio-anthropological laboratories to study the phenomenon of identity formation amidst a new socio-economic and political regime. The immigrants' original ethnicity and culture become juxtaposed on their religion and vice versa. Invariably the immigrant attempts to salvage and assert an identity buffeted in a sea of new cultural artifacts placed intentionally and unintentionally by the new society on the landing beach of the immigrant.

Generally, Islamic immigrants cling to orthodoxy but its expression cannot but be nationalistic and based on the home culture. Socio-economic class also plays a crucial role and culturally educated persons celebrate their distinctive ethnic identities within the main structure of an Islamic identity rather than cling to orthodoxy. They promote cultural troupes from the home country and seek their Islamic identity within that context.<sup>19</sup> Indicatively, sufi studies is perhaps more popular at foreign universities than within Pakistan, whereas sufism permeates Pakistani society and sufis have at least one major shrine in every city big or small.

The issue of the popularity of sufi studies in countries with Muslim immigrants is worth examining. Let us take the hypothetical case of Pakistani immigrants in Barcelona. The city has expanded greatly during the last decade and a half, especially after the Olympic games of 1994. It is not only a popular tourist centre but also an industrial hub offering a variety of employment opportunities. Pakistani immigrants are among one of the many nationalities represented in the city. They base their identity on their religion but the main Islamic group in Barcelona is the Moroccans who have a long history with this northern, neighboring country. Also, Pakistanis, mostly Punjabis, often are difficult to be differentiated from Indians, particularly the Sikhs. Thus, in Barcelona the various layers of the Pakistani identity tend to be blown away: distinctive Muslims in the wider world of Islam and distinctive people among South Asians in general. Their inner identity lies in their interpretation of the Islamic traditions.

It is noteworthy that social groups that aim to represent the community to the local authorities often cling to the mantle of orthodox Islam. Such representatives are closely associated with the mosques administered and frequented by Pakistanis men. Women belonging to these social groups also usually follow orthodox Wahabi practices, such as complete veiling.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast, Pakistani immigrants who are better integrated in Catalan society and, on the whole, are better educated, are more familiar with sufi teachings. Such groups would include the *Asociación Cultural Hispano-Pakistaní*, a group that came into existence some decades ago. In addition, the longstanding local inhabitants of Barcelona wish to get to know the Pakistani sufi knowledge and culture. Consequently, demand creates its own supply from amongst the immigrant community and from their original homeland.<sup>21</sup> The circle is complete about the reinforcement of the sufi identity of Pakistanis, both within Pakistan and abroad.

To recapitulate, the religion of Islam is the main grounding factor for Pakistani identities in its various geographic regions and abroad. There is a core feminine aspect to the peculiar mystic identity of the Indus region, vindicated from the Source, i.e., the Quran.

## Notes and References

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4. This was to prove far more practical on the newly introduced horse as compared to the Indian unstitched *dhotee* and sari that could be worn in the ample saddle of an elephant, Ahsan, *The Indus Saga and the Making of Pakistan* and Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God*, 37.
5. Benedicte Grima, *The Performance of Emotion Among Paktun Women* (Karachi: OUP, 1993), 153.
6. Fahmida Hussain, *Image of 'Woman' in The Poetry of Shah Abdul Latif* (Karachi: Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai Chair, University of Karachi, 2001), 186.
7. The work of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai has also been erroneously interpreted as by Hindu scholars of Sindh as "expressions of Hindu mysticism with a superficial Islamic veneer" Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*, 143.
8. Although my understanding of Sindh is almost non-existent, I do perceive that the English translation is better than the Urdu translation in Hussain's book and, therefore, have preferred to quote only the Sindhi and English versions, Hussain, *Image of 'Woman' in The Poetry of Shah Abdul Latif*. 69.
9. Hussain, *Image of 'Woman' in The Poetry of Shah Abdul Latif*, 182.

10. Hussain, *Image of 'Woman' in The Poetry of Shah Abdul Latif*. 82.
11. Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*, 143.
12. Following the tradition of the Spanish Islamic mystic, Ibn Al-Arabi, expressed the relation between man and God in metaphors of man's longing for a beautiful maiden, Annemarie Schimmel, *As Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 151 and Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God, A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (New York: University of New York Press, 106.
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16. Waris Shah, Trans. Into Urdu, Hamidullah Shah, *Heer* (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammed Bashir and Sons, n.d.).
17. "Begum Nawazish Ali kay saath," (With Begum Nawazish Ali) is a late night Pakistani talk show hosted by a fashionable transvestite. The guests are almost always widely recognized personalities, mostly from showbiz but also from amongst leading politicians and serving, high-ranking government officials.



18. Other similarly popular terms are holocaust for events such as Israel's killing of Palestinians, and pogrom, for massacres, such as in Gujarat, India.
19. An instance of insecurity about one's identity could be taken from Abida Perveen's 2000 performance in Barcelona. Only one Pakistani immigrant family attended it and they were persons who had heard of the elite Auditorium and had obtained free tickets. In other cities with greater numbers of affluent Pakistanis, they would have outnumbered the local spectators.
20. For instance, the Sabri brothers, who own one of the oldest Pakistani groceries in Barcelona, and their wives, who independently own and run cloth stores selling cloth and ready made items mostly for use by women and children.
21. For instance, the first edition of my book *El alma en paz* was completely sold out and there is a steady demand for the second edition. Also, the sufi music and songs of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Abid Perveen, etc. are in constant demand in Barcelona.