

## REMEMBERING A SAINT

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### ABSTRACT

*The book Baba Bamu-ud-din Reshi (RA) is the first effort at chronicling the events and incidents of the life of an important saint of South Kashmir. The editor and the mind behind this small but impressive project, Mr. Zulfikar Siddiqui, has really tried to fill a gap whose presence was felt for a long time. By initiating, seeking to collect information and organising that in the form of a book, Mr. Siddiqui has done a commendable job. At a time when people are busy in worldly pursuits and left without much curiosity about the saintly ancestors of our locality in Anantnag (Islambad) or Kashmir at large, this book does come as a refreshing departure. The book with a beautiful cover embellished with tempting calligraphic work contains ten chapters, with an introduction and concluding essay by the editor of the book. These chapters written in easy-to-understand Kashmiri and Urdu cover various dimensions of the life of saint from his early years to the advanced life. The writers like Prof. Bashir Bashir, Prof. Shaad Ramzan, Dr. Sameer Siddiqui, eminent writer Mr. Ghulam Nabi Aatash and others have vividly picturised the pious life of Buma Saad, who later became Baba Bamu-ud-din. It is a little embarrassing to share with the readers this information, that I live just two kilometres away from the grave of the saint, yet I did not know much about this human being. I found myself relishing each detail which came out of the book. Many of my own questions and doubts were answered, and of course an image of a human being appeared before my eyes which will surprise many of his followers.*

**KEYWORDS:** *saintly ancestors and chronicling the events, noble person*

### INTRODUCTION

We learn from various essays how Sheikh Nuruddin and Baba Bamu-ud-din were born almost at the same time at a village called Khi Jogi Pur near Kulgam. The story goes that (there are slight variations to this story in various chapters) once a person heard a learned pandit tell his wife in the evening that tomorrow morning two flowers will rise from the spring in the village. The woman who smells first flower will give birth to a noble person who will become pious and very popular. The woman who smells the second flower will also give birth to a great person but not of the same stature as the one who is born of the first woman. The person who overheard this conversation in the pandit's home was none other than Salaar din; he went to his home and told his wife about the story. His wife went to the spring long before the sun appeared. She waited until the flower came out of the spring. She cut it and smelled it. On her way home, she found the wife of the pandit approaching. The pandit's wife was surprised but told Salaar din's wife whose name was Saedra ("ocean") *Saedranai manz chi laal pholaan* ("pearls bloom out of oceans"). The Pandit's wife smelled the second flower. The story goes further that Sheikh Nuruddin Reshi was born of Saedra and Buma Saad was born of the Pandit's wife.

From the village Sheikh went to Qaimoh and stayed in a cave for over ten years and Buma Saada went to Bum Zu

village near Mattan, next to the river Lidder. The authors of various chapters give various reasons for the migration of Buma Saada from Khi Jogi pur to Bum zu. There is one account that his maternal home was at Buim zu, another states that since he knew how to sculpt statues Bum zu was a good place with stones available, another states that since he was a sadhu he wished to live close to the famous mattan temple. Whatever is the reason, before becoming a Muslim it is famous about him that before sunrise he would take bath in five *tiraths* of Kashmir. These five *tiraths* (“holy places”) where he took *isnaan* (“bath”) were at Bijbehara, Chatabal, Khadenyaar, Dalgate and another place at Baramulla. All of this was done in two hours time. How did he manage to do this when means of travel were very limited and it was not possible to do this while going on foot? The method mentioned for this is “Tai Makaan” a spiritual actions which defies logic. Mr. Sameer Siddiqui in this regard mentions the “face value” and “figurative expressions”. He implies the figurative value of these anecdotes and statements, and which have to be interpreted at a level different from the common comprehension.

While staying at Bum Zu doing his Tapasya, Sheikh Nuruddin heard about him and felt that it will be a good service to his faith if he could bring him towards himself. To this end he went to his cave where he lived with the bloodied skin of a cow. Initially, the Hindu sadhu was very angry at seeing the cow and asked his followers to close the door against the Sheikh. There began a week long “makalma” “manazra” between the Sheikh and the Hindu Sadhu. The Hindu sadhu tried to impress him with his magical powers in which the Sheikh is shown to be defeating him. The Sheikh asks him for food from the “haandi” but the Sadhu had fed the food to his 360 statues and there was nothing left in the “haandi” which was on the hearth clean and empty. The Sheikh asks him to bring the “haandi” down. He brings it down to find there is food in it. He is amazed. The discussion then moves into the belief systems of the two people. Eventually, the secluded Sadhu gives in to the scholarly disputation of the Muslim saint, and agrees to change his faith and does the “baiyyat” on the hands of the Sheikh Nuruddin. His name is changed to Baba Bamu-ud-din from Buma Saad. For twelve years after his meeting with Sheikh he lived like a Muslim and created his own followers. The description of one of the followers is given by Ghulam Nabi Aatash in one of the essays in the book. It is said that even after converting to Islam he did not cut the hair on the crown of his head. Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ganai makes this point in his essay, and cites the memories of the people living in the vicinity of his grave. During the course of his intellectual interaction with the Hindu Sadhu, Sheikh is said to have resided next to a Spring and an elm tree opposite to the mountain cave Buma Saad was performing his *tapasya*. In one essay instead of a spring and an elm tree, a chinar tree is mentioned which is still called by the name of the Sheikh. When Baba Bamu-ud-din passed away he wished that Hazrat Zain-ud-din would bathe before being buried. But the latter was not in Kashmir. He had been sent into exile. But again by “Tai Makaan” process he came and performed his “tajheez-o-takfeen.” According to his last wish, all his belongings were buried with him because he did not want people to make his belonging the “zariyai mash.” This included his stick and the white stone. He used the white stone break his fast by licking it in the evening.

Besides this, the book gives a lot of information about the cave where the Hindu Sadhu was worshipping. The story of the cave is multi-faceted as well as mysterious. It is said that two kings chose to live there and disappeared. During Mughal era, emperor Jahnagir asked Hyder Khan to look into the interior of the cave. Hyder Khan went inside with some 40 people. At a certain point he saw four ways, one to the right, other to the left, one going up and the other down. He did not dare go ahead but threw a stone into the path going down. After an hour the sound of the stone disappeared. By this time the “charaag” that they were carrying began to fall dark so they decided to go out. Another popular myth about the

cave is that it ends at China on another side. Not just the cave the book gives information about the etymology of Bum zu.

The essay by Shaad Ramzan concerns with the linguistic, folklore elements, and their historical value. Thus the need to study the linguistic elements. He gives the example of Habbak. The name tells us that at one time the place was a lake because the word means lake. Tanveer Hayat in his detailed and scholarly essay gives various meanings and definitions of “tarak.” He defends the “temporary” *gaar nisheeni* (“Cave dwelling”) and steps to spiritual enlightenment. He uses the life of the Prophet and his companions to justify his claims. The editor in his closing essay laments the fact how some people are trying to defame the life and practices of the sufi saints by incorporating their ideological elements into the translations of some classical text. The example being given is that of *Tareekh-i-Hasan*. Some translators at the behest of their ideological mentors insert writings which are harmful to the legacy of the sufis and their valuable traditions

The book published in collaboration with the Markaz-i-Noor center of University of Kashmir and the Al-Sarwat Foundation is a good addition to the understanding of the spread of Islam in Kashmir. It is expected that more books of this kind about other saints and savants are published to enrich the lay population about their collective legacy. The book is both a source of record and valuable knowledge



