



FROM SURREAL TO THE REAL: SAIF-UL-MALOOK AS A SPIRITUAL TRAVELOGUE

Dr. Kaneez Fatima Syeda
Associate Professor
Department of English
Government College (w) Jhang
Jhang - Pakistan
kaneezfatmiabukhari@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. Mazhar Hayat
Chair, Department of English
Government College University
Faisalabad - Pakistan
mazharhayat63@gmail.com

Dr. Ayesha Ashraf
Assistant Professor
Department of English University of Jhang
Jhang - Pakistan

Abstract

Saif-ul-Malook is the folklore epic of love in regional literature of Punjab inviting the readers to unfold the inspirational mystic ideology of Divine love as a bond between man, God and universe. Apparently the work describes the story of love between Prince Saif-ul-Malook and Badi-ul-Jamal (the queen of fairies). The thematic under-current, however, is not so apparent; it is engrossed in various mystical and metaphysical dimensions. This very aspect of the epic enhances its scope to be acknowledged universally as it is not less than the works of Rumi and other universally acknowledged mystic poets. The subtitle of the book, "Safar-ul-Ishq (journey of divine love)" contextualizes the protagonist's spiritual journey from physical to the metaphysical status; from surreal to the real. The work symbolically describes man's spiritual pursuit in search of a Divine Beloved which Allama Iqbal terms as "Infinite Reality". The journey of the hero to find out and get united with the fairy in this tale is not merely a pursuit of earthly love rather it is the journey of human soul in search of "Divine Reality" which is destined to experience a series of trials. The hero is judged on various corporeal as well as spiritual levels before his union with the "Divine Beloved". The present paper explores the journey of the hero in search of the fairy (Infinite Reality/Divine Beloved), in the epic Saif-ul-Malook as a spiritual travelogue.

Keywords: Infinite Reality, Divine Pursuit, Spiritual Travelogue, Surreal, Real.



Introduction

Saif-ul-Malook is a folklore epic of regional literature of Punjab written by Mian Muhammad Buksh (1830-1907). Buksh is a regional poet of Punjabi language born in Eastern Punjab. He completed the work under study when he was only 33. His versification talent tends to unfold the reality of the mystical bond between man, God and universe. This is the very universality of poetic art and thematic grandeur of this epic which enriches its fame. Farani (2004) observed: "I firmly believe that if Mian Muhammad Buksh's language had been Persian, he would have been recognized all over the world as a great Mystical poet not less than Rumi" (Farani, 2004:11-12).

The narrative of *Saif-ul-Malook* runs as Prince Saif-ul-Malook, the only son of the Egyptian king Asim bin Sufwan, happens to see two pictures inscribed on a sovereign stamp; a family heritage, which his father gives him as gift. The prophet Suleiman, who was famous to be acknowledged as the king of fairies and demons, had given those stamps to the grandfather of Prince Saif-ul-Malook as token of friendship. The prince recognizes one of the pictures inscribed on stamps as his own and the other one is of a beautiful and bewitching maiden with whom he falls in love at first sight. The king, his father, sends many brave knights in search of the maiden but all return unsuccessful. Then the prince sees the maiden in a dream presenting herself as queen of fairies, and inviting the prince to her fairy land but warning him of the impending trials to reach there. The prince sets out on journey in search of the fairy and ultimately undergoing trials and tribulations and performing many superman actions, reaches in fairy land and weds the Queen of Fairies. His wedlock with the queen of fairies is the union of human soul with divinity. Buksh writes in the tale and Syeda translated the verses: "Prince in this epic stands for soul." (Syeda, 2013: 755).

Aqeel(1970) maintains, "Laikin Mian Muhammad ye tamam marahil bian karnay ke bawajood is bat per israr krta hai Ke ye dastan mehz ishqiya dastan nahin hai balkay is main majaz ke parday main haqeeqat ka izhar kia gia hai." (278). (But despite describing all the stages of the love story, Mian Muhammad Buksh is bent upon pinpointing the fact that this epic is not merely a love epic rather in it under the veil of earthly love the divine realities have been discussed).

Purpose of the Study

The present study highlights the needs of the modern times: the need to enhance the spiritual serenity among mankind and the need to search the ideal human being among the trash who can deserve to be called a superman in its true sense; the one whose qualities of head and heart are much awaited for. The mankind in general needs heroes like superman who can confront the difficulties of life and solve the problems in the present scenario of anxieties and growing tensions. The superman-attributes and spiritual grandeur testified in the present research offers mankind a scope to nourish such qualities. This research offers possibility for soul searching and spiritual uplift for humanity which is the



greatest need of the present time. It is significant to study the selected topic in order to have a better understanding of human beings and their society.

Literature Review

By giving a general estimate of poetry as genre and the generic claims of poetry in Punjabi language, Dr. Ghuffran Syed(1982) ranks Buksh with notable literary giants of the world such as Homer of Greek literature, Moliere of French, Virgil of Latin, Pushkin of Russian, Goethe of German, Shakespeare and Milton of English, Khusru, Hafez and Firdosi of Persian and many other of various literatures of the world. This estimate speaks volumes of the universal appeal of the poetry of Mian Muhammad Buksh; a title which he thinks suits Mian Muhammad Buksh on account of his thematic grandeur in the epic *Saif-ul-Malook*. Dr. Ghuffran Syed commenting on the theme of Divine Love and Spiritual uplift of man in the epic by Buksh, states, “ainhnan ne tasawuf te salook, ishq-e-haqeeqi te irfan-e-nafs de ik ik nuqtay nu pharol pharol ke bian keeta aiy” (269). “(He [Mian Muhammad Buksh] has openly unfolded each and every hidden icon of mysticism, Divine Love and spiritual enlightenment)” When Buksh is discussed as story teller, no doubt, he excels in this as well only on account of his art of infusing the spirit of Divine Love in the art of story- telling.

The most authentic and comprehensive critical work on Buksh in Punjabi is PhD thesis of Dr. Syed Akhter Jafferi. In this published thesis Hazrat Mian Muhammad Buksh: Hayati te Shairi(2007), Dr. Jafferi has given a complete detail of the life and works of the poet under study with historic and literary references. This work is not merely limited to the analysis of *Saif-ul-Malook* but encapsulates the whole spectrum of life of the poet under study. Almost all the aspects of his poetic works have been touched upon, even elaborated in this thesis. The author has significantly contributed in criticism on Punjabi Sufi literature by rendering this meritorious service of writing a complete and authenticated work on the life and literary accomplishments of Buksh. The thematic coherence, artistic enterprise, moral dogmatism, fine agency of words and phrases in the works of Buksh as well as historic background and political upheavals in his period, his life from early childhood to maturing in poetic fancy till his death and above all his mental and spiritual metamorphosis in mystic creed which took him a long way to write the epic of *Saif-ul-Malook* in Divine perspective; all the aspects have been given full coverage in this book. Dr. Jafferi(2007) writes, "Punjabi shairi vich Hazrat Mian Sahib da khas rang aiy jaihra ohnan nu Punjabi de doojhay shairan nalun wakhrian karda aiy te imtiaz bakhshda aiy" (530). (Buksh is discern ably distinguished poet of Punjab. Almost all of his poetic work is written in mystic vein. If ever he has written some romantic tales, he has soaked out mysticism and points of moral teachings from romantic strands as well. This is the notable style of Mian Sahib which makes him not only distinguished from other poets rather gives him supremacy on them).

Sahi (1982) in his article “Mian Muhammad Buksh di ikhlaqi shairi”, authenticates the words of Dr. Jafferi by writing, “Mian Sahib na sirf apnay zamanay de bahut waday shair san balkay aj vi ohnan da darja hey.” (521). (Mian Sahib was not only the distinguished poet of his age rather his status as a great poet is also acclaimed in modern age as well).



Theoretical Framework

Iqbal's ideology of "Human ego ---his freedom and immortality" presents almost the identical personae in the form of his "Mard-e-Kamil" (accomplished man), however, with a few exceptions. Iqbal in '*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*' (1986); collection of lectures on theology and selfhood, has described fully his concept of superman (Mard-e-Kamil). He has presented his idea of power and superman in his lecture, "Human ego, his freedom and immortality" with a slightly different perspective. His "Mard-e-Kamil" has all the superman attributes but unlike Nietzsche's superman, he is not a superhuman character devoid of spiritual qualities. He is not some Divine being but a human being who is "Recipient of Divine illumination" (Iqbal, 1986: 98). He is the superman who explores the realities of life and immortality; ultimately embraces the Infinite Reality or 'The eternal Truth' with his ever enlightened spirit. He is the man who does not feel any need to shed away his soul (ego) and humanly attributes to become 'Superman'. He is the superman in real sense of the word as his soul is alive to lead his body towards the eternal pursuit, "Who can be the subject of this exception (immortality) but those in whom the ego has reached the very highest point of intensity?" (94).

Iqbal, no doubt, admires Nietzsche's philosophy and regards him a seer who can better see the vision of 'Eternal Reality' with the prospective of his insight. Iqbal feels Nietzsche's views more native to oriental philosophy than other occidental thinkers. In the words of Iqbal, "His (Nietzsche's) mental history is not without a parallel in the history of Eastern Sufism". (Iqbal as cited in Azad, 1983: 145). However, his own philosophy, though, similar to that of Nietzsche in many aspects, parts ways with it on theological grounds. "Iqbal, who gives a message of hope and action has a firm faith in the unending struggle exhibited by the world process" (145). This is the point of divergence where the epic heroes under study; Saif-ul-Malook and Redcross exhibit the different outlooks despite the more identical struggle they undertake for Divine pursuit. So, his Superman can have no Divine illumination to lead him towards the ultimate Truth. For Iqbal's Superman the case is quite contrary. His Superman is "the recipient of Divine illumination." (Iqbal, 1986: 98). His Superman has the spiritual power along with the physical strength; the most imperative weapon which the Superman should have. Jagan Nath Azad (1983) discusses the same point as:

Obviously, in spite of being impressed by the philosophy of Nietzsche, whom he describes as a believer in heart and a disbeliever by intellect, Iqbal cannot subscribe to a number of aspects of his philosophy. Nietzsche, after ringing the death-knell of religion, prophesies for man a higher state of existence. Iqbal does not own this view. As for Superman, Nietzsche says, "God is dead: Now let us live that Superman may live." But now different is Iqbal's human being:

"Tane paida kun az mushte ghubare,
Tane mohkam tar az sangeen hisare
Durun-e-u-dil-i-dard ashnae
Chu jue dar kanar-e-kohsare" (145-146)



(Create a physique from handful of dust; create a physique, stronger than a stone-built fort. And in this physique should be a heart full of pity and compassion. Like a stream flowing by the side of mountain).

Iqbal gave mankind the message of hope and struggle through his “Mard-e-Kamil”, the same message which Nietzsche imparted through his Superman. The treatment of Iqbal, however, in handling the theme of struggle and hope offers much wider perspectives than that of Nietzsche. Iqbal does not consider this struggle mere an effort for survival; the survival which ultimately is not bound to sustain if the body perishes. With Iqbal, unlike Nietzsche, this struggle for survival tends to explore the realities of universe ultimately becoming an unending Divine pursuit; the pursuit which entitles man with recipient of Divine illumination. Iqbal states: “Life is one and continuous. Man marches always onward to receive everfresh illumination from an Infinite Reality”. He further states, “and the recipient of Divine illumination is not merely a passive recipient” (Iqbal, 1986: 98).

Dr. Javaid Iqbal, in his book, *Khutbat-e-Iqbal: Tasheel-o-Tafheem* (2008) elaborates the point thus: “Iqbal ke nazdeek insan ka ki hasti ka silsila jism ki halakat se khatam nahin ho sakta” (133). (According to Iqbal the survival of man is associated with some spiritual body. The concatenation of his existence cannot cease to be with the death of his body).

Iqbal’s Superman thus is an earthly human being having supernatural powers endowed upon his illuminated soul by some Heavenly Body. This is the Divine illumination which prepares the Superman for the pursuit of Infinite Reality. Iqbal does not centre his philosophy of man on mere biological grounds. Physical reality of man is only a small particle of an organic whole. If we rest our study of Superman on Nietzschean doctrine which considers soul as contempt to shed away, we are bound to limit the Superman only to the physical and mental capabilities which are in themselves quite limited. The ultimate goal which the epic heroes under study have to attain; to embrace the Divine Reality (the fairy as symbol of Divine Reality) is bound to encompass some spiritual powers other than physical vigour and mental alertness. Therefore, the present study needs to encompass both the conceptual frameworks; that of Nietzsche, and Iqbal’s to dredge up the valid results. (Iqbal, 1986: 90-91).

The fundamental issue which the present study has questioned, researched and thereof challenged is whether the Superman with Divine providence or the Superman without Divine providence depending solely on physical power is needed to reach the Infinite Reality (the queen of fairies); whether or not the superman attributes of Prince Saif-ul-Malook and Redcross knight include “Divine illumination” and last but not the least which of them is more successful as an epic hero to prove him a Superman; to reach the Infinite Reality (The fairy). Nietzsche, unlike Iqbal, regards the human soul a mere instrument or a toy of the body. “An instrument ‘spirit’-----a little instrument and toy of your great reason” (Nietzsche, 1976:23). To embrace the Eternal Truth or to reach The Infinite Reality which is the main focus of the research, it is necessary for the hero not to be space-bound. Body without spiritual elevation is destined to be within the limits of time and space. The superman tasks



such as fighting with demons and reaching from one place to the other within the twinkling of an eye; the tasks which both the heroes under study perform during their pursuit for Divine Reality, sound quite out of question if we consider them space-bound with their weak corporal frames. It, definitely, is the soul (ego in the words of Iqbal) which is able to “think of more than one space order” (Iqbal, 1986:79).

To conclude, it can be safely said that despite slight variances, both Nietzsche and Iqbal presented the concept of Superman according to their respective terms of thought. Superman is the ideal human being who mounts the highest peaks, swims the perilous oceans and performs Sisyphean tasks not to be done by ordinary human beings. Superman is the outcome of ‘will to power’ which enforces the physical and mental capabilities of man to work wonders. This is the concept of superman on which both the epic heroes under study have been judged during pursuit of Infinite Reality (The Queen of Fairies).

Metaphysical journey of Prince in the spiritual travelogue

Saif-ul-Malook, the prince is the protagonist of the epic exhibiting all traits associated with the status of epic hero. He is physically agile, mentally alert and above all his soul is ever responsive to the intuitional working of brain. He is the hero whose spiritual tangibility acts like magnet clinging to the ever embracing ‘Reality’. He, quite easily, encounters the trials impeding the way to eternity. Buksh has delineated the character of Saif-ul-Malook in full terms describing each and every detail of the hero’s physical, mental and spiritual health. This character has been sketched entirely on the true lines of an epic hero. The metamorphosis, every epic hero is destined to experience has been described quite skillfully by the author in depiction of the character of prince Saif-ul-Malook. The very metamorphosis upgrades the spiritual status of the hero instead of any negative change in him. During the course of events, the hero transforms himself from an ordinary man to a superman quite successfully and this is the only metamorphosis he undergoes. All the other heroic attributes, he is reported to possess from the very beginning. Buksh (1984) states giving the initial information about the hero:

Saif-Malook ander Rab paya buhta asar danai.

Tez tabiat, hosh wadiat, fehm aqal, chitrai (Buksh, 1984:53).

(The God put prudence in Prince Saif-ul-Malook. He was wise, agile, mentally alert and active) (Syeda, 2013:753).

From the very beginning, Saif-ul-Malook scents out heroism. He proves himself on very initial steps, worthy to be chosen as superman for Divine pursuit. Saif-ul-Malook sees the fairy in his dream and his quick response to it shows his eager nature to unfold the hidden icons of great ‘Reality’. He undertakes the journey in search of the fairy as a sacred voyage which proves him the ardent seeker in Divine pursuit. During the course of action, the prince performs all the heroic actions even worthy to be entitled as supernatural ventures not to be expected from an ordinary human being. It is here,



on such extra ordinary performance that the prince is rightful to be called Superman; the living embodiment of Nietzsche's doctrine. Buksh presents graphic pictures of some wonderful incidents happening during the journey which are enough to prove the corporal vigour of Saif-ul-Malook. His valiant fight with the whole army of monsters named 'Sagsars' is one such example:

Saif Malook bahadar aisa, daiwtian sang larda

Dai marora ror jihan nu, koi na agay charhda(Buksh,1984:104).

(Saif-ul-Malook was such an intrepid man worthy of fighting with demons, monsters and yetis. With his extraordinary might and strength, he could chop the monsters to shreds; none could bear the force of his slash).

The attributes associated with 'superman' are his fighting with demons, swimming in the oceans like fish, flying in the air like birds and attaining such goals which no mortal can. Saif-ul-Malook proved to have each of these attributes during his pursuit for Divine Reality. Saif-ul- Malook sets out to seek the fairy with an army of more than ten thousand armed men on a fleet of several ships. The divine pursuit, however, proves not so easy a task to be achieved with the help of worldly armament; it always gives a spiritual test to the seeker. From the very beginning, the same has been told to the prince when the fairy warns him of impeding hardships. The statement can be cited here to prove Saif-ul-Malook 'Recipient of Divine illumination':

"Main te ap muhabat tairi tain thi kujh ziada

Tahin ap sadawan tainu jhabday a shehzada

Khushki rastay pahunch na saksain, thail nadi vich bairay" (Buksh, 1984: 78).

"(In the dream, the fairy spoke thus: O, prince! I myself am infatuated by you and my love is more powerful than yours, so, I came in your dream to invite you and tell you the way to reach me. She told that the prince would never be able to reach the destination over land. Land is symbolical of barren frame of man which leads nowhere unless it is watered by the spiritual love and lighted by the divine illumination. The fairy advised the prince to travel by sea. The wave of sea can be taken for the wave of unfathomable love, O, Muhammad Buksh, which makes a man indifferent to everything under the sun. The stream in which to sail the boat, said the fairy, was actually the stream of this fragile life. After some distance in the stream there comes the sea of eternal life and Divine love. This sea will lead the prince into a new direction when he leaves the stream of this fragile life. The boat will break into pieces as it is destined to quit during the journey of soul towards the eternal reality. The prince in this epic stands for soul. The stream(sea) to sail in, to find out the fairy is the stream of eternal love and the broken vessel during the journey stands for the breakage of corporal frame of man. Only then one can embrace the lover or the eternal Truth when he breaks fragile body-links with this world of misleading happenings)(Syeda,2013:755)".



All the predictions reported by the fairy proved true during the journey. After a long journey by sea, the prince had to face the calamity of hurricane in which the whole fleet of ships was sunk but for one ship on which there was the prince himself with his seventy comrades. All except them were drowned. It was the initial stage of the physical, mental and spiritual test of Saif-ul-Malook. There was nothing to eat and drink as the ship having all the commodities was sunk down with all others. The prince had been wrestling with the buffets of storm for eighteen days. It was Divine love that made him combat with that catastrophe. Shiekh (2008) is of the view, "By common consent, *Saif-ul-Malook* is the most important literary work of Mian Mohammad, and his fame would not have suffered at all if he had not written anything else" (363).

As the journey preceded the magnitude of physical, mental and spiritual test got higher and higher. In the way to his destination, the mountain of tribulations seemed to be erected for the prince. There remained no respite for Saif-ul-Malook; even his closest friend and counselor Saad got separated from him during the hurricane which was an omen that along with the physical, the prince would have to undergo mental and spiritual trauma before he could be prepared spiritually to embrace the Divine Reality. For six months, Saif-ul-malook sailed the only left out ship without any external aid or food supply. The act proves him 'Overman'; someone above the estimated capabilities of ordinary man. The prince truly reserves the right to be called superman. Buksh has drawn the character of Saif-ul-Malook as a fine combination of worldly wisdom, physical vigour and spiritual elevation; the combination not easily found in any other epic hero, "Azeemat o istaqamat ki tarjamani o pasdari ke lihaz se Saif-ul-Malook kakirdar is dastan ka hi nahin balkay bare sagheer main likhi gai sabhi dastanun main imtiazai haisiat rakhta hai" (Azhar, 1980: 97). (As for the reflection and keeping intact the higher attributes like chivalry and steadfastness, Saif-ul-Malook as hero is the only character true to these virtues; the one and only of his type not only in this epic but all the other been written in sub-continent. Almost all the epic characters before this are devoid of the power to act. All act as puppets in the hands of heroines either that is Gulfam, the hero of great epic Indersabha or Bainazeer, the hero of Sehr-ul-Biyan or the Ranjha of Waris Shah. All these heroes are flat characters without any special virtue of power to act. Even the characters of classical Urdu poets like Mir Taqi Mir and Momin, too, are deficient of courage and power. Among all these epics, *Saif-ul-Malook* of Mian Sahib is the only one of its kind in which the hero continuously combats with trials and tribulations and keeps on fighting courageously till the attainment of his goal).

This is the same physical and metal vigour which in the case of Saif-ul-Malook takes stimulus from his spiritual powers and make him an invincible epic character; a hero who is superman in true sense of the word. After six months long sea voyage, the prince reaches in an island in which there are plenty of fruit to eat and sweet water to drink. This is the first respite during the long journey full of troubles. The prince, however, could not stay there for more than one night as there came a gigantic bird like bolt from the blue. He took eight companions of the prince and flew away. The incident shows that there is no physical respite possible if one has to prove himself a superman along with the epithet of 'recipient of Divine illumination'. The prince sailed once again in the symbolical sea of troubles and after forty days, he had to lose the only ship which he had. A monstrous alligator split



the ship in two planks; the one plank remained safe from sinking on which there reported to be the prince with his forty companions. This is the great test to judge the physical and spiritual steadfastness of Saif-ul-Malook as superman. For three days the prince sailed on that single plank in the fathomless sea of tribulations impeding the way to Eternity. It seems as if the prince were immune from time and space. At more than one place in the epic, the prince proves his supermanly attributes; sometimes flying with the birds, sometimes swimming on fragile planks in perilous oceans. At one place fighting with the monsters, at another visiting the alien lands with supernatural happenings. Neither at any place the prince seemed amazed nor ever did he get frightened. All that was supernatural was quite natural for him as he was the "Superman". After three days dangerous sailing on the single plank, the prince reached overland vicinity where he had to encounter apes. That was a strange land where apes were in rule. Their ruler, however, was a human being whom they captured long ago and made their chieftain. The prince fought bravely with the apes but ultimately they caught him. This episode encodes the reality that during the journey of Divine pursuit, the seeker sometimes has to face circumstances which no logic can prove to be real.

"Hik, hik bander aida aida waikhdian dil darda
Saray banday ghair liunay, jan na dainday harda
Qaid hoya shehzada othay, kujh na chalda chara
Na oh maray jawin saray, na howay chutkara
Lai turay shehzaday tain, nalay ohdian nafran
Ashiq banna sukhla nahin, waikh ishqay dian safran" (Buksh,1984 :99).

"(One day the prince was caught by a group of wild apes. Every ape was horribly gigantic. The apes captured every person accompanying the prince and the prince himself got imprisoned there. The prince felt helpless as neither they could be easily killed nor they let the prince go. So it is evident that the Divine love and pursuit is not an easy task. It puts the man in endless trials before the acquisition)" (Syeda, 2013:756).

Prince Saif-ul-Malook is the hero who proves himself entitled with all the virtues worthy to secure a status for him where superman experiences spiritual uplift enabling him to see the Divine Reality with naked eyes. The trials he had to face paved for him the way to reach and embrace the Infinite Reality. Had he not undergone such trying situations, neither he would have been justified to be called superman nor could he reached his destination. "Man marches always onward to receive ever fresh illumination from an Infinite Reality which every moment appears in a new glory" (Iqbal,1986:98) is the agenda and "the recipient of Divine illumination is not mere a passive recipient" (98) is the epithet which the hero under study proves himself to be justified for. He is the man who always marches onward despite very trying circumstances; he never gets astray from the path he has taken up with his own free will. Moreover, being the recipient of Divine Illumination, he never gets passive either he is in difficulty or gets some respite. There always has been a new battle for him either testing his corporal potentials or his spiritual gustoes. If there comes some island for him after having spent countless days and nights in perilous sea, this pleasure is accompanied with the sudden appearance



of some vulture like bird forcing the prince to quit the rest area and to be active again. If the prince spends some pleasant time in the company of the chieftain of apes which arrest him as foe but treat him as friend, soon after, he has to get into a fierce fight with monstrous creatures named 'Sagsars'. He could not have stayed at some resting place because he was not a pleasure hunter; he was the Divine seeker who had always to march onward. He had the burning fire of Divine love in his heart which never lets him take rest; the love which is the essence of everything in the universe. Buksh states in the epic thus:

“Je lakh zuhd, ebadat kariay, bin ishqun kis kari
Jan, jan ishq na saray tainun, ta,ta nibhay na yari” (Buksh,1984:35).

“(Without Divine love, your prayers are vile. If there is no burning fire of love in your heart and soul, you can never embrace the beloved Reality)” (Syeda'2013:752).

Having lost all his possessions and many of his friends, the prince was in a desperate plight. Soon after defeating 'Sagsars', he had to encounter an army of wild, barbarian tribes whom he fought courageously with. Saif-ul-Malook and his companions, however, were caught by those barbarians because they were much more in number. The chieftain of those tribes enslaved all and put them to laborious tasks. It happened that the daughter of the savage chieftain having negroid features got dotted on the charming personality of the prince and offered herself as mistress to him. On the flat refusal from the prince, infuriatingly she augmented his rigorous imprisonment. Here, where the physical vigour of the prince failed to fight the calamity, was the test of the mental capabilities of Saif-ul-Malook. When he realized not to be able to get out of that miserable plight, Saif-ul-Malook decided to use his brain and sent a marriage proposal to the negress with the condition of going for ten days hunting trip with all his friends before marriage. The Negress was so dazed on this proposal that she could not understand the plotting and allowed the prince to go for hunting. She equipped the prince with a ship and all the accessories. Saif-ul-Malook fled from that land forever. The matter advocates the fact that Saif-ul-Malook was second to none as regards his mental capabilities. Buksh has figured out Saif-ul-Malook as round character exhibiting multi-dimensional skills and qualities of head and heart. If he fights with demons like superman, equally he proves himself an extraordinary man with exceptional mental enlightenment. Even his companions acknowledge the worth of his superior brain in these lines:

“Aih salah pasand tamamen keeti nal iraday
Kehnday afreen hazaran aqal tairi shehzaday” (Buksh,1984:111).

“(All the companions of the prince liked his contrivance to get rid of the negress and her savage tribe. All acclaimed the mental supremacy and sanity of the prince in making that flawless plan to be free)”. After getting rid of the tyrant savages, the most dramatic, climactic and conclusive part of the epic begins; the part in which the magnitude of trials for the hero reaches the climax. Until now the epic hero under study has been given the tests to prove his physical and mental capacity to be entitled as



“Superman” in which he remained successful. Divine pursuit, however, is not so ordinary a task which can be attained by superman without his being the “recipient of Divine illumination”. To secure this very epithet, the soul of the superman must undergo a series of ordeals to attain that spiritual zenith which can enable him to embrace the Infinite Reality. This is the point of divergence where Saif-ul-Malook parts ways with the Nietzschean concept of Superman; Nietzsche’s Superman go on pleading the verdict “What does your body proclaim of your soul? Is not your soul poverty and filth and wretched contentment?”(Nietzsche,1976:6). For Saif-ul-Malook, however, is quite different the case. For him ‘Soul’ is that finer matter which receives “ever fresh illuminations from an Infinite Reality”(Iqbal,1986:98). Buksh considers spiritual elevation an integral part of the very composition of epic hero; the only ground on which there rests the entire pedagogy of his writing this great epic. The character of Saif-ul-Malook as epic hero is a ‘Round Character’ throughout the epic only for the reason that “the recipient of Divine illumination is not mere a passive recipient”. It was the spiritual grandeur because of which Saif-ul-Malook, as epic hero reached the places where Nietzsche’s “Superman” might have ‘feared to tread’. Rehman, in her unpublished thesis (2000) writes about Saif-ul-Malook, “Shehzaday da kirdar ohday maqam te martabay parun bara ee sohna aleekia aiy. Oh nafs da ghulam nahin”. (The character of the prince in the epic has been drawn beautifully as far as his status as hero is concerned. His soul is not the slave of his body).

From here onward in the epic, the soul of the prince has been tested on various grounds to make sure that he is the superman who is the recipient of Divine illumination as well. It is only after successful acquisition of a certain amount of spiritual aggrandizement that the prince proves himself worthy to embrace Infinite Reality(the queen of fairies in symbolic perspective). The hurdling ordeals in the way to Divine pursuit, however, do not create anew but enhances the already inherent spiritual qualities in the prince. The kindling of Divine love in the heart of Saif-ul-Malook and his choice of Divine pursuit are quite enough to prove him an epic hero worthy to receive “Divine illuminations”. Syed (2003) is of the view discussing certain conceits used by Buksh in a couplet of the epic:

“Bal charagh ish q da, maira roshan kr de seena
Dil de deevay di rushnai, javay vich zameenan (Quoted in Syed, 2003: 62).
(Light the lamp of love and set aglow my breast. And let the rays of the heart’s earthen lamp enrich the earth with light).

The lamp in the first line is the divine unseen hand of deeper inner urges to which the poet surrenders himself for personal reorientation. In the second line it is the small earthly body of man whose light seeks to bathe the world in its glowing passion (62)”. Buksh, in the very beginning realizes the presence of divine love in his own heart which made him write the great epic. He uses Saif-ul-Malook and his love for fairy as his mouth piece to unfold the intricacies of divine love in him.

After getting rid of the negroid daughter of the savage chief, Saif-ul-Malook once again sailed the boat in the sea of troubles. Soon after the commencement of his voyage, the prince had to undergo



the first spiritual trial in which all his companions got separated from him. There came, all of a sudden, a gigantic conger which hit the boat with the great might to capsize it. The prince was about to drown when he gripped some log floating in the sea and mounted on that log. For seven days and seven nights he sailed in that furious sea on a single log. He was left all alone, empty handed and companionless. His ardent passion for divine pursuit, however, was not diminished rather accelerated. After seven days he saw a coast fringed with a high mountain; some unclimbed ridge. It was impossible to climb up the mountain, where flowed the unfathomable sea underneath. Saif-ul-Malook mustered up his courage and climbed a tree on the bottom of the mountain. Second day, there came an anaconda to drink water. The prince held its tail that supported him to climb the mountain. From there onward he flew with a huge sea bird by gripping its paws and after incessant flight over several mountains reached a forest. All these hardships, Saif-ul-Malook welcomed as test to purify his soul; to make it finer enabling it to embrace divine reality. The forest where reached the prince was the outskirts of a quaint city; the "City of Ladies". It was the city where there was no man but women only. There ruled the most beautiful woman of the world who offered herself as mistress to the prince. It was another spiritual test for the prince to test his integrity and credibility in Divine love and the pursuit of Infinite Reality. The refusing statement given by Saif-ul-Malook to the lady can be quoted as universal dogmatism for love.

There are more than one incident in the epic which have the ample scope to be cited to prove Saif-ul-Malook, recipient of Divine illumination equally exhibiting his superman attributes. He was on the zenith of physical, mental and spiritual elevation. Buksh, in the epic seems to be solemnizing the mystic creeds through the character of Saif-ul-Malook. He figures out this character as a conventional epic hero, who with a rapid metamorphosis cultivates his qualities of head and heart, ultimately attaining the destination where Divine providence reaches to the hero as a gift or bonus for the acknowledgment of his victorious pursuit of Divine Reality. It is the turning point in the epic when every tribulation loses the severity of magnitude for Saif-ul-Malook as he is quite near his ultimate goal; the destination of Divinity. "jadun salik aih manzil yeni istaghna di manzil vichun salamti nal langh janda aiy te phir oh toheed di manzil te aparda aiy." (Rana, 1986:264) (After attaining the attribute of contentment, the divine seeker reaches the point of eternity). Before embracing eternity, the soul of the hero faces the final dilemma when being alone and extremely thirsty in a desert Saif-ul-Malook listens openly the discourse between his soul and body.

"Bahut hoya lachar shehzada, taqat zor na reeha
Tangi, talkhi aisi, jaisi jan kandan din jeeha
Karay irada aih shehzada, maran pait katari
Ais talkhi de sakht azabun chutay jind baichari
Aqal shehzaday nu phir warjay, mat tairi kiun mari
Sans udan tak aas na torin, khas jinahndi yari
Nafs kahay main kahla hoya, kachrak tori jarsan?
Lakh museebat jhag na milya, aj milay bin marsan.
Aqal kahay kiun kamla hoyon?ishqay laj na lain.



Itni sakhti agay jhalya, koi din hor langhain.
Nafs kahay hun kithun milsi, na koi das sanaiha
Aas hondi das pondi jis di, ainwain jaran kaweeha
Aqal kahay aih kam ashqi da ishqun bas na karni
La kay bazi, baiandazi, orik war na harni” (Buksh,1984:123).

“(One day the prince felt so helpless and dejected due to loneliness and thirst in desert that he decided to commit suicide because his plight was more painful than death. He thought that death could rid himself of that pitiable plight. The prince decides to die but his Insight (soul) pleads that the prince should be sane enough not to do so. Those, whose love is divine one, never shun hope till their last gasp. Sight (body) of the prince answers that it is in hurry to get rid of the miserable condition. How long it should bear the brunt? If it cannot reach the Divine Reality (fairy) after countless trials, today the body must perish to end its existence along with these trials. Insight (soul) pleads that Sight (body) should be wise. It should not blemish the Divine love. If the body has undergone so much misery why not endure a little bit more. Sight (body) answers, that it seems difficult to reach the Divine Reality (fairy) as there is no clue to excess. The desire nourishes the hope of the object which is physically in sight or hearing. Hankering after the invisible and abstract is useless. Insight (soul) pleads that the divine lover never desists from Divine Reality. His whole existence centers on this pursuit)” (Syeda, 2013: 758).

It was, in fact, quite appropriate twist in the epic as a result of which the hero had to enrich his inner sight with the initial glimpses of the Divine Reality. It was only because of the falling morale of the prince that divinity itself considered it imperative to aid him with eternal providence; the providence which reached the hero in the corporal design of an angel. This part of the epic sounds more native to the concept of perfect hero given by Iqbal. It is the point where the strengthened subjectivity of the hero successfully subjugates the objective correlation between the physical and meta- physical.

This episode of the epic can be considered a gateway to enter the wonderland in which the hero performs extra ordinary acts exhibiting supernatural powers. The angel with his cane drew a long line on the ground and directed Saif-ul-Malook, the prince to follow the line guiding him towards the path to find out his destination. By then Saif-ul-Malook had secured such higher point of spiritual power where he was not bound to follow the bounds of time and space. For him, “mental and physical events are both in time, but the time-span of the ego is fundamentally different to the time-span of the physical event” (Iqbal,1986:79). To prove himself as superman with divine illumination, Saif-ul-Malook rendered supernatural twist to the epic. He reached with twinkling of an eye to a place where there erected, in a vast desert, a wonderful fort. The fort, however, was deserted except a beautiful princess named Malika Khatoon who was imprisoned there by a demon. Using his spiritual strength, the prince made her free. On her demand, he told the princess about his love and pursuit of Badee-ul-Jamal, the fairy. The princess told him the story of her own sister who was the sister-like friend of the fairy whom Saif-ul-Malook was looking for. Malika Khatoon promised the prince to arrange his



meeting with the fairy. After much toil Saif-ul-Malook accompanied with Malika Khatoon reached Sarandeeep, the native land of the princess. Badra Khatoon, the real sister of Malika Khatoon and foster sister of the fairy reported that the fairy used to spend one month yearly with her in Sarandeeep as guest. It was the magic power of divine illumination that a fairy; non-human personage herself reaches the prince in Sarandeeep. They meet; they see each other and realize the presence of divine love between them. After one month, the fairy went back to her fairy-land. The prince reached after her being escorted with a demon, the servant of the fairy. After fighting many duels with yetis and demons, Saif-ul-Malook ultimately got united with his Divine Beloved, the fairy in symbolical connotation. His going to fairy land within no time is the clear violation of the unity of time and space which is sufficient to entitle him as superman more close to the ideal given by Iqbal(1986) "The duration of the physical event is stretched out in space as a present fact; the ego's duration is concentrated within it and linked with its present and future in a unique manner" (79)

This union of Saif-ul-Malook with the Queen of fairies is the Divine union which has been stated in the epic in the below quoted lines encompassing the entire philosophy of Buksh about heroic deeds:

"Saif Malook, peri ral baithay nal muhabat dil di
Jis cheezay nu lorin chariay orik kadan mildi
Loran wala reeha na khali lor keeti jis sachi
Lor karaind jo mur aya, lor ohdi gin kachi" (Buksh, 1984:287).

"(At last, the prince reached the fairyland [ultimate destination] and got united with the queen of fairies[Divine Reality]. It is true that if the pursuit is persistent, one does reach the goal at last. If one fails to reach the ultimate reality, it is crystal clear that either his pursuit is not persistent or he has no Divine Illumination or spiritual guide)" (Syeda, 2013:761).

Conclusion

To sum up the discussion it is pertinent to mention that both on symbolic and metaphysical level, the tale *Saif-ul-Malook* exhibits all the traits of spiritual travelogue of its hero from physical to metaphysical, from surreal to real in search of Divine Reality.



References

- Aqeel, S. (1970). *Punjabi ke panch qadeem shair*. Karachi: Anjuman-e-Taraqi Urdu.
- Azad, J.N. (1983). Iqbal: Mind and Art. Dr. M. Yousaf (Ed). Lahore: Jamal-un-Nabi Publishers.
- Azhar, G.H. (1980). *Mian Muhammad: Shaksiat aur fun*. Lahore: Qutab Minar.
- Buksh, M.M. (1984). *Saif-ul-Malook*. I. Sallah-ud-Din (Ed). Lahore: Aziz Publishers.
- Farani, S. (2004). *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muhammad Baksh*. Rawalpindi: Adnan publishers.
- Iqbal, A.M. (1986). The Human Ego-----His Freedom and Immortality. In M. S. Sheikh (Ed.) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture.
- Iqbal, J. (2008). *Khutbat-e-Iqbal: Tasheel o Tafheem*. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel.
- Jafferri, D.S.A. (2007). *Hazrat Mian Muhammad Buksh: Hayati te shairi*. Lahore: Maqsood Publishers.
- Nietzsche, F (1976). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1891).
- Retrieved from: <http://www.holybooks.com/wp.../thusspokezarathustrabyf.nietzsche/pdf> [Accessed 17 September 2012].
- Rana, D.A. (1986). *Ramz Ravait*. Lahore: Aziz Publishers.
- Rehman, A. (2000). Saif-ul-Malook (Mian Muhammad Buksh) te Saiful Nama (Molvi Lutf Ali Bahawalpuri) da taqabli jaiza. (Unpublished Masters Thesis). University of the Punjab: Lahore.
- Sahi, B.A. (1982). Mian Muhammad Buksh di ikhlaqi shairi. In I. Salah-ud-Din (Ed.) *Laalan Di Pand*. Lahore: Aziz Publishers.
- Sheikh, S. (2008). *Our Legendary Intellectuals*. Lahore: PILAC.
- Syed, D.G. (1982). Punjabi di classiki shairi. In I. Salah-ud-Din (Ed.) *Lalan di Pand*. Lahore: Aziz Publishers.
- Syed, N.H. (2003). *Recurrent Patterns in Punjabi Poetry*. Karachi: City Press.
- Syeda, K.F. (2013). Saif-ul-Malook: Translated Verses. *Language In India*, 13(2), 751-761.