A Sindhi Bhagat Song Associated with Kanvar Ram

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Abstract

This article presents a translation from the Sindhi oral tradition of bhagat. It originates in Sindh, Pakistan. Today it is practiced by Hindu narrators in post-Partition India. The song translated in this paper focuses upon Bhagat Kanvar Ram, who contemporary bhagat narrators mention frequently. This essay exemplifies his influence on the bhagat tradition in the areas of inspiration, authority, and performance style. It offers a glimpse of the dynamics of the live performances of oral texts.

Keywords

Sindhi folklore – bhagat – Sindhi folk song – Sindhi folk theatre performance – Bhagat Kanvar Ram – martyr

FIGURE 1 The bhagat performance by Dewan Bhojwani from the *Sita Sindhu Bhavan*, Mumbai

PHOTOGRAPH BY JYOTI GARIN

1 Setting the Stage and Introduction

The group of five or six men comprises a “leader” (i.e., *mahredar*), an “assistant” (i.e., *bhechi* or *jheli*), one or two “followers” (i.e., *bolira* or *pichara*). Sometimes a “buffoon” (or *mashkiro*), and two musicians join the group. *Bhagat* is a typical Sindhi narrative form that includes language, costume, headdress, songs, instruments, movements, and gestures. Dressed in a symbolic costume, the *mahredar*, and his *bhechi* chatter while the followers (*pichara*) simultaneously repeat and dance. Fathers do not pass on this tradition to sons. The young narrators imitate and learn while singing and dancing on all sides of the bhagat acting space spontaneously. It does not involve consciously organized training.

The session begins at nightfall, in the open air of a village square or the precincts of a temple. The spectators come from all walks of society. Formerly, bhagat gatherings lasted three consecutive nights. At joyous festivals such as marriages or fairs, they generate a sense of holiness, spread knowledge, and acclaim righteousness and social progress, including values like love, compassion, understanding, connectedness. They also commemorate the death of the saints (*varsī*). To this day, bhagat narrators are honored. Performances generate an atmosphere of intense communion. Participants believe that bhagats purify, on the spot, houses, and villages. The glory of Bhagat Khotaram, Satramdas, and Kanvar Ram, the bhagat par excellence, persist. Village committees (*panchayats*) and private individuals both organize bhagat gatherings for the peoples’ delight.

As for the performance area, a perpendicular strip of space is used for the bhagat to pass (Figure 1). It divides the men from the women seated on the floor. This corridor physically brings the public closer to the performer, where he moves freely, breaks the rigidity of a stage front, and encourages spontaneity.

Sindhi folk sources suggest two definitions for the bhagat: scholarship sometimes classifies it as folk music and sometimes as folk theatre. Bhagat, among Sindhis, has a 300- or 400-year long history.¹ The term “bhagat” refers to both the narrator and the performance. It is also a title, for instance, Bhagat Kanvar Ram. It is a polysemous term derived from the Sanskrit root word *bhaj*, “to divide.” The *bhakta* or bhagat is “a very pious individual” who surrenders himself to the divinity and takes part in its nature. He is the follower of *bhakti*, religious thought founded on the love that binds the devotee to God. N.A. Baloch’s Sindhi dictionary gives four definitions for bhagat:

1 G.M. Allana, *Folk Music in Sind* (Jamshoro: Institute of Sindhology, 1982), 99; Lilaram Ruchandani, *Sindhi Bhagat* (Ahmedabad: Self-published, 1993), 25; Jetho Lalwani, *Sindhi Bhagat Saili* (Ahmedabad: Self-published, 1998), 11.

- Bhagat is a Hindu ethnic group (often from the Nawabshah region and Larkana areas).
- Sanskrit *bhāj* “to adore” *bhaktu*, bhagat, and bhakti; in a broad sense, bhagat suggests a particular form of music and dance in which narrators sing and dance.
- *Bhagatu langayanu* or *vijhanu* “to make or carry out a *bhagat* session.”
- Bhagat is a public devotional singer, a dervish, a fakir; simple, ingenious, or innocent in a broad sense.²

According to Lalwani, Hindu performers are called bhagat while Muslim performers are *nachu*.³ The origin of this tradition is uncertain, and the precise equivalence between these two groups remains unclear. Lalwani also adds a delightful definition: *bha* for *bhava* “emotion,” *ga* for *git* or “song,” and *ta* for *tal* or “rhythm.” Other narrative styles related to the Sindhi bhagat are the *nautanki* (Uttar Pradesh), *harikatha* (Andhra Pradesh), *bhavai* (Gujarat), *tamasha* (Maharashtra), *jatra* (Bengal), and *ujapali* (Assam). The art is alive today (based on fieldwork 2001) and has multiple performers: Arjandas Kuvarani (in Ahmedabad); Dilip Kumar and Notandas Pritaram (in Maharashtra); Bhagwan Chawla (in Mumbai); Khanchand Kusija Mohan Jagiasi, Chunnilal, and the late Ghansham (in Ulhasnagar); and in Rajasthan, Hassaram, Kalluram, Kamal Mangnani, Kishin, Pratap Rai.

The article’s main body is a translation and interpretation of a song from the tradition of bhagat. The performance translated in this paper focuses on Bhagat Kanvar Ram, the ideal bhagat, who was a simple grocer’s son and who becomes a mythical character. His legend exemplifies his influence on the bhagat tradition. It offers a glimpse of the dynamics of performance and oral texts.

1.1 Approach and Method

The sources for this article are multiple and include articles on bhagat, popular magazines, and a study of Bhagat Kanvar Ram.⁴ The untimely and tragic assassination of this charismatic revolutionary produced, under the force of widespread emotion, a legend comparable to a saint’s life. The vitality of this legend’s narratives, with wide-ranging components, starting from oral sources, represent an irreplaceable source of information regarding the bhagat.

Bhagat combines legends with lullabies, anecdotes, and narratives passed on among Sindhis and across generations. It includes statements related to the

2 N.B. Baloch, *A Comprehensive Sindhi Dictionary of Classical and Current Sindhi, Volume 2* (Jamshoro: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1981), 544.

3 Lalwani, 14.

4 Ruchandani, 1993; Lalwani, 1998; Kanhaiyalal Talreja, *Amar Shaheed Kanvar Ram* (Ahmedabad: Self-published, 1977).

past: popular tales and legends and “records” them through stories. The focus here is on what bhagats orally transmit. They are testaments to past events and data on contemporary Sindhi culture (without debating the oral sources themselves). They reflect the representations and beliefs of the Sindhi enunciators and listeners.

Undeniably, this oral tradition has an artistic dimension. However, the literary value of bhagats, as a socio-cultural product, is not fixed. When written, it defies the fundamental categories of the literary genres. The bhagat is neither epic nor song. Similarly, like the idea of an author, which is crucial in written literature, it is inapplicable. Even if recitation, composition, and re-creation coincide in a bhagat performance, its narrators are neither creators nor solely performers.

Not unlike other oral literature, anonymous and collective creators get involved in its creation. “Pieces” are at the disposal of a group of narrators, and there is no planned rehearsal. The performance skill of the bhagat resides in the combination of elements well-known by the audience (Figure 2). The bhagat narrator further enhances the performance by adding novelties, and it is part of a particular performer’s appealing strategy. The ongoing bhagat session involving the narrators and the public illustrates how the “pool” of Sindhi culture gets constantly enriched. This enrichment involves three kinds of exchanges: traditional (from the narrator to the public), interactive, and co-creative:

FIGURE 2 Enrichment of the bhagat repertory

It is crucial to question genre classifications in Sindhi folklore to analyze the semantics of a folk text, even if it does not provide a complete solution to issues of fundamental meaning.⁵ The bhagat is an “intermediary genre.” On the one hand, it nestles between the various forms of Sindhi folklore, both verbal and non-verbal. On the other hand, it is a form of narration between oral folklore and written/literary tradition.

Until the twentieth century, nobody transcribed bhagat songs. The transmission was purely oral. The dates of their composition are unknown. In India, the repertoires vary from state to state, and each narrator is frequently famous for a particular song. A single performer sings about fifteen excerpts in two hours, but he knows a hundred of them. Some even include Hindi and English.⁶

I adopt phonological transcription to record oral performance. It reflects the current state of the Sindhi language transcription and alternative forms in terms of contrasts: standard Sindhi/folklore; conventional Sindhi/dialects; Sindhi in the multilingual context of India. Like Short Message Service (SMS) orthography, the transcribing of grammatical “mistakes” in a bhagat performance enlightens the linguistic evolution of Sindhi. The bhagat repertoire is a continuous sound soundtrack, and intonation guided the transcription. It is akin to unrolling a parchment.

The transcript “text” translates directly from Sindhi to English. Literal translation often proved impossible since the bhagat performance is artistic. Thus, the English translation attempts to capture “essence.” The narrative’s outline gets preserved without omitting details. In the footnotes, I highlight some terms but without interrupting the translation flow. The translation is presented in the Latin transcription adapted to suit/reach out to a large readership.

However, transcription and translation are, by themselves, rarely sufficient. The bhagat is a complex collective event that lends itself to textualization through field observation. Such textualization aims to convey it as an oral, visual, and emotional experience. It enhances the bhagat performance as an object of study and connects performance with its documentation. It is also imperative to interpret the bhagat from the point of view of the narrator. Its contextual aspects are of primary importance in the interpretive process. For instance, the contextual parameters of a bhagat session are essential: the identities of the enunciators and the listeners, the cultural anchoring of both, the collateral activity (formerly a ritual and today, oral history), the reactions of the public, the artistic assessment, etc.

5 Parso Gidwani, *Glimpses of Sindhi Bhagati* (New Delhi: Sindhu Publications, 2003); Roma Doctor, “Sindhi Folklore: An Introductory Survey,” *Folklore* 96.2 (1985): 223–233.

6 Lalwani, 1998; Ruchandani, 1998.

For the bhagat performance, an objective was to preserve in writing the maximum number of oral features. One cannot avoid freezing oral data and transforming it into an object that the researcher can repeatedly consult when turning the pages. A characteristic of verbal exchange is an expansion in meaning. Textualization that highlights composition, performance modes, and style guides the transcription of the song in this article.⁷ A close textualization analysis of bhagat illustrates that it has three parts: (1) chants, (2) a combination of legends, anecdotes, etc., and (3) concluding songs of grace addressed to Jhulelal, the Indus River deity.

1.2 *Bhagat Kanwar Ram: A Short Biography*

The Sindhi community considers Bhagat Kanwar Ram a “saint.”⁸ The son of a grocer, he was born in 1885 in the village of Jarvar (Sukkur District, Sindh). According to the legend, he announced to his future parents, Tarachand and Tirathbai, his birth as a “chosen” being. During childhood, Bhagat Kanwar Ram attended congregations at the Hayat Pitafi Darbar. The spiritual guardian (i.e., *gadisar*) of this sanctuary was Mata Sahib Hassibai. She noticed his soft melodious voice and encouraged him to study music with Bhai Hassaram.

One day, Bhai Hassaram, discontented with Kanwar Ram, got angry and flung him to the ground. He complained that his teacher treated him like *kalar*, literally “barren land.” Punning, Mata Hassibai retorted that Kanwar was not *kalar* but a *kanwar*, a “lotus” which would later spread its perfume on the province of Sindh. When Kanwar Ram became a vocal virtuoso, he left the Hayat Pitafi Darbar. Mata Hassibai, unhappy about his departure, said: “a bullet will

FIGURE 3 Bhagat Kanwar Ram
COURTESY HMV RECORDS

7 Honko, 1998.

8 Dayal Asha, *Saints of Sindh* (Ulhasnagar: Chandibai Himathmal Mansukhani College, 1996), 78–81.

pierce him!" In response, Kanvar Ram, who revered Mata Hassibai, conducted all the traditional death rites and held a poignant bhagat session on the twelfth day of mourning.

Bhagat Kanvar Ram enriched the bhagat tradition by adding a sense of worship and performance style. Wearing a long white dress, a turban, and metal anklets, he performed bhagat when the heat of the day subsided: he began to sing, recite, dance, and told popular tales until dawn. During gatherings, Bhagat Kanvar Ram received offerings. He redistributed them since he already had a livelihood (i.e., selling boiled peas in the streets). He gave the offerings to the needy or used them to build "community host houses" or *dharam-shalas*. Hindus, Muslims, untouchables, the influential and the weak, and even gangsters attended Kanvar Ram's bhagat sessions without discrimination. Thus, through bhagat, he defended the values of humanism, love for a neighbor, unity, patriotism, and social progress. All three concepts hold a central place in his performances. Famous, he traveled in various parts of Sindh, particularly during "the death celebration of the saints" or *varsī*. He played a crucial role in popularizing the bhagat tradition.

He married in 1903 and had a son (i.e., Pessuram), and two daughters (i.e., Bhagwantibai and Kalawantibai). Six years later, his wife died. He then got married a second time, to Gangabai. On November 1, 1939, two fanatics killed him at the Ruk station, where an immense crowd had come to welcome him (as was customary throughout his travels). He was 55 years old, and Mata Hassibai's prediction came to fruition.

1.3 Translation

Bhagat narrators very often mention Kanvar Ram's holiness, his miracles, and performances.⁹ *His Master's Voice* published recordings of his *kafī* and *bhajans*.¹⁰ Among his most well-known songs, bhagat narrators cite the following:

- *Nale Alakha je bero tari muhinjo* or "In the name of the Eternal One, allow my boat to navigate" (the Dawn Melody).

9 For a complete list of Kanvar Ram's discography, see Jyoti Garin, "Le Bhagat, une Tradition Orale Sindhie," Ph.D. diss., Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, 2005 (<http://www.theses.fr/2005INAL0015> [accessed August 28, 2021]).

10 A poetic form, it has a succession of four lines and a refrain of two lines. The first three lines rhyme together and the last with those of the refrain, according to the following structure: AAAB BB CCCB BB, etc. There are two different etymologies for this term: *qafīya* "rhyme or poem" and *kafa* Arabic "rattle." In Sindh, the fakirs and Sufis frequently travel the streets with a rattle to beg for alms. It is a form of poetry that the Sindhi people cherish in the countryside.

- *Au kanga kari galhi munsan tani maruaraniji* or “Come crow, speak of the Marus” (the Maru Melody).
- *Ram sumar prabhata, mere manu* or “Remember to name Ram at dawn, my spirit” (the Dawn Melody).
- *Kiyan rijhayan, kiyan parachayan tokhe*, or “How to cherish you, how to console you.”
- *Jedo tuhinjo nao* or “To the measure of Your name.”
- *Milana hove to milu* or “If you want to meet, then come.”
- *Prata samay, Mohana* or “At dawn, Mohan.”
- *Loli lala nu* or “I sing a lullaby to the little one.”
- *Sacho Sain Satram* or “The true Swami Satram.”

In addition to these songs, others illustrate how Bhagat Kanvar Ram lives in the memories of current bhagat narrators. This paper focuses on one example that narrates the legend of Bhagat Kanvar Ram's life as a poor boy who becomes the best and the greatest bhagat. Like in folktales and legends, his life involves encounters and ordeals. Evil gets reversed and transforms into a divine blessing. In the song, a critical refrain resonates: destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram.

The Legend of Bhagat Kanvar Ram¹¹

In Sindhi

Music

Kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja (Allah)
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja
 o diyan paise men panu ta bhare
 hoka Dindo haliyo Rama nama ja
 o diyan paise men panu ta bhare
 hoka dindo haliyo Rama nama ja
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja (Allah)
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja
 Music
 mithi bolindo haliyo boli

¹¹ As none is currently accepted, there is no attempt in this article to propose a scientific transliteration of Sindhi.

jite lathala santana ji toli (Allah)
 mithi bolindo haliyo boli
 jite santana ji toli
 mithi bolindo haliyo boli
 jite lathala santana ji toli
 avazu vayo kana te
 nena khulya Sain Satrama ja
 avazu vayo kana te
 nena khulya Sain Satrama ja (Allah)
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja (Allah)
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja
 Music
 are bhai Rama nama ja mithira kohara
 Sain Kanvar Ram kohara khani kare Sain Satramdas sahibajana khe
 (beli) mana'e aya ahin Jarvarana je shahara man

In English

Music

He moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas,¹²
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram (Allah)
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram
 I sell a handful for a *paisa*¹³
 in the name of Ram, he cried as he passed by
 a handful for a *paisa*
 in the name of Ram, he cried
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram (Allah)
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram
 Music
 he walked speaking sweet phrases
 where the group of saints rested a while (Allah)
 he walked speaking sweet phrases
 where the group of saints rested awhile

¹² *Kohira* is millet, peas, or chickpeas boiled and sold in the streets.

¹³ Paper bowls.

he walked speaking sweet phrases
 where the group of saints rested awhile
 the call reached Swami Satram's ears
 Swami Satram opened his eyes (Allah)
 the call reached Swami Satram
 Swami Satram opened his eyes (Allah)
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas,
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram (Allah)
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram
 Music
 hey brother, in the name of Ram, here are some sweet chickpeas!
 Swami Kanvar Ram taking his hot chickpeas, he goes towards Swami
 Satramdas Sahib
 (friends) in the Jarvar town

In Sindhi

Kanvar Rama ji mata cavethi – bachira Kanvara, (beli) adhu seru khani
 tokhe kohara radhe dyan
 Vani vikini a
 ba tre paisa mili pavanda
 Sain Kanvar Ram agya vathi kare, uhe kohara khani kare vikirani la'e pyo
 vane
 cavando pyo vane: Rama nama ja mithira kohara kha'o
 mithiro avazu
 Rama nama ja mithira kohara
 Sain Satramdas Sahibajana je kana the parlau payo ahe
 santu nikri bahar ayo
 acanu san gale lagayo
 santu nikri bahar ayo
 acanu san gale lagayo
 (o) caya'in: lala sakhi bachira
 ayo vethala kahare ganva ja?
 (o) lila sakhi bachira
 ayo vethala kahare ganva ja?
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja (Allah)
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja
 Music
 Sain Satramdas cavetho: bacha Kanvara

are aba tuhinjo nalo cha ahe? kahare gotha ja vethala ayo? Ahari mithiri
 boli
 vari cavetho: Rama nama ja mithira kohara
 are aba, tuhinjo nalo cha ahe?
 Kanvar Ram cavetho: muhinja babala
 nav Kanvar man sadayan
 putu Tarachanda jo ahiyan (Allah)
 nav Kanvar man sadayan
 putu Tarachanda jo ahiyan
 (Allah), o muhinja datara
 o Jarvaru muhinjo ganvu
 ayun naukara tuhinje nanva ja

In English

Kanvar Ram's mother says: child Kanvar, (friends) I will cook a pound of
 chickpeas
 go and sell them
 that will get us two or three *paisas*
 Swami Kanvar Ram takes leave, takes the chickpeas, and leaves to sell
 them
 while passing, he says: in the name of Ram! eat soft peas
 what a melodious voice
 in the name of Ram! [here] are soft peas
 the cry reached Swami Satramdas Sahib's ears
 the saint came out
 and at once embraced him
 the saint came out
 and at once embraced him
 he says: generous child
 which village are you from?
 generous child
 which village are you from?
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram (Allah)
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram
 Music
 Swami Satramdas says: child Kanvar
 little father, what is your name? which village are you from? what sweet
 phrases ...
 at that time, he says: in the name of Ram! sweet peas

oh, little father, what is your name?
 Kanvar Ram says: my father
 they call me Kanvar
 I am Tarachand's son (Allah)
 they call me Kanvar
 I am Tarachand's son
 (Allah) oh my benefactor¹⁴
 Jarvar is my village
 we are the servants of Your name

In Sindhi

Jarvaru a muhinjo ganvu
 ayun naukara tuhinje nanva ja (Allah)
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja (Allah)
 o dyan paise men panu ta bhare
 hoka Dindo haliyo Rama nama ja (Allah)
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja
 Music
 Sain Satramdas sahibajan mithiro galayanu budhi kare mohitu thi paya
 santana ji jeka saji toli nindra men sumi pe'i
 avaza te sabhe'i nikri bahar aya
 Sain Satramdas sahibajana ditho sajioya toliya khe
 Kanvar Rama khe cavantha: aba, hiyana hoko ta de'i dekhari
 Kanvar Ram cavetho: muhinja sain, Rama nama ja mithira kohara kha'o
 Rama nama ja
 mithira kohara kha'o
 Sain Satramdas cavetho: aba, kohara, aba, bacha Kanvara, ihe kohara
 sadha sabha'i kha'indai,
 pani piyandai, na pa'i dindai (Allah)
 sadha sabha'i kha'ndai
 pani piyandai, na pa'i dindai
 muhinja Malika,
 ahe siru bi sadhana sadike,
 ayun naukara tavanje nanva ja (Allah)
 Kanvar Ram cavetho: muhinja Malika,
 ahe siru bi sadhana sadike,
 ayan naukara tavanje nanva ja (Allah)

¹⁴ Stated respectively.

kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja (Allah)
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja
 Music

In English

Jarvar is my village
 we are the servants of Your name (Allah)
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram (Allah)
 I sell a handful for a *paisa*
 in the name of Ram, he cried as he passed by
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram
 Music
 hearing the soft phrases, Swami Satramdas Sahib is enchanted
 the group of saints who was sleeping
 awake to the cry, come out
 Swami Satramdas Sahib looks at the whole group
 he says to Kanvar Ram: little father, repeat your phrase
 Kanvar Ram says: my Masters, eat sweet chickpeas in the name of Ram!
 in the name of Ram!
 eat sweet chickpeas
 Swami Satramdas says: little father, chickpeas, little father, child Kanvar,
 the peas
 all the ascetics will eat them
 drink water, but to none of them will give you a *paisa* (Allah)
 all the ascetics will eat them
 drink water, but none of them will give you a *paisa*
 my Master
 this head also is an offering to the ascetics
 we are the servants of Your name (Allah)
 Kanvar Ram says: my Master
 this head also is an offering to the ascetics
 we are the servants of Your name (Allah)
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram (Allah)
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas,
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram
 Music

In Sindhi

kohara sadhana sabhini khada
 jeke Kanvar Rama anda (Allah)
 kohara sadhana sabhini khada,
 jeke Kanvar Rama anda
 vaya kohara tuhinja adhu thyi
 Vishinu kama kare vayo ama ja
 (o muhinja rana, muhin ja rana,
 muhinja ranara, muhinja rana)
 vaya kohara tuhinja adhu thi
 Vishinu kama kare vayo ama ja
 Kanvara, tuhinje koharana ja
 aju kana vya pokhi ji
 Kanvara, tuhinje koharana ja
 aju kana vya pokhi ji
 umaru sari pyo lune o
 umaru sari je lune o
 ta bi sangu na vendu sokhi ji
 Satramdas du'a tho kare: bacha Kanvara, tuhinja kohara aghamiji vaya
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja (Allah)
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja
 o dyan paise men panu ta bhare
 kosa dindo haliyo Rama nama ja
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja (Allah)
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja
 o dyan paise men panu ta bhare
 kosa Dindo haliyo Rama nama ja
 o dyan paise men panu ta bhare
 kosa Dindo haliyo Rama nama ja
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja (Allah)
 kosa kohara khani haliyo
 bhaga khulya Sain Kanvar Rama ja

In English

all the sadhus ate the chickpeas
 which Kanvar Ram had brought (Allah)
 all the sadhus ate the chickpeas
 which Kanvar Ram had brought
 your peas decreased by half
 so Vishin says:¹⁵ thus, he served the people
 (oh, my king, my king
 my king, my king)¹⁶
 your peas decreased by half
 so Vishin says: thus, he served the people
 now Kanvar
 you have sown the seeds of your peas
 now Kanvar
 you have sown the seeds of your peas
 all life long, you will harvest
 even if all life long you harvest
 the pods will not dry up
 ah!

Satramdas praises [Ram] and says: child Kanvar, your peas are accepted
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram (Allah)
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram
 I sell a handful for a *paisa*
 hot chickpeas, in the name of Ram
 in the name of Ram, he cried as he passed by
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram (Allah)
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram
 I sell a handful for a *paisa*
 in the name of Ram, he cried as he passed by
 I sell a handful for a *paisa*
 in the name of Ram, he cried as he passed by
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram (Allah)
 he moved on carrying with him hot chickpeas
 destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram

15 The composer.

16 Another form of address to the public, like “friends.”

In Sindhi

Sain Kanvar Rama ja kohara aghami vya
 Sain Satramadas aju bachire Kanvara khe vathi kare
 Tarachanda vati aya ahin
 Sain Kanvar Rama ji banha vathi kare
 pahinje Raharkiya men tha vathi acan
 aju Sain Kanvar Rama je mathan Satramdasa ji mehara thi a
 (beli) bhagatyun karanu sekharintha
 (sabha'I cha'o Ram)
 Music
 (a) disi jori mazedar
 Kiyen pe'i mauja macha'e
 disi jori mazedar
 dadhi theahethi, dadhi vane pe'i
 disi jori mazedar
 kiyan pe'i mauja macha'e
 Satram Sain Kanvar Ram
 rasa racha'e
 Satiram Sain Kanvar Ram
 rasa racha'e
 shahara Shikarpura men
 chadya'un rangiro racha'e
 hiya galhi budho tavhin
 pyar dhyan laga'e
 aha jori a
 dadhi vane pe'I, dadhi suthi a
 Music
 ca'i kafi Kavar Rama
 bola bole pyo mithira
 ca'i kafi Kavar Rama
 bola bole pyo mithira
 hika bhena, o hika mata
 hika amaru kayo sadu haka¹⁷ putira
 hiya topi kalabaza ji
 pa'e ta tun bachira

17 Inaudible in recording.

In English

Kanvar Ram's peas are accepted
 today, Swami Satramdas accompanies the child
 on the way to Tarachand
 taking Swami Kanvar Ram by the arm
 he takes him to Raharki
 today, Satramdas's grace takes care of Swami Kanvar Ram
 (friends) he teaches him how to perform the Bhagat
 (every one, pronounce the name of Ram!)

Music

look at the happy pair
 how jubilant they are
 look at the happy pair
 how they blend together, how charming they are
 look at the happy pair
 how jubilant they are
 Swami Satramdas
 and Kanvar Ram dance with joy
 Swami Satramdas
 and Kanvar Ram dance with joy
 in the town of Shikarpur
 they brought colour
 listen to this phrase carefully
 with devotion
 ah, the happy pair
 how they blend together, how charming they are

Music

ah!

Kanvar Ram recited the *kafi*
 he pronounced sweet phrases
 Kanvar Ram recited the *kafi*
 he pronounced sweet phrases
 ah, a sister, yes, oh, a mother
 mummy called: son!
 child, come and wear
 the performer's hat¹⁸

18 Thus, symbolically, Kanvar Ram is initiated into the *bhagat* tradition.

In Sindhi

hiya topi kalabaza ji
 pa'e ta tun bachira
 bhagavan kando sada
 jiyanden tun lala gulira
 datar kando sada
 jiyanden tun lala gulira
 topi vathi chadi
 Kanvara lika'e
 aha jori a
 dadhi vane pe'i, dadhi suthi a
 Music
 Shikarpura je shahara men
 Sain Kanvar Ram Sain Satramdas Sahibajana san pandhre sale je umaru
 men pahanyo
 pahanyo bhagatu karanu vya ahin
 hazare khalqa a
 char premi uthi kare cavantha: muhinja Sain hina bachire khe ando
 athava (vo, vo)
 hina bachire khan bi hikiro bhajan cavayo
 Sain Satramdas Sahibajan Kanvar Rama khe sadu tha kani: bacha
 Kanvara, hikiro bhajan cha'o
 Hedan Sain Satramdas, hedan Sain Kanvar Ram
 (beli) mauja lagi pe'i a
 manhu cavantha: aba hode ta nihari
 disi jori mazedar
 kiyen pe'i mauja macha'e
 Music
 hikiri mata jo sadu kayo Sain Kanvar Rama khe
 uha topi pahinje puta je la'e thara'i hu'i
 mithiro ragu budhi kare (beli) vicharu mata kayo
 makhe Sayinya ganja dina ahen
 cha ta mithiro Kanvar
 (beli) ga'etho mithiro
 cho na iha topi ghura'e dyan bachire mithire Kanvara khe
 makhe Sayinya ganja dina ahen
 cho na man pahinje puta khe bi topi thara'e dindasi
 Kanvar Rama khe mata sadu kayo
 Sayinya Kanvar Rama cavetho: ama tuhinjo Kanvar baciro huzuru a
 mata cavethi: puta Kanvara hiya topi pa'e

In English

child, come and wear
 the performer's hat
 may God grant
 long life to you, dear flower
 may the Giver grant
 long life to you, dear flower
 Kanvar Ram took
 the hat on the sly
 ah, the happy pair
 see how they blend together, how charming they are
 Music
 in the town of Shikarpur
 Swami Kanvar Ram went to present his very first Bhagat session
 at the age of fifteen, beside Swami Satramdas Sahib
 thousands of people are there
 there, four admirers rise and say: my Master, you have brought this child
 so let the child sing a *bhajan*
 Swami Satramdas Sahib calls Swami Kanvar Ram: child Kanvar, then, sing
 a *bhajan*
 Swami Satramdas Sahib is here, Swami Kanvar Ram is there
 (friends) there is delight
 people say: father, look there ...
 look at the happy pair
 see how they blend together, how charming they are
 Music
 a mother called Swami Kanvar Ram
 this hat, she had got it tailored for her son
 by listening to his melodious song (friends) the mother said to herself:
 the Master gave me a lot
 how sweet he is, Kanvar
 (friends) he sings so well
 why not give this hat to the lovely child Kanvar
 the Master gave me a lot
 why not get another hat tailored for my son?
 the mother called Kanvar Ram
 Swami Kanvar Ram says: mother, your child Kanvar is here
 the mother says: son, Kanvar, just wear this hat

In Sindhi

Sain Kanvar Ram samu jo nihare
 Sain Satramdas Sahibajan niharintha
 (beli) disi kare mata khe ca'etho: man vathaintho
 (beli) puthi de'i bhihiji vyo
 Sain Satramdas nihare pyo
 hedan mata cavethi: putira vathu
 mata vathaintho
 santani hode niharyo
 bachire Kanvar Rama uha topi varti
 Sain Kanvar Rama topi vathi khise men vidhi
 mata cavethi: puta Kanvara, shabas hujei, makhe ta pa'e ta dekhari, disan
 tha'e ta athi
 Sain Kanvar Ram hua topi pati a
 jani ta thayala i santa je mathe ji
 mata khan danhan, nikri ve'i: puta Kanvara
 o bhagvan kando jiyanden
 sada lala tun gulira
 topi vathi Kanvara
 chadi ute lika'e
 topi vathi Kanvara
 chadi ute lika'e
 disi jori mazedar
 kiyan pe'i mauja macha'e
 Music
 Sain Satramdas Kanvara khe cavetho: bacha Kanvara, hane pahinje gotha
 vanu
 bhagatyun bi konani
 je bhagatyun thiyun tokhe ghura'e vathandumi
 (beli) Satiguruni ji agya vathi kare Sain Kanvar Ram pahinje mulku
 Jarvarani men tho ace
 aci pita khe pere pa'i, mata khe pere pa'i
 banha khan vathi kare, andar vathi ayo a, ca'etho: ama hede ta nihari
 mata topi dithi, sundar topi
 garibi halu, mata cavethi: puta Kanvara (beli) kahinji khani a'en?
 mata ja etra akhara cavanu, Kanvar Ram cavetho:
 ama, man bhagatyuni te vayumi
 Shikarpura je shahara men hikiri ma'iya sadu kayo
 hiya topi dini atha'in

pa'e kare mau khe cavetho: ama disu ta sahin, tha'e ta athi?
 hede ta nihari, o muhinji ama, disu ta sahin
 mata cavethi: putra Kanvara, bhala santani khe khabara ahe?
 mata ja etra akhara budhi kare Sain Kanvar Ram cavetho: ama santani
 vati jeka
 bi shaha aceti, bhagatu bandi kare virahe tha chadini

In English

Swami Kanvar Ram looks in front of him
 Swami Satramdas Sahib is watching him
 (friends) on seeing him, he says to the mother: I will take it
 (friends) he turns round
 Swami Satramdas is still watching him
 the mother says: son, just take it
 mother, I will take it
 the saints faced on the other side
 child Kanvar took the hat
 Swami Kanvar Ram took the hat, put it in his pocket
 the mother says: child Kanvar, congratulations, put it on, let's see whether
 it suits you
 Swami Kanvar Ram wore the hat
 as if it were cut for the saint
 the mother exclaimed, child Kanvar
 may God grant
 long life to you, dear flower
 Kanvar took the hat
 hid it at once
 Kanvar took the hat
 hid it at once
 look at the happy pair
 see how they blend together, how charming they are
 Music
 Swami Satramdas says to Kanvar: child Kanvar, now go back to your
 village
 these days, there are no Bhagat sessions
 if they occur, I will call you
 (friends) while taking leave from the holy Master, Swami Kanvar Ram
 returns in the
 he bows before his father, he bows before his mother [Jarvar] town

taking her by the arm, he enters and says: mom, just look at this
 the mother saw the hat
 the mother who knows her poverty, says: son Kanvar (friends) whose hat
 is this?
 [the mother hardly pronounced these words that Kanvar Ram says:
 mom, I went to perform Bhagat sessions
 in Shikarpur town, a woman called me
 it is she who gave me this hat
 he takes it and says to his mother: mom, just have a look, it suits me fine,
 isn't this?
 look here, ah mom, just have a look
 the mother says: child Kanvar, by the way, do the saints know about it?
 on hearing these words, Swami Kanvar Ram says: mom, everything that
 the saints
 collect at the end of the Bhagat sessions, they just distribute it

In Sindhi

ahari shaha man kiyan vinayan
 lika'e rakhu
 jadahan jadahan bhagatyun thiyani, tadin tadin pa'e pyo vendumi
 mata thi moha je vasu
 uha topi lika'e rakhi a
 para Yara ji qudrata
 o dihan thora thya
 Kanvara khe bukhhar thi payaro
 o dihan thora thya
 Kanvara khe bukhhar thi payaro
 kani ke'i davaun pya,
 para farqu na payaro
 hutan Tarachanda dili men
 vicaru hi kayaro
 ahe jahinjo dinalu
 tani watu chade acan baciro
 Satram Sainya je dara te
 aya puta khe khana'e
 disi jori mazedar
 dadhi vane pe'i, disi jori a
 Music
 Sain Kanvar Ram (beli) bukhara men gashu laga pya ahen
 Sain Satramdas sahibajan (beli) vacanu pya ta vathan

Sain Kanvar Ramaja mata-pita bacire khe khana'e aya ahen rohi kare,
 cavantha muhinja malika, muhinjo baciyo, jiyān tavhan vatan ayo a,
 aharo ta bukharu thyo athasi
 jiyān dava ka'i, tiyān dukhu vanetho vadhando
 dinalu bi tavhanjo, dava bi tavhan kandau
 Sain Satramdas sahibajan budho anabudho kare vyo
 hiku dinhu guziryo, ba dinha guzirya
 triyen dihare prabhāti je samay men
 Kanvar Rama ji mata aju roheti zaraun zar
 uhe gorha kirani Kanvar Rama je galani te pya pavani
 Kanvar Rama ji akhu khuli
 mata khe ruando disi kare ca'etho: muhinji ama, santani je dara te,
 muhinja satguru dayalu

In English

this beautiful object, how to lose it?
 hide it
 each time that a Bhagat session will take place, I will wear it for the
 occasion
 the mother succumbed to attachment
 she hid the hat
 but who knows the nature of the Friend ...
 a few days later
 Kanvar Ram has fever
 a few days later
 Kanvar Ram has fever
 many remedies were given
 but nothing changed
 so Tarachand thinks
 he thinks:
 he who gave us the child¹⁹
 I will take back the child to him
 he went to Swami Satram's door
 carrying his son
 look at the happy pair
 see how they blend together, how charming they are
 Music

19 Though, according to the legend, it was Bhagat Khotaram who announced Kanvar Ram's birth.

Swami Kanvar Ram (friends) is exhausted by the fever
 Swami Satramdas (friends) is uttering the Word
 Swami Kanvar Ram's parents carry the child
 in tears, they say: my Master, my child, since he took leave from you, the
 temperature
 though drugs were administered, the pain increases [suddenly shot up
 it is you who gave him to us you who will look after him
 Swami Stramdas ignored the call
 one day passes, two days pass
 the third day, at dawn, today
 Kanvar Ram's mother is still crying
 the tears fall on Kanvar Ram's cheek
 Kanvar Ram opened his eyes
 on seeing his mother crying, he says: my mother, at the saints' doorstep!
 my Satguru is compassionate

In Sindhi

muhiinje santani je dara te ruanda aya, khilanda vaya
 tun vari roheti pe'i
 danha kare cavethi: baca Kanvara, aju tre dinhara thya ahen santani je
 dara te
 (beli) ajun kayun ahen, nizaryun kayun ahen
 (beli) munhu'i natha diyani
 ahari ka galti thi va'i a
 o muhinja bacira (beli) mukhe aram kiyan indo cho ta piyu mau putra
 khe dukhu na dindo
 sab kuchu pahinje sira te sahando
 o muhinja lala bacira, pe'i thi dahun karyan satigurani khe
 mana ji pukara budhani
 Sain Kanvar Ram, (beli) ro'i kare mata khe cavetho: parvah na kari,
 muhinja satiguru dayalu ahin
 ro'i kare aju pahinje satigurani khe prarthana tho kare
 (beli) ajho na' tham asiro
 ajho na' tham asiro
 (o) muhinji jhugi jhale nathi
 sartyun Shahu Latifu cave
 ahe halu ta muhinjo hi
 (vo, vo) hane 'dhola dhakana thi
 (o beli) muhinje hinan madayun jo
 (bhalo)

vah muhinja nimani ja mana,
 o, e Hari
 Kanvar Rama jo prarthana ka'i
 (beli) pyara ja sadira budhi kare satiguru jo langhanitha
 Sain Kanvar Rama jo ditho pahinje satigurani khe, hatha jore, ho bahun
 badhi
 ho pere pe'i Kanvar Rama cayo
 ahyan man bimar, munte daya karyo dili san
 ahyan man bimar, munte daya karyo dili san
 ahyan nandhiro man bar
 Music
 Satramdas cavetho: re Kanvara, chatho caven tote daya kayan, chaji tote
 daya kayan?
 Kanvar Rama Sain ro'i kare cavetho: muhinja malika
 o muhinjo dukhiro lahyo
 o muhinjo malika, munte daya kayo

In English

at the saint's doorstep, they came crying and left laughing
 and you are crying!
 complaining, she says: child Kanvar, today I have been here for three days
 at the saint's doorstep
 (friends) I have made sincere prayers, begged
 (friends) he did not even turn to see
 surely, something has gone wrong
 oh my child (friends) how to remain calm? father and mother will not let
 a son suffer
 they take everything upon themselves
 my dear child, I pray to the Satguru
 that he may listen to my heart's call
 Swami Kanvar Ram (friends) in tears, he says to his mother: do not worry
 my Satguru is compassionate
 in tears, today, in front of his Satguru, he implores
 (friends) I have neither refuge, nor protection
 I have neither refuge, nor protection
 my hut does not hold
 thus Shah Latif says:²⁰ friends

20 The composer, Shah Abdul Latif (1689–1752), was a Sufi from Sindh. Hindus and Muslims consider his *Shah jo Risalo* a masterpiece of Sindhi literature.

this is my state
 Friend, now become the one who covers
 (oh friends) my faults
 (may the good come forth)
 congratulations, Thou paragon of humility
 (oh Hari)
 as soon as Kanvar Ram called
 (companions) passing by, Satguru hears this call of gentleness
 when he saw his Satguru, Kanvar Ram, arms joined, hands folded
 prostrating, Kanvar Ram says:
 I am unwell, have mercy on me
 I am unwell, have mercy on me
 I am only a little child
 Music
 Satramdas says: hey, you say have mercy, what kind of mercy?
 weeping, Swami Kanvar Ram says: my Master
 remove my pain
 my Master, have pity on me

In Sindhi

Satiram Sainya cayo: to ta kayo na vicar
 to ta kayo na vicar
 vicar kona kayu, aju tho caven, muhinjo dukhu lahe
 para puta Kanvara yad rakhijain
 ho, jeke topi lika'inda
 sada hunda bimar
 ho, jeke topi lika'inda
 sada hunda bimara
 je vacanu den Kanvara
 chadu dukhiro mita'e
 je vacanu den Kanvara
 chadu dukhiro mita'e
 aha jori a
 dadhi vane pe'i, dadhi suthi a
 Music
 Sain Kanvar Ram hatha jore cavetho: muhinja malika, jijan hukumu kan-
 dava tiyan kandomava
 para yara, muhinjo dukhiro la'e
 Sain Satramdas cavetho: aba, avala iha topi khani a, jahin men dukhu a,

jahin men bukharu a
 Sain Kanvar Ram mau de niharyo
 mau cavethi: puta Kanvara, man khani a'i ahyar
 mata topi khani Kanvar Rama khe dini a
 Sain Kanvar Ram topi khani kare pahinje satigurani khe tho dye
 Sain Satramdas cavetho: puta Kanvara, hode samu nihari, o mastano
 vetho'thi
 hina mastane men Maliku vase, (beli) rakhijen tun Tani san nato
 (beli) mastane khe topi pa'e Sain Kanvar Ram ayo, satigurani je caranani
 te hathu rakhiya'in
 satigurani ji nazar thi va'i
 je nazar thi ve'i po'e kaharo bi dukhu hundo ta dur thi vendo
 Satramdas cavetho: puta Kanvara, hane jiyan man cavain, je muhinje
 vacana te tho
 halen ta asan bi tosan vacanu tha karyun ta
 puta Kanvara jesta'in siju candu tara ahen testa'in duniya pe'i tuhinja
 guna ga'indi
 Sain Kanvar Ram perante kiri kare ca'etho: muhinja murshida, o muhinja
 satiguru
 baki mukhe cha khape, jiyan cavandava man tiyan kandomava
 he dasu Kanvar tavhanjo naukuru hazuru ahe

In English

Swami Satramdas says: you did not even ponder
 you did not ponder
 you did not ponder and today you say, remove my pain
 but child Kanvar, remember
 they always will be sick
 those who hide the hat
 they always will be sick
 those who hide the hat
 if you give me your word
 then I will remove the pain
 if you give me your word
 then I will remove the pain
 ah, the happy pair
 see how they blend together, how charming they are
 Music
 Swami Kanvar Ram, hands folded, says: my Master, I will follow your
 orders

but friend, remove this pain
 Swami Satramdas says: little father, to start with, bring the hat in which
 reside
 Swami Kanvar Ram turns towards his mother [pain and fever
 mother says: son, I have brought it
 the mother gave the hat to Kanvar Ram
 Swami Kanvar Ram takes the hat and hands it over to his Master
 Swami Satramdas says: son Kanvar, look over there, in front of you stands
 the Enchanted One²¹
 the Master lives in the heart of the enchanted ones, (friends) keep in
 touch with Him
 (friends) Swami Kanvar Ram put the hat on the Enchanted One, he
 prostrated
 Satguru's glance swept across [Kanvar Ram] [at the feet of the Master
 if the glance sweeps across, all pain will disappear
 Satramdas says: son Kanvar, here's all I have to say, if you listen to my
 words
 [then I also give you my word
 son Kanvar, as long as the sun will remain, the moon and the stars, the
 world will talk
 about your virtues
 Swami Kanvar Ram says while prostrating at his feet: my spiritual guide,
 my satguru, what else do I need, I will do what you say
 Kanvar, this slave, your servant, is here

In Sindhi

Sain Satramdas ca'etho: puta Kanvara
 de vacanu iyo
 kadhain pa'i na khananden
 jeki mila'i tokhe
 Dhaniya nale pyo dinden
 je vacanu khananden
 Vishina amar thinden
 je vacanu khananden
 Vishina amar thinden
 asisa asanji
 tun vasanden ain vadhanden

21 Likely the saint of the sanctuary.

asisa asanji
 tun vasanden ain vadhanden
 dino vacanu Kanvar Rama
 pahinje sira khe nima'e
 aha jori a
 dadhi vane pe'i, dadhi suthi a
 disi jori mazedar
 kiyan pe'i mauja maca'e
 disi jori mazedar a
 dadhi thahethi, dadhi vane pe'i
 disi jori mazedar
 kiyan pe'i mauja maca'e
 Satiram Sain Kanvar Ram
 rasa raca'e
 Satiram Sain Kanvar Ram
 rasa raca'e
 shahara Shikarpura men
 chadyaun rangiro raca'e
 hiya galhi budho tavhin
 pyar dhyan laga'e
 aha jori a
 dadhi vane pe'i, dadhi suthi a

In English

Swami Satramdas says, son Kanvar
 promise me
 you will not take even one *paisa*
 all that you will receive
 you will bestow it in the name of the Lord
 if you promise me
 thus Vishin says: you will be immortal
 if you promise me
 thus Vishin says: you will be immortal
 here are my blessings
 you shall live and you shall grow
 here are my blessings
 you shall live and you shall grow
 Kanvar Ram promised
 bowing his head

ah, the happy pair
 how they blend together, how charming they are
 look at the happy pair
 how jubilant they are
 look at the happy pair
 how they blend together, how charming they are
 look at the happy pair
 how jubilant they are
 Swami Satramdas and Kanvar Ram
 dance with joy
 Swami Satramdas and Kanvar Ram
 dance with joy
 in the town of Shikarpur
 they brought colour
 listen to this phrase carefully
 with devotion
 ah, the happy pair
 how they blend together, how charming they are!

2 Final Comments

Bhagat performances are a Sindhi community feature in India and its diaspora. Its narrators are generally Hindu and Sindhi speaking. It is impossible to imagine a bhagat gathering in another language and for another public. The form of the narration, the fragmentations, and interruptions would be incomprehensible to the uninitiated audience. The boundary between popular literature and other literary works gets blurred. By doing so, the performers preserve the memory of Bhagat Kanvar Ram and connect the community to its past.

The repertory of a bhagat reveals distinct levels of significance. Bhagat Kanvar Ram influences these levels, both in content and style but also socially and symbolically. At the social level, values such as humility, generosity, sweetness, and love predominate. Spiritual and mythical dimensions also are symbolically part of these performances. In their collective minds, Sindhi audiences make connections to Bhagat Kanvar through divine grace symbols. Most incidents narrated during a bhagat session about Bhagat Kanvar Ram's life, both the dramatic and negative, reflect divine grace. By citing his example frequently in bhagat sessions, contemporary performers collectively remind

audiences of his virtues.²² They invoke him as an appealing strategy. This strategy extends to style issues: many current narrators dress like Kanvar Ram (long white dress, turban, and anklets) and reproduce his words and purported gestures. People regard him as the ultimate authority and the father of the bhagat oral tradition. Individuals index and evoke a shared “pool” of Sindhi culture that binds performers and audiences alike by citing and mimicking him. This pool represents an irreplaceable source of information about bhagat. In this sense, bhagat strongly represents Sindhi culture, and its performers are “oral historians.”

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- 22 Examples include “Destiny smiled upon Swami Kanvar Ram; the saint came out and at once embraced him; you have sown the seeds of your peas, all life long, you will harvest. Even if all lifelong you harvest, the pods will not dry up; Kanvar Ram’s peas are accepted. Today, Swami Satramdas accompanies the child on the way to Tarachand. Taking Swami Kanvar Ram by the arm, he takes him to Raharki. Today, Satiramdas’s grace takes care of Swami Kanvar Ram. (Friends) he teaches how to perform the bhagat; Satramdas says: son Kanvar, here’s all I have to say, if you listen to my words, then I also give you, my word. Son Kanvar, as long as the sun will remain, the moon and the stars, the world will talk about your virtues – Satguru’s glance swept across [Kanvar Ram]; thus, Vishin says: you will be immortal, here are my blessings, you shall live, and you shall attain self-realization.”