

Jhulelal, The Sindhi God

Sindh, an erstwhile province of United India and now a state in Pakistan, is known as a land of Saints and Darveshs, pious men, both Hindus and Muslims, who treaded the path of truth and urged upon their followers to live in harmony with their fellow beings and to serve God through His creation. Sindh has given birth to many God men, who by their practice and precept, have spread God's message to all human beings, irrespective of any distinction of caste, color and creed. From times immemorial especially under the influence of Buddhism, Sindh has been free from caste barriers. Not in the distant past, but in the second half of the twentieth century, a Sindhi charismatic personality, Late Padamshri Prof. Ram Panjwani, a writer, singer, actor and an orator, all rolled into one, recreated a Sindhi God - Jhulelal, that too far away from Sindh, in India itself. It has been nothing less than a miracle! How did that miracle become possible?

In Hindu philosophy the concept of 'Bhavsagar' (the ocean of fear) occupies central place in as much as all the aspirants of spiritualism have to cross it and for this they need a guide, a Master. The world has been compared to a Bhavsagar and as such all people who want salvation, need a guide. Therefore, water and hence Water-god, Varun, have been significant from the days of Mohaan-Jo-Daro, the seat of the first ever civilization, known to the world.

Though the script of Mohaan-jo-Daro civilization is yet to be deciphered, most of the scholars, Indian as well as foreign, believe that water had a special significance. Some opine that Mohaan-jo-Daro itself was like an island surrounded by a 'sagar', the sea. This view is amply supported by the most unusual and modern drainage system, which existed during those times. It is also an acknowledged fact that Four Vedas which were the world's first and foremost reservoir of knowledge, were uttered in hymns by the Rishis and Munnies on the bank of Indus. Hence water was considered as the 'First Principle of Universe'. When the 'trimurty' of Hindu Religion was envisaged by Indian mythology, with Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Mahesh the destroyer and reincarnator, the Water God, Varun, was also considered as the fourth pillar of the Hindu mythological philosophy.

Prayers of Varun Devta (Water-god) in Rig Veda

Oh father of the Universe, Varun Devta!

You have bestowed on me a beautiful body of five elements

You have given it power to enjoy worldly pleasures

I praise You for this benevolence.

Oh Charitable Deity, give me that power of understanding

That I do not consider this vessel of dust only a fountain of joy

Beautifying body, looking after it all life, I should not do that.

Oh embodiment of bliss, kindle your immortal light in my dusty body,

I will find true path to happiness by that light.

(Alka, 1970)

Even during the days of Sapt-Sindhu (land of seven rivers), the mainstream 'Sindhu' and its tributaries were considered the life givers and hence, not only auspicious, but also worth worshipping. As there was scarcity of water in Arabia, the birth place of Mohamed and Islam, water became still more significant. It was basically the lure of

plentiful water in Sindh and India beyond, which brought them ultimately to the shores of this subcontinent. In its wake Islam brought monotheism. In fact, it was, in a way, revival of faith in Mohaan-jo-Daro doctrine that there is only one God. The only difference was that while God during Mohaan-jo-Daro civilization had Shiva-like form, Islam envisaged a formless God.

In Sindh Mohamed Bin Qasim defeated Raja Dahar, the last of Hindu kings, treacherously. Sindh was annexed by Khalifa of Al Hilaj to his kingdom and was administered by his representatives. They spread Islam rather with the power of sword than the conviction of its' being a better belief. Later, in the tenth century Sindh came under the rule of Sumras, who were converts from Hinduism to Islam. They were neither religious bigots nor were they fanatics. While they made Sindh free from the foreign rule, they were also tolerant to all other religions. There was one exception in Sumra reign. The province of Thatta being far away from the capital, maintained its separate identity and influence.

This kingdom of Thatta was in the second half of the 10th century, usurped by one Makrabkhan, who was a personification of aggrandizement and greed. He killed the then Shah Sahadat Khan and himself became the ruler of Thatta under the name of Mirkhshah. Mirkhshah was not only a tyrant but also a fanatic. Flattering courtiers, who in order to be in his good books and also to earn material gains always surrounded him. These courtiers one day advised Mirkhshah: "Spread Islam and you will be granted 'Janat' after death and you will enjoy eternal bliss". Mirkhshah was swayed away by the promise of blissful life after death. Ultimately, under the increasing pressure of the Maulvis, one day, he called Panchs - the representatives of Hindus, and told them bluntly: "Either embrace Islam or be prepared to die," For Hindus it was a bolt from the blue. Though they were panicky the Panchs pleaded for grace time to think over the 'Shahi Farman', the majestic order. Now, it is well known that when all the doors are closed upon man, he thinks of God. Something of that sort happened in this case also. The Mukhi (the Sarpanch) all of a sudden thought of the promise of Lord Krishna in Bhagvad Gita: "Whenever the sins increase beyond the limit and the religion seems to be endangered I come in the form of an Avtar (incarnate) and mitigate the distress of my worshippers." Who else could the Hindus think of at that time but their Varun god - Water god?

It is here that the doubt arises about the exact time the Hindus got as an extension from Mirkhshah to decide between the two alternatives. Some authors of religious books put it as three days, whereas others say eight days. But I am inclined to put it as forty days and it is not a figment of my imagination. Chaliho Saheb is performed every year by the worshippers of Jhulelal as if they enact the times of tyranny and their entreaties for God's help. It suggests that for forty long days they underwent rituals and vigil on the bank of Sindhu. They did not shave, nor did they wear new clothes or shoes. They did not even use soap or oil or any opulent thing. They just washed their clothes, dried them and wore them again. In the evening, they would worship God Varun, sing songs in his praise and pray for their solace and salvation. At the end of the fortieth day, they heard a voice from heaven (revelance): "Don't despair. Have patience. I am coming. I will save you from autocrat Mirkhshah. Eight months from now I shall take birth at Nasarpur in the house of Ratanchand Lohano from the womb of Maa Devki, like the Lord Krishna did." Hindus rejoiced and celebrated the occasion. After forty days of Chaliho, the followers of Jhulelal celebrate, even till today, the occasion with festivity as "Thanks Giving Day."

Immediately after that Hindus went to Mirkhshah and prayed for an extension after narrating to the tyrant the promise they had received from God. The courtiers tried

their best to dissuade Mirkhshah from falling into, what they thought to be a 'trap' of Hindus. But curiosity seemed to get better hold of the tyrant ruler who somehow could not reconcile to the idea: God coming down to the earth! How would that happen? He preferred to wait and watch. After all, lives of the helpless Hindus were at his mercy; he could put an end to them whenever he liked. So he granted them the extension with pseudo gracefulness. The Hindus awaited the arrival of their savior with fervor and fondness. After three months, the second tithi of Asu month, Hindus got the confirmation of the news of the conception by Devki. They all rejoiced merrily to celebrate the event. Even till today on Asu Chand Hindus celebrate the day with gaiety and gay. They organize cultural programs with mirth and merriment. Three months later, on the Pahi Chand, Hindus again prayed to Daryashah (the Lord of Waters) reminding Him of His promise. And lo! Right on the dot on Cheti-Chand, two tithis from new moon of Chetre, Devki gave birth to a handsome bony boy. As if to proclaim the auspicious event, unseasonal clouds collected on the sky and brought down torrential rains, to welcome the new Avtar. The new born infant also hailed his birth with a miracle. He opened his mouth and his parents saw therein Sindhu flowing and also an old man on Pala fish. Pala fish is a very tasty species of fish and its peculiarity is that it swims against the current. Devki went to the bank of Sindhu and performed 'Jado', which means praying to Water-god. All Hindus celebrated the birth of the child with songs and dances.

An astrologer - an ascetic person, who looked into the horoscope of the new born child, proclaimed that it was not an ordinary child. He predicted that the child will be a great warrior and his popularity will out live him. He named the child as Udaichand; Uday in Sanskrit means moon-like light; here it means one who brings light in darkness. A Punjabi astrologer in Nasarpur called the child Uderolal; Udero in Sanskrit means one who is near water or who has sprung from waters. Inhabitants of Nasarpur called the new born Amarlal, an immortal child. A miracle took place from the very day of the child's birth. The cradle wherein Uderolal rested, always kept on swinging on its own. It is because of this that Uderolal is also called 'Jhulelal' - the swinging child. And the cradle swung to and fro like the waves of Sindhu! The name 'Jhulelal' was most befitting and has accordingly become most popularly recognized. 'Jhulan' came to be accepted as the pet name of child. Everyone knows that the Pala (fish) too, by its very nature, swings like a cradle. Devki, the mother of Jhulelal did not live for long thereafter. After her death Ratanchand remarried. Jhulelal sucked step mother's milk. This can be compared with Sri Ramchandra's sucking from his step mother Kaikai instead of his real mother Kaushlya.

In the meantime Mirkhshah also got news of birth of the mysterious child. He called the Panchs and asked them how long he was supposed to wait for their reply to his demand: "Either accept Islam or die." Hindus now being quite convinced and confident of their savior having really taken birth, implored, "A few months more our Lord! Savior of Hindus has already taken birth. He is the Water god..."

Thus, Daryahi Panth created by Uderolal has blessings of the original Trimurti of Gods in Hindu Mythology. Mirkhshah scoffed at the very idea: A child saving Hindus! He said sarcastically, "All right! Neither am I dying, nor are you people leaving the land: I shall wait. When your savior embraces Islam, I am sure you will follow suit." The Maulvis pressed upon Mirkhshah hard for settling the issue without any further delay. But Mirkhshah could not digest the very idea of a child becoming more than a match for him. He told the Maulvis, "Wait and watch. We shall surely win. Why make haste unnecessarily?" It is said, not without reason, that curiosity killed the cat. After disposing of Hindus, Mirkhshah became very anxious to have a firsthand knowledge about the mysterious child. He decided to depute one of his ministers, Ahirio to Nasarpur

to see and gauge things for himself. Ahirio decided to make use of deceit. He took a rose dipped in deadly poison and asked Ratanchand to take him to the new born baby. Ahirio was astonished at the very first glimpse of the child. He had never seen such a dazzling and charming baby. He hesitated for a while, but soon mustering up his courage, he extended the flower to the baby's lips. Uderolal gave a meaningful smile and blew the flower in one breath. The flower flew out of Ahirio's hand and fell far away on the ground. Then Ahirio saw that the child was no more in the cradle. Instead, an old man with a long white beard was staring at him! All of a sudden the old man turned into a lad of sixteen years! Again the scene changed; he saw Uderolal on a horse back with a blazing naked sword in his hand and there were rows of warriors behind him. It was a scene of battle field. A cold shiver passed through the body of Ahirio, who bowed his head in reverence and entreated, "Have mercy Sindhu Lord. I am convinced, Hindus are safe...."

Essential articles emblems in the Uderolal Mandir

- *Verho: Ring, which acts like an Alauddin's lamp; by touching it, one gets what one wishes.
- *Light: Always lighted earthen candle, which reminds of the Almighty and His mercies.
- *Khantha: 'Pakhar' a cloth cover that acts like a shield against attacks of enemy.
- *Dega: A huge metallic vessel in which rice are cooked during, a marriage or festival. It is blessed with the boon that irrespective of the number of people to be fed, it never gets empty.
- *Tegh: A sword, Vishnu Devta gave to Bhavani to kill the demons or sinners. It is a symbol of Vishnu.
- *Dhokla: Damru, Shiva's symbol.
- *Jhari: A Kalsh, symbol of Brahama.

On his return to Nasarpur Ahirio narrated all the miraculous occurrences to Mirkhshah. Mirkhshah said, "It seems you have been under the spell of magic. How can a child turn into a young boy and an old man and then a warrior on the horse back, simultaneously? Impossible.... Next to Impossible!!

But in the heart of his heart, Mirkhshah was scared. That very night in his sleep, he dreamt a dreadful scene... A child was sitting on his throat; then it changed into an old man with a white beard, sailing in the sea with a book in his hand. Then the scene changed again. He was confronted by a warrior with a drawn sword, on the battlefield and saw himself losing ground...."

Next morning he called for Ahirio and asked him to think of any counter action in the matter. Ahirio advised him to lie low for the time being and to wait and watch! Uderolal as a child, performed many miracles for Ratanchand and the inhabitants of Nasarpur. They were fully convinced that God Himself had descended on the earth to fulfill his promise made in Bhagvad Gita. Nevertheless, Ratanchand performed all the routine ceremonies as a parent. He had the tonsure of the child's head. This ceremony is called 'Munan'. Then he took the child to a Vedic scholar and requested him to take the child under his protégé. The Vedic scholar smiled meaningfully and started imparting knowledge - worldly as well as spiritual to the child. When the question of giving 'Gur-Mantra' to Uderolal came up Ratanchand took the child to Gorakhnath, who said, "Yes, for the namesake I shall give him the 'Gur-Mantar', otherwise I know well, he needs none; on the contrary he has to teach us all so many things worth learning". Uderolal received the 'Gur-Mantar' of 'Alakh Niranjana' from Gorakhnath.

Maharashtrian Gudi Padva and Sindhi Cheti-Chand Similarities

Maharashtrian New Year starts from Parva, 1st Tithi of Chaitra month and Sindhi Cheti-Chand comes on the second tithi of the same month, one day afterwards. Sometime 1st and 2nd tithis fall on the same day and the beginning of both new years coincide, on the same day or one day earlier or later. Both new years have twofold purpose: on the one hand it is thanks giving day to Asht Deva for passing the old year, with peace and happiness and day of prayers to make the coming year more prosperous and joyful. Both communities pray not only for their betterment but also of all human beings. Another similarity is also there. On the Maharashtrian new year day, Maharaja Saliwahan had defeated a tyrant king. On that day starts new year according to Shaak Sambat Era. On Sindhi new year day Uderolal was born who defeated a fanatic ruler. On Sindhi new year day, new year starts according to Vikram Sambat Era.
(From Gobind Malhi's article in Sindhi Lok Rajya)

Udero's step mother wanted him to earn some money for the family. She gave him a container full of boiled beans to sell in the market. Udero instead of going to the market, went to the bank of Sindhu. Half of the contents he distributed free among the beggars, poor and the pious ones who lived on the river bank. The other half, he made an offering of it to Sindhu. During the afternoon he talked to the children and elderly persons about the spiritual wealth on the river bank. In the evening the same container emerged from the waters, and came swimming to him. The container was full with fine quality of rice. When the step mother started getting the fine quality of rice every day, she got suspicious. One day she sent Ratanchand followed Udero. Ratanchand followed Udero discreetly all the day and witnessed the miracle. He bowed to Udero from a distance and accepted him either as the God Himself or His messenger. On the other hand, Mirkhshah was once again being pressurized by the Maulvis. They told him not to waste any more time and that he should either convert Hindus to Islam and vouch-safe for his own blissful life in 'Janat' or be ready to be declared as an associate of 'kaffirs' the infidels.

Five Original Mandirs of Uderolal in Sindh

- * Nasarpur
- * Khudi, Thatta Nagar
- * Zindah Pir, Udero Ghat, Rohri
- * Manoharo Island (beyond Karachi)
- * Near Jhijhan Village, where Uderolal disappeared for ever.

Since Mirkhshah did not like to be branded as an infidel, he had no other alternative but to meet Uderolal either face to face privately, or on the battlefield. He asked Ahirio to arrange for a private meeting with Udero. Ahirio, who had in the meantime, become a devotee of Daryashah, went to the bank of Indus and prayed to Water-god to come to his rescue and save him from the onslaught of the king and religious fanatics. To Ahirio's astonishment, he saw an old man with a white beard in saintly clothes, sailing on a Pala (fish), going against the tide, north way. Ahirio's head bowed in adoration and admiration and he understood once for all that Uderolal, the Water-god was a holy man for Muslims also. He proclaimed at the top of his voice that Khwaja Khizr and Uderolal are two names of the same holy man. Khwaja Khizr swam the Sindhu against tide and rested on an island near Rohri! Then, Ahirio saw Udero springing from Sindhu on a

horse back, with a flag in one hand and sword in the other, followed by endless troops of warriors. Ahirio bowed once again to Uderolal and pleaded, "This is a private meeting, why to bring with you so many warriors?" Uderolal made the troops vanish into thin air. When Uderolal came face to face with Mirkhshah, he said, "Whatever you see around yourself is the creation of one and only God, whom you call 'Allah' and Hindus 'Ishwar'. Hindus, Muslims and other human beings are all His creation."

Maulvis urged upon Mirkhshah not to listen to infidel's talk of Udero, but to arrest him and to put him in jail, till he agreed to embrace Islam. They thought that all Hindus would subsequently follow the suit. They pleaded, "Sir, do not miss the golden opportunity. Arrest Udero while he is alone!" Mirkhshah, wavering as usual, was ultimately carried away by the pressurization of the Maulvis and ordered the arrest of Uderolal. As the officials of the court moved towards Udero, water started flowing in the court. All the courtiers including Mirkhshah found themselves inundated in water. Simultaneously, fire also broke out and the Palace became a towering inferno. There was no way to escape the wrath of the deity. Udero spoke again: "Mirkhshah! Think it over again. Your God and mine are not two different ones. Had Almighty so desired He could have ordained Hindus to be born as Muslims. But no; God wanted unity in diversity. All world is His manifestation." Mirkhshah beseeched tearfully, "My Lord! I realize the truth now. Save me and my courtiers from his ravage." Immediately the fire was blown out on its own and water receded.

Having been pacified, Uderolal pronounced "Fire is the first principle of Universe and Water is the first principle of life. Worship of God is to be done in its blended form of Jyoti (light) and Jal (water); and let every human being worship the Almighty with whatever the name he desires. Let there be a bond of brotherhood among all Sindhis-Hindus as well as Muslims." Mirkhshah bowed respectfully and agreed to treat Muslims and Hindus alike. Thereafter the persecution of Hindus was stopped forthwith and they were allowed to retain their identity. Uderolal then told Hindus to go home and attend to their routine work. Before they dispersed Uderolal told them to think of him as an embodiment of light and water and establish a temple to perpetuate the memory of the unusual transformation of Mirkhshah. "Day and night", he said "Light one candle in a temple and water should be available for Daat (holy sip)."

Both the elder brothers of Uderolal, Somanram and Bhedoram were neither impressed by Uderolal's victory over Mirkhshah nor were they enamored of his miracles. They kept away from him. Uderolal tried his best to make them give up their worldly materialist ways and to adopt spiritual path; but they bluntly and impudently refused to be his followers. Then, Uderolal turned to his cousin Pagad and named him the first Thakur-priest of the religious sect, which believed in Water-god. Pagad followed Uderolal wherever he went. They visited Rohri by the river side and a 'ghat' was built there, which later on came to be known as 'Udero Ghat'. It was near Zindah-Pir, the place where Uderolal, as Khwaja Khizr swam against the flow of the river. While he was with Pagad, Uderolal performed many a miracle, which convinced Pagad beyond any shadow of doubt that Uderolal was really the River or Water-God.

Uderolal accompanied by Pagad went to Thatta again. Mirkhshah was delighted and elated. He welcomed him with awe and adoration. Uderolal's temple, by then, had become quite famous since both Hindus and Muslims prayed there regularly and reverently. From Thatta, Uderolal and Pagad went to Hinglaj, from where Uderolal visited Manoharo island, off the shore of Kalachi (later known as Karachi). 'Lal Sai Mandir' was built at Manoharo too. Ultimately Uderolal and Pagad returned to Nasarpur. Uderolal gave seven symbolic things to Pagad. These seven form the essential elements of Daryahi Sect-believers of Water -god. These seven are described and explained in a box elsewhere,

Sant Pagad built a temple called 'Lal Sai Mandir' at Nasarpur and kept the essential symbols given by Uderolal there. More and more people, Hindus as well as Muslims, visited the Mandir everyday. Uderolal also asked Pagad that after the songs are sung in praise of the River-god every evening, 'Palav' ceremony must be performed; it means holding the lower part of the shirt, towel or any other piece of cloth stretched out to beg from God the good and welfare of all; one should pray for others' well being before one asked anything for oneself. Prayer songs of Daryahi Sect are known as 'Panjras' which are supposed to be of five lines. As specimen one such 'Panjra' is given below:

*My warrior Sanwal Shah came from North
All the trees and plants became
green and grass was green,
Mother tells son, purchase
butter and eat
When butter costs only a paisa
for a quarter
Here is a Sanwal Shah, who
bestows blessings on all.*

As water is quite essential for any vegetation and other creatures, all the Panjras talk of compassion and truthfulness and benignity of Water-god who grants reprieve to the sinners and assists and obliges one and all. With the changing times, Panjras are no more restricted to only five lines; today, some are of two lines and some even of seven lines. But 'Panj', the conception of five, has various connotations; the five temptations man is subjected to, the tributaries of Indus are also five, etc. Uderolal taught the Vidhi (ritual procedure) or Bahrana Sahib, symbolic of Uderolal's worship. How a Bahrana is made & performed, has also been explained in another box elsewhere.

Historical basis of the Legend of the Water - God

The Hindu legend about River Deity has a historical or semihistorical basis. The Hindu River Deity incarnate, Amaralal (Immortal Hero) or Uderolal (the Exalted Hero) was a historical personage who was born at Nasarpur in 1097 Sambat, i.e. in the year of 950 or 951 A.D.) when a petty Chief of Thatta, Mirkhshah by name, was making the life of Hindu subjects intolerable by forcing them to accept Islam at the point of sword. The oppressed Hindus prayed to God Varuna, the god of the river, to come to their help. It is said River Deity incarnated himself at Nasarpur, in the house of Ratanchand Lohano and his devoted wife Devki. Uderolal was a warrior as well as a holy person. His horse and his sword struck terror in the hearts of the bigoted ones. He preached the doctrine of religious toleration and love towards all... After finishing his mission, the warrior saint and his horse disappeared in the waters of Sindhu.
(Prof. Late L.H. Ajwani, History of Sindhi literature)

After giving charge of Mandir along with the seven 'fundamental essentials' of Daryahi Panth (Water-god's Sect) to Pagad, Uderolal again set on a tour of Sindh and far beyond it, to propagate his teachings: How a prayer to Jal (water) and Jyoti (light) can lead his devotees to their worldly and spiritual welfare and bring about the ultimate salvation of their souls. In this regard, Uderolal wanted to bind the people of the land, both Hindus and Muslims, into a bond of unity and spiritual harmony. He wanted to impress upon his followers the truth that all paths ultimately lead to one destination, i.e. oneness of the God and oneness of the devotees. He expected a concrete contribution from Muslims and

sought their active cooperation in building the Mandir and in spreading his teachings. By this time Uderolal was twelve years old.

He took Kodan a teenager son of the second Thakur after Pagad, Getturam and went to Hala, ten miles away from Nasarpur. There he saw a well nearby a barren land. He asked the Muslim old man, who claimed the ownership of the well, whether he would sell the well and adjoining land. Maman, the old man, looked at the youngsters and sarcastically said, "Show me the money first and then I shall reply." Uderolal drew two lines on the ground and started digging in between. To the surprise of the old man, gold and jewellery started emerging out of the earth. Uderolal told the old man, "Take away as much as you can but give us the well and the land". Maman was overwhelmingly influenced by the miracle. He reverently bowed to Uderolal and said, "So you are the godly being who has come on this earth to teach love and brotherhood. I shall give you not only the well and the land but also be your devotee. But first let me bring my wife. Why should she also be not benefited by your presence!"

Combined Prayer to two Lals - Jhulelal and Lal Shahbaz

(Lal Meri Pat Rakhio Bhala...)

Oh Lord of Sindh, Jhulelal, and soil of Sehwan.

Red robed God-intoxicated Qalandar, glory unto you!

May I always have your benign protection

Your shrine is always lighted with four lamps;

and here I come to light a fifth lamp in your honor

Let your heroic name ring out in Hind and Sindh,

Let the gong ring loud for your glory.

Oh Lord, may you prevail every time, everywhere

In the name of Almighty, I pray to you to help my

Boat cross (river of life) in safety.

(K.R. Malkani)

Both the old man and his woman not only gave the well and land but also assisted Uderolal in constructing the Mandir known later as 'Uderolal-jo-Mandir'. Maman couple became its first Mujawars- caretakers. Muslims continued to be its caretakers thereafter. This 'Uderolal-jo-Mandir' became the nucleus of pilgrimage for both Hindus and Muslims. When railways came to Sindh, there was no such railway station as Uderolal. People used to alight at Tando Adam. But the successive and ceaseless efforts of the pilgrims and miraculous occurrences, compelled the Government to build a railway station near the village that had sprung around the Mandir.

Sai Uderolal visited Rohri once again and saw to it that Zindah Pir Dargah was built in honor of Khwaja Khizr, his namesake god man of Muslims. Here too the stress was on unity and brotherhood of Hindus and Muslims. After returning to Nasarpur, Uderolal realized that the purpose for which he had come on the earth was over. At that time Uderolal was just thirteen years old. One day he called Pagad to his side and told him to carry on with the mission of building temples and spreading his message: "Your descendants will be known as Thakurs, the privileged priests, and my followers will be known as Shewaks. For every temple, there will be a 'Babo' who will conduct the day to day prayers and perform religious ceremonies regularly."

Pagad and others were sad to know all this since the idea of being separated from Uderolal, their leading light, was too much to bear; but they had no choice except to abide by the will of the Master. Uderolal selected a place nearby a village Jhijhan to give up his earthly being. Hindus and Muslims from far and near came to witness this unusual scene. Mirkhshah's representatives were also present there. As soon as Uderolal's soul left his body, they took over its charge and said, "Under the instructions of Mirkhshah we will build up a 'Turbat' and 'Quba' (a tomb) according to the dictates of Islam." The Hindus resented this stand. They said, "We shall build a Samadhi according to the Hindu customs." While the debate was going on, heavy rain started pouring in. There came a voice from heavens: "Behold, make my shrine acceptable to both, Hindus and Muslims; let its one part be like a temple and the other like a Dargah (shrine). I belong to all of you."

Thus ends the story of Uderolal, based on some historical events, folk lore; it is an unusual mixture of facts and fiction, one can even call it partly mythology too. The Daryahi Panth worshipping and following of Uderolal predominated the way of life in Sindh for more than a hundred years. Then came Pir Usman Shah Marwandi (Lal Shah Baz) who settled at Sehwan. He brought with him another philosophy-Sufism which was akin to Daryahi Panth in as much as it also emphasized on brotherhood of mankind. It different from Daryahi Panth in that it believed in a formless God, who was omnipresent but seen by none. Muslim god men embraced Sufism and adopted Sufi way of life. Even many Hindus became the followers of this philosophy.

The Question of Faith

Is the story of Uderolal based on history? May be or many not be. It is for the historians to adjudge. For me it is sufficient that faith has counts more than facts. And faith has established Jhulelal as Asht Dev of Sindhis - Community God of Sindhis. Can any one say whether Lord Krishna and Lord Rama were real or the product of history? No one can prove historically if Ganesh existed as son of Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati. For us it suffices that Uderolal is Lord of Water and Light. He inspires us to believe in unity and brotherhood of mankind. He raises us above the differences and distinctions of caste, color and creed. His birthday, Cheti-Chand, second tithi of Chaitra is auspicious for us, for that day not only starts our new year but it paves way for the progress of our drama, dance and music - development of rich cultural heritage. Though Sindh is not on the map of Independent India, Sindh is wherever Sindhis live. Uderolal continues to be a bond of unity between Sindhis everywhere.

(Prof. Late Ram Pamjwani)

The Lals, Jhulelal and Qalandar have been quite popular with Hindus and Muslims of Sind. There is a song in Saraiki dialect, praising jointly both the Lals: Lal meri Pat Rakhio Bhala... Singers like Noor Jehan, Reshma and Runa Laila have sung this song. Bhagwanti Navani made its Sindhi version popular in the nook and corner of India and abroad. In due course of time in Punjab, Guru Nanik started Sikhism - distinct from militant Khalsa Panth. Sufism became predominant among Muslims and Sikhism among Hindus, though both the philosophies were more or less accepted by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Guru Nanik in Jap Saheb called Water, Water-god, Varun, as Pita (father) and earth as Mata (Mother). Slowly and gradually Shewaks and followers of Uderolal were limited to illiterates and the economically backward class among Sindhi Hindus. A saying came in vogue : "Followers of Lal (Uderolal) beg and eat." Second tithi after every new moon is called 'Chand' when the moon is seen in the evening for the first time in the sky. It is auspicious for both the Sikhs, followers of Water-god Uderolal and Hindus. One

thing more is common between 'Prasad' in Sikh temples and 'Sesa' at Amarlal Mandir: both consist of the boiled beans. Sikhs' 'Prasad' is mainly Kanah Sahib made from suji and 'Sesa' is mainly 'Tahiri'- sweetened rice.

When India's independence brought in its wake the partition of the subcontinent on the basis of two-nation theory, Sindhi Hindus had to abandon their homes and hearts and they scattered all over India. Initially, they led quite a miserable life in the erstwhile military barracks which were turned into 'Refugee Camps'. Darkness prevailed in the lives of Sindhis. Most of them lived at the mercy of Government.

Chhej-Dance with Jhulelal's Procession

Chhej : It literally means Crescendo, Flood or inundation. This dance form is a dance of Joy. This dance form requires great vigor, enthusiasm, abundance and rhythm. It is performed with Sobha Yatra (Victory March) of Jhulelal's Bahraana Sahib. It resembles Gujarati Dandia Raas. A circle is formed by Chhejris (Dancers) with dandis (sticks) in their hands. They dance in circle, providing their own taal by clapping sticks to each other's sticks with the rhythm of Duhal (Drum) and tune of Shahnai. More than seven dancers are required to create abundance. Various patterns are formed during the dance. Slowly and gradually, rhythm becomes faster and faster and generates more and more ecstasy and joy.
(Sindhyaat Ji Jot)

In those days of despair and despondency, Padamshri Late Prof. Ram Panjwani had a new idea. As Lokmanaya Tilak made Lord Ganesh the symbol of awakening and unity for Maharashtrians, Prof. Ram Panjwani gave a slogan: "Jeko Chawando Jhulelal, Tanhja Thinda Bera Paar" - Whosoever utters Jhulelal, will find all his desires fulfilled. Thus Jhulelal gave hope and aspiration to the distressed Sindhi refugees, who soon became 'Pursharthees' from 'Sharnathies' with 'Tokal jo Turho' as a symbol of faith and confidence for Sindhis.

A God was incarnated with ever increasing followers. Ultimately Jhulelal became the Community Diety of Sindhis, a Community Symbol. His birthday, Cheti-Chand was termed as 'Sindhyaat Day' by Akhil Bharat Sindhi Boli Ain Sahit Sabha in 1959. Social and cultural programmes are arranged on that day throughout India. It paved the way for the cultural renaissance among Sindhis. While the readership of Sindhi books and speaking of Sindhi language have suffered a mortal blow during the past five decades, social and cultural programs of drama, dance and music have kept the candle of Sindhi language lighted.

Jhulelal continues to be the unifying force and the center of all the cultural activities among Sindhis. Most of the Sindhis today greet and reciprocate each other as "Jhulelal Bera-eee-Paar."