

# **Qadir Nagar: A Commentary**

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*This commentary is based on a documentary made on Qadir Nagar in 1988.*

**In the mountainous north, the valley of Swat is known to be one of the most beautiful and historically interesting valleys of Pakistan. In 327 BC, Alexander the Great invaded Swat on his way from Afghanistan to the Indus. Later in 1928, the British government acknowledged Swat as a separate state and Miangul Waheed became the 'Wali' or the ruler of Swat. His rule ended in 1969 and Swat became a part of Pakistan.**

**Pir Baba, a small village of District Bunair, in Swat, carries quite an attraction for the people from all over the country, as well as for the tourists. The village was named after a great saint, Syed Ali Khurasani, commonly known as Pir Baba. Thousands of pilgrims visit his shrine every year. In the beginning, it was a small community of people, including a number of Sikh families who have settled down over here. Gradually the word about the miraculous healing powers of Pir Baba, especially curing the leprosy cases. With time, people started pouring in from all over the country and eventually this small village took the form of a small town, which now includes a commercial area as well.**

**As we step out of the village of Pir Baba, a road is seen leading to a long stretch of beautiful Green Mountain ahead. This is the road that goes through a small village called "Batai" which is a remote, but a very beautiful enchanting place, right in the lap of the mountains, known as Qadir Nagar. Qadir Nagar, being an inaccessible and remote area, it took a couple of years to construct a jeepable road, which still is subjected to deterioration during the Monsoons. Before the construction of this road, it was a tough walk of five miles to reach Qadir Nagar. With the constant efforts of local workers and the people of Qadir Nagar, this road now goes straight up to the mosque or rather The Wali Masjid. In September 1988, the government of Pakistan sanctioned a metalled road, which has now materialised into a nice road. The story of this road evolves a lot of constant effort and hard work for its construction. Late Pasha Bhai's limitless dedication had started the whole project work despite of innumerable hurdles and difficulties. After he left us, the project came under the supervision of Janab Tahoor-ul-Islam. Initially, villagers of Batai refused to give way for the road through their village. So the road was taken around Batai. It was Tahoor-ul-Islam Sahib's determination, devotion and expertise about the whole project, which has made it a success. The approximate distance between Pir Baba and Qadir Nagar is about 5 miles. On starting the journey towards Qadir Nagar. From Pir Baba 'White Lines' can be seen which indicate the location of Qadir Nagar.**

After reaching the area of Qadir Nagar, the enchanting natural beauty around is so captivating that one forgets all the tiredness. It is fascinating to watch such nice and attractive buildings in the middle of the huge Mountains and rocks. It seems almost an unbelievable task of hard work and manpower. The first thing one notes as one approaches Qadir Nagar, is the minaret of Wali Masjid, indicating Qadir Nagar – a symbol of man's relationship to God, his creator.

An old professor of engineering saw in a very vivid dream – a spring, sprinkling out of a solid wall of granite by a hillside and a flat stone close by. The dream was so vivid that he could not ignore it. After a month he again saw in a dream that he is hiking on a hilly track – desolate and rocky, in company with a few local peasants. Feeling exhausted and thirsty, on inquiring he was told that there is a spring nearby. Reaching the spot, The Professor was wonder struck, when he remembered that it was the same spring. Seeing maps and hiking miles and miles, he reached the spring and decided that I have to settle here. This distinguished Prof. Ubaidullah Khan Durrani, also known as Babajan, then decided to build a hermitage there and it was named 'Qadir Nagar'. At the very spring of water he had seen in his dream and found it too!

In October 1963, the land was bought from a local farmer Mir Jabal. By the fall of winter, the construction equipment was transported from Peshawar to Qadir Nagar. In just two days a small hut was built, which later was reconstructed into a spacious guesthouse known as 'Hujra' – in the local language. It also has one main room or a sitting room. Photographs of some saints and sufis adorn the walls of this huge hall.

Any type of construction on this land requires a lot of hard work, drilling, blasting of huge rocks and leveling of the ground. People of this area are poor, but very hardworking. Construction work at Qadir Nagar has always provided the employment opportunities to the local people.

Spring water in this area is extremely sweet and carries lots of essential minerals for health. Water from the mountain springs is supplied to Qadir Nagar, which first gets stored in water tanks and then goes to all the houses of Qadir Nagar through pipes. A large amount of water also gets stored in a huge tank for producing hydro-electricity.

Among other dedicated residents and workers of Qadir Nagar, Najam Bhai takes care of the 'Workshop'. This workshop is self sufficient in providing almost every necessary tool for construction and other purposes. Everything in the workshop is well organised and properly labeled. This workshop provides learning and working opportunities for both young and the old.

The food department or the Kitchen area is managed extremely well by Pari Baboo- a long time faithful and devoted member of the family. In the evening, one can smell the delicious bread, made daily in the earthen oven or 'Tandoor'.

Every year, Babajan spends the entire summer season in Qadir Nagar, with his family. They reside at the main residence. Adjacent to Babajan's bedroom, is his library, thousands of books in English, Urdu, Persian and Arabic on numerous subjects have been collected by Babajan over a period of years. The books in the library are properly placed according to sections and are catalogued.

Babajan designed and constructed his shrine during his lifetime. Generally, shrines of holy people are either covered with a tomb or left open under the sky. The structure of this shrine is covered by an open tomb made out of 12 pillars: indicating the balanced living of a faqir. This is also the final resting-place for Mr. Mohinuddin Pasha known as 'Pasha Bhai' to young and old. He passed away on Nov 10 1984. Being the most loving and devoted member of Babajan family his memory would stay in the hearts of the people and all over the place forever.

Land between the shrine and Qadir Nagar's residential area is very fertile and is used for growing fruit trees. Grapefruit, guavas, plums and pears are found in abundance over here. Rich soil of this area provides good opportunity for planting plants of different regions as well. One of the many attractions for visitors is a cactus house, which hosts a collection of approximately 500 different types from all over the world. Cactus is a symbol of survival and all over the world it has become a hobby to collect cactus. Probably there is subconscious fear of total destruction by atomic warfare and the symbol of survival reassures them. Despite of the thorns and funny shapes, their flowers are very charming, giving lessons to the onlookers to wait for the flowers that are bound to bloom, in ones life full of thorns and obstacles.

The main mosque, 'Wali Masjid' stands out among the high mountains of the valley. The architecture as well as the decorative elements, present a unique style of craftsmanship. The craftsman had come all the way from Sindh to create a unique and developed style of its own. A stone from 'Ghaar-e-Hira' is placed inside the mosque and it adds to the importance of this special mosque.

Neither you nor I solved the secret of Being,

Neither you nor I opened the puzzle,

The image of you and I are hidden

behind the curtain,

When the curtain falls

Neither you nor I will remain

Hakim Omar Khayam (11<sup>th</sup> Century)