
A Unique Study of Sufi Rituals at the shrines of Sufi saints of Pakistan

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Abstract

In the global era, Pakistan is a famous country owing to the land of Sufi saints. The people in this country firmly believe in mysticism, particularly women are more attached to the sacred rituals and places in Pakistan. The history of Sufi shrines narrates as Muslim era of mysticism is associated with the different Sufi orders of the 12th century in (sub-continent) Pakistan. Such the orders like Owasi, Chishti, Suharwardy, Qadri, Naqshbandi, Firdausi and so forth have been so connecting and involving people to mutually take part in the rituals. Women and men are in the equal ratio as visitors to such the shrines. The culture prevailing at Sufi shrines teach individuals the language of human love, religious harmony; tolerance and fore bearing. People often visit the different shrines for spiritual needs located at various cities and towns and pay homages to such the saints. Such the Sufi saints since the inception taught people a lesson of simplicity and goodness, and respect for other religions of the World. The first teaching journey starts to avoid being rigid and intolerant. In present research paper, the contents of Sufi rituals i.e. poetries, stories, rituals, and music have been explored. There has been the particular focus on qualitative research methods. The observation technique was implemented too! During the performance of Sufi rituals at different Sufi shrines on various special occasions. The Sufi practices are instinctively planting the seed of human love in the heart of every woman and man regardless of the gender, religious, and social difference. It equally encourages every one of us to respect the other religions and adapting the broad-mindedness. It creates an environment of exploring contents of comparative studies of different religions. The Sufi shrines are focal points to spiritual customs for all religions alike whether Muslims, Hindus, Christians or etc. Thus Sufi rituals at Sufi shrines promote social harmony, brotherhood, and tolerance.

Keywords: Sufi shrines, Sufi Rituals, Tolerance, Harmony, Devotees

Introduction:

Pakistan is the country of Sufi Saints and shrines. This Sufi journey begins from the beautiful hills the shrine of peacocks at Kalar Kahar. A few steps ahead, there is another Sufi shrine on the top of neighboring hills Rori Peer. This connection is found everywhere in Pakistan. The charming voice of Seraiki dialect is on the bank of river Chenab is the village of Takht Hazara, believed to be the home of Punjab's legendary folk hero Ranjha (Haroon Khalid, 2017). In Pakistani society, belief concept regarding shrine culture is not limited to Muslim society, but even Christians; Hindus as well as people from other religions have belief pertaining to shrine culture. Thus, it promotes the cultural values beyond the barriers and limitations become the family of mysticism. The mysticism is an obvious path to connect the human hearts for the spiritual needs the individuals who come out of the various legacies and religions as well as sects they make a practice of purification of the soul together. Henceforth, it is the sacred place of spirituality and devotion that offer a decent manner to psychosocial patience, provision of food and shelter; better hope for hopeless. It offers innermost relief to depressed and social bonding for rich and poor communities equally. Furthermore, it is the center of religious teachings and guidance with human love and harmony. In this way, the holy shrines are supposed to be the pillars of microenterprises covering the

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shops of cultural products, toys, pieces of jewelry, sweets, food-spots, and staying; facilities being installed by poor people. Many poor families take two times meal at such the shrines. The different valuable gift centers being set up for visitors' as well foreign visitors so as to purchase such the gifts and as the same way; the investment is fruitful for poor persons of the native society.

Figure 1:1
Map of Pakistan showing main shrines in its provinces



Source: <https://www.google.com.pk/search/pakistan>

Such the shrines are the symbol of hope for the huge population. Irrespective to it, "Mannat" word used by every person of own native language during the first spouse visit at the shrine with their sound intention and hope before such the Sufi saints. Whenever such intention and hope come to true and become the miracles. Devotees bring sweet, rice, meat, meat and prepared food along with special a piece of cloth called "Chadder" so as to cover the grave of Sufi saint with such the Chadder, the then distribute sweet, feed other devotees and visitors of the saint, meanwhile beat drum "Dhol" with a great joy as well excitement and bow with their devotion. While the detached persons like the oppressed and psychosocial patience often visit such the shrines and get natural relief and consent as well bless of Allah. Overall such the practices are held throughout the year and people visit frequently so as to maintain round the year.

Literature Review:

Sufi rituals are the mystical aspect of experience or behavioral approach and showing the connections of every soul with the creator, and produce kindness and love for the creation of Allah. Sufi shrines in Pakistan being the major source of spiritual and moral education to man kinds. Sufi saints help in recognizing the self. It is inborn but on another hand social product to cooperate with people (Iqbal Choudary, 1998, page135). The Sufi saint Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai has symbolized the needle an instrument of connecting pieces of clothes, sewing which covers the body. He said a mysterious, subtle, invisible need has joined me firmly, inseparably with my love, with my people, with my creator (Ansari, 1983, page18). The tombs

of Sufi saints reflect Allah is divine and mercy with pure color of white and green. For example, the white tomb of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai is elevated to the height of 67 feet from ground to its top. The fascinating tile-work is done in and outside the shrine. There is a glazed tile of Kashi fixed about five feet above Silver Gate of the mausoleum (Kanasro, 2007, page24). The Sufi saints are the ambassadors of religious harmony and pioneers of the shrine culture in Pakistan. Albeit, every shrine has its own separate significant, historical fact and cherished outcome for poor people without religious discrimination. There is a turban on ahead of every buried saint because people have a belief that such individual has physical death not spiritual. Therefore, the existence of "soul" is more significant than the physical presence. In Islam, it is called belief on doom's day. Mysticism is a continuous eye-opening process while the shrine of every Sufi saint focusing on the specific rules for customs and rituals that invented by such the saint and practiced by folkways at every shrine of Pakistan. They have demonstrated and transformed the practical experience. A Sufi F.A Ali El Sensei stated that you should think, say the same thing, what say practically do it, and what you do should bring benefit to you and all creation. Our actions should bring benefit to creation (G. Cook, 2017). Sufi saints imparted individuals the art of recitation of the divine words "Zikir" highly the majority of the persons from the other religions incline to participate at such the gatherings of "Zikir" that is often arranged at every first Monday night of every month as per Islamic Calendar at sharp 10:00 pm – devotees often gather for communal prayers that are known as Sama or Sahao-Soomar while at the courtyard of shrine; there is square shaped fence along with dry weeds being accumulated in the month. There are other rituals at each shrine where people meet each other, they utter the words "Bismillah" which means in the name of God but it signifies that you are welcome in the name of Allah (Professor Dr. Allana, 2010). There can be many theoretical and empirical perspectives to analyze the issue of religious harmony. Walter Runciman in his words defines the magnitude of a difference between the desired situation and that of the person desiring it (Nazir Hussain, 2014, page86). The free of cost meal/food distribution practice is carried out at every shrine of Pakistan. In local language this is known as "Langar" means free of cost food. The word Langar as per Oxford Dictionary has been originated from the Hindi language. The same word is also used for the free kitchen in worship place Gurdwara, and the free of cost meal is served to individuals without distinction and discrepancy of caste, creeds ethnicity, social status, and religions. As the food service of the different items placed and entertained visitors on the courtyard of the shrines peacefully keeping in mind dire hunger of visitors at such the shrines timely for them with a great care and love of humanity developed for far and wide visitors and devotees of the saint. It is a symbol of equality, daily a lot of people getting such food but, charity practices are increasing day by day. Every year shrines receive millions of rupees in the donation each year, which are spent on Langar food distribution to visitors. Devotees come to the shrine to celebrate the Saint's union with God. Even woman are the saints like Mai Noorun Nisa Begum, whose name literally means a light among women. The shrine is famous all over Pakistan as Mai Sahiba (Malik, 2014, Dawn). It is common practice among the Muslim community they celebrate three days at the place and communal prayers for the soul of the departed person. It is believed that the death of Sufi saints is union with Allah. The word Islam means peace. In Muslims, there is a practice of As-Salam which means the "source of all peace" its goal of the religion, to achieve peace –with oneself through harmonious self-realization, with rest of

God's creation (Professor Qadri, 2015, page21). Sufi poetry is composed of the different regional dialects and languages for common people of Pakistani society. Sufi (mystical) poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, Bulleh Shah, Sultan Bahoo, Khawaja Ghulam Fareed, Sachal Sarmast and others imbibed with divine knowledge for common people of the global. Bulleh Shah was the poet of Punjabi language; Sultan Bahoo of Seraiki; Sachal Sarmast of Sindhi. Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai composed pure and very concise Sindhi verses, is the great storehouse of Sindhi poetry not only for the Muslims but also for Hindus. Hindu scholars have rendered a great service to Shah's poetry. Sachal has composed poetry in Sindhi and Seraiki (Schimmel, 1986, page112).

Research Methodology:

The qualitative research design was appropriately selected for the research study. The qualitative research method was conducted using unstructured in-depth interviews questionnaire that was designed with openly ended sub-questions. The participant observation technique was implemented to observe things rituals as usual on a different special event or during regular happening at the selected shrines. 20 unstructured in-depth interviews were held, 5 from each shrine. 5 participant observations were held, 1 from each shrine. Custodians of shrines, disciples, devotees were respondents from each shrine. Prior to the interview, they were requested over the phone to participate in such the research activity. In participant observation activity prior consent was sought and some official letters were sent to the custodian of shrines and Oaqaf department for seeking permission to attend the rituals. In qualitative responses feelings, emotions, gestures, melodies and frequent beat of drums, other sounds and relatively the non-numerical during such the rituals. The participant observation strategy was also implemented on Sufism, cultural, attitudes, and behavioral expressions while visiting at shrines and attending the spiritual rituals.

In sampling procedure, the lists of most frequently visited shrines were randomly selected for primary data collection. Out of 15 the shrines of Qalanader Shahbaz Sehwan (Sindh), Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, Bhitshah (Sindh), Bibi Pak Daman, Lahore (Punjab), Bahaudin Zakaria, Multan (Punjab), Shah Rukn-e-Alam, Multan (Punjab) were selected.

Data Analysis & Results:

The qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews were read carefully browsed and transcripts were labeled. The observed data – notes were listed properly. The careful notes were written about observations and in-depth interviews. The words, phrases, opinions, actions, emotional uttered indigenous messages, gestures, sentences were coded and sorted. Afterward, the selected codes were categorized. The most appropriate information was selected for writing final results. All the interpretation and results were written in a much-unbiased manner. The following results were drawn from the research that 98% of shrines are of male Sufi saints and only 2% female Sufi saints. At the Male Sufi shrines, there is 98% ratio of male custodians in Pakistan. However, 66% female, 44% male visitors' regular visit at the shrines. Female visitors were more focusing and spiritually connected to rituals, Zikir, prayers, and other Sufi practices. It was found that most of the times female devotees were weeping, crying moving their heads hither and thither. They were either in very dismal or feeling joy and distributing sweets uttering the words of congratulations. In all respect,

women were rather more focused on Sufi practices than the male devotees. At sunset time and on special occasion there was the crowd of male devotees. They were not as focused as female devotees during the rituals of a festival and special events. The 80% Sufi stuff in the form of poetries, stories, and other teachings is subjected to female as the symbol of courage and enthusiastic.

Conclusion:

The Sufi shrines in Pakistan have been the central place for people from different religions. They come to attend the rituals jointly. It is revealed that Hindus, Christians, Sikhs equally contribute finically and morally at the Muslim shrines throughout Pakistan. The doors of these shrines are opened for every individual without discrimination of gender, color, race, language and geographic boundary. Majority of the poor devotees eat free food “Langar” that is distributed regularly.

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