

## The Essence of Shrines in Rural Punjab: a Case Study of the Shrines at *Barrilla sharif*, Gujrat-Pakistan

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**Abstract:** Popular Islam has a significant role in accommodating the spiritual needs of people associated to it. Across Punjab, there are enormous shrines, where followers visit to manage their social and psychological problems. *Barrilla Sharif* is among others a highly visited shrine in the district Gujrat. Local villagers and the followers far away love to visit shrine on regular basis in a bid to satisfy their spiritual needs. On their visits they perform many rituals backed by certain beliefs. Most of the followers give donations in the form of money and in-kind. *Langer* (feast) is one of the major characteristics of the shrines, which attracts the devotees, especially of the nearby villages. The strong beliefs are other sources of motivation for the followers make them offer *manna* (divine intercession) and perform some rituals. Present study aims at understanding the belief system, key functions of the shrine institution and a variety of rituals performed by the followers of shrines at *Barrilla Sharif*. This paper is divided into major three sections. The first deals with theoretical framework and selected review of literature on religion, rituals and shrines; the second section discusses the background of the shrines at *Barrilla Sharif* with its major functions and key rituals performed by the followers; and last section adds on the information regarding the quantitative response analysis of the perceptions measured during study.

**Key words:** Religion • Beliefs • Rituals • Popular Islam • Shrines • Functions • Rural Punjab

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### INTRODUCTION

**Religion, Rituals and Shrines:** Sociologists and anthropologist have been focusing on the issue of religion and its major influences on social life and vice versa from the many decades. Among others, Bronislaw Malinowski, Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim stressed on the functional aspects of the religion and Clifford Geertz explored the symbolic aspects and practice (rituals) performed in different religions like Islam. Following section will discuss the main theoretical frameworks presented by the different scholars regarding functions of religion, rituals and shrines.

Starting with the definition of the religion, we will look into some classical definition coined by scholars which actually present the perspectives of those scholars on religion. Emile Durkheim [1] asserts that a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practice which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. Thus, he has asserted that a religion is defined by three elements: 1) Beliefs that some things are sacred (forbidden, set off from the profane); 2) practices (rituals) centering around the things considered sacred; and 3) a moral community (a church) resulting from a group's belief and practices. Karl Marx [2] also discussed religion and declared that religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of the hardness world.... It is the opium of the people. Geertz [3] defines religion as a system of symbols which acts to

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establish powerful, persuasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

Subsequent discussion will address the issue of popular Islam (visitation of the shrines) including basic beliefs, rituals and comparisons of the other studies made on the issue in Pakistan. Before moving on, we will define belief and rituals in sociology-cum-anthropological context. Leach [4] asserts that ritual action and belief are alike to be understood as forms of symbolic statement about the social order.... Watanab and Smuts [5] opines on the account of Rappaport regarding defining rituals as there are two obvious aspects of ritual. First, ritual consists of more or less invariant sequences of acts and utterances that the participants themselves do not invent but to which they must conform. Second, in order to have a ritual at all, participants must actually perform these sequences rather than simply invoke or acknowledge them. From a practice perspective, Bell [6] identifies six characteristics that rituals and ritual-like activities exhibit to varying degrees. The characteristics are as follows:

- Formalism: Rituals often employ more formal, or restricted, codes of speech and action than people use in everyday life;
- Traditionalism: Rituals often employ archaic or anachronistic elements;
- Invariance: Rituals often follow strict, often repetitive, patterns;
- Rule-governance: Rituals are often governed by a strict code of rules that determine appropriate behavior;
- Sacral symbolism: Rituals often make reference to, or employ, sacred symbolism; and
- Performance: Ritual often involves public display of ritual actions.

Sosis and Alcorta [7] argued that collective rituals enable the expression and reaffirmation of shared beliefs, norms and values and are thus essential for maintaining communal stability and group harmony. Durkheim claimed that the “effervescent” state of ritual performance minimizes individual distinctions and emphasizes the unity of the group.” McClenon [8] asserted that Durkheim, Rappaport and Burkert, maintains that ritual is the foundation of the human social contract and enables the extensive reciprocal relationships that make human life, as we know it, possible. Having discussed the key definitions of the religion and major characteristics of the rituals following section will present a historical analysis on the evolution and essence of the shrines in Pakistan society. The discussion made by Hassan [9] guides us that that the growth and essence of popular Islam matured over time. At time its spread, Islam was mainly depends on the shrines (*khankahs*). The shrines are considered as spiritually attracted places, where spiritually attached people visit to accommodate their wishes. On the evolution of shrine institution Hassan [9] asters that, “with the passage of time *khanqahs* evolved and changed as a socio-religious organization. The spirituality of the mystic and knowledge of mysticism shifted from a learned process to a hereditary one. The spiritual power of the founder of the *khanqah* came to be transmitted through his descendents who became the center of the devotion of followers of the Sufi saints who, after their death, were usually buried in the *khanqah*. This was an important change and eventually led to the development of the master-disciple or what is known as the *pir-murid* paradigm in which *pir* (or master) is the director and *murid* (disciple) a faithful follower obliged to surrender himself/herself completely to the *pir*. The *pir-murid* paradigm was instrumental in the evolution of the devotional saint cults and these eventually became the cult associations called *ta’ifa*. The charisma of the *pir* was routinized as headship of the cult association based on heredity rather than on merit became an accepted practice. This gave rise to a whole new class of people who by virtue of blood descent from a Sufi saint could claim spiritual status. They are now commonly known as *sajjada-nishins*, *gaddi-nashins*, or *walis*.”

In this context Kamran [10] adds on the relation of the structure of the shrines in rural Punjab, “the most outstanding feature of ‘popular Islam’ in the Punjab has been all permeating influence that the *Sufi* saints wielded for centuries. *Pir-murid* relationship acquires particular salience in the socio-political setting of the rural Punjab. Although mosques and

*maulvis* abound in the villages, they could hardly have substituted ‘a pervasive ideal of religious authority’ that a *pir* embodies and the shrines as “sites of special access to religious power” or *barakat* of religious authority” that a *pir* embodies and the shrines as ‘sites of special access to religious power’ or *barakat*.”

According to Nizami [11] as mentioned by Hassan [9] what mystics call *nafs-i-gira*-an intuitive intelligence that could understand, comprehend, control and direct the mind of the disciples-was needed in an abundant degree to fulfill the purpose of *Khanqah* organization. Unless they identified themselves with the problems of the people, their worries, their hopes and aspirations, these *Khanqahs* could not gain the confidence of the people. So, from its origin its popularity, shrine culture has passed through different stages. It provided the masses a space to accommodate their everyday problems and provided them with chances to satisfy themselves.

**Shrines at Barrilla Sharif and Surroundings:** This section is based on the four in-depth interviews with respondents from *Barrilla Sharif* village and secondary information provided by the caretakers of the shrines. The institution of shrine provides masses with internal satisfaction in order to manage their everyday tensions. Visiting shrines is one of the regular activities of the rural people. Present study was conducted in the rural setting, some 30 kilometers in the east of the Gujrat city which is famous for its the Shrines. There are two major shrines at *Barrilla Sharif*, one is the tomb of Hazrat Qanbeet and other is the tomb of Molvi Muhammad Hafizullah.

These two shrines have different history. According to the local sources (both in oral and written discourses) Hazrat Qanbeet was the son of Hazrat Adam and was settled at the same place where he is buried today. One of the major characteristics of the Tomb is that it has a length of about seventy yards. People relate this characteristic with the height of the son of Hazrat Adam. According to the critics, this tomb is artificially created. There are some other tombs with the same length in the rural settings of the Punjab associated to different moral authorities.<sup>1</sup>

The second shine is comparatively newly-established. Molvi Muhammad Hafizullah (b. 1901) was the son of a local landowner in Barrilla Sharif. The village is known by Khawja Qutabuddin-a local legendary figure who spread the teachings of Islam in Sikh Regime.<sup>2</sup> He was a man of astuteness, renowned for his colossal donation, piety and devotion to Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani. Following the same practice of the holy man, Molvi Muhammad Hafizullah organized *khatam* on the 11<sup>th</sup> of every Lunar month. Later, he and his son extended the same *khatam* 11<sup>th</sup> of every month and bi-annually. In bi-annual *khatam*, the followers all over the district Gujrat and beyond participate in it with great zeal and zest. At the *khatam* different spiritual activities are performed: starting with *Tasbeeh* (a form of recitation of the holy scripts like names of God, Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and other mystic personalities). *Tasbeeh* is followed by genealogical poetry which they mostly start with the name of God and Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), followed by Hazrat Ali and then the other key mystic personalities. *Dua* (pray) is another a kind of prayer in which people put forward their wishes in the name of God through divine/spiritual personalities and this meeting ends at *langer*. Same procedure has been followed for monthly sessions but the number of participants may vary. Both shrines provide *langer* but the shrine of Molvi Muhammad Hafizullah is more organized. At the latter shrine menu of the daily *langer* is displayed on the entrance of the main courtyard of the shrine where *langer* is served. The chefs and waiters wear typical dress with their heads covered by Arabic scarf. They welcome visitors with dignity and serve them with equal importance. One can eat to one’s fill in the scheduled timing. The shrine maintained a strict discipline for cleanliness and parking. On the ritual of *langer* at shrines in Pakistan Lyon [12] asserts that the religious phenomenon of *langer* (public kitchens attached to Sufi shrines), mirrors the *dég* ritual. *Langer* are organized around shrines of *pirs* (saints). In the *langer* the ‘giver’ and ‘receiver’ become symbolically, if not materially, confused. The *pir* is the re-distributor of goods and food provided by his *murid* (devotees). He is not perceived to be a ‘receiver’ because he does not ‘need’ the gifts provided. In the case of Palestine Al-Houdalieh [13] has mentioned that in the case of a sacrifice, among the more involved and time-consuming of the votive acts, the person slaughters the

<sup>1</sup>For detailed discussion see Zaman, M. (2005). Hazrat Qanbeet-Sacha Pir (A Tru Guardian), Imtiaz Fayaz Printing Press, Lahore; Zaman, M. (2006). The Tomb of Hazrat Qanbeet-son of Hazrat Adam, Weekly Ayena (Mirror) Gujrat.

<sup>2</sup>For detail discussion see Zaman, M. (2006) Molvi Muhammad Hafizullah, Weekly Ayena (Mirror) Gujrat.

animal (a goat or sheep) either at home or in a place close to the shrine. Then the cooking is done within the precincts of the shrine using the large pots and firewood stored there for that purpose. Others fulfilling a vow prefer to bring the fuel and implements with them from their homes. Normally the person will have notified relatives, as well as the local poor, at least one day in advance of performing the sacrifice. To do this, the person (or a relative) goes to a public place, most commonly the mosque, in order to invite the people to the banquet.

Besides *langer* there are about hundred free-of-cost rooms available for the visitors free of cost. Some kilometers in the east of the shrine, there is *Bahlol* agriculture farm; where people visit and perform some agriculture related activities in devotion. One other good reason to visit that farm is the possibility of having a chance to meet with Rafique Ullah (caretaker and son of Molvi Muhammad Hafizullah), who mostly lives there and personally supervises the agricultural activities. There are many devotees who spend months at shrine without getting any remuneration. The researchers got the opportunity to meet one of them, a retired Army Officer, who belonged to one of the districts in Southern Punjab, informed that he is internally motivated by the grace of the *pir* and have been working here for last six months.

Gujrat is rich in folk culture; there are many shrines of the same type of mystic personalities who promoted Islam in the region. Besides these shrines, one epic love story of *Sohni-Mahiwal*<sup>3</sup> is also associated with Gujrat. The land of Gujrat is Barren in nature. People depend mostly for cultivation on the ground water and rain fall. Because of the climate change the rainfall has been tremendously reduced. It has also affected the cultivation process in Gujrat. Because of this scarcity of water people do visit the local shrines and offer *mannats* for rain to overcome the agriculture crisis. Another main characteristic of the district is international migration and it has a direct relation with the expansions of both shrines. Khan *et al.* [14] asserts that in District Gujrat, according to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2007-08, 24.3% families were receiving remittances from abroad. The families of the emigrants are mostly depending on the remittances in Gujrat. Most of the migrants, on their visit back home, pay visit to the shrines at *Barrilla Sharif*. They have contributed in the construction and management of both shrines.<sup>4</sup> Prominent inhabitants in the nearby village belong to the castes like: *Gujjar, Jatt, Butt, Rajpoot, Mughal, Ansari, Khokar, Mirza*, and other predominantly working castes: *Mochi, Nai, Kumhar, Tarkhan, Marasi, Musali*, and others.

**Major Functions of the Shrines at Barrilla Sharif and Beyond:** In the context of functionality of shrines Hassan [9] opines that in fact relatively clear and explicit principles for Sufi mystics responsible for organizing *khanqahs* were laid down. These included: 1) The people of the *khanqah* should establish cordial relations with all men (*khalq*); 2) They should concern themselves with God, through prayers, meditation, etc.; 3) They should abandon all efforts at earning a livelihood and should resign themselves to the will of God; 4) They should strive for the purification of their inner life; 5) They should abstain from things that produce evil effects; 6) They should learn the value of time; and 7) They should completely shake off indolence and lethargy.

The shrine as a social institution performs certain functions for both *pirs* and *murids*. Major functions of the shrines towards *murids* have been discussed below.

**Spiritual Healing and Satisfaction:** It is one of the major characteristics of the shrines. The followers regularly perform certain activities and sometime assign *mannat* (divine intercession). One of the major practices performed at shrine is *dua*. The followers feel satisfaction while performing such activities and they love to spend time at shrines as much as they can afford. It can be stated that higher the time spent at shrine higher will be the satisfaction of follower. Nizami [11] identifies it as a *nafs-i-gira* and further he said that it provided the masses a space to accommodate their everyday problems and provided them with chances to satisfy themselves.

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<sup>3</sup>*Sohni-Mahiwal* is one of the four main romantic/epic stories of the rural Punjab and Sindh. This is an iconic figure of the Punjabi folk literature

<sup>4</sup>The names of the contributors/donors are written on the side walls of the Tomb of Hazrat Qanbeet. In a one way it promotes the cause of the donors and in other way it also works for publicity

**Social Cohesion:** It is another major function of the shrine. People who have a *bayat* on the specific shrine/*pir* come under the circle of *pir-bhai* (those who share same spiritual leader). It promotes group cohesion. Further, people promote working relations, affinity and ceremonial relations. So, shrine institution leads to the social cohesion in society. As a result the ritual performance leads to “effervescent” a state in which minimizes the individual distinctions and emphasis the unity of group as identified by Durkheim [1].

**Feast:** Shrines also provide food to the followers/and those who visit. At *Barrilla Sharif* many villagers regularly visit only to have a good food as shrine (particularly shrine of Molvi Muhammad Hafeezullah) is famous due to incessant and quality food. So, the shrine not only provides food to those who work there but also to those who visit. Such practice has been identified by Lyon [12] with the name of public kitchens attached to the shrines which mainly depends on the contributions of devotees and the *pirs* are only distributors of the *langar*.

**Stress Management:** It is among other functions of the shrine, people regularly visit shrines not only for the sake of food but also to manage their daily life tension (and related problems). Having such beliefs that the shrine is a kind of place where people feel relax and forget the everyday life matters by indulging themselves in the spiritual activities. So it can also be stated that shrine institution is a kind of place where one can come and get rid of the stress (and other psychological problems). According to Karl Marx religion in general is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of the hardness world.... It is the opium of the people. The visitation to the shrines and the performance made by the followers is a mechanism to their hardness and according to Marx this process indulged these masses to a series of performances until their hardness are managed properly.

**Marketing/Publicity/Showoff:** These are among other major characteristics of the shrines. There are two major kinds of people: those who contribute silently; and those who contribute and publicize it by writing their names. So, this function is for the people of later category. So, we can hypothesize that higher the monetary contribution to the shrine higher will be the publicity or shrines raises the possibilities of getting fame be contributing there.

**Recreation:** Shrines are always considered as a source of recreation not only for the followers but also those who causally visit there. Some groups always criticize the institution, as it provides people with chances of recreation and dating. As Pakistani society is not liberal enough to work-out such relations at village. Rural women observe *parda* and they don't interact with persons outside the family. Further Kurin [15] discussed that Several villagers were quite active in visiting the various *khanqahs* (tombs) of *pirs*, as well as making visits to the more famous *darbars* (court or pilgrimage centre) of Baba Farid in Pakpattan, Data Ganj Baksh in Lahore and Qadri shrine in Multan. Accompanying various villagers on such trips, I found that sometimes these trips provided entertainment and allowed for sightseeing and adventure. At other times they offered the opportunity for spiritual enhancement and deeply moving experience. So, shrine institution provides opportunity of recreation to the follower/visitors.

On other hand shrine also performs some functions for the *pirs*. In the context of shrine' functions and the role of *pirs* Gilmartin [16] asserts that the central figure of the religious authority at the shrine was *sajjada-nashin*, whose hereditary succession to the *gaddi* had been established from an early date. The precise character of the *sajjada-nashin* is not easy to define, however, because the authority derived from his simultaneous participation in more than one system of values. Following four major functions of the shrines towards *pirs* have been identified.

**Religious and Spiritual Authority:** The shrine is a kind of space for the *pirs* to exercise their religious authority over masses in general and the *murids* (followers/disciples) in particular. Robinson [17] stated that holy-men are the Sufis, or Muslim mystic, men expert in techniques of spiritual development, how to teach Muslims, how to make God's live in their hearts. Further Hassan [9] discussed that the Sufi response to these conditions was to mobilize spiritual power and apply

it to the regeneration of Muslim society. The world was divided into spiritual territories (*Wilayats*) and different Sufi orders, with clearly demarcated spheres of jurisdiction, set out to revitalize Muslim spiritual life. The spiritual orders (*Silsilahs*) were effectively organized to meet the challenge and *khanqahs*, which became an integral part of the mystic discipline, were established on an extensive scale. So, on the basis of above mentioned discussions it can be hypothesized that 'the shrine provides with space to the *pirs* to exercise their spiritual authority over followers.'

**Economic Power:** Owning the shrines is one the major surpluses for the *pirs*. Historical, shrines across Punjab is a major source of income. As Hassan [9] stated in this regards the *sajjada-nishin* of Baba Farid's shrine wields immense power, both through his family's spiritual influence over its millions of *murids* and through its economic power. Indeed, about 10% of total land in the Tehsil of Pakpattan is owned by the shrine, some 43,000 acres in all. Part of this land was given to the shrine as gifts during the period of Sikh rule in the Punjab. There are many other sources of income besides the land acquisition: the daily monetary contribution made by the follower; in-kind contributions made by followers (as in Punjab historically the *pirs* seasonally visit the followers and in reward they supported with money or in-kind goods). *Pirs* sit at the centre of human resource networks. So, it can be hypothesized that 'higher the number of followers higher will be the economic/monetary income from shrine.'

**Political Patronage:** This is the third major function of the shrine for the beneficiaries like *pirs*. Gilmartin in his study discussed that across Punjab, *pirs* have euphoric political powers. Among others *Shahjewan* family of District Jhang is good example of exercising same powers as they are caretaker of the shrine of *pir Shahjewan*. Syed Abid Hussain, Syeda Abida Hussain, Syeda Sughra Hussain Imam, Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat and Syed Asad Hayat remained the members of parliaments on and off from 1945 till now only due to their affiliations with shrine. Some cases of the Pakpattan have been addressed by Hassan [9] as the reasons for designating *pirs* as landed gentry, as stated by the lieutenant-governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, were because they were regarded with veneration by many of the leading chiefs and such influence had to be taken into account because this influence might be put to political purposes. Keeping in view the above-mentioned discussions, it can be stated that, 'shrine promotes the political power among owners or guardians.' But in the context of the present study stands with the findings of Alvi [18]. As he discussed that the widely-held idea that *pirs* have some kind of generalized charismatic power over the peasantry whom they can move into political action at their bidding does not appear to be valid from my own case studies; where a *pir* does not have a local-level political power....

**Social Control and Prestige:** *Pirs* not only hold the economic and social powers but at the same time they have the social control over their followers. In most of the rural settings they work as conflict managers/negotiators in the conflicting situations among their followers. In some cases the *pirs* work for the proliferation of the Shi'a sect. Such cases can be found among the followers of *Shahjewan* in District Jhang. According to Ewing [19] Sufi *pirs* and shrines are a controversial part of the religious organization of Pakistan as they are in many countries of the Muslim world. Leaders of Pakistan have found that the organizational structure of the shrines, traditionally maintained by hereditary living *pirs*, is a force that hampers their efforts to control the political and social organization of the country.

**Major Rituals Performed at Shrines Barrilla Sharif and Beyond:** In general, visitation could serve a multitude of functions, such as: to perform ritual prayers and worship God; to seek a mediator between God and the supplicant in order to facilitate or effect the latter's worldly or otherworldly needs and ambitions; to preserve and reinforce a religious group identity; to preserve and reinforce the religion and power of Islam generally; to bolster the socio-economic position of the shrine cities; to glorify the tomb of the saint as an element of a devotion rite; to pray for rain; to receive healing from (otherwise) incurable physical or spiritual ailments; and to swear an oath by the Quran in the settlement of a serious dispute or conflict between individuals. For the individual believer, visitation served to: gain the help, blessing and intercession of the saint; greet and commemorate the saint and renew the covenant with him; make votive offerings;

reinforce the bonds and sense of brotherhood with other believers and the saint [13]. The rural Punjab has a significant culture of shrines. People visit shrines on regular basis. Their associations vary in term of visiting shrines having particular beliefs in them. A list of major rituals performed at shrines is given below.

**Bayat or Having Oath in the Pirs:** This is a kind of practice in which many followers have to take oath on one of their *pirs* and then they follow the teaching of that specific *pir*. Many of the followers of Molvi Muhammad Hafizullah visit the shrine only to have a contact with the *pir* because they are bound by the *bayat*.

**Mannat (Divine Intercession or Making Vows):** This ritual is performed at many shrines including shrines of present study. There are different motives behind this practice such as; desire to have a male child, marriage, examination, business, competition etc. After the accomplishment of the *mannat*, the followers perform different rituals. As Al-Houdalieh [13] mentioned in the case of Palestine that “the essential aim of making vows was always to achieve one’s personal desires in critical cases such as: incurable physical or spiritual ailments, when marriage has been long delayed, times of trouble generally, inter-personal disputes and infertility.”

**Touching the Tomb:** Some time people perform many rituals only for the self-satisfaction. This ritual is one of those; people love to touch the tomb of their spiritual leader as they consider this ritual might helps them to reduce the miseries of their life.

**Tasting/Licking the Salt and Other Sacred Items Placed at Shrines:** This is another kind of ritual; which has some significance among the followers or visitors. They do perform this ritual because they think that it will help them heal their diseases and leading them to a prosperous healthy life.

**Knottting the Thread:** People perform this ritual in conjunction with a *mannat* (which might be healing disease, marriage, male child and so on) and after the accomplishment of their desires in regarding that to the *mannat* they come back and open the knot of thread and give perform some rituals at shrine.

**Prayers:** People do offer prayers at shrines. Although, there are some conflicts between different schools of thought within Sunni Sect on this practice but at the most of the shrines people offer prayers and make *dua* with the reference of these spiritual people/holy men.

**Bowing and Taking Round:** These are more common practices among almost all followers of the shrines at *Barrilla Sharif*. People offer *al-fatihah* (reciting holy script) and at end they make *dua* for themselves. Like Al-Houdalieh [13] asters that before entering the precincts of the shrine, the visitor should stand before the outer gate, saying: ‘Peace be upon believing people. May God grant mercy to those who preceded us and those who are to follow them. Certainly, God willing, we will join you.’ The visitor then reads the opening sura of the Quran (al-Fatiha) either aloud or silently, dedicating the reward for doing so to the souls of people buried in his cemetery and to the souls of the Muslim dead generally.

**Not Turning the Back Towards Tomb:** People most of the time, do not turn their backs to the tomb in a respect. They believe that by doing so they are pay homage to the spiritual leader/holy men.

**Taking Amulet (Ta’weez) Form the Pirs:** This practice is performed almost everywhere in rural Punjab. People do believe in such practice and many of the *pirs* are running it as a main business. Sometimes people use such amulets for taking revenges for their rivals but most of the time people use these for the solution of their daily problems including diseases. People do prefer to go to the amulet-men (*pir*) rather than the medical professionals.

**Monetary Contributions and In-Kind Goods:** Most of the shrines are running *langer* on the basis of the monetary contributions made by the followers. People also donate in-kind goods like wheat, rice, milk and cattle, etc. So, keeping such orientation people believe that in reward this act will save them from daily problems.

**Torching Oil Lamp and Torching Perfumed Stick:** At many shrines in rural Punjab, people torch traditional oil lamps and some time perfumed sticks at shrines as a part of their belief system.

**Driving or Fixing the Nails in a Tree and Wall:** Fixing the nails in a tree or a wall associated to the shrines in rural Punjab is very famous ritual. People perform such rituals in lieu of their *mannats* and after accomplishment of these *mannats* they donate some food items at shrines and sometimes at their homes too.

**Eating Tree's Leaves and Fruits:** Such rituals are profoundly performed at many shrines in the rural Punjab. Shrine of Hazrat Sultan Bahoo (District Jhang) is very famous for such practices, people for hours and hours sit under the tree and wait for the fall of fruits or leaves. So that after getting it they may eat it. People believe that by eating these leaf and fruits they believe will be getting male child or will get rid of the problems they are facing in life.

**Visiting Shrines with Bare Feet and Covered Heads:** These are the key guidelines for the visitors of the shrines; they have to cover their heads and keep their feet bared. By doing this they pay homage to the spiritual leader.

**Hitting with Stick and Broom:** At some shrines in rural Punjab mostly *pirs* use these items to eradicate the diseases from their followers/visitors. People do believe that such practices might help them to heal their diseases and reduce their miseries.

**Rolling Stone on Body:** This practice is performed on some of the shrines. The stones are placed at courtyards of the shrines and people use them for purification/intercession from diseases.

**Taking Bath:** There are a few shrines, on which water channels/pounds are available; followers/visitors with a specific disease take bath in it with a belief that this bath might help them to eradicate the disease.

Above mentioned are some of the main rituals performed at shrines in rural Punjab. There are some other rituals which are purely specific to the shrines, *pirs*. *Qawali* and *Dhamal* or Drum beating is one of the major characteristics of the shrines. On Fridays, the *pirs* arrange such events on regular basis to attract their follower. As Lyon [12] asserts that chishti shrines are known for their music. *Qawali*, the music made famous by Nusrat Fatah Ali Khan, is the devotional music associated with the Sufi shrines of South Asia. Further Wolf [20] asserts that Pakistanis recognize *dhamal* in terms of dance movements and drumming patterns. Serious *dhamalis* dance to achieve *hal*, a higher spiritual state. Drummers show their respect for the saint by facing the shrine, but they also must watch the dancers for whom they are drumming and the dancers themselves must face the shrine. So drummers sometimes stand between shrine and dancer and try to pay heed to both. Because the responsibility of such a role requires skill and concentration, *dhol* players are rarely able to engage in ecstatic practices themselves-for they might fail both as musicians and as ritual functionaries.

At *Barrilla Sharif*, some of the above mentioned rituals are performed. Why people performed such rituals? What kind of satisfaction these rituals provide to the followers? To answering these questions one should analyze the rituals in sociological-cum-anthropological perspectives. One aspect of the religious rituals is associated with the need fulfillment and other is the alignment into a moral community. There are the different objectives and commitments behind these rituals. Some time rituals are performed with motivation introduced by others but most of the time rituals are induced internally and contain reciprocity as people perform rituals and in reward these rituals satisfy them not only spiritually but sometime physically.



### Research Questions

The Present Study Will Address Following Questions;

- What kind of beliefs followers associate to the shrines?
- What kind of rituals people perform at shrines?
- What are the major functions of the rituals performed at shrines?
- How and when beliefs and rituals accommodate follower's needs?

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Present study was conducted on the two shrines in rural Gujrat. Study was divided into two phases. In first phase, a qualitative study using an interview guide was conducted to measure the perceptions and attitudes of the devotees associated to the shrines regarding their purposes of visits, having certain beliefs in the shrines, performing the rituals and the feast practices. Further, this qualitative account followed by the quantitative study. A well structured questionnaire was developed on the basis of qualitative ideas of first phase and divided into three major sections i.e. first sections was about demographic information, second was related to the motivational sources to visit tomb and rituals. Last section had information regarding beliefs of visitors. Respondents were selected from *Barrilla Sharif*. Although it was very difficult to persuade people for interview, however 50 interviews were conducted and further processed for the analysis.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Table 1 shows that 90% respondents were male and remaining 10% were female. Next section of the table indicates that 84% respondents were Sunni (Barelvi), 10% respondents were Shia and remaining 6% respondents were Ahl-e-Hadith. 64% respondents of the study were rural and remaining 36% respondents are urban. Last section of the table depicts that 60% respondents were married, 34% respondents were bachelor, 4% respondents were widowed and only 1% respondents were separated. Why among Sunni sects, Barelvi visit more to the shrines? In this context Alavi [18] opines that *pirs* (Sufi *sheikhs*) play an important part in the religious life of the peasantry. Barelvi Islam is closely tied to devotion of *pirs*. According to Shahzad [21] the *Barelvi* (Sunni) school places emphasis on paying respect to tombs and shrines and it believes that the bodies in shrines can bestow blessings on those who visit them. Further, Hassan [9] discussed the role of *sajjada-nashin* in the rural setting this structural position made them an often formidable force wielding enormous political, economic and spiritual influence over large numbers of their disciples who resided primarily in villages. It gives the clue that most of the follower/disciple lives in the rural setting as it is easy to exercise power on these people comparatively.

The Table 2 gives an idea about the some basic descriptive measures of quantitative variables like age, number of years of education and monthly income of the respondents. Average age of the respondent is  $33.68 \pm 1.953$  having standard deviation 13.53 years. Education was asked in number of years of education which the respondent has completed so some descriptive also completed for education. Average education is  $9.52 \pm .4838$  having standard deviation 2.90 years. To see the economic status of visitors monthly income was also asked which was  $19189.18 \pm 10664.7$  having standard deviation of 64871.17 which indicates large variation in the data.

Table 3 gives an idea about the motivational factors to visit tomb. It shows that 45.2% visitors said that they were not visiting due to their parents. Only 3.2% were in uncertain situation to explain this visit and 51.6% were agree with that they visited the tombs due to their parents' motivation or guidance. In this context, Kurin [15] explained the reasons for motivation in such pilgrimages across Punjab are as followed, "other religious specialists deeply affecting village life were *pirs*. In 1978, just about every adult male had a *pir*. *Pirs* might serve as spiritual guides to their followers, or at least provide for the identification of villagers with one or more spiritual brotherhood." Pir can be said is a motivation and affection factor for the followers. So, *pir-murid* relation is very complicated, it involves many layers.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Gender, Sect, Locality and Marital Status of the Respondent

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	45	90.0
Female	5	10.0
Sect		
Ahl-e-Hadith	3	6.0
Shia	5	10.0
Sunni(Barelvi)	42	84.0
Locality		
Rural	18	36.0
Urban	32	64.0
Marital Status		
Bachelor	17	34.0
Married	30	60.0
Widowed	2	4.0
Separated	1	2.0

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Quantitative Variables of the Respondent

Attributes	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	S.E
Age of the Respondents	16.00	65.00	33.6875	13.53193	1.953
Education	5.00	16.00	9.5278	2.90306	.4838
Monthly Income	1000.00	400000.00	19189.1892	64871.17055	10664.75

Table 3: Motivational Sources for Visiting Tomb (Motivations for Pilgrimage)

Attributes	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Total (%)
Visit of tombs due to motivations by parents	45.2	3.2	51.6	100
Visit of tombs due to the motivations by friends	37.1	5.7	57.2	100

Table 4: Reasons for Visiting Tombs (Reasons of Pilgrimage)

Attributes	Most preferred (%)	Preferred (%)	Total (%)
Preference for pilgrimage / say <i>salam</i> at Hazrat Qanbeet's tomb	93	7	100

Table 5: Rituals (Practices) Related Responses of the Respondents

Attributes	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Total (%)
Touching the tomb	25.5	8.5	66.0	100
Tasting the salt	19.1	14.9	66.0	100
Kissing the tomb	48.9	10.6	40.4	100
Not turning backs towards the tomb	30.4	17.4	52.2	100
Using scared items on the tomb	46.8	10.6	42.6	100
<i>Chadar charhana</i> (covering the tomb with clothe)	19.6	8.7	71.7	100
Torching oil lamp	12.8	14.9	72.3	100
<i>Jharo dena</i> (brooming)	19.1	6.4	74.5	100
<i>Sajda karna</i> (Bow/Abidance)	65.2	8.7	26.1	100
<i>Chakar lagana</i> (Taking round on tomb)	62.2	11.1	26.7	100

Table 6: Beliefs of the Visitors

Attributes	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Total (%)
They ( <i>pirs</i> /holy men) are friends of God.	12.8	8.5	78.7	100
God listens to them ( <i>pirs</i> /holy men) more than you.	14.9	2.1	83.0	100
They ( <i>pirs</i> /holy men) can change your fate.	29.8	21.3	48.9	100
They ( <i>pirs</i> /holy men) listen to you.	19.1	19.1	61.7	100
They ( <i>pirs</i> /holy men) are mediator between God and us.	14.9	6.4	78.7	100

Table 4 shows that all the visitors were preferred to say *salam* (pilgrimage) when they visited the tomb. But 93% were in condition of most preferred and remaining 7% were just preferred. It shows that in present study all respondents visit shrines with some purposes in mind as the concepts of visiting shrines as opined by the Kurin was rejected. Kurin [15] discussed that several villagers were quite active in visiting the various *khanqahs* (tombs) of *pirs*, as well as making visits to the more famous *darbars* (court or pilgrimage centre) of Baba Farid in Pakpattan, Data Ganj Baksh in Lahore and Qadri shrine in Multan. Accompanying various villagers on such trips, I found that sometimes these trips provided entertainment and allowed for sightseeing and adventure. At other times they offered the opportunity for spiritual enhancement and deeply moving experience.

Table 5 represents the account on some important rituals which visitors mostly performed at tombs during their visits. 66% respondents were agreeing with that they mostly showed their respect for tomb and having belief in the certain rituals associated to the shrines like; tasting the salt and touching the tomb. A moderate response like 46.8% were disagreeing with that anybody should show their attachment with the tomb by kissing the tomb. Another response to the question on directing back towards the tomb, 52.5% thought that it is matter of respect to direct back towards the tomb but 30.4% are against this. It is also seen that the items which are located in the area of tomb are considered sacred. On the response related to the using sacred items placed at shrines for the healing purpose, 46.8% think that these items should not be used as these items don't work to accommodate the purpose. While others 42.6% were considering them as sacred items and respected them equally. In response to the other activities, 71.7% favored to perform the activities like *chadar charhana* (covering the tomb with clothe) 72.3 torching oil lamp and 74.5 *jharo dena* (brooming). Last two important rituals which show the extreme level of attachment and respect of visitors are *sajda karna* and *chakar lagana*. But most of the visitors consider these as a sin and take it as *shirk* (forbidden). Rozehnal [22] asserted that in today's Pakistan, Sufism remains an emotive, multivalent and highly contested symbol-a lightning rod in the contestation over Islamic identity, authority and authenticity. While most Pakistanis view Sufi saints as the embodiment of Islamic virtue-true *faqirs* ('impoverished ones') committed to a life of piety, self-sacrifice and public service-the detractors of the tradition dismiss them as fakers.

Table 6 represents beliefs of the respondents regarding spiritual powers of the *pirs*/holy men. In response to the question 'they (*pirs*/holy men) are friends of God?' 78.7% respondents consider that these *pirs*/holy men are friends of God. In second response regarding the statement that 'God listens to them (*pirs*/holy men) more than you, 83% agree with that God listens to them more than any other. Almost half of the respondents think that they can change their fate because they are friends of God. 61.7% say that their *pirs* listen to them which they say at their tomb. 78.7% are admitted that they are mediator between God and us. Kamran [10] asserted that *pir*'s shrine also epitomises sanctity that it derives by virtue of the *barakat* it inherits from the *pir* itself. The *pir*, 'the spiritually saturated holy man', creates a bond with the *murid* through *bait*, a pact of spiritual allegiance, thus the former formalises his role vis-à-vis the latter. *Pir* performs dual function: he not only fulfils the 'mundane desires' of the *murid* but also acts as a mediator between him and Allah. According to Buddenberg [23] it is not an authority such as Shakarganj but an involvement in local circumstances thus characterizing Bari Imam's way of influencing his surroundings. It is not a personality like Shakarganj who determine the holy site and its relations, but a holy place does reflect a prevailing religious feeling. *Folk Islam at its best*.

## CONCLUSION

Popular Islam has played a fundamental role in the spread of Islam in the Subcontinent. Visitation of the popular shrines is a part of the daily life in the rural setting of the Punjab. Shrine as a social institution has multifold aspects; it performs certain functions for the *pirs* and at same time for the *murids* too. The essence of shrines lies in the beliefs of the visitors and the wishes they associate to the shrines. Significance of shrines portrayed in the belief and obedience of its followers via rituals. Overwhelmingly, Shrines locally accommodate many issues of the masses, especially of those who adhere to it. On the basis of the results shown in this study it can be concluded that rituals performed at shrines is the product of folk wisdom.

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