

SHRINES IN PAKISTAN AND THEIR IMPACT ON SOCIETY

(A Case Study of Golra)

☆
Abdul Qadir Mushtaq

Abstract

“This paper highlights the exercises and practices which are being observed in the shrine of Golra Sharif (Shrine of Pir Meher Ali Shah). It also depicts the system and characteristics of the shrine which attracts a large gathering of the society. This paper presents the role of the sajjada Nashines in social and political life of the society. It puts a light on the services of Sajjada Nashines for promoting religious education through speeches and madaris culture. It also gives information about the sources of the shrine upon those the system is being maintained.”

Khanqah is a Persian word that has developed between the ninth and twelfth centuries in the Muslim world. The word Khanqah is used for the lodges of Sufis. The centre of the Pir-based mediational Sufi Islam is the shrine. Dargah, Darbar, Ziyarat, Khanqah are the specific words that are used for the shrine. It is headed by a Pir⁽¹⁾ who himself is a part of the hierarchy of the brotherhood. It is said that At the shrin of Sufi, the shadow of Allah is ubiquitous. Along with the tomb itself, shrines also have a mosque, lodges for dervishes, Langarkhana and madrasa. Khanqah play an important role in religion and social life of a man. These are open for all kinds of devotees. The word devotee is not used in Mystic language and specific word Murid is commonly used. Murids are disciples of the Pirs. They visit their shrines regularly. In the Khanqah, the teachings or methods of the Order of Saint is strictly observed. The followers mostly concentrate around the Pir who accepts and tests novices, hold meetings, manages finances, maintains the madrasses situated in the vicintiy of shrine, look after the management of the Langar and guest houses.

☆ Incharge, Deptt. of History & Pak Studies, GC University, Faisalabad.

The village Golra Sharif is famous for having the shrine of Pir Meher Ali Shah. Golra Sharif is situated at a distance of 18 kilometers in the north-east of Rawalpindi and constitute at present the E-11 sector of Federal Capital Islamabad. The total area of the village is approximately 654 acres. Golra is fairly an old settlement. An old tradition narrates that a person, namely Shahab-al-Din came to this place from Soun Sakessar, District Sargodha. He was known as Awan Golra, and came to the present village site for hunting rabbits. It is said that when he commanded his hunting dogs to chase the rabbits, he was astonished to see that instead of running away from the field, the rabbits offered tremendous resistance and made the hunting dogs run for their lives. This was a strange experience for him. Finding no other explanation to this phenomenon, he attributed it to some unseen power. Hence he decided to settle here permanently. He brought his family and a number of people of different occupations from Sargodha and made it his permanent abode. His descendants call themselves as Awan. Consequently, the place came to be known as Golra. The total population of the village is approximately 3,378 all living in 563 dwellings. The most dominant and influential group is that of Meher Ali Shah's family. In the population census of the 1981 the total population of the village was reported as 3,378 of which 1,627 were males and 1,751 were females.⁽²⁾

Sajjada Nashines

Sajjada Nashine usually lives permanently at a shrine and is a spiritual authority. He instructs the disciples in mystical teachings, writes mystical treatises and poetry or propagates religious reforms. The Khanqah of Golra has witnessed the three following Sajjada Nashins who rendered the above mentioned services along with the administration of the Khanqah.

- Syed Meher Ali Shah, known as Pir of Golra Sharif, a saint of Potohar region, was born on Monday 14th April 1859 A.D. Meher Ali Shah died on Tuesday 11th May, 1937 A.D. / 29th Safar 1256 A.H. A large number of the ulema and disciples attended his funeral. He was descendent of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, one of the most famous saints whose reputation grew as a Hambali preacher, in the 25th generation of Hadhrat Muhammad

(Peace Be upon Him), the Holy Prophet of Islam through his grandson Hassan, son of Hadhrat Ali in the 38th generation. Syed Raushan Din Shah and Syed Rasool Shah, the great grandfathers of Meher Ali Shah migrated from Sadora, situated in Ambala District in the Indian Punjab and settled at Golra Sharif. Meher Ali Shah was a disciple of Syed Fazal Din Shah in his ancestral Qadria order. Syed Ghulam Shah was the grandfather of Meher Ali Shah who married his first cousin, daughter of Syed Rasool Shah and in 1815 A.D. Syed Nazr Din Shah, father of Syed Meher Ali Shah, was born from this couple. Ma-Sumah Nawsufah was his mother who belonged to a respectable family of Hassan Abdals.⁽³⁾

- Ghulam Mohyuddin Shah

He is known as Babuji. This title was given to him due to his special attachment with Engine of train. Ghulam Mohyuddin Shah was a replica and mirror of his father Meher Ali Shah. He was born in 1891 and received his education under the observation of his father. Meher Ali Shah himself kept a constant eye on his son and missed no opportunity to instill into him all the principles of virtuous conduct, service to others, strict observance of the Shariah in everything. Renowned teachers also played role in his education. Qari Abdul Rehman was one of those teachers who belonged to the united province in Northern India. Second important teacher was Mawlana Muhammad Ghazi who had settled in Golra sharif. The *art of Tajvid*, recitation the Quran in accordance with established rules of pronunciation and intonation was taught to Babujie by these teachers. Other important courses were *Fasos ul Hukam*, *Masnvi Mawalana Room*, *Fatho Hata Makkia* were taught to Babuji.⁽⁴⁾

- Ghulam Muinuddin Shah

He was born in 1920 and received his early education from Mawlana Muhammad Ghazi. After that, he was admitted to the Jamiah e Islamiya at Bahawalpur where he completed the *Dars e Nizami* under the supervision of Mawaalana Ghulam Muhammad Ghotavi. He also obtained the advanced Mawlavi Fadal degree. Ghulam Muinuddin also wrote poetry and used the title of *Mushtaq* in his poems. His Urdu and Persian

verses are often recited in Sama that is arranged in Golra on daily basis. He passed away at the age of 77 years on 12 March 1997. His funeral paryer at Golra were attended by as many as half a million people who had arrived from all parts of the country.⁽⁵⁾ He left his Wasiat in his last days that after his death his younger brother, Shah Abdul Haq, will look after the affairs of the shrine. Though his sons donot consider it a authentic document. But inspite of this, after his death, his younger brother became the sajada Nashine of Khanqah of Golra.⁽⁶⁾

- Shah Abdul Haq

He was born in 1926 and recived his eraly education with his elder brother Ghulam Muinuddin from the teachers of Mawlana Muhammad Ghazi and Mawaalana Ghulam Muhammad Ghotavi. He completed *Dars e Nizami* from Jamiah e Islamiya at Bahawalpur.⁽⁷⁾ After the death of Ghulam Muinuddin, he became sajada Nashine of Golra. His Sajada Nashinee was challenged by the sons of Ghulam Muinuddin. They also used to write the word of Sajada Nashine with their names. There is no blinking the fact that Shah Abdul Haq follows his beloved father Babujee in faith and deeds. In spite of his old age, he regularly presides the Majalis of Qawali where the devotees meet him for blessings.

Muridan

Murid is he or she who took a byat on the hand of the Pir. More than ten years age, male or female can become the part of muridan. Pirs issue the following instructions at the time of Bayat

1. Ten times Recitation of Darood Sharif after every namaz
2. Ten times recitation of 1st Kalima after every Namaz

All the muridan have a special attachment with their Pirs. No doubt, most of them do not follow the above mentioned instructions of Pirs but they are very committed to the Khanqah and the saints. But with the growth of the society, the attachment of Muridans with khanqah is also going to decrease day by day. They come from the different parts of the country and visit the khanqah regulary on special occasions. Among most of them are Jangli speaking and Pushto. There is a great

hustle and bustle of muridan at different Urs and on Fridays. Few are with beards, few are with only moustches and few are also clean shaves. All kinds of people gather there. Ten percent of Muridan come there for seeking religious guidance, fifty percent with their worldly needs (Dua for jobs, diseases) and forty percent are only routine visitors. Persons from all sections of the society join the khanqah. Politicians, poets, writers, bureacurates, doctors, judges, businessmen, farmers, labourers are murids of this khanqah. Even few muridans serve in different capacities in the administration of shrine without any financial benefits.

Bay'at

“Only such person should take other person in baiat who has the ability to envisage latent realities. He has got the power to foresee the past and the future life of an individual. Apart from possessing universal knowledge he should be capable of resolving the issues and problems of his followers at the moment of crisis both in this life and the life hereafter as well as ensuring the Prophet’s Mercy in both the worlds.”⁽⁸⁾
(Meher Ali Shah)

The concept of Bay'at leads towards loyalty and allegiance of the Murshad. **Hazrat** Babujee took a baiat on the hand of Meher Ali Shah and even his father (Murshid) allowed him to conduct baiat. No doubt Babujee showed reluctance but on the stress of Meher Ali Shah, he used to take baiat and also acted upon the advices of his father and Murshad throughtout his life time. The sons of Babujee took baiat on the hand of Meher Ali Shah but they did not use to take baiat from the people in the lives of Meher Ali Shah and Babujee. After the death of Babujee, they exercised this practice with this statement that Babujee allowed them in dream to conduct baiat. Nasir udeen Nasir also took baiat from the people with the permission of Babujee (His Murshid). Now all the sons of Golra do this exercise frequently. Nasir udeen Nasir was also of the opinion that Bay'at was not necessary for everyone. He stressed that it may be taken or not.⁽⁹⁾

In the shrine of Mahar Ali Shah, At the end of the Qawali session and after Dua, the Sajada Nashine and other his sons and nephews sit in the vicinity of the shrine. The devotees stand in the rows for kissing and shaking the hand with the Pirs.

At that time, a separate line is arranged for those who come for Bay'at. Pirs give the two important instructions to the Muredan i.e. recite the 1st Kalama for ten times after every prayer, second to perform the fives prayers a day on daily basis. The mureedans have to obey the instructions of the Pir. The few special followers of the related Pirs (except Shah Abdul Haq, existing Sajada Nashine) distribute the visiting cards in which the snaps with the names of Pirs is printed. At the back side of the card, the instructions of the Pirs are also quoted (instructions have been mentioned above). But this practice was not exercised in the period of Ghulam Mohyuddin Shah and Ghulam Muinuddin Shah. These special followers are mostly *dunia Daar*⁽¹⁰⁾ and they have even developed a competitive atmosphere among the sons of Sajada Nashins.

Ijtimas (Urs)

Urs is a special festival on which the devotees often undertake mass pilgrimage to saint's shrines. In Indo_Pakistan, the word Urs is used, Mausim in the Maghrib, Mulid in Egypt, etc for sint's fectivals. The term Urs means "Mystic nuptial and signifies the day of death of the siant and his union with God."⁽¹¹⁾ Urs are also arranged at different occasions in Golra. The renowned Ijtimas are,

(These dates have been taken from *Haqiq Miraf* written by Pir Syed Ghulam Qutbul Haq Gilani)

In these Ijtimas, the common thing was the speech of Maulana Shakoore Hazarvi. He announced the opening of the Ijtima with the permission of the Sajada Nashine and after that he elaborated the teachings of the saints with special reference to Quran and Hadith. He started this task from the period of Ghulam Mohyuddin Shah and continued till the period of Shah Abdul Haq. After his death, his son is performing the duty. Three major slogans are raised by the devotees during his speech i.e. *Nara-e-Takbeer*, *Nara-e-Risalat* and *Nara-e-Haidre*. No other slogan is allowed to raise. After the death of Nasir Udeen Nasir, his muredan raise the slogan of *Haq Nasir Ya Nasir* but majority of the devotees like only three slogans which have been used to raise from the period of Ghulam Mohyuddin Shah. Second important common thing of these Ijtimas is the Qawali. The regular qawals do the Qawali but at the occasion of the Urs of Ghous Pak, the Qawals of different khanqahes join

the celebrations and do the Qawali without musical instruments. The devotees are not allowed to dance during the Qawali. One rupee was delivered to the Qawals during the period of Ghulam Mohyuddin Shah and Ghulam Muinuddin Shah. Now the token of five rupee or the note of ten rupee is given to the qawals during the qawali session. At the end of the qawali, Khatam sharif is read by the Immam Masjid of Golra. After that the Sajada Nashine conclude the day with dua. It is not transmitted by huge loudspeaker systems. After all the sessions, Langar is served to the visitors in guest houses. Delegations from the different areas on the buses attend these Ijtimas and this easily draws participants up to million and more. It is remarkable that they come dressed in their finest, move in on bus, bike, tractor, or on foot. They clearly regard these ijtimas as auspicious events transmitting an enormous amount of barakat. The celebrations of every Ijtima consist of three days. At the start of three day, the Maulana Abdul Shakoor announced on the behalf of the Sajada Nashine that all the participants are the guests and at the end of Majilis they are allowed to leave the shrine.

Unlike the other shrines, wrestling contents, sword dances, tent pegging and similar events are not held and even the dervishes donot dance in ecstasy. The visitors are not entertained with vulgar music, dance and snake charming etc but they are amused with the kalam of Sufis in the Mahfal of Qawali and they are also amused with langar.

Samaa

Sama is another name of Qawali. It is of two kinds i.e. one that is sung to the accompniment of musical instruments, second that sung without instruments. It is recognised that the impact of Sama can be good as well as bad, depending on the nature of the content and the manner and style of recitation. Sama is used for spiritual development. No doubt it has remained a controversial subject among the ulama and the sufi school of Islam. But Sama is very popular among the Chishtiyah silsila and it used it for propagation of Islam. Maher Ali Shah also belong to this silsila and his life record shows that in his early life he used to listen Sama with musical instruments but switched over to Sama without instruments as he advanced in age and spiritual experinece. A regular Majilis of Qawali was not being arranged in the period of Meher Ali Shah but later on his son Babujee started it on daily basis for public also. But

Nasir udden Nasir disagreed with the concept of Qawali on daily basis and he presented the concept that Qawali should not be arranged on daily basis. He gave the argu that the sufis listened it occasionally not on daily basis. That's why he did not attend the regular Majilis of Qawali daily. There were and are the regular Qawals of Khanqah.⁽¹²⁾

The poetry in the languages of Punjabi, Persian, Urdu is sung by the Qawals of Golra. Masnvi Mawalana Room, poetry of Mawlana Jaami, Shaikh Saadi, Khawaja Hafiz Shirazi, Ammer Khesru, Baba Bula Shah, Ghulam Fareed, Ali Haider Multani were sung by the qawals. The poetry of Sajada Nashines like Meher Ali Shah, Ghulam Muinuddin and Naseer Udeen Nasir, is also recited in the Mahfal that is arranged on daily basis in the vicinity of the shrine of Meher Ali Shah. Special arrangements are ensured for Mahfal. The word Mahfal is common used for the special sitting of Qawali, Sajada Nashine and the devotees. The Sajada Nashine of the shrine daily attends the Mahfal. A large number of devotees are also there who have come from the different places of Pakistan. On Friday, there is a great hustle and bustle in the Mahfal.⁽¹³⁾ It is a common belief among the devotees that the place for the devotee in the Mahfal is determined by the Saint himself. During the Mahfal, when Sajada Nashine give the rupee to the Qawals, all the devotees present there feel it necessary to follow the Sajada Nashine. All the devotees give the reward to the Qawal in the shape of one rupee or two. It is not allowed to the devotees to float the bundle of rupees on the qawals. It distinguish the Golra shrine from the other shrines. There is a regular qawal of the shrine and it is also important that in Mahfal the regular qawals are only allowed to recite the poetry of saints. The Sajada Nashines often visited the different places and during the visit, the Qawals accompanied them. Mahboob Ali was very near to Babuje and Ghulam Muinuddin shah.⁽¹⁴⁾

A large Majlis hall has been constructed for Saama. It was built in the period of Babjee. The hall is 120&80 ft and the total capacity is for 2000 persons.⁽¹⁵⁾

LangarKhana

The sharing of food has always been remained a essential part of lived Sufi Islam. Langar Khanas are established in the Khanqas for making use of the free communal

distribution of food. On the same pattern, A Langar Khana has been established in Golra also. Free langar is served to the devotees. The food is free for the visitors. A large number of people serve in the langarkhana and most of them are devotees. Even this same langar is served to all the Pirs of Khanqah. Food items and provisions served to incoming visitors are Daal and Meat. The devotees eat the items with this concept that it will be helpful against the diseases. The Muredan contribute in the langar through rupees, commodities etc. Subadar was the incharge of lanagarkhana in the period of Babu jee. Nazir Ahmed, Amir Ahmed, Lala Makhan (industrialist), Ahmed etc served as workers in the langerkhana.

Darvishes

Different kinds of darvishes⁽¹⁶⁾ are available in the Khankah of Golra. Unlike the most of the other shrines, they are not entertained with drugs nor they adopt the shape of Malangs. There are two kinds of Darvishes in Golra i.e. one those who permanently live there and remain busy in different educational activities as well as the other services. They guard saint's tomb, sweep and clean the shrine. Second group of dervishes consist of those people who are not committed to Pirs and they are in research of rewards from the devotees. These dervishes also indulge in different business activities also like the exploitation of the snaps of Pirs and their visiting cards. Due to their cunningness, they are very near to some of Pirs (Young sons of Pirs). No doubt, they receive large donations and alms from the devotees. Even they try to use the Pirs for their worldly affairs also.

On the other hand, the Pirs of Golra generously distribute the gifts, they receive, to the dervishes and support them in emergencies. Few of them who are trust worthy and committed stay in the beautiful buildings of the Pirs.

Political Role

Saint's families are often linked to political rulers and groups. The Sajjada Nashines of the Golra shrine never directly indulges into politics. Meher Ali Shah even refused to meet with the British rulers of his period. In the period of Babuji, this tradition was maintained. He supported the Pakistan Movement

because he thought that the Muslims separate homeland would provide an opportunity for the subjects of newly created state of Pakistan to establish and implement the Islamic Law. After the creation of Pakistan, the situation came to worse day by day and he used to express his concern over the prevailing state of affairs of Pakistan. The rulers of Pakistan frequently visited the shrine but the SajadaNashines only took dua for them and after that it was left to the children of SjadaNashines to entertain them with the launger of the shrine. At the time of the Urs, it is announced that the SajadaNashines always supported Muslim League and the directions are issued to support Muslim League in the elections. Till the period of GhulamMuinuddin Shah, only the announcement was made in the Urs but after him, his sons violated the tradition of elders and used to visit the different constituencies for election campaigns. It is remarkable that at one place they support the candidate of one political party and in other constituency they support the candidate another party. But the existing Sajjada Nashine, Shah Abdul Haq, still follows the tradition of his elders and only announce their support at the time of Urs.

REFERENCES

1. In Islam, the term *Wali*, the Arabic term, is used for a saint. Wali is person who is near to God or a friend of God. In Middle East, the title *Shaikh* is give to the saint, *Pir* in South Asia, *Dede* in Turkey, *Ishan* in Central Asia, *Murabit* in North Africa and *Agurram*, in the language of Berbers. Jurgen Wasim Frembgen, *Journey to God _Sufis and Dervishes in Islam*, p.38
2. Hafeez-ur-Rehman, *Saints and Shrines of Pakistan*, pp. 143-146.
3. Fadil Khan, *Meher-e-Muneer*, p. 39.
4. Pir Syed Ghulam Qutbul Haq Gilani, *Haqiq Miraf*, pp. 13-14.
5. Fadil Khan, *Mihr-e-Munir*, pp. 367-375.
6. Ibid.,
7. Ibid.
8. Qouted in Prof. M. Isa Khan, *The Symbol of Perfection Hazrat Babujee (R.A)*, p.78.
9. Nasir udeen *Nasir, Naam o Nasab*, p. 45.
10. *Dunya Dar* mean a selfish people who do religious exercises only for the worldly gains. *They* are not sincer to anyone. They only try to get money on the name of Pirs. The devotees give them money and in the reward these *Dunia Daars* arrange meetings with the Pirs. After the death of Ghulam Muinuddin Shah, the role of these *Dunia Daars* have developed at a vast level in his family.
11. Jurgen Wasim *Frembgen*, *Journey to God _Sufis and Dervishes in Islam*, p.38.
12. Fadil Khan, *Mihr-e-Munir*, pp. 147-149.
13. Pir Syed Ghulam *Qutbul Haq Gilani, Haqiq Miraf*, pp. 27-28.
14. The information has been gained through the personal observance
15. Prof. M. Isa Khan, *The Symbol of Perfection Hazrat Babujee (R.A)*, p.146.
16. The term *Dervish* is literally derived from dar (Door) and wish (possibly from wihtan "to beg") and refers specifically to mendicants who go from door to door, in a figurative sense the threshold between this world and the next. Jurgen Wasim Frembgen, *Journey to God _Sufis and Dervishes in Islam*, p.14.
17. Prof. M. Isa Khan, *The Symbol of Perfection Hazrat Babujee (R.A)*, p.146