

## Shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam (R.A): Study of Shrine in Cultural Context

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### Abstract:

*Culture is a complex whole, comprises knowledge, belief, ethics, law, arts, traditions, and any other capabilities and behaviour obtained by man as a member of society (Tylor, 1889). A unique culture is observed in various holy places of the world including Mosques, Hindu Temples (Mandir), Churches and in shrines. Muslim saints and shrines, known as dargahs attract diverse range of pilgrims religiously. Some religious beliefs have more resilience and are retained or culturally transmitted by humans (Scupin and DeCorse,*

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2009). *The major purpose of the present research is to explore, which sort of culture is practiced at Shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam or which and how these beliefs and practices culturally transmitted to adjacent areas of shrine. A sample of 100 devotees was randomly interviewed with the help of structured questionnaire from Noor Pur Shahan village of Capital Territory Islamabad. Culture is an important feature of spiritual and religious events. In spirituality, there are number of rituals organised and performed by the follower and they feel comfortable and get inner peace during these ritual. According to the study respondents shrines is a place of peace and comfort along with the place where their prayer get accepted with the reference of Holly soul.*

**Key words:** Spiritual culture, cultural rituals and practices, Bari Imam, Auliya Allah, Mannat, Dargah, spiritual practices

## **Introduction**

Religion is a part of different cultures but varies culture to culture and these cultural differences show up systematically in religious beliefs and practices. Bearing several cultures in mind, four types of religion exists: shamanic, communal, Olympian, and monotheistic (Wallace, 1966). Nearly every religion includes both spirits and impersonal forces; similarly the supernatural beliefs of contemporary North Americans include beings (gods, saints, souls, demons) and force (charms, talismans, crystals, and sacred objects).

The religions of many cultures focus on sacred sites and shrines (Kottak, 2002). Shrines are Socio-religious-cultural places where spiritual persons (Sufi saints) are buried. Each foraging society has sacred places linked with landscape where they live and are often marked or painted with petro glyphs (rock painting) that tells the spiritual meaning of that territory. Similarly, rituals which are practiced at these holy places convey information about the participants and their traditions. They repeated year after year, generation after generation,

rituals translate enduring messages, values, and sentiments into action. People perform them in special (sacred) places and at set time like believers sing and dance at Sufi ceremonies to heal women with mental illnesses at the shrine of Moulay Idriss II (Mulderig, 2011) and infertile women in Madagascar seek fecundity by spilling the blood of a rooster in front of phallic stones (Kottak, 2002).

Different spiritual beings are associated or found at sacred places like Sufi, shamans, priests, God, Goddesses, ancestral beings etc. Through direct contact with the supernatural, people receive shamanistic powers usually by dreams, visions, or hallucinations (Scupin and DeCorse, 2000). Shamans acquire religious powers individually, generally in isolation, when the great spirit, the power, the great mystery, or whatever is exposed to them. They become the recipients of certain special gifts, for example by healing or divination; when they return to their society (Haviland, 2000). An illuminating example of a cosmic religion among foragers is Australian Aborigine notion of dream time (Stanner, 1979) and two main forms of shamanism are found Inuit (Eskimo) culture.

The shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam was originally built on the order of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. The shrine of Bari Imam is built on top of Medieval sites, therefore it is at least 450 years old. Shah Abdul Latif Qadri Qazmi Mashhaddi R.A (Bari Imam) is a well renowned Sufi Saint of the Pothohar region (District census report of Islamabad, 1999). He is a Wali Allah and spiritual guide of Silsila-e-Qadria, a tariqa which claimed spiritual supremacy over all other Sufi orders (Loimeier, 2013), of Hazrat Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani (ra).

He had predicted for coming into the existence of Islamabad city close to his shrine. He was pious, righteous and preacher of Islam. He was true follower of the teachings of Islam. Bari Imam received the sacred inner dimensions of spiritual knowledge from Hayat- al-Mir (Zinda Pir) and He gave him the name of Bari Imam. Bari Imam converted countless

Hindus into Muslims during the teachings of Islam at this place. That's the reason the village name choor-pur replaced into Noor-pur Shahan Bari Imam.

Auliya Allah gives physical and financial sacrifices to get the status of Wilayat and seeks the pleasure of God through worship and riazat/meditate/devotion/abstinence. Auliya Allah used to wear patched clothes on their bodies. They are the symbol of poverty but they are face/visage/countenance of commitment and trust, statue of patience and courage, and are the picture of Faqar and Astghna/careless. Distressed and getting woven people of time come to their threshold (faqir-abode) and return back with rich inner and outer satisfaction. That is why; people listen to them in their lives and follow their path after death.

The shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam contains a unique culture like other sacred areas. Believers of Shah Abdul Latif perform a variety of religious rituals at shrine to make connection with spiritual world especially the buried Saint.

Famous practices of this shrine are

- Lightning rituals (burning of candles, charagh, much and agarbatti)
- Chadars and spreading flowers on grave, locks, threads and jharoo
- Mannat, langar, tabarruk, sweets (Elaichi dana/Makhane)
- Recite story of Hazrat Ali ul Murtaza (A.S), Naat, Tilawat, without shoes visit
- Slogans of Hazrat Ali ul Murtaza (A.S) etc

Believers present different things at shrine, when their desires fulfilled, including animals, money, gold, sweets, Degs, milk, ghee, pitchers (gharolies), dalies, sehras etc for showing their love with buried Sufi and Allah. The rationale of the present research is to explore, which sort of culture is being practiced at Shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam or which and how these beliefs and

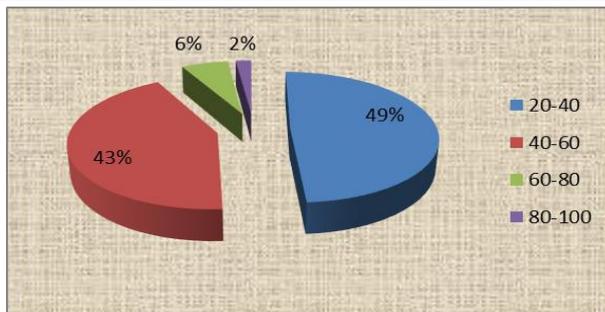
practices culturally transmitted to adjacent areas of shrine. As well as, that reason which is hidden behind the adaptation.

## **Material and Methods**

For the sake of present research in Village Noorpur Shahan of Capital Territory Islamabad, a sample of 100 devotees was used to collect data by using different research methods. SECF, Structured Questionnaire, Formal and Informal Interviews, FGD and Case Study Methods were used by participant observation during field work. Data was entered in SPSS and MSE for analyzation and to get the requited format of results.

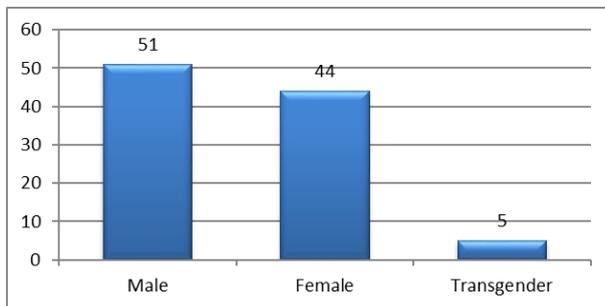
## **Results**

According to the data collected through socio-economic census forms, the age distribution of respondents at Bari Imam is shown as followed where 49 % respondents were in between the age of 20-40, 43% were from the age of 40-60, 6% were in between the age of 60-80, and 2% were in between the age of 80-100. Following graph shows high percentage between first two age slots to perform various rituals because an effort is required to take the pilgrimage of the shrine. It is also important to know that in this age people are mentally and physically fit and energetic, it helps them in understanding meanings and importance of religious rituals, symbols or belief and their performance as well. Lastly, people in this age are mostly concerned to education, business and other daily life matters, so that they come to shrine for mannat to get or fulfil their needs or desires which would pave their future course.



**Fig.1. Age Distribution of Respondents**

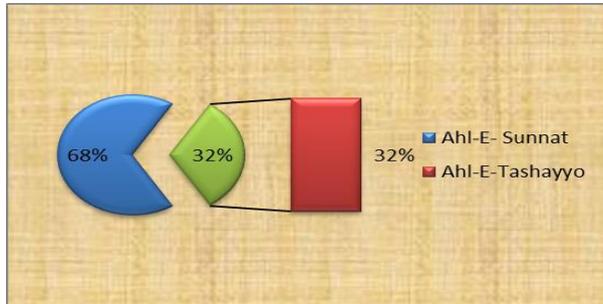
It was found that males were 51%, female percentage were 44 and 5% were transgender in the sample who visited the shrine. The high percentage of men and women shows that there is no as such restriction for women or men to visit shrine and its practices (ritual). This freedom of practice and visit is not just for male and female. It was also observed that transgender(s) also visit shrine to perform different religious rituals (like manajaat (reciting holy songs of Sufi Saints) and mannat) in contrast to visit mosque and other religious places.



**Bar Chart. 1-Gender Distribution of Respondents**

The lesson of sectarianism is not delivered through the channels of shrine including mosque and imam bargah. The sample showed their affiliation towards different sects. Around 68% of sample was belonging to Ahl-e-Sunnat and 32% were to Ahl-e-Tashayyo. As shown in figure, the percentage of Ahl-e-Sunnat is greater than Ahl-e-Tashayyo. The members of Auqaf

in the sample are from Ahl-e-Sunnat and Mujawers are from Ahl-e-Tashayyo. Whereas, most of the respondent from neighbouring community and other regular visitors were also of Ahl-e-Sunnat sect.



**Fig. 3. Sect Distribution of Respondents**

## **Discussion**

All the rituals performed at shrines have link with culture and represents a meaning in non-material world. Some rituals are performed at each Wali's shrine like burning candles and lamp, Fatiha, spreading Chaddars or flowers etc. Cultural traits of Shrine Hazrat Bari Imam are diffused in one way or the other in neighbouring area. They perform many rituals that are associated to in anyway. They don't proceed anything without indulging Hazrat Bari Imam in their work.

Culture teaches us to help others. In far away forests, Awlia Allah used to pray and while praying they burn fire for light, help and guidance of travellers. Lightning rituals including burning candle, charagh and agarbatti are performed at Shrine. The believers perform this ritual as a reminder of the practice performed by Hazrat Bari Imam. And through which believers try to heal and illuminate the spirit. It provides strength to overcome the disease because love is the ultimate source of energy. This practice provoke out of love and gives energy/strength.

It is observed in all religions and cultures of world, the way might be different but execute happiness when people greet each other. They send blessings and use greeting sentences as well. At shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam whoever comes to visit greet Hazrat Bari Imam by Fateha, Durood-o-Salam and Surah Yaseen. Similarly after the fulfilment of desires and by getting faiz, believers present different gifts to Hazrat Bari Imam in accordance to their powers. Chaddars and flowers are also given as gifts.

Red, green and black are the colours that usually used at the shrine Hazrat Bari Imam and are diffused culturally. These three colours represent symbolic importance to believers. Green colour is the colour of peace and love. Similarly red is the colour of protection of Islam and black is of love for Holy Prophet (PBUH). Therefore believers make use of these colours in clothing, ornaments, flags, Dalis, chaddars of shrine and where they want to get effects and satisfaction. Particularly green color has more importance and is used here in locale. Hazrat Bari Imam was generally used this colour in clothing because it is the symbol of love and peace. It also shows in His various pictures. When Hazrat Bari Imam came here, it was an asylum of criminals and famous as choorpur. He gave the message of Islam by their love and Hilaam (mildness/kindness), and made this place a house of love and peace. People also show their love for Hazrat Bari Imam by using this colour.

Culture is also transmitted through observation. People modify their actions and behaviours as a result of observations and their growing awareness that what the culture considers right and what considers wrong (Kottak, 2002). Hence, at shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam the believers and non-believers come and ask mannats, means to ask or beg, because Hazrat Bari Imam is very nearer to Allah and can advocate them in front of Allah to grant them their desires. After completion of their desires they present gifts at shrine according to their powers and conditions.

## Case study # 1

Mr. Khalid is 48 years old man, came at shrine with birds in cage and freed them. He had a car show room. His friends often used to come at his showroom. One day his friend Ashraf came along another man Yasir. Ashraf said to Mr. Khalid, Yasir needed a car on rent for ten days. Mr. Khalid never gave cars on rent to any stranger but he gave because of his friend Ashraf. After ten days, Yasir came to showroom and return the car. Police rate on showroom in three days and arrest Mr. Khalid. Police took car in their custody. He was in shocked and couldn't understand the situation what was going on. When his family investigated to police, it was told that the car was used in several robberies.

Mr. Khalid told everything to police. Police rated at his friend Ashraf's home for getting information about Yasir. Ashraf was not found. At that time Mr. Khalid that car was used in robberies. His showroom was sealed. His family and friends spent two months in his search but failed. He was distressed because the issue was not going to resolve. One day Mr. Khalid cried with pain in prison. He prayed and asked to Allah and Hazrat Bari Imam that he was not criminal, please helped him and bailed him. He said to Hazrat Bari Imam, he will certainly come to him when he got bail. After few days, those criminals were arrested in another robbery. During investigation, they told about this robbery. Hence Mr. Khalid was bailed. Mr. Khalid took pilgrimage of Hazrat Bari Imam. He prayed and said thanks to Bari Baba. And freed birds in front of Hazrat Bari Imam because he looked after and bailed Mr. Khalid.

Word "Urs" is abstract from the word "Urusi". Urusi means marriage, happiness and to united. It is celebrated on the birth and death of Awlia Allah. Mostly Urs is celebrated on the death of Awlia Allah. It is also a moment of happiness,

marriage and unity/meeting because lovers (Awlia Allah) are united by their love (Allah) after a long time of separation.

Urs is held after the death of Hazrat Bari Imam in which believers participate and present their belief in different ways such as by Kawali, Dhamal, Gharolies and Dali which people brings from far off areas etc. Believers stay in camps as long Urs is performed. They prepare Langar by sacrificing animals and distribute among people.

Specialists relevant with food and gemstone workers etc were come in Urs. Circus was held where all these people exhibited their specialties accordingly. Neighboring community was also participated in this huge ritual. They organized Urs, different ritual and participate. And were Provide place to live, food, shops and security to believers.

## **Case study # 2**

Mr. Tanvir belongs to Rawalpindi. He is 34 years old. He works in Peshawar and he is the bread earner of his family. He is a regular visitor of Hazrat Bari Imam. He visits Hazrat Bari Imam at week end when he comes to his home. He was belonged to Ahle- Sunnah but his father believed in Ahle-Tashayyo and participated in majalis. Likewise, he was interested in shrines and often took pilgrimage of shrine.

It's been long; Hazrat Bari Imam's Urs didn't take place. Majlis is held after a day of Bari Baba's Urs. At the last Urs, when the majlis was held a suicidal bomber attacked in which much causality occurred. Mr. Tanvir's father was in that majlis. He told the body of his father was not recovered. After this incidence, Mr. Tanvir and his family visits Hazrat Bari Imam and the place where there father was martyred. He told that his father didn't have a grave so he came here to pray and cry. He feels relaxed that his father is with Bari Baba.

Government profited heavily by this ritual every year. From last some years Urs is not practiced due to security reasons.

“Dali” (gift) is a very huge and important ritual of this shrine. Hazrat Bari Imam met Shah Muhammad Ghaus Lahori (buried in Lahore), when he went to Peshawar. Shah Muhammad Ghaus Lahori was pleased and inspired by the spirituality of Bari Baba. Therefore, He presented a round bucket of flowers and essence of roses to him. In the life of Shah Muhammad Ghaus Lahori, every year he came to Hazrat Bari Imam after 8 days of travelling bare footed, to bestow round bucket of flowers and essence of roses. This round bucket of flowers and essence is called “Dali”. After the death of Shah Muhammad Ghaus Lahori, his children are following and performing this ritual every year at the occasion of Urs. They come in groups at shrine to present Dali. They stay at shrine till the last day of Urs.

This ritual is not only diffused in many other areas but also evolution has occurred in forms. Like the children of Shah Muhammad Ghaus Lahori, believers of different areas also come in groups to present Dali at shrine and practice it with some variations (Ahmed, Chaudhry, Riaz, Batool and Farooq, 2014). Rituals are still performed even when Urs is not held due to security reasons.

## **Conclusion**

Religion is a major part of culture. They are inseparable and parallel work in a society. Culture works for the completion of physical needs of a man whereas, religion satisfies the soul. The religion has some sacred powers to maintain social control and cope with adversity. Similarly, Sufism is a main part of religion Islam. The fifteenth-century religious scholar Abd al-Karim al-Maghili was described as the person who introduced Sufism (Loimeier, 2013). It captivates people towards itself and provides inner peace and pleasure. Some religious beliefs have

more resilience and are retained or culturally transmitted by humans because it's in nature of human that he rapidly adopts those traits or things which are more beneficial rather than others. It is requested to local Authorities please introduce these customs to people in this period of difficulties to release their worries because motivation to follow the plan religiously is very much needed and when done so; it leads towards undeniable success (Sinha, 2012).

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