

Governmental Role at Shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam (r.a) to Facilitate Shrine Practices

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Abstract:

Saints, Shamans, Priest and priestess refer to full-time religious specialists who serve in an official capacity as a custodian of sacred knowledge. They are usually trained through formal educational processes to maintain religious traditions and rituals. Priest and priestesses are usually associated with more complex socio-cultural systems (Scupin and De Corse, 2009). The symbolic and ritual aspects of shamanistic healing practices provide a variety of therapeutic mechanisms for producing psychological and physiological transformation (Winkelman, 2000). The major purpose of the present research is to check the administrative role of governmental at Shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam to facilitate its practices or pilgrims and is the message of Islam, Faqar and buried saint conveying through this

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institution? A sample of 100 devotees was randomly interviewed with the help of structured questionnaire from Noor Pur Shahan village of Capital Territory Islamabad. Government should have to play a constructive role and eradicate the present dispute. Furthermore in pursuance of shrine rituals and issues related to shrine, proceed steps with the consultation of Sajjada Nasheen families for betterment and optimization.

Key words: Bari Imam, Spiritual Practices, Religion and Spiritualism, Government role and Shrines, Auliya Allah

Introduction

Religion is not empirical and no rational in its search for truth. It is not based on conclusions from scientific experience but is “pier” to experience. Religious truth is not “inductive”, providing evidence for metaphysical explanations. It symbolically and abstractly evokes the ultimate concerns of humans. Through ritual activities, these symbolic and abstract non empirical truths are given meaning (Geertz, 1960). Sufism is a main part of religion Islam (Batool et al., 2014). The fifteenth-century religious scholar Abd al-Karim al-Maghili was described as the person who introduced Sufism (Loimeier, 2013).

An especially close look is given to the Sufi tradition within Islam, for its mystical teachers have often clearly demonstrated in their works the spiritual significance of beauty and served as the source of inspiration (Nasr, 1987). They follow a special line (*Tariqa*) and appeal to the intuitive side of human nature and exhort people to lead a contemplative life, through which divine love enters into the soul of the devotee. This intuitive knowledge is called *maarifat* or real knowledge (Rahman, 1970). Therefore people listen to them and follow their path after death. As well as practice all those rituals which they practiced in their lives (Batool et al., 2014).

Hazrat Syed Abdul Latif (Bari Imam) is a well renowned Sufi Saint of the Potohar region. He was reportedly born in 1026 Hijri (1617) and died at the age of 90. He was laid to rest about 332 years ago. He was pious, righteous and true follower and preacher of Islam. He worshipped of Allah (God) in number of places in Margalla Hills and Kashmir. 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. He got education of Hades, *Fiqah*, *Muntaq*, and Mathematics and get specialization in *Ilm-ul-Kalam*, *Ilm-ul-Adab*, *Ilm-e-Maani*, *Ilm-e-Tib* and *Ilm-e-Rohani*. For religious and spiritual specialty, he traveled towards Kashmir, Badakhshan, Mashhad Moqaddas, Najaf Ashraf, Karbala and Bokhara.

Hazrat Bari Imam was buried down at village Noorpur Shahan. It is situated on Plateau of Margalla Mountains just behind the Prime Minister House Islamabad and about 4km northeast of the Diplomatic Enclave. The shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam was originally built on the order of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (District census report of Islamabad, 1999). It is under control of Auqaf, institution of Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs, since 1976. The management of shrine falls under this institution. 40 employees work at this shrine, 17 are regular and rest is hire on daily wages by civil defense.

In all most all types or categories of people visit this shrine such as

- Upper, lower and middle classes
- Old, young and children
- Man, women and transgender
- Believers and non-believers
- *Ahle Sunnat*, *Ahle Tashayyo*, *Ahle Wahabi* etc.
- Sick, true believers, strangers etc.

And whole day, pilgrims perform different rituals and practices including

- 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.

Similarly believers have diverse believes and they ask differently at shrine.

- Some asks directly to Sufi
- Some makes *waseela* to Sufi
- Some gives *wasta* of Sufi to Allah
- Some asks to Allah directly

Urs of Shah Abdul Latif Qadri Qazmi was not held due to some security reasons Since 6 or 7 years. However the believers come in the month of *Urs* every year by foot or bare foot in form of groups and bring *Dalies*, *Gharolies*, flags, *chadars*, *sehras* etc. and perform various rituals and *dhamal* on beat of *dhool*. The major purpose of the present research is to check the administrative role of governmental at Shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam to facilitate its practices or pilgrims and is the message of Islam, *Faqar* and buried saint conveying through this institution?

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

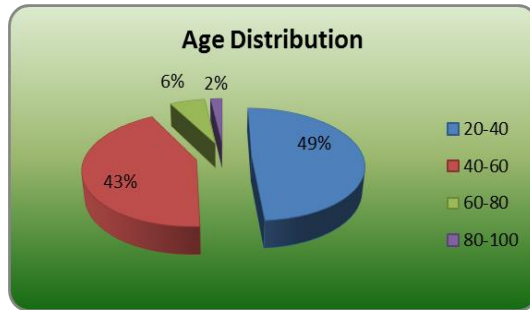


Fig.1. Age Distribution of Respondents

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 fulfill their needs or desires which would pave their future course.

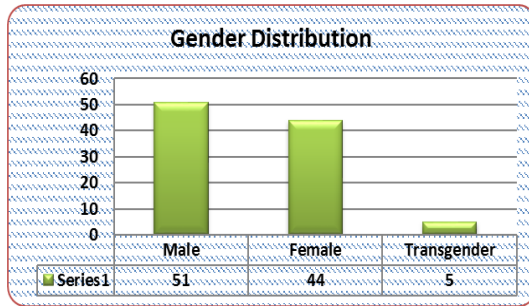


Fig.2. Gender Distribution of Respondents

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.

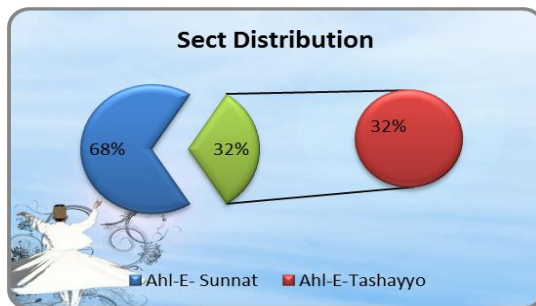


Fig.3. Sect Distribution of Respondents

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 neighboring community and other regular visitors were also of *Ahl-e-Sunnat* sect.

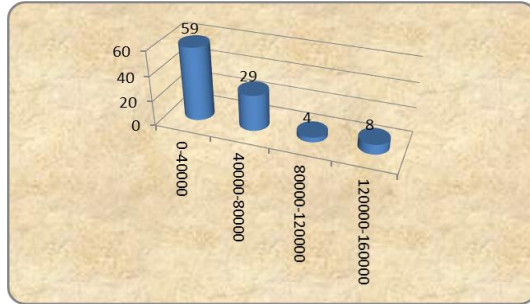


Fig.4. Income Distribution of Respondents

Income of the same sample was compared by making four different slots of income in PKR where 59% earned between 0-40000 monthly income(s), around 29% earned between 40000-80000, 4% earned 80000-120000 and the incomes of remaining 8% were between 120000-160000. Most of the respondents were found financially poor and less educated. Most of them were shop keepers and drivers. Whereas, some worked at governmental organizations like Auqaf but due to less education they did not earn more like educated in the society.

Discussion

Hazrat Bari Imam had four disciples, who had served him. Their names had Inayat Shah, Dabung Shah, Shah Hussain and Mitha Shah. They had managed the shrine affairs after the death of the Hazrat Bari Imam. With the passage, the management of shrine was further transferred to the next generations of time after the demise of four disciples.

Field Martial General Muhammad Ayub Khan took over the control of Government of Pakistan in 1958 and introduced Auqaf Act. The control and management of shrine Hazrat Bari Imam was taken into custody by the government of Punjab in

July 1960 from the *Sajjada Nasheen* families as like other shrines of the country under this Act. Islamabad, the capital city was in jurisdiction of Punjab province, therefore the shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam was managed by Punjab Auqaf till the introduction of Auqaf (Federal Control) 1976, when Ministry of Religious Affairs started management of the affairs of Bari Imam Shrine.

Again a Military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq toppled the elected Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's government and proclaimed martial law in the country. This was the U turn in the history of Pakistan and law and order situation what we have been facing since 1977 is the outcome of that dictatorship.

President General Zia ul Haq had constituted a presidential Advisory Committee for the Development and Construction of the shrine Hazrat Bari Imam in 1978. The devotees of Hazrat Bari Imam had realized that the facilities for them would have been upgraded and increased in view of the needs of time. But the motives of the committee members revealed, when they had started bulldozing historical Mosque, Imam Bargah, and primitive Water source for visitors and place of worship of Hazrat Bari Imam adjacent to the shrine.

Bulldozing and disgrace committed to historical heritage and graves caused provocation among the devotees of Bari Imam and they protested against the committee, but neither media nor courts helped them in martial regime. On the other hand, civil bureaucracy fully supported and all protest proved in vain. Due to the severe resistance from the locals, the committee members used force against them. Resultantly a so called peer Raja Akram who was sponsored and promoted by the committee members was shot dead in a Bazaar in a day light along with his guard, when he was returning from a *Namaz-e-Janaza*. Subsequently this incident had lead killing of another five persons.

Shrine committee promoted a so called peer Raja Akram of Jhelum, who had grabbed land measuring more than 150 Kanals of CDA at Bari Imam Bus stand during Martial law regime and there is no space available for the visitors parking. Now this land is known as Bari Imam House to deceit the public and bureaucracy for their vested interest. This Bari Imam House is now under the use of his nephew and his brothers.

Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs took control of Shrine Hazrat Bari Imam in 1976 and introduced Auqaf Institution. The management of Shrine falls under this governmental institution known as 'Auqaf'. Under this situation, 40 workers work at this shrine. Out of 40, 17 employees are regular and rest is hire on daily wages by civil defense.

Auqaf Organizational Structure

1. Deputy Director	
2. Director Manager	
3. Deputy Commissioner	
4. Chief Commissioner	
5. Chairman Auqaf	
6. 40 Employees	
7. 17 Regular	7. 23 Civil defense

Inside the shrine there is an office of manager Auqaf where he sites. All the work associated with management is his responsibility, like to make time table, duties of employees and area of work, recruitment, and to check the role of employees etc.

Auqaf employees work at their appointed places .i.e. as guard guarding, cleaning, distribution of *Langar*, and the duties with in shrine as *khadim*, etc. Other than this Auqaf gives contracts of shoes, bathrooms, animals to outside contractors.

If we take a quick look in history poor's, beggar and world's distressed people found asylum at the door of Awlia Allah and feed their hunger by *Langar*. Today this concept has been changed. Shoes and bathroom tax is charging. Animals that should be put in *Langar* are being sold.

Case study # 1

Ms. Bano belongs to Peshawer. She was 68 years old. She came to Islamabad for treatment of her parents. Ms. Bano belonged to a very poor family. In the starting, her parents rented a house. Her father was a laborer. They spent their lives on *Langar* of Bari Imam. The income was spent on the treatment of her mother. Ms. Bano's mother suffered from hepatitis. After extensive treatment, she didn't recover, and passed away. Her father passed away after two years. She had no siblings and due to poverty she didn't get married, relatives also abandon. She moved out of the rented house after death of her parents.

Ms. Bano came to Bari Baba when she didn't see any hope. She cried a lot and believed Bari Baba knew everything because she lived on *Langar*. Now she didn't has any roof over her head. At night she was asked to leave, at that time she started crying loudly with pain. Management asked what is the problem and why are you not going home. Ms. Bano told the whole story that she had no one and was orphan. She regularly visited the shrine; many people knew and believed her. Then they gave her place where she could rest. Ms. Bano lives at shrine since many years. She cleans the shrine. People give her money and lives on *Langar*. Ms. Bano wears black dress. When asked, she told she has faced troubles throughout and never been happy. And she liked black color.

Case study # 2

Baba Fayaz was 78 years old. He is living at shrine in a small room. He is disabled by one arm. In the childhood of Baba Fayaz, when he was school boy, a jungle was situated between

his home and school. An old man sat in jungle. Baba Fayaz and his friends met him every day. Sometimes they sat near old man. He never talked to anyone. He loved Baba Fayaz and sometimes talked to him. With the passage of time, Baba Fayaz fell in love with him. He was the man who told Baba Fayaz about Hazrat Bari Imam.

One day Baba Fayaz went to an old man. He hugged Baba Fayaz and cried with grief. Baba Fayaz tried to ask the reason but failed. After some days of this incidence an old man died. Baba Fayaz cried and became distressed on the death of an old man. Later than Baba Fayaz became paralyzed by one arm in an accident and occur some strange incidence in his life. Baba Fayaz left everything and came to Hazrat Bari Imam due to these incidences.

Baba fayaz's relatives come at shrine to meet him but he didn't go to his home again. He told that he don't have permission to go outside of shrine. He is happy to live here by providing his services to Bari Baba. Baba Fayaz has a key of Shrine. Every day, he opens and closes the shrine door. In the evening, he burns the holy *charagh*. He cleans and changes the *chadars* of grave at late night. He used to be silent and never talked to anyone. He took his meal one time per day.

System of shrines is usually under the ministry of religious affairs but three shrines Miyanthub, Sakhi Shah Mehmood Badshah and Hazrat Bari Imam are under interior minister. Auqaf claims that *Langar* of shrine is made and distributed by them whereas some key informants and common people told; all the *Langar* which is distributed at shrine is made by believers (outsiders) of Hazrat Bari Imam. The tax box is opened every week. There is no any outcome observed from this money and other such taxes. The shrine is under construction from several years and in these all years, there is just the foundation standing whereas in map, there is guestroom, *Langar khana*, *much* etc. are included.

For the right of shrine, a committee is made to inspect Auqaf. In which 6-7 persons are the decision makers and Auqaf is just more about as name here. Due to these few people there are disputes and construction of shrine is also slow. The committee and Auqaf put different disputes. They make security as an excuse and don't hold religious and shrine rituals which were held for many years like *Urs*, *Qawwali*, *Mehfil-e-Naat*, *Mehfil-e-Sama*, *dhamal* etc.

Present Conflict over Design of Respective Shrine

This committee mafia with the connivance of bureaucracy and political networking webbed during martial law regime remained members in committees later on except PPP government, when they were forced on defensive or kept excluded or ineffective due to public pressure. After the arrival of another dictator General Musharraf came into power by overthrowing an elected government of Mian Nawaz Sharif, the (Mazarat Qabza Mafia) committee members succeeded to reconstitute the committee and got approved a design for overall complex of the shrine in 2005. Senate chairman Muhammad Sommro approved it as chairman of the committee.

When design was studied and fate of the grave of Hazrat Bari Imam came to notice, this matter was taken up with president House through Leader of the house Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari in Senate. It was contended that the grave of Hazrat Bari Imam has a historical background, which needs to be preserved in its original form with certain possible alteration in design and not be built in box form by filling in with soil for the purpose of raising its level up to 7 feet, where an artificial grave for visitors would be placed. President secretariat responded positively and directed the Chairman CDA to consult with the applicants (Locals) for addressing their concerns.

In this connection a meeting was held in office of Leader of the House in Senate and consultants of the company visited the shrine along with the applicants after meeting. The alteration in the design was discussed on spot with the consultants, who agreed and assured changes. Unfortunately, the changes in design were not incorporated due to not convening of the meeting of committee. Due to change of the Government again this *Mazarat Qabza Mafia* (Private member of the committee) succeeded to hold decisive position in it and started implementation of the design, for which *Sajjada Nasheen* families had concerns. It was decided in a meeting of present committee that grave of Hazrat Bari Imam would be raised up to approximately 7 feet for the purpose of placing an artificial grave according to design by October 15, 2013. In view of this decision, no option left for *Sajjada Nasheen* families is to except knock the door of court of law and get stay order to halt the work till their demand is considered.

A stay order was obtained from the lower court of civil judge 1st. Class on October 05, 2013, which was later, vacated on January 06, 2014 by the said court. (Case file was retained by judge till next day and order was confidentially handed over to government), so that the petitioner could not appeal for setting aside the order of lower court in time. The committee started construction work on the grave of Bari Imam on January 07, 2014 at night (7PM). This activity was come to the notice of locals and *Sajjada Nasheen* families, who started protest against the construction work aiming to destroy historical grave of Hazrat Bari Imam. They also gave sit in about 22 hours in front of shrine gate. In the meantime the local administration and CDA official was informed about the writ petition No. 1235/ 2013 filed before the Islamabad High court, challenging the formation of shrine committee as unlawful, as there is no such provision in Auqaf (Federal Control) Act 1976. Resultantly the work was stopped. An

attempt was made late night to complete the work, but they could not continue due to severe protest of the devotees.

Next day the petitioner filed an appeal and got stay order from the court of Additional session Judge Madam Rukhshanda Shaheen Islamabad west. Present disputes are due to in-sufficient policies, poor management, and personal interests (Ahmed et al., 2014). According to community and believers, Auqaf is considered to be incapable. At this time, the role of Auqaf is zero percent at shrine. Shrine is a religious institution so that it is required; Auqaf will follow the path of buried Sufi Hazrat Bari Imam and spread the message of Islam through this religious institution.

All most all the Auqaf employees are under matric or primary and most of them are non-believer of shrine. They don't have basic teachings and knowledge of Islam and as well as this religious place. They don't know about shrine rituals, their meanings, performance, and about rituals effect on believers. These employees just come here to perform their duties for earning. In this situation, the message of Islam and *Faqar* is not conveying by this institution rather than believes of pilgrims are mortifying.

Conclusion

Auqaf employees are under matric or primary and most of them are non-believers of shrine. They don't have basic teachings and knowledge of Islam and this religious place. Moreover they don't be acquainted with shrine rituals, their meanings, performance, and about rituals effect on believers. Auqaf is considered to be incapable. At this time, the role of Auqaf is zero percent at shrine. The committee and Auqaf put different disputes. Under this situation the message of Islam and *Faqar* is not conveying by this institution whereas believes of pilgrims are mortifying.

The shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam and Sakhi Shah Mehmood Badshah (Abpara) are under control of Auqaf institution. Government is highly profited by these two shrines as compare to other shrines of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. In contrast, the shrine of Hazrat Baba Laal Shah Qalander (Sorasi) and Pir Mehar Ali Shah (Golra Sharif) are under control of *Sajjada Nasheen* families but this type of disputes and problem are never heard and seen there. *Sajjada Nasheen* families are using shrine's money to facilitate shrine practices and devotees as well as for mankind like in *langar*, *Urs*, *Madrassas*, free medical camps for poor's etc. The best example for government is Voice of Laal Trust and Voice of Laal Free Medical center. More over *Sajjada Nasheen* families themselves pay important shrine rituals.

Rituals were confined societies where strong tensions are aroused by conflict among different structural principles that are not controlled in distinct secular institution (Gluckman, 1963). Shrine is a religious institution so that it is required; Auqaf will follow the path of buried Sufi Saint Hazrat Bari Imam and spread the message of Islam through this religious institution.

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