

**Faith-based Practices Associated With Shrines and Their Use By  
Women For Solution of Their Socio-medical Problems  
(A Case Study of Mazar Mohra Sharif, Murree)**



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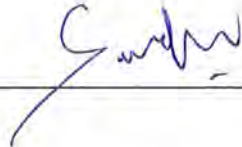
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## **Formal Declaration**

I hereby declare that this work has been produced by me without any external help except mention herein.

All third-party sources and ideas taken have been mentioned. This work has not been published or submitted to any other examination board in identical or a similar shape.

I am solely responsible for the contents of this thesis.

Islamabad, 2018

**Qantara Zain Abbasi**

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## **Abstract**

This study explores the socio-medical problems of the women and the spiritual practices that they perform for solution of these problems. The study explains the nature of their problems and the way the practices at the shrine serve as a mode of healing for them. Their social problems which are a contributing cause or primary cause of their medical problems have been explored. In this study Anthropological qualitative method was used for collection of the data. The qualitative methods such as purposive sampling, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and case study methods were frequently employed. The research was done in the Shrine Mohra Sharif in Murree which is a center of spiritual healing. The problems faced by women were explored. The problems such as serious medical condition like cancer, heart problems, and arthritis are common among the women who visit the shrine. The social issues such as the lower statuses of women and the problems caused by this are contributing causes of the problems. The shrines provide the women with a opportunity to get relief through spirituality.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Diversity is prevalent in Pakistan. One can find different cultural patterns from the south to the north. These different cultural patterns call for the different approaches towards the same problems. For example, a woman living in the interior Sindh will have to observe different norms from a woman living in the hills of Gilgit-Baltistan. But yet this diversity has an element of unity to some extent, so that, some common features can be found, not always, but in the most instances.

One of these elements is the religion and mysticism. Reasons for the prevalence of mysticism for spiritual and physical relief are many. But at the moment it is important to acknowledge the popularity of mysticism. Mysticism was a religious trend formed somewhat separately from the orthodox code of religion by interpretation of some religious injunctions. It pointed out a path, and by walking upon that path a person could become elevated.

Since then, many persons have been believed to be mystics having the power to get the prayers answered and solve the problems of the people. The details of mysticism are out of the scope of the present work but it must be known that since then mysticism has found place in almost whole of the world, and the Pakistani society is not an exception.

It is said that spread of Islam in the subcontinent owes itself to the toil of these mystics or saints. Therefore, they are considered not only the great men having close relationship with the God but also the guardians of Islam. One point that must be cleared here is that, societies always have a bend towards adjusting the teaching or practices analogously to the bent of their need. So, whenever this happens a peculiar cultural pattern emerges. For example, if two identical saints are sent to the two different areas, however they may teach the same, but within their life or after their demise, the socio-economic brush of the society will color their teachings with the color put upon it by the indigenous people. It is not being said that saints always propagate the same message.

Therefore, the Pakistani society has produced a culture of its own related with the saints and their shrines. It is not a pure one as it has elements of both Islamic mysticism and the regional cultural traditions. But our scope of the study is limited. What is more important here is the cultural status of these saints at present and the relationship of the people with them.

Shrines of the saints are revered and they are used for the solutions of the problems. Although both genders are involved in these practices but position of the women is of a special character. These women use these values of mysticism for the solution of their socio-medical problems. These problems are broad in range. They include health problems, family issues, economic matters etc. Women visit the Shrines and undergo a set of practices to get them solved. Moreover, they build a spiritual connection with the Shrine and the saint. Causal relation is uncertain between solution of the problem and these cultural norms.

What is more astonishing is the prevalence of these practices: the question arises that how they get satisfaction from it and how they psychologically stay assured for the help. Reports have been there that social and medical problems are solved by going to Shrines. Therefore, it is attractive to explore the cultural pattern that builds these perceptions. The origin of these perceptions ends up in psychological satisfaction. It also brings changes in physical orientation, therefore, leads to solution of the problems. As it has been said earlier that causal relation is uncertain, the factors that bring up these changes are important.

The cultural grooming of the women is important in this respect. Although these practices are considered superstitious, but it has been observed that the perceptions play an important role in social status of these practices. And this problem has not only been observed in the so called backward societies but also they continue their existence in advanced areas of Pakistan. In many urban areas these practices are performed side by side with modern measures. It shows the mental orientation as well as cultural importance of these practices.

Another important aspect here is the historicism's point of view that societies develop the mechanisms for the explanation and smooth running of the system. These practices related with the Shrines reflect the nature of the society and its trends. These different practices form an essential part of the Pakistani society. Reason for their importance cannot be hypothesized here. They should be explored through anthropological methods.

These practices performed by the women are like a cog in the great machine: it runs by assemblage of different parts. The cultural mechanisms behind the functioning of these cogs call for the research. It will lead to test the validity of some of the important hypothesis in functionalist paradigm.

## 1.2 Definition of the Key Terms:

*Durkheim* defined religion as: "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 practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."

The faith is strong belief in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual conviction rather than proof. Therefore, the practices based over faith may include actual or superficial solution of the problems, or psychological satisfaction at least, but causal relationship is not necessary. In mystical religious practices shrines form an integral part.

*Standard Oxford dictionary* defines a shrine as: "a place regarded as holy because of its associations with a divinity or a sacred person or relic, marked by a building or other construction."

*Saint* can be defined as: "a person acknowledged as holy or virtuous and regarded as a mediator between god and human spiritually"

*Merriam-Webster* defines socio-medical as: "socio-medical is something relating to the interrelations of medicine and social welfare". Broadly speaking, the term socio-medical problems relates to the medical problems and their relationship with the social environment. That how a disease is perceived socially, how it is constructed socially, and solved are the primary concern of socio-medical inquiry.

Shrines of Sufi saints are an important part of the Pakistani culture. They can be found in almost every city. They not only manifest the religious values of the people but also shape them continuously by acting as symbols. Their value is also functional. They have become part of the society in such a way that they serve as religious institution with system of their own. Their



importance can be observed by visiting a shrine; and such a visit would also reveal their particular importance for women.

Lives of women in Pakistan are abound by problems; physical, social and psychological. In such a society where ways of relief are less shrines perform various functions for them. They visit shrines for various reasons from solution of their family problems to spiritual relief. Therefore, importance of shrine cannot be exaggerated in realm of women.

Shrines lie within an Islamic spiritual tradition called Sufism and mysticism.

### **1.3 Sufism and Its History:**

There are various definitions and theories about Sufism. Some say that this word has been derived from '*safa*' which means purity. If this is true then meaning of them word *Sufi* becomes a person who is purified from all worldly impurities. Some say that the word *Sufi* has been derived from '*saff*' which means rank. Therefore, according to this theory the meaning of the word refers to those persons who are at first rank of spirituality due to their proximity with God. Another theory say that this word is derived from the word *suffah* which was a place in the mosque of the Prophet in Medina. There resided some companions of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who were devoted to religion. These companions were called *ashab e suffah*. Abu Nasr Al Siraj tells us that the word *Sufi* has been derived from the word *Soof* which means wool. So, in his opinion *Sufis* were the ones who wore wool. Wool has a special status in Islamic tradition. Hassan Basri tells says that he who wears wool out of humility towards God increases the illumination of his insight and his heart, but he who wears it out of pride and arrogance will be thrust down into hell with devils (Adams, 1976)

However, every person wearing wool is not a *Sufi*. *Sufi* is someone who believes that it is possible to have direct experience of god and who is a wayfarer<sup>1</sup>. He abandons this world in favor of the world hereafter and seeks communion with god out of love.

The concept of Sufism is not without disputes. From early times Sufism has been regarded by more orthodox scholars as a deviation from original Islam. One historical incident which Sufis boast off was the hanging of Mansour Hallaj by orthodox Islamic regime due to his beliefs which were a deviation from mainstream Islam. A shia scholar of Pakistan Muhammad Hussain in his book *Al Burhanfil Butlan e Tasawuf wal Irfan* rejects the idea that Sufism has any relevance to

Islamic tradition. Similarly, many other scholars in Pakistan have said that Sufism is not something that was endorsed by Islamic tradition and it is an innovation. However, such scholars have failed to appeal the masses who have been practicing Sufism and those who have been visiting Sufi shrines.

Against such criticisms, Sufism has been defended by many scholars. AL Ghazali who was an orthodox scholar in his early years later converted to Sufism. He said that Sufis are traversers of the way of god, their character is highest character, their path is straightest path and their moral attributes are correct and refined. Abd al Rehman Ibn Khaldun has defended Sufism by saying that Sufism is based on the religious law of Islam and is not a deviation. Its adherents were early Muslims who were around the prophet and their practices were considered right by the early Muslims. (Adams, 1976) A *Sufi* is one who applies to divine worship and keep away from impure worldly practices. Some also trace Sufism back to the practices of Ali cousin of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). They establish its purity on the basis of this association. Some other trace its origin back into practices of Abu Bakr who was companion of the prophet while other say that it was originally started by Hassan Basri. Ahmad S. Akbar says that:

*"Sufism is universalist and humanist Islam striving for spiritual purity. Its foundations are love and peace, sulh i qul, peace with all. The prophet's life provides inspiration in the sufis- his clothes of wool, suf, give them their name. The gentleness, contemplative solitude, and universal tolerance of the prophet are reflected in sufi's behavior, Ali too is a source of Sufi inspiration. The sufic spiritual genealogy is thus impeccable. Sufism is endearing- the enduring- side of Islam."* (Ahmad, 1987, p. 91)

Sheikh Shahab Al Din has defended the concept of sufi by quoting an ayat of quran which say that the people will be divided into three categories on the day of judgment: 1) *Muqariboon* 2) Companions of the right hand, 3) Companions of the left hand. He says that the word *muqaribon* is closer to the meaning of word Sufi. These scholars have defended Sufism in face of a continuing criticism from the orthodox scholars.

Having defined the turn, now it is important to give an brief historical account of the development of the Sufism particularly in the Indian Subcontinent. Some like Al Hujvari in his book *Kashf ul mahjoob* say that Sufism was based in practices of the companions of the prophet (PBHU). He particularly mentions Abu bakr, the first caliph of Islam for his simple practices and pious demeanor. This linkage has formed itself into a shape of sect of Sufis. They renounce this

world for the world hereafter. They believe that material things impure the soul. Some others say that the perfect example of Sufism was Ali the cousin of prophet. The practice of Awais Qarani is also important in this regard and he is regarded as an early sufi by some scholars.(Adams, 1976)

After the death of prophet (PBUH) activities of Muslims shifted to other capitals gradually. Kuffah became an important center due to Ali's residence there. Abu Hashim who is regarded by many as the first Sufi lived here. Similarly, Hassan Basri of Basra is regarded by many as the first Sufi. He opposed the wars between Muslims and pleaded for patience. Other Sufis were also present during the period of Hassan Basri who had spiritual dimension along with knowledge of religious law and Hadis. Rabiah Basri was a female saint. She is known as half qalander. Some other prominent Sufis were Abdullah Al Harith. He refused Mutazilah and Shitte beliefs. After Kuffah and Basra Sufism moved to Khurasan and Iran. Some prominent sufis of this region were Ibrahim ibn Adham and Abu al Shaiq, Abu Hamid Ahmad, Hatim Al Asam and Abu Yazid of Bastam.

Particularly important was Bayazid Bistami. He has attracted both fame and criticism. Sufis praise him for his spiritual status while others critics him for his belief which could not be justified keeping in view the mainstream Islamic tradition. Kirman in Fars region was also an important Sufi center. It is important to note that the Sufis were subjected to severe punishment by orthodox religious leaders. Example of Mansour has already been given. He was the one who wandered from Arabia to India in search of truth. He visited Buddhists and Hindus in India. He was finally executed after long imprisonment.

Islam came to subcontinent when Muhammad Bin Qasim defeated Raja Dahir. He went as far as Multan and Punjab. After it started the Muslim settlement in Sindh. Local people converted to Islam. They converted because of the gains attached with such conversion. Abbasid Caliph imported people and knowledge from India. Sufis came to India after this conquest. First Sufis were Sheikh Safiuddin from Shiraz in Iran, Abu fadl Khattali moved to Punjab on orders of his mentor, Abu i Hassan Ali bin Uthman al Hujwari and Shaykh Hussain Zanjani who settled in Lahore.

These were some prominent figures. The total number of Sufis who came here and those who became Sufi here cannot be counted. And the practice of becoming Sufi has not stopped yet. There are some saints who are currently living and certainly will be deified once they die. Whatever the view are of the orthodox scholars about them, they integral part of the Pakistani society. Their shrines are a center of reverence and love.

Sufism is also not without its divisions. There are different sects or Silsilas (to be moderate) with Sufism. They differ on some doctrines. Some differ on tracing their linkages back to the early Islamic period, while others differ on mystical doctrines. For example, Mansour Hallaj was executed for Uttering 'Ana Al Haq" which meant i am the ultimate truth. Islamic jurist regard only God eligible of this status. Therefore, he was executed. He was uttering this out of a belief which is called *Wahdat ul Wajood* which means everything in essence is one; and god becomes unified with earthly beings according to this belief. Ahmad Sarhindi objected to this view and presented the view that there is no unity essence but an unity of things which all say that they belong to a superior being but themselves are apart from that being. These two beliefs provided for different silsila of Sufi orders.

Such belief affects the culture and teachings of a shrine. Those adhering to Ahmad Sarhindi's thought set a more rigid religious code to follow that those belonging to *WhadatUlWajood*. However, one other thing also needs consideration here, that is, in a society every doctrine is bound to act on culture and get affected by the culture. It is a two way process. In Pakistan, owing to this fact, one finds it hard to notice differences among sufi shrines as all revolve around spiritual status of a Sufi.

#### **1.4 Shrines:**

Sufis shrines are an important part of the Pakistani culture. They are present in all areas of Pakistan. Some of the oldest shrines are in Sindh and Punjab. The Potwar area and Murree region is abound with shrines. This is perhaps due to the importance attached here to Sufis and their practices.

The shrine where this research has been conducted is also a very important shrine both politically and culturally for the people of Murree area. It is a old shrine that attracts attention and visits of many men and women from all country. This importance attached to shrines is due to two



reasons: 1) these shrines are associated with Sufis who are considered holy and close to god and able to solve their problems; 2) Due to the functions these shrines perform in society. This shrine which is subject of this study enjoys both of these attributes and it does so in an intense form.

These shrines are institutions in their self. They perform many functions in the society from religious guidance to spiritual healing and physical healing. The important point here is that the mainstream medical culture does not recognize such practices as potential solutions. But from an anthropological perspective health is itself culturally defined. Its definitions vary from culture to culture.

### **1.5 Socio-medical Problems:**

Increasingly, the cultural aspects of health are coming into attention. Anthropologists along with medical practitioners are focusing on cultural forms and health cultures of subcultures. Following excerpt throws some light on these phenomena

"Socio-medical indicators for the assessment of physical, psychological and social conditions have become increasingly popular as adjuncts to traditional clinical and epidemiological measures".

The socio-medical model of health looks at subjective belief about the health and well beings. It is based on the assumption that such belief within a particular health culture affects overall health indicators. The traditional measures of health like morbidity and mortality are now seen in cultural context.

This approach started as a result of assumption that science is itself a culture. In a famous debate between Michel Foucault and Noam Chomsky, Foucault maintains that the scientific methodology has evolved gradually and resulted in a culture which is scientific culture. As methodologies and cultures evolve approaches change. After such point of view forwarded by post-modernism, scholars attempted to focus on the fact that the cultures without western medical thought also have mechanisms for solution of their medical problems. Health and illness were now recognized as culturally defined values.

However, there is also a felt need that a harmony be found between standardized health parameters and cultural indicators. In this study I have focused on cultural aspect of the physical,

psychological and social problems faced by the women. But along with that i have tried to find a ground between cultural factors and mainstream medical indicators.

### **1.6 Statement of the Problem:**

Women living around the shrine Mohra Sharif near Murree go to the shrine and pray for the solution of their socio-medical problems. These problems are of a wide range. The problem is that how these women perceive the mysticism and particularly, the saint. Moreover, how they get the satisfaction that their problems have been solved. Exploration of their perceptions is necessary.

These perception lead to the faith based practices. These practices are believed to solve and heal. There is difference in Sufi orders and therefore, in their worldview. The worldview then makes the perception. But these also prevails a similarity. These perceptions have historical, causal and cultural dimensions in them.

Historical include the arrival of the saint and development of his relationship with the community. Moreover, the causes of the development of this spiritual trend of observance of special practices among the women. Causal include the nature of the problems; that how problems arise and how women arrive at the Shrine, and thereby get their solutions. Moreover, what are the causal relationships involved. Cultural dimension includes the cultural pattern that promotes such practices. These include the role of the culture in building up these perceptions and psychological orientation.

### **1.7 Objectives:**

The present study is confined with ritual use of Shrine and mysticism among the women living around the shrine Mohra Sharif, Kashmiri bazaar, Murree. The objective of the present study will be:

- 1) To study traditional and faith-based perceptions of the women about the saint and the shrine and the decision-making process for coming to the shrine.
- 2) To find out the nature of social-medical problems.
- 3) To explore the use of Shrine and mysticism by for the solution of the socio-medical problems



## Chapter 2: Research methodology

### 2 Introduction

In every research it is necessary to have a research design. In my research I have used qualitative research design. My research methodology was based on this research design. Research methodology is a process in which we collect data. The selection of research design and methodology is very important component of a research. It depends on nature of research and objectives of research. I have used qualitative research design because medical problems of an area are cultural problems.

In doing research I used many tools. These tools were used to collect data according to my objectives. All tools and the ways in which these were used are mentioned in next sections.

#### 2.1 Tools:

I used following tools for data collection. These tools were useful and feasible in research locale.

##### 2.1.1 Rapport Building:

Rapport building is the most fundamental tool for doing any research in anthropology. The concept of rapport means that there should be such a relationship which is based on mutual trust and understanding. In anthropology it means that if there is rapport between the researcher and the respondents then it would be possible to get such data from respondents which is closer to actual understanding and culture of the respondents. Rapport building is the process of building rapport.

Many things are important for building rapport. Most important of them is knowledge of the respondents' culture values and norms. It involves the understanding of etiquettes of socialization, knowledge of what is appropriate and what is not appropriate in the culture, dress pattern and ways to get into a good communication.

During my research I visited houses of the women frequently and spent time with them. I also went to shrine on daily basis and developed good relationship with people there. I developed such a relationship that soon people began to share their things which are normally shared. Most important in this regard were the personal matters of the women visiting the shrine. They shared with me their family matters and many other private things. It enabled me to understand their medical problems more deeply. It also helped me in understand the reason as to their visits at the shrine and their world view about the health problems.

My key informants were very helpful in building rapport. Although I belong to an area which is near my research locale, I did not know the culture or people before. My key informant helped me in entering the locale.

Initially there were problems but I spent more time people started to look at me with more confidence. It was not easy for them to give their views on religious matters which are considered sacred. However, with perseverance I went there and in the end developed a strong relationship.

### **2.1.2 Participant observation:**

Participant observation is different from observation. In participant observation we not only observe research participants but also engage in their activities. About its importance Bernard says that

*“Through participant observation the data about people can effortlessly be observed and recorded. This method can be applied by making people friendly. It is bedrock of cultural anthropology” (Bernard, 2006, p. 342)*

It is a long process. A researcher cannot participate in all cultural activities unless she is not accepted by the people. One has to get close to people in order to understand their culture and observe it. For me it took a little time to get close enough to the people so that they allow me into their activities.

Some activities were easy to participate in and did not require much rapport. These activities included visiting the shrine as all people did and performing normal activities there. But I later realized that in order to get the true understanding of these activities and

other activities in which i was not participating yet, it was necessary to build rapport with the people. Fortunately, my daily visits helped me in getting in. Once entered the inner sphere of the culture of the people found that these people performed these activities at shrines from a very different standpoint which is hard for a urban educated woman to understand merely from theoretical point of view. To understand the culture of the people it was necessary to be one of them yet retain the research in focus.

When i participated i activities i felt some of them emotions attached. I also came to understand that how these emotions constructed the worldview then. It was a very useful technique.

### 2.1.3 Key Informant:

*“Key informants are those whose social positions in a research setting give them specialist knowledge about other people, processes or happenings that is more extensive, detailed or privileged than ordinary people, and who are therefore particularly valuable sources of information to a researcher, not least in the early stages of a project.” (Geoff Payne, Judy Payne, 2004).*

Key informant is important source of information in anthropological research. They are the people who have more information about their cultures than other people. They also enable a researcher to enter a cultural group. The utility of key informants in study of health culture is beyond any doubt. World health organization also utilizes this approach to get firsthand information about the health cultures.

Selection of the key informant is important so they should be chosen carefully and researcher should take his/her time. It is essential that we explain the objectives of our study to the key informants so they can help us to obtain reliable data. According to Bernard;

*“Good informants are people who you can talk to easily, who understand the information you and who are glad to give it to you or get it for you.” (Bernard, 2004, p. 196)*

After going into the field, I realized that I needed three types of key informants. One, to guide me about the socio-medical problems of the women in the locale; two, to guide me

about the shrine and its system: third, to give me information about behavior of women when they interact with the mainstream western health culture. Based on these observations, i found three key informants.

My first key informant was from the shrine premises. His name is Murad Badshah. He is 40 years old. He is grandson of the saint. He arranged many interviews for me. He served at the shrine. I approached him through my contacts. He introduced me to the current saint and many women. He told them about me and my topic.

My second key informant was a woman. She was 33 years old. I approached her through a relative of mine. She was uneducated. She lived in the shrine and knew the visiting women very well. She was with me all the time there and helped me to get the data and information according to my topic and objectives.

My third key informant was a local lady health worker. She told me in detail about her experiences with women.

#### **2.1.4 Sampling:**

The process in which we choose some people that we think will represent the whole population under study is called sampling. We have to choose samples because we cannot study the whole population. Even if we study the whole population, the data that we will gather will be very huge in size and unmanageable.

In this research the population under study was of from the village near the shrine and other women who visit the shrine. I was doing my research on the problems of women so i had to choose women as samples. But i also needed to interview men to discover about the shrine.

I used a variety of techniques in research to understand the socio-medical problems of the women, and their views about health and the shrine. Some of the methods that i used are discussed below.

#### **2.1.4.1 Purposive Sampling:**

Purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which a researcher selects samples based on his prior knowledge. She selects such samples that meet the purpose of research. This sampling involves judgment on part of the researcher. Teddlie tells us that:

*"It is a non-probability sampling technique in which the investigator selects respondents from population by his or her assessment. The selection of respondents is based on the purpose and acquaintance of research that the sample must fulfill the research standards." (Teddlie & Yu, 20087, p. 78)*

I used this technique in my research because my research was related to socio-medical issues of the women and their solution through practices in the shrine. I selected such women who were having medical problems or some other problems that were psychological or to some extent social in nature

The assessment that i made in selection of purposive sample was based on my rapport building and socialization with the community. During my initial interaction with the people i gained knowledge about the people who were directly related to my research. Moreover, i selected sample on the basis of the information provided to me by my key informant.

#### **2.1.4.2 Snowball Sampling:**

Snowball sampling is a widely used technique in anthropology. In snowball sampling a researcher uses recommendations to find out the people who are relevant to research and are useful. According to Bernard:

*"Snowball sampling is a method used to collect data and facts, from extended relations through previous connections; snowball sampling uses recommendations to find people with the detailed variety of skills that has been determined as being useful (Bernard, 2006, p. 192)*

It is also called chain sampling. It works as a process of finding first sample through any other sampling technique like accidental sampling or random sampling, and then asking that sample to recommend other people in community who he feel are expert of at least relevant to the research.

During my research selected first sample accidently or purposively and then asked them



to recommend other people. The results were very encouraging. However, in some cases i was not recommended to finer respondents. Women referred me to other women who were having different types of socio-medical problems. They also referred to other women who were older in the community and had knowledge of the culture of the shrine and area.

### **2.1.5 Interview guide:**

An interview guide is a list of questions that are asked to an interviewee. We use this in anthropological research to conduct interview. An interview guide is less strict than structured questionnaire because in anthropology we aim at getting in-depth analysis. A question acts as a stimulus to which interviewee responds. In anthropological research some divergence is allowed to make interviewee feel at home and also to get a holistic overview of the problem.

Having a good interview guide is very important of a researcher. Quality of an interview guide depends on the knowledge of researcher about her topic and process of research. A good amount of literature review helps in preparing a good interview guide. I prepared my interview guide after reviewing some literature and visiting the locale for some day to assess the temperament of the people. Normally, an interview guide is prepared keeping in view the objectives of the research. I prepared my interview guide according to my objectives. All questions were related to research.

### **2.1.6 In-Depth Interviews:**

An interview is a way of interacting or communicating with people which is face to face. There are different types of interviews but i used in-depth interviews more frequently during my research.

It is a tool which is frequently used in qualitative research to collect data. It is used when there is need to conduct intensive interviews. It aims at bringing out as much data related to the research question as possible. Normally, the norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of people are explored in this method. The people from the selected sample are



interviewed in this method.

I used this technique to bring out detailed data about respondents and their culture. They told me about their culture and worldview. I also noticed the language used by the respondents to understand the underlying patterns of thought because the type of language used by people tells a lot about their view about a particular subject. During in-depth interviews i also explored the myths that underlie the socio-medical problems and their solution. They also told me about their perception about the shrine and its importance in their lives.

In the beginning the people hesitated to share their experiences with me. It was because of my subject of the research which dealt with the problems that were often rooted in family and also because they were religiously associated with the shrine. However, with time as rapport grew, they opened up and told me more intensively about their experiences.

Sometime women did not have enough time to indulge in a in-depth interview. Some women broke the interview halfway and left. Some women were hesitant to record their voice because they considered it illegitimate due to religious reasons. I had to not down such interviews with help of an assistant.

I also held interviews with people who were not directly related to the research topic. This general interview helped me in understanding other aspects of the shrine and the culture of people which ultimately helped me in understanding the things more deeply.

### **2.1.7 Case Study:**

In case study a researcher tries to explore the life of someone or some people by understanding and rebuilding their past experiences. It is a very useful tool to find out the real nature of problems and their causes. Difficult questions can be solved through this method. It is particularly useful in understanding socio-medical problems. It helps in understanding a life in its all dimension. Through these dimensions researcher can built a good and reasonable perspective on these problems.

I have used this technique frequently in this research. I have tried to explore experience

of women in their cultural setting to understand their problems. It has also helped me in understanding the process of construction of their. Particularly important these case studies were in understanding the association of these women with the shrine and the saint.

### **2.1.8 Focus Group Discussion:**

Focus group discussion is a research tool in which a researcher sets a discussion between more than three respondents who have knowledge about the culture of research area and research topic. It is primarily conducted to get acquainted with the underlying patterns with a culture. It also helps in getting a view which is from inside of a culture. Researcher acts as moderator only. She only observes the discussion.

During my research i used this tool twice. Because it was not possible to set Focus group discussions among people due to various reasons. However, i observed many ongoing discussions during my research. The two Focus group discussions i conducted were from respondents who were women. I tried to bring variety by setting such discussion among women from different strata of the community. These women discussed many thing among themselves which helped me to draw conclusion relating to my research topic.

### **2.1.9 Audio Recording:**

Nowadays, researchers use audio recorders to record interviews of their respondent. This practice helps in extracting data from this interview. They serve as a good record. A researcher can listen to these interviews and note down patterns.

I used this technique to record interviews of some respondents. But i could not do this with many women because they said that it was irreligious to record their voices. Some hesitated to record their voices just because of fear that their opinion over shrine might be a *gunah*. This does not mean that i had a bad rapport. It was merely a religious factor because at this shrine the women are bound to a strict moral and religious code.

### **2.1.10 Photography:**

Visual data help in communicating the research material to the user of a research. It also helps the researcher to have a good visual connection with the field when he leaves it. But as I encountered problems in recording audio data, I was also unable to capture visual data due to the reasons given in the previous section. I, however, recorded some visual data which has been included in this thesis at appropriate places.

### **2.1.11 Research Ethics:**

Ethics of research are very important. Any researcher going out on a research should follow the ethics of research. In a research people give information about their cultures and society. This information sometimes is confidential. Such information might cause harm for the respondent in future. Therefore, it is necessary to follow ethical guidelines. It involves obtaining consent from the people. The topic and purpose of research should be disclosed to the people. Their identity must also be concealed if there is any risk of harm.

I obtained informed consent from all respondents verbally. I told them about my topic and purpose of the research. I also showed them the authority letter issued to me by my supervisor and university. It was only after their consent that I started the process of interview and data collection.

I have also concealed the name of women who were involved in the research. I have given them alternate names. I have mentioned some name because these respondents gave me permission to share their names. I have made every effort to match the ethical standards of an anthropological research.

### **2.1.12 Data Analysis:**

"Data analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data. An essential component of ensuring data integrity is the accurate and appropriate analysis of research findings."(Govaert, 2004, p.205)

Data analysis is done in the end to get the information into an usable form. The themes that have been found in the data have been analyzed and classified.

### **2.1.13 Secondary Data:**

The secondary data has been obtained from relevant reports, websites, journals, newspapers as well as books in libraries.

### 3 Review of Literature

Pakistan's land is full of hundreds of shrines, in big cities as well as in small villages, scattered in the whole country where linkages between Sufism and the places of worship of different holy people and Sufi run deep. Many are unknown to the majority of the people, serving as sites of worshippers, while some are prominent on national level.

The Shrines inhabit a vital position in the cultural and social as well as religious and culture life of rituals, Saints, traditional belief, sounds, trance, dance, music in ethnic healing, and spiritual illness/disease. It is not only a place of belief and devotion based on Sufi shrines but a place where Muslims and non-Muslim take part in happiness activities together. The design and architecture of the Sufi Shrines have local as well as worldwide influences, representative spiritual, belief systems, economic, and esthetic dimensions of Muslim social institute. Therefore, Muslims' association with the Sufi Shrines has much importance from traditional, political, social and economic perspectives. Centered on an ethnographic illustration, this research aims to highlight the use of Sufi Shrines space and Peoples' Perceptions about Visiting Sufi shrines in the ethnic perspective of rural and urban Sindh. In addition to discuss the socio spatial interactions about the Sufi shrines, this study has discovered that majority of the people and visitors have strong belief systems upon the blessings of Sufis and they visit shrines to fulfill their social, economic, physical, mental and spiritual wishes. (Charan, Wang, & Yao, 2018)

Shrines and Sufis have been influential elements immersed in the structure of Pakistani society. They are constructive in shaping many rituals and practices that are carried out. A research was conducted to explore the reasons and purposes to visit a shrine by females. The study's locale was shrine of Syed Sakh iMehboobBaadshah in G/6 sector of Islamabad from where a sample of 12 respondents was purposively selected. The study made use of mainly qualitative tools. The results showed different protocols performed by women and also all socio-economic strata's visit shrine but majority of the population belongs to lower class that are more focused towards fulfillment of their desires and the educated people have a preference towards inner satisfaction and formal

attendance.(Author & Sciences, 2013)

As a general observation it can be said that the dominant majority of the people who come to attend the shrine and participate in the *urs* belong to the lower economic strata of the urban area, as well as from the rural areas and many of them are members of the marginal groups. Most people visit Bari's shrines for the resolution of their multifarious problems. Some come asking for a child preferably a male child some want cure from a disease (this includes particularly people who cannot afford the doctor or their diseases have been declared incurable), others want liberation from poverty - they get at least free food from the shrine kitchen - , obtaining a job, mental peace, higher crop yield, support in court cases, thanks giving, visa for employment overseas, success in the examination, marriage with beloved one, in short it covers all fields of life from social to economic, religious, political, entertainment and enjoyment. (Choudhary, 2010)

Pfleiderer, (1988) reports phenomenological and semiotic research on therapeutic rituals in a Muslim shrine, concentrating on three case studies. Women describe their experiences while being possessed by evil spirits and while undergoing ritual healing in the shrine. The semiotic structuring of their experiences and perceptions are analyzed as a culturally coded system of exorcism. (Pfleiderer, 1988)

Sufi shrines hold great importance in Pakistani society. Followers of the shrines consider it a sacred place and they perform different rituals there. The role of Sufis has been considered as intermediary who lead towards the path of God and success. Present study deployed qualitative research technique whereby data was drawn from 19 in-depth interviews at the Hazrat Mian Mir's Shrine in Lahore. Findings of the study revealed that majority of the people have strong belief upon the blessings of Sufis and they visit shrine to fulfill their social, economic, physical, and spiritual needs. They believed that the late Sufis of shrine could listen, correspond and help them in multiple ways. However, some people thought otherwise. They believed the Sufi of shrine as pious ones but they did not believe upon the intermediary role of Sufis between human beings and Allah. Perceptions about myths and superstitions varied with regard to gender and level of education but majority of visitors did not believe in myths and superstitions. (Abbas, Qureshi, Safdar, & Zakar, 2013)



In her article “Mapping ‘New’ Geographies of Religion: Politics and Poetics in Modernity” Lily Kong emphasizes the relevance of considering the various ways in which religion and place are experienced in by different groups of the population. Observing women’s habitual practices at roadside shrines in Mumbai presents an opportunity to ask pertinent questions related to gender, spatiality and religion. This article is an attempt to discuss how religious places on the pavements may alter both women’s perception of—and access to—urban public space. (Kong 2001).

Shrines are the places where usually people go for peace and tranquility. However, sometimes it is perceived that people have certain social, economic, psychological problems for visiting shrines and make these places a shelter for saving themselves from the outer world. (Jamal, Ahmad, & Lahore, 2012)

### **3.1 Women Visiting the Shrines:**

Many women visit shrines to have a son because in Pakistan son preference is common because they are considered more favorable for the family and honor. A woman is not given respect or is accepted by the family until she has borne a child. After a child’s birth she has given some real participation in the family and is valued and if the child is a male offspring the value is far doubled. Otherwise being childless is better than having a girl.

Large numbers of women visit shrines looking for help in times of need. These needs can be varied financial problem; search of job, health issues, evil eye, educational achievements etc. The perception of an individual about the health condition is highly shaped by the culture. Beliefs, Values, wealth, education, family, health care resources, individual resources to access health care all influence this perception. People of Pakistan attach great importance to healing through religion and religious rituals. On a daily basis people visit shrines, faith healers and other means in cure for health issues (Pirani 2009).

In Muslim countries, shrines of Sufi saints serve as sources of healing. Why people decide to seek healing at shrines and their experience whilst there remains largely un-researched. The aims of this study were to: investigate the explanatory models of sickness among attendees at a Muslim shrine particularly in relation to this choice of help-seeking; explore individuals’ perceptions and experiences regarding the role of the shrine; and

propose a theory explaining the meaning of attendees' problems, their choice of healing resource and the role it played. (Gesler, 1992)

Women also visit shrines to fight and end their illness and mental tensions or family problems. Illness perceptions and behavior are shaped by local traditions and cultural orientation. Similarly, symptoms of any illness have cultural meanings attached to them. The cultural meanings reflect what is generally considered to be normal, abnormal, desirable, undesirable, and its associated causative theories (Kleinman, 1988).

In Pakistan, symptoms caused by depression, anxiety or stresses are linked more with social adversity or disharmony in relationships, rather than 'ill health', and self-coping is prominent. These coping strategies may include crying, talking to others, praying, pleading for forgiveness from the Supreme Being, or visiting religious places (Hussain and Cochrane, 2003).

Conversely, the range of behaviors shown by those with psychotic illness is received with much apprehension and confusion. These behaviors are frequently believed to be the result of supernatural forces such as spirit or jinn possession, black magic, testing by God, a curse, fate or as punishment for one's sins. Belief in supernatural forces as a cause of mental health problems is a widely recognized and socially accepted. (Gadit and Khalid, 2002)

In a country like Pakistan women visit shrines because patriarchal forms of control are maintained over women through the issuing of restrictive codes of behavior, the practice of strict gender segregation, and the promotion of specific forms of family and kinship and powerful ideology linking family honor to female virtue. Men in these settings become protectors of family honor by controlling female members of the family. These societal systems largely exclude women from making decisions, give them limited access to and control over resources, restrict mobility and rarely encourage women to use assertion or. (Moghadam, 1992).

Pir, Fakir or Baaba in Pakistan are commonly known for their religious healing abilities and practices. They enjoy their position and prestige as community resources and in being able to intervene at times of despair and distress. Those who are truly dedicated to

the cause will offer these services without any reward; however they will accept gratitude and donations given by followers. (Razali and Najib, 2000).

In Pakistan, the faith healer, commonly known as *aalim* or a *Pir* plays a crucial role in providing healing to people suffering from a variety of mental ailments and is often the first point of contact when an individual or family experiences mental distress. The *Pir* claims to possess the power to communicate with God through the world of spirits. Faith healers reportedly prescribe a variety of treatments such as amulets containing Qur'anic verses, holy water, special prayers and/or the slaughtering of animals to deal with the problem (Winkvist and Akhtar, 1997).

In an observational study in Nawabshah, also in Pakistan, Hussain et al (2001) found a significant number of women attending shrines for the healing of mental and physical ailments. The researchers concluded that what gave shrines their status as a health resource was their association with the Sufis. By performing rituals, attendees experienced healing through the submission of wishes, catharsis (through crying, weeping, and acting out) and open requests for support and help. The authors have not included any details of the data collection, whether it was gathered only through observation or whether they also interviewed attendees at the shrine.

## 4 Area of Study

In every anthropological research, a researcher has to ascertain a place to study the culture of that place. After choosing a locale for study, a researcher proceeds towards further research. For this study the locale of research was in a village in Murree known as Kashmiri Bazar. In that area is situated a famous shrine which is a focus of attention for a long period of time. That shrine was the site of study. Its name is shrine Mohra Sharif.

### 4.1 Location of Murree longitude and latitude

This place is situated in Punjab., Pakistan, its geological directions are 33° 54' 0" North, 73° 24' 0" East and its unique name is Murree.

### 4.2 History of Murree:

Murree or *Marhee* as it was then called, was first identified as a potential hill station by Major James Abbott (Indian Army officer) in 1847.

The town's early development was in 1851 by President of the Punjab Administrative Board, Sir Henry Lawrence. It was originally established as a sanatorium for British troops garrisoned on the Afghan frontier. Officially, the municipality was created in 1850.

The permanent town of Murree was constructed at Sunny bank in 1853. The church was sanctified in May 1857, and the main road, Jinnah Road, originally known as Mall Road and still commonly referred to as "The Mall"), was built. The most significant commercial establishments, the Post Office, general merchants with European goods, tailors and millinery, were established opposite the church. Until 1947, access to Mall Road was restricted for "natives" (non-Europeans).

In the summer of 1857, a rebellion against the British broke out. The local tribes of Murree and Hazara, including the *Dhund Abbasis* and others, attacked the depleted British Army garrison in Murree; however, the tribes were ultimately overcome by the British and capitulated. From 1873 to 1875, Murree was the summer headquarters of the Punjab local government; after 1876 the headquarters were moved to Shimla

The railway connection with Lahore, the capital of the Punjab Province, via Rawalpindi, made Murree a popular resort for Punjab officials, and the villas and other houses erected for the



accommodation of English families gave it a European aspect. The houses crowned the summit and sides of an irregular ridge, the neighboring hills were covered during the summer with encampments of British troops, while the station itself was filled with European visitors from the plains and travellers to Kashmir. It was connected with Rawalpindi by a service *tangas*.

### 4.3 Site of Study:

Site of study was a shrine called Mohra sharif which is a spiritual center of a sufi order called Nisbat e Rasooli which is just another name of the Naqshbandiyah order. A discussion of the cite of the study will follow in the end.

### 4.4 Location of the site:

Mohra is the name of a residential community. It is said that this name has been given Because of the nearness of righteous aficionados (of Allah). This incredibly regarded *darbar* is arranged close Murree, the renowned slope station in the Rawalpindi region of Pakistan. While in transit to Murree from Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, a street from the Sunny bank leads into the valley of Mohra Sharif at a separation of 4 miles through Kuldana mountains. In front of the Sunnybank, prompting Bhurban, another course from the Kashmiri bazar joins the principle street to Mohrasharif.



Figure 1 Mohra Sharif on Map

#### **4.5 Housing:**

There are different types of houses. Some are cemented and brick house. Such houses are made by those who enjoy a good social and economic status. They do not necessarily fall in the highest social status but are middle class. Other people who are less fortunate economically do not have cemented houses. They live in mud brick houses. Wood houses are also common.

Roofs are sloped. This is to protect the houses from snow and winds. People with good economic condition build roof with have linter. Others made roof with tin. Roofs made from tin are more common. There are normally 3-5 rooms in a house but it varies considerably. The number of room depends on family structure and needs of a family. Families normally maintain a guest room with house. Kinds of room also differ. Some people build more rooms for different functions. Houses in lower economic strata have less space.

The use of wood is also common it houses. It is used for decorative purposes. However, wooden decoration is expensive. It is mostly afforded by the people with higher status. House are not made on any set pattern or alignment. Although concentrated housing exists, there also exist house which are away from these concentrated centers.

#### **4.6 Families and their types:**

There are different family structure in the area. As economic pattern of the area is changing people are shifting towards nuclear families. Joint families also exist but they are now passing out of practices. It is because of changing shift towards more individualistic economic and social values. In joint families the basic function was to provide economic support to each other. For some people it is becoming increasingly hard to support each other. Moreover, people now want to build their lives in their own way. They do not want to remain tied to older values. This does not mean that joint families are nonexistent. They still exist and perform function of economic resource sharing.

Role of the women is important in these changing conditions. Educated young women prefer to



live in a nuclear family instead of a joint one. They want to express their newly acquired values of individualism, within context of village, through making their family a nuclear one. This is because a joint family puts its values upon its member to maintain the social and economic solidarity.

Extended families are also decreasing day by day. This is also because of the reasons mentioned above. Additional reasons are the availability or resources for vertical mobility and constraints put upon them by joint or extended family system. People want to achieve something. But they recognize the fact that for that they will have to work for themselves. It limits the resources for prosperity.

#### **4.7 Birth Rituals:**

People prefer to have sons. Although daughters are not seen as a bad fortune as they were seen previously, still a son stands at top in the priority list. The rituals at birth are mostly those which are prescribed by Islam. They include recitation of azan in the ear of newly born child. People believe that this was recommended by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Usually an elder recites the azan. People also prefer to call someone recognized as spiritually elevated to recite azan in the ears of the child.

Another important ritual associated with birth of a child is called *aqeqa*. This is also seen as religiously recommended. This practice is limited to the people who have strong economic status. Meat is distributed among the poor. Some people give name to their children on this occasion. Some who do not afford this ceremony do simple ritual in which members of the family take part. The child is given name there. For male children another ritual is held which is called *Khatna* or circumcision. It can be done at any time. This ritual along with ceremony of azan recitation gives identity to the male child as a Muslim.

#### **4.8 Marriages:**

Marriage patterns are caste dependent. People who regard their castes as superior to other people prefer endogamous marriages. They marry within caste or with other castes which in their opinion are socially equal. Similarly, class also matters. People within higher economic strata prefer to marry within that strata. They do not perform marriages out of class. Marriages in such a setting are normally arranged. Usually parents decide the matter of marriage. With increasing

awareness it is common among the people now to ask their daughter about their consent. It is, however, still not practiced in some families.

The castes which are not considered worthy of marrying with are consequently forced to marry within themselves. These are the middle castes. Some castes are considered lower by all people. These castes are of the people who performed the lowest works in the community like *Nae* or *mochi*. People have strict constraints against marrying in these castes or tribes.

Marriage customs or ritual are same in majority areas of Pakistan. It is true here too. These customs include a ceremony in which girls gather around the bride in her house to put *ubtan* on her. The other ritual is of *rukhsati*. In this ritual girls leaves her home for groom's home. *Walima* is the final ceremony in a marriage. It is religiously recommended to invite friends and family members to a meal. It is called *walima*.

Nikah is normally performed on the day of *rukhsati*. Groom comes to the house of bride to take her with him. These all customs in this area are simpler when compared to other areas of Pakistan. Although the customs are same but the way they are celebrated is different. Here, people prefer simpler functions. There are also strict restriction on somethings like dancing etc.

Dowry is also common among people. Parents try to give a good dowry to their daughters. It is a burden on parents of girls. Gifts are also given to bride and groom in the marriage day. These gifts are normally in cash and called *salami*. This customs aids the families of the bride and the groom.

#### **4.9 Death Rituals:**

Some death rituals are same among different people. Some other rituals are not same among different groups because of religious differences. The religious rituals include *Ghusal* or obligatory bath of the dead person. It is usually given by a religious scholar or cousins if the dead person. Male give this obligatory bath to male dead bodies while females do it for females. Then people take the dead body to graveyard where *Janaza* is held. *Janaza* is also held in *janazagah* which is a special place for this purpose. Then people bury the dead body. Normally, people take try to take lead in carrying the dead body or burying it. It is regarded as a *sawab* or eternal reward. People pray for the dead person and leave the graveyard after burying the dead

body. A special mourning for three day is held in the house of the dead person.

Some people also commemorate the Chehlum or the fortieth day ritual. But this is not commemorated across all sects. More orthodox sect have religious injunctions against it. However, the majority holds ritual of this day. This event marks the end of forty day of mourning.

People visit the house of the dead person regularly in first days of death. They offer condolences. They also send food to the house. People come to recite quran for the dead soul and gift its sawab to that person. Chehlum formally marks the end of death rituals. But they start fading away before Chehlum.

Some people mark the day of death of the dead person and arrange special rituals on that day annually. It is called Barsi. People gather and recite Quran. Food is also distributed among the people on these days.

#### **4.10 Dress:**

Dress code is very simple in the area. Men wear KameezShalwar. They take warm coats, jackets or shawls in winter. Younger generation of males also wears jeans and shirts. Females wear kameezshalwar. Their dresses are a bit longer than males. Women also wear warm clothes in winter.

Dress code of outside differs from dress code of house for women. They usually have to cover their bodies with shawl when they go outside their home. Some women put a veil on their faces when they go outside their homes. This practice is, however, now becoming less popular. Women also wear some fashionable clothes inside their houses. But such clothes are not tolerated outside their houses.

#### **4.11 Food:**

Food is not very different here. People usually take tea in the mornings. In winter people take more tea. They also drink Kehva. Green tea is also becoming popular. Other drink like coffee are not very common. They almost nonexistent in the village environment. Cold drinks like Coca-cola and Pespri are also common. Lassi is drunk in summer. People drink lassi while eating Spinach. A special kind of Spinach is also made here using lassi.

People usually eat vegetables and lentils. Meat is also eaten commonly. Corn is a cultivated in Murree region. So people eat a bread up of corn flour with Spinach and lassi. Eating together has been a important tradition. People of a house sit together to eat. But such traditions are being replaced. People are adopting new practices. The rich people enjoy more variety of food. The educated families are experimenting with new foods. The food culture is on a path to changes.

#### **4.12 Religion**

Islam is the only religion of this village religious segregation exists in form of different Islamic sects majority of people in adhere to Sunni Islam. People of all sects pray here five times a day in the mosque. Religious peace and harmony exist in village. People are mostly tolerant toward religious sects but to some extent, bias towards other sects also exists. The sectarian structure exists in village and people prefer to affiliate themselves to one particular sect. The sectarian politics played its major role in making authoritative figure among the members of the community. Behind the construction of any mosque, the sect acted as the basic driving force. The community is conservative and females observe *pardah* as their religious obligation. There are no major religious conflicts observed between the community members but every individual always prefers to attain he/her separate sectarian identification.

#### **4.13 Languages**

Local language of this area is popularly known as "*Pahari*". *Pahari* language is a combined dialect of pothohari and Punjabi languages. Many people mostly younger generation can also speak Urdu as well. It is observed that is some families, parents use Urdu to communicate with children. They believe that it is more sophisticated way to converse with the children but still a significant ratio believed that mother was a treasure and has to be preserved and promoted and they feel no shame in speaking *Pahari*. Younger generation has good grasp over both languages and on other hand, the old generation can understand Urdu but also faced some difficulties in discerning this languages. Predominance of *Pahari* language in local poetry is quite evident in strengthening the roots of local language, at different occasions, like Urs or at marriage ceremonies. At marriage ceremonies, women sing *tapai*, which are traditional songs of marriages in local language.



#### **4.14 Education**

There are many government and private schools in Murree but no university in Murree area so access to higher education is especially low among females.

Literacy rate is quite good in the younger generation of this area. This village has one government primary school and one government high school for both girls and boys. Along with these public schools, few private schools are also functional near this area. Majority of children both male and female get education in local schools. Many people send their sons to urban areas to good schools and universities. It is against the traditions to send females to other areas, so females do not travel outside area for getting good education.

#### **4.15 Peace condition**

The area is quite peaceful and secure and no terrorist attack has ever occurred in this area. Murder and rape cases are very rare in this village. Cases of cattle lifting and theft involving mobile phones are common.

#### **4.16 Technological advancement**

Mobile phones have now become a necessary part of daily life. Majority of village population own mobile phones in spite of their poor economic status. Television and dish channels are common in majority of houses. The few people, who can afford, have computers and EVO net facility.

#### **4.17 Energy consumption**

Electricity is available in this village. Load shedding occurs frequently and sometimes its last for two to three days. The local community does not have access to sui gas, as the government has not provided the facility. Women use wood and gas cylinder to cook food. They use angethi and tandoor for cooking purpose.

#### **4.18 Occupation**

Most of the village people dependent on tourism for their earning. People prefer private business as source of earning that include hotels, shops, transportation etc. some people drive public transport vehicles like vans and pickups. Some are engaged in laborers work or move to other





cities as daily wage labor. Some of the people prefer to do daily wage labor with in the village or in surrounding areas.

The community is engaged in multiple occupations like caterings, transportation, tailoring, armed forces, wage labor, teaching, medical and other small-scale businesses. Some males of the family are encouraged to move to foreign countries to seek better job opportunities and to upgrade the lifestyle of their families. In such circumstances, wives and daughters re left behind to share the burden of work and handle the family matters but their authority is limited as the other males of the family keep a strict watch on their lives and interfere frequently.

People easily earn a lot of money in tourism season that is enough for the whole year. Apart from this, majority of people have government sector jobs and these are most preferable. Few people are involved in agriculture sector and their living is based on subsistence farming. Very few people now depend on cattle rearing as a source of living.

Females mostly prefer teaching as this profession is considered very respectful in society. Some females are engaged in the health sector too and make a reasonable living. Some females are associated with small business like beauty parlors, tailoring, and social services. Majority of women are housewives looking after home, children and elders. There are many retired army and navy personnel in this village and their old age pensions also provide some succor in times of need and are utilized in daily expenditure family.

#### **4.19 Political setup**

The mayor of Murree is the highest administrative authority of the tehsil. He is elected by chairmen of Murree area. Currently, position of mayor in Murree is vacant due to court's stay order.

#### **4.20 Climate**

Murree is known for its cool and pleasant weather throughout the year. It has snowy winter and cool weather prevails in summer. This alluring weather of Murree attracts many tourists and murree becomes centre of attraction for tourism. It has four distinguishable seasons. Murree have severe winter and mild summer. Sprinf in Murree starts in march and ends in mid of may.

Maximum temperature during this period hovers between degrees Celsius and minimum between four and ten degrees Celsius.

#### 4.21 Tourism

In past few years, this village has developed in to a city and now it is a popular tourist destination. Murree is most visited area of Pakistan.

The whole Murree is known for its scenic beauty. Mountains overhung with pines and oaks, bubbling with gurling springs, huge trees, present a magnificent spectacle. Cool weather in summer and heavy snow in winter attracts tourists and people love to spend vacations in *Murree*.

#### 4.22 History of the shrine:

"*Mohra Sharif*" (Holy Village; Mohra for "little town" and Sharif for "sacred" or "respectable") is an focus and home of the *Naqshbandia, Mujaddadiya. Qasimiyasufi* arrange, is a *Naqshbandi* in source, and is situated in a little town called *MohraShareef* situated in the *Murree* slopes of Punjab, outside the Pakistani capital of Islamabad. It is situated at the Eastern flank of Islamabad around one and a half hours drive from the Islamabad. It was made into an otherworldly focus by *Ghous-e-ZamanAla-Hazrat Baba JiKhawaja Muhammad QasimSadiq* (b. 1263 A.H.).

*Hazrat Khawaja's* precursors were relocated from Iran and settled in Rawalpindi District of Pakistan. *Hazrat Khawaja* Sahib was the Ghaus-e-Zaman of his chance better referred to among the immense Sufis as the Spiritual Sun not too far off of the East. *HazratKhawaja Baba Ji's* 120 long periods of life shapes a glad part of Islamic renaissance in this district of Asia.

*Hazrat Baba Ji Muhammad Qasim Sadiq* Passed away on the twentieth November of 1943 abandoning a large number of orders and fans to grieve him. His burial service petitions were offered three times upon the arrival of his downfall because of regularly swelling number of grievers going to his memorial service.

After his takeoff from the world, the Order driven by his child *Qutab-ul-AqtabQutb-e-AlamAmeen-ul-Ummat Khawaja Gharib Nawaz Ala-HazratPir Muhammad Zahid Khan Sahib*

Known as Pir Khan Sahib Khawaja Gharib Nawaz. Amid his life time, Hazrat Baba Ji Muhammad Qasim Sadiq had picked out of his 6 children, his third child Khwaja Pir Muhammad Zahid Khan Sahib as his successor because of his exceptional devout and equitable character. KhawajaGharib Nawaz was the primary SajjadNasheen of MohraShareef. He was adored and regarded by millions over the world. Amid his lifetime, he delegated his oldest child, PirAftab Ahmed Qasmi, his successor. In any case, PirAftab Ahmed Qasmi Sahib passed away one year before KhawajaGharib Nawaz. KhawajaGharib Nawaz passed away on December ninth, 1993 and after his takeoff from this world, the request driven by his second child Wali-e-KamilHazratPirKeumrasBadshah known as HazratKhawajaPirBadshah Sahib, who passed away on thirteenth August, 2008. After PirBadshah's takeoff from this world, PirAuliyaBadshahFarooq Sahib turn into the third SajjadaNasheen (Custodian of Holy Shrine) of Mohra Sharif.

Two times per year, in a week ago of May and November, there are assemblages (URS Paak), gone to by a large number of fans from every one of the four corners of the world, held to recognize HazratKhawajaPir Muhammad QasimSadiq's (Baba JiSarkar), Qutab-ul-AqtabQutb-e-AlamAmeen-ul-UmmatKhawajaGharib Nawaz Pir Khan Sahib , Imam-ul-AarifeenHazratKhawajaPirAftab Ahmed Qasmi (RA) and .Wali-e-KamilHazratPirKeumrasBadshah known as HazratKhawajaPirBadshah Sahib .

#### **4.22.1 Baba JiSarkar:**

From the very childhood he had built up his curious splendor of psyche and thought. For advanced education in Islamic law (Fiqh) and Sharia he experienced long trips to different focuses of Islamic learning at the time.

At the early age of twenty he had finished his training in different controls of Islam. After instruction fulfillments he gave himself to supplications and lecturing the message of Islam.

He additionally had established framework of the Masjid (Mosque) in Murree locale where he was Imam of the mosque and used to show kids and convey every day addresses on various subjects of the religion.

Before long he ended up popular as a man of learning. Several fact searchers would lounge around him and would tune in to his lovely preaching. The light hence began spreading far and wide. His name wound up known as easily recognized name both close and far. This is the greatness and acclaim he accomplished on the formal side of his training. Yet at the same time a more noteworthy enduring popularity was anticipating him. Furthermore, that was his otherworldly tallness he vanquished amid his lifetime.



Figure 2 Baba Ji Sarkar

Baba JiSarkar was an expert wrestler before he progressed toward becoming he gotten his higher Islamic instruction. He used to win all the coemptions and was extremely popular wrestler. One day when he won the competition as he was leaving the battling ring, an old Saint was going by who said to him "Allah has not made you for this, you need to fill a major need". Now in his life he quit wrestling and went to get his advanced education as clarified in "His Holiness Baba JiSarkar Education" segment.



He felt inside the profound hunger for which he went by walking numerous spots in look for the otherworldly guide. He met Baba Fazal Shah Kalyami of KalyamAwan (a place close Rawat, Rawalpindi District in Pakistan), who was a Qalandar (Very high profound status among Sufis) of his chance whose Namaz-e-Janaza (Funeral Prayer) was driven by Qutb-al-AqtabAla-HazratPirMehr Ali Shah Sahib (RA) of Golra Sharif in Capital Islamabad of Pakistan. Baba FazalShah disclosed to him that his Bait isn't at his hands, he ought to goto the mountains of Kashmir wher he will discovered his Murshid. Qalandar Baba Fazal Shah Kalyami (RA) additionally gave him the dried blossom and instructed him to protect it at whatever point this bloom will return to life you will realize that you discovered your Murshid. (Inshallah more will be included future in regards to his gathering with Qalandar Baba Fazal Shah Kalyami.

Hazrat Baba Ji Sarkar under took on foot travel and got otherworldly motivation from his Murshid (Guide) His Holiness Ghous-e-Zaman Khawaja NizamuddinAulia of Kahiyan Sharif in Neelam Valley, Kashmir. The Murshid familiar his supporter with every one of the phases of mysticism at a solitary look. Also, in the wake of spending few days at the Dargah of His Holiness Ghous-e-Zaman Khawaja Nizamuddin Aulia, the Baba Ji Sarkar was gave with Khilafat and requested that by his Murshid take his visit at MohraShareef, Murree. Around then this place was not as it looks today. It was the natural surroundings of savage untamed life like panthers, lions, and so forth.

The Baba JiSarkar as indicated by the counsel of his MurshidPaak attempted a 40-day profound difficulty (chillah). The stone piece on which the Baba JiSarkar sat for 40 days (day-and-night) is safeguarded even today as a relic (Taburrak) at MohraShareef. Who new around then that Fortune was working silentl to convey brightness and overall acclaim to MohraShareef.The put turned into a perpetual homestead Khawaja a while later. It was here that he spent whatever remains of his life. A huge number of lovers gather each year at this Center to pay respect to the promising soul of His Highness the Khawaja of the East, HazratPir Muhammad Sadiq (Baba JiSarkar) - The Lion of Allah and the Patron Saint of the East.



Amid his lifetime he conveyed a huge number of Non-Muslims to Islam uniquely the district of Kashmir including Kotli who was to a great extent tenant by Hindus around then. It was Khawaja who conveyed these individuals to Islam.

#### 4.22.2 Administration of the Shrine:

The administration of the shrine is carried by a number of people headed by *SajjadahNashin*. The current *sajjadahnasheen* is Peer Haroon Al Rasheed. He is both head of administrative and spiritual functions. He was born in 1935. He gives sermon on every Friday at the shrine. He has declared his son GoharNazir as his successor.



Figure 3 Pir Haroon

Under him is a controller who carries out administrative affairs for him. He acts under the guideline of the current saint. There are other functionaries also who perform different works. One person heads the langar. Similarly, other man heads the accounts and cash of the shrine. The management of the shrine appears as management of a large organization in which duties are divided into different persons.

The person working under the peer view it as a spiritual service. They are given money for management of their affairs by the saint. The religious and spiritual aspect in their service is eminent. There are some women also who take care of the women affairs.

#### **4.22.3 The Sufi Order of the Shrine:**

*Nisbat e Rasooli* order is the Sufi order that is followed at the shrine. It is Naqshbandi order but was renamed by Peer Nazir Ahmad of Mohrasharif. The reason he gave was that the real purpose of Islam was to follow the Prophet (pbuh) and names given to Islamic order on the name of people other than the prophet (pbuh) were not appropriate. In this order it is emphasized that the prophet (pbuh) should be followed strictly.

#### **4.22.4 Hospital:**

There is a basic kind of hospital at the shrine. It provides basic health facilities to the people coming to the shrine. This hospital was founded by Peer Haroon Rasheed. It is currently maintained by son of the Peer Haroon Rasheed. They distribute free medicines there. However, this hospital does not have facilities for serious diseases.

#### **4.22.5 Langar:**

Food is distributed among the people on daily basis. Twice in a week they are served with rice while on other day *roti salan* is given. There is a big system of langar management. There are many cooks who cook the food on daily basis. People also give food at the shrine for other people. The langar of the shrines serve a lot of people. It made from the money that people give to for the management of the affairs of the shrine.

#### **4.22.6 Visitors:**

Visitors at shrine come from different sections of the society. They come from the village in which the shrine is situated as well as from urban areas. They are also distributed among lower and middle socioeconomic statuses. The following chart shows the distribution of the visitors

#### **4.22.7 Segregation of Sexes:**

Unlike some other shrines, women at this shrine are segregated. They have to keep themselves away from the premises of the men. There exist some cases of breakage of this ethic but it is followed on overall basis. It is seen by people as an Islamic principle. This ethic serves as a strengthening to belief in people about the shrine.

## **5 Perceptions and Reasons for Coming to the Shrine**

### **5.1 Introduction:**

Women who come to the shrine do not always make decisions for themselves. There are many factors that play role in this decision. Along with that, the perceptions of the women is constructed by social factors. Their perceptions are the main source of inspiration for resorting to the shrine for solution of their problems. These women visit the shrine for many reason which are very diverse.

### **5.2 The ways of coming into interaction with Shrine:**

Decision-making model explains that why do women choose shrines for solution of their problems. There are a variety of options available to women to solve their problems. They can for example, visit a doctor for their disease, consult family for marital problems, go to homeopathic doctors and come to shrines. The women who choose to come to shrine choose for various reasons which can be explored. Some women resort only to faith based practices while other women perform more than one activity at a time. The decision to come at the shrine, as explored during interviews, was influenced by following reasons.

#### **5.2.1 Childhood rearing:**

The women coming to the shrine in some cases are groomed by the families having old connection with the shrine. They find the shrine and the saint as part of their family culture. Such women then automatically become devotees and visitors of the shrine. Many respondents told that they have been coming here since childhood. Once they were brought here by their family, now they come here on their own. One respondent told that "my mother tells me that when i was born i was brought to the shrine because i was sick. Then i became healthy."

These women consequently rear their children in the same way. And the chain keeps building itself.

### **5.2.2 Individual Decision:**

Some women decide on their own to come to the shrine. These are women who do not have any previous knowledge of the saint or the shrine. They come to the shrine when they know it through some source. Many women who were independent in their all matters told that coming to the shrine was their individual decision. These women can come here with or without any specific reason. Some of them just believe in Sufism. They arrive here to build a connection with the religion.

### **5.2.3 Mothers of Women:**

Mothers of the women play an important role in their decision making. Young girls are guided by their mothers to come to the shrine. They rely on their mothers for their decisions. This is especially true when girls get married. When women get married the role of mothers becomes even more prominent.

During this study many women were found who were brought for the first time at the shrine by their mothers. These women inherited a strong faith based attachment with the shrine. Some women were groomed from childhood to come to the shrine while for others it was a later part of their lives when they became acquainted with the shrine and its practices. And this decision was taken by mother in many cases.

### **5.2.4 When other methods are not working:**

It is not necessary that all methods work for solution of the problems faced by women. Many medical conditions and social problems stay unresolved even after spending a good amount of time and money on them. In such cases women resort to religious means such as going to the shrines, and other means like resorting to magic. In the shrines they get good explanations of their problems and psychological relief. This relief helps them in enduring the misfortunes and miseries.

The women who were interviewed reported that they used other methods to solve their problems but they were not working. Some women reported that the other means of solution of problems became helpful only when they resorted to religious. It is seen as an effect of the religion that it produces efficacy in other methods of problem solution like medicines.



### **5.2.5 Peer Group:**

Women have communication networks with other women. These women tell them stories of their experiences. In this way experiences and with them modes of these experiences are propagated in a culture. If a woman is not groomed from childhood to visit shrines and saints, she is often introduced to these practices by other women in their social circle. In some cases during this study, women had come for the first time to the shrine with other women who were in their social circle.

### **5.2.6 Socioeconomic Status:**

Economic means often determine the nature and variety of solutions available to women. It has been observed that women from lower socio-economic strata visit the shrine more often for solution of their problems than women from upper socioeconomic strata. It is because the means for solution of their problems are limited for them. It cannot be said that it is only because of this factor because there are women from upper socio economic strata who visit the shrine. However, there is disparity in in the numbers.

## **5.3 Perceptions about the Shrine and the Saint:**

### **5.3.1 Nisbat e Rasool:**

For all Muslims the personality of the holy prophet (pbuh) is very important. For them it obligatory to follow him in all affairs of their life. His teaching is seen as a virtue that would bring a good life in this world and in the world hereafter. But at the same time people think that they cannot imitate him because of his status as a exceptional person. Therefore, they are inclined towards spiritual means to connect with him which evade physical practices or at least to some extent, relax them

For women this spiritual side is more important. Although they believe in other practices of Islam, for them spiritual link through saint is more important. As the Sufi order at the shrine was renamed as *nisbat e rasool*, the people with women attach greater reverence to this shrine. Women who do not live in the premises of the shrine are less acquainted with



such things like name of the order. But even they acknowledge that this name resembles a relation with the prophet which in real one.

The saint is seen as having communication with or having visions of the personalities of Islam along with the holy prophet (pbuh). They see him as some who can reach the hidden world due to his status and bring them escape from misfortunes. For women this *Nisbat* or relation with the prophet is very important.

### 5.3.2 A Center of healing:

*Shifa* or healing powers are said to be in possession of the saint. It is believed by the women that their diseases which cannot be cured in hospitals, can be treated here through prayer. This belief does not exist in vacuum. Women have many stories to tell about solution of their problems. Many women who visit the shrine have themselves been patients. They report improvements in their medical conditions. A respondent was suffering from severe respiratory problems. She says that: " I get relief through prayer of the saint. I cannot afford going to city for treatment. I have been there to cities but i could not get better with my condition. I do not take ant medications now."

Some women visit only shrine for the treatment of their medical conditions. For others, the main source of healing is prayer of the saint while medications are ancillary to this prayer. There are numerous cases of the women who believe in the shrine and the saint to be a center of healing.

### 5.3.3 Spiritual Status of the saint:

Having link with the prophet (PBUH) gives a special status to a person, so is believed. This status does not come without exercises into region (known is Sufism as ' wayfaring'). The father if the current saint is seen as a figure who had great spiritual qualities. He reached this status due to his special relation with God had the prophet (pbuh.) He came to this area and inspired the people around this area through his spiritual qualities. Women believe that his coming to the area was a blessing for the people of the area. After he came here it is believed that it was due to his spiritual status that people flocked towards his station. He is supposed to have cured many people in the area. The list contains, according to narrations of the people, from minor diseases to major ones.



After him his son was appointed. He is also revered a lot. The women believe that he too can cure their diseases and solve their social problems. Moreover, the shrine is associated with the original saint of this place who is still believed to be a station of great spiritual importance.

#### **5.3.4 Intercession:**

With spiritual status is associated a special quality which is thought as being possessed by the current saint and his father. This quality is of (*shafa'at*) or intercession. The concept of intercession in Islam is disputed the Sufi orders believe in it. It is ability to pray for someone else to God. The women who come here see the saint as source of intercession. That he can pray on their behalf to God. Due to his spiritual status it is believed that he can have visions of the prophet and the prophet listens his prayer. The prophet (pbuh) then makes prayer on their behalf to God.

Not all women believe in in this type of intercession. These women believe that the saint has spiritual powers and can himself deliver cure to their diseases, solution to their problems, and access to God. In very simple terms, women believe in the saint as having spiritual qualities which enable him to intercession on their behalf.

#### **5.3.5 Miraculous Powers of the Saint and the Shrine:**

Sit with women and you hear miracles of the saint. One woman told me that: " There is a woman near my house whose name is Zahra. She had last stage cancer. She came here and started to live here. She prayed that she will not leave the place until her problems are solved. One day the saint asked her to go back to her home when his husband approached the saint. After she went home she was cured". After death of the primary saint, his is also seen as having these powers. It was one of such stories which abound in the shrine and nearby villages.

Saint is also believed to have converted many people into Muslim through his miracles. Not only women the men also believe in such miracles. The things he distributes in the people are supposed to have miraculous powers. The food distributed at the shrine is thought as having special status and good qualities for the body.

### **5.3.6 A place of Devotion:**

There is something in human that is instinctive: devotion. They always find way to give vent to this instinct or need, to say. The women feel a great amount of devotion to this place. And they see it as a place which is worth devoting one's self to. This devotion is seen as religious dedication. There are women one the shrine who permanently live here. They will be discussed in detail in next chapter. But devotion can be seen in all women visiting or living in the shrine. This devotion is not only to the Shrine, but primarily this devotion is to the religion and the saint. Women can be seen practicing in devotion. One woman said: "This place is very important for me. It is part of my faith. It is so for many women who visit this place.

The devotion becomes clearly observable in the practices of women at the shrine and *Urs* (religious festivals). There chanting of the '*hakhoo*', a mantra which is chanted at the shrine every time shows their devotion. It not only shows this but also creates the devotion.

### **5.3.7 A Center that Serves People:**

The women believe that the saint is a selfless man who has been appointed by God to serve people. They see food which is distributed at the shrine, the hospital that gives them free medicines, and other spiritual things with great respect. These things services to people which are being given to them though the saint and the shrine. One respondent says: " this hospital gives many facilities to the people. We get free medicines. There are medicines for all our problems." By problems she was of course referring to minor medical conditions.

### **5.3.8 A Center that serves Religion:**

Not only that this shrine provides facilities like free medicines and other such things, but it is also seen as a place doing a great service for people. The saint with whose name this shrine is associated is said to have converted many people to Islam. Today, people visit the shrine for religious guidance. The current saint delivers sermon and urges people to come towards religion. He also gives his opinion on many religious matters. People

consult him in their religious affairs. The library run by the saint have a huge collection of books relating to the principles of Islam.

The women who come here are provided with religious guidance not only by the saint but also some trained women who live there. These women see this shrine as a center of Islam which provides guidance to the people. The reason for such perceptions also include the practices of the saint which are seen as a form of selflessness, the training of women on religious matters by some women at the shrine, and resources that are available at the shrine which are religious.

### **5.3.9 Faith and obligation:**

For most of the women, it is a matter of faith to stay attached with the shrine. It is a matter of love and religious obligation. The women believe that they cannot reach God without the saint. The saint is an intermediary who is very important. Being less attached towards the saint is seen as being less faithful. The old women are particularly rigid in this position.

This sense of love is understandable when the shrine is seen as a institution. It provides various kinds of services which are not available to people. It fill the religious gaps. It give them a sense of attachment to God and the Prophet (pbuh). Their love for shrines if to some extent directed towards God and the prophet (pbuh). And some part of it is created through rituals at the shrine.

### **5.3.10 Political Side:**

Having learnt that the family of the saint is politically active, the perceptions of the women about the political activities were inquired. For these women, who have less political consciousness, it was necessary to follow the saint in all matters no matter they are religious or political. For these women the political activities were a form of bringing fruits to the society. They think that such families should come into politics because these are good people.



While giving their opinion, their lack of interest in politics and their devotion to the saint were visible. It is a kind of faithful devotion in which less questions are asked because it is considered a matter of love to follow such people.

### **5.3.11 Holy Place:**

For the women who visit the shrine this place is very holy. They view it with great reverence. The same is true for the saint. Some respondents told me that for them this place was holier than any other place on the earth except Kaaba and the mosque of the prophet (pbuh). Their reverence was apparent in their rituals.

The holiness of this place for the women can be observed in their following of the ethics of this place. They follow ethic such as covering their heads, entering the shrine while chanting different religious things, respecting the premises and object at the shrine, and respecting the saint while visiting him. Their glances sometime tell that for them this place is very holy.

### **5.3.12 The Superstitious side:**

The women follow the ethic, practices and the saint at the shrine to extent of being superstitious. They think that breaking the rules will bring them some mistunes. Their problems will not be solved if they fail to respect and follow the ethics at the shrine. The women showed this superstitious behavior in their conduct at the shrine. A young girl who was not covering her head was told by her father who was with her to cover the head. Similarly, the anxious and eager faces of the women tell that they are fearful.

These superstitions are not limited to the shrine. They are part of female culture mostly in villages. In cities too, women tend to be superstitious. Even many educated women told about their superstitions. This superstitious behavior is because of fear that comes along being a member of lower socioeconomic strata. The women who come from this section of the society are automatically fearful of losing something because they already do not have much. But this behavior is not limited to lower socioeconomic strata only. There come changes in this behavior in exceptional cases. Such cases depend of childhood rearing and education.



### **5.3.13 Women Who Do Not Have Such Perceptions:**

Having told the story of the most of the women who were interviewed, there should also be voice given to those who cannot be categorized in these categories. There were women who did not have such perceptions. They were brought here by their family or some family member like mother or father. They were not strong believer of such things. These were young girls who did not have much consciousness about such affairs, girls who were educated, women who were from other sects or had their in-laws from other sects, and also such women who did not bothered about such things.

Some women came here just for the for purpose of visiting a shrine. It was because of importance of this shrine in the area. They were not serious in their conduct. But they too followed the code of ethics at the shrine. For some women this was just a experimental thing. They do not share perception with other women about the shrine and its miracles. They were either forced by their misfortunes or brought here by their families.

## **5.4 Reasons for visiting the Shrine:**

There are various reasons for which the women visit the shrine. Some of them are to cure diseases while other are social reasons. Medical reason cannot be seen and understood in isolation from social ones. Almost all social problems lead to medical conditions. Some of the problems are given below under headings that represent various broader categories of Problems:

### **5.4.1 Medical Problems:**

Women having various kinds of medical problems visit the shrine. These can be divided between major disease and minor diseases. The women having major disease include women with cancer, cardiac issues, respiratory problems, diseases caused by serious kinds of viruses. There is also difference in the periods for which the women have been visiting the shrines. Some of these had come here for the first. For some there have been years with disease, and years in visiting the shrine.

These women with major disease use medication for treatment of their problems. In opinion of most women these medications are ancillary to the faith-based practices at the

shrine. There are some women who are depressed by their disease because they have been with them for years.

Minor diseases include problems like fever which is a normal thing is if it not of a serious kind. Women living in the village near the shrine visit the shrine regularly for such problems.

The other kind can be called "functionality" problems. In this category fall the people who are handicapped or disabled who have no way to get their problems solved. Other problem in this category, which is very important and common, is infertility. The ratio of women visiting this place for their fertility problems is no ignorable. Some women who do not have fertility problems come here to pray for son. Behind it is a assumption that sons are not born due to some medical reason. It is also believed that misfortune brings daughter. The behavior is changing apparently, but it is no changing at a fast pace. A brief account of the medical problems that bring women to the shrine is given below.

#### **5.4.2 Blindness:**

There were female respondents who were suffering from blindness. Some women were born blind while some had developed blindness it later stages of life. There were also women who were suffering from different eye diseases and mild eye irritations. A woman told that: "When my daughter was born she could not open her eyes. A girl with even a small defect becomes burden for herself and her parents. It is due to this saint that she recovered from that condition. She still faces difficulty in seeing but that is better that being blind. I am thankful to Allah."

Most of the women who developed eye problems in later stages of life were older than others. There are young girls with weak eye sights. Among the women there were many different explanations of these disorders. But one thing that was common was that the healing methods available at the shrine could help them in recovering from these disorders.

### 5.4.3 Heart Problems:

In Pakistan women also face heart problems. As women do not have any significant attention directed towards these issues, the problems become severer and severer. They problem, most often, lie under focus. They keep developing until a stage comes when they become fatal. Other issues that are leading factors contributing to the development of such problems go unnoticed. The respondents who were interviewed had many medical problems they were related to heart or contributing towards heart problems such as high blood pressure etc. These problems often result from psychological factors such as depression etc. Therefore, the spiritual activities not only relieve these contributing factors but also considered by women as the healers of serious problems such as heart diseases.

In the category of these problems are not only included those women who develop such diseases due to social causes, but also the women who are born with such problems. For all of these women who visit the shrine and have such problems, shrine serves as a center of healing. Although there were women who were not recovering from such disorders completely, they say that whatever the improvement or means to solution of such problems were being provided to them were due to the blessing of the saint. For them it is a matter of faith that one has to resort to the divine favor for solution of such problems. More prominent was the case of a girl who was born with her a valve of her heart blocked. She was a regular visitor of the shrine. She reported that:" My condition was not very well in the beginning. I still do not have my problem solved. My family lacks the adequate resources to get me cured. But i have seen that my condition improves after I visit the shrine. I feel relaxed here. Staying away from depression helps in my case. I have also seen improvement in the economic condition of my family."

The shrine is also attractive to the women with condition such as blood pressure because they are provided with free medicines at the shrine. As these conditions, when they cause problems, are temporary, the medicines that give temporary relief from such diseases are seen by the women as blessings. They remain thankful to the saint and the shrine.

#### **5.4.4 Cancer:**

Out of all respondents the cases of cancer were two. Yet it is highly important to see that how women with such serious diseases resort to religious and mystical means to solve their problems. One of these cases was of ovarian cancer and the other was of breast cancer. Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers among women. The high costs involved in treatment of such diseases makes them even more serious. One of these respondents with cancers told that: " I have not been very long that i fell sick. When we went to doctor he told us after many tests that i was suffering from breast cancer. I lost all my hair in this disease. I am getting treatment. Doctors have cut one of breasts to avoid further development of the diseases. The doctor told us that there was another treatment available which was expensive. In that treatment my breast would have been saved. But we hardly afford the cheap treatment. Expensive treatment was impossible." She further told that it was not after the disease that she started coming to the shrine. it was much earlier in her life that she resorted to shrine for spiritual relief. She attributed the treatment that she is undergoing to the blessing of the shrine.

Women with such serious diseases come to the religious centers when they do not have means for solution of their problems. Moreover, the difficulties and the pain that they suffer in such serious diseases leaves them psychologically vulnerable. They come to the shrine to pray and cry. This spiritual exercise gives them courage and a sense of belonging to the world hereafter. The spiritual status of the saint and the exercises to give him reverence also give them psychological relief.

#### **5.4.5 Hepatitis:**

This is another common but serious disease found it the women who visit the shrine. It is more common in the women who come from lower economic background. These women, it appeared in interviews, face prolonged suffering from environmental and nutritional problems. In this group of women there were mostly middle aged. Lack of attention given to them by their families was a contributing factor. Most of these women were not from the area around the shrine. They had come from other areas of upper and central Punjab as well as Potwar region. Hepatitis is not a fatal disease. What makes it serious is the negligence shown by the families of the women suffering from it. The non-

availability of the medical facilities is also a contributing cause.

A woman visiting the shrine who had this medical condition told that: " I am from Deena (a small town near Jehlum). I live in a rented house. My husband is a driver. I fall sick every now and then. I have recently been diagnosed with Hepatitis C.." When asked about the treatment opportunities she replied: " I go to the government hospital near my house. We are poor and cannot afford expensive medical treatments. The fees of private doctors are very high. I have 6 children. My husband does not earn enough to support our family." In such cases, it is the most common account that women give for their diseases. Women with such diseases, it appears from the interviews as well as other accounts of the medical problems of women, believe more in the healing methods available at the shrines such as breath water and amulets.

#### 5.4.6 Diabetes:

It is a common medical condition among the people in Pakistan. And women are not an exception. It is not only a cause of discomfort itself but also a contributing factor leading to depression. The women who suffer from this condition report that they face difficulties in performing their everyday duties. Like hepatitis, the women suffering from this disease also believe that the healing methods such as dam and amulets can relieve one from the discomfort of diabetes if not solve it permanently.

It is more common in the elderly women. These women develop religious inclination as they grow older and weaker. One respondent who was old in age, when asked about the difficulties she faces, said that: " It is a suffering like no other. You cannot remain *pak* (pure). You cannot perform your religious duties with ease. I suffer from continuous discomfort as I have to take care of everything. This is due to my age as well as this disease." Similarly, other women also suffer from this discomfort. As this disease also has psychological effects - it affects functioning of the brain- (**reference**) the religious mode of healing is seen by women as working as it provides them with relief. The practices done at the shrine contain an element of divinity in themselves. This connection with the sacred makes feeling of purity among women. It assures them that they are connected with God through the saint and that they are in a pure realm of spirituality (as told by a respondent).



#### 5.4.7 Arthritis:

The women who suffer from arthritis live a life of great discomfort. It is commonly found in the women in Pakistan. The ways for its treatment are limited, and in many cases not effective. One respondent narrated her story which was very interesting: " I am suffering from arthritis since I was a child. It started from one incident. Once I saw a small man in the street in which my house is located. He was too small to be called a man. As he approached me I was frightened to see that he was not a man at all. It was some other being. When I came back to home i was curious. I prayed and asked God that I want to see that man. In the night when I was sleeping I saw that creature in my dream. It was a *jinn* (ghost). after that day I started to have fits. I used to lose my consciousness every now and then. Then I developed skin allergy. After some time, I grew weak. My family took me to doctors. They diagnosed that I was suffering from arthritis. Since that day arthritis is part of my life. I can remember that man even now. The image of that man shakes my soul."

This story was very interesting. The researcher, not being a psychologist, could not discern the real reason and nature of her psychological condition but it revealed that the concepts of spirits and ghost have a strong existence in the minds of the people. These concepts have cultural meanings. They affect the medical conditions of people.

A patient who is suffering from a disease of pain like arthritis cannot escape the fact that she has to face it every day. The pain faced by these women is beyond imagination as it involves not only physical discomfort but also the psychological pain. Not only that, these women also have to face difficulties in their relationships. A woman suffering from this disease said that: " I did love marriage. My husband accepted the fact that I could not conceive baby due to this disease. I am still childless. But my in-laws did not know this at that moment. I am now facing threats from my mother in-law that she will force my husband to marry once ageing with a fertile woman. It is a cause off great depression for me." Similarly, these women face difficulties in their day to day activities. In such cases, where ways are limited, the shrine serves as a center of great comfort for the women.

#### **5.4.8 Fertility issues:**

These issues concern women the most. It is because of social expectation and social barriers that the women facing these issues find themselves under a great psychological pressure. Women are not always responsible for not having a child or being fertile enough for producing a desired number of children by their families. The infertility in men is not recognized. Even when it is recognized it is hidden because of an element of shame attached with infertile men. Consequently, women have to carry all the burden on their shoulder.

Many women who visit the shrine come here to pray for their fertility, some women who are fertile enough to give birth to female off sprigs come her to pray for a son. Normally, in-laws pressurize women in such cases. A hanging sword of their husbands' second marriage continuously haunts them. A respondent told her story that: " I gave birth to three daughters. But my husband was not happy. He married another woman who gave birth to three sons for him. I kept coming to the shrine. I have recently given birth to a son. After that my respect has increased in the eyes of my husband. He now takes care of me more than ever before." It appears that a woman's life after marriage is dependent on the fertility she has. The women with infertility have to bear a lot of pressure.

All respondents who were with these cases were not only coming to the shrine but also visiting doctors for their cases. They believed that the treatment given to them at the medical clinics can cure them only when they prayed at the shrine. The women can narrate many stories of miracles in which the women who could not give birth to a son came here and their prays were heard. One woman who gave birth to six daughters told that she came here at the shrine, the saint gave her some water and sugar after breathing it. He also asked her that she would be given a son if she promised to give him religious education. She say that she then gave birth of a son. It was a miracle for her.

#### **5.4.9 Skin Problems:**

The shrine is not exclusive for any kind of condition. Women come here whenever they feel any kind of discomfort or misfortune. The system of amulets and breath water at the

shrine is used frequently by the women for solution of their skin problems. These skin problems range from small skin irritation to serious problems like burn scars. On respondent who was visiting the shrine for this reason told that: " it is believed in our village that you can visit the shrine for every kind of problem. Girls often come here for their skin problems. I am suffering from skin irritation. For the first time when I came here the saint gave me breath water for my problems." When asked about recovery she told that: "yes our problems are solved that is why we come here."

The hospital at the shrine provides medicines for small skin problems. The women who come to the shrine often get free medicines from this hospital. It is amazing to note that women report that their problems, which look critically medical, are solved just from coming here. In their view it is miracle of the Shrines. Particularly important are the visits made by young girls with these problems. They too undergo the same rituals that are undertaken by every woman.

#### **5.4.10 Bone Problems:**

Apart from arthritis, women also suffer from other bone problems. It is due to the negligence shown by women towards their nutrition. Genetic conditions are also important in this regard. Some respondents reported that they were suffering from continuous bone pain in their muscle and bones. For them the real cause of their suffering was unknown as most of them regarded these problems with negligence. For them these were minor problems unworthy of detailed medical checkup. Coming to the shrine and praying here was an effective way of solving these problems.

There were some young girls who were very weak. They had weak bones and overall physique. Also included in these cases were the girls who were less physically healthy as compared to the socially constructed feminine standards. These women were self-conscious. They were visiting the shrine to have a healthy physical stature. They were eager to get breathed sugar from the saint for their '*kamzori*' (weakness). Women visiting for the solution of their bone problems said that they recover from their condition when

they visit the shrine.

#### **5.4.11 Deformities:**

In this society were normal women have to face great difficulties in living a comfortable life, the question of the women with genetically deformed bodies is birth of sympathy and importance. Women with deformed bodies often do not have adequate facilities to get medical treatment. Addition to this misery is the second-class status granted to them by the society. They are left helpless and wandering with no permanent solution for their miseries. They then need, meaning to their life, mental relief and sympathy to endure a life of many years- so long to live.

Religion and the concept of hereafter gives some meaning to their life. They are told that they will be rewarded for their sufferings one day. They then become inclined towards religion. And the women who come from family background having link with saints and shrines, the mystical tradition of Sufism become a abode to hide and find satisfaction in. The women, especially mothers of young girls with deformed bodies come to the shrine with this purpose in their minds.

There is no permanent solution to their problems in most of the cases. However, they tell that coming to the shrine gives them hope that their problems will be solved. They also narrate stories in which the problems of women who had deformed bodies were solved. A respondent told that: " There is a girl in our neighborhood who was handicapped from birth. Her mother used to bring here every week. Now that girl is fine. She is like all other girls now." Whether the problems of these women and girls are solved or not, the mere fact of coming to the shrine has importance for them. They have faith. And they believe that this faith will give them a better life one day if not now.

#### **5.4.12 Small Problems:**

Besides from these serious problems, women also visit the shrine whenever a problem arises. A respondent was visiting the shrine for her toothache. There were many women who visit the shrine as soon as they get fever or their children get fever. They come here and perform the rituals which are same for all. The shrine is for all problems. One respondent was asked about why they come to the shrine for every problem, she said: "

Because God can solve every problem.

## **5.5 Psychological Problems:**

Women face many psychological problems which face negligence. Most often the serious psychological problems are explained in terms of religion. The local culture of women also contributes to these interpretations. For example, in most of the cases that are faced by the women when they achieve puberty, the anxiety and depression of that stage is seen as possession by spirits. Therefore, the women come to shrine for solution of these problems.

### **5.5.1 Depression:**

Hope has been given an important place in religious tradition. The women who suffer from depression are not given attention in most of the cases. And when they are given attention, they are told to keep hope in God. Although the significance of this hope cannot be questioned, it is not understood by people that these women are facing psychological conditions which need proper treatment. These gaps in understanding lead women to shrines.

Many women were seen on the shrine who would go in 'sessions of crying'. They were critically depressed from their lives. They would sit and recite special recitations to get freedom from the ghost of darkness that haunts them. Their depression is an unending misery. The shrine provides important function in these cases. The women who have nowhere to go and heard, have a place where they think they come closer to God. The recitations provide them with temporary relief. The spiritual culture of the shrine heals them. The 'sessions of crying' give vent to their suppressed being which need ears to hear, and eyes to be seen.

### **5.5.2 Phobias:**

Like other psychological disorders, the phobias which are serious concern for psychology today are among the problems faced by the women. One respondent said that: "I cannot sleep at night. When I close my eyes, I feel that my neck is being tightly squeezed. I start to lose my breath. I cannot sleep then for hours." There were many women who were telling their stories to each other that they were frightened of spirits. Some women said



that they saw spirits in their houses. One woman said that: " my house is under possession of jinn (ghost). I have a little daughter. One day she went missing, I searched for her everywhere. After some time, she appeared from the house. After that day I have been coming to the shrine."

### **5.5.3 Bad Dreams:**

Bad dreams are one of the problems that keep women depressed. They see spirits in their dreams. They explain such dream in religious and cultural terms. For example, when a woman sees ghost in her dream she is thought as impure. Other women recommend her to keep herself religiously pure. Women reported that they stopped having such dreams after they came to the shrine.

### **5.5.4 Stress after Traumas:**

Losing a loved one, or facing some critical medical condition fills women with stress. There was a woman at the shrine who lost her son some years back. She was very old. She said that she comes here every week to pray for her son who was died in a car accident. Similarly, there were many women who came here to get relief from the stress that they have to endure after trauma. The shrine plays an important part in this regard.

## **5.6 Reasons for facing these problems:**

### **5.6.1 Socio-economic problems:**

Most of the women who come to the shrine come from lower socio-economic strata of the society. Therefore, the problems faced by them become self-explanatory. The women facing medical conditions do not afford treatment. That lack of resources brings them to the shrine. Similarly, the women who are from low socio-economic strata are more prone towards developing psychological disorders which contribute to medical conditions. Prolonged depression being one of the.

These women from lower socio-economic background are often strong in faith because it

the only relief that they can get. They are strong believers of the miraculous powers of the shrines and saints. They are more eager than other women to perform ritual at the shrines. These rituals give them a sense of assurance. Spiritual relief is the other element that they get from these shrines.

### **5.6.2 Nutritional issues:**

Women face nutritional issues because of their social status. They often act negligently towards their health due to the fact that it is not given much importance in the society. The lower socio-economic status acts as a severing cause towards these problems. This negligence in nutrition leads them to development of the medical problems.

### **5.6.3 Lack of Medical Facilities:**

Being from lower socio-economic strata means that one has limited access to medical facilities. The women who were interviewed told that they could not afford expensive medical treatments. There were some cases which do not fall in this category. But on overall basis this was the case.

### **5.6.4 Spiritual Needs:**

People visit shrines for many psychological needs that go unnoticed and untreated. It is in part because of the way problems are defined in society, and in part, due to lack of facilities. Many women reported that they were visiting the shrine because they get relaxed here. It gives them strength to endure difficulties. Some women came who were interviewed had signs of serious depression. They did not feel any attachment towards life.

Some girls who came here with their mothers or families had problems which in any other place having mental health facilities would have been defined as serious problems.

### **5.6.5 Due to Beliefs:**

Some women who were interviewed for knowing the reasons for their visit said that they visited the shrine due to spiritual devotion. They felt that the saint was worthy of devotion and love. For them the only reason for visiting the shrine was their reverence for the saint.

## **5.7 Social Reasons:**

### **5.7.1 Education:**

Some women who were interviewed told educational reasons for visiting the shrine. It is normally held by the women especially young girls that by visiting the shrine and praying here their educational grades will increase. Among these women most were young girls studying in school, college and universities. There were mothers of some boys also who stated that they had spent a lot on their son's education, and come here to pray for their success.

### **5.7.2 Resolution of Conflict:**

People come here for resolution of their conflicts. They come here especially when they are belonging to lower socioeconomic status. One woman told me that:

*"my son is in jail for a fight he did with our relatives. I am talking to my relatives to forgive him. I have come here to pray for my son."*

## **5.8 Family Disputes:**

It is the most common reason found during interviews. Family disputes range from disputes with in-laws to disputes with husband. Women reported that their in-laws or husband behave with them badly. Some of them were brought here by their mothers while others had come on their own.

### **5.8.1 Relationship Problems:**

The women who face problems in their relationship appeared to be more depressed than other during the study. These women also had a negligent attitude towards their own health. The strain put over them by relationship problems acts as a leading cause towards other problems. A respondent told that: " I used to be an easy and happy going girl before my marriage. After my marriage, my relationship with my husband was strained from the very beginning. At this stage I developed depression. All the colors of my life have faded away." Some common relationship problems are given below.

### **5.8.2 Relation with husbands:**

Women often face strained relationships with their husband. Such family matters are many women due to magic being done with them. In such cases, the only way for the women remains to consult spiritual healers for elimination of the effects of magic. The most important spiritual healers are saints. They, therefore, come to the shrines and resort to the help of saints. The respondents told that shrine and saint have been effective in solving their problems. They are of the view that all ill effect culminating from misfortune and magic can be warded off through these procedures.

### **5.8.3 Relation with in-laws**

Like strained relationship with husbands, difficult relationship with in-laws are an important factor that lead women to the shrine. Such state of affairs depresses women and leads them to more serious problems. They seek refuge in shrine for such matters.

### **5.8.4 Relation with children:**

Some women who were mothers of children and older in age told that they have come to the shrine to have better relationship with their children who were being disrespectful to them or not treating them well. Such women too attribute such behavior of their children to magic. To ward off its effect, the shrine is a pure and effective place.

## **5.9 Marriage:**

Young girls and their mother visit the shrine for marriage their marriages. One respondent told me that:

*" It has become hard to find good mates for our girls. My daughter has completed university education. I have come here to pray. I will get a amulet for marriage of my daughter."*

There was a time when all the marriages of the young women were arranged. With modernization (however limited it is) the young girls have come to realize that they too can fall in love, and marry with their choice. There was a girl at the shrine who confided that she wanted to marry a young man who was currently in UAE. Her family was not giving permission of the marriage because that man was not of her caste. She told that she has visited at least four shrine and performed rituals there to get her desire fulfilled.

There is a prevailing problem of girls not getting married due to unavailability of suitable men. Mothers of women, and sometime their fathers too, come to the shrine to pray for marriage of their daughters. Some women have become mature enough to marry. Still their parents come here and ask the saint to pray for their daughter's marriage.

## **5.10 Economic Reasons:**

### **5.10.1 Increasing Income:**

Women visiting the shrines usually come from lower economic class. This fact of being economically underprivileged causes different kinds of difficulties for them. Some women had come here only for elevation of their socioeconomic status. They believed that if there were any sins or fate blocking the way of their economic wellbeing it would get solved by visiting the shrine and asking the saint to pray.

### **5.10.2 Jobs:**

This ratio was low because many women interviewed came from the village. Urban women said that they came here to pray for their jobs. Some had applied for government services. To get that jobs they were performing many rituals at the shrine.



### **5.10.3 For House:**

Many people live in the rented houses. Most of the women resent that fact that even after getting married, their only wish to live in a house owned by themselves or their husband has not been fulfilled. These are mostly poor women. They come to the shrine to pray for their own house.

## **5.11 Reasons for facing these problems:**

### **5.11.1 Socio-economic problems:**

Most of the women who come to the shrine come from lower socio-economic strata of the society. Therefore, the problems faced by them become self-explanatory. The women facing medical conditions do not afford treatment. That lack of resources brings them to the shrine. Similarly, the women who are from low socio-economic strata are more prone towards developing psychological disorders which contribute to medical conditions. Prolonged depression being one of the.

These women from lower socio-economic background are often strong in faith because it is the only relief that they can get. They are strong believers of the miraculous powers of the shrines and saints. They are more eager than other women to perform rituals at the shrines. These rituals give them a sense of assurance. Spiritual relief is the other element that they get from these shrines.

### **5.11.2 Nutritional issues:**

Women face nutritional issues because of their social status. They often act negligently towards their health due to the fact that it is not given much importance in the society. The lower socio-economic status acts as a severing cause towards these problems. This negligence in nutrition leads them to development of the medical problems.

### **5.11.3 Lack of Medical Facilities:**

Being from lower socio-economic strata means that one has limited access to medical facilities. The women who were interviewed told that they could not afford expensive medical treatments. There were some cases which do not fall in this category. But on overall basis this was the case.

## 6 Practices at the shrine

### 6.1 Introduction:

The women who visit the shrine perform various kinds of activities there. Some of these activities are part of the code of the shrine, others are performed by women on their own and have become a part of the culture of the shrine. There are same activities for most of problems. But some activities or practices are performed for special or serious problems. These activities revolve around one principle: reverence for the saint due to recognition of his spiritual status. The element of respect and love is apparent in all activities.

### 6.2 Spending Three Nights at the Shrine:

Some women face very serious problems like a chronic disease or some other problem causing a lot of suffering for them. One way of solving such problems is spending three nights at the shrine. These women do recitations of different kinds and take part in service of the shrine. For them spending some time in service of the shrine can offset misfortune. It can also bring fortune for them.

These women try to serve other women. They, in this period of time, develop a good communication with the other women. They share each other's sufferings and grievances. This communication helps them in solacing their pains. They also share within themselves respect of the shrine. This spending night at the shrine is a ritual that help the production of a sense of being one with the shrine. While living in the shrine, women maintain seclusion from males. They regard it as a necessary thing. There are, exceptions every where

In most of the cases the problems for which women spend this time at the shrine in serious in nature. One respondent was spending time here because she could not conceive a baby. She said: " I am very depressed. I am visited many doctors. My husband spends a lot of money on me. Yet I cannot conceive." Other woman was there because she was suffering from arthritis. Her husband was attracted towards her anymore. She told that her husband wants to marry again. there was here because for her son who was out of

country struggling with his career. But some problems which do not appear serious for other people are perceived as serious by some women.

Most of the women who spend three nights here do so because of their "*mannat*". Once a *mannat* is fulfilled they come here and spend this time. But some also spend this time before "*mannat*". They stay here and pray. For some women this acts marks devotion. They stay here just because of their faith and love. In this category most women are elderly. Not all women come here with permission of their husbands or family. Some women told that they came here without knowledge of their husbands.

This activity creates a lot of satisfaction among the women. Causes of this satisfaction cannot be known clearly. This is perhaps because of the psychological attachment with the shrine, this satisfaction gives them solace. It might be because of the sense of being one with other women who are also suffering. Their communication with these women gives vent to their otherwise suppressed emotions. Or this is merely because of devotion.

### 6.3 Meeting the Saint:

Women flock to this place in urgency of their needs, anxieties of their sufferings and devotion of their love. For all these women, the time of greatest importance comes when the gate of the current saint's place is opened in *asr* (two hours before sunset). They go in with their anxieties and come back with a support to their grievances. The saint becomes a man who can assure them that their sufferings will end, or at least bring some rewards for them at some time.

In the room where the saint sits women are not usually allowed. They can visit him only in the time specially allocated for them. While in room they are not supposed to sit too closely to the saint. They have to maintain some distance. This distance is due to respect, and more importantly, because of Islamic principles. They tell him about their sufferings and ask for help. The faces of women are often in a position with lowered eyes. They assume that this respect will bring them end of their problems. They give expression to their emotions in phrases like: "my life is in troubles please help me". They often start crying. Saint gives one or two sentences of assurance to them and then prescribes something like an amulet. One woman was saying to the saint: "I feel a lot of pain due to

this disease. I cannot even work. My life has become a hell. My husband does not afford medicines....". And then she started to weep.

Women do not hesitate to share their problems with the saint. They, however, use respectful language when sharing their problems. Greater details are not allowed due to limited time. Women must dress properly within the shrine and especially when meeting the saint. Their heads should be covered. They must show respect.

#### **6.4 Amulet:**

One thing that the saint gives to women is an amulet. They is only one amulet given to all women. Some women are told to keep this amulet with them every time. Others are asked to put it in water and then drink water. There is also not any difference between the amulet given for medical conditions and social problems. Women take this amulet with great respect.

Not all women use the amulet in this way. They do perform what is said to them but also do other things out of their need or superstitions. Some women regard the amulet with great respect, in fact to the extent of superstition. They kiss it and touch it with their eyes. They keep it in the places where they are having problems. Some women even have got it framed and put on their walls of rooms.

It is a normal behavior among them women coming here to try to have amulet. Some women ask the saint to give them the amulet. The amulet gives them the satisfaction that they have something. It is like a medicine for them which is supposed to cure them. It is interesting to note that women report changes in their conditions after using the amulet. One woman said: " of course it is affective. Whenever I face some problem I come here and take the amulet from the saint. It solves the problem."

The amulet is kept with great care by the women. It is considered sacred by them. They try to protect its respect by keeping it in safe place. However, the behavior also varies among some women. They do respect it but do not show it by doing the same things that the other women do.

## 6.5 Azkar:

*Azkars* or recitations are important part of the rituals in Sufism- and Islam in general. Islamic scholars emphasize that Quranic verses can be used for different purposes. In Sufism, this practice is emphasized more. For a person who wants to attain a certain status spiritually, or want to get his problems solved, these recitations can help. There is no unified system of these *azkars* as different *azkars* are prescribed. There are many kinds of enchantments having different uses. They have supposed to have different affects.

At this shrine, women spend a good amount of time reciting Quran. Some women even spend whole day reciting Quran. Excluding Quranic verses, other *azkars* are also prescribed. These *azkars* are thought to have different effects. The purpose of a zikr or its supposed effect can be judged from its content. Some *azkars* include name of God which relate to specific problem. For example, a zikr having name of the God '*razik*' of sustainer, is enchanted for solution of economic problems. Similarly, a zikr having name of God, *Al Shafi* (curer) is enchanted for solution of medical problems.

The most important practice done by the women at the shrine is recitation of different verses of Quran for different purposes. Other *azkars* include:

### 6.5.1 Haqhoo.

It is a special zikr which is chanted and recited every time by men and women at the shrine. Women report that this zikr (recitation) takes them into another realm. They find satisfaction in the passion that it generates. One woman told that: " Thiszikr gives me energy. I feel elevated. I think that this world is nothing. If there is anything true that is the God. This zikr is thought to have special effects. It is a very strong zikr which brings blessings from the God. "This zikr is very close to God," said one woman when asked about why she recites it.



## 6.5.2 Khatam e Khwajgan.

This is a special khatam which is to be recited by a murid in presence of the saint, it is, however, recited also in absence of the saint. Its recitation is seen as extremely beneficial in the *Naqshabandia* order. It can be recited daily. But it is more often recited once in a week.

### ختم خواجگان نقشبندی

ختم خواجگان پڑھنے کے سنیے چادر ایک سو گیارہ دہانے لازمی ہیں۔ عاتق بنا کر باقاعدہ نظم و ضبط کے ساتھ اجتماعی طور پر یا انفرادی طور پر پڑھ سکتے ہیں۔ فضول باتوں سے پرہیز، کامل یکسوئی اور رجوع کے ساتھ اسے حسرت کی تلاوت کی جائے۔

ہر بار شروع میں بسم اللہ ضرور پڑھیں

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ ۝

۷ بار	الْحَمْدُ شَرِيف
۱۰۰ بار	درو شریف
۹ بار	سُورَةُ الْاَنْعَامِ نَشْرَح
۱۰۰۰ بار	سورة اخلاص
۷ بار	الْحَمْدُ شَرِيف
۱۰۰ بار	درو شریف
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا قَاضِيَ الْحَاجَاتِ
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا حَلَّ الْمُسْكَلاتِ
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا رَافِعَ الْمُرْتَبَاتِ
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا شَافِيَ الْأَمْرَاضِ
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا مُسَبِّبَ الْأَسْبَابِ
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا دَلِيلَ الْمُتَحَيِّرِينَ
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا خَيْرَ النَّاصِحِينَ
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا خَيْرَ الْخَاطِبِينَ
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا خَيْرَ الرَّاقِينَ
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا كَامِلِي الْمُهَمَّاتِ
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا دَافِعَ الْبَلِيَّاتِ
۱۱۱ بار	اللّٰهُمَّ يَا مُنْزِلَ الْبَرَكَاتِ

۱۱۱ بار	اللَّهُمَّ يَا مُجِيبَ الدُّعَوَاتِ
۱۱۱ بار	اللَّهُمَّ يَا مَقْلِبَ الْقُلُوبِ وَالْأَبْصَارِ
۱۱۱ بار	اللَّهُمَّ يَا مَخْرِجَ الْمَحْزُونِينَ
۱۱۱ بار	يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ
۱۱۱ بار	يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَحْمَنُ يَا رَحِيمُ
۱۱۱ بار	أَنْتَ الْهَادِي أَنْتَ الْحَقُّ لَيْسَ الْهَادِي إِلَّا هُوَ
۱۱۱ بار	اللَّهُمَّ يَا غِيَاثَ الْمُسْتَغِيثِينَ
۱۱۱ بار	أَعِزَّنِي يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ
۱۱۱ بار	چوں گدائے مستمند المدد خواہم ز شاہ نقشبند
۱۱۱ بار	بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ
<p>اللَّهُمَّ آمِينَ</p> <p>مندرجہ ذیل اساتے تین تین بار پڑھ کر فی اثبات کا ذکر کریں</p> <p>خُسْبِي رَبِّي جَلَّ اللَّهُ. مَا فِي قَلْبِي غَيْرَ اللَّهِ. حَقَّ اللَّهُ مَوْجُودَ اللَّهِ. نُورُ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ</p> <p>لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ</p> <p>أَنْتَ الْهَادِي أَنْتَ الْحَقُّ لَيْسَ الْهَادِي إِلَّا هُوَ</p> <p>اللَّهُ هُوَ</p> <p>مراقبہ کم از کم پانچ منٹ</p> <p>شجرہ شریف پڑھ کر تمام حاجات کے لئے دعا کریں</p>	

Figure 4 Khatam e Khawajgan

بار ۱۱۱	اللَّهُمَّ يَا مُجِيبَ الدُّعَوَاتِ
بار ۱۱۱	اللَّهُمَّ يَا مُنْقِلِبَ الْقُلُوبِ وَالْأَبْصَارِ
بار ۱۱۱	اللَّهُمَّ يَا مُخْرِجَ الْمُخْرُوجِينَ
بار ۱۱۱	يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ
بار ۱۱۱	يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَحْمَنَ يَا رَحِيمَ
بار ۱۱۱	أَنْتَ الْهَادِي أَنْتَ الْحَقُّ لَيْسَ الْهَادِي إِلَّا هُوَ
بار ۱۱۱	اللَّهُمَّ يَا غِيَاثَ الْمُسْتَغِيثِينَ
بار ۱۱۱	اغْنِنِي يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ
بار ۱۱۱	چوں گدائے مستمند المدد خواہم ز شاہ نقشبند
بار ۱۱۱	بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ
<p>اللَّهُمَّ آمِينَ  مندرجہ ذیل اسمائے حسنیٰ تین تین بار پڑھ کر فی اثبات کا ذکر کریں  حَسْبِيَ رَبِّي جَلَّ اللَّهُ. مَا فِي قَلْبِي غَيْرَ اللَّهِ. حَقَّ اللَّهُ مَوْجُودَ اللَّهِ. نُورِ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ  لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ  أَنْتَ الْهَادِي أَنْتَ الْحَقُّ لَيْسَ الْهَادِي إِلَّا هُوَ  اللَّهُ هُوَ  مراقبہ کم از کم پانچ منٹ  شجرہ شریف پڑھ کر تمام حاجات کے لئے دعا کریں</p>	

### 6.5.3 Different Daily Azkars:

These are different *azkars* prescribed in the *Naqshbandia* orders. The women keep reciting them at the shrine. Most of these zikrs have the name of God in them. Due to this reason they are considered very useful by the women.

اعوذ باللہم نالہ شیطان الرجیم

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

تک فرونہ اندکروند اندر کموا شکر والہ ولا

رضاکمط لوبی

و

الہ یاد تمہ قصودی

"My Lord, you are my destination and your contentment is my goal."

<b>Hasbee</b>	<b>Rabbi</b>	<b>JalAllah -</b>	حسب ربى جلا لله
My Rab (Lord, Sustainer), the Majestic Allah is enough for me			
<b>Maa</b>	<b>fee</b>	<b>QalbeeGhair</b>	<b>Allah -</b>
There is none besides Allah in my Heart			
<b>Haq</b>	<b>Allah Maujood Allah -</b>		حقا له موجود الله
Allah is Truth and He is Present			
<b>Noor-e-Muhammad</b>	<b>SalAllah -</b>		نور محمد صلا الله
Blessings of Allah be upon the Light of Muhammad SallallahuAlaihiWasallam			
<b>LaaMatloobailLah -</b> له لا مطلوب الا الله			
I seek none except Allah			
<b>LaaMaqsoodailLah -</b>			لا مقصود الا الله
There is no objective in my life except Allah (pleasure, closeness etc.)			
<b>LaaMashHoodailLah -</b>			لا مشهود الا الله
All things are manifestations of none other than Allah			
<b>LaaMasjoodailLah -</b> سجود الا الله لا م			
There is none worthy of worship except Allah			
<b>LaaMa'aboodailLah -</b>			لا معبود الا الله
There is no Lord except Allah			
<b>La</b>	<b>ilahailLah -</b>		لا اله الا الله
There is no God But Allah			
<b>MuhammadurRasulullah -</b>			محمد رسولا الله
Muhammad (SallallahuAlaihiWasallam) is the (Last And Final Prophet And) Messenger Of Allah			

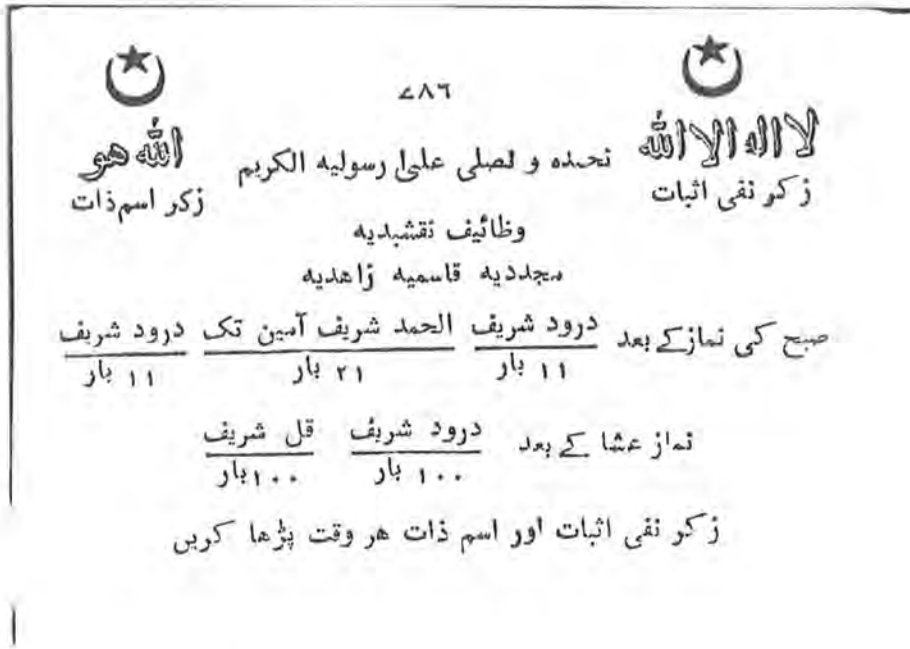


Figure 5 Amulet and Zikr

#### 6.5.4 Shajra Sharif:

Shajra Sharif is a chart of the *Naqshbandia* order. In it there are names of different saints. It is in format of a poem. It is read aloud and in low voice to seek favour of God for solution of the problems.

For women at the shrine these *azkars* not only provide satisfaction but also bring changes to their lives. When inquired about opinion about these *azkars* on respondent told: "Reciting these *azkar* is *sawab* (divine reward). I come here and recite them to provide myself with satisfaction... I first time started these *azkars* when I was young. I was told by my mother that these *azkars* will help me in solving my problems."



مشفقہ و مستحسن شجرہ شریف ذمہ دارانہ قاسم زاهدیہ  
موہڑہ شریف

قاسم الانوار زاہد کا بیوی دربار ہے  
اے کہ طالب گر تجھے فضل خدا درکار ہے  
ہوتا ہی کو ہی حاصل لذت دیدار ہے  
رحمتیں برس خدا اپنی رحمتی کے لئے  
فضل تیرا ہر گھڑی درکار ہے  
فضل کر یارب تو ذات کبریٰ کے واسطے  
حضرت صدیق اکبر خوابہ سلمان کے طفیل  
مشکلیں آسان کر اور دے صراط مستقیم  
خوابہ یوسف خوابہ خالق خوابہ عارف کے لئے  
خوابہ محمود علی بابا سہمی و کمال  
شاہ بہادر الدین قبلہ عرف شاہ نقشبند  
شاہ عارف الدین یعقوب و عبید اللہ شاہ  
خوابہ اسٹاک باقی باللہ جو تجھے محبوب ہیں  
شاہ مجدد الف ثانی وائلی سرہند شریف  
شاہ حسین عبدالباقی عبدالقادر پیشوا  
شاہ عنایت اللہ صاحب حافظہ و عبدالمہدور  
خواجگان عبدالغفور عبدالحمید عبدالعزیز  
شاہ نظام الدین قبلہ وائلی کنیاں شریف  
خوابہ زاہد ولی حقیقی وارث موہڑہ شریف  
مجھ کو جن کے فیض سے تیرا تعلق سے عطا  
نور چشم خان صاحب آفتاب احمد ولی  
روشن دربار و حلقہ خوش مزاج و بادشاہ  
رکھ مجھے مقبول اور محبوب بندوں میں خدا  
ان مشائخ کا وسیلہ پیش کرتا ہوں خدا  
یا الٰہی ہو ہمیشہ بے حد درود بے حد سلام

نور سے پر نور ہے اور فیض کا گزار ہے  
خاکپائے موہڑوی بن جا تو بیڑا پار ہے  
ضوکہ صدق دل سے اس در کا سب دربار ہے  
مشکلیں آسان کر اپنی کریمی کے لئے  
تو کرم کر دے تو بیڑا پار ہے  
سید کونین شاہ انبیاء کے واسطے  
خوابہ قاسم خوابہ جمعہ پر فناء کے واسطے  
بابا زید و یونس شاہ ابو العلی کے واسطے  
حب احمد کر عطا ان با عطا کے واسطے  
محو رکھ توحید میں ان اولیاء کے واسطے  
دین و دنیا کو عطا اس پیشوا کے واسطے  
خوابہ زاہد خوابہ درویش با خدا کے واسطے  
مشکلیں حل کر میری ان پارسا کے واسطے  
عشق احمد کر عطا اس بادشاہ کے واسطے  
خوابہ محمود خوابہ عبدالغنی کے واسطے  
گل محمد مانگی والے شہا کے واسطے  
شاہ ملوک عاشق ذات خدا کے واسطے  
بابا جی قاسم امام الاولیاء کے واسطے  
خان صاحب پیر کامل پیشوا کے واسطے  
مرتبہ ان کا بزحما بدرالدینی کے واسطے  
صیت اللہ قاسمی پیر ہدا کے واسطے  
دین و دنیا کر عطا پیر کیمرٹ بادشاہ کے واسطے  
معرفت کا نور دے جس اہلنی کے واسطے  
فضل کر یارب تو ان سب اولیاء کے واسطے  
سید اکوئین ختم الانبیاء کے واسطے

Figure 6 Shajra Sharif

### 6.5.5 Mannat:

Women make *mannat* at the shrine. *Mannat* is an act in which a person pledges to give or perform something for God or the saint if her problem is solved. Women having disease normally do this. They, at most, of the time pledge to spend three nights her, give food in langar, or do some other acts mostly for the service of people of the saint. They mostly take *mannat* to perform whatever task pledged to perform in the premises of the shrine. A woman's case seemed miraculous when she narrated her story:

" I was second heart attack three months ago. My daughter came here and made *mannat* for me to give food in the *langarkhana* (food is provided here for free) if my health improved. Doctors were amazed at my recovery. Now I am fine."

There are myriad for stories of this kind. Women can tell hundreds of them in which people were gained health and a good life by taking *mannat* here. It is a matter of belief for them. Some women who do not afford giving langar, or even spending a single night here make *mannat* to recite Quran in complete or completing a khatam or completion of a zikr. The khatam can consist of reciting a zikr for up to one lac times.

#### **6.5.6 Langer as healer:**

One of the faith-based activities performed by women at the shrine is eating langar with intention of healing or solving their problem. It is an exercise of faith. The ordinary for -if it had been in some other place- is considered sacred when it arrives or is made as langar at the shrine. Women say that it has special qualities. It is matter of intention. If one eats it with intention of getting cured or solving other problems, it can do that. They say that it is because it is considered special food having because of having relation with the sacred.

#### **6.5.7 Raza I Ilahi:**

In all these practices, and through individual efforts as deemed appropriate by the women, *Raza i ilahi* (Divine favor) is sought. This divine favor is seen as solution of all problems of this world and hereafter. Some women not only want blessing in this world but also in the world hereafter.

The reason for counting *Raza i ilahi* as a separate practice is because it not only is sought by the practices mentioned above but also through individual efforts. For example, some women can be found in doing the practices which are not done commonly like reciting special *azkars* or finding some time to sit alone crying in prayer. Because it is preached that *raza i ilahi* should be sought, so women try to perform special things out of love.

## 6.6 Case Studies:

### 6.6.1 Case Study 1:

A woman who has been visiting the shrine since childhood shared her experiences and problems. Her name was Saba (name changed to hide the identity of the respondent). She told that her family was permanent visit of the shrine. Her father was a boy when he became a devotee at this shrine. She said: " I even do remember when I came her for the first time. All i can tell is that i have been coming here since childhood." She is now suffering from diabetes and acute muscle pain. She comes here often and spends whole day here in recitation of Quran and other *azkar*. She says that: " there is nothing in our life but faith. Faith is very important for our lives because if you are not attached with Islam you will not find anything in this world or hereafter."

She has a lot of respect for the saints both the present one and the original saint who settled first here. She considers them to be an embodiment of all virtues. Her faith in the shrine and the saint is unshakeable. According to her: " I have witnessed a lot of people with my eyes who come here and return cured. I myself am an example. If I do not come here my illness gets severe."

Her socioeconomic status is not very high. She says that she has enough to feed her and her children. Her husband has a small shop in the village. Her three out of four children have left education while the youngest is studying. She told about other details of her life: " Initially, my husband was not very good with me. We lived in a joint family. It was with time and age that his attitude changed towards me." In all her conversation on thing was frequent: refence to the saint with title Baba Ji. She now brings her youngest son with her sometimes got pray for him.

### 6.6.2 Case Study 2:

A woman whose name was AmmerBibi was from the village. She was diagnosed for cancer two years ago. Since then, she is regularly brought here by her husband. Sometimes she comes with her sister. She has got all her hair gone. Her suffering in this

condition reminds one of the pains life can bring. With less means to cover the expenses incurred in medicines, this place is more than a hospital- a heaven. For her the recitation of Quran here is something that has effects on the spirit. She gets satisfaction from it. She says: " I am suffering from great pain. I think that why i am alive. I even lose my senses sometimes. My sister who tells me to have patience. I feel for my husband. He cannot earn enough to afford the expenses of treatment. He has a lot of other important things to do. I find myself helpless. Then my sister or husband bring me to the shrine. They think that the prayers of the saint can help me. I come here and recite Quran. The saint gives me breath-water. All these things give me solace which I cannot explain. In all these pains only, faith can protect a person."

When she talked about her pain, her eyes dipped into water. One thinks that if there had not been a place like this shrine to provide her with satisfaction, then she might not have survived even these two years. The psychological effect or the "spiritual effect"- as most people call the- brought about by the faith-based practices at the shrine cannot be exaggerated. The women like Ammerbibi cannot live with these practices. And even if they live, it would not be a tolerable life.

### **6.6.3 Case Study 3:**

"Since last i visited the shrine, i have a feeling that the time for the end of all my miseries is close," said Samina who hails from Islamabad Bara Kahu area. She came for the first time at the shrine with her family. The family often visits different shrines including the shrine of Bari Imam which is closer to their home. For Samina, life is full of economic joys but darkly spotted with her disease: she is living on one kidney. She is mother of two young daughter. When asked about what in her opinion is cause of her disease, she responded: " How can I tell? I was fine. Living a good life. Then one day I came to know that my one kidney had failed. I could not understand why it has happened. I thought that it was perhaps I had done something wrong. I visited different saint and some of them told me that i was under spell of black magic. When you have a good life, people become jealous of you. I think that my sister in-law is done magic with me." For Samina, every misfortune can be explained in term of religion and magic. She follows the rituals at the



shrine with extremely superstitious behavior. Fear of breaking the ethics, and then losing something is apparent can be observed in her behavior.

She does not come from less economically privileged family. Her husband earns enough to maintain everything for her including her bent of mind, which looked was is not austere from any account. However, she is not educated. And this she regrets: " I always wanted to have good education but i could not because my father was in favor of early marriage."

When sun dropped from its zenith towards its evening fall, she was finally narrating her miseries to the saint. The saint gave her some "sugar" and an amulet. He told her drink the waters after washing the amulet. When she was returning in the evening, her face was still in anxiety which could be observed in the morning. But she would say " everything will be fine soon, please come to my house someday."

#### **6.6.4 Case Study 4:**

A girl was sitting the female section of the shrine. She was with her mother. Her mother was telling two women sitting with her: " She is better now." Name of the girl was Zaidah. She was from Rawalpindi. Her mother had brought here because she thought she was in possession of a spirit. Her mother narrated to me: " one day she cut her eyebrows and threw herself into the fire in kitchen. I am very depressed because of her. i have come here to get amulet from the saint for her."

Ziadah is studying in the 12th class although she looks a bit older than that. He father is a taxi driver who barely earns enough to feed his eight daughters. A sister of Zaidah was also with her. She told that: "she was absolutely fine. Some months before she told me that she was having bad dreams. She started to talk to herself. Her voice would suddenly grow in volume and change. She would fight with us. We are very depressed because of her." Her mother told that she has come her for the first time. There is a neighbor of her who routinely visits this shrine. She asked her to visit this shrine.

At the time of interview, they were waiting to meet the saint. When I asked them about their views about such things like coming to shrines and not going to doctors, the mother



responded: " these things are real and Islamic. Magic has been described in Quran. I have faith that it will help."

#### 6.6.5 Case Study 5:

A woman whose name was Saba was suffering from severe depression- as it appeared. She was from Abbotabad. She had family problems. The most important thing that was torturing her soul day in and day out was her financial problems. "On last Eid my youngest son wept because we did not have sacrifice animal. Everyone in the house had animal'. She lives in a joint family with her husband. Her husband spent 12 years out of the country. When he returned he had nothing in his hands. "When others needed him, he helped them, but when there was time of need for him, they refused to help him. Only my brothers help. We even do not afford to live separately." Her husband, who was with her told me that she was very depressed. She cries a lot when she offers her prayers. I tell her to trust in God.

They were here for the third time in a year. Coming at the shrine are praying for the solution of their problems had much importance for them. She said: "What does the poor have except faith". She recites Quran here whenever she comes. She also completes Khatam e Khawajgan whenever she comes. According to her the visit to this place and meeting with the saint helps her in keeping the hope alive. For her, it is a divine test that would end one day.

#### 6.6.6 Case Study 6:

One of the most common reasons for visiting the shrine is infertility among the women. It cannot ascertain in that this infertility is on part of the female or the male. In any case the burden falls on women. An elderly woman was telling her son to take the food into the *langarkhana* and distribute it among the people. Her name was Hayat Bibi. When asked about the reason for distributing the food, she said: " my daughter was married two years ago. So, could not conceive a baby in the first years. I had come here then to pray for her. I had a pledged that i would give food at the shrine and complete a khatam if my daughter gives birth to a baby. Now my *mannat* has been completed. This food is to fulfill my pledge". This woman was alone with her son. Her daughter did not come because she was forbidden by the doctor. This woman told about many *mannat* that were fulfilled. She

told that she has been coming to this shrine since childhood. Whenever a misfortune falls on her she comes here and prays. Eventually, her problems are solved.

She was asked about her perceptions about the shrine. As she was elderly, her faith was one which had seen ages, and still going unbroken. She said: "This saint is special person of God. People can get whatever they pray for from here.... This place is very holy place. If you cannot afford going to Hajj then come here and pray. You will either go to Hajj or get the divine reward which equals Hajj". She had many problems of her solved through the same process before coming here yet again.

## Conclusion:

Women in Pakistan face many problems. In these problems are included both social and medical problems. Their sufferings and miseries are due to the patriarchal nature of the society. The dominance of males in determining their destinies cause trouble for these women. Women, living in status of a dominated human being, often neglect their well-being. This condition is more serious in the women of lower socio-economic background. Other factors also contribute to positivity on part of the women. For example, a culture which attributes the suffering and problems to religious and superstitious reasons play very important role in making the women suffer.

As women often are religiously inclined and superstitious, they think that their problems would be solved by visiting the shrines of the saints. It is not exclusive to women, however. In Pakistani society, men and women both relate to Sufism and mysticism as a support in their sufferings. The tradition of Sufism is not new in Islam. It came into being soon after the death of the Prophet (PBUH). Although there is difference of opinion as to when and why Sufi practices started, most of the Sufis are of opinion that it started with the practices of companions of the prophet (PBUH).

In subcontinent, these Sufis are venerated for their role in spread of Islam. More than that, this veneration comes from the fact that they are seen as closer to God. Miraculous powers of healing are supposed to be in their possession. Due to these reasons, people flock towards these shrines, there would hardly be area in Pakistan where these shrines are not present. There are some shrines which attract people not only from their area but also from other areas. The shrine Mohra sharif in Murree is one of such shrines.

The shrine is a center of attention for many years. It is a center of Naqshbandiya sufi order which was renamed here in Nisbat i Rasooli. It has a sophisticated system of administration. The current saint, Pir Haroon Rashid has been on the seat of in-charge for more than fifty years. There is a library, a hospital, a hostel (for women and male both) and a mosque for prayer. The saint emphasizes the teachings of Islam. The Nashbandiya order of sufism, which originated with Mujjadid Alif Saani is strictly following the orthodox Islamic rules than other Sufi silsila which allow some interpretation for the sake of spirituality,

For women, the shrine and the saint is a center of Islamic teachings. Both of these are seen as possessors of miraculous power. The shrine is considered as holy by these women. They perceive that their problems will be solved by coming here. In the study, it appeared that this reverence for the saint is primarily due to his spiritual status. He is seen as close to God.

Women with a variety of problems come to this shrine. Most of these problems are social and medical in nature. It was observed during the study that most of the women who come to the shrine are from lower socio-economic strata. In such cases, the social problems are most often the contributing cause of the medical problems. These social problems include relationships problems, economic problems, problems of good housing, lack of good nutrition due to lower socio-economic status, late marriages or no marriages at all and problems which arise to second-rate status afforded to women by the society.

The most interesting case is of the medical problems which result more often from these social problems. The biological reason area also a cause but on average the social factors are a major contributing cause. The women with many serious problems such are cancer, cardiac issues, arthritis and other bone problems. These women also visit the shrine for small problems like fever, toothache etc. These reasons for visit the shrine for such problems are many.

The most important reason is that these women often lack the adequate resources to solve their problems. Moreover, the repression they themselves do to their problems, and which is done by society explodes out. They need a place to vent this repression. The religious means and spirituality appear as these centers. The women, like men, are prone to superstition. There are other way to cater the superstitions too, but a shrine is a religious way to end them.

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## Annexure

### Interview guide

- 1 At what age did you understand the importance of the saint and mazar?
- 2 What were you told by the old women or men about the saint and the mazar?
- 3 Do you observe the norms that were prescribed by the saint?
- 4 what are the miracles of the saint?
- 5 What role do you think the mazar plays in the life of women?
- 6 What are the cultural religious activities associated with the mazar in the public life?
- 7 How do you perceive the activities performed by the women at the mazar?
- 8 What are the problems that you are facing ?
- 9 Have you ever been severely sick?
- 10 what kind of sickness was that?
- 11 what did you do then?
- 12 Are there any norms/rituals associated with the saint and the mazar for the solution of medical problems?
13. Do you pray at the mazar for solution of your problems?
14. Did you ever undergo any rituals at the mazar for the solution of these problems?
15. Do you think that life is tough for the women?
16. What kinds of problems are faced by the women at home?
17. What kinds of problems are faced by the women in society?
18. Do you think that saint listens?
19. How does, in your opinion, the saint help?
20. Have you ever felt that your problems have been solved?
21. How do you feel when you visit the mazar?
22. Do you get satisfaction?
23. what if your problem is not solved?

## Census form

s.no	Name	Age	Gender	Caste	Religion	Level of Education	Marital status	Total no of children	Place of work	Total income	Sect	Socio medical problem	Frequent reason	How long you are visiting shrine