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Cultural Perception of Sufi Pilgrimage
A Case Study of Shrine in Sorasi Syedan, Murree



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Islamabad - Pakistan
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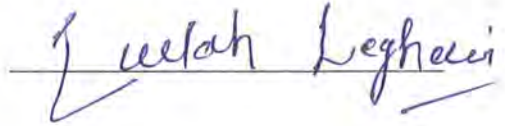
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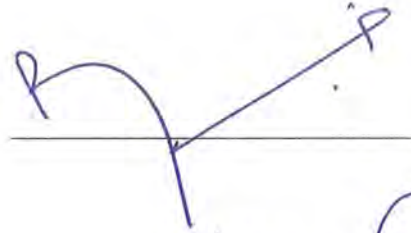
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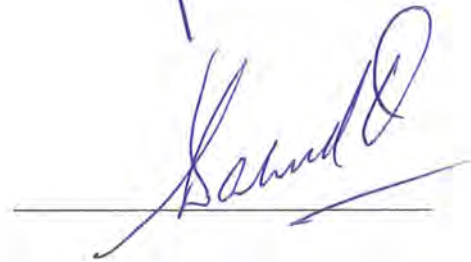
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Islamabad, 09 February 2015



Ms. Munaal Tanveer

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Abstract

The aim of the present research was to study the cultural perception of the *Sufi* pilgrimage by focusing on the importance of pilgrimage, rituals performed during the pilgrimage, importance of the rituals, transformative aspect of the pilgrimage and its internalization. The study was carried out at the shrine of Baba Lal Shah in Surasi Syedan, Murree. The sample selected through non-probability and snow ball sampling techniques consisted of 40 individuals, both males and females; out of which 15 individuals were selected for the in-depth interviews. Other research techniques included participant observation, rapport building, field notes, case studies and photography. The responses of the pilgrims showed that pilgrimage is an integral part of their life and they use it as mechanism to get psychological and emotional relief in difficult times. According to the pilgrims, pilgrimage to the shrine is actually an invitation from Baba Lal Shah. They do not just set out for the sacred journey to pray for the fulfilment of their wishes through the intermediation of Baba Lal Shah, but to get peace of mind and to contemplate upon life. The rituals they perform at the shrine to complete the pilgrimage help them not just to endure their current situation, but to become hopeful for a better future as well. Clifford Geertz definition of religion was used to study the ritual aspect of the pilgrimage which was validated in the study. The results of the study also showed that pilgrimage helps people transform their life, thus they internalize the pilgrimage process. Victor Turners concept of *rite de passage* was used to study the transformative aspect which was validated through the study as well. The present study did not validate his concept of pilgrimage leading to *communitas*, a homogenous egalitarian society with shared beliefs and motivations; rather it supported John Eade and Michael Sallnow's model of pilgrimage that it leads to contestation.

Keywords: Pilgrimage, internalization of pilgrimage, transformative aspect of pilgrimage

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1. INTRODUCTION

The word pilgrimage derives its roots from Latin word *per agrum* which means pilgrim. Pilgrimage is taken as a sacred journey which causes transformations in the soul. Another Latin word for pilgrim is *peregrine* which means, one who rambles from land to land. The pilgrim or the pilgrimage can be sacred or secular. However, both have the tendency to act as a mechanism for spiritual renewal and understanding of the self (Ross, 2011, p. 3).

Metaphorically a pilgrimage is often taken as living life through spiritual perspective, but non-metaphorically it is just a temporary movement to a sacred space. Exile and alienation are taken as the primary goals of a pilgrim, who alienates himself temporarily, from the materialistic world and takes time to ponder upon life and to gain spiritual insight. It is expected that the pilgrim will return with some spiritual, moral and material (with respect to pilgrimage memory) renewal (Wheeler, 1998, p. 5-6).

If taken as a sacred journey, then a pilgrimage is a journey made to those places which are associated with the divine and the holy (Coleman, 2014, n.p.). The pilgrimage site associated with the holy can be a place where God/gods live, the birth or death place of saints, places where any kind of miracles happened or any place which has some kind of spiritual power or attribute associated with it.

Pilgrimage is not merely a movement from one place to another, but it may awake the soul. Being an inner transformative journey as well, it opens the heart and helps to understand the things in depth (Ross, 2011, p. 3-4). It is a journey which involves the intentional transformation of the pilgrim (Ross, 2010, p. 57).

The tradition of pilgrimage is found in both Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic religions. In Islam, pilgrimage to Makkah is the one of the five pillars. Muslims all-around the world, gather at Makkah and perform the annual *hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage) in the month of *Zul-hajj*. This involves number of rituals such as wearing *ihram* (special white robes worn



while performing *hajj* and *ummrah*¹), performing *sae'e* (running back and forth from the Mount *Safa* to the Mount *Marwa* seven times), drinking *Abb-e-Zam Zam*², listening to the *hajj* sermon, circumambulating around Holy *Kaaba*³, sacrificing animals, the stoning of satan, and abstinence from wearing perfume, shaving, clipping nails, killing, hunting and damaging plants. Most of these rituals can be seen as the physical manifestation of the Muslim belief (Salamon, 2004, p. 159 - 161).

Besides the pilgrimage to Makkah, there are many other sites in the Muslim world which have got the attention of pilgrims for centuries. These include the *Masjid-e-Nabawi*⁴, *Masjid-e-Aqsa*⁵, graves of Prophets (A.S), graves of the *ahl-e-bait* (the family of Prophet Muhammad PBUH), graves of Prophet's (PBUH) companions and the holy saints.

In South Asia, the pilgrimage centers of the saints have introduced new brotherhoods in to Islam and act as an embodiment of the sacred as a reality. The loyalty and devotion of the people towards these saints is not just limited to the local population, rather it extends the national borders. These shrines reflect the sacred landmarks of Islam such as Makkah and Madina (Werbner & Basu, 1998, p.3 - 12).

In Pakistan, the culture has laid huge impact on the Islam which is apparent from the shrine and saint veneration; hence the shrines have become an important aspect of local religious life. The shrines of all sorts, despite the level of their popularity are equally revered and respected by the people, because the universal principles of Islam can be seen in the shrine tradition (Werth, 1998, p. 79).

The Islamic pilgrimage '*hajj*' comprises of different rituals which are mandatory to perform in order to make the *hajj* valid and meaningful. These rituals are the physical manifestation of the beliefs. The *Sufi* (Muslim mystic) pilgrimage also involves number

¹ The minor *hajj* to Makkah performed by Muslims.

² It is a holy water from a well in Makkah. Muslims believe that when Prophet Ismail (A.S.) was a baby; he was thirsty for days, so to quench his thirst, his mother Hazrat Hajra (A.S.) looked for water in the desert of Makkah. She could not find it, so the water was miraculously generated by Allah in the desert.

³ *Kaaba* is the most sacred worshipping place for the Muslims, considered as the worldly abode of Allah.

⁴ It is the mosque adjacent to the resting place of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Medina and the second most sacred place among the Muslims.

⁵ It is located in Jerusalem. It served as the first *Qibla* (direction to face while performing prayers) for the Muslims, hence the third most sacred place among Muslims.

of rituals, however they are not mandatory, but people who perform *Sufi* rituals; assign significant value to these rituals. A lot of work has been done on the internalization of pilgrimage and transformations it causes in a person's life, but this aspect is neglected by most researchers in the Pakistani context. Its impact on spiritual, social and moral life is yet to be investigated in more depth. This study focuses on the pilgrimage to the Shrine of Hazrat Baba Lal Shah in Surasi Syeddan, Murree. This locale was chosen by the researcher as no academic literature is available on this particular site with reference to pilgrimage.

1.1. Problem statement

The pilgrimage is a highly prevalent phenomenon in Pakistani society. People, not only come to pay their homage to the shrines of the *Sufis* and supplicate for the dead saint, but to receive blessings and to get spiritual satisfaction as well. The beliefs of the people play very important role in satisfying their needs. This research tries to investigate that what do people perceive about their pilgrimage, what purpose do the rituals serve which are performed as part of this journey and how do these rituals contribute to the satisfaction of the pilgrims.

This research also tries to explore whether pilgrimage causes any transformations into the individual's personality. Most pilgrimage studies focus on the external aspect of the pilgrimage, which includes all the rituals and transformations in the physical self. Less focus has been given to the process of internalization of the pilgrimage in anthropology. This ethnographic study tries to unpack whether or not the sacred journey to the saints' shrines is significant enough to leave an impact especially at spiritual, social and moral levels of the pilgrims, thus internalizing the pilgrimage.

1.2. Objectives

The research had the following objectives:

- i. To study the ritual aspect of the pilgrimage and the reasons out of which people carry out this sacred journey.
- ii. To highlight the internalization of the pilgrimage by exploring the changes it brings in the personality of the pilgrim.
- iii. To explore the perception of the pilgrimage among the pilgrims.

To accomplish the above mentioned objectives, this research study was carried out at the shrine of Hazrat Baba Lal Shah in Surasi Sayeddan, Murree. The researcher used in-depth interviews, case studies, rapport building, key informants, field notes, participant observation and photography as the research tools. Pilgrims who made more than one visit to the shrine in a year were selected as the study respondents to get the relevant information. The field work was carried out over the span of six months.

1.3. Operational definitions

The operational definitions of the study variables are presented below. These include definition of cultural perception, pilgrimage, ritual and internalization of the pilgrimage experience.

1.3.1. Cultural perception

In this study, cultural perception is taken as the community's perception regarding the pilgrimage. Cultural perception is the perception regarding the cultural phenomenon and activities, which are also shaped by the cultural values. As the focus of this research is pilgrimage, so the perception regarding the pilgrimage, saint and the holy is also shaped by the cultural values and norms. The accounts of miracles and the powers of the saint are transferred to the new generation, thus their beliefs and their perceptions are influenced by their cultural heritage.

1.3.2. Pilgrimage

Alan Morinis defines pilgrimage as “A journey undertaken by a person in a quest of place or state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal.” (Morinis, 1994, p. 2-4 as cited in Hinmon, 2002, p. 6)

Pilgrimage involves separating from one’s home and journeying to a sacred place. This journey always involves an achievement of some goal, such as repentance and forgiveness. The journey involves hardships such as physical difficulties and religious trials as well. Pilgrimage is distinct from religious wandering as the later does not involve an end goal (Partin as cited in Johnsson, 1978, p. 244). Margry (2008, p. 323) defines pilgrimage as a journey to a secluded or a sacred site. This journey involves some religious inspiration behind it and the aim of the pilgrim is to interact with a cult object from which the pilgrim can take physical, emotional and spiritual impact.

In the present study, pilgrimage is defined as a journey undertaken to the shrine of the holy saint. The motive behind the sacred journey is to get help from the holy being and divine power, for repentance and penance, to thank and to show love and devotion for the holy. This pilgrimage can be devotional, transformative and experiential.

1.3.3. Ritual

Ritual comprises of certain acts and performances that are prescribed by religious authorities or set by traditions. Rituals not only exist in all kind of societies, but they also act as an embodiment of the beliefs of the people in a particular society and become representative of their culture. Rituals comprise of both verbal and non-verbal acts (Penner, 2014, n.p.).

Turner (1982, p. 79 as cited in Bowie, 2006, p. 140) defines ritual as “prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technical routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical (or non-empirical) beings or powers regarded as the first and final cause of all effects”.

Rituals act as instruments which guide human behavior, give expression to human emotions and sentiments, maintain social order and preserve and transfer cultural values from one generation to another. They also build a link between the humans and supernatural world which includes God, deities, ancestors, spirits and mystic forces. They explain that how the people of particular society organize their world (Bowie, 2006, p. 138).

Arnold van Gennep uses the concept of *rite de passage* to define the rituals. He propagated that like rites of passage, the rituals also play a transitional role at individual and collective level. He explained transformative aspect of ritual in three stages which starts with period of separation from society and social status then comes the middle stage where the person is in the process of transformation and does not associate himself with the former and the later stages. This stage is best describes as between and betwixt. Finally at the third and final stage he rejoins the social order and society, but now with a transformed self and status (Bowie, 2006, p. 138).

This study takes all these above mentioned definitions of ritual to get the broader understanding of the impact of pilgrimage as a ritual and all the sub rituals that are performed during the pilgrimage.

1.3.4. Internalization of pilgrimage

In the present study the internalization of pilgrimage is defined as the impact of the pilgrimage on the inner self. This includes the impacts on the moral, social and spiritual self. The phenomenon of pilgrimage is not just limited to the shrine setting rather people are in constant need of moral and spiritual renewal. They internalize this activity that it becomes the part of their everyday life. External aspects of pilgrimage which include the rituals usually leave an impact on physical self such as people seeking help for physical ailments through supplicating, praying and using sacred ointments.

1.4. Significance of the study

The present study will be a significant addition to the body of knowledge available on the topic of *Sufi* pilgrimage as it has not just focused on the *Sufi* rituals, but also on the importance of the rituals performed by the people. The study has further highlighted that a pilgrimage or a sacred journey can cause change into the pilgrim's life.

Most of the previous work, done on the pilgrimage, focuses entirely on the external dimension of pilgrimage which includes rituals and the pilgrimage activity. The present research is not just limited to the external aspect, but on the internalization of the pilgrimage process as well. This study has not taken pilgrimage only as a group phenomenon, but it has focused on the personal experiences and personal changes which pilgrimage and association with a saint brings into an individual's life.

1.5. Outline of the thesis

The first chapter focused on the introduction, problem statement, objectives, operational definitions and significance of the research. The second chapter focuses on the literature review and the theoretical paradigm. In the third chapter, the description regarding research locale, research population, research process and data collection techniques is provided. The fourth chapter identifies reasons because of which pilgrims carry out pilgrimage to the shrine of Baba Lal Shah. The fifth chapter focuses on the internalization of the pilgrimage and transformations that the pilgrims experienced as a result of pilgrimage. The sixth chapter provides results regarding the understanding and meaning of the pilgrimage process by the pilgrims. The seventh chapter focuses on the results' conclusion and summary of the thesis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORITICAL PARADIGM

This chapter provides the review of the relevant literature and the theoretical paradigm that was built to understand the perception regarding the pilgrimage activity among the pilgrims.

2.1. Literature review

It focuses on the history of *Sufism* (Islamic mysticism), its validity within Islam, *Sufi* orders, pilgrimage as a *Sufi* ritual and its impact on the pilgrims.

2.1.1. *Sufism* and the *Sufis*

Sufism refers to the mystical or inner dimension of Islam. The name *Sufism* has Arabic origin, which was derived from the coarse woolen cloth “*suf*” worn by the ascetics, symbolic of their abomination and detestation of the worldly pleasures. The mystical dimension of Islam was present in the times of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and later *Sufis* derived its validity from the *Quran* as well (Attar, trans. 2000, p. 8). *Sufism* and the veneration of the saints have emerged as an integral part of Islam (Stauth, 2004, p. 10).

The transmission of *Sufi* knowledge first carried out orally, but as time passed and developments were made in this arena, *Sufi* brotherhoods and orders started to emerge in fourth and fifth century. Every order had its own distinctive way to reach the truth and understanding of self however, their ultimate aim was to understand God. The concepts of *tawakkul* (reliance on Allah) and *zikhr* (remembrance of Allah) are the basic tenets of all the *Sufi* orders. Early *Sufis* strictly adhered to the orthodox Islam, but with time the culture laid its impact on the *Sufi* orders functioning in particular culture which made these orders distinctive from one another. This variation formed the diversity of practices and rituals within Islam and led to the spread of Islam in non-Muslim regions. Besides this, *Sufism* also influenced the aesthetic aspect of Islam through calligraphy, poetry, music, and literature. *Sufis* face a lot of criticism from the Orthodox Muslims regarding

their practices. The performance of pilgrimage to the *ziyarat*⁶, music and dance at the *Sufi* saints' lodge or shrine are characterized as *bid'ah*⁷ according to the orthodox Muslims (Salamon, 2004, p. 421).

However Imam Al Ghazali, 11th century mystic advocated the relation of orthodox Islam and *Sufism*. *Sufis* focused more on the gnosis rather than practical religion itself; on the other hand the theologians strictly adhered to the religious code, so Imam Al Ghazali put *Sufi* teachings in accord with the Islamic theology (Schimmel, 2006, p. 96).

The Muslim reformers, throughout the history have criticized the shrine and saint veneration, but to the ordinary people this practice has been remained as an expression of their faith and devotion towards the religion (Basu, 1998, page 119).

The pilgrims who come to the shrine of Baba Lal Shah do not perceive *ziyarat* as *bid'ah*, rather they take it as a bridge which connects them with Allah and inculcates the religious values. They also explained to the researcher; the relation they derive between pilgrimage and the teachings of orthodox Islam.

As discussed earlier in this section that the developments in the *Sufism* led to the formation of various *Sufi* orders; the oldest of all is *Qadiriyya*, founded by *Sheikh Abdal-Qadir al-Jilani*⁸ in Baghdad in 11th century. Other includes *Chishtiyya* and *Suhrawardiyya* in Central and South Asia, *Naqshbandiyya* in Central Asia, *Rifaiyya* in Southwest Asia and Egypt, *Ahmadiyya* in sub-Saharan Africa and Egypt, *Shadhiliyya* in North Africa and Arabia, *Tijaniyya* in north and west Africa and *Nimatullahiyya* in Iran (Salamon, 2004, p. 422).

Lassen and Skyhawk (2008, p. 5) characterized these aforementioned orders as the orthodox orders. There are few saints who propagate the teachings of *Sufism* on the basis

⁶ It literally means to see somebody especially someone or something sacred. It is also used to refer to a shrine of a Muslim holy personality. Metaphorically it is also taken as a pilgrimage to the shrine.

⁷ *Bid'ah* is characterized as an innovation in Islam which does not draw any legitimacy from the religious text i.e. *Quran* and *hadith* and is not practiced by the traditional Muslims.

⁸ He is eleventh century Persian saint, born in Iran. He is the founder of the *Qadiriya Sufi* order. His shrine is located in Baghdad, Iraq.

of their own personal experience rather than following some strict doctrine, hence the orders (more informal in nature) are regarded as unorthodox. These kinds of Sufis are divided into different categories such as *Malamatis*⁹ and *Malangs*. Choudhary (2010, p. 18) defines *Malanags* as mendicants who wear colorful cloths or loincloth, heavy metal jewelry studded with stones, keep long hair and beard or go completely bald, smoke and drink intoxicants such as cannabis and carry a bowl called *kasa/zambil* to collect alms. Some of them also carry things of symbolic nature such as animal horn depicting the sword of Hazrat Ali (R.A.) and wear chains to mourn the tragedy of Karbala¹⁰.

Another category within the unorthodox *Sufi* orders is the *Qalandriya*. Its practitioners are called *Qalandar*; the ascetics who generally remain naked, practice self torture and have furious nature. Within the category of the *Qalandar* is the *Majzub*; the one who remains in the state of ecstasy and divine love. Both *Qalandars* and *Majzubs* usually cut their social relations and seek the self humiliation (Frembgen, 2008, p. 159- 160).

Frembgen (1998, p. 144-145) further explains the *Majzub* as the one who swings like a pendulum from being an ascetic to seeking and enjoying worldly pleasures. He is believed to be exempted from following the religious doctrine by the Allah Himself as he is characterized as a wise fool. In Pakistani context, the people characterize *Majzub* as the one quitting the world and confining himself to the solitude.

Baba Lal Shah does not hail from a family which has ancestral links to some specific *silsila* (*Sufi* order). He belongs to the *Majzub* category of *Qalandars*. He had a married relationship through which he had sons and daughters, but he abandoned them and left for the spiritual quest. Like the *Majzubs*, he only wore a loincloth even in the severe climatic conditions and performed *chillah(s)*¹¹ for countless years. His nature became

⁹ *Malamatis* are the practitioners of *Malamatiya Sufi* order formed in ninth century. *Malamatiya* means the way of blame. They focus on highlighting the negative personal aspects out in the public to constantly remind themselves of not to be proud of their positive personal aspects.

¹⁰ Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was martyred by the forces of Yazeed I (2nd caliph of Umayyad dynasty) in Karbala in 89 A.D. along with all the male members on Hazrat Imam Hussain's (R.A.) side in the battle of Karbala in Iraq. The females were captured as prisoners of war including Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) granddaughter.

¹¹ *Chillah(s)* is the practice carried out by some in *Sufi* traditions. The aim is to meditate and to receive inner enlightenment through solitude or as a penance. It usually lasts for 40 days and the practitioner lives without any food and water.

jalali (furious), which was reported by the devotees that he used to abuse and harm people. However, they regard it as a blessing upon themselves. They believe that he did not harm the actual person rather a Satan and a beast inside the person which motivated him (pilgrim/person) to commit wrongdoings.

2.1.2. *Sufi* rituals

The rituals that are being carried out at the shrines of saints not just involve the sacred journey, but include many other activities such as supplication, *mannat* (divine intercession), *zikhr*, music and dance (Abbas, Qureshi, Safdar, & Zakar, 2013, p. 370-371).

The heart of the Sufi practices is the ritual of *zikar* of The Allah by chanting His many of the ninety-nine names. The *zikar* also involves the meditation. It is not only limited to remembering The Allah through his names embodying His each distinctive power and characteristics, but *zikar* of The Allah is also there in the *Sufi* ritual of dancing, singing and music. The purpose is to achieve the state of ecstasy which can be achieved through any of these modes (Salamon, 2004, p. 422).

Some people just go there for the supplication, but for many others it does not just end by paying homage to the saint through supplication instead it turns out to be a life changing event for them. They go from a transformation of their self (Morinis, 1984, p. 282 as cited in Valdinoci, 2008, p. 223).

The pilgrims at Baba Lal Shah's shrine were inquired about the rituals they perform and how do these rituals help them in their life. They shared that they spend time at shrine to achieve peace and tranquility which helps them in understanding the true essence of life.

The pilgrims in this study were also asked about the changes they experienced after the pilgrimage. What were the factors that carried out the change in themselves and whether the change was persistent or had to get reinforcement and renewal with every visit?

2.1.3. Pilgrimage as a *Sufi* ritual

The religious acts and performances are very important in inculcating the religious norms, values and ideals among the people. Religion does not always focus on beliefs and faith, rather its huge aspect relies on the physical manifestation as well. The religion is presented in the materialized form through rituals, performances, sensations and spaces. Through these elements an individual is being able to act, imagine, feel and perceive (Keane, 2008, p. S124). Pilgrimage being a religious ritual plays significant role in inculcating and reinforcing the religious ideals (Kehl-Bodrogi & Schlee, 2005, p.12).

Pilgrimage to the graves of *Sufi* saints is one the most prevalent phenomenon in Pakistan. Most of the *Sufis* are acknowledged for the spread of Islam particularly in South Asia. The devotion to the *Sufis*, both living and deceased is not some recent phenomenon; rather it is as long as the Islam entered the land of South Asia. People make pilgrimages to the shrines on ordinary days and on the *urs* (death anniversary but literally means wedding) of the saints as well. The death anniversaries are celebrated with great fervor and festivity. *Sufis* believe that it is the most joyous moment in the life of the saint as he finally reunites with his creator, The Allah (Ernst, 1993, p. 44).

Sufis, because of their spiritual authority enjoy a very special position among their followers in South Asia. The shrines are considered as the centre of the dissemination and preservation of the sacred tradition and mystical knowledge. Besides this, one of the important functions the shrines serves is as a center for intercession. The living or the deceased saint, because of his command over the religious and mystical knowledge is endowed with *barakah* (blessing) by The Allah, which is transferable to the pilgrims and he also plays a role of an intermediary between ordinary humans and The Allah (Gaborieau, 2003, p. 84-87 as cited in Valdinoci, 2008, p. 203; Mills, 1998, p 32).

Valdinoci (2008, p. 210) presents the view of Sayh Sarafuddin bin Yahya Maneri (d. 1381), a *Sufi* saint from Bihar that pilgrimage in Islam is a legitimate practice which is authenticated through the *hadith* (Prophetic PBUH tradition) of Prophet Muhammad

(PBUH) that visiting tombs can bring tenderness to the heart, reminds about the mortality of the living being in the world and bring countless benefits to the visitor.

According to Great Sufi Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, as Muslims hold great respect for the dead, so an individual forms a physical and spiritual connection with the dead and the burial place. However this devotion must be limited to the boundaries set by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). One must only focus on contemplating, remembering God and death and to obtain blessings through supplication, but not through the dead saint (Valdinoci, 2008, p. 209).

In the present study, while sharing the perception of pilgrimage, pilgrims also talked about the legitimacy of pilgrimage within Islam and what are the rituals and practices they believe are valid and invalid according to the Islamic doctrine. They shared that they never perform any act which is against the Islamic code of conduct and always condemn non-Islamic practices such as bowing to the saint and to the shrine and use of intoxicants to reach the state of ecstasy.

The pilgrims make special prayers at the shrine with the hope of being heard through the intercession of the saint. The theological justification for this is that as the saint has achieved his union with the God after his death, so he has become transcendent and has overcome all the barriers that exist between Allah and the human beings. The pilgrims make pleas at the shrines to add intensity into their pledges and to give it a more concrete form; they tie threads and strips of cloths on the trees. This also serves as a reminder of their silent pledge with saint and Allah. This tradition is not specific to certain shrines; rather this can be seen at almost every shrine. As the pledge is fulfilled then the pilgrims bring offerings and gifts for the saint either monetary or in kind. If somebody fails to fulfill his part of the pledge than it is believed that this can bring disaster and troubles in the pilgrim's life (Ballard, 2006, p. 164 - 165).

The people from all socio-economic classes revere the saints, but the pilgrims of the low socio-economic class outnumber the pilgrims from the other socio-economic classes (Abbas et al., 2013, p. 384; Choudhary, 2010, p. 25; Saheb, 1998, p. 73). Choudhary

(2010, p. 19-27) further explains that beside these groups, people from marginalized social classes such as *Malangs*, prostitutes, beggars and eunuchs participate in the ritual activities as well, especially at the occasion of *urs*. The rituals people perform depend upon their socioeconomic status. The shrine setting provides them an opportunity to practice their own version of religion and belief system. The practices usually performed at the shrine by the pilgrims include the supplication, recitation of *Quran*, touching, kissing and bowing to the saint's grave, showering rose petals and laying grave spreads on the grave, tying threads with the grave and trees in order to fulfill desires, lighting candles and oil lamps, using this oil for treating physical ailments and making donations in the form of cash, goods and animals.

This same tradition was also seen at the Shrine of Baba Lal Shah. These above mentioned ritual were also carried out by the pilgrims at Baba Lal Shah's shrine. People tied their *mannat* strips not only on the trees, but on the doors of the shrine as well. Apart from tying cloth strips they also mounted flags as a reminder of their pledge.

At shrines people intermingle with each other and no one faces differential treatment because of their social position. In a symbolic sense, this means that all humans are equal and social inequalities cannot act as a barrier to get close to the God and attain blessings (Choudhary, 2010, p. 27; Valdinoci, 2008, p. 201-232).

Both males and females perform the ritual of pilgrimage. Tapper (1990, p. 247) reported in her study that as compare to men, women tend to participate more into the pilgrimage ritual. According to her men came only when accompanied by women, but never came all alone on their own. In the present study this notion was rejected as both men and women visited the shrine alone, with families and in same sex groups as well.

2.1.4. Impact of pilgrimage

The people who carry out the Islamic pilgrimage i-e- *hajj* have some expectations from their journey, both internal and external. It is not a journey taken at some point in life as a part of a human life cycle, rather when they realize a need for spiritual quest. They believe that this sacred journey will make them close to Allah, give better understanding of Islam, make them better person, elevate their status in the community and free them from the social and moral vices. After this journey the pilgrims can associate themselves with the fellow pilgrims and share the mutual feeling of belongingness. At external level, they make preparations for their journey and once the pilgrimage is performed and they come back to their community life, their physical appearance may change such as keeping beard and sometimes alter names with the tile of *hajji*¹² (McDonnell, 1990, p. 118-121).

The pilgrims to the *Sufi* shrines also come with some expectations. Those coming to the shrine of Baba Lal Shah had some prior motive in minds. However, they did not attach any titles with their names, but the change in the external appearances was seen such as people wearing rings and bracelets of *mannat*, wearing distinct colored dresses such a red and black, men growing beard after pilgrimage, women covering heads with shawl during and in some cases for entire life after pilgrimage and pilgrims making preparations before the journey such as making *niyat* (intention).

The major concern of the people coming to *ziyarat* is the achievement of blessing for their material and non-material benefits, rather than just contemplation, remembrance and supplication. The holy places act as a connection between the God and the human beings. The devotees believe that through these means, the God is accessible and hence their lives can be transformed. The saint acts as a mediator between the devotee and God. As he is the righteous man and an ally of God, so his mediation can act as a catalyst for the achievement of blessings from God (Abbas et al., 2013, p. 369-387).

¹² A pilgrim is given the title of *hajji* once he performs the *hajj*.

Sacred places have a significant transformational aspect that they can enhance the traits such as wisdom and knowledge, repose and peace, and empathy and compassion among the pilgrims (Gary, 2007, p.12 as cited in Weibel, 2011, p. 197) and the journey to such places also reinforce the religious ideals among the people (Kehl-Bodrogi & Schlee, 2005, p.12). Religious or spiritual experiences mark dramatic impact on the experient most common of which is that the person becomes tolerant, altruistic, and less apprehensive (Whitehead, 2011, p. 189). The pilgrims reported the changes they felt after their association with Baba Jee. They believed that their pilgrimage led to the transformation of their self as they became more compassionate, altruistic, selfless and hopeful.

While describing the effects of *Sufi* pilgrimage by Sheikh Rukn al-Din Ala al-Dawla Simnani¹³, Ernst (1993, p. 51) writes that the connection that is formed with the saint and his tomb can actually enhance the *tuwajah* (spiritual concentration). The contemplation and meditation upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) can have blissful consequences, but it can be spiritually more beneficial if done at Prophet's (PBUH) tomb. The reason for this difference is that, the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is not only able to feel the physical proximity to the pilgrim, but also the hardships the pilgrim faced during his journey for the pilgrimage. Similarly, when contemplating and mediating at a Saints tomb, one can achieve more spiritual blessings. At the time of resurrection, the saint's soul is more close to the place of his physical tomb than his own physical body.

The sacred places have certain kind of energy which is enhanced and channeled through prayers and meditation into the human body and mind. It is this energy which helps the people to get spiritual experience (Weibel, 2011, p. 171 – 198). This spiritual magnetism is not the product of sacredness, but the history, geography and values and human concepts also play their role (Majdali, 1998, n.p.).

The events explaining the power of the saint are passed down to the new generation and with that the whole tradition of *ziyarat* flourishes. People, who only seek the solution of their physical problems even for them, pilgrimage turns out to be a life changing event

¹³ He was a *Chishti* saint, died in 736/1336.

and a journey to their salvation in the world and in the hereafter as well (Pirani, 2009, p. 297).

These explanations regarding the blissfulness of holy places show that even though the physical body is dead, but the spirit has the ability to shower the blessings and can play an intermediary role between the God and the lay man. These visits to saints' tombs are regarded as a temporal unification with God. The pilgrims at Baba Lal Shah's shrine were also inquired about the practices and rituals they perform and what purpose they serve to them. The pilgrims reported the changes that they experienced in their life. These changes were not limited to the physical level, rather they reported a huge impact on their spiritual and moral self as well.

2.2. Theoretical paradigm

This research uses an eclectic approach to study the pilgrimage phenomenon. It includes Clifford Geertz's definition of religion, Victor Turner's concept of rites of passage and *communitas* and; John Eade and Michael Sallnow's model of pilgrimage.

2.2.1. Clifford Geertz definition of religion

Clifford Geertz focused on the symbolic and ritual aspect of the religion (Khan & Sajid, 2011, 66-77). He defined religion in the following way:

Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (Geertz, 1993, p. 90)

According to Geertz's definition, religion acts as a psychological resource which influences moods and motivations among the people and stimulates their feelings. It basically uses the supernatural powers and phenomenon to help people find their own self and understand metaphysical world. The religious rituals are symbolic as they help

combine and give expression to the human ethos and their world view (Addi, 2009, p. 335).

If the sacred pilgrimage is taken as a system of symbolic acts, then according to Geertz definition of religion, these symbols (the rituals) can have the power to create certain kind of moods and motivations among the pilgrims. According to Geertz (1993, p. 100), world is incomprehensible to the human beings and they face chaos at the limit of their intellect, morality and endurance. So, the religion formulates an order and help people to cope with their emotional upheavals and disturbances. Same can be true for the pilgrims that the rituals of pilgrimage and the pilgrimage itself can help them endure their sufferings. The rituals that are being performed in the pilgrimage such as supplication in crisis gives them an explanation of their existence and the way their life is. Because of that, these moods and motivations appear real to them and they are able to become contented with their lives.

2.2.2. Victor Turner's *rites de passage* and *communitas*

Another model for the understanding of pilgrimage is presented by Victor turner based on the ideas of Arnold van Gennep, who introduced the tripartite theory of *rite de passage*. The three aspects of any *rite de passage* are separation, transition and incorporation; focusing on the transitional aspect of any ritual carried out in the society (Turner, 1974 p.56). Victor Turner used Gennep's theory to further devise a model for pilgrimage. For Victor Turner (1974, p. 202 as cited in Valdinoci, 2008, p. 204-205) pilgrimage is like *rite de passage*, comprising of all the three stages, pre-liminal (separation), liminal (transition) and post liminal (incorporation).

If we put pilgrimage in this model then an individual, in his routine life is expected to behave according to his associated social role (pre-liminal). Through pilgrimage he goes through a transformation and is being able to question social and cosmological orders, values, laws and regulation towards which he has to show compliance in everyday life (liminal or transition) and after this he again follows the old usual pattern of his ordinary



life but with a altered perception or role (post-liminal or incorporation) (Bigger, 2010, p. 7; Mitchell, 2002, p. 739-740).

This transitory aspect of pilgrimage is similar to a novice performing rituals to cross a threshold to enter from one stage to another in life (Kreiner, 2010, p. 440-456). Turner takes pilgrimage as a transitional journey through which the individual cuts off himself from the ordinary life temporarily and re-establish his individuality (Wheeler, 1998, p. 22). When an individual cuts himself off from the ordinary social structure, he goes through the state of emotional release (Pirani, 2009, p. 82).

Through pilgrimage an individual undergoes from the catharsis. In the shrine/sacred setting he comes across with the people who are suffering from social inequalities and injustices, it gives them a shared experience and forms a kind of community which Turner calls *communitas*, striving and longing for similar things and interacting by keeping social and cultural divisions aside (Turner, 1973, p.202 as cited in John, 2001, p. 49). It evokes the idea of egalitarianism, interconnectedness and universal humanity (Bowie, 2006, p. 153; Gilmore, 2008, p. 216; Kreiner, 2010, p. 440-456; Olaveson, 2001, p. 93; Pirani, 2009, p. 82; Werbner & Basu, 1998, p. 11).

For Turner, pilgrimage is anti-structural because a particular social structure is rejected not, because of the absence of any structure or division, but for the alternative structures. It does not eliminate the social divisions and structures at all; rather it helps to soften them (Turner, 1974, p. 169; 207 as cited in Valdinoci, 2008, p. 204-205). Anti-structure is necessary for the continuation and stability of the social structure as human beings alternate between these two structures of routine life and ritual activity. Not just that, but anti-structure is also vital in resolving the conflicts and contradictions in the ordinary structure and thus maintains normative social structure (Whitehead, 2011, p.188). If pilgrimage is taken as an anti-structure phenomenon then it helps people to get rid of all the tension, frustration and conflicts they face in normative life and thus the normative order prevails.

The present study focused on how the pilgrimage is beneficial to get relief in the ordinary life and how people make sense out of their worries and problems. By temporarily rejecting the normative social order, they go into a different social structure which calls everybody towards itself without any discrimination. In the present research the affects to this experience were seen as life changing and helped the pilgrims rediscover their individuality.

2.2.3. Eade and Sallnow's pilgrimage model

According to Turner's model, *communitas* is the outcome of pilgrimage, but the postmodernists are in disagreement with this notion. Eade and Sallnow (2000, p.5 as cited in Giovine, 2011, p. 254-255) present a different model for pilgrimage according to which the pilgrims are idiosyncratic, not equal and do not have a common goal with regard to pilgrimage. According to this model, pilgrimage does not lead to the formation of *communitas* rather it leads to contestation. The social distinctions and hierarchies are reinforced in the pilgrimage (Hermkens, Jansen & Notermans, 2009, p.3).

Postmodernists believe that people coming for the pilgrimage have their own subjective discourses regarding the pilgrimage and that formation of a community with homogenous ideas is not the objective of every pilgrim. Every pilgrim tries to understand the other in the light of his own discourse (Wheeler, 1998, p 23). This postmodernist notion was also taken into account to see that is there anything as *communitas* with regard to pilgrimage or the post modernist belief is right?

3. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the research locale, research population, research process and data collection techniques.

3.1. The research site

The research site was the Shrine of Hazrat Baba Lal Shah in Murree. Firstly, the information about the Murree *Tehsil* (administrative sub division) and Surasi (where the shrine is located) is provided and then the information about the shrine is presented.

3.1.1. Murree

Murree is one of the major tourist attractions in Pakistan. It is popularly known as the *Malka-e-Kauhsar* (queen of the hills) (Khan, 2001, p. 57). It lies in Punjab province and comes under Rawalpindi District. It is also one of the seven *Tehsils* of the Rawalpindi District. The Murree city serves as the administrative hub of the Murree *Tehsil*.

During the British Raj, it served as the summer capital. A sanatorium for the British troops was built here as well, because of the presence of suitable climatic conditions for the British. The British influence is evident from the architectural designs of the buildings. An Anglican church was built in 1857 which is still functional. The houses built around the church are now used as hotels for the tourists. Popular tourist destinations in the Murree city are Mall Road, Pindi point, and Kashmir Point. Other tourist attractions outside the Murree City are Patriata, New Murree, Gharial, Kuldana and Bhurban (Majeed, 2014).

In summers and during snowfall in winters, it attracts a lot of tourists. An expressway has been constructed as an alternate route from Islamabad to Murree in order to avoid the dangerous mountainous roads. There are many hotels and guests houses in Murree for the tourists. Because of the scenic beauty and cool weather, lots of people from far off cities are buying lands to built houses in the area. Where at one hand, it is an opportunity for

the locals to earn money, but on the other hand local population considers it as interference from the outsiders and threat to their own privacy.

3.1.2. Geography of Murree

It is a mountainous region laying in the northeast of Federal Capital Islamabad at an altitude ranging from 600 meters to 2100 meters. Located at 33° to 34° Northern latitude and 72° 42' to 73° 30' Eastern longitude, it forms the outer part of the mighty Himalayas (Kausar, Mirza, Saboor, Saleem & Khalid, 2013, p.463). The total area of the Murree *Tehsil* is 434 square kilo meter and has population of 176, 426 according to 1998 census data. The Jhelum River lies in the east of the Murree region, *Tehsil* of Kotli Sattian (district Rawalpindi) in the south, Islamabad in the southwest and Abbottabad and Haripur (Districts of Khybar Pakhtumkhwa) in the northwest and west respectively (Majeed, 2014) (See figure 1):

Figure 1. The map of the Murree Tehsil



(Source: Google Maps, 2014)

Note. The black running line makes the entire boundary of Murree Tehsil. The cities of Abbotabad, Haripur, Islamabad, and Kotli Sattian can also be seen.

3.1.3. Location and boundaries

There are 15 Union Councils in the Murree Tehsil namely, Murree City, Ghel, Dewal, Rawat, Numble, Phagwari, Charhan, Sehr Bagla, Ghora Gali, Darya Gali, Mussiari, Tret, Potha Sharif, Ban, Angoori, and Bhumrote Saydan. Surasi, where the research was conducted is a small village located in the Union Council of Ghel. Union Council Ghel borders Sehr Bagla in the North, Rawat in North West, Murree city in the West and Charhan in the South.

Village Surasi lies at the distance of 2.1 kilometers from the popular tourist destination Patriata in New Murree, 17 Kilometers from Murree City and 65.3 Kilometers from the Federal Capital Islamabad (see figure 2):

Figure 2. The map of Susari Village



(Source: Google Maps, 2014)

Note. The area highlighted in pink shows the village Surasi. The shrine of Baba Lal Shah, where the research was carried and popular tourist destination Patriata can be seen as well.

3.1.4. Population

The population of the Union Council Ghel is 10300 according to the 1998 census report. The village Surasi, during the census of 1998 was so small that it was not taken as a separate entity. All the small villages in Union Council Ghel including Surasi were represented under the name of village Ghel in Union Council Ghel.

3.1.5. Flora

Fruits like *nakh* (pears), *aloocha* (yellow plum), *batangi* (pyrus pashia), apple, apricot, black figs, black grapes, pomegranate and walnut trees are locally cultivated. *Koh* (wild olive) and berries such as *sumbal* (berberis lyceum), *kanachi* (black raspberry), *akhyara* (yellow raspberry) and *shehtoot* (mulberry) grow wild naturally. Roses, dahlia, calendula, morning glory, daffodils and wild daisies are in abundance and most of them grow wild.

Wild flowery shrubs *kaneera* (with yellow, white and pink flowers) and *chaal* (creepers of wild Jasmine) can be seen at their full bloom during springs and in early summers on the road sides and in jungles, spreading their sweet smell in the entire area. *Marro* is another wild growing flowery shrub during spring which adds into the beauty of Murree.

Crops such as wheat, maze and barley are cultivated by the local population. Potatoes, ladyfinger, brinjal, tomatoes, gourds, luffa, green chilies and capsicum are locally grown in the houses. Herbs such as anise seed, mint, lemon grass, *pahari poodina* (white mint), *tar phaki* (wild parsley), *timbar* (a herb with minty smell), *niyaz boo* (basil), *banafshan* (sweet violet), *kasni* (chicory), *khatimbal* (a plant with iodine like properties used for healing bruises and in cooking) are also found. Pine trees, oak trees, *paludar* (*abies smithiana*), *deodar* (*cedrus deodar*), *drek* (*melia semper virans*) and *biar* (*pinus exeelsa*) are found in abundance in the Murree forests.

3.1.6. Fauna

The birds such as jet black crows, parrots, sparrows, nightingales, cuckoos and *lam dumbar* (long tailed bird) are found abundantly in the region. Many people keep cattle and pet animals such as goats, cows, buffalos and chickens at homes. Monkeys, jackals and foxes and occasionally pigs are found in the jungles. Leopards and tigers were also common in the Murree forests once, but now they have become extinct.

3.1.7. Weather

Murree is distinguishable because of its weather. It is the weather which brings the economic opportunities for the locals. The spring season starts in March and remains till the middle of May. The temperature remains between twelve to 20 degrees Celsius at maximum level and between four and ten degrees Celsius at minimum level. The entire area gives a spectacular view when the spring flowers are at their full bloom. The wild creepers and shrubs fill the environment with their sweet flowery smell which makes the spring experience more beautiful (Majeed, 2014).

When the spring comes to its end, but the beauty of the entire region still remains the same. The fruit trees start to bloom with their flowers as the summer approaches. Summer time is from the mid May till the end of August. The maximum temperature remains between 20 to 25 degrees Celsius and minimum temperature remains between 13 to 16 degrees Celsius. Because of the cool weather, it is the season which attracts the large number of tourists all around the county and especially from the neighboring cities. It is also the most fruitful season for the local people economically. The autumn season spans between September and early December. As the autumn approaches the tourists become extinct in the area. Winter approaches in the early December and temperature remains close to the freezing point. This brings color back to the life as it is again the tourist season, because of the snowfall. The most part of the region remains snow covered during the winter season (Majeed, 2014).

3.1.8. Language

The natives use *pahari* language for communication, which is one of the dialects of *pothohari*¹⁴ and *hindko*¹⁵. *Urdu* is spoken and understood by all; however the indigenous people do not use it for their own communication.

3.1.9. Tribes

The *Abbasi* clan is predominant in the entire *Tehsil* of Murree. They are the decedents of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) paternal uncle Hazrat Abbas (R.A.). Other notable clans in the region are *Sattis*, *Rajas*, *Kethwals* and *Jats*.

¹⁴ *Pothohari* is one of the dialects of *Punjabi* (Indo-Aryan language spoken by the inhabitants of Punjab region in Pakistan and India) with the influence of Dardic languages. It is spoken by the people of Pothohar Plateau in northern Punjab and Azad Kashmir in Pakistan and Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir.

¹⁵ *Hindko* is one of the dialects of *Punjabi* with the influence of Indo-Aryan languages and the dialects of Pothohar Plateau and Azad Kashmir in Pakistan.

3.1.10. The shrine

There are few shrine is Murree *Tehsil*, notable of which are shrine of Mohra Shareef, shrine of Dewal Shareef, shrine of Potha Shareef and shrine of Baba Lal Shah. The present study was carried out at the shrine of Hazrat Baba Lal Shah. His shrine is located in the village Surasi.

3.1.10.1. History of Baba Lal Shah

Hazrat Baba Syed Lal Hussain Shah Kazimi, popularly known among his devotees as Baba Lal Shah was born on 7th February 1904 in Surasi Syeddin. His day of demise is 11th June 1967. He is a *Syed* (descendent of Prophet Muhammad PBUH) by drawing his lineage from Hazrat Imam Musa kazim (R.A) (descendent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and sixth *Shia* Imam) to Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.) and from him to Hazrat Fatima (R.A). His forefathers lived in Iraq, then migrated to subcontinent before the British Raj and settled in Surasi. His father was also a saint and an orator.

His entire family was very religious, so he received early religious education from his parents and from the local mosque. From his youth he was not only extremely religious, but he also equally participated in worldly affairs. He was also the *Imam* (the one who leads the communal prayer in mosque) of the local mosque where he taught *Quran* to the local children. He quit all the worldly activities and started carrying out *chillah(s)* in forests and because of that he was given the title of "*Qayoom-e-Doran*"¹⁶ by the people.

He carried out extensive *chillahs* for his inner enlightenment and to get close to Allah. He used to spend entire day and night in snow wearing nothing, but a loincloth. He carried out *chillah* for two years in a forest named "*Mangal*". His devotees used to bring cloths and food for him, but he never used or ate a single thing. From there he left for Galehra Gali, one of the famous *Galiyat* (streets) of Murree. He spent 22 years there in *chillah* and only lived in a 15 yard circle for the entire time. The climatic conditions were also

¹⁶ *Qayoom* is one of the 99 names of Allah which means "the everlasting one". In *Sufi* traditions, *Qayoom* is a special position given to the only one *Sufi* upon whom depends the entire order of existence. There can be only one living *Qayoom* in any given time so, *Qayoom-e- Doran* means the present *Qayoom*.

harsh there with extensive snowfall, but he did not build any home or shelter. Sometimes during the snowfall, his devotees used to take him out of the snow as he would just sit under the open sky and get almost covered under the snow.

After that he carried out *chillah* for two years in Patriata, major tourist attraction in New Murree. Other places where he performed *chillah* are Satra Meel, Bagla Kohar, Lower Topa, Rawalpindi, Ghel and Surasi. He was also a *sabaz-posh*¹⁷, but when he entered the state of ecstasy he quit covering his entire body and only used to wear a loincloth.

3.1.10.2. Architecture

The shrine of Baba Lal Shah was built by of his devotees. The shrine is made up of *sang-e-marmar* (marble). The shrine is situated up on the hill, so to access to the shrine easily; stairs are built from road to the shrine building. The shrine is bounded by the walls from all the four sides. Adjacent to the shrine's boundary is the *mach*¹⁸ of Baba Jee. In the courtyard, the grave of Baba Jee's son is held on the one side of the entrance door. On the other side of the door the stones with Baba Jee's foot prints are placed in a glass container. Statues of lions are placed on the both sides of the entrance door as a memory of a lion coming to pay regards to Baba Jee. The pilgrims told and some shred their own experience of watching lion coming to meet Baba Jee and not hurting him or the pilgrims. At the entrance there are two doors. One is the sliding glass door and the other is red metal sliding door. The pilgrims tie threads and cloths of *mannat* with the metal door. In the centre of the front yard of the shrine, there is an iron pillar upon which the *alam* (flag) is mounted. Pilgrims not just tie the threads of *mannat* with the pillar, but also light oil lamps and incense on the cemented platform constructed around the pillar (see figure 3):

¹⁷ This is the one who only wears green dress. It is mostly worn by ascetics. The green color is symbolic of Islam, *Sufism* and signifies purity, so having this significance attached to it; the ascetics prefer of wear green attire.

¹⁸ *Mach* is where all the flowers from the grave are burnt into ashes and the ashes are later used for the healing purpose

Figure 3. The front yard of the shrine



(Source: Author, 2014)

Note. The above picture is of the front yard of the shrine where the statues of the two lions can be seen along with the metal pillar in the center around which the people place *mannat* lamps on the cemented block.

The shrine from the outside is not like a typical shrine. It is a square building with a rather nontraditional doom. Keeping in mind the snowy weather of Surasi, the doom is made in a circular slope which makes it easy to remove the snow in winters. The roof of the building upon which the doom is placed is also slightly tilted. The color of the doom is green. All the four walls of the building are decorated with the mirror work and small motifs made in red and blue (see figure 4):

Figure 4. The Shrine of Baba Lal Shah



(Source: Author, 2014)

Note: The above photo shows the shrine of Baba Lal Shah. People place *mannat* lamps and light incense on two marble platforms which can be seen the photo.

Keeping in mind the sacredness of the place the names of the *ahl-e-bait* are inscribed on the walls and the *Shia*¹⁹ *Kalima*²⁰ is inscribed at the entrance door as well. All the four walls have two windows, each in every corner.

In the center of the shrine building there is a circular room which is the grave room of Baba Lal Shah. The walls of the shrine are covered with black and white tiles like a checkered board. Pillars inside the shrine are covered with red and green tiles in the similar pattern. The ceiling is decorated with the mirror work in red, yellow, blue and green color. Red decorative fans are installed in the ceiling along with crystal

¹⁹ It is one of the two major sectarian divisions in Islam. The *Shias* follow the *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Hazrat Ali (R.A.), Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.), Hazrat Imam Hasan (R.A.) and Hazrat Fatima (R.A.)

²⁰ It involves the confession of One Allah, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) an last prophet and Hazrat Ali (R.A.) as the first Imam.

chandeliers. Marble, wooden and glass cabinets are placed as well in the room to keep the *Quran* and other holy books.

The circular grave room is covered with grey and charcoal marble from the outside on which the names of all the twelve *Shia* Imams are inscribed. The grave room has also two entrances. At the entrance, *Nad-e-Ali*²¹ is inscribed in a calligraphic way in the shape of a lion. The door is painted red with decorative metal work in golden, red, green and yellow.

Inside the grave room the walls are covered with grey marble tiles. In the center of the room the grave is held which is made-up of *sang-e- marmar*. The grave is always kept covered with grave spreads and flower petals. The headstone of the grave is made in traditional design on which the name, titles and the dates of birth and demise of Baba Lal Shah are inscribed in black.

3.1.10.3. Transportation

The excess to the shrine has become very easy for the devotees as a concrete road has been made in this modern era. Few decades earlier, it was hard for pilgrims to reach Baba Jee as they had to walk on foot and climb mountains in order to pay their respect to Baba Lal Shah. Now the devotees come on their private cars and motorbikes as well as on the public transport. There are devotees who hire an entire coaster, Suzuki pick up or bus and then make their visit towards Baba Lal Shah. The road to the shrine is not very curvy and narrow unlike the roads in mountainous areas, but the negligence from the authorities has led to the deterioration of the road, but this does not stop the devotees from coming to the shrine.

3.1.10.4. Electricity

As Murree is one of the most developed hill stations in Pakistan, so the electricity is available here. In the shrine the electric chandeliers and the fans are installed. Outside the shrine the tube lights and light bulbs are also used to illuminate the place during night.

²¹ It is a *dua* of Hazrat Ali (R.A.) (Fourth Caliph and First *Shia* Imam), read by Muslims because of its miraculous power.

3.1.10.5. The devotees

The devotees come from far of places and from the adjacent areas as well. The local people come here as they have ease of access to the place. The devotees from Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Abbotabad and other nearby cities are also seen particularly on the weekends. The Pilgrims from Sindh and from far of places in Punjab region such as Lahore, Gujrat, Faisalabad etc also visit the shrine in large number, especially during the *urs*. The pilgrims from the low socioeconomic class outnumber pilgrims from other classes. The researcher met few pilgrims from middle socioeconomic class and none from the upper socioeconomic class. The proportion of male and female pilgrims is not much distinguishable.

3.1.10.6. Langar (shrine food)

The *langar* system at the shrine is not very extensive. The food is prepared in small quantity during lunch and dinner time. The tea is served all day long to those who come and sit in the *langar khana* (shrine kitchen). (For the details see results section page no. 55)

3.1.10.7. Sub shrines

The graves of the Baba Lal Shah's son and two devotees are adjacent to Baba Jee's own shrine and *langar khana* respectively. There is a small grave yard across Baba Jee's shrine's main road where Baba Jee's wife, sons and family members are buried. Pilgrims also come there to offer *fatiha*²², light lamps and tie knots and mount flags for *mannat*.

3.1.10.8. Wazu khana (place for ablution)

A *wazu khana* is made in the open air close to the shrine mosque. Both male and female pilgrims use it to make ablution at the same time. It is like a typical *wazu khana* with several water taps and a fixed marble slab serving the purpose of a stool.

²² *Fatiha* is the first chapter of the Holy *Quran*. It is recited by all the Muslims for the forgiveness of a dead Muslim.

3.1.10.9. Shrine mosque and *madarassa* (mosque school)

There is a mosque and a *madarassa* adjacent to the shrine. The local children come here to get the understanding of *Quran*. The *madarassa* is not like the typical *madarssas* which provide the entire religious education from teaching *Quran* to the understanding of *hadith*, *fiqh*²³ and *sunnah* (Prophet Muhammad's PBUH traditions). Currently, it is only providing the service of teaching *Quran* to the children.

3.1.10.10. Shrine hospital

A hospital is also in progress near the shrine with an aim to provide free medical facilities to the poor. The hospital will have the facilities to tackle the emergency situations. The idea behind the hospital is to carry on the *faiz* (divine blessing endowed to the saint by Allah) of Baba Jee not only at the spiritual level, but at the physical level as well and to help the people as he did in his life.

3.2. The respondents

The respondents for the study were chosen through different sampling techniques. The sample size comprised of 40 individuals in the present study. Sampling is one of the integral parts of any research. As it is very difficult to include the whole population into the research, that's why a sample which is representative of the whole population is taken. Careful selection of sample is very important in order to get the information which the research aims to find out. For that, one must keep research objectives in mind while selecting the sample to carry out the research activity.

3.2.1. Non-probability sampling

Non-probability sampling is used when the research requires those cases which have rich information regarding the subject under study, hence respondents are selected purposefully (Patton, 1990, p. 169; Taylor-Powell, 1998, p. 6). The judgment or the criteria is determined by the researcher. Non-probability sampling is best for the in-depth researches (Bernard, 2006, p. 186). The sample size is also very small for studies which

²³ The Muslim sect-wise theology.

use non-probability sampling as the aim is to get in-depth knowledge and not to make generalizations (Taylor-Powell, 1998, p. 6).

For the present study, the researcher used non-probability sampling to select the sample from the population. Both male and female pilgrims were selected in order to get diverse information. Respondents were selected purposively on the basis of their frequency of visits to the shrine of Baba Lal Shah to only document the experiences of pilgrims who come more frequently to the Baba Jee's grave. The respondents who made yearly visits or came to the shrine for the first time were ruled out. The sample comprised of 40 individuals with 20 males and 20 females to ensure equal gender participation.

Other than the selection of population sample, the selection of respondents for in-depth interviews was also based on non-probability sampling. Respondents under the age of 25 years from the sample of 40 individuals were ruled out for the in-depth interviews as the researcher identified from the initial interviews that they had little experience to share and sometimes did not understand the questions. The respondents with age of 25 years and above were included for the in-depth interview as they had more life experiences to share and had better understanding towards things. Another criterion for the in-depth interviews was the frequency of visits. Respondents with the age of 25 and above who made visits every third month or more were selected.

3.2.2. Snowball sampling

Snowball sampling technique is used when the researcher requires information rich respondents to explore different aspects of the study. Instead of locating the respondents him/herself; the researcher asks other people or the key informants who then introduce the researcher to those information rich cases (Patton, 1990, p. 176).

In the present research, the researcher used snowball sampling technique to take in-depth information on the phenomenon of pilgrimage. As the criteria to select respondents for the research was based on the frequency of visits to the shrine, so this process was aided by the referrals from key informants and other respondents. From the total sample size of

40 individuals, 8 were identified through snowball sampling with the help of key informants and the other respondents.

3.2.3. Demographic data sheet

Demographic data sheet was made which included the information regarding the demographics of all the 40 participants. The demographic variables included age, gender, sect, socio-economic status, marital status, education and number of years of association with Baba Lal Shah. The demographic information of the study sample is presented on the next page (see table 1).

Table 1. Percentage (%) value of demographic variables of respondents (n = 40)

Variable	Label	%
Gender	Males	50
	Females	50
Age	Below 25	12.5
	25 – 50	50
	51 and above	37.5
Marital Status	Single	27.5
	Married	62.5
	Divorced	2.5
	Widow(er)	7.5
Education	Matric and Below	52.5
	Intermediate	15
	Bachelors	20
	Masters	5
	Diploma/Religious/Vocational Education	7.5
Socio-Economic Status (SES)	Low – SES	55
	Middle – SES	45
Sect	<i>Sunni</i> ²⁴	95
	Shia	5
Duration of Visit	Since Childhood	20
	Five years and below	17.5
	Six to 15 years	42.5
	Above 15 years	20

(Source: Field Date, 2013)

Note. The above table shows the percentage (%) values of gender, age, marital status, education, SES, sect and duration of visit of the pilgrims.

²⁴ It is a major sectarian division in Islam. The *Sunnis* follow the *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). However they hold great respect for Hazrat Ali (R.A.), Imam Hussain (R.A.), Hazrat Imam Hasan (R.A.) and Hazrat Fatima (R.A.) and acknowledge Hazrat Ali (R.A.) as the fourth rightly guided caliph.

3.3. The research process

As the research site was a public sphere, the researcher did not face any kind of hurdles associated with “entering the field”, yet the researcher had the official field letter and also took formal permission from the shrine authorities to carry out the research which was granted. The field work lasted over the span of six months. The respondents were identified on the basis of their frequency of visits by the researcher. The key informants also helped in identifying some of the respondents. Building rapport was a difficult task as it was very difficult to get the intimate information from the pilgrims especially about the internalization of the pilgrimage and the transformations in the self; however the researcher managed to develop rapport with the pilgrims especially for the in-depth interviews. There were some female pilgrims who were reluctant to talk, but this feature was seen comparatively less among the male pilgrims. The respondents some time did not understand the questions asked by the researcher, so it was bit difficult to extract information from the pilgrims. The reason behind this might be the low education level among most of the pilgrims. After interacting with the pilgrims, the researcher felt that most of the people come here because they are made to believe through their elders and culture that these saints are holy and we must take their blessings. Here, the researcher does not intend to challenge the authority and validity of the saints, rather highlighting the notion that most of the pilgrims focus on the physical aspects such as setting out for the pilgrimage to get their desires fulfilled and not having much insight regarding the spiritual aspect of the pilgrimage and its internalization.

3.4. Data collection

The various tools that were used to gather the information are presented below:

3.4.1. Key informants

Bernard (2006, p. 196) defines key informants as those people who have a lot of knowledge about their customs and culture and are there to cooperate with the researcher by sharing their knowledge.



Three key informants were selected from the shrine setting in order to approach the pilgrims and to gather information regarding the shrine. Key informants were helpful in identifying those respondents who made beneficial contribution into the study. As the sample for the study was selected through non-probability sampling so, this process was assisted by the key informants.

Two of the key informants were males with ages 55 and 34. They both worked at the shrine's *langar khana*. Both key informants used to cook food for the pilgrims and look after all the chores at the *langar khana*. They were not the natives of the Surasi. One of them belonged to Sargodha and the other was from Danna, a village in Murree *Tehsil*. They were devoted to Baba Lal Shah and his family and were providing their services for a very long time.

The third key informant was a 50 years old female who belonged to Aliyot, another village in Murree *Tehsil*. She was also one of the devotees of Baba Lal Shah since her childhood. All the key informants helped the researcher in identifying the regular pilgrims and giving information regarding the shrine itself.

3.4.2. Interview guide

According to Bernard (2006, p. 212), interview guide comprises of all the themes and questions a researcher wants to cover through his research. It forms an order for semi structured and unstructured interviews so that no aspect of the research is left untouched during interviews. "You should build a guide and follow it if you want reliable, comparable qualitative data" (Bernard, 2006, p. 212).

Being one of the essential anthropological research tools, interview guide was formed for the present study. It was based on all the key categories which the research aimed to investigate such as perception of pilgrimage, rituals performed during pilgrimage and changes associated with sacred journey. The interview guide helped the researcher to keep all the important categories in the mind during interviews with the respondents. Interview guide also aided the process of in-depth interview by providing the researcher a kind of guideline for what to ask the respondent.

3.4.3. Rapport Building

Rapport building is an important tool to use while carrying out qualitative research. To build a good rapport, a researcher must develop relationship of mutual respect and trust with the community under research. The researcher has to show respect to the indigenous beliefs, norms, values and practices and must be willing to learn and engage with the community under study in order to build trusted relationship with indigenous people (Denes, 2011).

The researcher focused on developing rapport with the pilgrims as her first objective after entering the field, so that the pilgrims share more of their experiences with her. To build rapport, the researcher not just carried out the rituals performed by the pilgrims herself, but she also did not challenge their belief and practices, so that they must feel at ease to share their experiences.

3.4.4. In-depth interviews

They help in collection of data regarding the individuals own distinctive perception and behaviors. In the current study 15 in-depth interviews were carried out by the researcher.

In-depth interviews helped the researcher to dig out all the relevant information. These interviews followed an unstructured pattern, so that there must be more space to discuss phenomenon under study. Instead of just relying on the participant observation there was a need to have a direct conversation with the respondents. This helped the researcher to get more insight into the native's perception regarding the pilgrimage. The sentiments and feelings of pilgrims attached to the saint and the practices and the rituals they perform were best understood through the in-depth interviews. Respondents were inquired about the changes which they felt in their self after the sacred journey which is not possible through the participant observation.

3.4.5. Case studies

The case studies are research tool to get in-depth information about the study topic (Zach, 2006, p. 4). The aim is to take the reader in to the respondents' world, so that the reader can have a better understanding of the respondents' experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 1999 as cited in Zach, 2006, p. 5). They are also helpful in the situation where the focus of research is on the limited number of people and the purpose is to take in-depth information about individuals (Patton, 1990 as cited in Zach, 2006, p. 5).

In the present research, to understand the impacts of the pilgrimage on the lives of the people, 28 case studies were taken to explore the phenomenon in detail.

3.4.6. Participant observation

Participant observation is a research tools which helps to study the phenomenon in the context in which it occurs. It forms the basis of anthropological research and requires the researcher to fully immerse into the culture. Here the researcher tries to understand the local perspectives by putting himself in to the native's shoes. Whatever the researcher observes later makes the field notes of all the information. The information collected through participant can be in the form of audio and video as well. While studying a community the researcher becomes the part of it and tries to experience everything the way native does. Rapport building is very important in participant observation, because only then people will feel comfortable around the outsider (researcher) and will not only let him do his work, but will show their cooperation as well (Bernard, 2006, p. 342-344).

In this study the researcher was an active participant and observer. Rather than just relying on the verbal account, the researcher observed the practices and rituals performed during the pilgrimage by the pilgrims. The whole shrine setting was observed rather than just focusing on the pilgrims' account. The researcher herself performed the rituals and remained an active participant. This enriched and enhanced the information collected through the interviews.

3.4.7. Field notes

Field notes are important to be taken as they let the researcher lessen the burden from his/her memory. Field notes include field jottings which are noted down at the spot in a small diary or notepad in the form of key words. They are taken for formal interview, informal conversations and during observation as well (Bernard, 2006, p. 389). Field notes also include writing down the activities a researcher carries out every day in the field, details of the interviews and the description of the observation he/she made in the field (Bernard, 2006, p.395-397).

In the present research, the researcher took field jottings and also wrote down the field notes at the end of the day regarding the conversations with the pilgrims, interviews and the observation she carried out herself.

3.4.8. Photography

Photography is a research technique which helps to present concrete description of the routine life, daily events and the context in which the activities occur (Schwartz, 1989, p. 152).

Photography was also used as one of the data collection techniques. It helped in capturing the photo of the activities that were carried out at the shire. This aided the results of the research by adding strength into the descriptive results. The photography was used to take visual information of the physical space which included the shrine and the relics.

4. RITUAL ASPECT AND REASONS TO CARRYOUT PILGRIMAGE

This chapter focuses on ritual aspect of the pilgrimage and the reasons for which people carry out this sacred journey. The pilgrims come to the shrine because of the number of reasons such as for healing, for spiritual guidance or only out of the respect of saint. Below are the themes which were extracted from the interviews carried out to gather the information regarding the practices, rituals and reasons behind sacred journey. The results are presented in two parts. The first part focuses on the rituals carried out at the shrine of Baba Lal Shah and the second part focuses on the reasons for which people come to the shrine.

4.1. Rituals and practices

This focuses on the rituals performed by the people and the activities they carry out at the shrine. It also focuses on the description of the *urs* of Baba Lal Shah.

4.1.1. Praying

As shrine is the burial place of the saint, so reciting *fatihah* for the saint is as necessary as it is for any other dead person among Muslims. The pilgrims come to pray for Baba Lal Shah. They do this for the increase in rewards and achievement of high status in *jannat* (heaven) for Baba Lal Shah. Besides *fatihah*, they also recite *Quran* especially *Surah-e-Yaseen*²⁵. According to the Islamic practices, reciting *Quran* and offering *nafali*²⁶ prayers for the dead brings good for him in hereafter. Both male and female pilgrims show equal reverence by praying for the saint. A pilgrim said that:

“These saints are the special gifted people of Allah. They do not need our prayers, but our religion tells us to pray for the deceased. So, this tradition of *ziyarat* is basically also one of the blessings of Allah upon the saint. There is a saying that those who remember

²⁵ It is the 36th chapter of the Holy *Quran* and also considered as the heart of *Quran*. It is recited particularly on the death ceremonies and to bring blessings as well generally.

²⁶ *Nafali* prayer is a formal prayer, but not obligatory. The one who offers it gets the reward, but there is no punishment for those who do not offer it.

Allah, Allah remembers them. So, for me this whole cult of *ziyarat* is not an activity often criticized by people as deviance from the Islamic *shariy'ah* (Islamic moral code and religious law), but it is a special blessing of Allah”.

A female pilgrim added that:

“When you pray for the saint then you feel that as you are praying for Allah’s loved one then Allah will bless you. Allah loves these saints, so when you will love them then Allah will love you as well. You also feel that today you are praying for someone then someday someone else will pray for you”.

As praying for the deceased is an essential activity in Islam, so there are pilgrims who come only for this reason. They are against all the unlawful and un-Islamic activities carried out at shrine such as drug abuse and *dhamaal* (devotional *Sufi* dance), however they believe that on these bases you cannot criticize the whole institution of *ziyarat*. They believe that asking saint for help is wrong at the part of the pilgrims. Saints are like a role model for the ordinary people, so that they can take guidance from the saints and get motivation to become a good human being.

The pilgrims believe that it is not necessary to come to the shrine to offer *fatiha*. This activity can be done at home at any time of day. A pilgrim added that:

“When you love somebody then your mind is occupied with that person all the time. You do not need to come to the shrine to pay your *salam*²⁷ and *fatiha* to the saint. I remember Baba Jee every day and pray for him every time. These visits are something which I do out of love, but he is never out of my thoughts.”

The pilgrims believe that people who spend life according to the life style of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are rewarded by Allah and Allah keeps them close to Him. This relationship with Allah which is developed through following Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) makes the saint worthy and respectable in world and hereafter. It is the love and

²⁷ It literally means greeting other people, but metaphorically means offering dua and paying your regards at the grave.

blessing of Allah upon the saint that they get huge following even after their death. A pilgrim gave the example of the *langar* system that:

“One can see *langar* being distributed at the shrines even after the death of the saint. It is the saint’s love for Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Allah which brings such following for him and he helps the people by feeding them. The saints never give their own money as they do not have any, but they act as a focal point where people come and present the saint with money and goods which is given back to the community in the form of *langar*. All this happens because of the love and blessing of Allah that saints help people when they call out to them in need.”

The responses of the pilgrims show that the *fatiha* for their revered saint is very important. It is taken as a traditional Islamic practice to increase in the rewards of the person even after his death and a mechanism by Allah to reward his loved ones after their demise. There are pilgrims who do not seek any kind of favors from Baba Jee, but as *fatiha* for dead is encouraged by Islam, so they believe in receiving Allah’s blessing through this way. The pilgrims who come to seek help from Baba Lal Shah, even they only stick to the legitimate Islamic practices as presented by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through his (PBUH) *hadith*.

4.1.2. Supplicating Allah and seeking help from Baba Lal Shah

After reciting *fatiha* and paying *salam* to the saint, pilgrims supplicate Allah and seek help of Baba Lal Shah in getting their wishes fulfilled. They seek help in variety of things such as success in life or in any specific activity, resolution of marital problems, to conceive babies, to get jobs, for recovery in sickness and accidents, release from prison, to seek spiritual guidance and to receive *barakah*. The belief in Allah as the only being worthy of making any change is held by all the pilgrims. Researcher was told by the pilgrims that they take pilgrimage as an Islamic practice supported by *shariy'ah* as they are coming here to pray for the deceased saint. These pilgrims reported that they never do anything which is against the *shariy'ah*. They hold a strong belief that only being which can give or take from you anything is Allah. As a Muslim one must believe that he cannot even ask Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for anything after his (PBUH) demise, but the

assistance of the Prophet (PBUH) and the saints can catalyze the process of *dua* (supplication) due to their closeness to Allah. A female pilgrim said that:

“He (Baba Lal Shah) asks Allah for help and we ask him for help (Baba Lal Shah)”.

Pilgrims believe that the saints are the true devotees of Allah and spend their whole life in praying and loving Him, so they are close to Him. Now they can act as a catalyst in the fulfillment of the desires of ordinary people and can also play a mediatory role between Allah and the pilgrim. Allah loves them (saints) because of their attributes, so pilgrims come here with a possibility that Baba Jee would help them in getting their wishes fulfilled by Allah. These practices of the pilgrims at the shrine of Baba Lal Shah are in accordance with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that one should only seek help from Allah, but not from the saint (Valdinoci, 2008, p.209). Pilgrims reported that only Allah can grant you anything, but these saints act as a catalyst in the fulfillment of your desires as Valdinoci (2008, p. 210) reports that visits to shrine can bring benefits to the pilgrims. Fulfillment of desires is also one of such benefits. They believe that it is not *bid'ah* as a female pilgrim explained it by sharing that:

“We do not ask saint for help, we just need his help to forward our wishes to Allah. People say that it is *bid'ah*, but I ask them that don't they seek their parents', family and friends' help by asking them to make *dua* for them in difficult times? What is wrong when we are doing the same thing, but through a person who is acclaimed and famous. There is no difference between us and those people who criticize our activities, but as soon as they hear the word '*ziyarat*' they start condemning this act”.

The pilgrims, both males and females pray for themselves, their families, fellow pilgrims, entire Muslims and all the people of the world. They do not talk and mingle with the fellow pilgrims, but they told the researcher that along with praying for themselves and their dear ones, they pray and hope that the wishes and desires of other pilgrims get fulfilled. The responses of the pilgrims validate Turner's notion that pilgrimage leads to the compassion for others (Bowie, 2006, p. 153; Pirani, 2009, p. 82; Werbner & Basu, 1998, p. 11). A female pilgrim said that:

“I never talk to or meet other pilgrims here in the shrine, but I wish that all the people who come here to supplicate and ask Allah for help, may get their desires fulfilled. I pray 24 hours that may Allah keep all human beings of the world, all Muslims and Pakistanis away from all the problems.”

A male pilgrim said that he prays for all the Muslims; from Prophet Adam (A.S) to all those who have passed away up till now. A male pilgrim who was coming to the shrine since childhood said that:

“I have never seen Baba Jee, but heard about him a lot as he was one of the famous *wali*²⁸ of this area. I make *mannat* and come here to ask Baba Jee to pray for my forgiveness.”

The researcher met only single pilgrim who told that he only prays for himself. When the researcher asked him the reason then he replied that:

“Why would you pray for somebody else? Off course you only pray for your own self.”

On the other hand the eunuchs shared that they do not pray for themselves as such. Their entire focus is only on praying for the people who look after them and provide them with financial assistance. They told the researcher that they come for *ziyarat* and pray for the women, so that they can conceive children. One of the eunuchs said that:

“We come here and pray for all the Muslims. Allah says that whatever you desire for yourself you should desire the same for the others as well.”

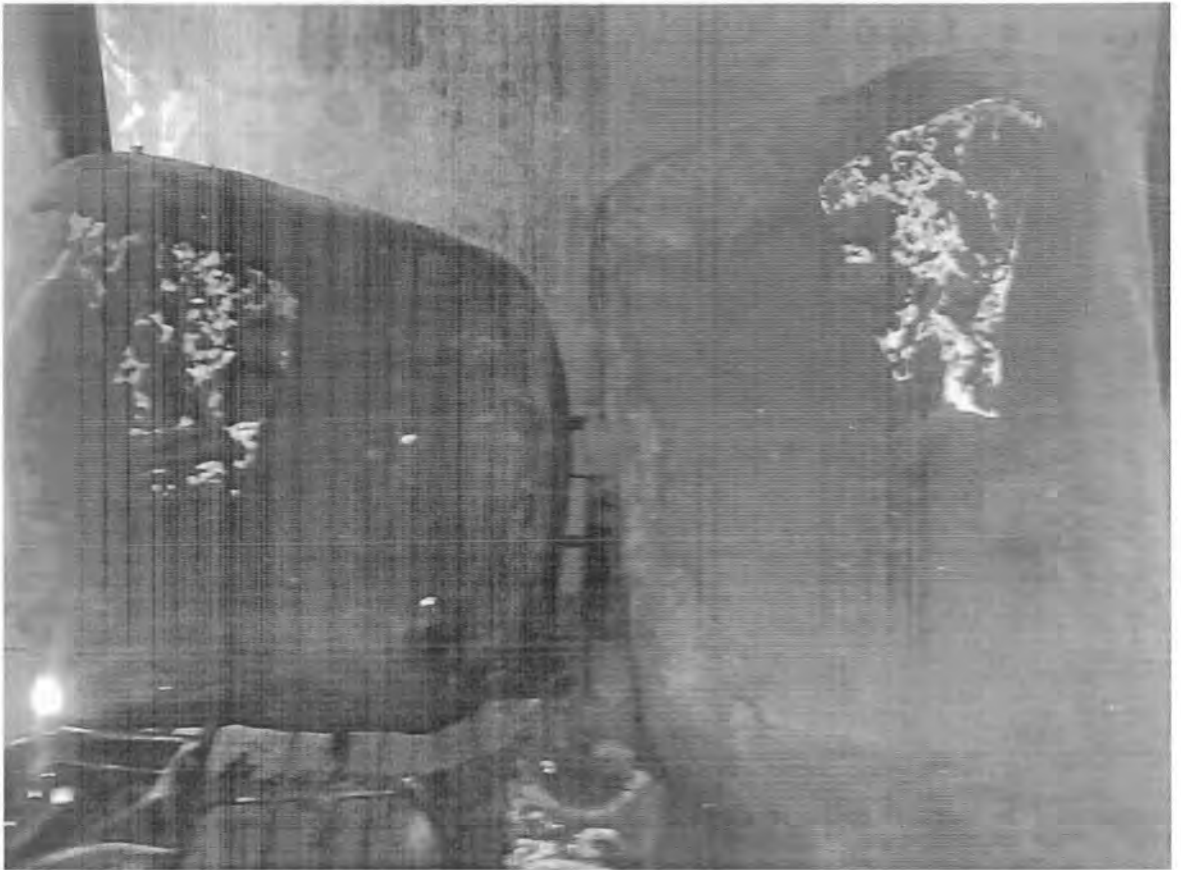
4.1.3. Touching shrine and relics to attain *barakah* (blessing)

The pilgrims shared with the researcher that the things associated with Baba Jee and the objects that are associated with him or remained in his possession have the capacity to transfer his *barakah* to the pilgrims. They have the healing power and give relief in psychological distress. Besides the shrine and the grave as source of *barakah*, the relics

²⁸ *Wali(s)* literally means friend, but here as friend of Allah. *Sufi* saints are usually attributed as *wali* Allah i.e. Allah's friend.

are preserved at the tomb which include rocks with the foot prints of Baba Lal Shah (see figure 5) and a healing stone which also acts as a medium for the transference of *barakah*.

Figure 5. The foot prints of Baba Lal Shah



(Source: Author, 2014)

Note. The white marks on the above stones are the foot prints of Baba Lal Shah which got imprinted on it after he carried out *chillah* while sitting on these stones.

The pilgrims touch and caress the tomb and the grave, so that they can attain blessings through it. While doing it, most of them close their eyes and press their hands and forehead against the wall of the tomb and the grave. This usually lasts from few seconds to several minutes. While touching, it is obvious that they are getting something, because their facial expressions change and sometimes the pilgrims cry as well. The respondents told the researcher that they can feel when the *barakah* is transferred to their bodies.

A small stone possessed by Baba Jee is also kept at the shrine which has both spiritual and physical healing powers. Mostly female pilgrims rub it all over the body of their kids with physical ailments. Besides physical cure, they also do this just to transfer the *barakah* to their own or to the kid's body, so that they remain safe from any harm in the future. Pilgrims also use it for healing body aches. There is also a rock preserved at the shrine on which Baba Jee used to sit especially during his *chillah*. With the passage of time, the foot prints of Baba Jee got imprinted on it (see figure 5). It is also one of the great sources of *barakha* for the pilgrims.

Pilgrims also touch their edible items such as *ilaychi dana*²⁹ with the tomb to make the food blessed as well. These items are usually taken back by the pilgrims to their homes for the families and relatives, so that they can also get the benefits of the saint's blessing. The pilgrims believe that these edible items also serve as a healing agent. Besides these edibles as a blessed food, these are also taken as a delicacy for the family members and especially children back at home.

The researcher met a female pilgrim who told that she has never touched the tomb as she does not think herself worthy of it. She said that:

"I am an ordinary sinful human being and I just do not have courage to touch Baba Jee's tomb. Every time I come, I think that this time I will touch the tomb, but when the moment comes; I lose all the courage".

A pilgrim shed light upon the concept of *barakah* that qualities of a person can be transferred to things or other people through the vibes his body omits. A person with strong positive personality will omit strong positive vibes towards people and his environment. He explained the transference of saints' *barakha* in the following way:

"We say that a certain person gives us negative vibes, so we try to stay away from their company, because we do not feel good and comfortable. Similarly, when a person or a place gives us positive vibes we feel good about it and take physical, emotional and

²⁹ It is a traditional white sphere shaped candy with coarse surface; usually distributed at shrines and on weddings.

psychological effect on our own personality. When we take this effect from the personality of the *Sufi* or a sacred place or an object then we name it as *barakha* as it is always beneficial".

A female pilgrim added into the concept of *barakah* that:

"According to science there is nothing in this world, but the atom. It is the atom which we give different forms such as a door, wall or human being. So, human body is made up of atoms and these atoms have certain properties. When the saint touches the things; the things also take the affect. His blessings are transferred to these things and from them to the pilgrims. This is same as an atomic bomb where one atom explodes and there is a chain reaction which explodes all the other atoms".

As Ernst (1993, p. 51) reports that strong connection with the saint's tomb, both physical and mental; brings blessings to the pilgrims and Weibel (2011, p. 171 – 198) is also contended that spiritual centers have certain energy which is transferable to the body of the pilgrim through prayer and meditation. So, pilgrims at the shrine of Baba Lal Shah reported that they feel this energy which they call *barakah*, being transferred to their body once they come to the shrine.

4.1.4. Mannat (divine intercession)

The pilgrims come to the shrine to make *mannat* in the name of Allah, *Panjtan Pak*³⁰ and Baba Lal Shah. It is a form of supplicating Allah and seeking Baba Lal Shah's assistance in their matters. The pilgrims believe that as Baba Jee is the *wali* of Allah, He has granted him the ability to intervene in the matters of ordinary people that's why they make *mannat* on Baba Jee's name.

Males and females both make *mannat*, but the way they do it is different. The female pilgrims are more into ritualistic things such as lighting the oil lamp or tying a knot with the thread. This ritual is same as reported by many other at different shrines (Abbas et al.,

³⁰ *Panjtan Pak* includes the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his (PBUH) family i-e- daughter Hazrat Fatima (R.A.), son in law Hazrat Ali (R.A.) and grandsons Hazrat Imam Hasan (R.A.) and Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.)

2013, p. 370-371; Choudhary, 2010, p. 19-27). Few men are seen lighting the lamps. However, they definitely use and take the oil from the lamps with them for the healing purpose.

The pilgrims make *mannat* for variety of things. The problems for which they make *mannat* are not only related to the big issues of their life, but to the minor everyday problems as well. Their desire and wishes range from the marital to economic problems, from physical ailments to mental illness, from success in life to getting rid from troubles. The process of making *mannat* varies among the pilgrims. There are pilgrims who believe in the performance of elaborate rituals to make *mannat* and the most popular of these is lighting the oil lamps.

According to the pilgrims the process of *mannat* comprises of three phases:

- i. At first stage, the pilgrims make *niyat* which includes their wish and the promise they have to fulfill once the wish is granted.
- ii. After making the *niyat* the pilgrims perform rituals which according to the pilgrims, serve as the mark of their promise. These rituals can be lighting the oil lamp, hoisting flags at the shrine, locking metal locks with the shrine door, wearing jewelry such as rings, bangles, bracelets and anklets and tying threads and cloths on the shrine's windows, doors and trees.
- iii. Once the wish is fulfilled, pilgrims fulfill their promise which can be anything, but mostly distribution of food among poor, alms giving, offering *nafali* prayers, reciting *Quran*, sweet distribution among pilgrims, cleaning the shrine or donations for the *langar* which helps the continuation of the *langar* system as well.

Most popular of the *mannat* rituals is the lighting of the lamp. A traditional *diya-salai*³¹ is used to light the lamp. At the shrine the lamp is placed on the marble counters specifically designed for this purpose in the courtyard (see figure 6). Pilgrims bring their

³¹ A traditional lamp made with clay is called *diya*. The *salai* is the light for the lamp made with a cotton bud soaked in oil usually mustard oil.

own *diya-salai* or use those which are already placed there. The oil from the lamps is used as an ointment. The pilgrims take it with them back home as an ointment. According to the pilgrims lighting the lamp is symbolic of the pilgrims hope and expectation for the successful fulfillment of the wishes and desires.

Figure 6. Marble counters to light *mannat* lamps



(Source: Author, 2014)

Note. In the above photo, two marble counters can be seen which are used to place oil lamps and incense sticks.

Pilgrims also use metal locks while making their *mannat*. They put their locks on the door handles of the grave room of Baba Jee. Once their wish is fulfilled they remove it from there. Tying knots with the threads is also one of the popular ways of making *mannat*. The pilgrims explained to the researcher that tying a knot, hoisting a flag, locking a lock or lighting a lamp is like a remainder of their wishes and desires to Baba Jee and it will stay there until the wish does not come true. The act of unlocking the lock,

opening the knot and removing the flag after the fulfillment of the wish is also symbolic of the good luck of the pilgrim that now all the knots and locks on his/her luck and fate are lifted from him/her.

A special metal pillar is made in the front yard of the shrine where people tie knots with the threads and also on the shrine's main entrance door. They also hoist flags on the metal fence of the shrine's boundary and trees. There are no restrictions regarding the color of flag, however abundantly found flags are red, signifying the name of Baba Lal Shah³²; green as representative of Islam and *Sufis* and black as a color of mourning for the suffering of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) family in Karbala.

Another mode of making *mannat* is without performing any kind of ritual. Usually people just make a vow that if the desire they make gets fulfilled then they will offer services and goods which they promised.

The pilgrims explained the importance of the *mannat* by saying that Allah likes that you give something to others in the form of *zakat*³³, *sadqat* (alms) and especially feeding others which includes both, the rich and poor. They believe that *mannat* is also a way to give others. Normally a person prays and asks Allah to grant wishes, but through *mannat* you are not just asking Allah, but you are giving something in return as well which is beneficial for the community and society, especially when people distribute *langar* among the pilgrims or poor and give money as alms. When you make *mannat* with the intercession of the saint then the blessing of the saint and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also adds into it.

A female pilgrim said that the process of *mannat* not just helps the pilgrim who makes the *mannat*, but the society as well. Usually people present food as their promise of fulfillment; which is distributed to the people as *langar* or even the money which they give is used for the *langar* at the shrines. She believed that it is the reason that no bloody

³² The name Lal means both red color and ruby. The Lal in Baba Jee's name means the ruby. Some of the pilgrims also mistake Lal in his name with the red color. So, the significance behind wearing red cloths and mounting red flags is the meaning of Baba Jee's name.

³³ It is the one of the five pillars of Islam; a process of mandatory taxation and redistribution of wealth in the society.

revolution has ever occurred in the past 1400 years in the entire Islamic world. She added that:

“North African Muslim region is the poorest in the entire world and there have been some struggles by the oppressors, but they never showed results as the bloody revolutions of Russia or France did. It is because in Muslim societies the food is available to everybody; even if it is not lavish, but people are contented with what they have and it is enough to keep them alive. Besides this, these spiritual centers also help them in easing the psychological distress and people never feel disappointed in themselves or the society which keeps the life going. Bloody revolutions only come when people literally do not even have a piece of stale bread. In Muslim societies, the shrines started the distribution of *langar* and generally people also distribute food in the form of *sadqat* to feed the masses. The biggest example of the *langar* is the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh³⁴ in Lahore, and it is said that nobody can sleep hungry in Lahore”.

As Geertz (1993, p. 90) takes religious symbols as capable of arising certain moods among people and providing the factuality to these moods so, the ritual of *mannat* is a symbolic act and it has the capacity to arise certain moods among the people. When they make *mannat*, they become hopeful that their wishes will be fulfilled. The symbolic acts pilgrims perform actually give them a satisfaction that now they are in the eyes of Baba Lal Shah, so he will help them. These rituals derive their validity through their ancestors and this knowledge is passed down to the new generation (Pirani, 2009, p. 297) and because of this, the people believe it and they feel that it is the only true way to make their lives better and to get rid of their problems.

4.1.5. Laying *chaddar* (grave spread)

The pilgrims bring *chaddar* with them to lay it on the grave. It is also taken as a very sacred thing as people touch it with great respect and devotion. It is also sacred, because it is carved with the name of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and *Panjtan Pak*. As Baba Jee belongs to a *Syed* family and most *Sufi* orders and *Sufis* draw their lineage from

³⁴ He is a famous eleventh century *Sufi* mystic and a scholar from Persia. He contributed a lot for the spread of Islam in South Asia especially in subcontinent. His shrine is located in Lahore, Pakistan.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through Hazrat Fatima (R.A.) and her family, so their names on the *chaddar* do not only show the spiritual association, but the genealogical association of the saint with the holy figures. Other than the names of the holy personalities, *chaddars* are also carved with the *Kalima Tayyaba*³⁵, the four *Quls*³⁶, *Ayat al-Kursi*³⁷, *Darood-e-Ibrahimi*³⁸, Holy *Kaaba* and *Masjid-e-Nabawai*.

A golden thread traditionally known as “*tilla*” is used to carve all the things on the *chaddar*. This spread is expansive than the one made with the color imprint which is very cheap, so that the people from low socio-economic class can also afford it and show their reverence.

The pilgrims said that sometimes they also lay *chaddars* after their *mannat* is fulfilled. They said that they save money for the *chaddar* as it is expensive. The type of *chaddar* laid on the grave is a mode to show the intensity of devotion and the respect of the pilgrim towards the saint. To show more respect and love, the pilgrims prefer to lay the *chaddar* made with expansive cloth such as velvet with embroidery on it.

The pilgrims also take their *chaddars* back home and keep them as the *tabaruk* (anything with holy attributes attached to it). As the *chaddar* is laid on the grave of Baba Jee, so it becomes holy and blessed as well. When kept at home, the *chaddar* can also bring the effects of the blessings of Baba Lal Shah all the times.

³⁵*Kalima Tayyaba* literally means word of purity. It is considered as one of the basics to enter Islam where one accepts Allah as only God and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as His messenger.

³⁶The last four chapters in *Quran i-e- Surah-e- Ikhlas* (The Purity), *Surah-e- Naas* (The Mankind), *Surah-e- Falak* (The Dawn) and *Surah-e- Kafiroon* (The Non-believers) revealed on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by Allah when he (PBUH) was under the influence of magic. He was told to recite these chapters and because of this Muslims take it as the cure for magic. The four *Quls* are also recited by the Muslims on the 3rd day of the death of a Muslim for his forgiveness and better life in hereafter.

³⁷It is the 255th verse of Quran. *Kursi* literally means throne or footstool in Arabic language. As the verse shows the emphatic explanation of Allah Almighty, so the title of *Ayat-al Kursi* (The Throne Verse) was used by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a metaphor.

³⁸It is an invocation made by Muslims to praise Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and his forefather Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.)

4.1.6. Distribution of *langar* (shrine food)

The *langar* is one of the integral parts of the whole pilgrimage site generally in Pakistan. The *Sufi saints* focused on feeding the people, without the discrimination of rich and poor, so this tradition prevails even after their death. At the shrine of Baba Lala Shah, *langar* system prevails as well. *Langar* does not mean to provide people with the meals, but anything to eat or to drink presented to the pilgrims comes under the category of *langar*. It can be tea, sweets, meals, roasted black chickpeas or any kind of food. The pilgrims provide *langar* irrespective of the gender, however female pilgrims are more likely to distribute sweets such as *ilaychi dana* as compare to the men.

The *langar khana* at the shrine is run by two grandsons of Baba Lal Shah, each of them takes duty of the *langar* for six months and then this duty is transferred to the other. At the *langar khana*, during the day at the lunch time, lunch is prepared by the cook. The system of *langar* is not as elaborate and extensive as it is at the other major shrines (see figure 7). The cook is all in all at the *langar khana*. The pilgrims come and sit while having tea and little chit chat with the fellow pilgrims. The cook keeps on making tea and presenting it to the pilgrims until they do not leave. There is not a single permanent cook at the *langar*; rather different people take charge of it. They take it as a divine duty. They associate it as an invitation and special blessing from Baba Lal Shah. The sitting arrangements for both male and female pilgrims in the *langar khana* are not segregated. Women come and sit their within the presence of the other men and enjoy the tea and the food. Female pilgrims sometimes come and ask the cook³⁹ to make *dua* for their problems.

³⁹The duty of cooking is not specified to any particular cook at the shrine of Baba Lal Shah. Devotees come and cook out of love and respect. One of the cook was respected by the pilgrims because of his age and wisdom, so pilgrims also asked him to make *dua* for them, but not all the cooks.

Figure 7. The *Langar Khana*



(Source: Author, 2014)

Note: the above photo is of the langar Khana where the cook can be seen sitting with the cooking utensils at the left corner and pilgrims enjoying tea

The donations given by the pilgrims in money and form are used to run the *langar*. The perception of the cooks towards the *langar* is very different. They do not associate it as a donation by the pilgrims, rather a blessing of Baba Jee. The researcher asked them about how they meet all the expenses for the food, to which the cook replied that:

“Whatever *Sarkar* gives us we use it”.

He further elaborated it as people are coming here to pay their homage and getting their wishes fulfilled through Baba Jee, so they are making these donations on his name and because of his blissfulness we are feeding the people.

Pilgrims coming for *ziyarat* also bring sweets with them. They believe that the *langar* or feeding others is one of the major practices of the *Sufis*. Keeping in mind this practice, the devotees bring sweets with them or buy from the shrine market to be distributed among the fellow pilgrims.

The devotion of the pilgrims can be seen from the way they make arrangements for the food. In order to show their devotion, some pilgrims do not give pre-cooked items as *langar*. They bring all the cooking ingredients and utensils with themselves and cook meal especially rice and distribute among the fellow pilgrims.

The researcher was told that distribution of food is considered to bring *barakah* into the life of the one who distributes. The same belief prevails among those who eat *langar* from others that as the food is endowed with *barakah*, so it is also beneficial for them. The pilgrims hold the belief that rejecting *langar* is a disgrace and sometimes you can face negative consequences.

A male pilgrim shared a story of his *Sufi* teacher that once he rejected the *parshad* (blessed food) at the shrine of Khawaja Ghareeb Nawaz⁴⁰, because the appearance of the one who presented it to him was very disgusting. After rejecting the *parshad*; he went to pay *salam* inside the tomb of Khawaja Ghareeb Nawaz, but he was not allowed to enter by the *darogha* (gatekeeper), whereas during every visit he was allowed to enter the tomb multiple times in a single day. There was some spiritual connection between all these events. Nobody saw what happened between him and the man who offered him the *parshad*, but the *darogha* did not let him in. He believed that as he had rejected the *parshad* of Khawaja Ghareeb Nawaz, in the same way Ghareeb Nawaz had rejected him.

The practice of *langar* is also associated with the spiritual growth of the pilgrims. They told the researcher that when they distribute food among others they feel that they are feeding people. For them it is not only some offering for the saint, but also providing these services to the mankind. They believe that pilgrims come from far-off places, so it

⁴⁰He is a 13th century *Chishti* saint from Afghanistan. His name is Moin -u- din Chishti, but he was given the title of Khawaja Ghareeb Nawaz; which means the benefactor of the poor. His shrine is located in Ajmer, India

is their duty to help them. A respondent told that it is not necessary that you only feed the poor and needy. Feeding your relatives and people from well off backgrounds is as rewarding as it is for poor.

A pilgrim shared with the researcher his idea about *langar* as a means to gain spirituality. He said that:

“When you sacrifice your money for Allah and His mankind then you know that it is being spent at the right place for the right cause. You use all your energies to present the Allah and the pilgrim with the best you have in the form of food. This practice of distribution of food connects you with Allah spiritually. You realize that you are in this world for the service of fellow human beings. You become very submissive towards others, because you know that whatever you have actually belongs to Allah, so there is nothing to be proud of. We spend our whole lives gathering as much money as we can which is of no use in the grave and in the hereafter, so it’s better to spend it on the people. Most important of all is that only eating *langar* is not blissful, but presenting it is as well. It is the source of *barakah* in one’s life. I have felt it and I am sure other people do as well.”

To shed the light upon the importance of the *langar* among *Sufis*, a female pilgrim shared that:

“Somebody once asked Sheikh Abdul Qadir Gillani that if you get all the treasures and wealth of the world then what will you do with it. He replied that they are of no use to me. He was asked again then he replied that I will feed the people.”

A male pilgrim believed that:

“*Langar* is the legacy of saints and it would not be wrong if we call it the sixth Pillar⁴¹ of Islam.”

⁴¹There are five pillars of Islam including *tawheed* (oneness of Allah and Prophet Muhammad PBUH as last prophet), *salat* (prayers), *sayam* (fasting), *zakat* (tax/alms giving) and *hajj* (annual pilgrimage to Makkah). Here the respondent called *langar* as the sixth pillar of Islam just to emphasize on its importance among *Sufis*.



However, there are pilgrims who do not relate their act of any material contribution as a source to attain spiritual satisfaction. For them it is just an act of alms giving and helping others. A pilgrim told that he never made any *mannat*, but his entire focus is on the *langar*. He told that the *niyat* is very important while contributing into the *langar*. He further elaborated that:

“Allah rewards and accepts your services depending upon your *niyat*. If you do this for the social recognition then you get it. You are recognized as the most generous, but if you do it for the love of humanity and love of Allah then you will get that. In the end Allah knows the best.”

The pilgrims believe that all the saints act as a *wasila* (mediation) between Allah and the mankind. Allah has allotted different roles and duties to the saints which they perform on Allah’s behalf. Pilgrims firmly believe that only Allah is omnipotent and sole provider of everything, but He does not come Himself to do things. He sends His *wali(s)* to different areas in the world to guide and help the mankind. A pilgrim explained the philosophy of *langar* by giving the example of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh (R.A.), whose *langar* is considered as one of the largest *langar* in Pakistan. He added that:

“Data Sahab was given the title of ‘*Data Sawa lakh*’ (bestower to the one and the quarter lakh people), because daily 1, 25000 people used to get food from his *langar*. Can our president and prime minister arrange such *langar*? I will say no, at least I cannot do that. Everything is provided to them (saints) by Allah through ordinary people in the form of alms, but there is *nisbat* (association) attached to these *walis* of Allah. Because of this *nisbat*, they are being able to create a center where everybody can come and feed himself.”

4.1.7. Presentation of *na’ats* (poetry to praise Prophet Muhammad PBUH)

The tradition of *qawali* (devotional *Sufi* songs) which is popular at the shrines of saints in Pakistan can only be seen at the shrine of Baba Lal Shah during the *urs*. During ordinary days there are no *qawals* (*Sufi* singers) at the shrine unlike other shrines. However there

are pilgrims who come to present *na'ats* at the shrine by standing next to Baba Jee's grave. Only the male pilgrims were seen presenting the *na'at* during the research period, however there is no restriction for women. Those who presented *na'ats* said that they do this out of respect. None of them is an official *na'at khawan* (one who presents *na'at*) at the shrine or a professional *na'at khawan*.

One of the *na'at khawan* shared that he was a singer and had a musical band. Then his life changed when he met some people who were inclined towards the *Sufi* tradition. This inspired him and he quite all the musical activities. After that he became the devotee of Baba Jee and now makes regular visits whenever he gets time. He believed that if he has a good voice then why he shouldn't use it only to praise Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

4.1.8. Restriction on females to enter the grave room

The women are not allowed to enter the room where the grave is held, which is written on the entrance door of the grave room, however they are allowed to freely move in the shrine and its premises. The women can just look at the grave by standing at the door of the grave room. The men can go in to the grave room, touch and sit next to the grave of Baba Jee. The women can only touch the boundary wall of the grave room. Even through the boundary they feel that they receive the blessings of the Baba Jee. If they bring a grave spread or flower petals to lay on the grave then they give it to the male member who accompanied them to present it on their own behalf or any other male pilgrim who is there.

When women were asked that how do they feel about this discrimination then they said that they love their saint and if he has restricted them from doing it then they are happy with it. They said that they want to touch and sit next to the grave, but if this makes the saint angry then they would not feel good about their (pilgrim) own selves.

A female pilgrim said that women are restrained from touching the grave and entering the grave room, because of them being impure during their menstrual cycle. As both male and female pilgrims put emphasize on the outer cleanliness, but the female pilgrims are

more conscious about it. The reason behind this is again the impurity during monthly cycle and they said that they never come in this state and even if they have to accompany somebody then they do not enter the shrine and just pray standing outside the main entrance.

There were few female pilgrims who deliberately do not even touch the boundary of the grave room, because they think that they are not worthy of it and they are sinful. They believe that it requires a lot of courage to touch the holy things associated with pious people. The researcher did not meet any male pilgrim who did not touch the grave out of this reason.

A female said that:

“Sometimes you want to go inside the grave room and touch it out of love and to receive the blessings and you also feel bad for yourself that you are not allowed, but then there comes the concept of *mehram*⁴² and *namehram*⁴³. The grave room is very small and there are men inside, so it is difficult to maintain the distance from them. Women also feel insecure in the close proximity of *namehram*. Islam also focuses on maintaining a distance from a *namehram* for both men and women; which is difficult to practice if both are allowed to enter in a small grave room. Baba Jee in his life also maintained distance from women and rarely met any women, so keeping in view this; I am contented with the restriction on women”.

Another women added that restricting women from entering the grave room is good as sometimes women go and start crying loudly and do not leave the place for other pilgrims. So, the tomb itself is big enough where all women can pray easily.

Through the responses of the female pilgrims stated above, it can be seen that the pilgrims accept the orders of their revered saint without any objection and they do not feel that they are less important than males, but all what matters to them is that they are

⁴² According to Islamic *shariy'ah*, *mehram* for both men and women is the one who is unmarriageable to them. If marriage takes place then it is incestuous.

⁴³ According to Islamic *shariy'ah*, *namehram* for both men and women is the one who is marriageable to them. Islam plays a lot of focus on maintaining distance and limited interaction with *namehram*.

still loved by Baba Lal Shah and he helps them in the difficult times. They even justify such orders and prohibitions themselves which helps them to remain contented.

4.1.9. *Urs* (death ceremony) of Baba Lal Shah

The date of Baba Lal Shah's demise is 11th of June 1967, so the *urs* celebrations start on the 11th June of every year and last for the next 7 days, thus ending on the 18th of June. The shrine being located in the hills of Murree captures the attention of pilgrims because of its natural beauty. The enthusiasm among the pilgrims is so immense that even the long distance and dangerous roads cannot stop them for coming.

4.1.9.1. The *urs* celebrations

The preparations for *urs* start almost two weeks before the *urs*. The food vendors display their stalls and the *Malangs* and pilgrims from far off places come early, so that they can mount their tents at the perfect location.

The pilgrims come from distant cities such as Hayderabad, Peshawar, Multan, Chakwal, Lahore and almost from all parts of Pakistan. People come with their families including their children, wives, grand children, grand parents, uncles, aunts, with groups of friends, acquaintances and neighbors.

The hills around the shrine are used as the grazing fields for the cattle, but during the *urs* they are used as an accommodation for the pilgrims. The pilgrims hire trucks, so that they can bring their things with them. For their own conveyance; they reserve vans and pickups. Their vehicles are also decorated with colorful flags and banners.

Most of the people bring their tents and folding beds with themselves every year, but some of the people entrust their belongings to the natives who live in the surroundings of the shrine, so that they do not have to face all the exertion of loading and unloading, booking a truck especially for the things and money to be paid to the driver every year.

On the night of 10th of June, 2013; the shrine was washed with three different waters. The first wash was made with water, second wash with the *Abb-e- Zam Zam* and the third

wash with the rose water. The water was preserved and the devotees took it back with themselves as a medicine. Then the *Sajjadanashins* (hereditary administrators/successors) laid the *chaddar* upon the grave and made special *duas*.

On the first day of *urs*, the celebrations started after the *Fajr* (dawn prayer). After the recitation of *Quran* there was a *mehfil-e-qawali* (devotional *Sufi* music program) which lasted till the *Maghrib* (sunset prayer).

On the 2nd day of *urs*, *mehfil-e-milad* (a poetry program to praise Prophet Muhammad PBUH) was organized which lasted till the *Asr* (afternoon prayer). After this the horse show was presented at the shrine for the entertainment of the pilgrims. According to the key informant, by the end of the 2nd day, 100,000 pilgrims came to pay their respects for Baba Lal Shah.

On the 3rd day after *Maghrib*, a *Pothohari* poetry program was organized in which the legendary *Sufi* poetry “*Saif al Maluk*”⁴⁴ was presented along with other people presenting their own poetry.

On the 4th day, the pilgrims celebrated the *mehndi*⁴⁵ of Baba Lal Shah. This tradition was celebrated in accordance with the *Shia* tradition of *mehndi* celebrations of Hazrat Abbas Alamdar (R.A.)⁴⁶. Both males and females equally participated in it. Along with this, they also made *mannat* with the hope that it will be fulfilled before the *urs* next year.

On the 5th and 6th day the pilgrims came and prayed for Baba Jee and for themselves, however there was not any special program organized with reference to the *urs*. On the 7th day, there was a slight decrease in the crowd, because the *urs* was coming to its end. So, the *Sajjadanashin* made the special *dua* along with his devotees.

On the 8th and the final day, the *majlis-e-iza* (ceremony to mourn the tragedy and martyrs of Karbala) was organized for the martyrs of Karbala which lasted till noon, for which the

⁴⁴ A *Sufi* poetry by *Sufi* poet Hazrat Mian Muhammad Bakhs (R.A.) from Khari Shareef, Azad Kashmir.

⁴⁵ It is an aromatic dark green paste of dried leaves of *henna* plant used as a red dye to apply on hands, hair and feet. It is also a wedding ceremony in which *mehndi* is applied on the hands of the bride and the groom which marks the start of the wedding.

⁴⁶ He was Hazrat Imam Husain (R.A.) half brother, flag bearer and a martyr of Karbala.

orators came from other cities. After that the pilgrims also performed *zanjeer zani* (flagellation to commemorate the sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain R.A.). The *langar* in the name of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.) was distributed among the pilgrims and the final *dua* was made by the *Sajjadanashin*.

4.1.9.2. The shrine during *urs*

The tomb is surrounded by a metal fence serving as the boundary. In normal days all the pilgrims entered and left from the front gate. The gate at the back is kept close all the time. The crowd at the shrine exceeded during *urs*, so to manage this, the back door of the boundary was opened as well. The area at the back of the shrine which is deserted most of the times looked like a totally different place during the *urs* celebrations.

There were musicians and singers singing all the time, people danced on the music and performed *dhamaal* on *Sufi* songs, people sacrificed their animals there, drug sellers sold drugs in disguise and other than the enthusiast pilgrims, drug addicts also sat next to the shrine intoxicated with the drugs.

There are two doors to enter the tomb, but in the days of *urs* due to the increase of pilgrims, one door was used as an entrance and the other as an exit. At both the doors, people stood voluntarily in shifts, so that they could manage the crowd and prevent any kind of disturbance. However, this restriction of entering from the one door and leaving from the other was not applied on the women. They were free to enter and leave from which ever door they wanted to. If there was crowd at the entrance then the volunteers standing at the gate helped women by making way for them, so that they could move without any problem.

The platform where people light oil lamps and incense is made up of marble, which in ordinary days is covered with dirt, smoke and oil. During *urs* it was especially cleaned for this purpose, after which the original marble surface could be seen very clearly.

People came and light the lamps and incense. A *Malang*, who came from Sindh, served the duty of cleaning the platform, removeing the lamps from it in order to make space for



more lamps and removing the rose petals from the platform with the broom. The petals were then burned and their ashes were used as *khak-e-shifa* (healing ashes).

The sight of the shrine was like a complete city. The pilgrims got the land for their *ghoppa* (tent) on rent by the native people. After assembling the tents, the pilgrims hoist red, orange and green flags on the tents and decorated them with colorful buntings. They brought the food items with them such as rice, pulses, vegetables, oil, ghee and other non perishable dry ingredients. They also brought goats with them which were sacrificed and later used as an ingredient for *langar*. Huge amount of wooden logs were carried by all the groups for the cooking purpose as gas was unavailable in the open air. These ingredients were used to prepare *langar* everyday as all of them presented *langar* once in a day, however there were pilgrims who presented *langar* twice a day. It was not only ate by the whole family or the group, but was also distributed among the fellow pilgrims as the key philosophy of *langar* is to spend your money by feeding the mankind. Both men and women together prepared the *langar*.

The pilgrims faced the problem of drinking water. As the *urs* is celebrated in summers, so the water intake naturally increases. It was difficult for the pilgrims to fetch huge quantity of water with them. The water available for the pilgrims was bit expensive and unclean. However it did bring opportunities for the native people to earn. They kept on collecting bottles and then during *urs* refilled them, so that they could sell them to the pilgrims. Donkeys were used to carry gallons of water from one hill to another.

4.1.9.3. Music and recreation

The drum beaters kept on beating even if nobody was dancing or paying attention to them. The singers not only sang the *Sufi Qawali*, but also sang the secular songs. People stood around the singers in a form of a crowd to enjoy the music and some of them also showered them with money traditionally known as *vaile*⁴⁷. The male pilgrims and the eunuchs performed *dhamaal* and raised slogans such as *Ya-Ali*⁴⁸ (my Ali R.A.) and *Ya-*

⁴⁷ Showering money as alms on dancers, musicians and eunuchs.

⁴⁸ It is a slogan raised to seek help from Hazrat Ali (R.A.)

*Hussain*⁴⁹ (my Hussain R.A.). No female was involved in dancing activities, however little girls danced and pilgrims appreciated them.

Pilgrims did not just come here to pay their homage and to celebrate the *urs* of the saint; most of them also came here to enjoy, because of the natural beauty and climate of the Murree. Majority of the pilgrims belonged to the low socio-economic class, so this was an affordable opportunity for them to spend their vacations. They came in the form of groups, so they pooled in for all the expanses of conveyance, food, luggage and rent charges. The land rent for 8 days for a single tent was 2000 rupees which was very cheap and affordable, whereas the charges for a hotel room for a night start from 800 rupees. Then the food in the form of *langar* was available all the times. There were so many recreational activities such as food stalls of traditional Lahori food, pathans selling dry fruits, vegetables shops, meat shops, juice stalls, *sardai*⁵⁰, traditional cloths from different cultures, jewelry shops, toy shops, women selling bangles and applying henna, perfume sellers, ferris wheel and trampoline for kids.

4.1.9.4. Activities of the pilgrims

The pilgrims who were there on a one day visit supplicated, made *mannat* and light lamps and incense. Most of the people who stayed in the tents usually came for the purpose of entertainment and recreation, but this was not the only case. Their desires, wishes and supplications which they made at the Shrine of Baba Lal Shah did get fulfilled at some point in their lives as well.

Pilgrims who came with the *dali(s)*⁵¹ were in the form of groups. They kept the *dali* at the shrine and then performed *fatiha*. There were few devotees who did self torture as well.

Pilgrims staying in the tents went to the shrine to offer *fatiha* and wandered around exploring the shrine market, but most of the men remained in their tents idle, dressed in *shalwars* and vests. Most of them and some of the women kept on smoking in their tents.

⁴⁹ It is a slogan raised to seek help from Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.)

⁵⁰ A traditional sweet drink made with almond, milk and poppy seeds.

⁵¹ During the *urs* of the saints, some pilgrims come in the form of processions from different area or cities. The entire procession follows the model of the saint's shrine and a *chaddar* to collect alms. This procession is called *dali*.

Male pilgrims had their beds laid on the sidewalks of the road, where they spent their time in the day while enjoying the company of other pilgrims.

A lot of pilgrims did not mingle with the others, because they did not think that others were much worthy of interacting. They said as they did not know that what kind of backgrounds they were coming from, so they only spent time with their own group. The concept of *communitas* presented by Victor Turner focuses on the idea of egalitarianism in the pilgrimage activity (Bowie, 2006, p. 153; Gilmore, 2008, p. 216; Kreiner, 2010, p. 440-456); Pirani, 2009, p. 82; Werbner & Basu, 1998, p. 11) does not seem valid here at the Shrine of Baba Lal Shah, rather these results validate the postmodern notion of difference in discourse and motives of the pilgrims (Wheeler, 1998, p.23). Firstly the pilgrims reported that they do not mingle with others and then they hold negative views about the fellow pilgrims. So, they might come to shrine for their own benefits and to get blessings, but for many it is not an opportunity to form a community of people who believe in egalitarian values or strive to overcome barriers which limit the formation of such society.

People did face many problems here, but keeping the teachings of the *Sufis* in mind they did not hesitate to help each other. As some pilgrims talked about the problem of water they faced, but they also reported that fellow pilgrims helped them and offered them water if they had.

In the evening the female pilgrims went to the shrine and presented *mehndi* in decorated plates. This was their way of celebrating the *urs* and after that they supplicated. *Urs* is a joyous occasion celebrated on the death anniversary, so *mehndi* is celebrated because the saint reunited with Allah that day. Eunuchs were also present at the shrine. It was an earning opportunity for them, so they hesitated to give interviews as they had to earn money. Those who came to the shrine to supplicate were not dressed in fancy cloths but wore casual cloths and did not apply any makeup at all.

4.1.9.5. The saint's *dali* (*urs* procession following the shrine's model)

The pilgrims brought the models of the shrine traditionally known as *dali* accompanied with the drums. The whole *dali* comprised of the platform on which the model was placed. Artificial flowers and traditional *gota* (shimmery ribbon) were used to decorate the model.

The *dali* was held by the group of pilgrims and behind those who hold the *dali*, a long *chaddar* in green, red or black embroidered with the name of Baba Lal Shah and the *Kalima Tayyaba*, 99 names of Allah, names of Prophet's (PBUH) family members and name of the twelve Imams was held by other members of the same group. This *chaddar* was not only placed on the grave of Baba Jee, but people also put money in it which was later given to the poor as *sadqa* (alms).

The *dalis* were not only brought by the local people, but also by the pilgrims coming from other cities. The drums were beaten and the *chaddar* for alms money was carried by the pilgrims throughout the journey to the shrine. The pilgrims also hoisted red and green flags on their trucks, buses and pick up cars, as green being the color of *Sufis* and Islam and red in accordance with the name of Baba Lal Shah.

The *dalis* and the grave spread were held by the male pilgrims and the *dali* procession was also led by the male pilgrims. Females did accompany the procession, but they were not given the charge of carrying anything or leading the procession.

4.1.9.6. *Urs* and the shrine market

There are around twelve small shops in the entire shrine and only one hotel. There is no diversity and variety among the products at these shops. They all have similar items such as jewelry, sweets, dry fruits, religious books, *chaddars*, flower petals, toys, oils, incense and lamps.

During the *urs*, the area surrounding the shrine gave an image of a downtown city, where people lived and all the items were available which are mandatory for living such as vegetables and fruits, chicken, meat, butchers, spices, shopkeepers from other cities

selling their delicacies, herbalists selling herbs, perfume sellers, oil sellers, cobblers, barbers, shoe polishers, people imprinting names and tattoos, masseurs making typical noise by hitting the bottle against the plate in which the bottles containing oil were placed. The diversity of food items could also be seen during the *urs*. Few natives also came there to sell the locally grown fruits which go wasted in large quantities in normal days.

4.1.9.7. Women and *urs*

Like the male pilgrims females also came in large numbers. They also lived there and the groups of all female pilgrims stayed without accompanying any male member. There were some female devotees who did not come to the shrine during *urs* because of the crowd, They made their visit right before the start of the *urs* and then their male family members presented *chaddar*, *dali* and *langar* on their behalf.

Women faced the discrimination of entering the grave room in both ordinary days and the *urs*. The males faced the discrimination of entering from only one door and leaving from the other during the *urs*. This was to be practiced by all the pilgrims during *urs*. However, there was a lot of leniency for women at *urs*. They could enter and leave from the same door. Because of the crowd the men who voluntarily took the responsibility of managing the pilgrims at the entrance and the exit paved the way for the female pilgrims. Even though females are not allowed to enter the grave room, but it does not mean that they are less respected than the male pilgrims which is evident from leniency in entering the shrine from either ways in crowded days such as the *urs*.

In the shrine market besides *urs*, no female shopkeepers or venders were ever seen. All the shops were run by the males. During the *urs* female shopkeepers came as well, but in very small proportion to male shopkeepers. The things which women sold and the services which they provide were also very limited. None of the female sold any of the edible items or dresses. Their activities were only limited to selling bangles, applying henna and carving tattoos on the body.

Females being subject to harassment by males felt safe there. When the female shopkeepers were asked that did they face any kind of harassment, then they told that nobody had the guts to do such thing to them. Some of them said that nobody would do such unethical things at such a sacred place. Except the few, most of the female sellers did not hesitate to get their photos taken which can become a big issue for a woman to get her photograph taken by a complete stranger.

The amount they earned through these things was a lot more than what they earned in ordinary day, but it was not as much as the men earned during *urs*. A gem seller told that during *urs* he earns in millions.

4.1.9.8. Females' visit before *urs*

A huge number of female pilgrims not only just visited during the *urs*, but they also lived there in tents and some groups of female pilgrims did not accompany any male. However, there were female pilgrims who did not come to attend the *urs*. So, to compensate this they made an early visit right before the *urs*.

They said that they do not come to attend the *urs* because of the crowd. People come from far of places and the whole area gets congested and crowded. They told that in order to avoid all the hustle and bustle they make an early visit.

They added that during *urs* the substance abusers and the sellers come, so they believed that it was not a safe environment for them. Some female pilgrims did not come because of their own choice, but many female pilgrims were not allowed to come during the *urs* by their families. They told they all have heard about the stories that during *urs* all the social and morally bad things happen at the shrines, such as dancing and substance abuse. This is the reason that their families do not think that at that time shrine is a safe place for them.

4.1.9.9. *Urs* and the socioeconomic differences among pilgrims

The major proportion of the pilgrims came from the low socio-economic class and the proportion of people coming from well off families was less among those who stayed in the tents throughout the *urs*.

The arrangements made by pilgrims also varied according to their socio-economic status. Tents of the low socio-economic class were small in size, congested, proximal to the shrine and to other tents. The tents of pilgrims from middle socio-economic class were huge in size, carpeted and clean. They mounted their tents on the sidewalks of the road, vacant lands in the way to the shrine and some resided in the houses near the shrine. The reason for the less proximity from shrine and pilgrims was that those coming from well off families wanted to stay away from the crowd, noise and wanted to maintain their privacy as well.

The pilgrims from low socio-economic class made their own *langar* themselves, whereas those from well off groups had cooks with themselves who prepared the *langar*. Similarly the quantity of *langar* also varied from low to middle socioeconomic class. Pilgrims from low socioeconomic class had small cooking pots “*daygchi*”, where as pilgrims from well off families had huge cooking pots “*dayg*”. The pilgrims from low socioeconomic class had to buy water from the local people. That water was not only costly but unhygienic as well. Pilgrims from middle class had their own reservoir of clean bottled water.

The pilgrims from middle socioeconomic class had singers and musicians who sang *qawali* in those pilgrims’ tents. It was because they were able to afford it. On the other hand the pilgrims from low socioeconomic class did not invite singers to their tents, rather they were only limited to the drum beaters as it was economical for them.

As Victor Turner talks about the pilgrimage as a step towards forming an egalitarian society (Bowie, 2006, p. 153; Gilmore, 2008, p. 216; Kreiner, 2010, p. 440-456; Pirani, 2009, p. 82; Werbner & Basu, 1998, p. 11) but this notion is rejected here. The pilgrims who stay during the *urs* at the shrine cannot let go of the worldly needs. As the difference among the pilgrims on the basis of socio-economic status is presented above; it is evident

that the visible difference is always there and it is not easy to from a homogenous society. It does not mean that the pilgrims; despite having differences do not feel the pain and the suffering of the other pilgrims; but they keep up with their present lifestyle which is visible even in the shrine setting.

4.1.9.10. Dress patterns

The dress pattern of the pilgrims was very casual. There were some men and women who wore red cloths in accordance with the name of Baba Lal Shah. Some female pilgrim wore very shiny formal dresses. Men on the other hand wore casual clothes.

In days other than *urs*, pilgrims told that they wear *namazi*-dresses⁵² in order to perform the pilgrimage. Some pilgrims make special preparations which were evident from their clothing. Men were dressed casually in *shalwar kameez* (traditional Pakistani dress) and pants.

Among the female pilgrims, many came in very casual *shalwar qameez* and a shawl wrapped all over the body. The colors of the dresses were not very bright, so that they would not catch attention. They believed that it was a sacred place and a grave of a saint, so they should not wear loud colors.

Some female pilgrims wore very bright and shiny cloths. Other than the cloths, the difference of the makeover also varied among the women. Pilgrims in shiny cloths used a lot of makeup which was also detested by the fellow female pilgrims. The pilgrimage was not just a sacred journey for them, but also a means for recreation as well. Due to the beautiful climate of Murree, pilgrim took it as an opportunity of a trip. They came with their families and cooked and ate *langar* right at the spot, so it was a much festive occasion for them. They themselves reported that they are here to enjoy as well, because of the scenic beauty and cool climate of Murree.

⁵²According to the pilgrims, *namazi* dress is the one which fulfills all the prerequisite of offering prayer such as it must be clean of any impurity and covers the *satar*. *Satar* is Islamic way of dressing up with modesty by covering the body and wearing loose clothes which do not expose the details of the human figure.

4.1.9.11. *Urs* as an earning opportunity

The shopkeepers who came there to sell products earned huge amount of money. A gem seller told that he earns in millions during *urs*. However the money earned by women applying henna and selling bangles was quite less than those selling other things. The shopkeepers who displayed their product during *urs* also paid rent for the space they occupied, so in order to meet their expenses they had to sell things at high rates. Besides this there is also an emotional attachment of people towards the things they buy from the shrine. So the shopkeepers also kept this in mind while increasing the price of the products.

To earn money some people made fake traditions and rituals as well. For example a young boy in the shrine was distributing water in steal bowls carved with holy verses to the pilgrims as holy water. After the pilgrims drink it; he asked them for money as alms. If they paid less (ten-20 rupees) he asked them to give the red note (100 rupees) in accordance to the name of Baba Lal Shah. While he was doing this with the researcher, a man passed by and said please stop this drama.

In ordinary days the car parking is free of any charges but as *urs* came, it brought economic opportunities as well. The pilgrims were charged 200 rupees for the parking. Those who charged money were responsible for not letting any damage happen to the car as there was too much transport and crowd on the road. However this duty was not performed in very efficient way.

The locals and native shopkeepers were not seen in the market, so the large proportion of sellers in the shrine market came from far off cities such as Lahore, Haydarabad, Mardan, Chakwal, Sakkhar, Multan, Faisalabad, Sargodha, Islamabd, rawalpindi. The locals totally ignored such huge economic opportunity. The only means to earn for them was through renting the land and selling locally grown seasonal fruits.

4.1.9.12. *Urs* and hygiene

As the days of *urs* passed the crowd increased. People sacrificed animals but there was no proper way to dispose of the waste products. The municipal committee was responsible for the disposal of waste products but it did not perform its duty well. As the days passed, the increase in indisposed waste matter and the rain made the entire surrounding of the shrine unhygienic.

Heavy rain fall did not stop more pilgrims from coming and those there already to leave, but it also increased the problems for the pilgrims. They lived in the tents, so spending the night got really difficult for them as all of their belongings got wet and they could not sleep in such condition. The road also remained crowded during entire *urs* due to heavy traffic and the rain. To resolve this issue, traffic police was there throughout the *urs* but as days passed and the pilgrims, cars, suzukis, vans and trucks increased, it got difficult for many pilgrims to reach the shrine and make supplication for the saint. Some pilgrims were very disappointed after this condition that they said they have decided not to come to the shrine during *urs*.

4.1.10. Importance of rituals

Not all the pilgrims come with some desire in their heart to get fulfilled. There are pilgrims who only come out of love and respect of Baba Lal Shah. They do not have any worldly desire to get fulfilled. Rather they only focus on spending time in the presence of a blessed personality out from the chores of ordinary life. A female pilgrim, while talking to the researcher said that:

“While sitting and spending time at the shrine sometimes you think about how magnificent Allah is and his creation. You ponder upon your purpose in life. Sometimes you regret the life you have lived. You realize that you have spent so many years in ignorance, but then the hope of changing your life is always there. One thinks that he has still left with time to change whatever went wrong.”

Valdinoci (2008, p. 209-210) reports that meditation and contemplation carried out at the shrine is beneficial for the pilgrims and reminds him about the mortality and the blessings

of Allah. This notion was made clear by the responses of the pilgrims that they not only come to get their wishes fulfilled, but the pilgrimage brings them closer to Allah and they spend time in thinking about the nature of the life and its true purpose.

There are many pilgrims who do not perform any kind of rituals other than *dua*. One of these pilgrims said that to him these rituals do not make any difference. He further added that:

“People have invented such rituals just to formalize the whole process of *mannat* and to add strength to the whole practice of *ziyarat*. It may help the pilgrim to strengthen his belief that his desire will be fulfilled once he performs the whole process right. In my opinion, you do not have to offer your service to Allah only as a return of His favor of granting your wishes. I think that one must always be in this state of thinking and doing everything for Allah. If you forgive somebody, or do not yell at somebody in chaos, if you call fellow beings with respect or pass a smile to a stranger, I think these are also the services one can do for Allah without asking for anything in return. You cannot apply terms and conditions on your dealings with Allah.”

A female pilgrim responded to the importance of rituals as:

“Allah listens to you even if you do not say it. But when you perform certain rituals such as *dua*, recitation of *Quran*, lighting lamps then these things add strength to what you wish. I do not know the value of these things for Allah, but it gives us hope that we have done enough to plead Allah and now He is definitely going to listen to us.”

A female pilgrim said that the rituals not only emotionally and psychologically satisfy the pilgrim, but also help in the economic activity of the local population. People buy edible items or sweets to distribute at shrine usually form the shrine market. Rose petals for the grave, grave spread, *dia-salai*, oils, locks, flags and many other items are bought from the shrine market which is run by the local people. Through rituals people also help the general masses in their livelihood earning. She believed that it is another way of helping the people through Baba Jee.

From the responses of the pilgrims, the Geertz (1993, p.90) ideas regarding the importance of the religious symbols seem valid that they help the individuals not just to endure their situation, but also reinforces certain kind of moods and motivation in them that they always stay contented with their lives and strive to make it better.

Keane (2008, p. S124) also focuses on the manifestation of religious beliefs through rituals and performances which allow people to get the spiritual and religious experience. He believes that the religious spaces and sensations caused by the religious performances give an individual the experience of sacred. These elements together help an individual at both emotional and mental level. This idea regarding the importance of rituals is evident from the responses of the pilgrims that after performances such as supplication, *mannat*, touching of relics, distribution of *langar* and attending the *urs* of Baba Lal Shah they give their beliefs a concrete expression.

The pilgrims regard such activities as sacred and they feel that they are the part of the sacred order as well by helping other people. This not just gives them a sacred experience, but also an emotive one as well. They feel contented, happy, blessed and grateful to Allah for their lives and whatever they have. They offer prayers and seek help even in their homes which makes them realize that they have an entity whom they can ask anything at any time, but once at the shrine setting the space and the surrounding also plays its role; hence their prayers become more intense.

4.2. Reasons to carryout pilgrimage

The pilgrims come to the shrine out of many reasons. They come to get the blessing of Baba Jee and just out of his love. Most of the pilgrims come to get their wishes fulfilled, because they have an unshakeable belief that Allah will listen to them when they will forward their requests through Baba Lal Shah. Their desires range from everyday problems to huge life crisis.

The shrines and holy sites are taken as the centers for the dissemination of the religious knowledge and mysticism (Gaborieau, 2003, p. 84-87as cited in Valdinoci, 2008, p. 203), but majority of people come there to get their worldly desires fulfilled (Abbas et al.,

2013, p. 369-387). At the shrine of Baba Lal Shah, people come to get spiritual insight, but most of the people focus on the fulfillment of their wishes. The major problems faced by pilgrims for which they come to pray are presented below.

4.2.1. To seek cure for diseases

The shrines hold a special place as spiritual centers for the cure of various diseases. Shrine of Baba Lal Shah also attracts pilgrims, because of its attributes of healing and cure of diseases, both physical and spiritual. Studies have shown that association with the saint can bring blissful consequences to the people, both worldly and spiritual (Abbas et al., 2013, p. 369-387).

4.2.1.1. Use of oil and rose ashes as medicine

The pilgrims take the oil from the *dia-salai* and then refill it with the oil they bring themselves. They believe that the oil once used for the lighting the lamp becomes holy as well, because of being placed near the saint. They use the oil to heal body aches, skin and other diseases. A female pilgrim said to the researcher that:

“These oils are also *barakah*. Oils have always been used in subcontinent for so many centuries, so healing properties of oils increase once they come in touch with the saint and his belongings. All kind of oils have qualities such as olive and mustard oil, so the positivity in the shrine adds into their (oil’s) benefits. When the pilgrim has positive thoughts regarding the blessedness of the oil then the first step of his cure occurs at the psychological level that he accepts that his suffering is going to end and then once he uses the oil, its starts showing its physical effects as well”.

The pilgrims use the oil for many physical ailments and problems which include massaging the oil in frozen shoulder, leg pain, cancer pain, cervical pain, sciatica, eczema, arthritis, gout, goiter, backache, headache, earache, pyria, weak eyesight (oil as an eye drop), pimples and body rashes.

The rose petals and flower sheets which people lay on the grave of Baba Jee are removed and put into a small cemented block known as *mach* especially designed to burn the

flowers (see figure 8). When they turn in to ashes, they are used by the pilgrims as *khak-e-shifa*. They eat the ashes not only for the cure of physical ailments but as a spiritual source of *barakah* as well.

Figure 8. Mach of Baba Lal Shah



(Source: Author, 2014)

Note: The above photo is of the *Mach* of Baba Lal Shah where the fresh rose petals are burnt.

4.2.1.2. Seeking help and endurance in sickness

At the shrine, cure in the time of sickness is one of the major reasons which bring people to seek help from Baba Jee. The health concerns are related to both physical and mental problems. The pilgrims come to get help during seasonal fever, pains and aches, skin diseases such as pimples and rashes, accidents and terminal illnesses.

The pilgrims shared that their sickness is cured once they make *dua* at the shrine. They become healthy and after that they present alms and *langar* at the shrine. The pilgrims who suffered from terminal disease such as cancer said that their visits help a lot in the endurance of their suffering. A female pilgrim who was a cancer patient said that her

visits to the shrine have not led to the cure of the disease, but it has helped her a lot in the endurance of her suffering. She believed that these people and such places have an attraction towards people and all this is because of the piousness of these saints. She comes here to get relief from her suffering. She used to remain in a total state of fear and helplessness, but ever since she has called Baba Jee for help; her belief and perception towards her disease has changed.

According to Geertz (1993, p. 90) religious symbols and rituals help people to endure their suffering. Religious symbols form certain mental states among people which are evident from the results of this research. These rituals help people to accept their situation even if they cannot change it, but they feel better once such rituals are performed. Due to the aspect of sacred attached to these rituals; they have the power to change moods and feelings of the people. When people know that they have asked a sacred entity for help, because of their strong belief they become contented and endure their suffering by believing that it was one of the God's plan to keep these people close to him as pilgrims reported that sickness makes you psychologically and emotionally close to Allah. Many pilgrims believe that their sickness is just a way to form a strong bond with Allah and it will lift their sins from them. After supplicating at the shrine during sickness; the pilgrims feel positive energy in them and a motivation to do good in life.

Other than the endurance in the sickness; the pilgrims' suffering also lessens because of the positive energy at the shrine as is also transferred to the body of the pilgrim through supplication (Weibel, 2011, p. 171 – 198). As the shrines are also considered as the spiritual healing centers and are capable of bringing blissfulness in to the pilgrims life (Valdinoci, 2008, p. 210) which was reported by the pilgrims as they felt ease in their suffering and pain.

Case study 1

A 53 year old female pilgrim from Murree shared her story. She was a house wife and was coming to the shrine of Baba Lal Shah for past ten years. When she was diagnosed with cancer, she started to remain very distressful. Her health was deteriorating day by day and the psychological impact which she took from her illness also worsened her

physical condition. She belonged to Murree, so she had heard a lot about Baba Lal Shah and also made couple of visits to his shrine as a child along with her parents but she was not a regular devotee.

In agony she started regularly coming to Baba Jee's shrine. These visits gave her the courage and instead of becoming hopeless; she started to accept her situation. She realized that she is going through a difficult phase of life, but Allah has given her the love of His loved ones. With this belief she started to feel privileged as this situation brought her close to Allah. She believed that it is the Baba Jee himself who called her to come to him, so that she could endure her situation. For her, it was all destined, which she attributed as a blessing from Allah. According to her; suffering is the state where there is a very thin line between gratitude and ingratitude, but her suffering had made her thankful and humble towards Allah.

Case study 2

A 64 year old male pilgrim from Rawalpindi; a business man by profession and a devotee of Baba Jee for last 21 years was suffering from gall bladder cancer. As a result of his disease, he became very weak, experienced unbearable pain and could not sleep at night. He knew that now it is not going to get cured, but he came to the shrine to pray Allah to ease his suffering and receive blessings form Baba Lal Shah. He took the oil with himself back home and started using it for body massage, As a result of the blessings of Baba Lal Shah, he started experiencing less pain and from the very first night when he came back home after making *dua* at Baba Lal Shah's shrine; he started getting peaceful sleep.

Even though he still had cancer (at the time of interview), but now he was in much relief. He reported that he has accepted his condition and believes in the blessings of Baba Jee, because according to him; as Allah says that in the return of your suffering I lift your sins from you. He believed that as these saints faced so many hurdles in their lives, so similarly Baba Jee also faced hardships and choose a very difficult path to live his life, so he (Baba Jee) sat an example for him to follow and through his blessings he is being able to have the courage to face the life threatening difficulties and to fight them. He believed that through his cancer Allah is forgiving him for his sins and Baba Jee's blessing

through the help of Allah have enabled him to accept his condition and become contented with it. He felt pride in saying that he is the chosen one.

4.2.1.3. To seek Cure for magic

Researcher met few pilgrims who were the victims of magic. They told that they came and prayed here and with time the magic lost its powers.

A pilgrim who was the victim of black magic told that no one recovers from the effect of black magic, but his family came to pray for his cure. He told that he was in his home and Baba Jee was here buried in the shrine. There was some spiritual connection that Baba Jee's voice entered in to his ears. After this event he became free from the effects of the magic.

Case study

A 52 year old female pilgrim who belonged to Murree, but was the resident of Rawalpindi and a house wife shared her problems created by her sister-in-law. She told the researcher that she had a very good relationship with her sister-in-law and they were like sisters to each other. She (pilgrim) was living a very good life with her husband and was financially very stable, but gradually she and her husband grew apart. She told that even then he fulfilled his duties towards her and their children and provided all the facilities, but he became very uninterested in the matters related to home. One day her brother came to meet her and told that his wife (pilgrim's sister-in-law) does not think good of her and he reckoned that she also does some magic as well on her (pilgrim), her husband and himself (pilgrim's brother). She talked to her husband about it who initially did not accept this. They talked to a spiritualist who told them that their female relatives have done magic on her and two men. He also told her the first alphabets of the name of those women which were same as her sister in law and her sister's names' first alphabets.

Now she became very distressful because of her relation with her husband, family situation and that her sister-in-law's intentions whom she always treated as a sister. She also feared that because of this her relationship with her brother will also get effected. She came to Baba Lal Shah's shrine and supplicated. She believed that the power of the

blessings of Baba Jee helped not just remove the effects of the magic, but she also received insight as well through which she was able to connect the dots. She told that she started recalling past events which made her realize that her sister in law was not actually sincere with her. Because of the magic her family did not face any kind of big crisis, but minor things such as different kinds of voices coming from the home as if somebody is moving a chair, or somebody is slamming something at the door or on the bed, or water splashing during night or somebody is watching her while she prays.

She said that these things apparently do not leave any major harm to you, but if you start to get panic then they give psychological distress which can lead to severe psychological problems. She believed that it was the blessing of Baba Jee that she and her husband did not become frightened after these events and gradually these events stopped occurring. She also became close to Allah and kept on praying all the time and started *zikar* as well which she believed to be the blessing of Baba Jee that he took her close to Allah. She told that it was the *nazar*⁵³ (sight/attention) of Baba Jee which kept her family safe.

4.2.2. To get *faiz* (divine blessing)

Apart from getting any wish fulfilled, the major motive of the pilgrims generally is to get *faiz*. However there are pilgrims who only come to get the *faiz* without any worldly desire. A respondent told that his major concern here is to get *faiz* of Baba Jee. He told that he met Baba Jee when he was alive and is coming here for last 55 years. He told that at that time there was no proper road, but he used to come to Baba Jee by facing all the difficulties of the harsh mountainous journey. He added that if you do not show the world what you are then nobody acknowledges you. So, the world has acknowledged him because of his *faiz* and now you see people coming from remote areas of other provinces as well. People who never saw him come too as they are told by other people that there is a friend of Allah who will ease your pain and misery.

⁵³ The word *nazar* literally means sight, but metaphorically taken as the attention of a person upon another person or thing. It is also used in two different terms which are *nazar ka lagna* and *nazar main ana*. *Nazar ka lagna* means evil eye, but *nazar main ana* is to get the attention of somebody which leaves positive impact on the person on whom the attention is. In the present research *nazar* is used in the terms of *nazar main ana*.

Another pilgrim said that people who come here they do get something from here that's why they are here. Millions of people come here, but they are not Baba Jee's family or relatives and some of them have not even seen him. All this is because of his *faiz*. These are the places where Allah has granted his *faiz* to these people and then they pass it on to the ordinary people.

A pilgrim said that his visits to the shrine are only to get the blessings of Baba Jee as he believes that everything in his life will be perfect if he will have the blessings of Baba Jee and the *raza* (consent) of Allah. He added that this way you become more contented with your life and even in the crisis you accept it and you associate it as a test from Allah to build your strength. With this believe you do not get worried and distressful in crisis rather you take it as the will of Allah.

A female pilgrim told during the *urs* that initially she had no plans to attend the *urs* this year, but then she thought that if she will not come here then God knows from how many troubles and crises she has to go through the entire year. Out of this fear and to attain the *barakah* she came to the *urs*, so that the entire year brings peace and prosperity for herself and her family. She did not have any problems at the moment, but her belief in the *faiz* of Baba Jee was so strong that she made a plan to travel all the way from Lahore to Murree with an all ladies group, unaccompanied by a male member. Her basic desire was to get the blessings of Baba Jee by attending his *urs* so that her visit could bring prosperity to her family.

Another female added that she has never made any *mannat*, but she only come to get the blessings of the Baba Jee. She told that it is the blessing of Allah and the love of Allah that she has never faced any big crisis in life, but at the same time she has never asked for more. She further added that it is the blessing of Baba Jee that she is so contented and satisfied with her life, where normally everyone wants more even if he is the king. She told the researcher that she comes here and after offering *fatihah* and reciting *Quran* for Baba Jee; she sits and spend time at the shrine which she believes bring energy to her body which helps her to keep always a positive approach towards life and for every person. She never saw Baba Jee, but she said that there is something about the aura and

personality of these saints which attracts you even if you do not know much about their past. It is the impact of their personality that you get a feeling of holiness even if you are entering a new shrine. That feeling itself is so powerful that it makes you to live a life which is in accordance with the teachings and values propagated by Islam.

4.2.3. Seeking solution for marital problems

Both male and female pilgrims come to get help from Baba Jee in their troubled marital relationships and familial problems; however female pilgrims outnumber the males. They come to the shrine and make prayers in the name of Baba Jee and then ask for his help. The pilgrims reported that soon after their visits to Baba Jee they experienced positivity in their lives and their marital problems got solved. The pilgrims ask Baba Lal Shah for help which is because the saints play an intermediary role between Allah and the people (Mills, 1998, p 32). With the help of Allah they are able to transfer their *barakah* to the people to eliminate all the problems from their lives.

4.2.3.1. Case study 1

A 27 year old female pilgrim from Rawalpindi; who was a graduate and a house wife told that she was engaged to her maternal aunt's son. She never liked her fiancé, because he was not educated, so after four years of engagement she decided to tell her family that she wants to break off the engagement as her marriage was expected right after her graduation, but unfortunately her father died the same year. She told her mother that she wants to end the engagement, because she is not interested in her less educated fiancé; she wants to pursue higher studies and to get a job in order to earn for her family. For her mother, it was impossible as her family became socially, emotionally and financially dependent upon her fiancé's family. His entire family stood up with her mother in this difficult time, so her mother was afraid that she will lose her brothers and sisters and life will become even more difficult for them.

Eventually she got married, but she told her husband that she never wanted to get married to him and lied that she wanted to marry somebody else. After hearing this and due to her stubborn nature, her husband used to abuse her as well. She told her entire family about

her marital crisis, physical abuse and decided to get a divorce. Her mother was a long time devotee of Baba Lal Shah, so she (pilgrim's mother) made a *mannat* at his shrine and family elders talked to her husband to stop abusing her. Baba Lal Shah came to her (pilgrim) dream and told her to go back to her husband's home. She went back against her will, but after that her husband was a changed man. He stopped abusing her and they started to live a happy life. She told that she had realized that her husband was a good man and it was all her fault to create such disturbance in her married life. Now she had two children and was going to perform *hajj* with her husband the same year.

4.2.3.2. Case study 2

This case study is of a 35 year old female pilgrim from Murree. She studied till 8th grade and now was a house wife with 3 children. She shared with the researcher that her mother-in-law and sister-in-laws were very bad to her and used to twist arguments and then pass them to her husband. Her husband never listened to her, rather only believed what he was told by his mother and sisters. As a result of this situation she (pilgrim) started to become psychologically disturbed to such an extent that she had to face difficulties in doing small things for instance, she would go out and forget the way back home, because of her distress and tensions. She thought that before this becomes more serious she must do something about it.

She remembered coming to Baba Lal Shah's shrine as a kid, but never came in her adulthood. So she thought of coming here and supplicating for herself and her marital life. She told that after coming here she felt at ease and realized that I cannot change other people, so it's me whom I have full control of. So, she started to endure her situation. Instead of taking her mother in law and sister in laws behavior to heart; she stopped taking it seriously.

4.2.3.3. Case study 3

A 50 year old female pilgrim from Abbotabad, who was a midwife by profession, shared her story that she used to come to the shrine and pray for herself and her husband. She had a troubled marital relation and with the blessings of Baba Jee; her marital problems

were solved. Before that, she and her husband did not get along well. Her husband used to get angry and rude with her all the times even on petty issues. He used to listen all the times to his mother and sisters, who always talked bad of her. She also suspected that her husband was interested in other women as well. She made *mannat* at the shrine of Baba Lal Shah and started distributing langar. With the passage of time the blessings of Baba Jee started showing their impact and with time her relation with her husband started to change. He became caring towards all the family.

Along with the change in his attitude towards the family; other things started to change as well. Her husband got a job in government sector through which financial burden of their family was lifted. She herself started working as a midwife. After this she had a dream about Baba Jee couple of times. This assured her that Baba Jee is with her, helping all the times and changing her life.

4.2.3.4. Case study 4

This is a case study of a 48 year old male pilgrim from Murree; resided in Rawalpindi. He was married and held a master's degree. He was a devotee of Baba Lal Shah for last 21 years. He shared that his parents had a troubled marital life. His father was literate and had a very good government job in Rawalpindi, but got married to his mother who was illiterate and lived in Murree village. His father was very wise and intelligent man and his mother was very naive, so her father never liked her and was never happy with the marriage. As pilgrim's father never gave the due respect to his (pilgrim's) mother, so her in-laws always treated her badly. Even though she was the eldest daughter-in-law of the family, but she was not influential at all unlike the much young daughters-in-laws. His (pilgrim) father's siblings were also very mean and materialistic. They did not have any jobs, so it was his father who took care of his all siblings at the cost of ignoring his own wife and kids. His (pilgrim) father's siblings also knew that to live a lavish life they have to keep their brother away from his family, so they always used tactics to lessen the respect and love of his wife and children. His father did second marriage and took the first wife's children to the home of their step-mother who was very strict. He (pilgrim) started to live in frustration which increased when he could not continue his college and all his siblings and step-siblings continued their education and got good jobs. By that

time his mother moved to Rawalpindi and he and his sibling lived with her in separate home, but even this did not ease his suffering as his step mother still maintained power over his (pilgrim's) family. His frustration led to severe depression. He lost interest in even doing the daily chores, meeting people, talking to family members and he even stopped taking care of himself and became hopeless.

His mother became worried because of his (pilgrim) condition and used to cry all the time. She was a devotee of Baba Lal Shah, so she started taking him to his shrine in Murree every week. She supplicated there and asked him to do the same, but he refused as he had become a cynic due to his depression. With the blessings of Baba Lal Shah he moved back to life once again, cut off his hair and shaved his beard which was grown long because of lack of self care. He also started mingling with his relatives. When he saw the results of his visits to Baba Lal Shah then he felt really sorry and went alone to Murree to ask Baba Lal Shah to forgive him for his disrespect towards him. After few days his brother who lived in Quetta asked him to move in with him there. He packed his belongings and left for Quetta and started living with his brother's family. He completed his graduation privately in English and started a job as a college lecturer and with that also earned master's degree and started living a happy and contented life as a blessing from Baba Jee.

4.2.3.5. Case study 5

A 63 year old male pilgrim from Islamabad, a business man by profession shared with the researcher that he belongs to a well off family and has an only son. He took care of his every need and provided him with the best he could. His son grew up and when entered his teen years he became very disrespectful towards the parents. After he finished his school; he joined bad company of friends and because of his mischievous behavior he had to change four colleges. He (pilgrim) had to face humiliation in front of all the relatives and especially when all his other siblings had very respectful and able children. As a result of his son's behavior the tension grew between his wife and him and they used to quarrel all the time. He became frustrated that he did not have an ideal son and family. He was a devotee Baba Lal Shah, so in his each visit he started supplicating for

his son and the family. After that he started having a recurrent dream in which Baba Jee came and said that:

“First change yourself then think about your son.”

Eventually he started realizing that it was his responsibility to make his son an ideal man. He felt ashamed of providing his son with all the luxuries as a kid just out of pretention and supporting his son even if he did something wrong with his cousins. After that he started to demand less for an ideal son, because he realized that he himself was not an ideal father. He started focusing on understanding his son’s personality and instead of addressing his wrong doings with contempt and anger; he used a rather soft approach to discuss his problems and soon the family’s environment became normal and his son also started taking interest in family, business and left the bad company.

From the above case studies it is evident that the *barakah* of the saint is so powerful that it can eliminate the negative influences from the people, as the pilgrims believe that they lived happy lives once they asked Baba Jee for help. The pilgrims associate these changes as the *barakah* of Baba Lal Shah, but they still believe that without the consent and help of Allah this is not possible. They actually ask Allah for help in every matter, but through the mediation of Baba Lal Shah. They believe that Allah wants to help them, but then He always finds different ways to help people, so He creates situations and send people who turn out to be blissful for the sufferers.

4.2.4. Supplicating to have children

Praying to have children is also one of the major concerns of the people who come to the shrine. Some pilgrims pray to have a male child and some are the childless couples who come to seek help from Baba Jee. The eunuchs also come to the shrine to pray for women to conceive babies. The eunuchs told that they pray for the families who help and look after them in difficulties and provide financial assistance. They told that they repay these people by praying for the longevity of their generations and their prayers are heard by Allah every time.

A female pilgrim said that she was married for eleven years and had no children, but she did not stop praying and made a *mannaat* at the shrine of Baba Lal Shah and her *mannaat* was about to get fulfilled as she was expecting a baby at the time of the interview.

A female pilgrim shared her story that she was married for nine years, but had no children. She made a visit to Baba Lal Shah's shrine and prayed for the children. He appeared in her dream and said that she had prayed with true heart so her wish will never be denied by Allah. After that she had five sons and a daughter. She associated it as a blessing of Baba Lal Shah

A female pilgrim said that in her family there were four couples who had no children after many years of marriage. Their parents always use to pray for their children, so she came to Baba Lal Shah's shrine and prayed. After 20 days of her supplication at the shrine of Baba Jee; one of the couples conceived a baby, after 3 months another and after 7 months another. She told that she is now hopeful that the fourth couple, who was her own daughter and son-in-law, would conceive soon. She added that she does not mean to imply that she is the one whose wishes are always granted, rather she believed that you do not know that whose prayers are going to get fulfilled and then the blessings of Baba Jee played their role as well.

There were pilgrims who came to pray for the male child; however there was a pilgrim who told the researcher that he came and ask Baba Jee to help him. He had a daughter after that and he took care of her. Now his daughter was a doctor and he believed that all this was because of the blessings and *dua* of Baba Jee. He was very proud of her and told that he never felt unhappy or disappointed of not having a son as this what Allah wanted for him. He knew that whatever Baba Jee asked Allah for him was in his (pilgrim's) best interest.

4.2.5. Supplicating for the release of prisoners of life and death sentence

The pilgrims shared that Baba Lal Shah is very famous for his *dua*, especially for the prisoners of life imprisonment and death sentence. They believe that if a person gets rid of the punishment or if the punishment gets prolonged, it is all because of Baba Jee.



A 71 year old male pilgrim from Lahore who was a devotee of Baba Lal Shah for last 55 years shared the story of his friend. His friend had committed three murders and every time he got bailed out in the end. He believed it to be the *barakah* of Baba Jee and the prayer that his friend's family made at the shrine of Baba Jee that became effective and saved his friend's life. When he committed the first murder his family came to Baba Jee, but Baba Jee sent him to jail for six months. Then after three years he committed another murder and gotten out of the jail again, because of the *dua* of Baba Jee. He added that such events also contribute into the popularity of the saint. When somebody gets what he desires from the saint, then he definitely tells other when they are in some crisis.

A female pilgrim shared that her son killed a man and was imprisoned. Somebody told her about Baba Jee and then she came here and supplicated. After that the death sentence ended and eventually her son was released. After this her belief in the power of Baba Jee got strengthen and she started making regular visits. She added that:

“He eased our hardships, so we believe in him and come to celebrate *urs* every year as well.”

The pilgrims were asked that if a person commits a murder and then gets forgiveness as a result of Baba Lal Shah's blessing then how do they feel about it as taking somebody's life is a huge crime. A female pilgrim responded that normally it is a murderer's female relative such as mother, wife or sister who comes and pray for his release. In Pakistani society when a woman comes at your door and ask for some help then it is not usually refused out of respect. So, according to her this could be one of the reasons that Baba Jee prayed for the murderers' release.

Another pilgrim added that Baba Jee prayed for the murderers' release, so that their mothers and the families become satisfied and get some relief in this world. However, their son might have gotten away with it in this world, but nobody knows about the hereafter. Allah might punish them and they only got the worldly relief.

A male pilgrim said that the murder might not be a bad person and committed a murder by mistake, but not deliberately. Once he got free, so he was given another chance to redeem himself and then serving his life for the humanity. He added that it is same as we hear in western countries that criminals and murderers, instead of given capital punishment get the moral, social and ethical training to strengthen their positive self and that they can go back to community and live positive life.

Another male pilgrim added that may be Allah wanted to release these murderers, but He used the *dua* of Baba Lal Shah as a *wasila* to carry out this task. This way Allah also wanted to bestow his special blessing upon Baba Jee to help the mankind.

4.2.6. Supplicating to pay off debts

Pilgrims also come to make *mannat* and *dua* regarding their debts. People who took debt and now it was getting difficult for them to pay back to their creditors, come to ask Baba Jee for his help in that matter. The pilgrims who had paid back their debts told that they have become true lovers and devotees of Baba Jee. A female pilgrim who owned a debt told that her belief formed on the *barakah* of Baba Jee when her *mannat* got fulfilled. She told that the love and respect for Baba Jee got intensified a lot ever since that she does not love her own children with that intensity.

Case study

A 58 year old male pilgrim from Murree, who was a lawyer by profession, shared that once he had a debt on him. He could barely meet the everyday home expanses, so it was very difficult to return it. Days passed and the *Eid-ul-Fitr*⁵⁴ approached near. He was worried about meeting the expanses for the *Eid* to cater the guests and his creditor was also asking for money as he also needed it for the *Eid*. He became so frustrated that he spent all day at the shrine praying. He planned to leave after offering the *Asr* prayers, but before that his wife called and told him that there is man waiting for him, so he must come home. He left immediately and when he met the man, he had his (pilgrims) money. The pilgrim was a lawyer and the man was his old client who did not give dues to him

⁵⁴ It is a religious festival celebrated by all the Muslims on the first three days of the Islamic month of *Shawal* after they fast the entire previous month of *Ramazan*.

earlier. As soon as he got the money he came to pay his dues to the pilgrim. He thanked Allah and Baba Jee that he heard him the very same day and granted his wish. He not just gave money back to his creditor, but also made preparations for the *Eid*.

4.2.7. Supplicating to get jobs

Acquiring jobs is another factor which motivates people to come to shrine. Jobless people come to pray for their job. Those who have applied somewhere also come to pray for their success. Some pilgrims reported that all the positive and good things in their life are due to the *barakha* of Baba Jee and a good job is one of them. Pilgrims told that they had so many difficulties in their life, but once they prayed here their problems got solved and they got better jobs which they associated as the blessing of Baba Jee. Pilgrims also reported praying for their promotions and increase in their salaries.

A male pilgrim told that he did not have any job and it was difficult to meet the needs of his family. He had to face a lot of tension because of it, so he use to come and sit at Baba Jee's Shrine and pray to get a job. From there he started realizing that these saints earned this status after a lot of hardships and they are our role models in every walk of life, not just for spirituality. So, he started doing petty jobs instead of waiting for a good one by just sitting idle. He was hopeful that one day he will get a good and respectable opportunity to earn.

4.2.8. Discouragement of use of amulet

Giving amulet to the pilgrims to solve their problems is a practice carried out at many shrines. The amulet is used to safeguard one's self from harmful forces and from their impact in the form of illness, mental disorders, financial crisis, marital problems, familial issues and other problems and crisis of such sort. Unlike many other shrines, there is no concept of giving amulet to the pilgrims. The entire focus of the pilgrims is to attain blessings by praying and devoting themselves to Baba Lal Shah. The beliefs of the pilgrims are in accordance to the beliefs of their revered saint. Baba Jee and his sons discouraged the use of any kind of amulet hence, their devotees also do not believe in it. They never feel any need to use amulet for themselves, because they know that Baba Jee

keeps them in his mind all the times. A female pilgrim told about the practice of amulet as:

“Women come to the shrines and ask the *pir* (spiritual master) to take money and in return do this or that for their child, but here they do not do any kind of such thing”

From the themes discussed above it is evident that people have a firm belief in the intermediately power of the saint and that he is capable of easing their sufferings (Mills, 1998, p.32). The pilgrims seek Baba Jee’s help in various life crises and also to attain his blessings, so that they can diminish the impacts of negative forces from their lives.

5. TRANSFORMATIVE ASPECT AND INTERNALIZATION OF PILGRIMAGE

This chapter focuses on the changes pilgrimage and relation with a saint brings into the pilgrim's life at mental, social, moral and spiritual level. The pilgrims talked about the changes they experienced after associating themselves with Baba Lal Shah and how do they internalize these aspects and make part of their routine lives.

The sacred settings can leave an impact on the pilgrim and enhance certain aspects of his/her personality such as compassion, empathy, and give peace of mind. The pilgrims associate these changes as a result of Baba Jee's blessings; which is a valid stance in the light of the previous studies (Ernst, 1993, p. 51; Gary, 2007, p. 12 as cited in Weibel, 2011, p.197). The enhancement of these traits among the pilgrims is evident from their responses presented below.

The pilgrimage model with the states of pre-liminality, liminality and post-liminality presented by Turner (1974, p. 202 as cited in Valdinoci, 2008, p. 204-205) has also been validated here as we see from the results presented below that pilgrims had a different approach towards life before the pilgrimage, but their association with Baba Jee and the visits to the shrine led to a change in their life. The time spent at the shrine is taken as a transitional phase where they became detached from their worldly life for a short span of time, but when they pursued their routine life; they tried to incorporate the *Sufi* teachings into their worldly matters, hence they internalized the pilgrimage.

5.1. Psychological relief

The pilgrims experience psychological relief once they come to the shrine. They reported that whenever they face any problem in life; as a solution they not just ask Allah for help, but also come to the shrine to get some relief in their suffering by attaining the blessings of Baba Lal Shah. Pirani (2009, p. 82) also states that when people leave the ordinary social structure temporarily and try to find solace in the sacred then they go from an emotional release and catharsis.

5.1.1. Peace and tranquility

The researcher did not meet a single pilgrim who does not experience peace and tranquility after coming to the shrine. The pilgrims shared that whenever they come to the shrine they experience the serenity in the entire atmosphere. The pilgrims said that their aim is to get inner peace and they find it right here. A pilgrim said that by coming here at the shrines you get a kind of spiritual pleasure and happiness. Another pilgrim said that he prefers to offer *nafali* prayers for Baba Jee during his visits to the shrine. He further added that:

“The feeling you get at that moment is unbelievable and unexplainable. It’s all about the spiritual connectedness you feel with the Baba Jee and Allah. When you come here and ask Allah for help in the state of crisis then you get a relief and your mind comes at peace. Then what happens is that you become patient that now your request has been forwarded to Allah and sooner or later, He is going to act upon it. Even if our wishes do not come true, we do not lose hope, but expect the best.”

The pilgrims said that the performance of rituals also gives them peace and tranquility. They believe that after performing the whole formal process of asking the saint to help them and addressing him with all the ways of due respect, they feel at peace that now their worries will come to an end.

The pilgrims said that to attain peace you do not need to carry out physical journey. Even if they are at a far off place in some crisis, feel helpless and need courage then only thinking about Baba Jee gives them peace and satisfaction that there is someone else as well taking care of them. A female pilgrim added that your problems do not get solved immediately, but you get a peace of mind. The intensity with which you worry about your problem lessens. She said that:

“Baba Jee, other saints and believe in Allah is like a pillow on which you can lay your head in difficult times then all your worries go away and you feel relaxed once you contact them in trouble.”

5.1.2. Happiness and joy

The pilgrims believe that being at the shrine brings happiness and joy to them. The whole environment seems very sacred where they get rid of all the worldly tensions and frustration. Pilgrims said that they do not come to make special prayers every time, rather most of the times their entire focus is to spend time at the shrine, pray for the saint and distribute food among people. The reason behind them performing only these activities is the happiness which the whole environment provides them.

The pilgrims believe that this is the place where nobody intervenes and interferes when you pray; even when there is lot of public around; they do not distract other people from their activities. This is because all the pilgrims want to spend as much time as they can for themselves. They believe that in ordinary lives; mind and life is so busy and occupied with the worldly matters, but at shrine your mind gets free from all the worldly thoughts and you can experience the holiness. The connection which the pilgrim forms with Allah, Prophet (PBUH) and Baba Jee brings the happiness.

They also believe that when you are going through a difficult phase in life then the thing which gives you relief and courage to deal with your problems is the belief that it was the Allah who gave you happiness and from Him as well comes the pain, so you accept it with full heart without complaining.

The pilgrims at the shrine have a totally different worldview regarding their own selves. They believe that they are most blessed. They belong to the low socioeconomic class even then they do not measure superiority in terms of wealth. A respondent said that her relatives live in posh areas of Islamabad. She herself lives in a government house as her husband works as a printing operator in government department. This woman was very contented with her present life. She said that in economic terms she has low standard in eyes of the other people, but the standard she actually has cannot be enjoyed even by the richest of all. She said that:

“We are very poor, but with the blessings of the loved one’s of Allah we are not less than the kings.”

Another pilgrim added that Baba Jee has given him everything. He has never left his (Baba Jee) door with empty hands. He said that even if you become a millionaire you still want more, but he is thankful to Allah that Baba Jee has given him everything.

5.1.3. Freedom from worries and pains

The pilgrims experience relief from worries and pains through pilgrimage. They believe that these visits and association with Baba Jee gives them peace of mind and relieves them from all the worldly stresses. A pilgrim said that:

“During visits to the graves of the holy and blessed people one cannot help oneself from not crying. When you come to these places you feel that one day you are also going to lie in the grave. You do not know that whether there will be anybody making prayers and supplications on your behalf. These are the loved ones of Allah and now only there association can save you from the sins in this world and grant forgiveness in the hereafter. You feel suffocated before coming here, but as soon as you lay your feet on this ground you feel that there is something which has been lifted up from you.”

A pilgrim elaborated this by telling that he has performed four *hajj* and countless *Ummrah(s)*. He told that he gives visit to his parent’s graves as the status of *hajj*. He tried to explain this by saying that:

“A visit to the people who are close to your heart frees it from all the worries and pains in life, and there should not be anyone as dear to you as your parents. We hear in *Sufi* poetry and songs that seeing or meeting your beloved is like performing *hajj*, so in this world there is no one who loves you more than your parents do”.

A pilgrim told the researcher that since his association with Baba Jee, his enemies cannot harm him. He told that if his enemies only even think of doing something wrong with him, they face harmful consequences. He believed that as Baba Jee remains with him all the time and his blessing are always with him, that is why his enemies’ negative plans do

not work. When the researcher asked to tell any specific event then the pilgrim replied that these things cannot be disclosed as they are related to *ma'rifat* (spiritual knowledge).

5.1.4. Patience

Patience is another virtue which pilgrims reported that they learnt from here. They explained that when you come to the shrine and you make wishes; you believe that they will get fulfilled, so in the mean time you become patient that your request has been forwarded. They said that from this you apply it in your ordinary life. Whatever you want to do and whatever you wish for, you become patient regarding its fulfillment. Even if what your wish is not granted, you realize that all happened for the good and there is something better for you, so you become hopeful. This patience and hopefulness keeps you to follow the right path.

A pilgrim added that when your wishes are not granted then you learn patience. When you go to the shrine and ask Allah for help in the state of crisis then you get a relief and your mind comes at peace. Then what happens is that you become patient that now your request is forwarded to Allah and sooner or later, He is going to act upon it. Even if your wishes do not come true, you must not lose hope, but expect for the best.

From the responses of the pilgrim it is evident that they use the pilgrimage to get psychological relief, peace and happiness in their life. Before coming to the shrine they feel something missing in themselves and whenever they feel helpless or emotionally and mentally distressful then only place where they can find solace in the Shrine of Baba Lal Shah. They believe that the physical proximity to Baba Jee is not important as even thinking about him in distress leaves positive impacts on the pilgrims. Pilgrims believe that it is all about the presence of the element of love. If it is missing then nothing can make you feel good. It is actually the reciprocal love among the pilgrims and the Baba Jee which is so powerful to cause emotional transition.

5.2. Relationship with Allah

The pilgrims believe that after coming to the *ziyarat* the thing which they experienced in themselves is the change in their relationship with Allah. Those who have taken *bayat* (oath of allegiance to a religious or spiritual authority) said that it is also a major factor behind their changed relationship towards Allah. Those who have not taken formal *bayat* said that when you come to these places you come into the sight of the saint. The pilgrims believe that in fact it is the saint who invites you himself. So these visits are not just some ordinary visits, but there is a special purpose behind them. The people who are invited by the saint are the special blessed ones.

The responses of the pilgrims show that the pilgrimage is a step towards building a strong relationship with Allah. The shrines are the spiritual centers which form a bond among the people and God (Abbas et al., 2013, p. 369-387).

The pilgrims said that when their wishes get fulfilled their belief in Allah strengthens. This acts as a renewal of their faith. Apart from their worships and prayers; their monetary contribution also helps in their changed perception towards Allah. When they spend their money upon the needy and the poor then they believe that as a reward, Allah will grant them the best in here and life after. But the most important thing for them instead of getting any reward is that they know they are looking after the needy as Allah looks after them (pilgrims). They said that by doing this they can never ever return Allah's infinite favors, but at least they can make Him happy.

A pilgrim added that:

“When you come here you realize that your life is not in accordance to the righteous path. You are not thankful to Allah as you must be and you are not humble and kind towards the man kind as well. These visits are a kind of refresher for you to think upon all these aspects of life and try to become a good Muslim and a better human being. You realize that Allah has blessed you with so many things, but you still complain. After listening to other pilgrims and their worries; you thank Allah for His kindness upon you and you

become more humble towards Him. You start to love Allah rather than fear Him and then whatever you do is out of love of Allah Almighty”.

A female pilgrim said that:

“These saints remind me of the love of Allah. In order to be loved by Allah one must worship Him out of love. One should love the lovers and friends of Allah. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that Every Prophet (A.S) was granted one wish in his life so I am keeping mine for the forgiveness of my *ummah* (transnational Muslim community) in hereafter. (She continued with a grieved heart) How cannot we love such a man who did not use it for the life of his own sons and grandsons, but for the people who were not even born yet?”

She added that we all are so busy in our routines that we take Allah and His Prophet (PBUH) for granted. One must always keep Allah in his mind, because you do not know what might make Allah happy.

Another pilgrim added that you start feeling that even your single breath is a blessing of Allah upon you and all the luxuries you enjoy in this world are the result of Allah’s love and kindness, but you never had a right of your own. So, after this you start loving Allah unconditionally. A female pilgrim believed that after coming to the shrine and spending time in the company of the saints; the concept of Allah gets clear in your mind. She added that:

“Our concept of Allah involves the *asateer-ul-awaleen* (ancient stories), but after coming here you start taking Allah as a living reality, rather than believing in Him just because you were taught by your elders. You believe that He is *Ya-Hayy*⁵⁵ *Ya-Qayoom*⁵⁶. After that, in all the matters of life even in your daily tasks, you believe from the core of your heart that Allah is watching you, so you deliberately start making efforts to do things honestly. This is not just limited to the practical work, but to the thoughts in the mind as

⁵⁵ It is one of the ninety-nine names of Allah which means The Ever Living One.

⁵⁶ It is one of the ninety-nine names of Allah which means The Self-Existing One.

well. You believe that you will be hold accountable for your actions and thoughts on the judgment day, so you restrain yourself from negative thoughts and actions.”

Another pilgrim added that:

“Instead of fearing Allah, you develop a relation based on love”

A female pilgrim believed that:

“Allah does not need our prayers, but we offer them as we are told to, because they are the basic pillar of Islam. When you develop a relationship with Allah then you pray because you want to, you feel that Allah does not forget to provide you meals three times a day and all the luxuries you enjoy, but all what He asks from us is presenting ourselves to Him five times a day, so how can we be so ungrateful. This perception towards Allah develops when you build a relation of love with Allah.”

5.3. Changes after *bayat* (oath of allegiance)

The pilgrims who have taken *bayat* from Baba Jee or from his sons told that this has brought a lot of changes in their selves. Their idea of *bayat* is quite different from what is generally held by the people. They believe that you do not need to perform the formal process of *bayat* where men take *bayat* by holding hands of the saint and women through a piece of cloth with one end in their hand and other in the saint’s. They said that if one comes into the *nazar* of Baba Jee then it’s same as *bayat*. Now the person will experience the things which are experienced by those taking the formal *bayat*.

The pilgrims told that Baba Jee never practiced formal *bayat* as he belonged to the *majzub* category of the *Sufis*, who do not *bayat*. For the pilgrims, coming into Baba Jee’s attention is same as *bayat*. The researcher did not meet any female pilgrim who took *bayat* from Baba Jee in his life as he rarely met women, so they take *ghaibana bayat*⁵⁷. As one female shared that her son took *bayat* in a dream and through him, her entire

⁵⁷The pilgrims define *ghaibana bayat* as taking *bayat* after Baba Lal Shah’s demise in dreams or only by seeing Baba Jee in dreams.

family took *bayat*. Another female pilgrim reported taking *ghaibana bayat* through her grandfather.

The pilgrims, both male and female also take *bayat* from Baba Jee after his demise through dreams which they attribute as *ghaibana bayat*. The power and believe in the authenticity of the *ghaibana bayat* was evident from a respondent who's son took *ghaibana bayat*. She told the researcher that Baba Jee has taken her son and now her son belongs to Baba Jee.

The pilgrims said that the changes which *bayat* has brought in their life is that they have to be very careful after that. They believe that now there is no chance of any wrong doing. They said that they do not know about Allah, but Baba Jee is not going to show any leniency towards them if they make any mistakes and do not follow Allah's orders.

The *bayat* also plays role in strengthening the relation with Allah. As one respondent said that the teachings of the Baba Jee were to pray and to devote one's life for Allah, so it is not possible that you get affiliated with such people and no change occurs in your life. These people are like a role model to whom you can look up too. Ordinary people can't be like them as these are the people who prayed and meditated in forests in extreme weather conditions, but they do act as an intermediate in your affairs with Allah. One cannot become even close to the dust of their feet, but all he can do is to love them and ultimately love Allah.

The impact of *bayat* is not only limited to the pilgrims' religious and spiritual development. Most of the problems faced by the pilgrims are solved after they take *bayat*. A respondent said that she does not face any hurdles and get whatever she wishes for. She further told the researcher that:

“As you are a woman yourself and you know that it's the biggest wish of the parents that their daughters get married in good families, so by the grace of Allah my daughters got married and they are living a very good life which we never imagined. This is all because of my love for Baba Jee that we got all this.”

A male pilgrim said that:

“After I took *bayat*, nobody can think to do wrong with me and if somebody does then he faces the dire consequences.”

5.4. Fulfillment of *hakook-al-ibad* (rights of people)

The pilgrims believe that the love of Allah is incomplete without the love of His mankind. A person cannot achieve love and closeness to Allah if he despises other people and is not sensitive to their needs. The pilgrimage and association with saints not just make people close to God, but also bring tenderness to the heart (Valdinoci, 2008, p. 210).

A female pilgrim believed that usually while practicing religion, little importance is given to the rights of the other people and character building and more on the ritual prayers. In *Sufism* a lot of emphasize is laid upon the *hakook-al-ibad* along with the prayers. As a Muslim, we all believe in the importance of *hakook-al-ibad*, but its implementation is more visible in *Sufism*. We learn through *hadith* that Allah does not forgive until the people do not forgive, but generally we only pay theoretical focus on these things. She added that:

“Once you start realizing the needs of the people than you do not take even small gestures and actions for granted. It ranges from talking gently, giving smile, following traffic rules, giving way or making queue to huge things such as making fake certificates and documents to get your things done or adulteration in edibles. According to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) even providing someone with a good advice and suggestion is something which Allah keeps as *amannat* (depository) and deliberately giving wrong advice to somebody is *khayanat* (peculation). In Quran it is written that ‘*Wa yum kurona wa yum kuro Ullah hu wa Allah hu khair Al makireen*’⁵⁸, so when

⁵⁸ It is the 30th verse of the eighth chapter *Al- 'Anfal* in Quran. The verse means that “they plan, and Allah plans. And Allah is the best of all planners”.

people do such wrong doings with His people then He will not forgive until the people do not.”

A pilgrim said that you believe that in every matter of life you are ultimately answerable to Allah and even if people are praising you for your good deeds even then you just have to keep in mind that your intention has to be good. You should not do good in life to get all the attention or to achieve the happiness, but with the aim of helping Allah’s creation as it is your duty. It is the *nafs* (carnal self) which motivates us to do good. He added that:

“Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh is famous for his huge *langar* in Lahore, but once his *murshid* (spiritual guide/teacher) asked him to stop distributing *langar*, because he used to spend all the time thinking and worrying about feeding as much people as he could. It was because the *murshid* felt that now it is his (Data’s) *nafs* which is motivating him to provide people with food which might lead to astray. Same goes for the ordinary people like us that whenever *nafs* motivates you to do good which ultimately leads to your own pleaser, then with the help of a spiritual guide you are being able to fight the desires of your *nafs*”.

A pilgrim shared with researcher that love of Allah and the love of mankind can never be separated. They both go hand in hand. He elaborated it by saying that:

“We worship Allah five times a day, so it is like our attendance same as a student shows in the classroom. How we deal with fellow human beings is like our examination in a class. Now, this is not possible that a student shows full attendance in the class, but performs poor in the exam or shows little or no attendance at all, but performs extraordinary in the exam and in the end earns the best reward in both situations. The only way a student is going to get fruit of his hard work is by showing attendance in the class and by giving his best in the exams. Same is the case here that you come to Allah five times a day and tell Him that you are present in front of Him and then you perform your duties towards other people. Only by doing this you are going to make Allah happy and that’s the only way to show your love towards Him by fulfilling the rights and duties towards Allah and humans.”

Another pilgrim shed light upon the importance of *hakook-al-ibad* that these saints devoted their lives for the betterment of other people. When a person comes to them then the same passion arises among him and he tries to adopt the same life pattern of the saint that is living for the others.

A female pilgrim added that in this world people are divided into rich and poor, but justice of Allah is that the final resting place of all the human beings is in the grave. A king wears gold, pricy jewels and expensive cloths in this world and poor wears the patched cloths and lives in misery, but his and the king's final dress is the same. She added that nobody can judge that how pious and obedient servant of Allah somebody is. A person may spend entire life worshipping and following the rules given by Allah, but he does not know that he will get forgiveness in the end. There might be a person who just performs a single good thing and is forgiven. So, one must always try his best to fulfill the *hakook-Allah* (rights of Allah) and *hakook-al-ibad*, only by this he can earn a good life in hereafter.

5.4.1. Case study 1

This case was shared by a 49 years old male pilgrim from Murree. He was an officer in Pakistan Air Force. He shared with the researcher that his grandfather and father could not divide their property in Murree for some reasons and died. His maternal aunts could not get their share out of it. When he grew up and got the entire property then first he thought that it is not his duty to give the share in property to his aunts; which was actually his father's and grandfather's duty. He was told by his family and in-laws that the nephew is not responsible for it religiously, but he decided to give his aunts their fare share.

His own children were growing up and now he needed a lot of money for their university education, so people used to say to him that instead of giving his aunts prescribed religious share; he can also make adjustments keeping his own financial situation in his mind and also because his aunts were financially stable. Initially he thought that he should not divide the property among his aunts and keep all of it to himself, but then he realized that then all his prayers and association with the saints would be nothing, but

pretention until he would not follow their true message. So, he did not listen to other people and divided the property. After this act he became fully satisfied that his father and grandfather will not face the consequences of it in hereafter and he also fulfilled his duty towards his family because of Allah orders.

5.4.2. Case study 2

A 59 years old male pilgrim from Jhelum shared with the researcher that he has a property business and lived a very luxurious life. He used to come to shrine of Baba Lal Shah since his childhood, but it was merely a physical journey for him or sometimes he would just pray for the worldly gains. He spent his life luxuriously and never thought to spend the money on charity. He got married at the age of 27 and had a son. At the age of 41 he did a second marriage and gave his all attention to his second wife. He cut off all relations with his first wife and his son.

He used to bring his mother to the shrine and along with her he prayed and supplicated there as well. He shared with the researcher that he had everything in life and did whatever he desired for, but still he never felt at peace. He saw other people associating themselves with Baba jee and becoming contented with their lives and getting the peace of mind. He started to realize that until a person does not fulfill his duties which Allah holds him/her responsible for, he/she can never achieve peace and happiness. He realized that he will not get any good out of these visits to the holy men until he does not fulfill the duties towards other people among which the family comes first. So, firstly he started meeting the financial needs of his first wife and son and then also started giving his time to them. He had to face a lot of troubles and hurdles from his second wife because of his sudden attention to the other family, but he believed that both families are his responsibility and ignoring any of the two will be an unforgivable sin.

He also realized that maintaining balance in his life and living with modesty will bring peace to him. The money which Allah has given him is not to attain luxuries when he has enough to live a respectful life, so he started to spend a good amount of his wealth on the poor. He feared that Allah has given him a lot and the right way to thank Him is to spend

on the man kind who do not even have the capacity fulfill the basic needs of life and especially those who are white collar and cannot ask for help especially for financial assistance out of shame. He said that he did not let go all of it, because the purpose is to maintain balance in the life in every domain. The family is everyone's biggest responsibility, so he provided them with all the best he could, but in modesty and keeping in mind the needs of others.

5.4.3. Case study 3

A 47 year old male pilgrim from Murree, shared with the researcher that when you associate yourself with the saints then you do not even take petty matters for granted. He said that he was building his house in Murree, so in order to make his garden specious, he took some area from the adjacent land without the permission of the owner. In village there is no clear demarcation of the land and people usually do not go to the officials and *patwari*⁵⁹ for the official transference of the property.

So, He took the area of his neighbor and used to grow all the seasonal vegetable on it. He thought that as the area he occupied was so minimal as compared to the whole land then it will be negligible. After few years his neighbor who lived in the city; came back and started his own construction and did not realize that his land was occupied by the neighbor (pilgrim). The pilgrim realized that how terrible this sin of occupying somebody's property is even if it is minimal. The vegetation he grows and his children eats will bring terrible consequences in hereafter and the world as well. His children will have to face the terrible punishment of his evil doings. He took all the vegetable out of it and not just that, he actually went to the neighbor and told him that it is his area and he was sorry for it. Then he removed the boundary and rebuilt it again on its actual place.

5.4.4. Case study 4

A 52 year old female pilgrim from Rawalpindi, a married house wife, said that she learned from associating herself with Baba Jee that one should love other people and look after them especially the poor. She believed that sometimes we do things which we later

⁵⁹ A government official who maintains the revenue and land record in rural areas of Pakistan.

realize as our selfish acts, but we do not have courage to accept them and make amends for them. She said that when she was in her teenage her maternal aunt and her son; who were very poor, used to live with her family. Her mother was very strict and they were not allowed to do anything without the permission of the parents.

Once, somebody brought sweets to her home, so her mother asked her to distribute it among all the members. She divided it equally for everybody and asked her cousin (maternal aunt's son) who was nine years old at that time to eat his share. He ate it and then without asking took somebody else's share as well. She got so angry that she ordered him to eat entire box of the sweets until he became nauseous and sick. She told that three decades have passed and he is a grown up man now, but she still has it in her heart that she will say sorry to him one day. Once she thought of doing it, but she believed that as she did this in front of entire family, so she will say sorry in front of entire family as well.

5.5. Spiritual experiences and their impacts

The pilgrims find it very difficult and hesitate to talk about their spiritual experiences. A respondent said that you cannot just go about telling all this to everybody. Firstly, because it is really difficult to talk about this and secondly, people usually do not believe such things, but eventually they do when they are left empty handed.

A pilgrim said that if you really want to understand spirituality then you must read the poetry by Baba Bulleh Shah⁶⁰. He gave the example of famous *Sufi* folk singer Sain Zahoor that nobody knew him, but when he sang the *kafi* (*sufi* poetry in *punjabi*⁶¹ and *sindhi*⁶²) of Bulleh Shah then he rose to fame.

A female pilgrim said that spirituality is not about possessing super natural powers and then showing them to the world. The saints do have spiritual powers, but they do not use

⁶⁰ He is an 18th century saint from Qasoor, Pakistan.

⁶¹ Indo-Aryan language native to the inhabitants of Punjab region in Pakistan and India.

⁶² Indo-Aryan language spoken in Sindh region of Pakistan.

them to get fame, rather these powers are also a kind of *imtihan*⁶³ from Allah. She believed that if a person thinks that possessing such powers makes a person a saint then he is wrong. In her opinion:

“One can attain spirituality and peace by fulfilling duties towards Allah and the people, taking care of the family and relatives and being able to differentiate between *halal*⁶⁴ and *haram*⁶⁵.”

She said that these saints are blessed that's why Allah gives them the courage and patience to bear all the hardships to attain spirituality. For ordinary human beings like us, we only need to remember the last sermon of the Prophet (PBUH). She believed that only focusing on these things is enough for us to attain spirituality.

Pilgrims believe that spirituality is anything which brings you close to Allah. Even if they have never experienced spiritual or supernatural event, but the connection they feel with Allah during *ziyarat* is spiritual for them. A female pilgrim believed that as a Muslim we all know that life in this world is connected with the life in hereafter. So, when we read Allah's book then we come to know about the reality of life and purpose we have to serve in this world. She said that the interconnectedness with other human beings is spiritual to her. She added that:

“At shrine you feel connected to other people even if you may not talk to them, but there is some kind of connection. As a result of this interconnectedness you feel that you all are a single entity and there is no discrimination among you all. This makes you humble and sensitive towards others; which is the true essence of spirituality.”

Pilgrims also believe that any kind of supernatural thing or event also leads to the change in your attitude. They shared their experiences associated with Baba Jee which helped them in their lives and brought them close to Allah. Even if they did not believe in the

⁶³In Urdu it literally means test or exam, but in spiritual and religious terms means a test to judge someone's humility.

⁶⁴*Halal* are all the things and acts lawful and allowed by Allah for a Muslim.

⁶⁵*Haram* are all the things and acts unlawful and prohibited by Allah for a Muslim.

Sufi school thought; experiencing such events led to their following of the *Sufi* path and regard for *Sufi* saints.

5.5.1. Case study 1

A 52 year old female pilgrim from Murree shared the story of her father which led to his and his family's devotion towards Baba Jee. She said that her father never believed in the *Sufi* school of thought, but an event occurred which led to his devotion for Baba Jee. During his (pilgrim's father) teenage, one day he was on his way back from school after giving his matric exam that he lost his track. The school was in Murree city and his house was in Chahran village, so he had to travel a lot on foot. The evening approached and he along with his friends was alone in the dark. They were standing on a hill and Baba Jee's *dera* (camp) was at another hill in Surasi. They did not know the way back home as the dark was approaching. They did not find any elder passerby, so he (father) started calling "O Shah jee O Shah Jee", so that they could track the direction of Baba Jee's voice and then go there to find a safe place. Baba Jee heard his voice even from such a long distance and said "come here you all" instead of using a singular noun. They started moving in the direction and finally approached Baba Jee.

The pilgrim's father was the first one to enter Baba Jee's room. Baba Jee offered him tea and he poured himself a good quantity of it, but then Baba Jee said that leave some for the others as well. The pilgrim's father started to wonder that only he called Baba Jee and it was dark, but how did Baba Jee come to know that he was accompanied by his fellows. Also when he entered the room alone and had tea, Baba Jee knew that there are other people with him as well. At that moment this did not change his perspective for Baba Jee's insight and abilities. Time passed, he finished his studies, started a job and got married. His wife and her entire family were the devotees of Baba Jee, so once when they were coming back from Murree to Rawalpindi, his wife insisted to go and meet Baba Jee. Reluctantly, he agreed and went to his *dera*. He did not have any memory of his previous encounter with Baba Jee in his mind as he never believed in such things, but as they all entered Baba Jee's *dera*; Baba Jee saw him and started saying "O Shah Jee O Shah Jee". He was amazed that Baba Jee had remembered him even after so many years. Baba Jee

used to beat and abuse people, but he was very kind and gentle towards him in both situations. This event led to his devotion towards Baba Jee. He never came to the shrine to ask for help, but only out of his love and respect for Baba Jee and his children also carried on this tradition.

5.5.2. Case study 2

A 74 year old male pilgrim from Murree told that he used to come to Baba Jee as a kid with his father and uncles, but Baba Jee never gave him any attention. He grew up and joined Pakistan Air Force as an airman. During the earlier years of his service he came back to Murree to meet his family. One day he made plan with his cousins to meet Baba Lal Shah. They came to his *dera* and he sat in front of Baba Lal Shah. Baba Jee tore a piece from a blank paper laying on the floor and put it in his (pilgrims) pocket. None of his cousins saw this happening and he did not tell anybody as well. However, he kept the paper with himself in his briefcase entire time of his service in air force. He worked hard and became an officer. His carrier flourished and he saw almost all the countries of the world. He got a lot of respect during his service even from the senior officers. He told that he was a squadron leader and his boss was an Air Vice Marshal who used to trust him more than he did his (pilgrim's) seniors of higher ranks regarding the official matters.

He shared his experience that once they were flying to Germany, so before leaving a stranger came to him and said that Pakistani Ambassador will meet you in Germany in the air plane right after your landing. He told him (pilgrim) to not to discuss it with anybody. After landing all the crew left, but he remained in the plane and after few minutes the ambassador came alone driving his own car and gave him a box and told him about a secret compartment in the plane to put the box in it and upon landing Pakistan, he will deliver it to a man who will approach him in the plane after landing. He did as he was told and believed that it was something related to the nuclear project of Pakistan. He thought that he was blessed by Allah to do something this big for the survival and safety of his country. There were senior offices in the crew and pilots in that flight as well who had seniority over him (he was a navigation officer), but it was him who was chosen and

trusted. He believed the paper which Baba Jee gave to him was blank, but there was something spiritual about it that it brought happiness, success and respect in his carrier with the blessing of Baba Jee.

5.5.3. Case study 3

A 49 year old male pilgrim from Murree, who was also an officer in Air force, shared with the researcher that when he gave his matric exam, he came back to Murree from Rawalpindi because in those days people had little awareness and were ignorant towards attaining college and higher education. So, he came back to his village to start a job with no plans of continuing his education. He belonged to Murree, so he had heard a lot about Baba Jee, but had never been to his shrine. One day he came to Surasi with his friend. His friend had to meet somebody, so he left him (pilgrim) and went alone to a nearby village. He (pilgrim) was hungry and had no money, so he thought of going to the shrine to eat *langar*. It was his first time at Baba Jee's shrine, so he also supplicated and offered prayers for Baba Jee. He took *langar* from a group of people who brought it with themselves. After that he sat there as he was waiting for his friend along whom he had to go back to his own home. He felt asleep and had a dream that Baba Jee comes to him and says that:

“Shouldn't we fight the Hindu's, shouldn't we fly jets”

After half an hour of sleep, he woke up and recalled the dream. The pilgrim's father was in air force, so he (pilgrim) thought that Baba Jee might have said this in reference to his father's job, however he was amazed as Baba jee passed away before his (pilgrim's) birth but he knew about it. The very next day, his uncle came home and told him that his father just called and asked him to come back to Rawalpindi immediately as the recruitments for the officers in air force had just started, so he must apply. He (pilgrim) told that his father who was serving as a non-commissioned officer in air force, even he was unaware of the recruitments. His father came to know about the recruitments when his (pilgrim's father) friend called from Kuwait and asked him regarding the selection procedure in air force as his son has to apply as well. When his friend told him that his son has just completed matric and now is the time for the selection in forces then he (pilgrim's father)

thought that his own son (pilgrim) had just finished matric, so he must inform him and ask to come immediately. After hearing the news, the pilgrim went back, applied, got selected and recently earned *Sitara-e-Basalat*⁶⁶. He believed that all this was the blessing of Baba Jee that he chose this carrier for him and then he attained success and respect in life.

5.5.4. Case study 4

A 52 year old female pilgrim from Rawalpindi shared that some people from her family had a bad eye on her wealth and her husband. She was told this by some relatives; she did not believe them until she started having signs through dreams. She told that she was coming to the shrine for last 10 years, but she never had any dreams related to Baba Jee. When her relatives forewarned her about the bad intentions of her few family members, although she did not believe it as truth, but she went to the Baba Lal Shah's shrine and made prayer for the safety of her family. After few days of her visit; she had a dream one night in which Baba Jee came to her and asked her to clean her home. A few days later a stranger came to her husband in a market and said that ask your wife to cook food in the state of *wazu* (ablution). After a month of this event another stranger came to her husband and said that ask your wife and children to offer *namaz* (Islamic ritual prayer) regularly.

After these three incidents she became alert. She believed that she always wanted to attain some spiritual knowledge, so when Baba Jee came to her dream then he meant that first instead of focusing on these things such as attaining spirituality; she must focus on her own home and by cleaning the home he meant to keep those relatives away from her home who wanted to tore her family apart. The men who said to prepare food in the state of *wazu* and praying regularly; she believed were sent on the behalf of Baba Jee to her husband, so that he could himself understand the severity of the matter, rather than just thinking it as one of the doubts or tricks of his wife. She believed that these strangers said this so that she can attain *barakha* through prayers in her home and even from the food

⁶⁶*Sitara-e-Basalat* means Star of Good Conduct. It is awarded to servicemen in armed forces of Pakistan for their gallantry and courage while performing their duties.

she and her family eats. This way Baba Jee wanted to diminish all the negative impacts of whatever her relatives were plotting against her.

5.6. Moral transformation and character building

The pilgrims believe that moral transformation is inevitable. It is not possible that one acquires the company of saints and does not experience moral change. They believe that once you start to attain the *faiz* of the saints your life starts to change as well. One is being able to abstain himself from evildoings such as hurting others, lying, deceiving and other moral vices. A pilgrim said that this change does not only refrain you from committing moral crimes, but also from things which apparently seem very small, such as you do not talk in a way which might hurt the feelings of the other person.

A female pilgrim defined morality as when you do not harm other people and you feel happy for them for whatever they do. She felt that she has become morally strong after her regular visits. She became more helpful, considerate and accommodating towards other in her everyday dealings. Another female pilgrim defined morality as when you do not do wrong deeds even if you want to and you must acknowledged bad deeds as bad.

A male pilgrim shared that:

“There are so many things to tell, but it is very difficult. I was a very bad man and once I met Baba Jee, my whole life changed. I was like a beast, but after association with Baba Jee the humane aspect of my personality overpowered the beast inside me. It was all because of the Baba Jee’s *dua* that my heart totally changed. If you do wrong then Allah is there to forgive you. In my opinion He finds ways so that He can forgive you. He will punish you only if you will do evil things, but He rewards you even if you just make a *niyat* for doing good things. A mother punishes if you do one bad deed, but Allah forgives on countless bad deeds. Allah’s door for forgiveness is always open.”

About the mistakes a person makes in life, a female pilgrim said that nobody is free of errors, but the important thing is to realize and to make an effort to overcome the shortcomings in ourselves. She told that only *ziyarat* was not responsible for these

changes in herself, rather there were so many other factors such as the regular *dars*⁶⁷ she took in her residential community.

Pilgrims said that they try their best not to do anything wrong and to avoid making mistakes in life, but if they commit such things then the door of forgiveness is always open. A female pilgrim said that Allah has bestowed His special blessing on her and Allah's loved ones (saints) keep her entire family in their blessed shadow, because of which she has not made any mistake in life which she may regret later. She further added that Allah has given her the strength to not commit bad deeds. Whatever Allah has given to her and her family, they all are contented with it.

A male pilgrim said that when you go to shrines to honor the pious saints of Allah then you get motivated that you must also get the *raza* of Allah. This feeling motivates you a lot to change your life patterns, fulfill your duties towards other people and Allah, follow the righteous path and avoid all the bad deeds.

Pilgrims also believe that character building is one of the basic tasks of these saints and the people who associate themselves with the saints also pay attention on their character building. A female pilgrim added that:

“You live your life according to Allah's will and *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); which is the basis of the Islam, but the *Sufi* takes a step further and forms an entire building upon these basis through his character”.

The pilgrims believe that once a person comes into Baba Jee's *nazar* then it is out of question that he will do wrong ever again. Female pilgrim said that even if she thinks of doing something wrong then she gets a warning through dreams or already faces some minor problems which keep her away from doing wrong to anybody else. For example if she commits a minor fraud in finances then the very next day she faces a much bigger loss herself.

⁶⁷ It is a lecture regarding the teachings of *Quran*, *sunnah*, *shariy'ah* and *fiqh* (sect).

A pilgrim said that these visits brought good changes in him. He reported that when he started making regular visits he stopped spending time in useless activities such as spending time with friends and talking about every girl who passed by. He told that now he does not even look at them. He further told that as we say in Islam that the *haya* (modesty) of eye is very important for both men and women, which he believed is the first step to enter *Sufi* lifestyle.

Another pilgrim shared that he was a very bad man during his youth. He said that a person can try his best to live up according to the values made up by society and religion, but in the end it's only Allah who actually knows what is inside the heart. He explained to the researcher that you are a girl and you have come here. God knows how many eyes met yours, but you cannot tell that what was in their hearts. You might resemble their sister, daughter or niece. So, you cannot say that every stare is bad. This is something we all must think upon that every man is not a bad man and every man is not free of animal inside him. He believed that we cannot judge people, so it is better to treat everybody in a good way.

Another pilgrim said that he used to be what one must not be. Now by grace of Allah He had changed a lot and this process of change was still continued. He explicated that following the path of Allah and His loved ones definitely brings change and then with time you are being able to overcome all shortcomings in your personality. When asked about his previous life then he replied that:

“It is better not to talk about the evil and when I will talk about my evils then you will become witness to them on the judgment day. I was part of a company with is not considered very appropriate by our society, but there is much difference ever since Allah has chosen me.”

5.6.1. Case study 1

A 52 year old female pilgrim from Murree shared that she bought a commercial property in Rawalpindi. She added that it is a normal practice that in official documents people mention one-third of the actual price, so that you do not have to pay a lot of tax. When

she was in the process of documentation then she was told by her family to put one-third of the price and she decided to go with it, but then she realized that this is not right.

She said that she felt so ashamed that all her life she had been going to these saints to ask for their blessings, but she does not deserve their attention as she is not honest. She realized that all the times she preaches people to differentiate between lawful and unlawful acts, but when she herself came in to this situation she also became astray. Finally she put the actual price of the property on which she bought it and believed that paying more in this world will cause less pain and suffering in hereafter. She added that our politicians are corrupt and spend our tax money on their own selves, but a cleric once told her that even if the state is corrupt and imposes tax on the people and people pay *zakat* as well; even then people have to pay the imposed tax.

5.6.2. Case Study 2

A 37 year old male pilgrim from Rawalpindi, who worked in a hotel, told that when he was young he was a singer and even formed a small band in Karachi, but once he came into contact with these saints his life transformed. He said that as Islam does not encourage the practice of music and our society does not consider music as a respectable profession, so he was happy that he quit it for good. In the start of his music career, his parents were not happy, but initially he did not care much about them.

After he started visits to Baba Lal Shah and other shrines and became acquainted with the teachings of the *Sufis*, he started to realize that the real meaning of life is to live for others and especially when the others are your parents. He told that deep down he did not want to do anything disapproved by his parents. He used to quarrel and argue with them all the time, but eventually he realized that he was making a big mistake and by hurting his parents he could never get peace in life and hereafter. With time his perception changed and he said that he considers himself as the most blessed human being.

5.6.3. Case Study 3

A 41 year old male pilgrim from Kashmir, who was clerk shared with the researcher that his association with Baba Jee led to change in his personality. He told that he used to give epithets to other people based on their physical appearance and shortcomings. He did it since his childhood to all his cousins and friends and nobody ever scolded him or even stopped him for doing this. But when he joined the company of friends who were the devotees of Baba Lal Shah; he also started coming to Baba Jee's shrine along with his friends.

He used to pray a lot for his children's better future at the shrine, but then one day he realized that how can he earn happiness for himself and his family when he has broken hearts of so many people through his words. It was a challenge for him to stop himself from not mocking others as he had been doing it since childhood, as it had become a kind of non-voluntary act. He tried hard and with the passage of time he quit giving people disrespectful names and stopped calling those whom he used to call with such names. This change was quit shocking for his family and friends. He told that after that sometimes people try to provoke him to come up with new derogatory names just for their own enjoyment, but he repented and promised Allah that he will not do this again.

5.7. Submissiveness towards Allah and people

Submission towards Allah and others is another change experienced by the pilgrims. A pilgrim said that according to him two important things which a person must have that he must pray and remain submissive not just towards Allah but to the people around him. One must take others as better than himself. By doing this one gets over the feeling of pride. Pilgrims believe that if you do this then Allah will help you, but if you will look down upon others then you will remain at the losing end.

A female pilgrim said that she and her family do not mingle with other pilgrims, because you do not know that what kind of people are coming here. She spends much of her time in praying, but even then she could understand other people pain, both at shrine and in ordinary life. She further added that after *ziyarat* you realize that you are not alone who

has a troubled life; everyone is going through some kind of crisis in life which is much severe than yours. So, this not just brings gratitude in yourself towards Allah, but the empathy for the people as well and you help them ease their suffering.

Pilgrims reported that they have become very submissive and down to earth since their attachment with Baba Lal Shah. A pilgrim explained that:

“These people teach you about the humility and humanitarian values, which are the core of submissiveness. If a person does not care about humanity then there is no chance of submissiveness. It is your love for your fellow human beings that without any blood relation you care and love them.”

Another pilgrim said that he earned this trait of submission from here (Baba Jee’s shrine). He believed one must possess this if he also wants to become Allah’s favorite. Many people only come here in the time of need, only when they want their worldly desires to get fulfilled like economic gains, diseases, during crisis, to conceive an offspring etc, but he thought that one must come here to get the love of Allah and His friends by practicing what they did in their lives.

A female pilgrim added that once you associate yourself with the saints you refrain yourself from doing many things such as if you are beautiful, rich or highly educated then you do not use these things to exploit the people who are deprived of these things. She further added that:

“You feel so shallow of yourself to use these things for the purpose of show off and to make others feel inferior. Boosting about these things can make you happy, but you cannot imagine what kind of psychological distress others go through from. I do not know how people do these things. If I have something good or expensive then I feel embraced even mentioning it to a friend or relative who cannot afford it.”

Case study

A 48 year old male pilgrim from Murree, who was a teacher by profession shared that sometimes your personal attributes get so over powering that you do not realize that how much you are hurting people; instead of thanking Allah that he has given you such abilities; you use them to present yourself as somebody with unique and unequalled skills. He said that he had a very good command over Urdu language and used to use a lot of good words and ideas in his conversation. People use to praise him a lot, but through the teachings of the saints he came to know that one must not boost his personal attributes especially to get praise from other people.

He then realized that it will eventually lead to disdain. His selection of words was never in accordance to the social class of the people he was addressing to. He realized that he used such language with people who were less educated; so that he can take pride in himself that he is a very learned man, which might be hurtful to the listeners. Eventually he came to the level of the people and started using language which was appropriate for their intelligence.

5.8. Brotherhood

Brotherhood is a factor which pilgrims believe the practice of pilgrimage brings with it self. They said that when you come to the shrine and you meet people especially at the *langar khana* and you spend time together or have a little chit chat then it increases the bond with them.

They believe that all the factors of change are interrelated. When you distribute the food among the fellows without the distinction of poor or rich and just out of love of the humanity then a bond is created with these people. These practices are not just one time activity, rather they teach you different things. During *urs* people come from far and wide and here everybody is equal. It is not just the Allah and saint who take all the pilgrims equal, but the pilgrims themselves keep regard of each other. They believe that through these activities you learn to apply these virtues to your personal everyday life. You try to practice the things which you learn here in your life.

However, when the pilgrims were asked that does this relation with other pilgrims is beneficial economically and financially; they told that it is not. They further added that people come from far off places, so their relation does not extend outside the shrine boundary. They also said that in this difficult economic situation of Pakistan, it is difficult for a person to meet his own economic needs, so how can they help others as well.

Besides the other pilgrims, eunuchs also believed that by performing pilgrimages, the brotherhood among the people increases. They said that these men are like our brothers and you (researcher) are like our sister. All these pilgrims are Muslims and believe in one Prophet (PBUH), so everybody is related to each other.

A pilgrim added that when you associate with this lifestyle then you show empathy towards other people, because you believe that when you will be sympathetic towards people then Allah will be sympathetic towards you on judgment day. Another pilgrim added that the *Sufi* teachings tell us that as all people are Allah's creation, so helping them takes you closer to Allah. If a person wants to achieve closeness of the Creator then he has to attain the closeness of His creation.

A male pilgrim said that when in this world you will ease the suffering of the people than Allah will ease your suffering, both in this world and hereafter. Moreover this will also promote harmony in the society.

A female pilgrim believed that *Sufism* tells you that whatever you possess; the other people also have right upon it; which you have to give to them. There is a concept that everything belongs to Allah and the people are just a source to deliver it to the others, so keeping in mind this you believe that you are here to help other people and fulfill their needs. Further, Allah says that he will grant you seventy times more than the amount you spend for Allah, be it money, a smile, your time or your shoulder to cry.

The pilgrims believe that elimination of discrimination among people was one of the fundamental practices of the *Sufis*, so the pilgrims also try their best to practice it as much as they can. A pilgrim said that he does not discriminate between Christians and Muslim.

To him the most important thing is humanity and after that comes the religion. He believed that it is the clergy which has created all this problem of sects within people. On the other hand these saints, they call everyone without discrimination. He talked about the difference of sects in the family of Baba Jee that Baba Jee and one of his son is *sunni* and the other sons are *Shia*, but they are living in harmony and their followers as well. Here at the shrine people from all the sects come and nobody discriminates or shows hatred and intolerance towards other.

Another pilgrim said that Baba Bulleh Shah being a *Syed*, disapproved his family's disapproval of him being a *murid*⁶⁸ of *Arain*⁶⁹. Through this we learn that one must keep humanity above all the things. If a Muslim befriends a Christian then he will think good of him, his family and his religion. He further said that Muslims ruled Spain for centuries, but that rule did not end because Islam is wrong, rather they were the Muslims who were wrong. If all these Islamic sects get united only then Muslims can prosper. The Muslim countries, just like Iran and North Korea can take stand against western powers without felling inferior.

5.9. Tolerance

Pilgrims believe that when you understand the meaning of brotherhood then with it comes the tolerance. When a person realizes that every person is different from the other then you cannot judge them according to your own criteria. This leads to the development of tolerance towards their attitudes and behavior. When a person realizes that Allah blesses him even because of his shortcomings and sometimes when he becomes ungrateful towards Allah, then he feels that he must show tolerance towards other people.

Other than this, they believe that as tolerance is one of the virtues of the saints, so they (pilgrims) must also practice it. They believe that you are not going to make people love you by criticizing them, rather you accept and respect them as they are and then eventually your life will come at peace. A pilgrim said that:

⁶⁸*Murid* means spiritual disciple, but this term is also used for the devotees of any saint or *pir*. Its plural form is *muriden*

⁶⁹A *Punjabi* clan associated with agriculture.

“We usually criticize the people of other sects, do not show tolerance at all and say things which can hurt the feelings of the followers of that particular sect. Here we learn the lesson of peace and tolerance and then we realize that the difference of sects is not as big as we have made them. There are very minor differences which are related to the rituals otherwise the basic tenets, laws and principles are same. So this discrimination and intolerance is all in vain. We try so hard to declare other people’s beliefs and practices as deviation from the right path, whereas we must only worry about keeping our direction right.”

A pilgrim said that you believe that humans are not free of errors and no one is perfect, so when a person follows the *Sufi* path then he does not get judgmental towards other people on the basis of their errors and believes that it is between Allah and the person himself. If somebody does wrong with you; believing that when you will ignore this; then on the Day of Judgment Allah will forgive you. With this hope in your heart, you develop tolerance towards people.

A female pilgrim added that:

“You have your own eye open on your own sins, so you just keep focus on correcting them and ignore what other people do. Moreover, if someone is bad to you then you ignore and do not make big issue out of it believing that when you will do this you will be able to control your *nafs* and anger; which is the core of *Sufism*.”

Another female pilgrim added that:

“When you understand others suffering and you know that somebody is going through a difficult phase then, if they intentionally or unintentionally do something bad to you, you let it go. You are being able to sympathize with others. For example, if somebody shows anger to you then you understand that what he is experiencing right now then instead of reacting; you respond to it in more mature manner or you just simply forgive them for that.”

Pilgrims said that at times they tolerate upsetting situations and attitude of people just for the sake of Allah. They said that their motive is not to make Allah happy, rather to be happy for others and out of Allah's love. A eunuch told that he has become very tolerant towards other. If somebody ridicules or mocks him then he does not bother at all. He never curses anybody instead forgives them.

A male devotee said that after his visits, he has become harmless towards other people. He said that it is not possible that this change does not occur in anybody. At some level everybody does experience this change. He further added that if somebody does something bad to him then he does not react and forgives the person. Another pilgrim told that whenever he is in crisis and faces problems created by other people he thinks that:

“I have got nothing to do with it. I just leave everything to Allah. Now only Allah knows and the Baba Lal Shah knows. I do not have to worry about it anymore.”

Case study

A 52 year old female pilgrim shared that a woman, especially in Pakistani society has to have a lot of tolerance. She believed that family needs sacrifice and it is the woman who has to do this. She told the researcher that she had lived a very difficult life. She lived with her step mother and step sisters who always discriminated and neglected her. When she got married, her mother-in-law and sister-in-laws made life unbearable for her. They did not quarrel with her, but they were very strict and had total control over her husband. She was not allowed to go anywhere, had to clean her room herself while there was a servant at home and had to get only single new dress every season even though her husband and his family were very rich. She said that she and her husband would decide to do something for their home and children, but her husband would change his mind once he would share it with his sister. Her sister in law's husband was terminally ill, so her own husband had to take him to different doctors in different cities; which she (the pilgrim) was never disapproved of.

Time passed, but she never discussed these things with her husband. The event which led to her taking a step and telling everything to her husband was when there was her brother's graduation ceremony in Lahore. She made plans that she will go with her husband, so she made breakfast and lunch for the children a night before and started to make her own preparation, but her husband came back from his sister's home and said that she will not go. She was very upset as he was her only brother and it was a proud moment for her as he was graduating with distinction. She did not go, but after that event she told her husband about all the things his sister did and made him realize that they all had been using him and keeping him away from his family. Her husband quit doing extra favors to his sister, and made his own family first preference. Her life became happy; however she never talked bad of her sister in law unnecessarily. Sometimes her husband would get little rude and unreasonable with his own sister, but she stopped him from acting this way. Her children grew up and when it was the wedding of her first daughter, her sister in law came to her home and talk bad of her with the maid. This made her (pilgrim) furious and she talked to her husband and her brothers-in-law about their sister. This was a very embarrassing situation for her sister-in-law as her brothers scolded her for this action, but she (pilgrim) thought that this served her sister-in-law right.

On the day of her daughter's wedding the groom and his parents got angry that they were not received well by the bridegroom's family on their arrival. She got embarrassed in front of all the relatives about the situation and when she came back home she realized that she let go of her patience and just to satisfy her ego she made her sister-in-law embarrassed in her own younger brother's home. She believed that all her life she had shown tolerance towards her in-laws attitudes and eventually she got ease and happiness in her life, but one small deed in order to even her scores with her sister-in-law left a life time embarrassment for her. She told that even though her daughter is very happy and contended with her in-laws as they are very good people, but what happened on the wedding can never be changed and her relatives still remember it.

5.10. Knowing yourself and the purpose of life

The visits to the shrine give the pilgrims an understanding towards their own self and their purpose of life. A pilgrim put it in this way that:

“In our routine everyday life, whenever we get together with our friends and families we talk about different things and do gossip. When you are in some spiritual environment such as of a shrine, then you do not indulge in all these activities. You are being able to think about all the shortcomings in your personality and ways to overcome them. It is, I believe the part of spirituality that one is being able to identify his shortcomings and sins. This is the situation which people say that ‘know thy self’. It is said that to know God, first you have to know yourself and that’s what I think it is.”

Another pilgrim believed that:

“When you spend time in the company of such people, you are being able to get over all the doubts regarding yourself, existence and religion. People have so many doubts in their mind, but once these people bestow their *faiz* upon them they find the ultimate reality of the human kind. There is much more to life than just being able to eat and reproduce. If that’s the purpose of life then there is no difference between a man and an animal”.

Pilgrims believe that the purpose of life is to live a life of piety and keeping the needs of other people as your priority. They believe that following the Islamic path is very easy and one must have to keep three things in mind that one must love Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and should never carry out any blasphemy against him (PBUH), must have a sense to distinguish between *haram* and *halal* and never hurt other people. A pilgrim added that:

“One must adopt the *taqwa* (piety) and never ever get disappointed in Allah. Purpose of life is not to achieve high milestones in world and get fame, but to live the life of humility. One must serve himself for the man kind without any desire of reward in this world and even in the hereafter.”

Among the female pilgrims, one said that:

“While sitting and spending time at the shrine sometimes you think about how magnificent Allah is and His creation. You ponder upon your purpose in life. Sometimes you regret about the life you have lived. You spend so many years in wilderness and ignorance, but then the hope of changing your way of life is always there. One thinks that he has still left with time to change whatever went wrong, but life is too short”.

A female said what she realized after her pilgrimage that there are some things which you just have to do for Allah and hence at times you do not react to certain actions of other people. You tend to forgive them, you just unconditionally love people or you start showing helping attitude towards them. She believed that all these things make a person’s life meaningful.

Another female pilgrim said that usually in our routine lives we get involved in the worldly matters, but this world is going to end one day. For the hereafter, we must have such deeds to ensure our better future. The purpose of life is to not live for your own self, but for Allah and the other people.

A female pilgrim shared with the researcher that when she was young she was indifferent towards other people. She told that she wasn’t bad towards them, never hurt them or thought of herself as better than them, but once she realized the true essence of life, her entire past seemed meaningless to her. After making regular visits and meeting with people she realized that Allah wants us to submit towards Him and this submission is not just limited only towards Allah, but towards his mankind in the form of doing things to make them happy. The satisfaction which it brought with itself was unexplainable to her.

From the responses of the pilgrims presented above; it is evident that pilgrimage to a saint’s shrine can leave a drastic impact on the life of the pilgrims, hence it turns out to be a transformative journey .

6. PERCEPTION OF PILGRIMAGE

This chapter focuses on the meaning and importance of the pilgrimage. The pilgrims derive the understanding and meaning of pilgrimage and different aspects related to it in different ways depending upon their familial background, personal understanding and their desire which encourages them for pilgrimage. Different themes are identified and presented here to shed light upon this topic.

6.1. Importance of pilgrimage

The pilgrims said that they know about Baba Jee since their childhood as Baba Jee is a very famous saint. Pilgrims who never met Baba Jee in his life told that their families were the devotees of Baba Jee, so they carry out their familial tradition of coming here. Some pilgrims who do not have any family background of saint and shrine veneration said that they met people among their group of friends who moved their interest towards the teachings of the saints.

Regarding the importance of the pilgrimage, pilgrims believe that pilgrimage is important for them, because sometimes your prayers do not get fulfilled, so you come to these saints and then through their mediation you make *duas*. They believe that these saints are very important especially in the context of sub-continent. Allah sent Prophets (A.S.) in the Middle East and Arabia, but the message of Allah and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was spread by these saints that they converted millions to Islam on their hands. So saint veneration became a vital aspect of Islam (Stauth, 2004, p. 10).

A pilgrim said that Allah says in *Quran* that you remember Me and I will remember you. He believed that as these saints remembered Allah in their lives, so now Allah remembers them by sending people to the saint's grave to pray and supplicate for them. He believed that this practice of making *dua* and reciting *Quran* for saint is actually a special blessing by Allah upon the saint. He said that people associated shrine veneration as *bid'ah*, but for him it was a continuation of blessing the saint by Allah.

Another pilgrim shed light upon how the tradition of pilgrimage started by sharing that:

“The practice of pilgrimage became common when the saint died, his devotees decided to gather at his house on his death anniversary in order to discuss the teachings propagated by the saint and to transfer it to other people. As the saints had large following in their life, so it was very difficult to accommodate large number of people every year in a small house. So, to ease this and to continue the system of propagation and transference of the spiritual teachings of the saint, people decided to gather upon the site of the saint’s grave. It was with time that people introduced other activities which are neither related to Islam nor propagated by the saint and early *Sufis*, such as bowing, dancing and intoxication. For me; as propagated by early *Sufis*; the entire purpose of the pilgrimage is to pray for the saint, get spiritual insight and be a part of the special order maintained by Allah to bless the saint.”

A female pilgrim said that we are bad people and when you are at such sacred places and in the presence of a holy person you realize your own true status in the eyes of Allah. You become ashamed of your sins and shortcomings. According to her through pilgrimage you are being able to make a commitment to yourself that from now onwards you are going to follow the right path, bring positive changes into your personality and will try to hold on to it.

Another female believed that after *ziyarat* you are being able to know that you are not the only one who is going through some problems. There are many other people who are experiencing the same. Their nature of problem might be much worse than ours, so this sight makes us to thank Allah that he still has His kindness upon us. Through this you are being able to understand other people’s problems and pains. Other than this, it inculcates the feeling of kindness towards other people.

Pilgrims said that they used to hear that once you come into somebody’s *nazar* or if you join the company of living saint or you just sit quietly in a spiritual gathering; even that is going to affect your life. They said that when there is will there is always a way, so they joined this path and became devoted towards every saint, both living and dead. A pilgrim said that a saint gets famous by his miracles. Although miracles are not criteria to judge somebody’s spiritual power, rather they are a kind of test by Allah to judge the humility

and modesty of a saint, but the problem with the ordinary men is that they do not respect or accept you until you do not give them the proof of your power. Many pilgrims told that they got to know about Baba Jee after they heard about his miracles especially that he was very famous for releasing prisoners of life sentence.

Another pilgrim said that Allah has granted *faiz* to these saints and then they forward it to the ordinary people. When Allah blesses someone and chooses him to serve the mankind then his popularity cannot be restrained and everyone is blessed by his *faiz*. Their miracles attract the mankind and they come to their doors to get help.

The pilgrims believe that the pilgrimage is a way to ask saint for help. A pilgrim said that:

“When we need some favor from somebody we go to them to ask for the favor and sometimes we get them a gift as well, because we know that it will make them happy. So, same is the scenario here that to get our problems solved, to get peace or closeness to Allah we ask these people for guidance. Not just that, but we also present them with *nazarana* (gift out of respect) such as distributing *langar* as we know that distribution of food is one of the most encouraged practice by the saints.”

A pilgrim added that:

“Those people who do not have any belief on these saints and who do not appreciate the practices we do, I want to tell them that we all ask Allah for help in every matter, but these people are *wasila*. Life and death only resides with Allah, but He is not coming to cure an ill or dying person Himself, so a patient always needs a doctor”.

Another pilgrim said that we all ask Allah for everything, but the problem is that we are not as sincere and pious as these people are. If a person goes to meet a minister then first he has to take an appointment, after then he will be able to talk to him. One cannot just go all by himself and talk directly. The only direct relation with Allah was of Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH). Those who come to the shrine must come and do whatever they want to within the limits of Islam. He added that:

“I will say this for million times that Allah is the sole provider, but these saints are His means to grant our wishes”.

The pilgrims showed a lot of respect for the saint and his power over things which can change their lives. But contrary to this, the researcher met a man who came with his friend to the shrine and said that he does not believe in the practice of *ziyarat*. He further explained that:

“When Allah has clearly mentioned in Quran that only ask Him for everything then what’s the point of asking anybody else for help. These saints did good deeds only for their own self and will get rewards in hereafter only for themselves. It’s between them and Allah. I do not think that their prayers can be beneficial for other people. Everyone will get reward for his deeds, but not for somebody else’s. Most people come from low social economic class and I think this is all because of ignorance. Pakistan being a Muslim country does not provide much recreational opportunities for women and youngsters. In my opinion most of the people come here for enjoyment.”

A female pilgrim also believed this that when a man leaves this world then only thing you can do for him is to pray. But you cannot use these saints and Prophet (PBUH) as a *wasila*. Only Allah can grant you things, but He has made these people like a role model for us so that we can take guidance from their life.

6.2. Pilgrimage is not mandatory

Pilgrims do come to pray for their wishes to get fulfilled or to get peace of mind, but they also hold this believe that coming to the shrine is not necessary. They said that whenever they feel helpless and experience rough times, even only thinking about *Baba Lal Shah* gives them peace, satisfaction and relief from their misery. They said that physical contact is not necessary to gain help form the saints, the spiritual connection which you form with a loved one brings peace even in his absence. A pilgrim added that:

“Performing the pilgrimage is a ritual activity. It is of no good until you do not learn something from it. If a person does all the wrong things, but in the end he goes to a holy

place to offer his prayers and *salam* to the saint then these are two very contradictory behaviors. The real essence of pilgrimage is not to follow it as a ritual, rather using it as a religious and spiritual learning experience. If you can do that then the physical journey is not mandatory to show your reverence for the saint.”

A female pilgrim said that Allah is omnipresent, so you can pray in any part of the world at any time, but the places associated with the *Sufi*'s or which have spiritual importance; Allah bestows them with *faiz*. So, when you go there you feel psychological relief and you ask them to pray for you which adds the intensity to your prayers.

Another female added that that:

“You do not need to come to the shrine to ask the saint for help. The moment you make *niyat* that you will go and ask Baba Jee to present your request to Allah, the spiritual forces start to work, because of the connection you have with Baba Jee. My saint is always in my thoughts and he keeps me in his thoughts as well. The physical journey is not important, but I frequently perform it, because I love Baba Jee. Even if I have a spiritual connection with him, but there is no substitute of coming to meet your beloved physically.”

6.3. Pilgrims' preparations before pilgrimage

The pilgrims before coming to the shrine of Baba Lal Shah make some preparations. They put a lot of emphasis on performing pilgrimage in the state of purity and cleanliness.

6.3.1. Preparations for the pilgrimage

As the pilgrims take *Sufi* pilgrimage as a religious activity, so they take special care to perform all the rituals considered mandatory for general religious practices by *Muslims* such as outer cleanliness before entering the holy place and performing ablution.

The researcher was told by the pilgrims that they do not make any special preparation before coming to the shrine such as wearing new cloths. They all believe that the most

important thing is the *niyat*. They make *niyat* of coming to the shrine; which is very important as according to the pilgrims; your pilgrimage actually starts from the point when you make a *niyat*.

As for the dress, pilgrims said that they never wear any special cloths, but according to them the only requirement is that it must be clean and meet the criteria of the perfect attire for the ritual prayer according to Islam. A female pilgrim said that:

“As you are going to meet the pious people, so you have to be clean. You prepare yourself by wearing clean clothes on clean body and then throughout your journey you keep on reciting something and take some kind of sweets with you to distribute.”

Few of the female pilgrims also come here alone without any male with them; however the majority is always accompanied by a male. Those without accompanying a male member of the family said that they do not face any restriction from their family in this regard. As one female shared that it is our belief, so the men in our family do not stop us from coming here. People say that women should not go to the graves, but her family does not believe that. She added that it is a good thing and she does not feel satisfied and come at peace until she does not pay a visit to the grave of Baba Jee. Some female pilgrims have male children with them. They said that coming with a male child is same as coming with a grownup male.

The female pilgrims who come with their makeup on are criticized by some female pilgrims. A pilgrim shared that a woman was praying next to her with full makeup on, so how did she make her ablution. She said that she herself; only wears clean cloths, takes shower and make ablution before coming here, but never applies any makeup.

The female pilgrims who wear fancy dresses and apply makeup said that they do this because of the love of Baba Jee. They explained that people make special preparations when they meet their loved ones, so they do this because they love Baba Jee. They further explained that it is not just a spiritual journey for them, rather a recreational one as well. They said that they come here with the entire family, prepare *langar*, distribute it and eat it themselves. So, the pilgrimage was also a source of enjoyment for them.

6.3.2. Importance of outer cleanliness

When pilgrims were asked about their idea of outer versus inner cleanliness, they firmly believe that outer cleanliness is very important. They said that one cannot just get away with it by saying that the purity of thought and heart is more important. A respondent said that she cannot think of coming to the shrine and touching the tomb or reading something from *Quran* without being cleaned physically.

Another respondent said that nobody knows how pure somebody's heart is, but your outer cleanliness is a gesture of respect for the saint, so it is very important that you must take very special care before coming here He further added that:

“Baba Jee performed *chillah* in a forest for 22 years while sitting on his toes. Can a person sit even for few minutes on his feet? No, he cannot. So, we cannot take our physical purification for granted while coming to these people. I believe that even if somebody prays less, but he must respect more”.

A female pilgrim said that taking a bath, performing ablution and wearing clean cloths is very important of your preparations, so that you can pray and recite *Quran* as well. She further explained about the purity of outer self that it is very important, because these are sacred places and self cleanliness shows your respect and love for the saint. She quoted a very famous line of a couplet by Iqbal:

“adab pahlaa qareena hai, muhabbat ke qareeno'n mein⁷⁰”.

Another pilgrim said that people following the *Sufi* doctrine want to form a spiritual connection with Allah, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and saints; because they (pilgrims) want to earn some *martaba* (spiritual rank). To achieve this, the outer purity is as important as the inner purity. He believed that when a person is not physically pure and clean then he gets prone to the effects of not just the physical forces, but the demonic forces as well. If he takes influence from such forces then he would not just get harmed

⁷⁰Respect is the most important among all the manners of love



by them, but he will also deviate from the righteous path. According to him the purity of outer self and the purity of inner self have a reciprocal effect on each other. He explained with the example of *wazu* that:

“If you are in a state of *wazu* and you are dealing with the worldly matters then you would not try to deceive or do unlawful things in that state as well. It is because you know that you have just finished your prayer and you are about to perform another and you are clean of all the impurities through *wazu*, so this thing would not let you get yourself impure. When your outer self will be clean then it will lead to your inner purity and your inner purity will not let your outer self get impure.”

A female pilgrim added that outer cleanliness is a social requirement not only for the sacred, but for secular places as well. She believed that at shrine outer purity shows our respect for the saint. Even if somebody thinks that his heart is pure, but when he cleans himself from outside then it means that for the love of saint and out of his respect the pilgrim took out special time to make preparations to make his self presentable. She said that people who died centuries ago and are still celebrated because of their high spiritual ranks might not care for the outer purity, but a pilgrim must never take such things for granted.

Another female pilgrim believed that if only the inner purity was important then there would not be people coming to the shrines in huge numbers. She further added that *taqwa* is the most important factor for Allah, but still He loves entire human kind. She further added that:

“The saints come to show the right path to the people, and if we discriminate people on such basis of right and wrong or pure and impure then we will not let them learn the right way to live the life. Whereas, the teachings of saints tell us that the doors of Allah’s blessings are always open for everybody and the saints themselves never caused hurdles for somebody to attain spiritual enlightenment and closeness to Allah”.

A female pilgrim added that Islam teaches us that cleanliness is half the faith, so its importance cannot be questioned. Moreover, if you come to shrine in impure cloths and

body then you cannot offer *nafali* prayers and cannot touch *Quran* to recite for the saint, so when you cannot do something for the saint then it is very shameful that you just keep on asking only for your own benefits. Inner cleanliness is very important, but *Sufis* do not discriminate people on these basis.

6.4. Journey to shrine as a sacred activity

Traveling to the shrine is considered as the part of the pilgrimage by some pilgrims. Generally pilgrims do not associate it as part of their pilgrimage. Hence the commute to shrine is secular to many pilgrims, but the certain gestures of respect make it sacred for others. According to the pilgrims their pilgrimage starts from the *niyat* they make at home for coming here, but the ritual aspect starts at the shrine. However some pilgrims practice some rituals out of respect while traveling to the shrine.

This ritual is the ritual of traveling barefoot from home to the shrine. Some pilgrims come barefoot especially the *Malangs* who mostly travel on foot. Pilgrims who use vehicles for transportation said that they lay off their shoes during travel out of respect. Some pilgrims said that they remove their shoes while they enter the surroundings of the shrine and they walk barefoot from the main road to the grave of Baba Jee.

The pilgrims said that the respect people show varies among all the pilgrims. A pilgrim said that he never came bare foot, but he was a very old and devoted *murid*. He added that the more respect you have the more you show it. He believed that if a person does not show this gesture it does not mean that he is less devoted to the saint than those who do.

The female pilgrim said that:

“When you are mentally prepared to carry out the journey, so it becomes the part of it. You become involve into it in so many ways. Throughout your journey you keep on reciting something such as *Darood-e-Ibrahimi*, *Surah-e-Yaseen* or any other *zikhr*. When you are in this state of mind then you can experience the emotions which you feel at the shrine in the presence of Baba Jee.”

6.5. Concept of *bulawa* (invitation by the saint)

The pilgrims have a very different worldview regarding the visit to the shrine of Baba Lal Shah and all others saints. They believe that nobody can come here without the orders of the saint himself. A respondent said to the researcher that:

“You are here to do your work (research), but you cannot come here without the permission of Baba Jee. It was his will that’s why you are here otherwise you could not have sat here and wrote all this.”

A pilgrim said that you make special program and preparations for the pilgrimage, but sometimes it happens that you do not make any proper plan for paying a visit to the saint’s shrine, but you end up being there. Sometimes you are going somewhere else, but in your way to that place there comes a saint’s shrine and you go there to pay your respects. He believed that in all these three situations or any other, these visits are predestined not only by Allah, but with the consent of the saint as well.

A female pilgrim shared that as a kid whenever she used to come with her family; her father used to say that it is actually a *bulawa* for us from Baba Jee that is why we were able to be there. She said that she never understood it back then, but as she grew up and started to comprehend the spiritual phenomenon she formed firm belief on *bulawa*. She added that:

“Most of the time it happens that we make plans to visit Baba Jee and to distribute *langar*, but we get so occupied with other things that we do not get time even if we want to. Sometimes I or my family members have dream of distributing *langar* at the shrine. We associate these both scenarios as the will of Baba Jee. When we plan to come but we cannot then we know that it is not to be fated yet, but if we dream about the visit then it is actually Baba Jee calling us there”.

Another pilgrim said that when these saints die then their souls become more efficient as they get free from the weight of their physical body. Now they can perform spiritual processes assigned to them by Allah more proficiently. With that their power increases

and who comes or leaves their place solely depends upon their own (saint's) wish. He shared his own experience with the researcher which is presented as a case study.

6.5.1. Case study 1

A 63 year old male pilgrim from Islamabad shared that his mother was a true devotee of Baba Jee, but as a young boy he never wanted to meet Baba Jee. He told that for him all this lifestyle was a mere drama. He added that he was very mischievous, so his mother once took him to Baba Jee's shrine against his (pilgrim's) will. They went there and his mother made prayers and supplicated. The same night he had Baba Jee in his dream and he said to him that:

"You abuse me and then you come to me for help as well".

He told that Baba Jee knew all along the views he held about him, but he invited him there because his life had to be changed. He believed that Baba Jee wanted him to come that is why he was able to be their even when he did not believe him. He believed that Baba Jee helped him and prayed for him even when he did not respect him. After his visit and the dream, his life started to change and he left all the bad company and started focusing on his studies. He told that Baba Jee wanted a good future for him, so with the Blessings of Allah and Baba Jee's prayers; he got good grades and a good job. He shared that after his bachelor's exams; he was waiting in the queue to submit his forms for master admissions. His brother recommended somebody for a bank job to his friend, but that man did not show up on the day of interview. His brother thought that it will be very rude to his friend and embarrassing for him, so he came to the college and found his brother (pilgrim), took him out of the queue and told about the job interview in the bank which was about to start in an hour. He gave the interview and got selected with only having a bachelor's degree and also served at the high posts in the bank.

6.5.2. Case Study 2

A 23 year old pilgrim, who had a burger stall in Lahore, shared one of his experiences that once he came to Patriata⁷¹ along with his friends. He kept on insisting that first they all must go to the shrine, but one of his friends did not approve it. As they were about to enter the chairlift, his friend's foot got tangled into the lift and he fell into a ditch. He (the pilgrim) knew that all this happened because they did not go to Baba Jee first and the way his friends disapproved going there. He talked to his friends about this and without giving any second thought, they all left for Baba Jee's shrine, paid their *salam* and repent on what they did. He said that he wanted to go, because Baba Jee wanted him to be there. His friend's injury was a kind of a turn of events which forced all of them to go; who were initially disapproved of it.

6.5.3. Case study 3

A 50 year old female pilgrim from Abbotabad shared that she did not have a male child. She went to many shrines out of love, but never prayed for a son. She never had a chance to go to Baba Lal Shah's shrine. She said that one night she had Baba Jee in her dream and he asked her that:

"Will you come to me if I give you a son?"

She went to Baba Jee's shrine the very next morning along with her husband and there they both prayed. They had a son through the *dua* of Baba Jee. She believed that Baba Jee wanted to help her, so he approached her himself.

6.5.4. Case study 4

A 36 year old female devotee from Rawalpindi came to know about Baba Lal Shah through her dreams. She never knew about him, but only heard his name once. She had a dream one night that she was holding his youngest son and Baba Lal Shah was trying to take her son from her and said that you have not come to meet me. Her arm was hurt and she felt sever pain when Baba Jee took hold of it to take her son.

⁷¹ It is a hill station at the distance of two kilometers from the Surasi village.

The next morning when she woke up; her son became ill. He stopped eating anything and had fever all the time. She also felt intense pain in her arm for the next two days which Baba Lal Shah grabbed in her dream. She did not take the dream seriously until after few days she heard a voice saying that she did not come to meet. After that she planned her journey, took her son to the shrine and made prayers after which her son became healthy and she became Baba Lal Shah's devotee for life. Her children used to get ill or had to face serious injuries, but after that incident; they did not face any such problems. She believed that she is blessed as Baba Lal Shah had his *nazar* upon her, her family and especially came to her dream to invite her.

6.6. Saint as an intermediary between Allah and people

The pilgrims believe in the intermediary power of the saints. They said that these people are *wali* and it takes a lot of devotion and hard work to become a *wali*. Once they become *wali* then Allah grant them with His special blessings and through Allah's blessings they help people. A pilgrim put it in this way that:

“These people are graduated from the Hazarat Ali (R.A). So when you graduate you feel very happy and your parents and family feel proud. If you become a doctor then you did the hard work, but now the ordinary people will get benefit from you. Similarly, when people become devotees of Allah such as these *walis*, then people come to them and ask them to ask for their forgiveness. So sometimes these *walis* ask Allah to forgive them (devotees) and grant their wishes, because of their association with these *walis*.”

A pilgrim said that:

“Some people do not believe on these things, but some like us do. Only Allah can take and give things to you, but these saints are like a lawyer. You hire a lawyer to get what you want and then he does all the preparation and fights for your case. Same happens here, you submit your case to them and then they talk to Allah, persuade Him and make requests to Him to give what ordinary people desire”.

Another pilgrim added that the intensity of love and devotion a pilgrim has for Baba Jee is reciprocated with equal intensity. You have to pray in front of Allah and request him to give you whatever you desire, but these people are intercessors. If you do not pray yourself and only rely on these people then nothing is going to change. The most important thing is to maintain balance between everything.

The pilgrims said that these saints play the reconciliatory role between Allah and the people. Allah bestows these people with His blessings, so that they can make amends between Allah and the people by bringing people close to Allah. They are here to rightly guide the laymen and to keep them on the righteous path and at the same time asking Allah for the forgiveness of the human kind. A pilgrim explained it by quoting an incident from the *Jami' at-Tirmidhi*⁷² that:

“Baba Lal Shah belongs from Chakwal, but Allah has given him the duty to come and live here in Murree, to serve the human beings and to make Allah happy. According to *Jami' at-Tirmidhi*, a saint was sitting in the market and a king passed by. He asked him that what are you doing? The saint replied that I am making reconciliation between men and Allah. Allah is ready, but the people are not. The king left him there thinking that the saint might be crazy and foolish. After some time the same king saw the very same saint sitting in the graveyard. He again asked that what are you doing here? The saint replied that I am making reconciliation between men and Allah, men are ready, but Allah is not”.

6.7. Difference between praying at home and shrine

The pilgrims experience huge difference when they pray at shrine than praying at home. They believe that it is the atmosphere of the shrine and the presence of the saint which adds more humility and concentration in to the pilgrims' prayer. A person cannot get distracted even if there is a lot of crowd and hustle and bustle of other pilgrims. A pilgrim said that:

⁷² It is one of the six canonical books of *hadith*. The *hadith* in this book are collected by a Persian Islamic Scholar Imam at-Tirmidhi (824 A.D. – 892 A.D.).

“While you pray and do not pay full concentration; then you know that Allah will forgive you as He is very kind and gentle. But once you are at saint’s shrine you know that if you will not carry out your prayers with full concentration at his (saint’s) place then he will not forgive you for this disgrace towards Allah”.

Another pilgrim said that:

“Off course there is a lot of difference between the two prayers. At home your mind is occupied with so many things and your home is not a sacred place. But once you are at the shrine or any other holy place, you are in a particular state of mind. Your devotion and love for Allah increases. Even though your love for Allah should not be something that needs a stimulus, but when your mind is cleared of worldly thoughts and you especially visit sacred places for peace of mind then your devotion naturally increases”.

A female pilgrim said that the environment of the shrine makes you feel that this place is full of blessings. When you pray at home your wishes do get fulfilled, because Allah hears you everywhere, but particularly in the shrine setting; the blessedness of the place adds into your devotion to ask Allah. When you see everybody else making prayers and supplications then it also strengthens your belief on the power of making *dua* and asking Allah for help.

Another female said that at home you acknowledge that you are in front of Allah, but at shrine you feel that you have an additional advantage, because of the presence of the saint who prays for you. Not only the saint, but pilgrims also pray that your wishes get fulfilled. This belief helps you in strengthening your belief in Allah and his blessings. According to a *hadith* one should ask those to pray for him; who are free of sins, so these saints are free of sins and that is why the word saints utter from their mouth and feel in their heart is always fulfilled.

6.8. Pilgrimage out of love and respect

The pilgrims said that they carry out their spiritual journey out of love and respect of the saint. Many pilgrims come with some desire in their hearts, but for many others it is a

totally different phenomenon. As one respondent said that there is something which calls you here. You naturally get a feeling in your heart that you have to go there and it is totally random. He said that at times you feel that you just have to be here. He believed all this as natural. He said that:

“It comes naturally as a kind of an adduction in your heart.”

Another pilgrim said that People come towards the saint when they get hurt from the world. They experience pain and affliction, so to heal this they find solace only in the company of Allah’s *walis*. It is the reciprocal love among a pilgrim and the saint which calls you. He further added (while sobbing) that he was hurt by his own people, his own family and relatives. He told that nobody is true and sincere to you in this world, but only Allah’s loved ones.

Another respondent said that he never made *mannat* here or at any other shrine. He only comes to these places out of love and respect. He added that:

“Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is *rehmat-al-alamieen*⁷³, so similarly these saints are *rehmat* (blessing) for the entire world. Prophet (PBUH) is the city of knowledge and Hazrat Ali (R.A.) is the door to that city. These people are their decedents, so when you desire to get some spiritual knowledge without loving these personalities is totally out of question and will not lead you to the true spiritual understanding.”

A pilgrim who came from London said that his own *murshid* is Darai Sahiba in Jhehlum, who is the *murid* of Baba Lal Shah. So this makes Baba Jee his (pilgrim’s) *dada murshid* (grand spiritual guide/teacher). He said that he calls Baba Jee as *Lal piya* (Lal – my beloved) out of love. He shared that whenever he comes to Pakistan he tries his best to visit Baba Jee as well as Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh and Hazrat Fareed Ganj-e-Shakar⁷⁴. He does not belong to Murree, but he tries every time to come here to pay his homage to Baba Lal Shah.

⁷³It is a title given to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by Allah which means blessing for all the universes.

⁷⁴He is a 13th century *Sufi* mystic of *Chishti* order, born in Multan. His shrine is located in Pakpattan, Pakistan.

Another pilgrim who came from London to attend the *urs* told that initially he had no program of coming to Baba Lal Shah, but he was in Pakistan for last two months, so he thought that it would be unfair and unfortunate to come to Pakistan, but not visiting Baba Lal Shah. Initially he quit the idea of coming here as he thought that his family and relatives will get annoyed that he has come from London and now he is leaving them to attend the *urs*. But then his elder brother felt that he (pilgrim) wants to come, so he asked him that if he really wants to go then he will accompany him. He said that they were so eager to come here to gain blessings from Baba Jee that they started making their preparations for *urs* without any second thought.

The pilgrims carry out this journey, because they believe that shrine is full of Allah's blessings. They believe that there are people through whom you receive blessings by Allah. A pilgrim said that in our society there is a concept that if you have old people in your family or in your home then their presence brings blessings to your house and life. Due to the presence of the saints in someone's life; the person receives the blessings as well. He added that similarly the saint's burial place is blessed as well and it brings good when you make visit to his grave.

A female pilgrim said that people question that how a man can bring *barakah* to you. She believed that:

“There are *rajal- ul- ghaib*⁷⁵, Allah has this entire spiritual system which is beyond the human imagination. Allah has assigned duties to *rajal-ul-ghaib*, so when somebody performs good deeds, or even make a *niyat* for it or adopts the company of the pious people, he starts receiving the blessings of Allah. These are *rajal-ul-ghaib* who are especially assigned with the duty to transfer Allah's blessings to these people. These saints are *rijal-ul-ghaib* who carryout Allah orders to help the mankind even after their demise.”

⁷⁵ *Rajal* in Arabic means men and *ghaib* means hidden or invisible. So these are the invisible men who carryout spiritual duties assigned by Allah.

6.9. Concept of *nazar* (coming into sight/attention)

The pilgrims take the *nazar* as coming into the attention of Baba Jee. The pilgrims believe that the attention of the saint is beneficial for the people as well. Once a person comes into the saint's eye and gets his attention, his life is changed totally. They believe that Baba Jee gives everything to the pilgrim through his *nazar*. A devotee said that:

“Baba Jee is a *qalandar* while he is in anger, dressed or undressed. Whatever he possesses in his eyes, once he captures you in it then he gives everything to you through it”.

Pilgrims believe that these people have insight and through that they can look through people. A man is full of sins and desires. Nobody can tell what other person is thinking or what he wants, but these people through their insight can tell. Because of this, they know that what kind of person they are encountering at the moment. A pilgrim said that:

“There are 40 veils on the human eye. As one goes into deep prayer and meditation then Allah removes these veils. Then they can see things unseen to ordinary eye in the form of dreams or in the state of sudden dozing. The more one worships Allah the more his knowledge and insight increases, but only with the will of Allah. The most important thing here is that not just loving and submitting to Allah is enough. You have to love his loved one, so the love and submission to the Prophet (PBUH) is very important.”

Pilgrims also believe that every change that occurs into a pilgrim's life is because of the *nazar* of Baba Jee. They said that one does not have to be physically present before Baba Jee to get his problems solved. Once he captures the attention of Baba Jee then he keeps his devotee in his heart all the time.

A pilgrim added that it is not necessary to take *bayat* in order to get spiritual insight and help from the saint. Baba Jee was *mast* (being in the state of spiritual ecstasy) and he did not take *bayat* or left any *muriden* (spiritual disciples). It is his *tuwajah* which leads to the change into pilgrim's life. There are different ways for it so, some practice *piri-muridi* (spiritual master and disciple relationship), some use amulets, but there are some who just through their *tuwajah* turn people's heart towards Allah.

A pilgrim said that Baba Jee used to strike people with his wooden sticks. He told that a getting struck by Baba Jee's stick was like a privilege for the pilgrim. It was same like the *bayat*. He further explained that *bayat* means to come into somebody's *nazar*. He showed his finger which got crooked, because Baba Jee struck it with his stick; which the pilgrim believed as a blessing.

6.10. Negative activities and *bid'ah* (innovation in Islam)

The pilgrims were also inquired about any negative practices that are being carried out at the shrine and things which are often characterized as *bid'ah*.

A pilgrim said that when you come to the shrine you must perform ablution, then go to *Baba Lal Shah* and read *Quran* especially *Surah-e-Tawba*⁷⁶. There are some activities that are performed by some people in the shrine setting such as drug abuse, because of which the whole shrine system is criticized. He believed that instead of focusing on the negative aspects and associating it with the whole system, focusing on the teachings of these saints is more important.

A pilgrim talked about the activities falsely associated with the shrine system. He said that people say that at shrines, pilgrims prostrate to the saint and his grave. He believed that it is something which not even an ignorant will do.

A pilgrim criticized the music at the shrine. He said that few people understand that this is a respectable place. According to him all the drumming, dancing and hooting was not appropriate with this place.

A pilgrim told that during *urs* females and eunuchs come as well. So, he decided that he will never come to *urs* again, but only in routine days. He also mounted his tent quite far from the shrine as it was crowded by the pilgrims. The reason behind this was that he believed that eunuchs were dancing in the shrine and then there were women as well in such a crowded place. So, it was not possible for him to maintain the proximity to the

⁷⁶ It is the ninth chapter of the *Quran*. *Tawba* means repentance.

shrine in this situation as it is contradictory to the concept of *mehram* and *namehram* in Islam.

A female pilgrim said that everybody has their own sets of belief and she never criticizes anybody for upholding those beliefs. So, people may call the practice of *ziyarat* as *bid'ah*, but she believed that they should not say such things when nobody is saying anything to them.

Another female respondent said that we do not force anybody to come here, so nobody should have any concern with this practice. Regarding the negative experiences; a female pilgrim said that sometimes you come across substance abusers. They come here, because they know that they will get something definitely to eat. We give alms in the name of Allah to get reward, so we do not stop doing this because of such people. We contribute our wealth because of the respect and love for saint and for our better life in hereafter.

6.11. Miracles by saint leading to his following

The miracles that were performed by Baba Jee are also a major reason behind the devotion of the pilgrims. These miracles of the saint also help in flourishing the tradition of *ziyarat* among the future generations (Pirani, 2009, p. 297). One of the pilgrim said that people do not acknowledge your spiritual power until you show it. So, some pilgrims shared the events related to Baba Jee which led to their love and devotion for him.

A pilgrim told that the *chillah* which Baba Jee carried out for 22 years was also his miracle. He said that a normal person cannot sit naked in snow only for five minutes, but he spent 22 years here. He sacrificed his body, soul and wealth for Allah which was not an easy thing to do. So, he believed that these saints did perform some extraordinarily remarkable things for the love of Allah and to get insight of the spiritual world which we cannot even imagine to do. He believed that this insight which the saints gain from their spiritual devotion can benefit the life of the pilgrims.

A pilgrim shared his own experiences that whenever he used to leave from his home to meet Baba Jee, he (Baba Jee) already knew that why was he coming here. Besides this

Baba Jee was also aware of the visitor's good and bad deeds, for which he also punished them. He said that Baba Jee was not a *gaddi nasheen* (hereditary successor of a saint) and like those *pir(s)* who use a lot of heaters to warm-up their place in winters, instead he lived in snow covered mountains and chilly winters for 22 years naked.

A pilgrim said that Baba Jee used to ride a lion. The lion used to sit beside him and when the pilgrims used to get afraid of the lion he used to say that:

"Son, do not be afraid of the cat."

A pilgrim associating the practices performed by Baba Jee as a way of worshiping and getting close to Allah quoted a couplet in *punjabi* that:

"Ishaq namazan jinhan nay parihaan o kaday nai marday"⁷⁷
Maran dy ba'ad he unhan di qabran tay hamesha deway balday"⁷⁸

A pilgrim said that his father used to come here and he witnessed some unusual things such as the story of the lion. His father saw that lion came to visit Baba Jee and when he (Baba Jee) used to hit the lion with his stick then the lion used to sit by his side without doing any harm to Baba Jee and the pilgrims. The respondent said that people associate manipulated version of real events or make fake stories, but as he was told by his own father then there is no possibility of the story being fake.

The pilgrims believe that Baba Jee or any other saint does not need miracles to get extensive following and popularity. These miracles are just a sign for the people to ask them (saints) for help, because ordinary people do not have an inner eye which can help them identify the spiritual authority of another person. A female pilgrim added that:

"Allah creates these people (saints) as a *wasila* in order to ease the suffering of His people. Now it is not the attitude of a true saint that he will ask people door to door to come to him in difficult times or will boast about his prayers, intense mediation and closeness to Allah, because a true *wali* never makes such claims. It is actually the will of

⁷⁷ Those who love Allah never die

⁷⁸ After death their graves are lightened forever

Allah to disclose the certain acts of these saints and make them public, so that ordinary people can identify their well wishers and saviors.”

6.11.1. Case study 1

A male pilgrim in his 70s from Murree, a mason by profession, shared with the researcher that he held cynical views regarding the miracles of the saints. Once he came along his father to meet Baba Jee during snowfall. Night approached and due to extensive snowfall and with no electricity; they had to stay at Baba Jee's *dera*. Baba Jee made them sleep in the snow, but when they woke up in the morning they felt as if they slept in countless blankets and their cloths did not get wet as well. He also witnessed another event when Baba Jee was alive. He told that Baba Jee used to abuse people and beat them with a stick, but in reality he abused and beat the animal inside the man. People used to think that he abused and hurt the human beings, but he used to punish the bad aspect of the man's personality. He himself was beaten by Baba Jee, which he took as a blessing upon himself.

6.11.2. Case study 2

A 71 year old male pilgrim from Lahore shared that once he came to meet Baba Jee. There was another man at Baba Jee's *dera*. As soon as that man came near; Baba Jee grabbed him, because he was not honest with his job. Baba Jee knew all along that who was coming to meet him. Baba Jee also knew about the deeds they carried out in their routine lives, either good or bad, so his treatment towards pilgrims was based on their own actions.

So, when Baba Jee grabbed the man; in his struggle to release himself, his coat remained in Baba Jee's hands and the man ran away. Baba Jee burnt that man's coat right away into the fire which was lit already. He (pilgrim) and other people witnessed the coat getting burnt. Then that man left, but on his way back he saw a piece of cloth and when he approached near, it was his coat in its proper condition with all the possessions and money in it. Then after this that man became the *murid* of Baba Jee and he is the one who

built this shrine. Not just that man's, but this incident also strengthened the belief of many people on the *karamat* (miracles) of Baba Jee.

6.12. Pilgrimage and social interaction

The pilgrims were asked that do they think that pilgrimage is a mean to form new social relations and using these relations for social support. They said that they do not interact with the fellow pilgrims, because everybody is so busy in their own activities that nobody gets time to form friendships. People come here to pray for the saint and presenting their requests to him, so interacting with fellow pilgrims is not one of their prime motives.

The common reason reported by the both genders for not meeting new people at the shrine is that they do not know what background people are coming from and that they cannot just socialize with people they do not know anything about. A female pilgrim said that:

“People here seem sulky. Even the natives do not interact much”.

She then added that she and her family themselves do not mingle with other pilgrims and are not concerned with them. Another pilgrim said that we do not know what kind of people they are so we just restrict ourselves to our own family.

A female pilgrim said that at shrine people from good background come as well, so there is nothing wrong in making ties with them. She shared that her elder sister got married through the people who got acquainted to her family during pilgrimage.

A respondent said that both good and bad people come here, but he only interacts with those who are of his own standard. The researcher asked him whether they help each other in the hour of need then he replied sarcastically:

“Nobody helps you, only Allah helps”.

A group of pilgrims said that they do mingle with other pilgrims. They come in the groups during *u's* and spend most of the time together. But if by chance they meet

somebody outside the shrine which is rare; then it is only limited to recreation. They have never helped somebody financially or socially.

A pilgrim from Lahore said that he spends the days of *urs* by enjoying the beautiful scenery and the weather. Another entertainment is the *mela* (fair/festival) itself. People from different backgrounds come here, so they spend time with each other which is a really good activity to cut time. He told that if he meets somebody at the shrine then this interaction is only restricted to the shrine. Another pilgrim said that he meets fellow pilgrims outside the shrine only by chance. A pilgrim said that he mingles with other pilgrims at the shrine and befriends them. He added that:

“I do not have any *parda-nasheeni* (secret) from anybody”.

As for helping them is concerned; he said that not the pilgrims from other cities, but he definitely helps pilgrims who belong to his own city. A pilgrim added that at shrine he does meet other pilgrims, but a lot of them come here with strange beliefs and stories for example coming on foot or bare foot. Sometimes people bring goats with them and give it to the *mujawar* (caretaker of the shrine). He said that it is quite clear to a normal person that the *mujawar* will definitely defalcate. So, he believed that it is more appropriate that the money and goods must be given to the poor then Allah will definitely give you reward for that.

Turner talks about the concept of *communitas* as a result of the pilgrimage that it evokes the harmony among all the people and inculcates the idea of egalitarianism (Bowie, 2006, p. 153; Pirani, 2009, p. 82) that people sharing similar set of believes develop a community which has collective values and their ultimate goal is similar. These notions can be taken as true at psychological level as all pilgrims believe that they feel compassionate, empathetic, submissive and tolerant towards other pilgrims, but its physical manifestation still lacks. If we take *communitas* as a physical entity then the formation of such communities is not possible at the present research site. People might internalize the teachings in their ordinary life, but they do show their difference at the pilgrimage site by restricting their interaction with fellow pilgrims. They do not believe in forming new relations at the shrine. They also come with different motives and have

different perception of their sacred journey such as some come for only the worldly gains and some only for the spiritual purposes and to attain *barakah*. This is against the basic idea of the *communitas*. The post modern notion seems valid here that people come with contradictory motives and also uphold different views about the pilgrimage and the pilgrims.

6.13. Perception towards sectarian differences

Pilgrims who come to the shrine are from both *Shia* and *Sunni* sects; however the *Sunni* outnumber *Shia*. Their practices are bit different from each other. The *Shia* pilgrims raise slogans of *Ya-Ali* and *Haideri*⁷⁹. Other than this there was no difference with regard to the rituals.

Baba Jee hailed from a *Shia* family, but his devotees include both *Shia* and *Sunni*. So, the pilgrims were inquired about their perception of the people of other sects and their following of a person from different religious school of thought. They were questioned that in the current era there is a lot of sectarian intolerance in Pakistan, so how the *Sunni* pilgrims follow a *Shia* saint and what do they perceive about the *Shia* pilgrims.

The pilgrims are very tolerant towards the people of other sects. They believe that saints are the friends of Allah, so they do not associate themselves with any religious sect. A pilgrim said that:

“Baba Lal Shah is a true *Syed* and is from the family of Hazrat Ali (A.S.). He belongs to the family of Bari Sarkar⁸⁰, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar⁸¹ and Saien Saheli Sarkar⁸². He is *Syed*, but never thought superior of himself, rather only associated himself to Allah as Baba Bulleh Shah said in his poetry that

I am not the pure among the impure.

⁷⁹ It is a slogan raised to praise bravery and courage of Hazrat Ali (R.A.) and to seek help through his intercession.

⁸⁰ Shah Abdul Latif Kazmi and popularly known as Babri Imam is a 17th century *Sufi* saint from Nurpur, Islamabad.

⁸¹ A *Sufi* saint from Sehwan Sharief, Sindh

⁸² A *Sufi* saint from Azad Kashmir.

I am not the believer in the mosque.

I am not a pagan disciple.

Bulleh! I do not know, who am I!"

A pilgrim said that he converted from *Sunni* to *Shia*, because he found it as the true way to live life. He further added that these people love everybody like a mother does. She never discriminates among her kids, so similarly these people do not make distinction among *Shia* and *Sunni*. Another respondent said that:

"*Qalandar* does not belong to any religion".

Another pilgrim said that:

"I am from *ahl-e-sunnat*⁸³ and I am not that *molvi* (Muslim cleric) who does not believe in *Panjtan Pak*".

He elaborated that one who does this is out from the circle of Islam. He said that all this division and discrimination is caused by lack of education. He claimed that if we get education then all these problems will be sorted out. Allah has created all these sects and religion, but the humanity comes first. He further said that Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) name is written at the top in Lincoln's inn, not because that he prayed a lot. A Christian has got nothing to do with his (PBUH) prayers, but only because he (PBUH) was a very good human being.

Another pilgrim said that he never discriminates even between Christians and Muslim, so discriminating between Muslims was out of question for him. He believed as well that the most important thing is humanity, after that come the Muslims. It is the clergy which has created all this problem of sects within people. These saints call everyone without discrimination.

Another pilgrim added that Baba Jee's one son is *Sunni* and the other son is *Shia*. They all live together, so it will not be appropriate to discriminate fellow Muslims just because

⁸³ It is one of the sub divisions within the *Sunni* sect.

their path to follow Islam is different from ours. If somebody does this then he believed that he is not a true devotee of Baba Jee.



7. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The aim of the study was to understand the cultural perception of the *Sufi* pilgrimage by exploring the ritual aspect, transformative aspect and perception of the pilgrimage. The study was carried out at the shrine of Baba Lal Shah in Surasi Syedan, Murree. The sample of 40 respondents was selected through non-probability and snow ball sampling techniques, from which 15 individuals were selected for the in-depth interviews. Besides interviews, other research techniques included participant observation, rapport building, field notes, case studies and photography.

The orthodox Muslims criticize the practices of *Sufi's* and their devotees as *bid'ah* (Salamon, 2004, p. 421). The Muslim reformers have always been remained against the saint veneration and *Sufism*, but for its practitioners; it has always remained an expression of their faith (Basu, 1998, p. 119). Orthodox Muslims regard Sufism as deviance from Islam, cultural backwardness and survival of superstitions (Chittick, 2000, p. 3). The saints and the *Sufi* brotherhoods are often regarded as the part of the folk religion followed by the illiterate believers (Voll, 2007, p. 281).

The results of the study showed that the pilgrims believe that pilgrimage is important because Allah has created a mechanism to reward His loved ones (the saints). These saints devoted themselves to Allah, so in return people pray for them everyday even after their death which is the continuation of the blessing of Allah upon the saints. They also act as an intermediary between Allah and human beings. Through pilgrimage and associating oneself to a saint; a person is being able to follow a role model and commits to him/her self to follow the righteous path. According to pilgrims, having a shadow of a saint upon you also makes your heart tender as you realize the suffering of other people.

Pilgrims carryout the pilgrimage as they have a firm believe that Allah has granted *faiz* to His loved ones and through this blessing of Allah upon them, they are able to transfer it to other people. Pilgrims come to receive this *faiz* of Baba Jee to have blessings in their lives. The journey to the shrine is also sacred to them as they make preparations, *niyat* and recite something on their way to Baba Lal Shah's shrine. Pilgrims also strongly

believe in the *bulawa* from the saint. They believe that until the Baba Jee himself does not invite you, you can never come to his place. They take it as a blessing upon them that Baba Jee has chosen them. Pilgrims believe that saints do not encourage publicizing their miracles, as miracles are Allah's test to check the humility of a saint. People only recognize your potential when you show them something, so a lot of pilgrims came to know about Baba Jee through his miracles which they heard from others or experienced themselves.

At the shrine of Baba Lal Shah, pilgrims from low socio-economic status outnumber the pilgrims from middle socio-economic class, whereas the pilgrims from upper class are rarely found. These findings are consistent with the previous researches carried out at other shrines that pilgrims from low socio-economic class tend to come more as compare to other socio-economic classes (Abbas et al., 2013, p. 384; Choudhary, 2010, p. 25; Saheb, 1998, p. 73).

The study results showed that people want to receive the *barakah* of a saint in their life, so that they can achieve success and satisfaction. They pray for Baba Lal Shah not just because they feel that offering *fatiha* for a dead is encouraged by Islam, but this will also bring *barakah* to their own (pilgrim) lives. However, there are pilgrims who only stick to offering *fatiha*, but not on getting their wishes fulfilled through the intercession of Baba Lal Shah; whereas the intermediation is a prominent aspect of sainthood (Mills, 1998, p 32).

People seek Baba Lal Shah's intermediation for variety of things such as in sickness, marital problems, child birth, to get job, success in education and jobs, financial problems, magic etc; however they reported that they are actually asking Allah, but Baba Lal Shah only catalyzes the process of *dua* and acts as *wasila*, so they do not consider the practice of *ziyarat* as *bid'ah*. They not only focus on seeking help from Baba Jee, but also help others by praying for them, giving alms and distributing *langar* at the shrine. They believe that all the things that are associated with Baba Jee and are proximal to him take the affect from the saint, hence becoming blessed. This way these things which include the tomb, the relics at the shrine, oils, rose ashes and even the *langar* becomes blessed

and when used; these things pass down *baba Jee*'s blessing to the people who come in contact with them.

Where the rituals make the whole pilgrimage activity meaningful; at the same time they help people in understanding their own lives. Clifford Geertz definition of religion was taken to highlight the importance of the rituals. According to Geertz (1993, p. 90) religious symbols have the power to create moods and motivations and through these moods and motivation one is being able to understand his existence. So, through the results of the research it is evident that people perform these symbolic rituals such as *mannat*, supplication, *dua*, praying, lighting oil lamps and the pilgrimage, because they give them relief and hope in dark times. These rituals are not some meaningless activity; rather they provide pilgrims a sense of satisfaction which leads to the peace and tranquility in crisis. Performance of ritual varies according to the socioeconomic status (Choudhary, 2010, p. 19-27), but at the shrine of Baba Lal Shah, pilgrims from different socio-economic classes perform similar rituals with same devotion. Female pilgrims are more into ritualistic activities such as lighting oil lamp as compare to men.

As symbols are the physical manifestation of the human beliefs (Keane, 2008, p. S124), so they give an aura of factuality and reality to the moods and motivations experienced after the performance of religious rituals (Geertz, 1993, p. 90). The pilgrims who come to the shrine of Baba Lal Shah, after performing the rituals, experience change of mood. They feel more satisfied and peaceful than before the pilgrimage. The pilgrimage process is not just limited to the transformation of present mood, but also helps to form motivations for the future. These motivations are towards both, the God and the ordinary humans. Through this motivation; people try to inculcate positive attitude and behavior in the social, moral, religious and spiritual domains of their self.

They get motivated to follow the righteous path that is, following the tenets of Islam in better way, living life according to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and to become a good human being for the whole society. According to Islamic and *Sufi* doctrine, these moods and motivations are closely related to the understanding of the true meaning of existence. The change of mood and motivation which the pilgrimage brings

into the pilgrims' life is reinforced by the rituals. These rituals not just bring change, but they also motivate the pilgrims to continue their practice of pilgrimage.

Religious symbols act as an explanation of the human life (Geertz, 1993, p. 100), so many pilgrims reported that their pilgrimage led to acceptance of negative life situations, such as in sickness, financial or familial crisis. Once at the shrine, the pilgrims start to believe that their suffering is just Allah's way to thank Him, get close to Him and to understand the suffering of other people who are living even worse life than them. This not just leads to the rationalization of their problems, but they also empathize with other pilgrims.

The perception of the pilgrims towards the saint, the built environment of the shrine and the social conditions all act in causing the change in physical and mental conditions of the pilgrims (Pirani, 2009, p. 227). The social conditions which motivate people to come to the Baba Lal Shah's shrine include the cultural perception of saint as endowed with *barakah* and the low socioeconomic status of the majority pilgrims, which encourages them to seek help through affordable means. The pilgrims at Baba Lal Shah's shrine shared with the researcher that they knew about the miracles and the *barakah* of Baba Jee which motivated them to seek help from him. The holiness in the whole environment of the shrine is also one of the factors which bring changes into the moods of the pilgrims as they feel that there is holiness in the entire premises of Baba Jee's shrine which suddenly make you free of all the worries and problems in life.

According to Victor Turner's model of pilgrimage, an individual undergoes through a change. He passes from three stages i-e- separation from routine life/society, transition and incorporation into the society (Turner, 1974, p. 202 as cited in Valdinoci, 2008, p. 204-205). The same process of transformation was observed in this research. Pilgrims told about their journey of transformation. Through a temporary separation from the society they learned new aspects of life and self which were not present before their state of separation, so the time spent at the shrine was a transitional phase. When they came back from the pilgrimage and carried on with their routine lives, they tried to incorporate all the things learned and understood through pilgrimage in their routine life. So, it was a

transitional journey for them through which they were being able to establish new understanding towards life and internalized the whole pilgrimage.

Pilgrims reported transformation in themselves after they associated themselves to Baba Lal Shah. They feel peace, tranquillity, happiness and joy at the shrine and sometimes they only come to get peace of mind, but not to get worldly wishes fulfilled. The love and happiness they receive from the *nazar* of Baba Lal Shah makes them feel as the most blessed of all in the entire world. They do not measure happiness and success in materialistic terms; rather they believe that the rich is the one who has the love and attention of the saints. At psychological level, they feel less tense as they believe that Baba Jee is looking after them and through his prayers and Allah's blessings nothing negative works against them. Pilgrims reported that they have developed a strong relationship with Allah after coming to the Shrine of Baba Lal Shah. Their relation is based on love rather than fear and the concept of Allah has become a living reality to them rather than just believing on Him because they were told by the elders. The belief in Allah also strengthens among them after their wishes come true. Fulfilment of their wishes also reinforces their practice of pilgrimage. They believe that to achieve Allah's love; they should not just make their actions rights, but their thoughts as well.

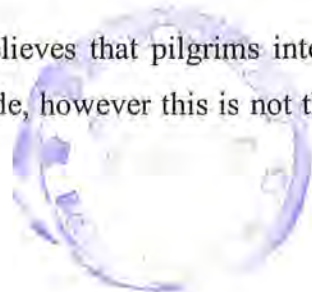
The pilgrims believe that love of Allah is incomplete without the love of His people, so through pilgrimage they realize that fulfilment of *hakook-al-ibad* is very important. The pilgrims hesitate to share their spiritual experiences as they believe that it is related to *marifat*, so it must not be disclosed. Some pilgrims shared some spiritual experiences which led to their devotion for Baba Jee and this spiritual association also helped them in endeavours of their life. They believe that anything which brings a person closer to Allah is spiritual. Pilgrims said that the interconnectedness they feel with other pilgrims and people is spiritual for them and being humble and sensitive towards others is the true essence of spirituality. According to them, in order to attain spirituality one must live according to code prescribed by Allah, follow the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) last sermon, must be kind to others and being able to differentiate between *halal* and *haram*.

The pilgrims believe that moral change and strong character building is inevitable once a person associates him/herself with the saints. Pilgrims reported that they abstain themselves from committing huge moral crimes and even from negative attitudes such as talking impolitely. They believe that it is Allah's will to free them from these vices, so He uses *wasila* of these saints to stop people from moral degeneration. Submission towards Allah, towards people, tolerance, patience and brotherhood are other aspects which the pilgrims reported that were absent from their lives before they set out to the sacred journey and came into the *nazar* of Baba Jee.

Victor Turner calls the pilgrimage sites as anti-structure (Turner, 1974, p. 169; 207 as cited in Valdinoci, 2008, p. 204-205) and these anti-structures are important for the solution of conflicts and stability of the normative structures (Whitehead, 2011, p.188). So, when people separate themselves from their normative social structure and come to the shrine, it helps them in enduring their situation and also provides them with the solutions of conflicts and crisis they face in ordinary life.

Victor Turner's concept of *communitas* is somewhat evident in the research results. He said that the shared experience of the pilgrims form a community having similar objectives. The pilgrims in this research developed the sense of *communitas* by relating themselves with other pilgrims and understanding their suffering. However the concept of *communitas* does not seem to be fully validated here especially when it is taken as the formation of an egalitarian, interconnected and homogenous society with universal humanism (Bowie, 2006, p. 153; Gilmore, 2008, p. 216; Kreiner, 2010, p. 440-456; Pirani, 2009, p. 82; Werbner & Basu, 1998, p. 11). Through the results the regard for humanity is evident among all the pilgrims as they reported that they pray for all the Muslims and all the humans of the world. They also reported that they help people regardless of their ideological and sectarian differences and keep humanity as their first priority, but the formation of egalitarian and homogenous society at the pilgrimage site does not seem to be an outcome of the pilgrimage in this study.

Turner (1973, p.202 as cited in John, 2001, p. 49) believes that pilgrims interact with each other by keeping their socio cultural divisions aside, however this is not the case at



the shrine of Baba Lal Shah. Many pilgrims reported that they do not mingle with the other pilgrims. The major reason behind not interacting with fellow pilgrims reported by the pilgrims is that they focus on spending this time on their own selves by contemplating and supplicating. The other reason reported by some pilgrims is that they do not want to intermingle because they do not know the other people, they do not know what kind of background they are coming from, whether they are of their own social standard and for some people; other pilgrims do not seem to be very hearty and warm. These factors can never contribute to the formation of a homogenous and egalitarian society.

Victor Turner focuses on the formation of homogenous society and John Eade and Michael Sallnow on the contestation. Keeping in mind the above mentioned responses of the pilgrims, it is evident that the model of pilgrimage presented by Eade and Sallnow (2000, p.5 as cited in Giovine, 2011, p. 254-255) is valid for the present study that pilgrimage does not form *communitas*. They believe that all pilgrims have different discourses, different motives and are not equal. The pilgrims at the shrine of Baba Lal Shah come with different sets of beliefs as some believe only praying for the dead saint, but not asking him for help and some seek Baba Lal Shah's guidance and help in every matter of life. Some pilgrims only come for material and worldly benefits, some for only spiritual benefits and some for both. The pilgrims at Baba Lal Shah's shrine do not encourage mingling with fellow pilgrims and also hold negative views about others and marginalized groups such as eunuch and prostitutes which validates Eade and Sallnow's notion that the pilgrims are not equal as some pilgrims at Baba Lal Shah's shrine do not consider fellow pilgrims equal and the social cultural divisions are not ignored rather they are reinforced (Hermkens et al., 2009, p.3).

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APPENDIX

Glossary

<i>Abb-e-Zam Zam</i>	Holy water of a well in Makkah
Abu Hamid al-Ghazali.....	An eleventh/twelfth century Persian Muslim mystic, theologian, jurist and philosopher
<i>Ahl-e-bait</i>	The family of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
<i>Ahl-e-sunnat</i>	Follower of the Sunni school of thought in Islam
<i>Akhyara</i>	Yellow raspberry
<i>Alam</i>	Flag
<i>Aloocho</i>	Yellow plums
<i>Amannat</i>	Depository
<i>Arain</i>	A Punjabi clan associated with agriculture
<i>Asateer-ul-awaleen</i>	Ancient stories
<i>Asr</i>	Islamic afternoon prayer
<i>Ayat al-Kursi</i>	The throne verse of the Holy Quran showing emphatic explanation of Allah
Baba Bulleh Shah.....	18th century saint from Qasoor, Pakistan
<i>Banafshan</i>	Sweet violet
<i>Barakah</i>	Blessing
Bari Sarkar.....	Shah Abdul Latif Kazmi, popularly known as Bari Imam is a 17th century saint from Nurpur, Islamabad
<i>Batangi</i>	Pyrus pashia
<i>Bayat</i>	Oath of allegiance to a religious or spiritual authority in Islam and Sufism
<i>Biar</i>	Pinus exeelsa

<i>Bid'ah</i>	Innovation in Islam
<i>Bulawa</i>	Invitation
<i>Chaal</i>	Creeper of wild jasmine
<i>Chaddar(s)</i>	Sheet of cloth, also used as grave spread
<i>Chillah(s)</i>	Spending 40 days in seclusion to receive spiritual enlightenment and to meditate
<i>Chishti</i>	A follower of the Chishti Sufi school
<i>Dada murshid</i>	Grand spiritual guide/teacher
<i>Dali(s)</i>	Urs procession following the model of the saint's shrine
<i>Darogha</i>	Gate keeper
<i>Darood-e-Ibrahimi</i>	Invocation to praise Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) and Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.)
<i>Dars</i>	A lecture on Quran, sunnah, shariy' ah and fiqh
<i>Data Sawa lakh</i>	Bestower to the one and quarter lakh people
<i>Dayg</i>	A large cooking pot
<i>Daygchi</i>	A small cooking pot
<i>Deodar</i>	Cedrus deodar
<i>Dera</i>	Camp
<i>Dhamaal</i>	Devotional Sufi dance
<i>Diya-salai</i>	Lamp made with clay and lightens with cotton bud soaked in oil
<i>Drek</i>	Melia semper virans
<i>Dua(s)</i>	Supplication
<i>Eid-ul-Fitr</i>	A religious festival celebrated by Muslims on first three days of Islamic month of Ramazan
<i>Faiz</i>	Divine blessing endowed to the saint by Allah

<i>Fajr</i>	Islamic dawn prayer
<i>Fatiha</i>	Praying for a dead fellow Muslim
<i>Fiqh</i>	Muslim sect-wise theology
<i>Gaddi nasheen</i>	Hereditary successor of a saint
<i>Galiyat</i>	Streets
<i>Ghaibana bayat</i>	Taking oath of allegiance from saint after his death through dreams
<i>Ghoppa</i>	Tent
<i>Gota</i>	Shimmery ribbon
<i>Hadith</i>	Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) tradition
<i>Haideri</i>	It is a slogan raised to praise bravery and courage of Hazrat Ali (R.A.) and to seek help through his intercession
<i>Hajj</i>	Annual Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah
<i>Hajji(s)</i>	One who performs hajj
<i>Hakook-al-ibad</i>	Rights of the people
<i>Hakook-Allah</i>	Rights of Allah
<i>Halal</i>	Lawful acts according to Islam
<i>Haram</i>	Unlawful acts according to Islam
<i>Haya</i>	Modesty
Hazrat Abbas Alamdar.....	Hazrat Imam Husain (R.A.) half brother, flag bearer and a martyr of Karbala
Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh	Eleventh century Sufi mystic from Persia, buried in Lahore
Hazrat Fareed Ganj-e-Shakar.....	13th century Sufi mystic of Chishti order, born in Multan, buried in Pakpattan, Pakistan.

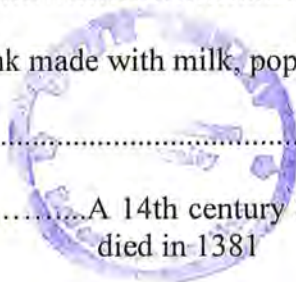
Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.).....	Grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Hazrat Ali's (R.A.) son, Third Shia Imam and martyr of Karbala.
Hazrat Imam Musa kazim (R.A.).....	Descendent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and sixth Shia Imam
Hazrat Khawaja Ghareeb Nawaz.....	13th century Chishti saint from Afghanistan, buried in Ajmer, India
<i>Hindko</i>	Indo-Aryan language, a dialect of Punjabi spoken in Pothohar and Azad Kashmir regions in Pakistan
<i>Holy Kaaba</i>	Worldly abode of Allah and center of worship for Muslims
<i>Ihram</i>	Special white robes worn while perform hajj and Ummrah
<i>Ilaychi dana</i>	A white small sphere shaped traditional candy with a coarse surface usually distributed at shrines and weddings
<i>Imam</i>	The one who leads the communal prayer in mosque
<i>Imtihan</i>	A test to judge humility
<i>Jalali</i>	Furious
<i>Jami' at-Tirmidhi</i>	One of the six canonical books of hadith
<i>Kafi</i>	Classical Sufi poetry in Punjabi and Sindhi language
<i>Kalima Tayyaba</i>	Confession of Only God (Allah) and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as last Messenger of Allah
<i>kanachi</i>	Black raspberry
<i>kaneera</i>	Wild flowery shrub
<i>karamat</i>	Miracles
<i>kasa</i>	Bowl to collect alms money
<i>kasni</i>	Chicory
<i>khak-e-shifa</i>	Healing ashes

<i>khatimbal</i>	Plant with iodine like properties
<i>khayanat</i>	Peculation
<i>Koh</i>	Wild olive
<i>Lal piya</i>	Lal my beloved
<i>Lam dumbar</i>	A long tailed bird
<i>Langar khana</i>	Shrine kitchen
<i>Langar</i>	Shrine food
<i>Ma'rifat</i>	Spiritual knowledge
<i>Mach</i>	A small room adjacent to a shrine where the flower petals from the grave are burned and used as a healing ash
<i>Madarassa</i>	Mosque school
<i>Maghrib</i>	Islamic sunset prayer
<i>Majlis-e-iza</i>	Ceremony to mourn the tragedy and martyrs of Karbala
<i>Majzub(s)</i>	A Qalandar who remains in the constant state of ecstasy and divine love
<i>Malamatis</i>	They are the practitioners of Malamatiya Sufi order formed in ninth century. Malamatiya means the way of blame. They focus on highlighting the negative personal aspects out in the public to constantly remind themselves of not to be proud of their positive personal aspects.
<i>Malangs</i>	Mendicants
<i>Malka-e-Kauhsar</i>	Queen of the hills
<i>Mannat</i>	Divine intercession
<i>Marro</i>	Wild flowery shrub
<i>Martaba</i>	Spiritual rank
<i>Masjid-e-Aqsa</i>	It is located in Jerusalem. It served as the first Qibla for the Muslims, hence the third most sacred place among Muslims

<i>Masjid-e-Nabawi</i>	Mosque adjacent to Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) resting place in Medina
<i>Mast</i>	Being in the state of spiritual ecstasy
<i>Mehfil-e-milad</i>	A poetry program to praise Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
<i>Mehfil-e-qawali</i>	Devotional Sufi music program
<i>Mehndi</i>	It is an aromatic dark green paste of dried leaves of <i>henna</i> plant used as a red dye to apply on hands, hair and feet. It is also a wedding ceremony in which <i>mehndi</i> is applied on the hands of the bride and the groom which marks the start of the wedding.
<i>Mehram</i>	Unmarriageable kin in Islam
<i>Mela</i>	Fair/Festival
<i>Molvi</i>	Muslim cleric
<i>Mujawar</i>	Care taker of the shrine
<i>Murid</i>	Spiritual disciple
<i>Muriden</i>	Spiritual disciples
<i>Murshid</i>	Spiritual guide/teacher
<i>Na'at khawan</i>	One who presents na'at
<i>Na'at</i>	Poetry to praise Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
<i>Nad-e-Ali</i>	A dua of Hazrat Ali (R.A.) with miraculous power
<i>Nafali prayer</i>	A formal, but non-obligatory Islamic prayer. The one who offers it gets the reward by Allah, but there is no punishment for those who do not offer it
<i>Nafs</i>	Carnal self
<i>Nakh</i>	Pears
<i>Namaz</i>	Obligatory Islamic prayer

<i>Namazi dress</i>	A dress which fulfills the prerequisite to offer prayer such as it must be clean of any impurity and covers the satar. Satar is Islamic way of dressing up with modesty by covering the body and wearing loose clothes which do not expose the details of the human figure
<i>Namehram</i>	Marriageable kin
<i>Nazar</i>	coming into the sight/attention
<i>Nazarana</i>	Gift out of respect
<i>Nisbat</i>	Association
<i>Niyat</i>	Intention
<i>Niyaz boo</i>	Basil
<i>Pahari</i>	A dialect of Pothohari and Hindko languages
<i>Pahari podina</i>	White mint
<i>Paludar</i>	Abies smithiana
<i>Panjtan Pak</i>	The holy five - Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his (PBUH) family i-e- daughter Hazrat Fatima (R.A.), son in law Hazrat Ali (R.A.) and grandsons Hazrat Imam Hasan (R.A.) and Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.)
<i>Parda-nasheeni</i>	Secret
<i>Parshad</i>	Blessed food
<i>Patwari</i>	A government official who maintains the record of revenue and land in rural areas of Pakistan
<i>Pir(s)</i>	Spiritual master
<i>Piri-muridi</i>	Spiritual master and disciple relationship
<i>Pothohari</i>	A dialect of Punjabi spoken by inhabitants of Pothohar plateau
<i>Punjabi</i>	Indo-Aryan language native to the inhabitants of Punjab region in Pakistan and India

<i>Qalandar(s)</i>	Category of ascetics who remain naked, practice self torture and have furious nature
<i>Qawal(s)</i>	The one who presents qawali
<i>Qawali</i>	Devotional Sufi songs
<i>Qayoom-e-Doran</i>	The present qayoom (the everlasting one)
<i>Qibla</i>	Direction to face while performing prayers
<i>Quls</i>	The last four chapters of Holy Quran
<i>Raza</i>	Consent/contentment
<i>Rehmat</i>	Blessing
<i>Rehmat-al-alamieen</i>	Blessing for all the universes
<i>Rijal-ul-ghaib</i>	Invisible men who carryout spiritual tasks assigned by Allah
<i>Sabaz Posh</i>	The one who only wears green cloths
<i>Sadqa</i>	Alms
<i>Sadqat</i>	Alms
<i>Sae</i>	Running back and forth from the Mount Safa to the Mount Marwa seven times during Hajj and Ummrah
<i>Saif-al-Maluk</i>	Poetry by Sufi mystic Mian Muhammad Bakhs (R.A.) from Khari Shareef, Azad Kashmir
<i>Sajjadanashin(s)</i>	Hereditary administrator/successor
<i>Salam</i>	Literally means greeting others, but metaphorically taken as offering dua and paying regards to a dead usually saint
<i>Sang-e-marmar</i>	Marble
<i>Sardai</i>	A traditional sweet drink made with milk, poppy seeds and almonds
<i>Sarkar</i>	A higher authority
Sayh Sarafuddin bin Yahya Maneri	A 14th century Sufi saint from Bihar, died in 1381



<i>Shalwar Qameez</i>	National Pakistani dress
<i>Shariy'ah</i>	Islamic moral code and religious law
<i>Shehtoot</i>	Mulberry
Sheikh Abdul Qadir Gillani	Eleventh century Persian saint buried in Baghdad, Iraq
Sheikh Rukn al-Din Ala al-Dawla Simnani	A 14th century Chishti saint, died in 1336
<i>Shia Kalima</i>	Confession of Only God, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as last messenger and Hazrat Ali (R.A.) as the first Imam
<i>Shia</i>	One of the interpretative school of thought which follows the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Ahl-e-Bait
<i>Silsila</i>	Sufi order
<i>Sindhi</i>	Indo-Aryan language spoken in Sindh region of Pakistan
<i>Sitara-e-Basalat</i>	Star of good conduct, an award for good conduct for the servicemen of Pakistani armed forces
<i>Sufi</i>	Muslim mystic
<i>Sufism</i>	Mystical dimension of Islam
<i>Sunnah</i>	The acts of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
<i>Sunni</i>	One of the interpretative school of thought in Islam which follows the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
<i>Surah-e-Tawba</i>	Ninth chapter of the Quran. Tawba means repentance
<i>Surah-e-Yaseen</i>	36th chapter of Holy Quran, considered as the heart of Quran and particularly recited at the death ceremonies
<i>Syed</i>	A biological descendent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
<i>Tabaruk</i>	Anything with holy attributes attached to it
<i>Taqwa</i>	Piety

<i>Tar Phaki</i>	Wild parsley
<i>Tawakkul</i>	Reliance on Allah
<i>Tehsil(s)</i>	Administrative sub division
<i>Tilla</i>	Golden tread used for embroidery
<i>Timbar</i>	A herb with minty smell
Tragedy of Karbala.....	Martyrdom of Hazart Imam Hussain (R.A.) in Karbala
<i>Tuwajah</i>	Spiritual Concentration
<i>Ummah</i>	Transnational Muslim community
<i>Ummrah(s)</i>	Islamic minor pilgrimage
<i>Urs</i>	Death anniversary of a Sufi saint
<i>Vaile</i>	Showering money as alms on dancers, musicians and eunuchs
<i>Wali(s)</i>	Friend of Allah - usually a saint
<i>Wasila</i>	Mediation
<i>Wazu</i>	Ablution
<i>Wazu Khana</i>	Place for ablution
<i>Ya Ali</i>	My Ali (R.A.); slogan raised to seek his help
<i>Ya Hayy</i>	The name of Allah which means Ever Living One
<i>Ya Hussain</i>	My Hussain (R.A.); slogan raised to seek his help
<i>Ya Qayoom</i>	The name of Allah which means The Self-Existing One
<i>Zakat</i>	Islamic process of mandatory taxation
<i>Zambil</i>	Bowl to collect alms money
<i>Zanjeer Zani</i>	Flagellation to commemorate the sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.) in Battle of Karbala
<i>Zikhr</i>	Remembrance of Allah

Ziyarat.....It literally means to see somebody especially someone or something sacred. It is also used to refer to a shrine of a Muslim holy personality. Metaphorically it is also taken as a pilgrimage to the shrine.