

# Shrines Shaping the Cities

## Lahore: A Case Study

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Exhibiting the architectural remains of various ruling dynasties, Lahore is an old city with a known history of more than one thousand years. Historians have explored its dynamics mostly keeping in view the ruling authorities and their contributions in the form of grand edifices. The vibrant role of Sufis and their hospices in the expansion of the city from within its walls to its immediate surroundings and their impact on the suburbs of the Walled City has not been taken into account in the architectural, urban, anthropological, sociological and historical studies.

This paper explores the city at two levels, first, the urban fabric and its expansion during various ruling dynasties and second, the rituals and ceremonies performed throughout the year on the premises of Sufi abodes. Cities have acquired their identities with reference to the presence of shrines of prominent Sufis. The shrine complex, a component of an urban settlement and a place for performance of rituals and ceremonies throughout the year, seen as an integrated phenomenon, is the focus of this paper. It is believed that in the case of a shrine, the physical environment cannot be separated from its socio-religious ambience.

The Sufis who mostly migrated from Central Asia, interacted with the Indian natives holding a variety of beliefs, first adapted the local culture, habits of living and social norms, language and literature, and finally transformed their belief in accordance with their own Islamic ideology. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Lahore earned a reputation as a popular center of Sufism and its teachings, belonging

to the *Qadiri* order. This order believed in the ideology of *Wahdat al-Wajud*<sup>1</sup> and largely influenced the populace of Lahore at multiple levels.

The second part of this study, brings to light the rituals, ceremonies and other celebrations relating to the Sufis and their cults that effectively attract the devotees towards them. This socio-religious and cultural environment is an outcome of the spiritual and physical auras of the shrines.

Although Multan is popularly known as “The City of the Saints”, Lahore has also preserved in its soil hundreds of Sufi souls who entered the sub-continent even before Hadrat Baha al-Haq Zakaria (d.1267 A.D.), Hadrat Shah Shams Sabzwari (d. 1276 A.D.) and others who settled in Multan and in its environs in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Lahore was a gateway to the people coming from Central Asia, including *Sūfis* and *Sultāns*, who came to trade with, convert or conquer the people and territory of the Indian sub-continent. Hadrat ‘Alī Hujwīrī came to Lahore in compliance with the direction of his *murshid*, in the mid years the of eleventh century.<sup>2</sup> It was the age of transition of almost a hundred years between the fading *Chaznavīd* power and the formation of the strong Delhi Sultanate.<sup>3</sup> Before coming to Lahore, Hujwīrī had a vast exposure to life, scholarship, erudition, and political happenings in the cities of Central Asia.<sup>4</sup>

The Sufi tombs inside the Walled City of Lahore are not ubiquitous,<sup>5</sup> as dozens of Sufis settled outside the wall in its immediate surroundings.<sup>6</sup> Sufis preferred to live away from the populace and

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- 1 The doctrine of *Wahdat al-Wujud* meaning “the unity of being or existence” asserts that everything that exists can only exist because it is an aspect of Divine Reality, hence an aspect of Divine Unity itself.
  - 2 The exact date of arrival of Hadrat ‘Alī Hujwīrī is unknown. Researchers are mostly agreed that he arrived somewhere in the mid years of the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.
  - 3 Nizami, Khaliq A., (1987) *Historical Role of Three Auliya of South Asia*, University of Karachi, Karachi Pakistan.
  - 4 Hujwīrī, before coming to Lahore visited *Khurāsān*, *Maverānnahār*, *Merū*, *Adherbājān* etc.
  - 5 These mainly include Hazrat Shah Raza Qadiri, Pir Sherazi, Syed Ishaq Gazrooni, Saed Soaf, Syed Sar Buland, Pir Zaki, Saed Mithha, etc.
  - 6 Hadrat Bibi Pak Damana, Hadrat Miran Hussain Zanjani, Hadrat Pir Aziz-ud Din Makki (d.1215) Syed Mūsā Āhangar (d.1519) Syed Jhūlan Shāh Ghorey Shāh Bukhārī (d.1594) Dadrat Meerān Mauj Daryā Bukhārī (d.1604) Syed ‘Abd al-Razzāq Makkī Neelā Gunbad (d.1638) Sayyid Shāh Jamāl (d.1639) Shaykh Jān Muhammad (d.1671) Shaykh Muhammad Isma’eel Miyān Waddā (d.1674) Hadrat Shāh Abū al-Mu’ālī (d.1615) Shaykh Tāhir Bandagī (d.1630) Hadrat Miyān Meer Qādirī (d.1635) Syed Shah Muhammad Ghawth (d.1635) Hadrat Shāh Jamāl Qādirī (d.1639), Khwājah Khāwind Hadrat Eshān (d.1642), Hadrat Shah Kamal Qadiri, Khwājah Behārī (d.1655) Syed ‘Abd al-Razzāq Shāh Chirāgh (d.1658) Hadrat Shāh ‘Ināyat Qādirī (d.1728), Syed ‘Abd al-Qādir Shāh Gadā (d.1741), Hadrat Shah ‘Ali Rangrez, Hadrat Shah Gadā, Hadrat Shah Hussain and many more.

dense residential areas and after death were buried in their *hujrahs* (small room). With the expansion of the city these shrines, being located in the urban and suburban areas, have become an essential part of today's Lahore.

The Sufi abodes in the immediate surroundings of the Walled City can be declared the earlier settlements that ultimately set the direction of the city's future growth that is, towards South-East and South-West. There were open agricultural lands and trees around the city where Sufis preferred to live and were finally buried. Later these open agricultural lands attached with the shrines were converted into gardens and public places. The footprints of the paths giving access from the Walled City to its surrounding areas where Sufis lived can be traced out by studying the layout of today's road network with contextual reference to these Sufi shrines.

## Sufis and their Shrines

During the early Sultanate period (11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries), the shrines were simple burial places of the Sufis and no annual celebrations were conducted by the devotees. Multan was the capital during the Sultanate period. With the introduction of the Sufi orders in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the construction of massive and grand shrines for the Sufis of the Suhrawardi order began along with the performance of rituals and ceremonies. Hadrat Ala' al Din Mauj Darya for the first time organized and patterned the various ceremonies at the shrine of his grandfather that is, Baba Farid (a Chishty Sufi). This tradition attracted the devotees for participation. These rituals were adopted by the *mutawallis* of other shrines and in this way, the *'urs* days of a Sufi became more attractive and encouraged the devotees to pay regular visits. Next, the Mughal era (starting 1526 A.D.) witnessed a strong tradition of constructing tombs and shrines within the premises of gardens or otherwise gardens were constructed on the land endowed to these burial places.<sup>7</sup> These enormous gardens in the immediate surroundings of the city attached to the shrines remained intact till the commencement of the Sikh period.

During the Sikh period, a spacious garden named as *Bagh-e Zanjaan*<sup>8</sup> was revived on the evidences of previous foundations around

7 Naqoosh Lahore Number (1962) Idara Farogh-e Urdu Lahore. p205

8 *Ibid.* p145

the shrine of Hazrat Meeran Hussain Zanjānī. This garden had been engulfed by residential units and a community graveyard till the shrine was taken over by the Auqaf Department in 1960. Another spacious garden was attached to the shrine of Hazrat Shah Isma'el located at Hall Road. Buildings of the European Cathedral School and the Roman Catholic Church<sup>9</sup> were constructed on the *waqf* land of this shrine in the colonial period.

The British rulers, first through the “Bengal Code 1810” and then “The Religious Endowment Act 1863”, got full control over all the religious and *waqf* properties of the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. This enabled the colonial authorities, firstly to collect the income from these shrines and secondly, placed *waqf* lands at their disposal. With the introduction of a new government, the British required land for the construction of public buildings, hospitals and educational institutions. It was the *waqf* land attached to the shrines, used for performance of rituals and ceremonies, that was made available for constructing institutional buildings. The changes carried out on a large scale re-shaped the immediate surroundings of the Walled City of Lahore.

Mayo Hospital, King Edward Medical College, Women's Hospital, *Sarae* Ratan Chand and many quarters<sup>10</sup> were constructed on the open public land attached to the shrine of Syed Ya'qoob Shah. The remaining land was sold by the *mutawallies*. A piece land measuring 3 *big'ha* (24 kanals) was endowed by Hadrat Abd al-Jalil Chuhar Shah Bandagi in his lifetime to his devotee Shaikh Mūsā Ahangar.<sup>11</sup> It had also been encroached upon by illegal occupants. Towards the South-West of the shrine of Hadrat Miyan Meer, there was a large-sized garden where the shrine of Hadrat Mullah Shah Badakhshi<sup>12</sup> was constructed. After Mughal era (1759 A.D.), when plunderers started robbing, people took shelter inside the walled premises of the shrine of Hadrat Mullah Shah Badakhshi and started living there.<sup>13</sup> This turned the garden into residential quarters.

The Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan gifted one hundred thousand golden *tankas* to Hadrat Khwajah Khawind Mahmood Aeshan who

9 *Ibid.* p147

10

*Ibid.* p165

11

*Ibid.* p187

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Mullah Shah Badakhshi was a murshad of the Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh who was killed by Alamgir in 1659 A.D. by taking verdict from Ulama' regarding the “*Mujma ul-Bahrain*” written by Shikoh.

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Naqoosh Lahore Number (1962) Idara Farogh-e Urdu Lahore. p304

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F. 3  
Sufi shrines across  
Lahore



constructed a mosque, an amazing garden and shrine in his lifetime.<sup>14</sup> Ghulab Singh constructed a cantonment in the place of the garden after dismantling the boundary wall during the Sikh period. Local brick-sellers removed the bricks from the courtyard of the mosque and graves for selling purposes and Ghulab Singh stored ammunition inside the shrine's room.<sup>15</sup> The mosque and shrine still exist but are in a poor condition.

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14 *Ibid.* p320-21  
15 Hindi, Kanhiyya Lal (1894) *Majlis Taraqqi-e Adab Lahore*. p244

On the western side of the shrine of Hadrat Syed Mahmood (d.1640), there was a magnificent garden till the last decade of the Mughal era.<sup>16</sup> A grand mosque and garden were constructed attached to the shrine of Hadrat ‘Abd al-Razzaq Makki.<sup>17</sup> The Garden was later occupied by the Sikhs and the shrine was turned into a warehouse for dumping the ammunition.

The buildings of the Lahore High Court, the Supreme Court Lahore Bench, Shah Chiragh Building, Aiwan-e Auqaf, and Auditor General Office were constructed on the *waqf* land attached to the shrine of Hadrat Shah Chiragh Lahori (d.1658) who settled in Mohalla Langar Makhdome in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Income Tax Complex and other related buildings have been constructed on the premises of the shrine of Hadrat Meeran Mauj Darya Bukhari (d.1604). Governor House has enveloped the grave of Muhammad Qasim Khan that still exists. King Edward Medical College University, Mayo Hospital, Anarkali Bazaar and Neela Gumbad Market are constructed on the premises of land attached to the shrines of Syed Ya’qoob Shah and Syed ‘Abd al-Razzaq Makki (d.1638).

In general, historical studies reflect that gardens, water wells, wrestling arenas, *Saraes*, and older trees were essential components of the Sufi abodes and their shrines. The shrines at Lahore still continue to perform their role in providing space to the people for their socio-religious and cultural activities.

## Rituals and Ceremonies: Ambience of the Shrines

The Dictionary<sup>18</sup> meaning conveys that ‘ambience’ is “*a feeling or mood associated with a particular place, person or thing*”. A Shrine is a building-type that is very rich in its ambience as all the three, that is, “*the place, person and thing*” jointly create an environment that enhances the “*feeling and mood*” associated with the mystical vibes.

A deep analytical study of the content and thought of *Kashf al-Mahjūb* reflects both, the state of mind and the nature of socio-religious institutions of the Muslims during the eleventh century A.D. In his

16 Naqoosh Lahore Number (1962) Idara Farogh-e Urdu Lahore p328

17 *Ibid.* p543

18 <http://www.Merrian-Western.Com/dictionary>

writings, Hujwārī has made no direct reference to the social conditions of the local residents of India. He has deliberated a the religious and mystical concepts of Indian natives. In *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, he has described in detail about the dialogue that he had with the religious scholars of Lahore.

Hujwārī, the Sufi and his treatise *Kashf al-Mahjūb* later on, created an impact on both; *khānqāh*-life and local residents. He laid down the principles of *khānqāh* organization. Hujwārī defined the etiquettes for residents and travelers. He delineated the rules for devotees, regarding eating, sleeping, fasting, companionship, and *Samā'* etc. These principles of *Khānqāh* organization provided guidelines to the mystics for centuries and helped in establishing various *Sūfī* orders. Though he himself did not introduce any *Sūfī silsalah*, he instructed practicing *Sūfīs* on almost every aspect of life. He warned them against eating or drinking in excess.<sup>19</sup> He advised them to avoid visiting the houses of wealthy people or to beg anything from them.<sup>20</sup> He directed, “while walking with a number of people, one should not attempt to go in front of them”.<sup>21</sup> Nizami writes<sup>22</sup> regarding the impact of *Kashf al-Mahjūb* on the Persian speaking people as under;

“*Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, one of the earliest books on mysticism in the Persian language had a direct impact on the Persian speaking people. It elucidated the basic principles of Islamic mysticism in crystal clear language and paved the way for making mysticism a mass movement on Indian Territory”.

Hujwārī writes that *wadū* and prayer are two means for physical and spiritual purification. Man is composed of clay and clay has impurities. The ways and means of *Sūfī'* practices help a person in purifying impurities.

Besides the shrine of Hadrat Ali Hujwiri, there are many other Sufis buried in and around Lahore whose '*urs* ceremonies are celebrated with public participation.<sup>23</sup> Spiritual ambience at these

19 Hujwārī, Hadrat 'Alī;(1938) *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb* Trans. By Reynold A. Nicholson, Luzac & Co. 46-Great Russell Street London p. 347

20 *Ibid.* p. 349

21 *Ibid.*

22 Nizami, Khaliq A., Op.cit., pp. 33-34

23 These include Hadrat Bibi Pak Damana, Hadrat Meeran Hussain Zanjani, Hadrat Miyan Meer, Hadrat Madhu Lal Hussain, Hadrat Shah Jamal Lahori, Hadrat Shah Kamal Lahori, Hadrat Inayat Shah Qadiri, Hadrat Shah Abu al-Mu'ali, Hadrat Shah Chiragh Lahori, Hadrat Turt Murad etc

F. 3

Devotees at a shrine

shrines is created by the practical followings set by the *shari'at*, *hariqat*, rituals, beliefs, ceremonies, and other related activities performed by the devotees. The simplest gesture paying homage to the *Sūfi* starts with *fātihah* and reaches the biggest event of the annual '*urs*. Remembering Allah, that is. *Dhikr-e Jalī* and *dhikr-e khafī* are two common rituals performed by the devotees regularly on the premises of the shrines to experience the ecstasy.



Another common ritual is to drink water from the *chashmah* (fountain) located on the premises or to taste the salt placed towards the southern side of the grave of Hujwiri. Devotees believe that this would protect them from physical and spiritual disorders and discomforts. People are in the habit of visiting these shrines weekly, monthly, and annually to participate in the ceremonies. Devotees visit shrines especially on Thursdays and Fridays to pay homage to their spiritual leaders.

In the early decades of the establishment of shrines, devotees used to visit to say *fātihah* or to request the *Sūfi* to fulfill their wishes. To recite the holy Qur'ān at the grave of a Sufi was another activity. The '*urs* ceremony was very simple, spreading over one day. Later, *gaddī nashīn* and *mutawallis* started organizing numerous rituals and ceremonies to create a dramatic effect at *khanaqahs* to attract and involve of the devotees. Now '*urs* ceremonies are spread over three days formally, and continue for more than ten days informally at the shrines of prominent *Sūfis*. On the first day, the *waqf* administration, government or political authorities inaugurate '*urs* ceremonies by spreading the *chādar* (cloth-sheet) on the grave and inaugurating the free milk distribution (*sabeel*).<sup>24</sup> The Governor or the Chief Minister feels honored in availing the opportunity of inaugurating the '*urs*

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It has become a tradition since a long time that milkmen of Lahore and its suburban areas provide milk for three days, free of charges. Thousands of kilograms of milk is freely distributed to the devotees.

ceremonies.

The second day is reserved for the colloquium, *samā'*, *na'at khawānī* and others. These activities start in the morning and adjourn late night. The second day ceremonies continue to the third day and finally end up with a big *Du'ā* in the closing ceremony. Tens of thousands of people participate in these events.

*Mehfil-e na'at*, *'īed mīlād al-nabī*, *m'irāj sharīf* are the other regular events celebrated on the premises of shrines which have become community centers for socio-religious and cultural activities. Primarily, the devotees are in the habit of visiting the shrines to request the *Sūfi* for help in fulfilling their desires and wants. Visitors are increasing daily. People stay at these shrines round the clock and this socio-religious and cultural environment has continued since centuries. This has transformed the socio-religious ambience of the shrine into one which is Islamicate.<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusion

The shrine is a living thread of the urban fabric of Muslim settlement in the Indian sub-continent. It is not static but dynamic in nature. It is a dynamic culture, ever flourishing, changing, adapting to new versions and extending traditions. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the shrine has accepted the challenging responsibility of exhibiting cultural norms and religious ideology simultaneously in its multilayered ambience. It has successfully performed its role in the expansion of urban ambits of Muslim settlements in past years and now has managed its spatial configuration to take up its new task of bringing together individuals and groups having contradictory ideologies, religious sects, diversified cultures and territorial contexts. Its spatial configuration is elastic and resilient. On occasions, it provides space to perform purely religious ceremonies<sup>26</sup> and simultaneously it offers its premises to hold rituals, ceremonies, annual '*urs* celebrations, and *sama'* which are more cultural and spiritual. People achieve ecstasy through *dhamal* and *qawwali* on the rhythm of the drum and also recite the holy Qur'an and perform their prayers, being a compulsory act, on the same premises but at different time's. It is a continuous source of income for the *waqf* administration with zero investment. It has also become a hub of commercial activity for businessmen because of the regular and ever-increasing visits of devotees. It has also become a permanent security threat for law and order agencies.