

Interventions Vs Authorities at Muslim Shrine

Ghafoor Ghafer Shahzad

Abstract

Shrine is an important component in urban settlement of Muslim society. Muslims show their devotion and association by visiting these religious magnets regularly.¹ Their affiliation and devotedness compel them to manifest their feeling by adding certain buildings in the premises of khanqah, by repairing and painting the shrine or by participating in the ceremonies and rituals. Similarly, administrators of the waqf make interventions in the name of providing the facilities to the zaireen. Sajjada nashin or khalifa of the saint has also keen interest to provide maximum facilities to the zaireen who are assumed as guests of the saint. Some time, rulers add some structures to show their presence in the khanqah. All these activities ultimately damage the spiritual environment and affect the identity of architectural merits of shrines. Authorities try to make certain arrangements to prohibit the devotees to mark their expression. This article deals about administrative, spatial and structural interventions at Muslim shrines.

Introduction

The shrine in an urban and rural settlement of a Muslim society is a great cultural and religious phenomenon that influences the daily activities of the visitors. Before independence (1947), Muslims and Hindus lived together and mutually participated in cultural and social festivals.² Their religious ceremonies created an impact on the living patterns. Devotees develop certain type of attachments with the shrine and its environment

¹ The shrine has been called here a 'religious magnet' because of its quality of pull-force that attracts the *zā'ireen*. Like magnet, this pull-force has its magnetic field that provides a space to get together the like-mind devotees of the *sūfī*.

² Muslims participated in *Holī*, *Dīwalī*, *Dusehrā* etc. and Hindus participated in ceremonies and rituals associated with the sufis saints on eve of their *urs*.

and express their feelings by additions/alterations and repair/renovation works.

Shrine,³ in its simplest form is a burial place, housed in four walls and occasionally roofed with a domical structure. This grave is of a *sufi* or *shaykh* belonging to Islamic mysticism-*tasawwuf*. Devotees firmly believe that after death, the spirit of the *sufi* or *shaykh* lingers around and more effectively fulfils the needs and wills of his followers.

Shrine in an urban settlement is not a static phenomenon. It is dynamic in context of its expansion as well as contraction. Up to the end of the Mughal era, saints and shrines both were equally important for the rulers.⁴ The Mughals paid reverence and respect for living as well as dead saints.⁵

There were only two components in the beginning, one the 'shrine' and other 'a small mosque' that was missing in some cases in the life of the saint but constructed after death of the *shaykh* for need of *zaireen*.⁶ *Chishties* have *jamat khana* that was used for multi-purpose activities related to *khankah*.⁷ Track of visitors was very simple. They use to come straight to shrine for *fati'ha* and to request saint to fulfil their needs. From this visitation, ceremonies and rituals started. Visitation increased in number that ultimately affected the spatial relationship, built environment and administrative set up of the shrine.

According to general opinion of the public, authorities⁸ do not strictly control the interventions, encroachments, additions and

³ According to Encyclopedia (Wikipedia), a shrine (from the Latin *scrinium* meaning box) was originally a container, usually made of precious materials, used specially for a relic and often a 'cult image'. By extension, it has come to mean a holy or sacred place containing the reliquary or tomb dedicated to a particular hero, martyred, saint or similar figure of awe and respect.

⁴ When prince Saleem was born, emperor Akbar visited the shrine bare-footed. He endowed lot of property and money as gesture of thanks to Khwājah Mu'in al-Dīn Chishty of Ajmer.

⁵ The word *Hadrat* meaning 'Present'. The word is also used for the dead *sūfis* as it is believed that *sūfis* never die, they depart.

⁶ At shrines of Bābā Bulleh Shāh and Shāh Hussain, the mosques were constructed later on after their death.

⁷ *Chishties* used the *Jamā'at Khānah* for living, learning, *samā'* (listening of *Sūfi sangeet*), knowledge sharing etc.

⁸ Authorities mean the administrative force, the government, some committee, *gaddi nashin*, *mutawalli*, *shaykh*, court, *diwan* etc.

alterations⁹ at religious monuments like shrines in urban settlements of Muslim communities. On other hand, authorities themselves make interventions in the name of public need and demand.

Three major categories of interventions have been observed at Muslim shrines.

1. Administrative interventions
2. Spatial interventions
3. Structural interventions

Administrative interventions

These interventions are made in administrative format varying from shrine to shrine. Many other factors also influence these interventions. Originally, administrative affairs were very simple, revolving around enshrined personality. After the death of a *shaykh*, when *gaddi nashin* or *mutawalli* took over the charge for administration of *dargah*, situation became more complicated and many other problems appeared.

Mughal emperor Akbar was first who introduced the post of *mutawalli*¹⁰ when he endowed a lot of property to the shrine of Hazrat Mu'in ud Din Chishty of Ajmer. Before, it was only the *gaddi nashin*, who was held responsible for administration and management of ceremonies, rituals and *rasoomat* being performed at shrine at different eves. Actually, *gaddi nashins* were more interested in collection of money and kinds instead of betterment of shrine. *Mutawalli* was caretaker in the true sense who was answerable to the appointing authority and he was supposed to keep a proper record of income and expenditure. The creation of the post of *mutawalli* was the first intervention in administrative set up of *khanqah*. *Mutawalli* was given powers to appoint *naib mutawalli* for help and better management of large shrine complexes. He was authorized to spend money for development works, to pay salaries to *khuddam*, to invest the money for achieving the objective of *waqf*.¹¹

During the Sikh regime, religious monuments came under direct control of ruling authorities. Sikh rulers used the shrines and mosques for residential purpose, for storage of ammunition or horse stable etc. There

⁹ Excluding the grave of the saint, all other components attached to Muslim shrines are considered as interventions. When grave of some pious man is revered by people it becomes shrine.

¹⁰ *Mutawalli* is the caretaker or administrator of shrine. He does not belong to descendants of *shaykh*, where as *gaddi nashin* or *diwan* although care taker of shrine but they belong to family of the *shaykh*.

¹¹ For more detail, see Mahmood ul Hassan Arif '*Islam ka Qanoon-e-Waqf*' (Lahore: Markaz-e-Dil, al Singh Trust Library, 1994).

was no administrative set up for Muslim religious buildings. During these days, *waqf* properties were handled as private personal property of *gaddi nashins*. Condition of management and quality of buildings were adversely effected and became worst.

During the British period, government took the administrative control of religious monuments through board of revenue under Bengal Code 1810. According to which powers were delegated to the board of revenue for administration and looking after the *waqf* properties. The income from these *waqf* properties was spent for projects of public welfare like construction of bridges, *sareis* etc. The board of revenue looked after and took care of *waqf* properties for about half a century.

After 53 years, British government promulgated Religious Endowments Act 1863. According to which board of revenue was directed to hand over such property to trustee, manager or superintendent who were appointed by court. To supervise the trustee, manager and superintendent, a committee was constituted comprising three or more members. During British period, religious monuments of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims were dealt under a single act under same administrative policy. The administration became more complicated after participation of local residents or devotees of saints in committee supervised by court.¹²

To supervise the manager, trustee or superintendent, a committee was constituted comprising three or more persons who were assumed to perform all the duties which were imposed on local agent or board of revenue. The members of this committee were essentially required to profess the same religion of which the property fall. It was also declared that members of committee should have interest to serve and maintain the religious endowment. Government may hold election to ascertain the general wishes of such persons. Every member of committee held his office for lifetime, unless removed for misconduct or unfitness.

Only civil court was eligible to remove such persons from membership of the committee, due to reasons mentioned above. It was described that any vacancy in the committee, shall be filled up through election. Procedure of election was also laid down. If such vacancy was not filled by election within three months, the civil court, on application of any person, may appoint a person to fill up the vacancy.

Civil court was defined as the principal court of original civil jurisdiction in the district in which the mosque, temple or religious establishment was situated. No member of committee was eligible to act

¹² For more detail see Raja Muhammad Arif, *Manual of Waqf Laws in Pakistan* (Lahore: Kausar Brothers, 2002).

as a trustee, manager or superintendent of mosque or other religious establishment for the management.

Immediately on the appointment of the committee, the board of revenue or local agents were directed to transfer all land or other property. The powers for recovery of rent of land etc. were also delegated to the committee. Every trustee, manager and superintendent of a mosque, temple or religious establishment was directed to keep regular account of his receipts and disbursements in respect of endowment and expenses of such religious establishment. The committee was authorized to enquire from every trustee, manager and superintendent the production of such regular account or receipt and disbursement at least once in every year, and every such committee of management shall themselves keep such accounts. Court may decree damages and costs against such trustees, manager, superintendent or member of the committee.

The basic spirit of this committee and appointment or election of trustee, manager or superintendent was to open the opportunities for local residents to participate in the affairs of management of their religious establishments. This gave confidence and involvement of inhabitants for such affairs. This system was further patronized by courts.

Charitable and Religious Trust Act 1920 was promulgated to provide more effectual control over the administration of charitable and religious trust. The Charitable Funds (Regulation of Collection) Act 1953 was approved to regulate administration and accounting of collection of charitable donations and for preventions of frauds.

After 1947, Governor of West Pakistan promulgated The West Pakistan *Waqf* Property Ordinance 1959, in pursuance of presidential proclamation of 7 October 1958 for proper management, administration and maintenance of Muslim shrines in East and West Pakistan. After this ordinance, *mutawallis* and *gaddi nashins* became ineffective and the entire administrative and monetary control was taken over by government. Now chief administrator *auqaf* became *mutawalli* of Muslim shrines under his control. He was given unprecedented powers to take over and assume the control of any Muslim shrine or *waqf* property in his jurisdiction.

According to this ordinance, more comprehensive definition of *waqf* property was introduced for the first time. Accordingly, *waqf* property was further explained as:

1. If a property has been used from the time immemorial for any purpose recognized by Islam as religious, pious and charitable, if

although there is no evidence of dedication such property shall be deemed to be *waqf* property.

2. Property allotted in lieu of or in exchange of *waqf* property left in India shall be deemed to be *waqf* property.
3. Property of any kind acquired with the sale proceeds or in exchange or from the income arising out of *waqf* property or from subscription raised for any purpose recognized by Islam as religious, pious or charitable shall be deemed to be *waqf* property.
4. The income from boxes placed at a shrine and offerings, subscription or articles of any kind, description or use presented to a shrine or to any person at premises of a shrine shall be deemed to be the *waqf* property.
5. Relief of the poor and orphans, education, workshop, medical relief, maintenance of shrine in the advancement of any other object of charitable, religious or pious nature or of a general public utility shall be deemed to be charitable purposes.

According to this ordinance, government appointed chief administrator of *auqaf* to look after and take care of *waqf* properties. It was pre-conditioned for the chief administrator *auqaf* to be a Muslim and possess such qualification as may be prescribed by the government with perpetual succession and an official seal, chief administrator of *auqaf* has the authority to sue and be sued in his corporate name. Subject to general control of the government, he has been authorized to appoint the administrators, deputy administrators and assistant administrators, to maintain the *waqf* properties.

Chief administrator *auqaf* may by notification take over and assume the administration, control, management and maintenance of a *waqf* property.¹³ 'Control' and 'Management' mean control over the performance and management of religious, spiritual, cultural and other services and ceremonies (*rasoomat*) at or in the *waqf* property. After assuming the charge, chief administrator could prepare scheme for the administration and development of *waqf* property. Chief administrator *auqaf* could sell or otherwise dispose of any *waqf* property under defined terms and conditions, to get the maximum benefits or for public interest etc. Chief administrator was required to maintain a complete record of all properties under his control and keep account of income and expenditure of such properties.

¹³ 'Control' and 'Management' mean 'control over the performance' and 'management of religious, spiritual, cultural and other services and ceremonies' (*rasoomāt*) at or in the *waqf* property.

All money received from *waqf* properties under the control of and operated by chief administrator *auqaf*, has to be deposited into the *auqaf* fund. Such account has to be audited at the end of every financial year and audit report should be laid before government. No civil or revenue court or any other authority has jurisdiction to question the legality of any thing done under this ordinance or at the instance of chief administrator.

Section 19, gives the powers to frame rules for the purpose of carrying into affect the provision of this ordinance. Under this section government framed rules for better administration and maintenance of *waqf* properties.¹⁴

Spatial interventions

Spatial organisation helps for appropriate performance of rituals and ceremonies at shrines.¹⁵ Buildings are constructed for these ceremonies to protect the *zairreen* against extreme weather conditions in Punjab. Today, sufis are identified by building forms of their shrines.¹⁶ In other words, these identical shrines are the personification of sufis buried in it.

Spatial interventions are related with re-defining the space usage with the passage of time inside a shrine complex. It deals with change in inter-relationship of spaces reserved for specific activities.¹⁷ In Muslim shrines, grave of the saint is the focal point around which all activities occur. All ceremonies are directly and closely related with the saint and his shrine and are performed with regular intervals.¹⁸

Spatial interventions are as old as the shrine. In most of the cases, *shaykh* is buried in his *hujra* (room) where he spent years of his

¹⁴ Punjab government has prepared rules for service, pension, estate, finance, administration, religious affairs etc. for better management and control of the *waqf* properties and the employees of Auqaf department.

¹⁵ Spaces around the shrine were not planned in beginning. Now government has started preparing master plans for better usage of the space around the shrine and its interaction with the visitors.

¹⁶ Again the idea goes back to the building form (*gunbad-e Khazrā*) of the shrine of Holy Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) that has been related with the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) by the Muslims of all over the Islamic world.

¹⁷ In all the activities daily, weekly or annually, there is a sequence in performing them. This sequence leads inter relationship of space with activities.

¹⁸ Daily activities include opening and closing of shrine, weekly activities included Thursdays and Fridays and annual activities include '*urs*' ceremonies.

life.¹⁹ He is buried in the center and space around the grave is reserved for devotees of the saint who come for *fati'ha* and for thanks giving. Space outside shrine was assumed as private property of *gaddi nashins*. So they constructed their houses and other buildings near shrine. Usage of space was redefined with the introduction of new *rasoomat*, rituals, ceremonies related to *shaykh* and his *urs*. These ceremonies occupy the whole area around the shrine on the eve of annual *urs*.²⁰

During the Mughal era, mosques or *saraies* were constructed for *zairreen* at shrines.²¹ Three mosques were constructed at shrine of Hazrat Mu'in ud Din Chishti by Sultan Mahmood Khilji (1455), Akbar (1571) and Shah Jahan (1658). Spaces for *langer* distribution, *chilla*, prayer, recitation of holy *Quran*, *sama'a*, *shifa khana*, *hauz* for ablution, entrance gates etc. were defined first and then some structure was constructed to perform activity in proper manner. Allocation of these spaces permitted structural interventions later.

After the burial of the saint peoples start visiting his grave that ultimately establish his shrine. In earlier years, space is defined and reserved for saying the prayer that is finally constructed as a mosque. This is the first intervention normally held at shrines. The mosque is used specifically for the *sharī'at* purpose like prayer. In beginning, mosque was used only as a space for saying the prayer. Later on, it established as a community centre.²² During last few years, the weekly or monthly ceremonies and celebrations like *khatm sharīf*, *Mīlad al-Nabī* etc. have been started holding in the *aiwān* of mosque. This has provided more opportunity for the public to celebrate and participate in the ceremonies.

Sikhs used mosques for residential purpose, storage of magazines, stables for horses etc. Ranjit Singh used top balcony of

¹⁹ The idea to be buried in *hujrah* came from the Holy Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) who was buried in the room located in *masjid-e Nabavi*.

²⁰ In case of bigger shrines, the whole city is influenced by the activities related to the *sufi*, on the eve of annual '*urs*. For example during the *urs* of Haḍrat 'Ali Hujwīrī at Lahore or Baba Farid at Pakpatten.

²¹ Three mosques were constructed at shrine of Hadrat Mu'in al-Din Chishtī by Sultān Mahmood Khiljī (1455 A.D.), Akbar (1571 A.D.) and Shāh Jahān (1658 A.D.).

²² In the life of Holy Prophet Mohammad, *Masjid-e Nabavi* was used for meeting of delegate, education, lodging of guests etc.

minaret of Masjid Wazir Khan for having good time with his beloved.²³ Sikhs did not create any worth mentioning changes in building structure of shrines.

During British period, mosques were used for accommodation of British government officers like deputy commissioners, assistants etc. until their bungalows were constructed.²⁴ British government allocated the open *waqf* land available around the shrines for construction of governmental, educational and public buildings.²⁵ This changed the layout of approach roads to Muslim shrines as well as their urban setting.

After independence, Punjab government acquired land from neighbouring residents to expand the shrine areas like Shrine Complex of Hazrat Ali Hujveri Lahore²⁶ and that of Hazrat Baba Farid Pakpattan.

Structural interventions

While visiting the Islamic world, one cannot ignore the presence of shrines or burial places of Muslim saints in urban and rural areas. Robert Hillenbrand²⁷ has compared these shrines with monumental statues built in memory of the dead of western world. Another misconception is that Muslims built shrines because they did not erect statues like other non-Muslims to remember their heroes. Actually, these shrines of Muslim saints are deep rooted in religious and social life of Muslims of Iran and Indo-Pak.

Structural interventions are the physical phenomenon. These are re-constructions, additions and alterations in built environment of religious monuments. Architects are more concerned with these interventions. These are witness of changing scenario of built environment in historical perspective.²⁸ Authorities decide to construct

²³ See Kanhiyyā Lal Hindi, '*Tārīkh-e Lahore*' (Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab Lahore 1884) and '*Naqoosh Lahore Number*' Lahore, Idāra Farogh-e-Urdu, 1962.

²⁴ Deputy Commissioners used Mosque Shāh Chirāgh and Mosque Dāi Angah at Lahore for residence. See Kanhiyya Lal Hindi.

²⁵ Lahore High Court, A.G. Office, Aiwān-e Auqāf, State Bank Old Building etc. were constructed in *waqf* land of shrine Hadrat Shāh Chirāgh Lahori.

²⁶ In 1960, the area attached with shrine of Hadrat 'Alī Hujwīrī was slightly more than 6 *kanāls* but now it has become more than 58 *kanāls*.

²⁷ Robert Hillenbrand, '*Islamic Architecture - Form Function and Meaning*' The American University in Cairo Press 1999, p.253.

²⁸ These building components reflect the building materials and construction techniques of their time. So shrines having the heritage value has becomes an open museum for the architects and planners.

building components to fulfil the needs of devotees.²⁹ These can affect the spatial interventions.

While taking the shrine as a nucleus, built environment of *khanqah* in urban settlement of Muslim community can be categorized at three levels:

First level of surrounding includes shrine itself, comprising the grave of the *sufi* and four walls, some time domed at top. The second important feature is the *ghulam gardesh* or a veranda around the shrine for *zaireen* for sitting, reciting holy *Quran* or listening *sama'a* etc.

Second level of surrounding includes all the buildings and other physical components out side the shrine of the saint but inside the periphery of complex. For example, *jamia* mosque, *sama'a* hall, *musafer khana*, *langer khana*, entrances with shoe keeping areas facility, library, dispensary, public amenities, police *chowky* etc. Courtyard is another component of shrine complex. In the earlier period, this space was common for male and female visitors but now a segregated space is reserved for female visitors in frequently visited shrines.

Third level of surrounding includes the components related to shrine outside the periphery but closer to the shrine complex. These components are privately owned and do not fall in *waqf* property land. For example, private parking areas, private commercial units, passages or walkways, neighbourhood etc.

Structural interventions are the most visible and noticeable phenomenon at Muslim shrines. In beginning, a small mosque was constructed towards the western side of the shrine.³⁰ Chishties constructed *jamā*, at *khānahs* for multipurpose usage. Suhrawardi constructed large size and massive shrines to enclose more space for burial of their family members. At *gaddī nashīn* level, money were received but never spent on development works as required by the general public.

Mughal added mosques, *naqqar khana*, *tausha khanas*, entrance gates, *musafer khanas*, *shifa khanas* and the shrine of the *shaykh* itself was re-constructed. These structural interventions divided the space in zones and specified for particular ceremonies. During the Sikh regime, these religious monuments were defaced to collect the marble for their

²⁹ President of Pakistan decided in 1979 to construct the shrine complex of Hadrat 'Alī Hujwīrī at Lahore. Prime Minister of Pakistan approved the architectural design of new mosque at shrine of Bābā Farīd at Pākpaten and also provided rupees 120.00 million for its construction in 1996-97

³⁰ For Pakistan, as *Qiblah* direction is towards western side that is the main reason of constructing the mosque towards the western side of the shrines.

own religious and residential buildings. During the British period, premises of shrines were restricted to the room where *shaykh* was buried and attached land was utilized for construction of public, governmental and educational buildings. Road and railway track also divided the areas.³¹ These structural interventions some time totally hide the view of shrines and changed the whole impact of urban settlement.

Conclusion

During the last half of twentieth century, many new components have been introduced in shrine complex.³² These include parking areas, shops, landscape, air conditioning units, research institutions, *jamia* mosque, multi-levels, shoe keeping areas, zoning for ladies and gents, flood lighting, special lighting etc.

Construction of big *jamia* mosque at shrines of Hazrat Ali Hujveri, Baba Bulleh Shah and Baba Farid have changed the over all culture of *dargah*. Now it is more Islamized. Religio-culture atmosphere of shrines is transformed into purely religious. This has damaged the universality of shrines. This is an out come of spatial, administrative and structural interventions at Muslim shrines.

³¹ Railway track divided the land of Hadrat Miyān Meer and Hadrat Khwājah Bihārī in Lahore.

³² For further information, visitation of shrines of Hadrat ‘Alī Hujverī Lahore, Bābā Bulleh Shāh Qasūr and Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Pakpattan are strongly recommended.

