

Social, Economic, and Psychological Problems of the People Visiting Shrines

(A case study of Data Darbar, Shah Jamal and Mian Mir in Lahore)

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Abstract

Shrines are the places where usually people go for peace and tranquility. However, sometimes it is perceived that people have certain social, economic, psychological problems for visiting shrines and make these places a shelter for saving themselves from the outer world. This paper is a case study of Data Darbar, Shah Jamal and Mian Mir shrines in Lahore. It is purely an empirical research.

Key Words: Shrines, Tranquility, Social, Economic, Psychological,

Introduction

The shrines are the places where people used to go for satisfying their aspirations that may pertain to their social, economical and psychological aspects of life. When I started work on the assigned topic, I found it highly difficult to garner the facts. I never visited shrines after the age of twelve or more, before that I remember my mother used to visit the shrine of Hazrat Ali Hajveri (RA) popularly known as Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh along with me. She might have certain aspirations as I took least interest in her wishes but used to eat and drink with relish whatever she gave me during her visit to the shrine. So in this perspective I became a little bit interested in working on this project. I took my movie camera and went to Data Darbar (popularly known as the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh RA) and interviewed with people belonging to different walks of life. It became highly interesting for me that I did not know about such facts that were directly disclosed upon me from the visitors visiting the shrine.

I often pass nearby Data Darbar and always saw a crowd of people in and out side the shrine. The celebrations of the annual anniversary (Urs) of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh really create a serious problem for the residents of the adjacent vicinity. I always ponder at the occasion of the Urs of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh about the behaviour of the people visiting the shrine who do create problems for others by beating drums and shawl donning processions. As Data Darbar is situated at the Ravi Road that is a main link road to the other highways, sometimes serious patients coming from remote areas face serious threats to their lives owing to the traffic jam on the occasion of annual Urs of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh. Therefore, this aspect made me more active to know about the factors that led most of the people to visit shrines. I visited shrines of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh, Hazrat Shah Jamal and Hazrat Mian Mir.

Categories of the people visiting shrines

During course of my research I came to know that real factors that led people to visit these shrines have never been studied ever before. Yet, I am unaware about the reality due to my limitations, in view of such discrepancy; this research may be an addition or commencement of information about the problems of people visiting shrines of Lahore.

The recorded interviews of various people coming to shrines revealed upon me a different aspect of human psyche and social milieu. The people coming to shrines may be categorized as:

- 1) People who belong to labour class and are unable to hire any hotel or room and obliged to stay in Lahore for earning their livelihood.
- 2) People, who come from far-flung areas of the country and have devotion to Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh, called devotees.

- 3) People who are indulged in crimes and has made shrines basis of crimes. These crimes include debauchery, prostitution, homosexuality, drug addiction and pickpocketing, etc.
- 4) People who are interested in making careers in 'Pirism'. (Pir is a chief exponent of resolving the problems of the people and who believe in such ism is called Pirism).
- 5) People, who have some quarrels at home, come to shrines for taking relief.
- 6) People who have no source of bread and butter eat 'lunger' (food served at shrines by the devotees).
- 7) People who are waiting for their buses and want to kill their crimes come to shrines without any devotion or attachment.
- 8) People, who come to Lahore for studies or hearing of any case in courts for any other purpose and have heard about the beauty or blessings of shrines so they want to cherish themselves, visit shrines.
- 9) People, who consider that their businesses flourish owing to the shrines, visit there.
- 10) People, who are abnormal and have been disowned by their parents or guardians also used to stay at shrines.

Cases that studied during research

The video interviews include encounters of the above-mentioned categories of the people.

Case 1

A view is shared by two young chaps belong to Mardan, explained that they come to Lahore on their business trip and just for observing the pomp and shows of darbar hazrat data ganj bakhsh, have visited the shrine.

Case 2

An other opinion is that two elder persons, sitting at Data Darbar waiting for their buses that are supposed to be set out for Multan at night round about 1'o' clock.

Case 3

A person who is in the right side of his 30s, having four or five people around himself is solving their social, economic, and psychological problems. The Pir Sahib named as Kamran Aziz, belong to Jhang, going to adopt Pirism as his career, sitting at Data Darbar and making his disciples (mureeds). Sharing his views, he tells us about his stay at Data Darbar as a devotee and used to solve the social, psychological and economic problems of the people with the blessing of God.¹

Case 4

Another view proves a bolt from the blue, in which a person tells about the crimes. His statements are proving shrines as bases for crimes. According to him, some people visiting Data Darbar are criminals. Such criminals used to hire girls for prostitution from here. (A close up of a woman and two young girls in the videotape proves the statement).² He also explains about homosexual addicts along with drug-addicted people. According to him people take boys of teenage and use them for their sexual purposes.³

Case 5

Another individual of mid twenties, who serves at the gate of shrines and keeps the shoes of the people in their custody until they come back after visiting the shrine. He also rectifies the criminal activities in the shrine. Along with him a person with beard in the left side of his twenties also tells about the infamous activities inside the Data Ganj Bakhsh shrine but reluctant to tell about the hot spots in the shrine.⁴

Case 6

At Shah Jamal, Imam of shrine and other people say that criminals are not used to visit the shrine, the shrine is closed at round about 1 'o' clock at night. Nobody is supposed to sleep or live inside the shrine premises. So this is the basic factor that people visiting Shah Jamal do not indulge in criminal activities.⁵

¹ Interview recorded in the videotape.

² Recorded in the videotape.

³ Interview recorded.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Interview by Imam & an employee of Auqaf Department at shah Jamal shrine.

Case 7

At Mian Mir shrine, a person in his late thirties tells about the reality that many people come to shrine owing to their sinful acts and try to say prayers for the exoneration of their acts.⁶

Case 8

A family entertaining the Data Darbar and I asked male member, may I record an interview of you all. He said, no and told that we belong to Sant Nagar, Lahore and used to visit Data Darbar in view of our ancestral training. Some views have also been shared at the Mian Mir and the Shah Jamal shrines by various families.⁷

On another day, I went again to visit the shrines along with my spouse since in the last visit I could not interview women visiting shrines. This time we remain successful and got the views of women.

Case 9

A woman at Data Darbar shares her views about visiting the shrine with us and says she is a spouse of an MPA (Pakistan Muslim League-N) an ousted government. According to her, she is coming from America today and comes here for saying ISHA prayers. She has been visiting Data Darbar for the last twenty years with devotion but knows nothing about the teachings and preaching of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh. She has not any social, economic and psychological problem but it is her firm belief that the people as if Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh are very close to Allah and can recommend our aspirations to Allah for approval.⁸

Case 10

Another woman at Shah Jamal's shrine, shares approximately same views about her devotion towards Hazrat Shah Jamal. She tells that once her cousin suffers in a serious set back and came out of that set back owing to keeping her fingers crossed for her during visit at the shrine. Now she is praying for her own social problem, reluctant to explain. She is accompanying her spouse. Woman is a law graduate and her spouse is an M.Phil student of Fine Arts in the University of The Punjab.⁹

Case 11

At the shrine of Hazrat Mian Mir, another person explains the same views that visiting shrines gives earlier acceptance to his prayers and consolation to his social problems that lead to economic and psychological ones.¹⁰

At Data Ganj Bakhsh's shrine, a devotee is burning 'Agarbatties' says that he met with Data Ganj Bakhsh and talked to him.¹¹ In the same way, a person at Mian Mir's shrine says that he saw the vision in which all saints met in a rendezvous. These people are salt on the earth and discuss with each other the problems of people.¹²

Another person who is in his late thirties talks about his visit at Data Sahab, says that he gains whatever, is thanks to Data Sahab. He was accompanying with two women and taking cup of tea looking very pleased, whereabouts of who were not known but looking ungracious. Their gestures were making them suspicious, vagabond and brazen faced.¹³

Another person, burning, 'Agarbatties and diyas' in a big vase filled with clay, explains that he is burning such things in view of conventional gestures. His all economic and social problems are being solved by Data Sahab that's why he visits Data Sahab. Moreover, he has got two rickshaws (an automobile containing three wheels used for carrying people) and now he has bought another one owing to the blessings of Data Sahab. He has firm belief over the devotion towards Data Sahab but he knows nothing about the teachings of Data Ganj Bakhsh.¹⁴

⁶ Interview by Mian Mir shrine.

⁷ Unrecorded interviews of the families coming to shrines.

⁸ Interview with the woman at Data Darbar.

⁹ Interview with the couple at Shah Jamal's Shrine.

¹⁰ Interview with the person at the Shrine of Hazrat Mian Mir

¹¹ Interview with the devotee at the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh.

¹² Interview with the devotee at the shrine of Hazrat Mian Mir.

¹³ Interview with the person at Data Sahab.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Two boys in their early 20s, say that they visit Mian Mir for getting more profit in their business and they share approximately same opinions as mentioned above.¹⁵

Another person at Mian Mir also used to visit to visit the shrine in the context of business uplift, as he runs a hotel.¹⁶

At Shah Jamal, a young chap in his 20s accompanied by his mother is of view that Baba Shah Jamal can solve all problems of people.¹⁷

Another person belongs to Khushab is doing massage of Diya's oil on his face and has a firm belief that this oil cures many inflammations on the body. Many other people are also following suit.¹⁸The same practice can also be seen at other shrines.

An abnormal person starts kissing stones at the shrine of Hazrat Mian Mir and considers his act for curing all pains of the body.¹⁹

In the same way an abnormal child can also be identified at the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh sitting along with other people, smiling and laughing without any reason. The child is disowned by his parents.²⁰Such an example was not found at the shrine of Hazrat Shah Jamal.

Some children in their teen age are used to runaway from their homes with money. A young boy of well nigh 17 years old runs away from his home with Rs. 1500/- and stays at Data Darbar. At the same spot, another young chap of the same age comes from Kasur after fighting with his neighbor and breaks the arm of his opponent during the duel. He says, he damn cares for his relations, if they are being worried by the police, as his relations are not real; he has a stepmother and a stepbrother. His own young sister, mother and father have died²¹. Therefore, such types of persons or children are not found at the shrines of Hazrat Mian Mir and Shah Jamal, as both these shrines are closed at night and nobody is allowed inside the premises of shrines.²²

Another important factor is location of the shrine. Data Darbar is located in the center of the city, at Ravi road near Bhatti Gate where most of the bus stands are found. So people get on and get off near Bhatti Gate and stay at Darbar. Another factor that also favours people to visit Data Darbar frequently is 'Langar'. Free food is served among the people by the devotees throughout the day.

The large covered area of Data Darbar also attracts the labour class to stay at Data Darbar, even security guards are used to say people go out of Data Darbar but nobody listens to them.²³

As far as Mian Mir's shrine is concerned, it is located in Mian Mir's colony, which was known as Hashim Pur in Mughal era.²⁴

This shrine has not much covered area and no 'Langar' is served to eat among visitors.

Only some sweets are given away among people coming to shrine. At the last night, almost everyone except an employee of Auqaaf Department is supposed to go back to their shelters. Same is the case with the shrine of Shah Jamal as it happened at Mian Mir. Both the shrines are located in peripheral areas of Lahore.

¹⁵ Interview with two young chaps of Ghazi Abad at Mian Mir's shrine.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Interview with the young chap at Ichra (Lahore) at Shah Jamal's shrine.

¹⁸ Interview with the person at Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh Shrine.

¹⁹ Action shown in the videotape recorded at the shrine of Hazrat Mian Mir.

²⁰ As shown in the videotape recorded at the shrine of Data Ganj Bakhsh.

²¹ Interview at Data Sahab.

²² Interview at Shah Jamal.

²³ Shown in the videotape.

²⁴ Abbasi, M. N. (1988). Hazrat Mian Mir Qadri: Hayat-o-Taleemat, Lahore: Evergreen Press, Chamberlain Road, Lahore, 10.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The human nature is based upon oscillation. It never goes into status quo, remains always dynamic. The human being has been proved very much materialistic always engages in searching ways of getting more and more for himself and his relations without considering any consequences. Dastoyesky writes in his theory of value satisfaction that people are used to go after their aspiration, therefore, human being never becomes satisfied, he used to aspire more and more. The contentment of human being varies from person to person. Some become satisfied after getting few things but other demand more so this waver human nature seldom becomes satisfied on the value of certain things.²⁵

In our society, most of the people are usually suppressed under certain social and economic pressures that may create certain psychological cases. All social, economic and psychological problems of the people are interconnected with each other. Sometimes social problem seems to be pervaded and sometimes economic and psychological problems oblige the people to find out some ways of catharses of their problems. A few of the people are used to perform prostration at the shrines that is totally unfair and seems irrational. Owing to their illiteracy or lack of knowledge, they consider that problems lying in the shrines are the real liberators of their problems. They have shut their eyes from the facts and do not want to listen any logical and sane view of adoration. They do not even know the teachings and preaching of the saints whose shrines they are visiting. Data Darbar has become unfortunately an umbrella for the criminals to hide their nefarious activities under the cover of religion. The shrines of Hazrat Shah Jamal and Mian Mir, such activities are found scarcely.

Here are some suggestions for making further research and recommendations to check infamous activities that may restore the sanctity of shrines.

1. One should try to find out hot spots of nefarious activities at Data Darbar that could assist authorities to eliminate them.
2. One should try to find out why people visit shrines mostly on Thursday?
3. The local administration should try to check the uncontrolled mob at the Urses (anniversaries) of saints for the elimination of traffic jam.
4. Strict security measures and pragmatic laws should be implemented for attaining positive results.

At the end one thing administration must try to implement that all religious festivals and processions should be observed within the premises of their places of worship. It will end the demise of innocent security personnel. No security should be provided any religious sect for performing their religious rituals. No sect, or community should be allowed to come out from their premises and their premises would be protected by the followers themselves. This will minimize the religious rituals that have become a tradition for observance in the whole year of any sect in Pakistan. There is no country in the world except Pakistan where religious processions are protected by the security personnel for the whole year and sacrifice their lives for no reason.

²⁵ Cantril, H. (1961). *Human Nature and Political System*, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 10-11.
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