CHAPTER 2ND
SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF THE SHRINES:

Muslim shrines have played a significant and far-reaching role in spreading Islam and propagating the teachings of Quran in every nook and corner of the Valley. Shrines became the promising institutions in imparting spiritual as well as temporal instructions. Apart from their educational importance, the shrines made an impact on the socio-cultural fabric of people throughout the Valley. The socio-cultural role of the shrine has been so profound that a true and real picture of the society cannot emerge unless it is viewed in the background of the shrines and their contribution. However, with the passage of time, the impact has been misconstrued and misrepresented owing to the illiteracy of the masses which ultimately led the people to perform such activities and functions as, to a considerable extent, deflected the shrines from their enjoined course of action. The position was confounded by the blind self-interest of the custodians (mujavirs) of the shrines. The custodians are much honoured and respected by people of all sections particularly by rural masses even today, though they do not deserve what they ask for.

Kashmir has an age-old and long-standing history of shrines. Abul Fazl talked about some one hundred and thirteen old but important Hindu shrines. Besides, there were seven hundred places

where stone-cut images of snakes were being worshipped. In fact Kashmir has from time immemorial been the abode of gods and goddesses, renowned mystics, lamas, sadhus, Pandits, Rishis, Piras and faqirs. Together they constituted the dominant force in society.

Faith in Shrines:

The Kashmiri Muslims professed divine faith in shrines. The credulous masses associated godly powers with the saints entombed in them. Even those people, who, for one reason or the other, did not venture to visit these did not challenge the sanctity of the shrines. Obviously, very few people could escape the divine influence of the saints and their ziarats. It was usually felt that the key to godly favour lay in the shrines. Time and again, the seeker and the suppliant came to the shrine and tried to propitiate the saint to gain his favour and thereby secure the fulfilment of a cherished desire. The tremendous and unbounded faith made the people love and respect the shrines more than their lives. They were ready to sacrifice anything dearest to them for the sake of pir and the shrine. If the people

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In historical times we first come across sages and savants of the highest order who lived here soon after the advent of Buddhism. The Culture of Kashmir, p. 31.

in Kashmir had nothing to eat, they would always donate one thing or the other to the shrine even if they had to sell some house-hold article.  

Islam was propagated in Arabian peninsula by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) It was a dynamic movement, and it spread far and wide in Asia, South East Asia, China, Central Asia, Africa and reached as far as Spanish Granada. On its march in different directions, Islam absorbed fresh stock of people into its fold. With the passage of time the real and simple teachings of Islam got diluted by contact with different philosophies prevalent in such countries as were conquered by the Muslims. Muslims came to Iran and they borrowed many things from Zorastrianism. They came to India and picked up many practices from Hinduism and vedanta. Books of Greek philosophy were translated by Mamun-ur-Rashid and the Greek philosophy became a part of Islam. Thus, Islam in course of time, lost its original simplicity and dynamism. The Muslims imitated others. In India the idol worship was rampant, Islam was totally against it, but in India Islam, through its native converts, carried over the spirit of worship of objects other than God.


Thus, paradoxically the people, in course of time, came to worship Prophets, saints and shrines, though they were only to be revered and respected. The shrines and ziarats became the citadels of Muslim faith. This gave birth to polytheism (shirk) and infidelity (kufr). The Muslims following such a course had no inhibition in regarding saints and Sufis as objects of deification. Such people mostly neo-converts, as they were, carried over with them certain practices and attitudes which were un-Islamic in strictest sense of the term. In Kashmir, the transformation was quite peaceful. Islam made its way into Kashmir not by forcible conquest but by persuasion and through a gradual process of conversion, the ground for which had been prepared by the foreign adventurers from south as well as Central Asia. In this process, the people of Kashmir, after their conversion to Islam, accepted the tradition of Islam as they received it with its institutions which had been formed in the course of its march across Iran and parts of Central Asia. One of the institutions that Islam had come to have was the shrine with its concomitants. Such institutions were readily accepted by the neo-converts in the conquered lands. Kashmir before the advent of Islam, had been the abode of Buddhism and Brahmanism. However, when the people of the Valley embraced Islam, inspite of becoming Muslims, they could not abandon their old beliefs and practices. The fact that

the new converts were allowed to recite the aurad-i-fathiya in a loud voice proves the point. Numerous ziarats enshrining a relic or a tomb or hospices which had been already there continued to exist and exercise great influence on the minds of men during our period of study. Consequently, the spread of Islam did not create a socio-cultural structure bereft of old customs and traditions. The faith in shrines was rampant during the period under review. The Kashmiris were of opinion that the dead saints were more powerful and effective than those alive. That is why the faith in shrines developed among the people.

The dead saint was considered to be nearer in presence to God and according to a principle widely accepted by adherents of the primitive religions the dead saint was supposed to be more fully charged with supernatural powers and influence than what he had been during his life-time. After his death, the saint was believed to become more potent in whom the divine was more intimately at home and more readily active. Naturally many more people resorted to him, and much greater pains were taken to gain access to him and to do him honour.

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1. See Infra, p. 340
2. Men assume towards him the same worshipful attitude as they have towards God, and freely think of him as one who can secure to them all the blessings for which men usually invoke God. James Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 7, p. 60
The people of Kashmir both Hindus and Muslims had profound reverence for the shrines, which were the resting places of saints. "The dead, besides being infinitely more numerous than the living, are infinitely more powerful. They reign over the vast domain of the unconscious, that invisible domain which exerts its sway over all the manifestations of the intelligence and of character. A people is guided far more by its dead than by its living members. It is by its dead, and by its dead alone, that a race is founded. Century after century our departed ancestors have fashioned our ideas and sentiments and in consequence all the motives of our conduct. The generations that have passed away do not bequeath us their physical constitution merely; they also bequeath us their thoughts. The dead are the only undisputed masters of the living."\(^1\)

The more eminent the ancestors are, the greater is their influence on the lives of the people. With the passage of time eminent men particularly the saints and mystics came to acquire a greater sanctity. They (saints) tend to rise in the estimation of the people, especially among the more credulous who come to adore them. Among these divines were Rishis and saints like Shaikh-ul-Aalam and Lal Ded. They might have been criticised by

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certain people in their own times, but right now they are the house-hold names in Kashmir whose memory is cherished with deep reverence and love. The Rishis and pirs acquired unbounded fame and popularity. They exercised tremendous influence over the Kashmiris by dint of their piety, austerity and selflessness. They took delightful interest in propagating unity and brotherhood. It is because of their virtues and qualities that they are still respected by Hindus and Muslims alike. As a token of love, respect and devotion to the Rishis the people constructed ziarats over their graves, enshrined their relics and preserved the places. They fixed their gaze on the shrine where the saint had spent his life of asceticism. Even the intellectuals do not hesitate to bow before the gates of dargah while passing through it. They bow their heads and with joined palms pointing towards the right direction of the shrine. They silently recite verses and then proceed to their day's work. It must be pointed out here that the Kashmiris believe in wasalat (intercession) through the shrines

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1. The Rishis particularly Shaikh Nur-ud-Din, founder of Rishi movement in Kashmir was greatly criticised by Mullahs. The reason was that the Mullahs had become parasites in the society. The Shaikh launched an anti-Mullah tirade in order to reform them. But the Mullahs reacted sharply and criticised him.

2. The people of Kashmir generally believed that a visit to the shrine will secure them their spiritual and material object. Therefore, early in the morning, we find, even now-a-days, people from all walks of life praying for their material welfare or economic gains during the day. The advocates, politicians, smugglers and research scholars all Hindus and Muslims pay equal respect to the shrine. The Geography of Jammu and Kashmir, p. 179.
which is not what Islam preaches. According to G. M. D. Sufi such a practice is detrimental to the progress and promotion of the society from the religious viewpoint. He says further, "This habit of the wasila is, I am afraid, responsible for the habit of sifarish in life, so rampant throughout the Valley. This saps self-reliance. The seeker of sifarish is more anxious to seek the wasila than to work hard to improve his prospects." Thus all the veneration in the Kashmiri character comes out as the Muslims approach a shrine. Alam Khundmiri, once remarked that the Kashmiris were more seen in shrines than in mosques. That is why the shrine worship which was common during our period of study led Lawrence to declare the Muslims of Kashmir as Pir-parast (saint-worshippers) and astan-parast (worshippers of shrines) and the attribute is appropriate.

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1. The great Hazrat Umar Second Caliph approached Hazrat Abbas, the Prophet's uncle for praying at the time of a famine, but did not turn to the grave of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) of Islam for aid and intercession. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) has emphatically prayed to God not to let his grave be worshipped as an idol. Imam Ibn Taimiya says that it is only our good deeds that are the means of our intercession. And this is a great lesson in self-reliance and self-respect without which no people can rise in the world. Kashmir, Vol. II, p. 687.


3. Geography of Jammu and Kashmir, p. 171. The remark was made by the eminent scholar in one of his lectures which he delivered at the University of Kashmir as the Visiting Professor.

Muslims have retained the characteristic custom of *pir-parast* from the traditions of the past when they were Hindus. The Muslims never really gave up the old Hindu religion of the country. It is due to this fact that Lawrence labelled the Muslims of Kashmir as Hindus at heart.²

During the sultanate period the number of shrines within the Valley was perhaps small. With the passage of time the number of shrines registered a marked increase. The shrines which have been erected in the memory of Rishis and saints are living testimonies of the fact. There is hardly any locality which does not have a shrine. Even the hilly and elevated areas in the Valley have each a shrine dedicated to one Rishi or the other.² The 1971 Census enumerated one hundred and thirty four important Muslim shrines in the villages of the Valley which numbered 2940 in 1971. The considerable increase in the number of shrines speaks of the faith and attachment of the Kashmiri Muslim towards shrines. The faith of people in *astans* (shrines) can be measured in the context of the large masses of people who flock to them. It is curious and interesting to see devotees raising their hands collectively before a shrine in the hope of receiving the boon.

1. Ibid.

² The Rishis remained immersed in deep meditation, maintained celibacy, and refrained from taking fish or mutton. They chose areas for their residence which were distant and far away from the hue and cry of people in order to achieve spiritual enlightenment. That is why most of the shrines of the Rishis are located in the hills and on mountain-slopes.
and bliss. The people in Kashmir would never do anything against a pir particularly those who were connected with the shrine. Muhammad-Din-Fauq says that in 1930 Mir Sayyid Maqbool Shah and his other friends Pir Hassan-ud-Din of Poonch, Zabardast Khan and he himself by chance proceeded to Verinag from Srinagar. No sooner did we reach the garden of Verinag than the greater crowd of devotees gathered round Mir Maqbool to show their faith. The main thing that attracted the people to kiss his hands and to rub their eyes with the hands of Mir Maqbool was that he was mutwali of the ziarat of Khanyar.

The people performed religious exercise called dhikr in the shrines. This method includes the reading of Quran and reciting the prayers which the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) used to recite. The devotees sing hymns mostly in Persian, in the same way as the darvesh dances his head. The mind is thrown into a whirlwind and the dancer falls into a religious ecstasy. This exercise was mostly performed in the shrines out of faith and for invoking the saints. One thing common among the Kashmiri Muslims was the

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2. It is commemoration. In its asma-e-sifat, the names and attributes of God, are recited which is a help to the mystic in his spiritual progress. Shughl is the practising of dhikr. Shughl-i-Wafi is the dhikr of La-ilah, denial of everything other than God and Shughl-i-Ithbat is the dhikr of Illahlah, the affirmation of God.
conviction that saints would come to their rescue on the
day of resurrection. The mystic poets of our period, out of
love and devotion, believed that any one, who visited the three
important Rishi shrines situated at Charar-i-Sharif\(^1\), Bumzoo\(^2\),
and Aishmuqam\(^3\) in one day by journeying on foot, would be saved
from the fire of hell.\(^4\) This indicates the amount of hope and
faith of Kashmiris in the shrines.

The failure of Jamat-i-Islami to secure a good number
of seats in the Legislature at general elections since 1947 is
largely attributed to the general indifference of this party
towards the shrines.\(^5\) The Ahl-i-Hadith too could not gain satisfac­
tory ground in the Valley during our period simply because
of the faith of masses in pir\(^5\)s and shrines. As is very well known
the Ahl-i-Hadith reject totally the belief and faith in the
shrines and relics. Inevitably the Ahl-i-Hadith could not carry
conviction with the masses in Kashmir.

1. See supra, p. 25 & 26
2. Baba Bam-ud-Din lies buried at Bumzoo in a shrine where
he used to pray to God during his lifetime. He was a faith­
ful khalifa and disciple of Shaikh Bur-ud-Din. Tarikh-i­
3. See supra, p. 29 & 33
4. The mystic Kashmiri poet says out of love and faith:

5. To ensure the chances of their victory at the polls the
Jamat leaders and the candidates reverted to Khanqah-i-
Mualla, the shrine of Shah-i-Hamadan and took the pledge
there.
Generally speaking, the Kashmiris would sacrifice even their lives for the sake of shrines. The general resentment of the Muslims of Kashmir towards the followers of Ahl-i-Hadith led to the banishment and exile of some of their leaders. They were coldly received and grievously hurt throughout the Valley. The faith of Kashmiris in shrines is so unshakable, that they would not accept anything that runs counter to it. Viewed in this background, it is not difficult to follow why Ahl-i-Hadith could not make much headway in the Valley. The people of Kashmir entered the premises of a shrine with a sense of mortification. They would hardly start business without calling at the shrine of a saint deceased and buried in the shrine. The young girls would pray to shrines for smart and handsome partners and married women would supplicate for the boon of a beautiful son. The people tied cords or strings at the shrines for the fulfilment of their cherished objectives. The tying of cords had become so symbolic that it has gone into the Kashmiri literature as an admitted belief and an established fact. For instance Maqbool Shah Kralvari, the author of the work Gulrez, says:

1. See Infra, p. 166
"I made a thorough search of gardens to find you, and when I could not, I went to the shrines of Ishiq (love) to tie the cords so that my ambitions are fulfilled."

The faith in shrines was so much ingrained among the common masses that even the bridegroom would not rise above the age-old custom of going to pay respects to some neighbouring shrine before leaving for bride's house. This practice of visiting shrines for paying salam and offering fateh still continues. A bridegroom of the Fak pargana, would, along with his friends, visit the Hazratbal shrine besides going to a local shrine. This practice satisfied them and then they started for bride's house. The bridegroom was followed by a group of womenfolk who recited wanwun in praise of the deceased saint to whose shrine the party proceeded. The practice continues to flourish even today. The group song of the women included the praises of the shrine in the following way:

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1. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 269.
"Out of the joy of your marriage feast,
Oh, brothers be good to me.
The way is long and the shrine is far,
Where my weary feet would be.\(^1\)

In fact, the verses of *wanwun* (folk song) sung in the memory of saints and shrines are remembered by an overwhelming majority of womenfolk. Today such praises exist in a modified form. At the time of cutting hair of the bridegroom the women recited as follows:

"Dastgir Sahib blessed you and it is now the occasion to have your hair dressed fashionably."

"I have full faith in Shah-i-Hamadan, who would protect the bridegroom."

"Bow to the religion preached by Holy Prophet, The giver of purity and auspiciousness to our hearts."

"Pir-i-Piran Hazrat Gousul Azam will protect your tender body who is your custodian.\(^2\)"

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2. These verses have been obtained from an old lady. These, she said, were sung when bridegroom proceeded towards the shrine. The contents embodying the verses lay bare the fact that women too were aware of the importance of the great saints like Pir-i-dastgir, Shah-i-Hamadan and others in propagating the mission in the Valley and, therefore, people's faith in them. That is why we see more women instead of men at the shrines, though they are prohibited to do any such thing.
Not only this, the child at the age of four or five years was circumcised (khutna). This was an occasion of great rejoicing. But before the circumcision of the child, the guests, relatives and neighbours went off to the neighbouring shrine with the boy and returned to the house for feast. He was and is commonly known as Sunnat Maharaz. All this clearly indicates that the shrines were part and parcel of the daily life of the people during the period under survey. The shrines played a vital role in the life of Muslims of Kashmir and had a tremendous socio-cultural impact. The shrines have, in course of time, become powerful force in the Valley because of their wide geographical distribution.

1. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 27.
Faith in Relics:

There are four different forms of worship found in Hindu religion. Sir John Wood Roffee writes that the realization of the individual soul and universal self is the ultimate object of worship. Constant meditation upon the devata (deity) in the heart is the lower and middle-most. Recitation of hymns is still lower and the lowest of all is the external worship. With our faith either in shrines or belief in pirs emerge other objects of worship, we call relics. These relics are an integral part of the shrines. There was conversion of a sizeable section of indigenous population to Islam in the 14th century in Kashmir. The neo-converts who had been used to worship of relics carried over the external worship in its various forms as a part of their heritage. The faith in relics of these neo-Muslims remained intact even after their conversion.

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1. In external worship, there is worship of an image, a diagram or a relic as it has close relationship with the enlightened person who is being worshipped. Sir John Wood Roffee, *An Introduction to Tantra Sāstra*, p. 74.
Relic is a symbol with men of saintly character, who have done some karamat (miracle) and who by working wonders have influenced and motivated the religio—spiritual and philosophical outlook of a large section of human race. Relic is either a part or whole of khirqa (clothes), dastar (turban) aasai-sharif (cane), pae-mubarak (foot-print), aalem (tent-pole) moe-mubarak (hair). In most primitive societies of the world, we find that the relics were not only revered and respected but adored and worshipped. This practice still continues in many parts of the world.

In India the faith in and worship of relics attained its prominence after the death of Lord Buddha. Lord Buddha himself during his lifetime had not even remotely suggested the preservation or enshrinement of a relic, to say nothing of its worship. Nonetheless after the demise of Lord Buddha, the Mahayan Buddhism, a splinter group of the mainstream came to adore the Buddha and his various relics. With the passage of time, many stupas Caityas were raised where the relics of Lord Buddha and other prominent preachers of Buddhism were enshrined for the believers and devotees to adore.

Kashmir, the dwelling place of Hindus and Buddhists became a centre of worship of the Buddha and his relics. The archaeological survey followed by the excavations at Harwan, Ushkur, and Ahan have revealed the existence of Buddhist relics.

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There is another place in the Buddhagham present Budgam area where a huge stone and some relics exist today. Thus the origin of relics in Kashmir goes back ancient times.

The local centre of the saints influence after his death is his tomb. From that shrine, the neighbouring community of which he is the patron spirit extension of benefit evolves. But the virtue of the Wali may be carried to any distance by his relic. Though many great saints and Walis who never visited Kashmir, cultivated good name and fame among the Kashmiri Muslims. The saints like Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani, a world renowned saint had never come to Kashmir. His relic was brought to Kashmir and was enshrined at Khanyar. The people of all walks visited the shrine and invoked his name even today. The relics that have been closely associated with the saintly people are supposed to be under his care and to share in the blessing of his efficacious influence.

The enshrining of relics and their adoration is not permitted by the injunctions of Quran and Hadith. But many Muslims have borrowed these practices from other religions particularly of those people under whose influence and domination

2. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 292.
had remained before they embraced Islam. It was not only difficult but will nigh impossible for them to forsake all the age-old traditions. For example, a few places in India, Pakistan and Turkey possess relics of holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.).

After the spread of Islam in the Valley, many relics were introduced in the name of great Sufi saints and were enshrined at different places. Pir Hasan Shah Khuihami in his remarkable contribution *Tariqht-i-Hasan*, Volume III mentions some fifty eight sacred relics available in the Valley. There are many other relics like *pae-mubarak* (foot print) at petipora Pulwama which has not been mentioned in the *Tariqht*. The Kashmiris have developed faith in relics. The fairs and festivals held annually at various shrines are the occasions when such relics are displayed.

The Kashmiris faith in relics can be observed from the fact that on such an occasion as the relic of a non-local saint arrived in Kashmir, the natives flocked in thousands to receive the relic with honour and faith. According to the author of

Tarih-i-Hasan, while exhibiting the relic (moe-mubarak) of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) for the first time in Srinagar at the shrine of Naqshband Sahib, the crowd was so large that many people were trampled to death in the stampede\(^1\). The relic enshrined at Hazratbal is an object commanding tremendous reverence of the people of Kashmir. They can sacrifice anything dearest for the sake of Hazratbal shrine. In 1963, when moe-mugaddas (hair relic) of Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was found missing from the shrine of Hazratbal, the information spread far and wide like wild fire. It caused widespread anger and panic among the people. Lakhs of demonstrators with black flags appeared en masse into the streets and open spaces of Srinagar. Inspite of rigours of biting cold and frost there was no let up in the march of anguished demonstrators. The people throughout the Valley got annoyed and frustrated and forgot two time meals.\(^2\)

According to Tarih-i-Kabir, the holy relic (hair) of Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani was and still is revered and venerated by the people of Kashmir. He further adds that on the way to the...

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\(^1\) Tarih-i-Hasan, Vol. III, p. 481, Lawrence, op. cit., p. 293.

\(^2\) Khulasat-ul-Tawarikh, p. 307.

Four other shrines in Srinagar boast that they possess a hair of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) --- These shrines are located at Kalashpora, Anderwara, Soura and Dangarpura. There is a belief that the hair shown at the shrine of village Khirm Sirhama in pargana Dachinpora is genuine. There are other relics like footprint of Prophet (p.b.u.h.) at different places. For example the footprint at Fatehpura (Islamabad) and Petipora (Pulwama) are exhibited to the devotees on Urs occasions.

However, the relic was restored which even Pandit Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India said with a sigh of relief to B. N. Mullik who informed the former of its recovery. "God bless you", Goecgraphy of Jammu & Kashmir, p. 178.
shrine, the people showered thousands of rupees on the relic so that many poor people who had gathered around could enrich themselves by collecting the money. Besides this, the two holy relics which were in the possession of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani were obtained by two prominent Kashmiris namely Ladi Magrey and Malik Devi Ganai who brought them to the Valley after passing through many trials and tribulation. These were later enshrined at Khangah-i-Mualla. The faith in relics grew so much that it ultimately led to their worship in Kashmir. During the period of our study when any kind of natural calamity occurred, the Muslims having faith in these relics carried the holy relics particularly tent-pole of Khangah-i-Mualla in a procession to Chrar-i-Sharif.

It is said that during the time of Maharaja Hari Singh, the Maharaja arranged for khatm-khwani under the supervision of Hasan Shah Banday (mutwali of the ziarat of dargah) for the birth of a son. The participants in the khatm-khwani were served with

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3. This information was supplied to me by Muhammad Amin Farooqi (Naib Imam of Hazratbal shrine) in an interview.
4. In Khatm-khwani Quranic verses and darud are recited. However, the gathering which consisted of traditional pirs to observe khatm-sharif recited the litanies for invoking the help of saint or saints. Thus we have khatm-i-sharif of many Sufi saints like Shaikh Hamza Makhdoom, Shaikh Nur-ud-Din, Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani and other saints. In Maulud-i-Sharif, the praises of Prophet (p.b.u.h.) are recited.
wazwan (feasts) and were paid one to two rupees each. The people of pargana Dachinpora and Khowurpora during the time of natural calamities carried the tent-pole of Baba Zain-ud-Din of Aishmugam in a procession to Naginbal, where two rakats of naufil were offered to ward off the calamity. "In 1823 A.D., Moorcraft observed that ziarat of Shakh-ud-Din had a brass headed pike said to have been in walking staff, his Quran and his chaplet of heads of clay from Karbala and were shown to the faithful who kiss them with pious zeal."

There is a stone at Shopian which has reportedly the impression of foot of Shah-i-Hamadan and for that reason it has been venerated by the Kashmiris. The Kashmiris considered their visit to shrines particularly on Urs occasions incomplete without having a deedar of the relic of the saint which is exhibited before the mob. The prevalence of faith in relics in the Valley led Lawrence to assert, "I have rarely been in any village which cannot show some relics of antiquity."

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1. This information was supplied to me by Muhammad Amin Farooqi.

2. It is said that the place was considered sacred. It was there that the saint Baba Zain-ud-Din guarded his asai-sharif in the ground and water came out. Presently the whole Aishmugam is supplied water from that nag. There is also a mosque.

3. D. C. Sharma, op. cit., p. 84.

4. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 286.
Fairs and Festivals

The faith of the Kashmiris in saints, sadats, walis. Shrines and relics was matched by the zeal with which they were seen to perform various fairs and festivals celebrated annually in memory of the saints and sadats. On such occasions as these the devoted followers of the saints flocked to their shrines illuminated. The tombs and ziarats and set for night long prayer and penance. Contrary to the teachings of Islam the people believed that the practice of pir parasti (worship of saints) and mazar parasti (worship of the tombs) would bring them their cherished object. The practice is still in vogue.

The history of celebrating the festivals with proper rites and ceremonies goes back to primitive time. But the birth and development of Islam in Arabian peninsula put an end to all the festive ceremonies—having no meaning other than prodigal spending due to false vanity. However, with the expansion of Islam in various directions the strict injunctions of Islam got diluted with local customs and traditions and the fairs and festivals, challenged and rejected by Islam came to be performed with enthusiasm. The shrines and tombs built in memory of saints and heroes of early Islam became the centres of pilgrimage. About medieval Kashmir, we have little information about festivals and

their celebrations. Therefore, it is not easy to determine the extent to which the local conditions influenced the nature of their celebrations. But during our period of study, the fairs and festivals were celebrated with fervour and zeal. There is no reference to show that any exotic factors, influenced the mode of the festivals in Kashmir. But it is crystal clear that through the infiltration of local Hindu and Buddhist customs and beliefs the native converts to Islam retained the festivals and their celebrations. Kashmiris, with their rich cultural heritage and background have been taking great interest in "celebrating festivals with elaborate and colourful ceremonies". The Kashmiris coming from the same stock had and still have resemblances in social customs and ceremonies, though among themselves they are split into various segments as the followers of different faiths. Their rituals and ceremonies are alike which may differ those observed by people outside Kashmir. There are

1. Dr. Mohd Ashraf, Socio-Economic Conditions During Medieval Period, Unpublished thesis.
3. Ritual is a form of worship reduced to the routine of habit. Man's increasing effort to win happiness and keep off troubles takes the two forms of religion and magic which are not always kept apart even in the higher religions. The history goes back to the Rigveda samhita enjoining the rigid principle of conformity to the order of the sacrificial ritual. V. M. Apte, Vedic Rituals, Vol. 1, p. 234.
many places in Kashmir where Hindu and Muslim live in close proximity and sometimes their festival dates are the same. The fairs and festivals involved almost all the sections of people during our period of study. Different communities like Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs celebrated their holy days and anniversaries in honour of their world renowned gods, gurus, saints, heroes, martyrs and others. The Kashmiri Pandits celebrated many festivals like Shivratri, Navreh (new year's day), Baisakhi, Harnavmi, Jethastami, Dusserah (Vijaydashmi) and Kambri Pacha. The Hindus celebrated all these festivals with interest and zeal and held customary ceremonies on many religious festivals. But the most important among all the festivals was Sheoratri (Herat). This was celebrated with gusto and at a large expense. It commenced from the first day of dark fortnight of Phalgun (February--March). Offerings were made to an incarnation of Shiva, known as Bhairav and he was worshipped on the eve of Shivratri. On the Shivratri the Hindus obliged their married daughters with presents. The Hindu women like Muslim ladies sung the Ruf songs on the eve of festivals. Similarly the Sikhs celebrated their festivals with great hustle and bustle. They celebrated the

2. Daughters also received presents on the Navreh, Harsatam, Vethtruwah, Janam Ashtami, Khich Mawas, Shushar, Sankrat, Lawrence, op. cit., p. 266.
3. Ibid.,
anniversaries of ten gurus (religious chiefs). The anniversary of Guru Har Gobind whose Dharmsala stands near Hari Parbat at the entrance gate of Kathidarwaza, was celebrated with great ceremony. But among all the religious festivals, the anniversary of Guru Nanak was celebrated with great eclat and enthusiasm.

The frequency of festivals and fairs among the Muslims of Kashmir had a great socio-cultural dimension. Though Islamic injunctions did not permit the celebration of such festivals, except two great occasions of Iddas namely Idd-ul-Fitr and Idd-ul-Zuha. Muslims irrespective of social status celebrated these two festivals with great rejoicing and merrymaking. The people exchanged good wishes and Idd-mubarak on the occasion. Its celebration was so common that even the saints, in spite of their seclusion came out of it on Idd days. The visitors were entertained with delicious feasts. The regular feature of 'Idd' was

1. Ibid., p. 301.

2. The most celebrated and popular festival was Idd which marked the end of the month of Ramzan (fast-keeping month) Idd, means happiness. The philosophy behind its celebration is to share the happiness among the poor neighbours and poor relatives. So as to bring them out from the distress and destitution and make them equally happy and joyous. This festival was celebrated with great fervour during our period.

3. Falling on the tenth of Zilhaj, the twelfth month of the Muslim calender, it has always been an important festival held in commemoration of Prophet Ibrahim offering his second son Ismail as sacrifice. Ismail miraculously escaped the atonemat through a Dumba (a kind of sheep with thick tail). N. P. Srivastava, Society ad Culture in Medieval India, p. 111.
distribution of presents known as 'Iddis. The Iddas were performed and celebrated with passionate zeal and the people visited the neighbouring shrines on these occasions. Melas (fairs) were held at shrines on the eve of Idd. New dresses were put on. The Milad-un-Nabi another important festival was celebrated with great fervour. The people recited daruds and thronged the shrines particularly those that possess the relics of the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) The Hazratbal shrine was flocked by all communities in great number. However, it should be borne in mind that Prophet Muhammad's (p.b.u.h.) birth-day was celebrated for the first time in the 7th century Hijra. Another important festival was the celebration of Muharram (Yaumi Aashora). The Shias on the occasion took out the processions to Immambaras and performed Majalis (congregational mourning sessions).

1. The practice of celebrating 'Iddas as melas at shrines was a common feature during our period of study. In village Litter pargana Shahoora, a great fair was held at the shrine of Seiyid Ahmad Qureshi on the occasion of 'Idd! The 'Idd' fairs are held with great eclat even today.

2. Muslim, Safar, 1360, A.H., p. 4.

3. It was on Aashora that 10th of Muharrum that Immam-i-Hussain along with his seventy two companions fought bravely from morning till afternoon against the forces of Yazid. It was on the same day that Immam-i-Hussain was himself martyred.

4. When any one of Immam Hussain's companions was slayed he would go to the Khimahgah lodged in the plains of Karbala in order to condole the bereaved relatives of the martyr. Tents of the Khimahgah resembled the shape of an Immambara. Immambara is thus considered to be a place where people would assemble and pay tribute to Immam-Hussain for his martyrdom and condole one another for the deep feelings over happenings of Karbala.
on the happening of Karbala. There was and still continues
to be four stages of mersia:

1. Hamud, praises to the unity of God;
2. Nath, narration of Usrah of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.);
3. Madha, praises of Seerah of household of Prophet (p.b.u.h.);
and;
4. Dardh, narration of happenings in Kerbala and tyranny of
Yazid on Imam and his householders.

The mourners beat their breasts and sometimes it caused
them injuries. This represented a state where the sentiments of
mourners were shaken and they beat their breasts according to the
rythm of the dard, a part of the mersia. One important charac­
teristic of the procession was the taking out of a horse at
lead, which resembled the Zuljanah² of Imam Hussain. The people
also recited the praises of the horse on tenth of Muharram.

Feasts were arranged for the recitors of elegies. The
Sunnis did not take out processions on the occasion but they
distributed cooked rice (Tahar)³.

2. The 10th day celebrations of Muharram were accompanied
with horse, resembling that of Zuljinah, name of the horse
of Imam-Hussain. The Zuljinah was brave and well trained
and very faithful to his master. The weeping wounds did
not tire him upto the last that is when its master was
martyred, he stood bravely and repeated the same act of his
master that is to go to the Khimagah after the martyrdom of
anyone of the partymen of the champion, Imam Hussain. Now
that Imam Hussain was himself martyred, the masters horse
went towards Khimagah. The scene is repeated in the
procession of Zuljinah on tenth of Muharram.
3. The practice of distribution of Tahar among the children
was the very common feature of the Sunis of Srinagar.
M.I. Khan, op. cit., p. 102. The villagers prepared
dudwaqra (rice cooked in milk) on the tenth of Muharram
and the children took it by using one traml for four heads.
This practice is common even today.
Besides, these, many other shabs namely, Shab-i-Barat, Shab-i-Qadr and Shab-i-Mehra1 are celebrated by the Muslims. During the entire course of above said nights the Muslims of Kashmir including women folk visited the shrines and remained wide awake for the whole night and recited the daruds and other wazifas. The people visited the shrines with many solicitations.2

Apart from the celebration of international festivals, Kashmiris celebrated many other festivals with local hue and colour. These were the most important festive occasions. These included the celebrations of the anniversaries of the deceased saints. People of different age groups participated in them. As already stated there was hardly any locality devoid of a relic or tomb of a saint i.e. shrine. The anniversaries and other celebrations at shrines led Lawrence to assert that annual fairs held at various shrines were red letter days in the dull and monotonous lives of Kashmiris.3

Kashmiris, traditionally conservative and fatalist believed that non-celebration of the festivals at shrines would bring them curse and cause trouble and difficulty to the locality around the shrine. They celebrated the anniversaries according to the traditional interpretations of their ancestors, though it 1. M. I. Khan, op. cit., p. 102. 2. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 289. 3. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 289.
was irrelevant to the teachings of Islam. At certain places the people took pure vegetarian meal during festivals of many saints. Thus the residents of Aishmuqam did not eat meat during the death anniversary of the saint. This had not become obligatory on the Muslims only, the Hindus of the locality followed the rule. In pargana Dachinipora and Khowrpora, most of the population do not even today eat meat on the anniversaries of saints. Similarly, Hazrat Shaikh Daud, a disciple of Shaikh Hanza enshrined at Batmalloo was one more example on whose anniversaries the eating of meat was completely prohibited and even the guests were served vegetarian food. They considered the breach of this custom a sin which resulted in calamities particularly fire.

Similarly, one more disciple of Hazrat Makhdum known as Baba Herdi Rishi or Hyder Rishi popularly known as Rishimol spent his whole life in celibacy. "It is believed that anyone who visits his shrine having taken mutton, fish or other stimulants invariably meets some sort of tragedy. The orthodox believers do not take any of these things for about a week's time when festival is in progress". The foregoing discussion shows the spirit and piety that regulate the festivals at shrines. The taking of vegetables only during the festive occasions by people living in different localities testified the fact of strict adhesion to the age-old tradition and customs. This custom of

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refraining from eating mutton had been criticised by many contemporary scholars like Shaikh Ahmad Trali. He criticised it by putting forth extract from Quran, Hadith and other scholars.

The Kashmiris looked forward to fairs and festivals as impatiently as one looks forward to the fourteenth moon of the lunar fortnight fourteenth moon. They gathered together in a huge crowd and "spent the day eating and buying articles, such as pretty kangris (fire-pots) wooden patterns, glass bangles, necklaces and painted clay toys. Cobbler's were hard at work repairing shoes, sweetmeat sellers had a roaring trade". The women folk used to sit on the left side of the shrine in thousands. They were busy in "eating sweets, talking and sucking their infants". The Muslims of Kashmir celebrated many more festivals with great enthusiasm. They were the birth and death days of the saints and these were quite large in number. On these occasions feasts were prepared and thrown in every family. The residents of the locality invited their friends and relatives on festive occasions and the latter reciprocated in turn. A short funny story on the tip of every tongue in Kashmir says that some non-

1. Shaikh Ahmad Trali, Risala Dher Gosh Khurdn Hazrat Rishi, R&P NO: 1056.
2. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 289.
3. Ibid.,
Kashmiri married a Kashmiri woman and being fed up with huge expenditure on meat and other articles during innumerable Muslim festivals of the above nature, he left his wife and went to his own land. When contacted by letters he replied, "I will return only when the festivals there end." This shows the lavish expenditure of Kashmiris on festivals.

Almost all the shrines in Kashmir were the homes of melas. Atleast once a year a festival was held on the death anniversary of the saint. These shrines were visited by people in the immediate neighbourhood and even by travellers from far off places. It seems befitting and has been rightly stated by James Hastings, "Local centre of the saints influence after his death is his tomb. From that centre a tutelary benefit extends over the neighbouring community, of which he is patron the patron spirit". It is very difficult to give a detailed account of all the festive ceremonies at all the shrines separately in a comprehensive form and, therefore, attempt has been made to examine the very important of these.

There were and still are some important shrines of well-known saints who had tremendous impact upon the socio-cultural life of every Kashmiri during our period. These shrines were thronged by people in congregation both from Kashmir and outside round the year, particularly on festive occasions. They left a

1. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 68
deep imprint on the lives of people. Their Urs celebrations attracted the people from far and near. Among these festivals of Muslims of Kashmir must be mentioned Urs-i-Hazratbal, Urs-i-Makhdooom Sahib, Urs-i-Shah-i-Hamadan, Urs-i-Pir dastgir, Urs-i-Naqshband Sahib, Urs-i-Shaiikh-ul-Alam, Urs-i-Zain-ud-din, and Urs-i-Payam-ud-Din etc.

The people of Kashmir visited the shrines mostly during the Urs (festival) of the deceased saints. The people impatiently looked forward to festivals in order to celebrate them. Here we mention the above shrines along with the way in which certain festivals at these shrines were held. The shrines selected are as under:

**Hazratbal**

The shrine of Hazratbal is beautifully situated on the shores of the Dal lake. The shrine was and is still the holiest shrine for the Muslims of Kashmir as it contains the holy relic (hair) of holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) People from all parts of the Valley rushed in thousands during the time of Urs (fair)\(^1\). The hair relic (hair) was, as it still is, exhibited on the eve of Idd-i-Milad, the Urs-i-Charyar, on the occasion of Mehraj-i-Sharif, and on the Fridays following each of the festivals\(^2\). But during

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the month of Rabi-ul-awal, the festival lasted for twelve
days and the people thronged the shrine during this period for
a view of the relic and for offering prayers. During the Urs
period, the people recited naths, daruds, zikr-u-azkar, khatmat-
u-mauvmat at the shrine. Many Muslims blessed by the 'Ishiq-
Rasul' (love for Prophet p.b.u.h.) have said many verses called
nath-i-sharif which are aimed at praising and glorifying the
Prophet (p.b.u.h.), are directly addressed to him. One example
of such verse was composed several years ago by Ghulam Mohi-ud-
Din Kashmiri (nath composer). The verse is directly addressed
to the Prophet (p.b.u.h.).

"This morning breeze is expected to go to the resting
place of Prophet (p.b.u.h.) of Medina and convey to him my
condition as he is the sale helper of mine; please tell him
that a poor Kashmiri has fallen back upon; Tell him that your
benedictions are vast and grant me a grain out of that; Tell
him to help the helpless and request him that it is not the
time to ignore the poor people".

This verse was selected for recitation by the devotees
at Hazratbal shrine during festive occasions, to invoke the
blessings of the Rasul-i-Pagamber (p.b.u.h.). This has become
an established fact for Muslims of Kashmir to recite the above

1. Historical Geography of Kashmir, op. cit., p. 185.
said verses of such blessed personalities in the shrines and mosques in Farz and Sunnat prayers of Fajr (morning). Dargah Hazratbal has been an important place of pilgrimage for lakhs of people from far and near. Even an each Friday, the people attended the shrine in large numbers for congregational prayers. The people of pargana Fak came there and they still keep coming to the shrine for Juma (Friday) prayers.

During our period of study no transport facilities were there. The people particularly villagers used to come mostly on foot. Even today most age-old people like to go on foot particularly from Saida Kadal bridge onwards. The villagers eagerly looked forward to the celebration and their participation in the Urs at Hazratbal. About their participation Dr. Neve remarked, "There are the great days to which the people especially the women and children look forward, for not only is there the display at shrines, but the opportunity of showing off"— the best they possessed and of seeing the shops of the city and

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1. While talking to many age-old people of pargana Fak, they said, "We feel dissatisfied if we don't visit the shrine once a week."

2. In earlier times people of the city came to Dargah in doongas, shikaras and boats of various sizes and coming on foot was considered to be an act of fetching pleasure of the Almighty. Even some people walked barefooted all the way holding their footwear in their hands atleast from some distance.
making purchases. A bundle on the man's back contains a few days rice and condiments. The devotees brought home tabruk from the shrine. The people considered it an act of piety to bring the tabruk for people at home. The recipient of the tabruk at home had to read Bismillah while stretching his hands for receiving the tabruk. Sometimes, the tabruk of shrine (sweets) Metahe (clay) was received against cash payments to the mujavirs. This was preserved by the devotees and used it for treatment of any ailing person at home, as doctors were few and the people being superstitious considered it as the best mode of treatment.

Makhdooom Sahib

The shrine of Makhdooom Sahib too occupies a very important place in Shesh Buga (six holy places) and wields a powerful influence on the masses. People in large numbers visited the

1. Dr. Neve, Thirty years in Kashmir, pp. 301-302. This remark of Dr. Neve shows that the poor villagers particularly women came to the city shrines as much out of devotion as out of fondness to exhibit their own clothes and jewellery. They made the purchases if they could afford to do so. They brought a few days ration and also a cock which they offered to the Mullah because being superstitious, they could not do otherwise.

2. Lawrence, while comparing many answers to his various questions pertaining to the important shrines of Kashmir, found the six muslim religious places of great rank and respect. These were and still are 1. Hazratbal, 2. Shah-i-Hamadan (Khanqah); 3. Jamia Masjid, 4. Shrine of Nur-ud-Din at Chrar-i-Sharif, 5. Ziarat of dastigir-i-sahib at Khanyar, 6. Ziarat of Makhdooom Sahib at Hari Parbat. These when taken together are called Sheh Buga. Lawrence, op.cit., p. 292. Further in a interview with Moulvi Mohd Seyid Masoodi of Ganderbal, the author of this work could confirm that the term Sheh Buga was the collective nomenclature of the six shrines named above.
shrine for religious merit and material and vantage. A festival is still celebrated on the eve of Hazrat Shaikh's death anniversary, which lasted for twelve days upto 24th of Safar which is the date of Shaikh's demise. The people in thousands from neighbouring countryside and Srinagar city thronged the shrine from 13th to 24th Safar to offer prayers and paid homage to the deceased saint. The concluding session of the Urs was and is even now celebrated with great zeal and zest. On this day thousands of people, men, women, children, old and young and even Hindus visited the shrine. This shows that the people of Kashmir had, as they continue to have, respect for the noble souls who once preached the message of Islam. Apart from days of Urs the people visited the shrine on Mondays and Thursdays. During Urs period the verses of Khatmat-i-Mehboob-ul-Alam and Ajkars were recited in loud voice. The daruds and wazafs were recited to invoke the blessings of the Pir. The devotees and believers considered the ziarat as a means to warding off the evils and securing the grant of favours, both spiritual and mundane. Besides all the above mentioned occasions the people

1. Tarikh-i-Hasan, p. 171.
2. Ibid.,
4. Ibid.,
approached the shrine during the time of natural calamities like famines and floods owing to excessive rainfall. According to the usual tradition the Kashmiris brought the water in jugs, jars, and pales and poured that into the pond of Makhdooom Sahib in order to get rid of the catastrophe. The praise of the deceased saint. These verses were recited collectively.

However, it is not out of place to mention here that a very few visitors and devotees were seriously concerned about the principles and teachings of the great saint. Mostly the people came to participate in the Urs to show off their pelf. The beggars who flocked there to beg alms created a lot of noise and nuisance. While all this went on, the mujavirs were busy in extracting money from the innocent devotees thus deviating from the main aim of the celebration. The shopkeepers were absorbed in their own money making activity. In this atmosphere the people caught up in the mood of festivity, scarcely showed any disposition or inclination towards acquisition of religious or spiritual merit. In earlier times people sought favours from Makhdooom Sahib because they had implicit faith in his immense power to grant boons to them.

The shrine at Khanyar known as Dastgir Sahib is dedicated to the world renowned saint Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani popularly known as Gous-ul-Azam, Mehboob-i-Subhani and Peri-dastgir. The Muslims and the Hindus had and they still have immense faith in the power of the shrine and the holy relic it enshrines. Even passer by stood erect for a while in silence to do their obeisance (sajda). The people all over the Valley flocked in large numbers on the occasion of the Urs (11th Rabi-us-Thani) to celebrate the death anniversary of the saint with zeal and enthusiasm. The festival lasted eleven days. This started on first of Rabi-us-Thani upto 11th of the same month which was the day of demise of the saint. The devotees and believers recited Khalmat-u-muazmat, and nath khwani.

Besides and above all, the verses and words of Aurad-i-Qadriya and kibriyat sharif were recited either in the form of Mikr or loudly. Some people got involved in dhikr for mental peace and spiritual merit. The 11th date of Rabi-us-Thani had and still continues to have so much traditional fervour that the Kashmiris considered this date to be the luckiest of all. The

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emergence of Kahnov is the direct inference from the eleventh day of the month. The devotees recited loudly the following verses in order to invoke the saint Ya Shaikh Sayyid Abdul Qadir Shaykh-Ilah (Oh Shaikh give us something for the sake of God). They also recited Ya Shai Baghdad Kar Imdad (Oh King of Baghdad help us). These citations were also recited in almost every mosque of Kashmir particularly on the occasions of Shab-i-Mehraj, Shab-i-Qadr, Shab-i-Barat and during the periods of Ura of many saints like Makhdooom Sahib and Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. The people thought the celebrations to be incomplete without the recitation of duruds, naths and praises in honour of the saints. Really gigantic and tremendous was the driving spirit of Pir-i-dastgir. This spirit was found to operate in every effort and endeavour. The porters carrying cartloads of articles, timber, fuel, iron, cement, items of grocery, drapery, grains and any other effects keep on shouting “Ya Pir Dastgir” (Oh mentor lift us to the size of the burden we carry). It was also the cherished call of the hanjis (boatmen). An intellectual worker would not feel shy in expressing the same terms while he

1. There is general belief that ‘Kahnov’ grants boons to the devotees and bestows favours on his followers. The custom of offering tea on certain specific days is known as ‘Kahnov chai’. The Kashmiri Pandits also have faith in Kahnov.

2. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 292.
set working at his desk. The Ya Pir Dastgir is a household expression that inspired the people of Kashmir while they were busy doing their jobs.

Khanqah-i-Mualla

Khanqah-i-Mualla, the most famous shrine of the Muslims of Kashmir is the place which Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani choose as his abode. Ever since the place has been regarded as a holy shrine and a place of pilgrimage. The shrine occupies a very remarkable position among the important shrines of Kashmir popularly known as 'Shesh Buqa' (six important shrines). At Khanqah-i-Mualla a festival was organized every year on 6th Zilhij (the 12th lunar month), the anniversary of the great saint. Thousands of devotees from all parts of Kashmir attended the Urs in order to offer prayers. The people considered the shrine as a source of meditation and a place for grant of boons. The Kashmir had absolute faith in the relics enshrined at Khanqah-i-Mualla viz., the 'Alam' (tent-pole) and 'Aasar Sharif' (holy stick). These relics were exhibited before the devotees during

1. See Supra, p. 34
the days of the festival. The people recited Aurad-i-fathiyah. Although based on the Quran and prayers of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), some portions of the aurad comprise supplications of many Sufis whom the Sayyid is said to have met during his extensive travels in the Muslim world. At the time of recitation of aurad it was not uncommon to see Muslims standing on knees with their faces towards Hujra-i-khas (the main chamber) where in Shah-Hamadan meditated, practised penance and prayed. The last phase of aurad was and is recited in chorus by Kashmiri Muslims. The faithful joined palms in a standing fashion offered reverential salutations to the Prophet of Islam. The devotees burst into tears, cries and loud lamentations at the time of prayer. The recitation of aurad has become an established practice in all the mosques particularly at the time of morning prayers. The tone of the recitation of the aurad-i-fathiyah, at the Khanqah of Shaikh Ismail Kubravi was so loud that people residing at Shalimar across the Dal Lale could hear the voice.

Similarly, the fairs and festivals in commemoration of great Rishis whose shrines are established throughout the Valley had a very significant impact on the blunt obtuse lives of Kashmiris. The Rishis being natives were very close to the common

people in their socio-cultural tradition. Therefore the Rishis played a significant role in moulding and shaping the life and character of the masses. They preached in Kashmiri language which went straight in the mind and heart of the people. Along with the Rishis, their respective abodes became sacred places of pilgrimage. Sheikh Nur-ud-Din Nurani verily occupies the first place in the Rishi order. For this reason the Sheikh himself was called and is still called as the Alam^dar-i-i-Kashmir. (The leader of Rishi order in Kashmir). The people believed that a pilgrimage to his ziarat at Chrar-i-Sharif was next to Haj. The time of Urs was considered to be full of benediction and blessing. Obviously, the people of Kashmir marched on foot to celebrate the festivals.

The shrines belonging to Shaikh Nur-ud-Din at Chrar-i-Sharif, Baba Zain-ud-Din of Aishmuqam and his Khalifa Baba Payam-ud-Din at Ranbua in Pargana Bangil were the more popular and distinguished ones and the Kashmiris in general and villagers in particular often visited these shrines. The Rishis particularly Shaikh Nur-ud-Din toured most parts of the Valley to preach his faith and instil the spirit of brotherhood. At a number of places

1. The people owing to ruthlessness of foreign yoke turned miserable and poor. As such the number of pilgrims to Mecca was not considerable. The people, therefore, fell back upon Chrar-i-Sharif in place of Mecca in order to quench the thirst visited the shrine particularly Chrar-i-Sharif.

2. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 287.
D. C. Sharma, op. cit., p. 91.
have erected shrines in his name. His influence and impact among Kashmiris is so powerful that coins were struck in his name by the Afghan Governor, Atta Mohammad (1800-05).\(^1\) Not only this, the incharge of shrines known as rishis who were called who were called by Lawrence Waddell (illiterate) respected everywhere in Kashmir. The Shaikhs death anniversary which according to Kashmiri tradition falls in the month of Poh (December) was celebrated at many places, where shrines are associated with his name. But the most important among these was at Chrar, where Shaikh is himself entombed. Besides, the anniversaries of Baba Zain-ud-Din and Baba Payam-ud-Din were celebrated by the people. The people besides narrating khatmat and wazief, performed dhikr. They recited the verses in their praise particularly the khatmat of the respective saints to invoke their blessings.

The people prepared for participation before and were dressed in new clothes in order to show them off, who in large numbers assembled at their respective shrines. They while visiting the shrine did not forget the mutwalis and rishis who in return gave them taburuks ( ) not only for themselves but also for their family members too. These tabaruks included shirin, sweets and tanghet\(^3\) (dried chips of pear).

No other saint perhaps in human history, has ever had coins struck in his name.

Lawrence, op. cit., p. 287.

The village named Chrar-i-Sharif had abundance of pear trees. The mujavirs plucked the pears, cut them into pieces and dried them for being offered as tabaruks to murids at the ziarat around the villages.
The people coming through various streams particularly rural and urban came in close contact with one another at these shrines. Very often they picked up the ways and fashions of one another. The women in particular were impressed with anything that they found to be novel. And inspite of their poverty, they sometimes insisted on having one or the other article, be it an item of dress or jewellery. The Kashmiris are imitative and have great love to show themselves off on festive occasions. Sometimes they would exchange ideas with one another and perhaps occasionally few of them struck the marriages of their children on such occasions.

However, the saints during their life times constituted and prepared the khatmat on the basis of inspirations of Quran and Hadith. They used to recite the same by themselves and also asked their devotees and disciples to recite in the same manner. For instance aurad-i-fathiya, khatm-i-Mehboob-ul-salam of Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom, aurad-i-qadiriya and kibrayat-i-sharif of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, Khatm-i-Sharif Nur-ud-Din and Baba Zain-ud-Din. The recitations were mainly aimed at purification of soul, spiritual illumination, eternal peace and salvation from the

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1. M. I. Khan, op. cit., p. 103.
2. These khatmats and azkars were recited in the respective shrine on the auspicious occasion of the Urs in commemora-tion of different saints in our period. The recitation is still performed. Gh. Mohd and Nor Mohd, Khatmat-Murwaja Kashmir, p. 8 & 2,3, 6, 9.
dangerous with in grave and hell. But after the death of a Wali, his disciples and followers continued the recitations of Quranic verses prescribed by the saint or Wali. This tradition was come down from generation to generation. With the passage of time greed of materialism increased and eagerness for attaining and acquiring knowledge for spiritual upliftment ceased to grow and people from all walks of life particularly the mujavirs and khudams of shrines confined their activities to their selfish interests which were mainly material. Ostensibly, they preached recitation of daruds, azkars, aureds and khatmats would fulfil the wishes of the recitor, but actually they emphasized the individuals material desires. This wrong conception added to these azkars and daruds certain innovations as:

"Give me something for God's sake, Sultan (Shaikh Hamza) makes me happy and makes me to forget all the worries. He helps in achieving our aims and objects. He solves our problems. He is my priest."

All these and many other additions crept into azkars and daruds were totally against the main contents of original azkars and daruds. For instance in auran-i-fathiya we recited:

"Oh God none can grant what you deny and none can deny what you grant. Oh God you are eternal without fall and you are all powerful without any minister or advisor."

1. Khadims like mujavirs are attendants at the shrines rendering various services.
2. This was recited hundred and eleven times during the khatm-i-Sharif ceremony of Hazrat Gous-ul-Azam.
Amusements and Recreations:

The fairs and festivals and consecutive visits by pilgrims to the shrines provided the people much needed opportunity for amusement and jubilation. The people of Kashmir were eager to visit the shrines to get relieved from dullness and to refresh themselves. They (shrines) were the pleasant places of meeting at fair times and the natural beauty of their position and surroundings appear to have impressed the people. Noble brotherhood of venerable trees particularly of chinars and other provided a pleasant and beautiful shade. For example the Hazratbal shrine looked overcrowded on Fridays and all other days when festivals were celebrated there. In summer season most of the people used to engage house-boats, shikara and dugads for enjoying themselves on the Dal Lake and in Mughal gardens on the eastern bank of the Dal Lake. The Hazratbal shrine on the western bank of the Dal Lake and in close proximity to Bagh-i-Nasem attracted people in large numbers. The people came to the shrine on fast. A succession of prayers, singing and feasting was to be witnessed everywhere around the shrine. The scenery of the lake was so attractive that when a Kashmiri though poor found himself in possession of some money he lost no time in assembling his partymen and set out for the lake. From the ground of this shrine people had an open and fine view of the mountains rising on the opposite side. Mughal gardens perched on the mountains opposite the shrine presented a magnificent spectacle. The chinar trees within

2. A. R. Mattie, Kashmir Under the Mughals, p. 137.
the premises of the shrine added to the grandeur and charm of the place. Similarly many other shrines like the one of Baba Payam-ud-Din near Gulmarg attracted many devotees on account of sanctity and scenic beauty. The trees around the shrine were appealing. The days of festival, in particular attracted the people to celebrate the Urs with fervour and zeal. The multitude of people included men, women, children, young and old from different corners of the Valley. They made purchases of various beautiful articles and exhibited these before the people on their return home. The roaring and noisy markets around the shrines represented the commercial spectacle at the festival. The women-folk who generally were confined to the four walls of house were seen to move about in great freedom at the festival site. It was a sight to find them eat sweat and fruits. Amidst this the women kept on sucking their infants\(^1\) people came and returned in swarms. The young girls and boys exhibited the fine dresses, they had put on. Some people listened to the preachings of the pirs particularly at the time when they were highlighting the life history and achievements of the deceased saint. There were others who were busy in raising their hands and head high and crying loudly for grant of boons. The khadims looked very ridiculous when they were pouncing clumsily over the offerings\(^2\) made by the devotees. The scene appeared interesting when one saw such flashes of temper as were evident from the attitude.

1. W. R. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 289.
2. Ibid.,
of the khadim. The laughter and the sobbing, expressing two opposite emotions of the people were to be heard on all sides.\(^1\) This excited and astonished the people who were in different pleasure and pain.

The fair and festivals were an institution which were held at every shrine and ziarat. The place was not only a market for purchase and sale of goods but it also became the meeting ground for friends and relatives. "Here in one corner one would find a juggler giving his performances in the open, with amazement and amusement of people, in another corner may be seen a snake charmer or a man with trained bear and a monkey giving performances and just passing their plates round or spreading, a piece of cloth into which the people may throw a pice or two. In another place a quack with all his herbs and medicines spread out, may be extolling their efficacy in various diseases—-attracted by the great variety of interesting things in these melas, people can spend all their leisure wandering from booth to booth."\(^2\) Lawrence has rightly remarked that "the only gatherings are at weddings or at the fairs at the shrines of the saints".\(^3\) The wrestlers considered the shrines particularly during the period of Urs very appropriate for wrestling matches. This was seen and observed by the spectators with pleasure.

\(^{\text{1}}\) The light hearted usually carry laughter wherever they go while the serious minded people particularly in distress keep on sobbing and yelling at the ziarats.

\(^{\text{2}}\) P. C. Lal, *The Tradition of Adult Education in India*.

\(^{\text{3}}\) W. R. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 255.
They used to cheer up in order to encourage the wrestlers and made the audience to rejoice. There were famous wrestlers who displayed and exhibited their skill and dexterity at mass gatherings. Kashmir was indeed celebrated for its wrestlers. Similarly the Bhagats and Bands (folk dancers, singers and artists) had their long and chequered history in Kashmir. They combined the profession of singing and acting with that of begging. They sometimes performed short comic plays in different villages. The villagers in particular liked their programmes and jocular skits and dramas. They visited the villages during harvest and collected the paddy after displaying their band-pather (folk drama). They added piquancy and gaiety to the otherwise dull life of villages. But the people both urban and rural enjoyed the Bhagats and Bands during the periods of Urs. They (Bhagats) displayed their wit in accompaniment with the beating of drums and other musical instruments. It was famous as Jashan-i-Bhagatan (performance of the folk singers). Their participation in annual fairs held at various shrines attracted large number of people. That is why they were in great demand on various occasions of fairs and festivals. They sang songs in Kashmiri, Persian and Punjabi but the Kashmiri songs were liked the most, as these met the taste of the natives. Their instruments consisted of a drum in centre and four clarionets. Their plays, playing of instruments and songs enlarged the scope of the gatherings at shrines.

1. Ibid.
The recitation of group songs by women at shrines was another recreational exercise. These songs highlighted the noble deeds of the saints. At the ziarat of Hazrat Shaikh Nur-ud-Din at Charar-i-Sharif the women-folk presented ruf (group songs of women) to the accompaniment of songs in praise of the Shaikh. Thus not only the local women participated the group songs but the ladies from outside also took part in this event. They stood in rows, advancing and retreating, singing the ruf songs. On the last day of Urs, the tomb of the saint was covered with a new Chaddar (cover) made of superior fibre.

The damali or dambaal (folk dance) which was presented at many shrines was another source of recreation. There used to be two rows of men moving up and down, singing songs in praise of the saint and in the middle of a dense circle of men two stick holders played with each other with their sticks. The drummers beat the drums to accelerate the state of ecstasy among the stick holders and dancers. The mind was thrown in a whirl and the dancers fell into religious ecstasy. The practice of dambaal was common at the shrines of Baba Nasib-ud-Din Gazi at Bijbehara, Lal Bab Sahib at Zakura near Naseem Bagh and other shrines like Khan Sahibs during their anniversary days. The dancers were called damal-i-maet and damal-i-faqir. The dancing at Baba Nasib's shrine was so much famous

1. On the occasions of Idd, the women sang the songs. The song was pretty and the dance graceful. W. R. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 266.
2. Ibid., p. 289.
that most of the people of District Anantnag came all the way to witness the damali (dance) at the shrine of Baba Nasib-ud-Din. The dancers of different areas and villages like Drey-i-gam, Humhom, Butamarg, Kanagund Akingam came to Bijbehara on the auspicious occasion of Urs to present their programme of damali (folk) dance. On their way they performed their dance in various villages. They prepared dramas and showed them out to the people on the way where they had to stay for night. The villages viz., Aglar, Meelahura and Wachi in pargana Shahura of Maraz were eagerly waiting to see their skits. They stayed for a night in each of these villages. Similarly the Lal Babs shrine was flocked by the large numbers to observe and see the damali presented by the professional folk dancers of various villages. Some scholars have wrongly referred to this Urs as Watal mela and the dambael as watal dambael. While interviewing some age old people in the area, it could be gathered that it was not watal-mela and watal damali. But the pure damali was presented by the professional folk dancers at the shrine of Lala Bab Sahib. At village Zakura resided sixteen families during our period of study. The damal-i-maet were presented some khirwars of shali and sixteen cocks by the sixteen families of the village.

1. The damal-i-maet came once in a year in order to participate in the Urs and to add to the pleasure of the gathering.
2. M. I. Khan, op. cit., p. 100.
3. This information was gathered in the course of an interview with Haji Muhammad Abdullah Wani alias niama.
Perhaps it was at the shrine of Lal Bab Sahib that the members of the watal community assembled to settle their disputes relating to money and other transactions. It was there that they entered into matrimonial alliances as well. One peculiar feature of the residents of Zakura was to organize a reverine procession at the time of sowing the paddy seeds. On that occasion they engaged a small flotilla of boats and went in the boats right across the Dal lake to the shrine of Baba Najm-ud-Din at Gupkar.

Almost all the people enjoyed at shrines particularly during periods of Urs. The shodas (the addicts of charas) not only rejoiced themselves at shrines but became a source of jubilation for the visitors and devotees. For instance the meeting place of shodas at Batmaloo presented a very colourful and fascinating scene during the festival of Batmaloo. On the eve of festivals, they held a feast and organized musical concerts with voluntary contributions.

1. It seems that the watal community of pargana Phak and of Srinagar held the saint Lal Bab Sahib in highest reverence. The shrine of Lal Bab Sahib is at Zakura then a village in pargana Phak. This fact has been stated by Lawrence in the following words, "the watal community from all parts of the Valley and the city assemble at Lal Bab's shrine near the Naseen Bagh and many other matters affecting the tribe are then settled and marriage alliances are made." W. R. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 315.

2. Lal Bab Sahib was a great farmer. He as routine used to go to Baba Najm-ud-Din (uncle and preceptor of Lal Bab Sahib) every year before sowing seeds. Having complete faith in his pir, he never started his work of farming without his consent. The seeking of permission became a tradition among the people at Zakura.

At the tombs of the mystic poets like Socha Kral at Inder (Pulwama) and Wahab Khar at Shar Pampore and many singing parties used to sing their songs in a very disciplined manner at the Urs celebration occasions. Kashmiris were mostly interested in the poetry of these mystic poets. Even at present, the people arrange musical parties at their private houses where the poetry of these mystics is recited to the accompaniment of various musical instruments. The shrine of Kamar Sahib at Ganderbal was visited by the people mostly on the occasions of festival. The singers and dancers flocked in large number to the shrine. The people hired the dungas and Shikaras for weeks together for enjoyment.

The people lighted a bundle of leush¹ (piece of timber with rich content of resin or turpentine) at night on the occasion of Urs at Aishmuqam as a mark of jubilation commemorating the killing of a dev (demon) by Baba Zain-ud-Din of Aishmuqam. In course of time the custom spread to people among other areas of Maraz (South Kashmir). In the villages where leush was not available people lighted sheaves of hay.

The fairs and festivals held at various shrines spread over length and breadth of the Valley provided the occasions for fun and frolick. An average Kashmiri generally poor as he was, had little leisure and means to afford recreation and amusement. But the eve of Urs, which he eagerly looked forward to, gave him the opportunity to enjoy himself to the utter forgetfulness of his misery and poverty. He would save a little money with great hardship and take along his wife and children to the fair and festival. These poor dependants of the poorman on such an occasion found an escape from the clutch of poverty and want, though it was only momentary--just for a day or two in their long dreary and dull life.

¹. Tarikh-i-Hasan, Vol. III. D. 1295
The shrines were looked upon as places of worship and the various fairs marked the celebration of a special event connected with the life or death of a saint. Apart from providing spiritual and moral satisfaction to the people, the shrines and fairs became a source of recreation and amusement to them. But over and above these, the ziarats and various ceremonies promoted communal harmony among two major communities, viz., the Hindus and the Muslims. The savants, Rishis and saints both native and non-native in their life times preached brotherhood, tolerance, amity, peace and harmony. Their teachings made a direct and indelible imprint on the minds of the common masses of Kashmir. These efforts of the Rishis and saints led in course of time, to the establishment of stronger ties of brotherhood among the people of the land. We have noticed that the Hindu festivals were joined by the Muslims as well, though not with a religious motive but for recreational sake during medieval period in Kashmir.¹ Not only this we find also the Muslims putting forward their helping hand to Hindu brethren in solving their problems at their festivals by providing food and other requirements.² This not only shows the spirit of amity and harmony but among the Hindus and the Muslims but also points to the religious freedom in the society. Even Sultan Qutb-ud-Din and his Muslim subjects visited the temple in Ala-ud-Dinpora every morning.

¹ Srivara, Rajatarangini, pp. 123-25.
Sultan once performed the  _yagya_ and distributed lavish gifts to the Brahmans in order to avert famine. In Kashmir one may not be astonishing to witness the Hindus and the Muslims "equally holding a reverence the Hindu shrines and the Muslim khanqahs situated in close proximity or sometimes within the same premises. The notable examples are the Muslim shrine of Shah Hamadan co-existing with the Hindu shrine of Kali Devi at Fateh Kadal and Makhdoom Sahib's shrine near the Hindu temple of Sarika Devi at Hari Parbat. An ancient legend related by Kalhana shows the spring at Sudrabal near Hazratbal as being the abode of an _avatara_ of the Sodara Naga worshippers originally the place has near the sacred site of Bhutesvara below Mound Harmukhta. Thus the inheritance of respect for each others religious places and shrines never gave rise to communal tensions in the Valley. Rather these there were the living symbols of communal harmony and amity. The understanding that was developed by two major communities in the background of shrines testifies to the fact that the people remained calm and peaceful for centuries inspite of several provocations to break the bonds of mutual friendship. The presence of shrines was

3. This is what led Mahatma Gandhi to pronounce that he had found a "ray of light" only in Kashmir when the entire sub-continent was in the grip of darkness of communal passion and hatred. Ibid., p. 185.
considered a virtue which members of both the communities revered and respected. The people without any religious distinction offered donations for the construction of such shrines— as symbols of love and affection. "Seldom in the history of mankind", so writes Sir J. Marshall, "has the spectacle been witnessed of two civilizations, so vast and so strongly developed, yet so radically dissimilar as the Hindus and Muslims, meeting and mingling together". The religious personality that Kashmir developed since times immemorial in a unique style led Augustine to put it in the heavenly city, "while it so journeys on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims in all languages, not scrupling about diversities, in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained— that these diversities of Pandits, Muslims, Sikhs and others in Kashmir are preserved as long as Kashmiris are united in the service of God, on these shrines, Tirthas, mosques, darqahs and asthans amidst the environment governed by an absolute spirit.

The shrines as centres of fraternity were thronged by people of all the communities. It must be pointed out here that Hazratbal shrine attracted not only Muslims but other two major communities, viz., Hindus and Sikhs both for recreation and grant.

1. The Culture of Kashmir, p. 27.
3. Ibid.
of booms. All the people looked at it with awe and veneration. Most of the Kashmiris whether Hindu or Muslim bowed before the gates of darqah while passing through it. Even well qualified people of all the communities never fight shy in showing reverence to the shrine and they acknowledge its power. There were people from other communities who reached the religious places of the Muslims in the early morning even before the arrival of their Muslim brothers.

It was in December 1963, that moe-i-mugaddas (holy hair of the Prophet p.b.u.h.) was found missing from the shrine of Hazratbal. The Kashmiris without any religious distinction shared the grief and sorrow in equal measure and unanimously demanded restoration of the holy relic (hair).

The Hindus not only participated in the festivals of Khanqah-i-Mualla and Makhdooom Sahib but also presented themselves at the shrines on other occasions. During the Sikh regime, when Sikhs planned to destroy the Muslim places of worship particularly

2. In an interview with Prem Nath of village Wachi (pargana Shahura) who might be of eighty years of age, he asserted he had tremendous faith in shrines particularly in the Khanqah-i-Shah Hamdam popularly known as Khanqah-i-Wala at Wachi. Without any training worth the name he established a medical shop and practised as a successful medico in the area. He further stated that he owed his success not to his own ability but he owed it to the benedictions of the said Khanqah.
In 17
Khanqah-i-Mualla, they were stopped from doing so by the influential Hindus particularly Birbal Dhar (the influential noble of the time).

There were many shrines where not only Muslims contributed but Hindus too very gladly raised funds for the construction of the Muslim shrines. They also paid the mutawalis (custodians) of the shrine annually or bi-annually. The mujawirs of Baba Zain-ud-Din's shrine at Aishmuqam were paid money by the Hindus. For example the Pandits living in the nearby village of Aishmuqam offered twelve kharwers of shali (paddy) to the traditional Rishis of the shrine. Similarly the closeby Pandit residents of Lai Bab Sahib's shrine paid equal respect to the shrine as their Muslim broth did. They used to send money, oil and bread to the shrine on festive occasions. The ziarat of Mian Shah Sahib at Rainawari was equally venerated by both the communities. Both the communities looked forward impatiently to the celebration of the festival.


2. This information was given by Mumma Haji (resident of Aishmuqam), the recipient of the above noted payments. The Haji said that he was eighty year old. He was himself one among the mujawirs.

3. This was told by Haji Muhammad Abdullah Wani alias Niima, a local age old follower of Lal Bab Sahib.

4. Many Muslim fairs held at different shrines like Chrar-i-Sharif and Aishmuqam were held on Hindu calendar.
They gave themselves up to jollity and played with fire works. A significant feature of this shrine was that people both Hindus and Muslims threw feasts on the seventh day of the dark fortnight in the month of Poh. Both the communities paid money at the shrine to the mujavirs and for the construction of the shrine. What is of great importance is that the iron safe lodged at the entrance of the shrine bear the names of Allah on one side and Om in Hindi script on other side. All this speaks of the amity among different communities. Similarly shrine of Shaikh Nur-ud-Din was put in great esteem by all the communities. It was in 1344 A.H. that Abdul Ahad Azad while expressing his views on Shaikh-ul-Alam and his mission observed that the Alamdar exerted his energy in cementing the bonds between the Hindus and the Muslims. Obviously, both the Muslims and the Hindus had great faith in saints like the Shaikh of Chrar-i-Sharif. The verses of Shaikh Nur-ud-Din amongst other things taught and preached tolerance which to a great extent motivated and influenced almost all the communities in Kashmir. Nur-ud-Din like Lala Arifa also preached tolerance and respect for each others faith. As a matter of faith, Islam in

1. The tradition is quite contrary to the Rishi cult of Kashmir. Rishis of Kashmir abstain from meat eating. The people in the locality prepare fish particularly on this day. Srinagar Times, 26th January, 1989.

2. Abdul Ahad Dar alias Azad resident of Ranger (Chaudura) has written a Qasida (1344 A.H.-1348 A.H.) This portion is preserved in the unpublished form in the personal Library of Mir Ghulam Nabi of Chrar-i-Sharif.
Kashmir began to assume a new form under the influence of Rishis who emphasized the right path by practising the virtues like tolerance and social service. The Rishis did not emphasize doctrinal side of Islam. Thus the reverence for Shaikh's shrine was deep-rooted among all the people. His message was not confined to a particular race or any class, but addressed to mankind as a whole. All the communities attended the festival of Shaikh Nur-ud-Din with devotion and dedication. So was the case with the shrine of Pir-i-Dastigir at Khangar. Whenever they are in distress, the Hindus like the Muslims chant va pir dastgir with great fervour. The word dastgir is at the tip of every Kashmiri tongue without any religious distinction. It has become an important part of our culture to recite it. The communities even take the pledges of dastgir. Besides the eleventh Rabi-us-thani, the date of the demise of the Pir was and is still famous among both the communities and they celebrate it with great enthusiasm.

There were many other shrines which Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims respected alike. Pir Pandit Padshah also known as Rishi Pir of Aali Kadal was revered equally by both the communities.

1. They lived among the common people, shared their troubles and pains. P. N. K. Bamzai, op. cit., p. 488.
2. A. Q. Rafiqi, op. cit., p. 158.
3. On next page
Still earlier, both the Hindus and the Muslims claimed Lal Ded as their own and gave her equal respect. Similarly, Wali Shah of village Devsar was respected by all. Even Maharaja Ranbir Singh was a great devotee of him.  

Hindus believe that the sacred cave of Amarnath was discovered by a Muslim shepherd and even up to this date the successors of the shepherd got a sizeable portion of the income received by way of offerings of Hindu yatris at the shrine. The Muslims assisted and still assist the Hindu pilgrims to the cave in many ways in reaching the cave through touch passes.

Right from ancient times, the history makes it clear that Kashmir was always blessed with communal harmony and religious toleration. The conversions that took place on several occasions have been recorded in various works.

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3. Haji Mohi-ud-Din Miskin, op. cit., p. 328. On 5th day of full moon in Baisakhi, a fair was held in honour of the Rishi Pir at Aali Kadal. The Hindus presented 4½ annas to the saints representatives and received in turn fried rice which was taken home and distributed among relatives. W. R. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 365.


2. W. R. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 298.
occasions from Buddhism to Brahmanism and from Brahmanism to Islam did not change the religious personality of Kashmir. It was because of this fact that the people unhesitatingly accepted new faith. That is why Stein remarked "Islam made its way into Kashmir not by forcible conquest but by persuasion and gradual conversion".

After the demise of saint, his shrine or ziarat worked as beacon for the people and inspired them the path of communal amity. The uria celebrations brought the two communities together at the shrines assumed great importance as grounds for the growth of communal harmony. Lawrence rightly remarked, "the strong rule under which the people have lived for generations would not brook any quarrelling between Hindus and Musalmans".

The spirit of mutual friendship which was inculcated and nurtured by the celebrated saints and Sufis of Kashmir has stood the test of times and has guided the people along the right path through their lives. The lessons of their saints have stood by them in the hour of their gloom and dismay and emboldened them to overcome an ugly situation.


2. W. R. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 286.
The shrines and Khanqahs, which initially aimed at spiritual and religious advancement, deviated from this objective and became centres of superstitious practices and beliefs. It was popularly believed that the prayers at shrines were sure means and efficacious instruments for averting ailments and misfortunes. So the visits to the graves of saints and religious men were considered acts of great merit and as such all sorts of people, traders, townfolk, city people and villagers visited the shrines. However, in course of time several superstitions came to be associated with shrines. The people tied their fear and hope with the shrines, a practice quite contrary to the teachings of Islam.

Quran says:—

"Oh people, listen carefully, an example is cited for you, the gods whom you call for help, they all by joining together cannot make even a fly and if a fly will confiscate anything from them, they cannot get that back. The seekers of help those that are supposed to render it are weak."

1. Al-Qur'an, Sura Al-Hajj, Ayat, 73.
This and many other sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) make it clear that God is omnipotent. Even a small wing of an insect cannot be cut off without the will of God. The Muslims of Kashmir like their Hindu neighbours had full faith in superstitions. The mass conversion to Islam during the 14th century A.D. could not completely wipe out the age-old superstitions of the neo-converts. There is ample evidence to show that both the communities observed certain rituals which were alike. The occurrence of cholera and other epidemics in the Valley was attributed to gins (evil spirit) and goddesses. Like the Hindus the Muslims too believed that the curse was due to the dishonour to some or the other saint. They believed that the displeasure of the saints was sometimes responsible for the outbreak of one or the other natural calamity. It is said that the areas of Tujr and Zainagir became dry due to displeasure of Makhdoom Sahib. There was general belief among the people of Zainagir that a spring of water known as Makhdoom nag was caused to flow from hard dry rock by the great saint Makhdoom Sahib. Thus whenever a dreadful disease like cholera or small-pox occurred the Muslims would consult the

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1. The contemporary sources make it clear that Hindus were banfully superstitious. It was believed that touching leather, swimming and crossing the sea, touching non-Brahmans and similar other would render them outcastes. See Biscoe's Autobiography, p. 10.

2. It is said that the people of Village Tujr (birth place of Shaikh Hamza Makhdoom) did not show respect to the saint. His companions laughed at his preaching and prophecy. In lieu, Shaikh is said to have expressed the curse that faced with scarcity of water. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 289.

3. Ibid.
Pir particularly the mujavir of the shrine which provided "a unique occasion for trading upon the superstitions of the people". The Kashmiris both in normal and difficult times visited the shrines. They always considered the shrines as the centres of their redemption. At the shrine the married couple requested for a beautiful and charming son. So was the case with ailing people who supplicated for speedy recovery. Such irrational beliefs of people led Lawrence to remark that the shrines were centres of superstitious practices. This situation was intensified by selfish and crafty mujavirs. They impressed upon the minds of the credulous masses, that they (mujavirs) were really the mediators and intercessors between the deceased saints and the zaireen (pilgrims). This strategy earned the mujavirs a great fame among the people particularly their murids. The credulous villagers came to be exploited by the pirs. Though the mujavirs also known as Rishis, Babas, Pirzadas were illiterate. Their influence was far greater than that exercised by the local pirs also known as Mullahs of the mosque.

2. Dr. Aziz Ahmad Qureshi, *Asrar-i-Kashmir*, p. 98.
3. Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p. 293.
4. The Mullahs led five time prayers at the mosque and performed the mansab of Immanat. However, it is essential to mention here that this mansab (duty) was also performed by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) This is the highest position among the Muslims. An Imman should be a man of high character and knowledge. However, mostly the Immans during our period were believed to be merely reciters of a few things rather than being knowledgeable. They were sometimes termed as Amsipari-Pirs, committing to memory the Suras of Amsipar (30th para of Quran). They taught the children to recite Quran and lived upon their offerings. Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p. 308.
The respect that the mujavirs commanded was due to their close association with shrines and shrines played a vital role in perpetuating the institution of Pir-muridi in Kashmir. The mujavirs really played a negative role and deceived the devotees. They made the people believe that at least seven rounds and at the most eleven rounds (tawaf) around the shrine would fulfill their needs and meet their requirements.

The superstitions were deep-rooted in the Muslim mind during our period of study. Some people allowed the superstitions to grow out of their own imagination. The conservative beliefs made the people slaves of idle fancies and their minds were not at all rational and objective. Their power of reasoning was extremely poor as such they were incapable of understanding any scientific explanation which aimed at rejecting superstition and blind belief. As a matter of fact superstitions among the people delved deep and pushed the people backward in many respects. Their superstitious nature led them to respect and abide by what the illiterate and selfish mujavirs desired them to do.

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1. In Kashmir Guru-Shishya Parampara (the preceptor disciple tradition) is still prevalent and both the communities (Hindus and Muslims) in Kashmir have strong sentiments for their respective gurus and pirs. Gurus are considered the guardians of the spiritual tradition in Kashmir and so is the case with the Pirs and they share much in common between themselves.

2. Aziz Ahmad Qureshi, op. cit., p. 98.
These and other practices of the mujavirs at the shrines on different occasions became an integral part of the socio-cultural behaviour of the people in Kashmir. The mujavirs exploited the ignorant and superstitious masses and often extracted money from them for repair of the shrines during adversity and natural calamities. The mujavirs made the people believe that their own sins and misdeeds and consequent wrath of God were responsible for natural calamities like draughts and famines. They performed various rites in order to avert the disastrous consequences of the natural calamity (afat-i-naghani).

However, it should be mentioned here that natural calamities like cholera, earthquake, fire, famine and flood occurred frequently in Kashmir. These dreadful happenings caused great loss of life and property of the people during our period of study. Cholera of 1892 and 1900 swept across the whole Valley including the city of Srinagar. The mild earthquakes were annually felt in Kashmir. The terrible earthquake that occurred on 30th May, 1885, destroyed 20,000 houses, 30,000 cattle and 3,000 human beings. The famine of 1877--79 caused enormous loss of life--stated to have been more than 2/5th of the population. So was the case with the frequent occurrence of fires and floods. The people instead of seeking the solutions approached the shrines for riddance from natural calamities.

1. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 288.
calamities. They, amidst, the grip of misery and misfortune, started repairing the ziarats. The practice of visiting the religious place on such occasions made them more superstitious which ultimately led Lawrence to state that "religion of Islam is too abstract to satisfy their superstitious cravings and they turn from the mean priest and the mean mosque to the pretty shrines of carved wood". The people formed and took out processions while a natural calamity raged. The procession entered the premises of the shrine with a sense of remorse and held mass prayers (nauful) there, and in several khanqahs. This practice was common. The people of pargana Dachinpora and Khowerpora took out processions which ended up at the shrine of Baba Zain-ud-Din with a solicitation to the dead saint to relieve them of the natural calamity. Similarly the people from all parts of the Valley during the occurrence of drought, cholera, earthquake and epidemics like small pox, gathered in large numbers at Chrar-i-Sharif and sat silent in a mood of mortification on the hills around, confessed their sins and begged for pardon. This impressive ceremony was called naufl.

Whenever there was a failure of rains, the people visited Makhdoora Sahib's shrine in thousands from all parts of the Valley in general and Zainagir, and Tujr area in particular. The main feature of the custom was for the people to carry pitchers and

1. Ibid.
2. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 288.
pails filled with water which they poured into the pond of Makhdoom Sahib. This performance was sometimes carried out in a ceremonious form when a group of accompanying (Bands) folk dancers danced and sang all the way. The ceremony was observed by the credulous people full of expectations. During the time of Maharaja Pratap Singh whenever any safat-i-naghani (natural calamity) occurred, the people of Srinagar, in a procession, carried the holy relic (alam-i-sharif) tent pole of Khanqah-i-Mualla to Chamar-i-Sharif where special prayers were offered in a congregation in order to avert the calamity. The great place for the confession of sins was Idgah. The place was thronged by a large number of people. It has been also recorded that the people of Kashmir offered Salat-i-Istisqa at Idgah on the 9th of Cheth, 1937 Bikrami (9th Rab-us-Sani, 1297) during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh to save the Valley from drought. They offered their obeisance to the deceased saints and paid nazaran to the living pirs. It was also in 1934 Bikrami that people being worried due to constant rains, they went to Idgah for offering two ragats of

1. Local informant Mohammad Amin Farooqi, who acted as Naib-i-Imman of Hazratbal shrine during the closing years of the Dogra period.

2. Ghulam Nabi Khanyari, op. cit., p. 61b

It is believed that rains stopped soon after the naufāl had been offered. The same type of obeisance was made in 1949 Bikrami (1893 A.D.) during the Dogra period when Habba Kadal area caught an extensive fire. Among the other natural calamities that befell the people of Kashmir from time to time were epidemics like cholera. When people offered naufāl at Idgah, and visited the shrines to ward off this natural calamity.

The reverence for primitive and age-old traditions rallied the people round a specific group of privileged men who tried to keep them at the lowest ebb and deprived them of the real spirit of knowledge. The fatalist and superstitious people of Kashmir seldom endeavoured to emerge out of the quagmire of ignorance and intellectual morass. The greater the degree of superstition the greater were the chances of their exploitation. This was more true of Muslim masses who were cheated and defrauded by a small number of Babzadas and Pirzadas. This exploitation of the common Muslims by their priests led to two important consequences.

1. Ibid., f. 64a.
2. Ibid., f. 72b.
3. During the period under survey the shrines became jagirs of Pirzadas, Babzadas and Rishis. They were men of no knowledge who would direct the people towards the right. Even though they enjoyed a privileged status among the people. They used the shrines as business centres showing total disregard of the faith and their duties as true Muslims. Shrines provided nourishment to these parasites who worked to the detriment of Islam. The Babzadas and Pirzadas got entrenched in the shrines and they came to acquire a vested interest in a calling that was supposed to be honest.
Priests did not bother to educate the Muslim masses. They considered it below their dignity to serve the poor masses in the just cause of making them literate. Moreover, they always held the masses in derision and desired not to relax their traditional hold over them. The common Muslims remained ignorant which they ought not to have been as the teaching of Islam whereas they still are and will remain very simple and even an illiterate person could follow the fundamentals of this religion with a little effort and by and by he could know much about it.

From the above discussion it is clear that the preachers of Islam took shelter to secure their own interests, in shrines instead of preaching Islam in the open so that the common and innocent people might benefit. Evidently the shrines became such institutions as made the common Muslims ignorant of their religious duties. They fell victims to superstitions and un-Islamic practices. They neglected the basic principles of Islam and converted its simplicity and faith in one God into extravagancy and belief in many saints and pirs.

1. It is obligatory for every Muslim to impart to the people all that he himself knows pertaining to Islam. But the pirs and mujavirs were not prepared to share, with common people what little knowledge they possessed. They even opposed the people who looked favourably towards the Christian missionary who wanted to educate people and uproot the superstitious practices. They termed the learners of English language as Kafirs and infidels.
This alienated the common Muslims from what is recited in every Namaz\(^1\). In fact, the permanent attendants of the shrine (pirs and majavirs) tactfully organized themselves into a body of exporters in the Valley. Dr. Aziz Ahmed Qureshi rightly remarked that this traditional profession of mujavirs was and still it continues to be in vogue at common ziarats and shrines of Kashmir. He referred to the following shrines: Shaikh Hamza Makhdoom, Hazrat Batamaloo, Amir-i-Kabir, Hazrat Dastgir, Shaikh-Nur-ud-Din, Baba Zain-ud-Din, Haider Rishi, Baba Payam-ud-Din Rishi\(^2\) as the main centres where the mujavirs lull the credulous devotees to hopeless consequences of exploitation. They posed as sufis and introduced among the common Muslims the practice of singing and playing musical instruments and gave them many other such prescriptions rather than urging them to offer daily prayers and observing fasts. These selfish people did not hesitate sometimes to wrongly quote a Sufi saint and attribute to him such words and acts as are not expected of Muslim Sufis. They highlighted the

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1. *Al-Quran*, Surah Fateh,
   Oh God we pray You and seek help from You only.
karamats (miracles) of the saints, that gave impression to the common Muslims that their difficulties could be solved by these saints even when they were not alive. Thus the shrines gave a set-back to the achievements of Sufis and Sadats who had put in their all out efforts in the spread of Islam in the Valley in the real sense of the term. It can be safely said that the superstitions bred more and more means of exploitation of the general masses by a small number of people. The lack of scientific education, ignorance among common masses, selfish interest of the section that exploited religion by breeding superstition, were the factors which made the contemporary atmosphere glum by adding to the stock of superstitious beliefs and practices.

The superstitious nature of the people became manifest at the ziarat of Shah Hamadan in village Mitrogam (Pulwama). It was obligatory for every family to present five seers (kilograms) of rice and a cock to the shrine which was used for Bandar (community feast) at the shrine. The people had termed it as Jabri Bandar (forced feast) and they were not happy in celebrating it.

1. G. H. Khan, op. cit., p. 147.

However, the saints never preached any such thing which was against Islam. Their teaching were quite contradictory to that which was preached by the Pirs and mujavirs. These people have been greatly criticised by many saints like Shaikh Nur-ud-Din Rishi. There are many references to show that many people left this job voluntarily.
it. They hesitated to pay further expenses (nazru-niyaz) for 
Bander. All this shows the tradition oriented nature of the 
people. Even Moorcraft while visiting the Valley wrote of the 
Kashmiris as being superstitious and ignorant.

The whole Valley was rich in superstitions and there was 
not a mountain, river or spring which had not some quaint legend 
attached to it. Kaumude writes, "The Kashmir hills and mountains, 
lakes and rivers, according to legends and Mahatmyas, are the 
sacred abodes of nagas heavenly figures, thereby serving as media 
for the fulfilment of the pious mission, i.e. the washing away 
of the sins of the faithful." For example in pargana Devsar 
there was a spring called Pahlu. Whoever was willing to know the 
prospects of his future, filled an earthen vessel with boiled 
rice and closed its mouth having written his name on its top and 
threw it into the spring. After a period of years time on the 
same day the vessel floated on the surface, if the rice was found 
fragrant and warm, the year was considered prosperous, but if it 
was filled with clay or mud it was considered as a sign of bad 
omen.

1. Shiraza Mehjoor Number, J&K Academy of Art, Culture and 
Languages, August, 1904, p. 78.
2. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 273.
The people considered saints particularly deceased ones more powerful in granting the boons. That is why they entered the shrine (where the saint was buried, where a relic of his was ensconced) barefooted. They smear their bodies, throats and chest with the clay, raised their heads and hands towards the shrine, went round the shrine, wept and bowed their heads in homage to the saint. The people of Kashmir believe that the visit to the shrine would secure the object of their wishes, women could be vouchsafed, children, and the litigant would win the case. The people believed that the ointment made from the fuller's earth found at the shrine of saint Nur-ud-Din at Rishipura in Kothar Valley could cure the sick. The Muslims approached the shrine with great reverence. The pirs and mujavirs attached to the shrines brought the people to believe that the disease and other atrocities were not caused by germs but these occurred owing to the displeasure of saints. That is why Kashmiris regarded cholera to be the result of disrespect to the shrine. The pirs left no stone unturned to make the people superstitious for their vested interests. They gave birth to some new innovations and new superstitions. As already

1. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 288.
2. Ibid., pp. 289-90.
3. Ibid., p. 293.
referred to, small-pox was said to be caused by goddess Sheetal. Occasionally the pirs attributed its out-break to some evil spirit (gin). As and when the afflicted came to the shrine for relief the pir at once assumed the functions of a physician, judge, and what not because of his connections with the shrine or the khangah. When the requirements of the devotees were met such as when a child took birth, it became obligatory for the family of the new-born to take the child to the shrine along with some nazrana (offering) and party remained grateful to the mujavirs of the shrine for all time to come. The Kashmiris took their children to the shrine where the boon had been sought and granted and there they cut off the child's first locks of hair. The people believed that if this ceremony was performed elsewhere the child would die or would become blind. The shrines commonly known for this purpose were the ziarat of Nur-ud-Din at Chrar, and ziarat of Baba Payam-ud-Din at Ranbua (Gulmarg). The child was given a name particularly on the occasion of aqiqah (the ceremony of first hair cutting).

It must be explained that the child was not named by his mother or father. They were made to believe that if they themselves gave the name to the baby it would make the life of

1. Sheetal devi is the deity who brings small-pox to the people according to the Hindu tantrik system. Sheetal devi is notorious and known as shootulbud by the Muslims and Mon by Pandits of Kashmir and no meat is prepared in the house when a child suffers from small-pox to please the deity.

2. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 296.
the child very hard in future. That is why the child was given name by the pir. It is also worthy to note that while giving the baby a name the pirs had full consideration of the name of the month in which the boy was born. The pir produced certain names which though apparently peculiar indicated local influence of the personality cult and implied also the respect for the saint. Thus a boy born in the month of Ramzan, Shaban, or Rajab would in all likelihood be named Ramza, Shaban or Rajab respectively. A boy born in the month in which the great saint died was often named after the saint. Thus Sultan was probably the name given to the boy who was born in the month in which the great saint Mehboob-ul-Alam had died.

The pirs of Kashmir always kept the people in the dark. They made the people believe that they could not do anything against the will of the pir nor do anything that might violate the sanctity of the shrine. They made a great display of their veneration when they approached the shrine. Lawrence related an eye witness story which reads as:-

1. While constructing the house or doing marriage it was conditional for the people to consult the pirs. They sometimes changed the programme of their murids altering the length, breadth and location of the house. So was case with marriage. They before going for marriage went to seek permission of the pir and see sitarbagna.

2. The pirs considered many things while christening the babies of others and not their own. This accounts for the vast difference in the nomenclature of the laity (common) and that of the pirs.
"No man will dare to pass a shrine on horse-back, and I once saw a striking example of the danger of neglecting this rule. A marriage party was crossing a stream above which stood the shrine of a saint. All of them dismounted and passed over the bridge, but the father of the bridegroom, with the bridegroom in his arms rode boldly over. The bridge were precipitated into the stream, where they lay struggling. I ran up and rebuked the crowd for not assisting the sufferers, but they looked on gloomily and said the man richly deserved his fate."¹

Such feelings generated superstitious beliefs which took a deep root in the minds of the gullible Kashmiris. The Kashmiri Muslims followed many customs and superstitions even while they are out of station. On the anniversary of a saint's death men will abstain from food, and Kashmiris far may in India observe these fasts.²

The parties who entered business partnership took oaths at shrines in order to run their enterprise honestly. If any person lost anything, he took the suspect person to the shrine, where he was made to take an oath in the name of the saint with his face towards the shrine. It was so because the people believed in the sanctity of oaths taken at such places.³ The people were

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1. Lawrence, op. cit., pp. 286—287.
2. Ibid.,
3. Ibid., p. 294. There were and still are some established shrines meant for the purpose. The shrine like Pakherpora, Aadahoma and many others were considered effective and meaningful for oath taking.
absolute fatalists. They considered that their misery stemmed from their ill fate (taqdir). Therefore, to ward off ill fate they resorted to shrines. Though nobody knew anything about his future nonetheless his own superstitious nature made him narrow-minded and timid.

The people of Kashmir tied chords at shrines in order to achieve their material ends. The tying of chords was so common among the people that mystic poetry could not even leave it untouched. There were many trees particularly in the neighbourhood of shrines where strings were fixed. These trees were considered sacred and were used by the people as a source of help. Even the intellectuals did not hesitate in bowing before shrine. They joined their palms in a standing posture and sought many favours in confidence. The students, the unemployed and many others tied chords for the fulfillment of their respective aims. After the aim was fulfilled the chords were untied. They arranged feasts and distributed tahar (cooked rice) as a token of happiness and joy. The tahar was sometimes taken to the shrine and was distributed among the pilgrims.

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1. M. D. Sufi, op. cit., p. 244.
2. Aziz Ahmad Qureshi, op. cit., p. 95.
3. The ritual is known as dash-i-gandin and dash-i-mutchravin in Kashmiri.
4. It consisted of three items namely turmeric, oil and rice. It was distributed equally among the people present on the occasion. The children were mostly fond of such things. Sometimes the dogs availed themselves of the function. It is interesting to note that the dreadful and dangerous dreams were sometimes followed by the distribution of Tahar.
The constant and regular practices performed at shrines enlarged the scope of superstitions. The shrines were raised to the height of supernatural power centres. This was all contrary to the principles and teachings of the saints. The belief in superstitions gave rise to the warning, which says:

"Do not recite and relate the shrine;
Do what the saint did."

Among the Muslims the services of a priest or mujavir were required and sought all the time. The conception of family pirs and Rishis grew to such an extent that the people flocked and hovered around the house of their pir and Rishi to seek redress of their troubles. The pir would give them an amulet (tawiz)¹, which the murids put around their necks or somewhere else as per the directions of the preceptor. The pirs in rural areas also gave fatlas which were to be put in a fire-pot and the recipient had to put his face close to the smoke though it was a health hazard.

We can say that the people wanted peace and blessing through an easy method, and they found it in visiting the shrines. They believed that by approaching the shrine or the saint they would gain the merit of their dedication to the deceased saint. They heard the pirs with great reverence whether it was beneficial.

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¹ M. I. Khan, op. cit., p. 104.
or otherwise. To speak before the pir was to commit highest
sin, unless directed by him the aspirant was not allowed to speak,
to eat anything without bowing to the tomb at the shrine. Each
pir had his own way of dealing and communicating with the people.
The responsibility rested with the pir as long as that relation
continued between the two. Like the bee greedy for honey, which
moves from flower to flower, the disciple too in a bid to get
comfort moved from shrine to shrine and implored the pir.

To conclude, it could be said that the pirs and mujavirs
have striven hard to make the people superstitious for their own
ends. And the result is that superstitions and ignorance are now
ingrained in the very nature of the Kashmiris. No seed can sprout
with the AC being a fertile soil to nurture the seed. Likewise
superstitions could not have flourished in Kashmir if the common
people of Kashmir had not been gullible and their minds credulous.
Hence the cunning self interest of the mujavirs and the ignorance
and blind credulity of the people together conspired to breed and
promote superstition among the people of Kashmir.