CHAPTER VII
THE DEVOTEES
This Chapter deals with the types of devotional activities, the analysis of the annual festival in terms of saint, disciple and devotee relationship. It also includes the composition of the pilgrims and the pilgrimage. The role played by the dargāh in bringing mutual inter-action between different faiths in the region is highlighted through case studies.
Devotees form an important component in the trichomatic understanding of a Sacred Complex. As a powerful saint, Sahul Hameed Nagore Andawar has a large following in the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the Southern districts have a sizable concentration of devotees. The cities of Madras, Madurai, Tanjaur, Tiruchirapalli, Mallapuram, Ponnani, Tiruvananthapuram, Mettupalem, and Vellore, have a large number of devotees. The relation between devotees and the deity at the sacred centre will be of several type depending upon the ritual tradition.

Devotion is a very common phenomenon in all areas of the world and in most religious traditions. In the religious sphere, devotion is ardent affection, piety, dedication, reverence, respect and loyalty, love for or to some object, person, spirit of deity deemed sacred holy or venerable (Eliade, 1987). Devotion may also be thought of as action, such as worship, praying, and making religious vows.

Objects of Devotion

The extensiveness of devotion in religion becomes evident when the variety of objects of devotion is considered. While deities are usually considered the principle objects of devotion, a great many other things are also given devotion in the world's religions. Various people, living or dead,
also become objects of devotion or the focus of devotional cults. The examples, for this are the Gurus in Hinduism, Saints in Christianity; Thirthankaras in Jainism and the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas in Buddhism. In the present context, the Sufi saint of Sahul Hameed Nagore Andawar's tomb is an object of devotion not only for the Muslim but also for the non-Muslim devotees who visit the abode of the saint and revere him from the inception of the dargah. Though this kind of worship of divine personages is abandoned in Islam, but directly or indirectly the Sufi tradition supports this kind of treatment for the benefit of the devotees.

Relics associated with sacred personages are the objects of devotion in many religions. It is true in case of the present study, where the sacred objects such as Baba Ki Sangali, Kombu Tengai, Chotta, Kanta, Taj, and Tajvi and the like are revered by the visiting devotees at the dargah of Nagore saint. It is believed that these sacred objects associated with the saint have miraculous powers and hence, they are physically, touched by the devotees, as if the devotees feel that they are getting the blessings directly from the saint himself.

A great variety of places are also deemed sacred and receive devotion. For example, rivers in Hinduism and mountains in 'Shinto' religion are often revered by the devotees. Some times, certain cities, play an important role
in the origin and development of many religions and often themselves became the centres of pilgrimage. We can name a few such as Varanasi for Hindus, Jerusalem for both Jews and Christians, Makkah for Muslims. It brings a special merit to Muslims if they go as pilgrimage here. In case of Sufis the tombs of Sufi saints become the substitutes for those who cannot afford to the pilgrimage to Makkah. In a few cases the entire geographical area or country becomes the object of veneration. For example, the Indian sub-continent as a whole is an object of veneration for Hindus. They consider the earth as Mother and give the same respect which is due to their own mother. In case of the present study, all the geographical places visited by the saint have become sacred to his disciples. They go to these places in course of their tour.

Devotion often focuses on ritual or cult objects. Sacred texts are also objects of devotion in some religions. The Torah in Judaism and the Adi Granth in Sikhism are the best examples of this category. In case of Muslims the holy Text of Qur’an is an object of great veneration. Whenever they open and close the Text they touch it to their eyes and also keep it in a neat and clean place.

Types of Devotion

Devotion is of several types and it takes place in different physical settings. It is seen with different
attendant moods and within different kinds of communities. It is often meditative, emotionally disciplined and subdued; and consists primarily of the wilful direction of one's attention to the object of devotion.

Devotion may also express itself in emotional frenzy and passion. In Sufi tradition, it is usually accompanied by music and dance, and much of Sufi devotional poetry is intensely passionate.

The setting of devotion may be quite formal. The temples, churches and mosques are the places where the devotees concentrate their minds and hearts in the Almighty. In such settings the devotion may be highly formalized as per the rules and regulations framed by the sacred specialists. In its formal expression, devotion is often congregational. The best example for this category is the annual festival of the saint of Nagore, where tens of thousands of devotees assemble on the occasion to witness the sandal paste anointment ritual. On the other hand, devotion in such physical settings may also take the form of a lone individual performing an act of devotion to a special saint. In the present study, we have noted that though the congregation attended to the sandal anointment ritual, it is only the Khalifah, a lone individual will perform the act of sandal application to the tomb of saint. It symbolically
represents the act of all devotees, who have come for the celebration of the ritual.

Devotion may also be highly informal and unstructured. The best examples of this are the lives of famous people, who were great devotees. In our present study we have the case of a potter devotee of Nagore saint is a good example here. Through the case study it is recorded that this potter devotee for every act of his, he used to recite the name of the saint once. The potter devotee was characterized by spontaneous out bursts of passionate devotion in nearly any setting.

Devotional communities i.e., groups formed primarily as a result of, or in order to cultivate devotion, also vary from the highly structured to the very unstructured. For example, the religious mendicants of Sufi tradition in which devotion plays a central role, is the best example of highly structured devotional communities. The South Indian devotee - saints of Shiva (the Nayanars) and Vishnu (the Alvars), in comparison, were part of un-structured traditions in which individual poet-devotee-saints wandered the country side or resided at temples and sang devotional hymns to their Lord (Eliade, 1987). The devotional community may extend to no further than an individual saint and his or her admirers, students, followers or devotees.
Devotion and Religious Practices

Devotion is often associated with or expressed in the content of several common types of religious practices. They are as prayer, meditation, pilgrimage, mysticism and so on. Now let us discuss them in detail.

Prayer

Devotion often takes the form of a prayer. In prayer, a deity is entreated, supplicated, adored, or praised in a mood of devotional service or attentiveness. Moving and dramatic expressions of devotion are found in poems and hymns that articulate the prayers of devotees to the divine, collective prayer, common in many religions is another example of formalized devotion.

Worship

As a formal expression of homage, service, reverence, praise or petition to a deity, worship is closely related to, or expressive of devotion (Elade, 1987). Much worship represents a formal and structured expression of devotion. The prescribed daily and Friday prayers in Classical Religion of Islam, called Namaz (Salat) for example, are essentially devotional in nature. In Hindu worship (puja), which is performed in both temple and domestic settings and which may be performed by an individual or by large groups. The basic pattern of ritual actions denotes personal attendance upon and service of the deity, by the worshippers. The deity is
symbolically bathed, fanned, fed, and entertained by the priest or directly by the devotees. It is common in worship to make an offering to the deity, which again is often done in the spirit of devotion. In the same way the Nagore saint is also worshipped by way of offering the objects such as flags, and sandal paste annointment. It appears that these practices are borrowed from the Hindu tradition. Some forms of worship are primarily occasions for devotees to express together their devotion to their God. This is the case, for example, with Hindu Kirthana and Bhajana gatherings of devotees at which songs are sung in praise of a deity. The setting is usually informal and the mood warm and emotional. The quawwali songs sung by the devout musicians come under this type.

Pilgrimage

In many religions pilgrimage is a very popular undertaking, and for many pilgrims their journey is an act of devotion. Undertaking a long trip to a sacred place is a physical prayer. Through the pilgrimage the pilgrim may be making a special appeal to the deity or expressing gratitude for the blessings he received from the deity. In Islām a pilgrimage to Makkah, is as one of the fundamental acts of submission incumbent upon all Muslims.

The pilgrim may be making the pilgrimage simply to steep himself in an atmosphere of piety and devotion; that is far
more intense than in ordinary circumstances. The feeling of community that arises among pilgrims is often strong, and the entire journey, which can last for several weeks, may turn into a devotional extravaganza - as reported. In the present study the pilgrimage to the dargah of Nagore by the Arcot Nawab IV, is a best example, which took four months time. It was praised by Nainar (1950) as a state pilgrimage. The pilgrimage to the tomb of Nagore saint is known as Ziyarāt and the annual festival is the event of the dargah which is considered by the pilgrims an occasion of pilgrimage.

Meditation

Meditation is used to perfect, deepen, sharpen or enhance devotion. A common meditative technique used to express or enhance devotion is the constant repetition of the deity’s name or a short prayer to the deity. In the present context, the Sūfīs, mendicant functionaries invoke the names of Allāh in general and the names of the saint of Nagore in particular over and over as part of their meditation. It denotes the recollection that refers to devotional techniques.

Mysticism

In Sufism the term fana describes a point in the devotee/mystic’s spiritual quest in which all feeling of
individuality and ego fall away and the Sūfī is overwhelmed by Allāh. Mystical union, then, represents the ultimate goal of many devotees in several different traditions, and the mystical path is often understood as being the highest path a devotee can embark upon.

Social action and charity:

In some religious traditions charitable service to one's fellow human beings is considered the most perfect form of devotion to the divine. In the present study, the Muslim devotees, who offer food for the poor, irrespective of caste and creed, in the name of saint. The food which is offered to the saint, is considered Tabrook i.e., sanctified material, and devotees in great number stand in Queve to get this food. Now-a-days, the devotees have adopted a new technique where-in they usually buy tokens from hotels and give them to the poor. These hotels will be the same places where the order is placed by the patron devotee for the donation of food. Like this charity is shown to the poor by way of food, money, clothes, and the like.

The relation between devotees and the deity at the sacred centre will be of several types depending upon the ritual tradition. The religions which are monotheistic such as Islām and Christianity have God lodged in heaven to look into the affairs of their devotees through their intermediary - prophet or messenger or saint. Based on this
ground the devotees believe that the saint of Sahul Hameed Nagore Andavar is an intermediator between man and Allah. He was considered a companion of Allah, hence, the devotees throng to his abode in large number for his blessings. On the contrary the religions such as Hinduism which is polytheistic, has several gods and goddesses to look after the different aspects of man. Often some god comes to earth and even resides along with man to look after the devotees. As a result the god and devotees will have direct contact and often they may be interpreted by priests - the sacred specialists.

In view of the presence of a large number of gods in Hinduism they are taken by the devotees in several levels such as personal, family, caste, community or settlement, clan and so on. This also requires a devotee to worship a bunch of them. Similarly, when a devotee is not satisfied with his deity, he can take the help and protection of some other deity. Like this the gods are classified into favourite or personal deities, family or clan deities, community or caste deities, village deities and so on. The family or clan deity is one with whom the devotee interacts or gets by being born in that group. So one cannot change this deity and he is also traditionally linked. So, from time to time the devotee makes a pilgrimage to the sacred centre and offers food, gifts and a worship, praying for health, wealth and well being. Since one is linked to the
deity like he can not change when the deity becomes unfavourable towards him. So, what they do is in addition to their linked deity, they also select deity of their liking, who is active and powerful and they offer worship and gifts to such deity. Gurumurthy (1995) says even praying for a favour with a deity by a devotee, is by tradition. Begging a favour from a deity to whom he is not linked is untraditional. Like this we can classify the devotees into two categories (1) those who have the deity as their family/clan deity and (2) those who have a deity as their favourite one.

But in case of the devotees of Nagore sacred centre there are a few peculiar situations. Firstly, this is a sacred centre of a saint and a human, who had only the extra-human powers and not supernatural. Secondly, this saint is a Sufi by faith and practice and has both Muslim and non-Muslim devotees. Thirdly, the sacred centre is housed in an abandoned Hindu temple and its ritual tradition flourished few centuries earlier to the coming of the saint here. Fourthly, the Sufi got not only the Hindu temple but also the Hindu devotees. The presence of a few Hindu religious practices such as playing of holy music at the time of ritual activities, lighting the holy lamps, taking out the holy cart procession, maintaining a temple elephant, and so on, have brought a lot of confusion to scholars. In addition to the above, the dargah area contains a water tank, which is a common feature among the Hindu temples in South India. It
looks like a temple, if one can ignore the abode of the saint. Even the suffix of the title to the name of the saint Andavar, supports the Hindu style of referring to god in the local parlance. The sacred specialists of the dargāh claim that they are Muslims and attend to prayers regularly in the mosque. Of the devotees of the saint the Muslims, after their visit to the tomb, also visit the mosque and offer prayers. Like this, the situation in the dargāh presents a peculiar combination.

Another interesting thing is that, of the devotees of the saint, a few castes such as the Rowther, Maraikkar Dudekula, kayalar and Labbai et al, are found in two faiths - Hinduism and Islâm. This happened since a section of Hindu castes were drawn to Sufism owing to historical regions which prevailed at that time. Similarly the different dargāh structures belong to Hindu tradition and also the devotees of the deity. Since the temple was taken over by the Sūfis, the low caste Hindus who had only the ritual affiliation and no role to play in the ritual activities of the temple, continue to vow their affiliation to the dargāh. Like this today we have a few devotees who belong to one community but affiliated to two different religious faiths - Hinduism and Islâm. For them it is not important as to who is the god lodged in the dargāh structure, since their affiliation is to the institution and the land grant given to them. So, they continue to visit and offer their respect and gifts to Him. Since the dargāh has a lot of Hindu devotees the same old
celebrations, customs and offerings are retained for the benefit of the non-Muslim devotees. However, the Muslim devotees as a process of Islamization visit the mosque and even offer prayer there during their stay in the dargah.

Devotees - Muslim and non-Muslim, can be divided into two categories-viz., those who have Nagore Andavar as their family god (Kandan Ki Wali) and they are treated as traditional devotees (Paramparai Bhakthargal) in the present context. The other category of devotees, are those who have the Nagore Andavar as their favourite deity and in the present study, they are treated as devotees in general. In terms of vows, the offerings they make and the rituals they perform, there is significant difference between the two. The traditional devotees are under a number of obligations towards the Mujawar and Adhinam, who are their fictitious kin. Their families have been visiting the dargah for several generations. They carry the offerings during the annual festival. These offering objects such as flags, chadar, models or toy ship, palanquin, chariot, fish, engine, and the like are worshipped during the flag procession of the saint. These models are later kept at the home of the devotee, after the annual festival and revered. This worship is in the manner in which the Hindus offer votive objects to the deities, in the Nagore region. The Paramparai Bhakthargal can not change their saint, even if they find him not favourable. In such cases, they take another saint who is
active and powerful. For example, the Sufi saint of Tiruchirapalli Nathar Wali, is a very ancient saint and believed to be the contemporary of the Prophet. The tradition relates that the saint of Nagore, during his visit to Tiruchirapalli, stayed at the dargah of Nathar Wali and had spiritual discourses with him (Hasan, 1985). Though the saint of Nagore is junior to Nathar Wali, the local devotees consider the Nagore saint more powerful spiritually. Hence, the Nagore saint receives more devotees and also throughout the year.

However, the relation of Sufi Muslim devotees with the saint is a linked one permanently. Traditionally, they keep a sacred object of the saint such as a photograph of the tomb, a shawl, or even the model of a votive object in their houses and regularly worship them, the way the Hindus do. They also undertake pilgrimage on all auspicious occasions and specially on the day of annual festival. They give the name of the saint to their children and also take part in the ritual celebrations which are observed locally and at the shrine of Nagore Andavar. The saint is locally called Meeran Sahib and his anniversary is known as the flag or annual festival. In rural area the anniversary is celebrated as the Jhandel (flag) festival. The Gyarmi Ki Jhande is celebrated in commemoration of the Sufi saint Syed Abdul Quadir Jelani of Bagadad. The saint of Nagore’s death anniversary is also called the Quadir Wali Ke Jhande festival (Saheb, 1995:15).
The colour of flags used during the festival of the Sufi saint of Syed Abdul Quadir Jelami is green. The flags offered to the Sufi saint of Nagore are Saffron in colour. It is believed that the non-Muslims who were attracted to Sufi saint adopted the custom of offering saffron colour flags to the saint of Nagore; Which was a Hindu practice. In rural area, traditionally these flags are taken in a procession from the devotee's house and along the streets and later hoisted on a specific tree which is known as Jhande Ka Jhad. The South Indian Sufi Muslims especially from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, observe these flag festive rituals not only during the occasion of the saint's death anniversary but also at the time of commencement of any auspicious occasion such as circumcision of boys and marriage of both boys and girls. It is believed by the devotees that the flag ritual gives the same merit that one gets by visiting the dargah of Nagore.

An analysis of the notions behind the colour of the flags and the flags themselves shows that the green coloured ones are offered to denote the success. While seeking prosperity the saffron colour flags are offered. It is observed that those devotees who are unable to attend the flag festival at Nagore, can perform the same at their respective places and get the benefit. At local level devotees offer only the flags in honour of the saint and not the sandal paste, since it is a unique feature of Nagore dargah alone. The flag offering tradition is observed
throughout South India, even in Singapore and Sri Lanka also (Ibid, 1989).

Those devotees who are not able to attend the flag festival at Nagore in person, can get the same merit by sending their offerings either in cash or kind and through the pilgrims of their locality who attend it. Often this amount never reached the dargāh. So, now the dargāh management has devised a new method wherein the devotees can offer their donations and payments to the dargāh trust by remitting it to an account direct in the bank. In turn, the management will send them the sanctified material by post.

The history of the flag ceremony at the dargāh throws some light on the history of the land. The flag festival according to one version, has been borrowed from Hinduism. Another version is that it came from Arabia. The two versions are as follows: The first version recorded in the Tanjavur District Records (Hemingway, 1906), states that it was introduced by the Maratha Kings of Tanjavur. They were the devotees of the saint and whenever their vows of victory and prosperity were fulfilled they offered flags. A full flag post, richly and elaborately decorated, was installed on the minarets of the dargāh, to mean a rich and prosperous dargāh; commanding royal patronage. It was a sign of pomp and pride also. The Nagore Andavar is the greatest of the spiritual kings in the region and the dargāh is his palace.
Arabian version told by the sacred specialists of the dargāh, who are the lineal descendants and also by the disciples of the saint, is that the flags are the symbolic representation of Ali, the prophet's son-in-law. Hence, the flags are embodied with the emblem of Zulphikar, two swords and one shield. This confirms that the dargāh is meant for the propagation of the message of Allāh and the descendants are the true preachers of the saint (For more detail about the types of flags, size, history, shape and given by whom, see Chapter No. 3).

There is a different version prevalent among the devotees of the saint regarding the flags and the lizard emblem on it. When the saint arrived at the area, it was already occupied by a demon. He used to swallow animals and human beings, alive. When the terrorised people approached the saint for help he agreed to save them. Accordingly when he went to kill the demon, he took several forms and it is told that he was killed, when he was in the form of a lizard. However, the dying demon requested the saint to show mercy on him and allow him to stay in the area till the last day of the world and it was also granted by the saint. As a mark of the grant of his wish a lizard form is used on the flags, while offering the flags in honour of the saint by the devotees. This version however was not accepted by the descendants of the saint, who are in the processes of Islamization and argue that the shield and swords symbol is more appropriate on the flags.
Devotees make payments, provide due hospitality and assistance to the Faqirs and the Adhinams when they visit their villages. Any lapse on their part is considered a ritual offence against the saint, since it is believed that they are other forms of the saint or his representatives. All these are obligatory on the part of the Muslim devotees.

Treatment and ritual fee collected by the Adhinam and Mujawar at the shrine from the devotees and the disciples, differs. The non-Muslim devotees are treated as their subjects and the disciples are their guests. This is similar to the findings of Gurumurthy (1989) and Tarachand (1987) among the devotees of Renuka-Yellamma deity. When the devotees of the saint visit the shrine they first report themselves to Mujawar and Adhinam. In fact, they were pursued by the Faqirs, to visit the shrine on pilgrimage. As they approach, Adhinam consults his records or memory and snubs them for the delay in coming to the shrine and for lack of concern, reverence or devotion to the saint. The devotees are supposed to visit the shrine regularly and also after attaining or gaining some thing significant in life.

In case of the disciples there is no need for them to go to Adhinam for ritual help. They are at liberty to go to the saint on their own. There is no demand of gifts, ritual offerings and fee from them.

The belief is that even today the saint has miraculous powers with him and helps his devotees. It is further
believed that the saint will not delay in granting the wishes of the devotees. As a result, devotees always visit the dargah with their prayers.

The tradition shows that the saint went to the people as a giver and always fulfilled their desires. After his death his disciples are going around the society and spreading the message of God. As a tradition, they came to the dargah only once in a year to receive spiritual instructions from the saint.

The annual festival of the dargah starts from the first day of the 6th Muslim month and lasts for 14 days—till the 6th day of the 7th month. However, for the spiritual disciples, it is a festival of 40 days. From the point of disciples, the festival is divided into three phases symbolically representing the Pre-Mourning, Actual Mourning and Actual Festival period.

Pre-Mourning Period:

The myth says that by the time the disciples came to meet the saint he was dead. The mourning period of his death lasts from 1st day to the 9th day of the festival. So, they assemble at the abode of the saint to mourn and meditate.

Actual Mourning Period:

After the death of the saint the mourning period starts. This lasts for two days—that is on the 10th and 11th day of
the festival. After hearing the news of the saint's departure the devotees from Nagapatnam arrange for a funeral ceremony on behalf of the saint's lineal descendants. According to Islamic tradition, on the 3rd day after the death the Ziyarāt was also arranged to the tomb.

But the disciples of the saint do not agree with the lineal descendants. For them, this period commences from the 11th day evening and lasts till the 40th day, when they depart from the dargāh. They believe that Sufi saints do not die and death does not mark the termination of life, but a new stage of saintly existence comes to him. Like wise, they revive the saint in the form of a Faqīr Pīr. This is observed by the disciples as the day of resurrection of the saint. So, this day is a time for spiritual discourse. They get spiritual instructions from the Faqīr Pīr, later on that day. Not only that they stay at the dargāh for 40 days but also perform meditation, as per the Sufi tradition.

Actual Festival Period:

The day of resurrection is observed as a festival and rejoiced by the devotees. Hence, they rejoice the occasion by way of offerings of sacred Flags and Sandal Paste from Nagapatnam and ceremoniously this is anointed to the saint by his lineal descendants. The sacred flags and the holy Sandal Paste Chariot procession arrive to the dargāh after passing through the streets of Nagapatnam and Nagore. This
brings the residential areas of the town into contact with the dargāh. Another auspicious movement is the ceremonial arrival of the shawl from the devotee family.

The 10th day activities of the annual festival mark the end of the annual celebration. It is customary among the Tamil Muslims to imprint the Walls of their houses with the impressions of the hand in sandal paste. This is done with the belief that this would ward-off evil spirit and the diseases they bring.

The Descendants

The descendants after performing the ritual of sandal annointment to the saint, remove the flags from the minarets. The stay of the disciples for 40 days is considered the mourning period, Chehilam² as per the religious tradition. Accordingly they also conduct the 40th day ritual to the saint. It is believed that the departed soul stays in the material world for 40 days and with the performance of this ritual, it moves to the next world and merges with Allāh. Like this the 40 days ritual is conducted by reading Qurān, offering prayers and send supplications Dī'arud³ to the departed souls.

The devotees

The devotees after the completion of the sandal annointment ritual, visit the saint to offer their gift
offerings and respect to the saint and start returning to their homes. However, the secular purposes of attending the annual festival is also there. Apart from seeing the grand processions arranged as a part of the festival they also meet friends and relatives here and also purchase, religious and household objectives in the place arranged.

The disciples:

The Faqīr Jamas when they came to the dargāh, are treated as guests and are provided with all facilities.

It is not only because they are the disciples of the saint, but also they are a link between the spiritual and the material world; through whom the descendants get their livelihood. Another belief is that if they fed the Faqīrs and the poor in turn they get the blessings of Allāh.

Sacred Specialists and Inter-linkages

In the course of performing their roles, the sacred specialists such as the Mujāwar and Adhīnam established socio-economic and religious contacts with outsiders. This brings the Spiritual Saint-Devotee type of relationship as follows.

**SPIRITUAL SAINT-DEVOTEE RELATIONSHIP**

A type of permanent relationship is found between the disciples of the saint and the devotees. Apart from their
contact at family level when the Faqīrs visit the devotees at their homes, a type of special contacts is also established between them when both come to attend the annual festival.

The annual festive occasion at any Muslim shrines is called Urs. The meaning of this Arabic term is 'marriage', or 'nuptials' (Platts, 1977:720). In the Nagore dargāh the annual festival is termed as Kanduri instead of Urs. Because in case of the Sūfī saints, death does not being an end to them and they will be active even after their death. According to Sūfī tradition the relationship between the saint and Allāh is often expressed in the idiom of a bride longing for her lover and during an Urs festival devotees therefore, celebrate the union of the saint with the divine or perform this spiritual marriage to Allāh. While these beliefs are generally associated with Muslim saint cults, the manner in which they are articulated differ according to the local version of Islām practised. Ahmed Riza Khan (1995) described the Prophet as a bridegroom and during the annual festival the meeting of the saint with the Allāh is viewed as the union of the two.

The belief is that there is an immortal element in man which is known as soul and that lives on even after the 'death' of the mortal body. Or it continued to exist in a shadowy realm of the dead. Belief in resurrection presupposes either a monastic view of man, which implies that man as a whole disappears in death and is then revived to a
new existence, or a dualistic, view, according to which the body dies and whereas the soul lives on and is later united with the body and becomes a renewed being (Encyclopedia of Religion, 1975).

According to Qurān there is the resurrection (Yaumul Qiyamah) of every Muslim, on the day of standing-up (Chapter II:79). The Sufis use the term in a spiritual sense to denote the state of a man who, having counted himself dead to the world, "Stands up in a new life in Allāh" (Hughes, 1973). At the shrine of Bava Gor, the notion of marriage is symbolical but vividly expressed during the Urs by observing rituals for the female 'saint' - 'Mai Mushra' (Helene Basu, 1995:164). In case of Soundatti Renuka-Yellamma tradition for example, the Jamadagni gets resurrected to life (cf. Gurumurthy, 1995:170). But in case of the Nagore dargāh the situation is different. Here, the saint is revived in the form of a Pir and the ritual is known as the "installation of the Pir". It is performed at the place where the funerary prayers were performed over the saint's body, by the members of Malang Faqir Jama. The founder of their Jama was one of the two first disciples of the saint who followed him during his tour to preach the divine message of Allāh. On that day in the evening, all the Trustees of the dargāh, the Khalifāh (ritual supervisor) of the dargāh, the five Faqīr Jamas and pilgrims, assemble near the Pir Mandapam, to install the spiritual saint. The Fatihāh is conducted and his two first
toes are tied with a fine thread. It is a must that he should be tied down like this for three days. During this period he also meditates by chanting the name of Allāh. He throws lemons at the devotees which they collect with great reverence. (The beliefs and practices related to the lemon and its significance are explained in the Chapter on Sacred performance).

Traditionally, the Faqīr Jamas have only spiritual roles to perform unlike the Mujāwar and Adhīnam, who have both secular and ritual roles. The latter serve as owners or share holders, Trustees, and Advisory Board members and also sacred specialists of the dargāh. At present all the Adhīnam are employees of the Waqf and paid by it. So, they are not entitled to receive any payments from the devotees for their services. In turn, all the offerings to the saint are supposed to be put into the collection boxes kept there. However, the traditional minded devotees continue to give the same to the Adhīnam. Now they are only the owners of the dargāh. In this capacity they get a share in the earnings of the dargāh in addition to the pay.

As stated by Vidyarthi (1961:130) the combined functioning of the three components of a sacred centre reflect Great as well as Little Tradition. The sacred specialists of a place of pilgrimage maintain a district style of life and transmit certain elements of Great tradition to the masses by popularising certain texts.
organising pilgrimages and officiating as the dargāh priests. Further, the sacred complex in general and sacred specialists in particular undergo modification and transformation as a result of general development into larger universe of civilization, of which they are a part.

In case of the dargāh, the position and status of mendicants have a specific place in the study of sacred complex. This aspect needed the attention and hence, adequate analysis was given. For the Nagore-e-sharief sacred complex mendicants had a special role and have been in existence from the times of Nagore saint. Owing to their local beliefs and connections, they were not allowed to participate in, or perform, any rituals but they had direct links with the local people and devotees. They have a supplementary role of interacting with the elements of Great and Little Traditions as has been stated earlier like visiting devotees regularly and keeping track of each and every thing which occurs in their families. Mendicants, like the Jamas in Nagore-e-Sharief tradition, are found in all religious traditions and occupy a peculiar position. They are agents of the shrine or priests, doing certain duty on payment. They perform their duties as a tradition and in turn receive alms from the devotees also. In terms of their status, they belong not to the category of the sacred specialists of the sacred centre, but mostly to that of devotees. In fact, they say as mendicants, they do not have
any creed or religious linkages, but have affiliation to the saint as per tradition. They claim that they were the original disciples at the sacred centre and were sent out by the saint. The mendicants under the circumstances are required to motivate and bring the devotees, on a pilgrimage by using threat of wrath or grace of the saint. An interlinkage with the devotees, the sacred specialists and also the dargah administration was needed at the time of growth of the Sacred Complex. Perhaps this category emerged with force with the blessings of the saint when he was alive and later, their existence becomes a tradition. Definitely they are playing their role rather effectively and in the manner of almost devotion to the cause of enhancing the dargah's prestige and continuance of tradition with out much benefit in the material and pecuniary sense. Like this the sacred specialists and spiritual mendicants of the shrine maintain relations with the devotees.

**PILGRIMS AND PILGRIMAGE**

Nagore saint is an active force and pilgrims come to dargah to seek his help to solve their problems. Apart from his tomb there are also a few other holy objects and places here which are associated with him. So, they come on pilgrimage to take vows, kiss his tomb, eat the chameli flower petals, which are spread on his tomb, touch the flags
and chadar, which are of great reverence. They also carry home the holy water, keep the wooden sandals on their head, travel thousands of miles, spend thousands of rupees, and eat the sacred food which is cooked and offered to the saint. Like this the places, objects and relics associated with the saint are revered by the pilgrims during their visits to the dargāh. It is evident from the data that tens and thousands of pilgrims visit the dargāh during the annual festival of the saint.

On the basis of a sample survey, the researcher was able to enumerate the number of pilgrims (200); who visited the dargāh in a day and classify them into several groups-on the basis of place, they came from, their education, occupation, religion and purpose of their visit. From Table No. 2 it is evident that pilgrims came from seven Indian states and one Union Territory. A few even came from foreign countries.

The second largest group of pilgrims who visit the dargāh is that of the Hindus (55) and from Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Andhra Pradesh. The third largest group of pilgrims is the Christians. Majority of them belonged to Tamil Nadu. Of the fifteen Christian pilgrims, six came here to offer worship to the saint. The remaining nine pilgrims said that they are tourists and since the dargāh is one of the tourist attractions in the region they visited.
It is evident from Table No. 2 that the home state of Tamil Nadu (63.64 percentage of Hindus and 43.08 Percentage of Muslims). Second the highest, Pondicherry scores the next place (27.27 Percentage of Hindus and 19.23 Percentage of Muslims) and Andhra Pradesh (10.77 Percentage of Muslims and 3.64 Percentage of Hindus) the third. The pilgrims from foreign countries included those from Sri Lanka (6.5 Per cent), Malaysia (2.31 Per cent), and Saudi Arabia (1.54 Per cent).

### Table 2

Distribution of pilgrims according to their religion and place of residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the State/Union territory/country</th>
<th>No. of pilgrims as per religions</th>
<th>% Muslims</th>
<th>% Hindus</th>
<th>% Christian</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.77</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>43.08</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>63.64</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27.27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample size: 200
Distribution of pilgrims according to occupation and religion

It is evident from Table No. 3 that more number of poor who are labourers and representing both (42.31 Percentage of Muslims) and (34.55 Percentage of Hindu) religions, come on pilgrimage. They are followed by farmers (36.36 Percentage of Hindus and 28.46 Percentage of Muslims) and 14.62 Percentage of Businessmen. It is also found that a sizable numbers of school and college teachers, students came on educational tour. A few government employees also visited the dargah.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Type of Occupation</th>
<th>No. of Muslims</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Govt. Service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>School Teacher</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36.36</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Painter</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.62</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Peon</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Businessmen</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Supervisor in mill</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is evident from Table No. 4 that more number of illiterate Muslim pilgrim (59.23 percent) visited the dargah. When compared to illiterate Hindus (29.09 percent). The data also suggest that 11.54 Percentage of Muslim and 9.09 Percentage of Hindu graduate pilgrims, visited the dargah with vows seeking employment.

It is found from Table No. 2 that pilgrims to the dargah belong to all religious faiths. However, Majority of them are Muslims (130) and also came from different parts of India and abroad.

It is noted that (43.64 Percentage of Hindus) literates are more in number when compared to (13.85 Percentage of Muslim) literate pilgrims. It is suggested that once the Muslims become literate they go to mosque. Hence, the literate Muslims are represented fewer in number compared to Hindus literates.
## Table 5

Distribution of motives of the pilgrims according to the religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Motives</th>
<th>No. of pilgrims as per religion</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>To participate in the Kanduri festival</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>flag hoisting ritual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>To participate in the Kanduri festival Chandana</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Koodu ritual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>To get mental peace</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>To fulfill the vow of Ghee lamp worship</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>To fulfill the vow of Aloe-wood worship</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>To pray for children</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14.54</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>To perform Mundan ceremony</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>To get good crops</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Success in Profession</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>To get spiritual benefit</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Motives</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Save in an accident</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Curing of diseases</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.23</td>
<td>12.73</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>To get relief from evil spirit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pray for employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>7.27</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Health of the Child</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Success in examination</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Shifted from earlier Dargah to the present Dargah as per the direction of the saint in a dream</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.46</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>To get Faqir hood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Success in Marriage</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Offer flag to the saint</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>On tour and other occasions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>7.27</td>
<td>26.67</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most important among the sacred centres of the Nagore dargah is the saint’s tomb. Table No. 5 shows that all the pilgrims, irrespective of their caste and creed paid a visit to it for one or other reasons. The purpose of worship can be categorised into three groups such as casual, specific, and miscellaneous reasons. A casual visit means paying a casual visit to the dargah without any vows or rituals to observe. There are the occassions on which the devotees visit dargah to participate in the procession of the annul festival. The percentage of Muslims (27.69) and Hindus (23.64) who participate in the Chandana Koodu ritual and the percentage of Muslims (18.46) and Hindus (9.09) in flag hoisting ceremonies, are significant in this case.

The specific reasons to visit the dargah are related to certain problems that confront the individual worshipper or his family. In this context the devotees are specific in their motives to come on pilgrimage and offer something after the fulfilment of vows or to make fresh vows. Under this category the material motives included are to: pray for being blessed with a child (3.08 percentage of Muslims and 3.64 percentage of Hindus), offer Mundan (5.14 percentage), help to celebrate the marriage of son or daughter (7.12 percentage), get relief from evil spirits (5.14 percentage), perform ghee lamp worship (3.13 percentage), Aloe-wood worship (2.59 percentage) and pray for success in examination (4.9 percentage) and so on.
Of the motives to get cured from ailment by both the (12.73 percentage of Hindus) and (9.23 percentage of Muslims) reported significantly. Vow taking for good health is most prominent among the Hindu devotees of the dargãh.

It is also observed that the dargãh is used as a means to get contemplation. The five Faqîr Jamas who attend the annual festival of the saint every year, come under this category. They are also the living examples of spiritual line of disciples of the saint. It is even supported in saint installation during the annual festival. The devotees who failed to get a cure from a minor shrine can approach a major one. The percentage of such cases reported in this study come to 8.46. Most of the devotees reported here for a favour had shifted their alliance from a minor shrine by name Masthan Wali Dargãh in Andhra Pradesh. A few Faqîrs visit the dargãh to receive spiritual instructions from the saint. Such Faqîrs numbered 3.85 percentage.

Apart from the spiritual and material purposes for pilgrimages there are a few other purposes, which we have termed as miscellaneous. These include such purposes as acquiring merit and also to enjoy the scenic beauty of the place. These reflect a combination of both sacred and secular matters. Thus, the Nagore dargãh holds a place of primacy over other local, regional, peninsular and universal sacred centres, in terms of its efficacy in attracting hundreds and thousands of devotees.
It is evident from the above descriptions that there are two sorts of pilgrims - those who come to the dargāh for material benefits and others for spiritual benefits. The pilgrims also belong to different states and castes and creeds. They all stay together and observe ritual activities as per the customs practised there. These acts reflect a process of continuity, compromise and combination of Great and Little Traditions while achieving their personal and divine needs by way of observing sacred performances.

Pilgrimage to the dargāh

It has already been told that the saint of Nagore had forecast the day of his death to his son. He had instructed him further as to where to bury him and how to perform the funeral bath and also the prayer. He had advised his son to visit his grave on the third day after the death and to greet him and if he got the reply, then only he was to stay at Nagore. Otherwise, he should go away from there.

According to his prediction the saint passed away on the 10th day of Jamathal Akhir month, 978 Hijiri (on Friday in the 6th month of 1570 A.D.). According to his instructions the son arranged for the funeral rituals. When he kept the corpse on a particular place for funeral bath, immediately there gathered clouds in the sky and brought heavy showers. This served as the holy bath to the corpse. The spot where this water was collected became a sacred pond and has now become known as Safa Kund, today. Devotees believe that all
Skin diseases will be cured if they take a bath in this water. Today the Ya Hussain Palli dargāh has come up on the spot where the bath was given. The spot where the saint’s body was placed to perform the last prayer, has become the Pir Mandapam. It is here the customary Pir installation ritual is conducted, during the annual festival. The place where the saint’s body rests today became the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Nagore dargāh.

The myth says that three days after the death and according to the instructions of the saint, his son visited the tomb and greeted him. He promptly got the reply from the saint. So according to the instructions he decided to stay at Nagore, for the rest of his life. This visit is considered the first ever pilgrimage made to the saint’s tomb. Later on, devotees who are considered the descendants of this son started coming on pilgrimage to the shrine, for material needs.

It is propagated that even after his death the saint continued to perform miracles. The saint’s lineal son, who had immense faith in his father’s supernatural powers, had told his father’s followers to continue to have faith in him and pray at the tomb for his favour.

THE DARGĀH

In the beginning the fishermen community i.e. the MaraiKKar Muslims of Nagore, with the permission of the
lineal son of the saint, erected a thatch roof over the tomb. That year the first ever annual death ceremony was also performed, in 1517 A.D. by his son and disciples belonging to the four mendicant groups such as Banawa, Malang, Mandal and Jalali. In the following year, on the first day of Jamathal Akhir 6th Muslim calendar month of 1572 A.D., a ritual flag was hoisted on the tomb structure. On the 10th day, the sandal paste was also annointed over the tomb by his son and disciples. In the succeeding year the residents of Nagapatnam requested the saint's son for permission to join them in the procession and also to offer a flag and sandal paste, as a mark of their respect to the saint and this was agreed. Like this the custom of offering the flag and sandal paste by the residents of Nagapatnam started and it is being still continued even today.

As the number of devotees increased the dargah started tapping their sentiments by allowing them to worship and to offer gifts in cash or kind. The Raya Kunjali Maraikkar was the first to construct a permanent dome over the saint's tomb. In due course of time the compound wall around the dargah was also erected. Like this the five minarets in the precincts were also constructed at different periods by the devotees of the saint. Similarly, other devotees came with their offerings which helped in the development of the dargah. Since the vows of the devotees are heard even today by the saint they believe that he is an immortal being.
The dimension of pilgrimage to the saint's tomb came to light because of two factors: the patronage given by the then rulers and the miracles associated with the saint. The then Maratha Kings of Thanjavur and Nawabs of Arcot, came on a pilgrimage to the dargāḥ and gave endowments. This fact brought much publicity and common man also begins to come there on pilgrimage.

There are two notions regarding pilgrimage to tombs of holy persons. Holy Qurān states that one can perform pilgrimage only to Makkah and that too if a person can afford. That means pilgrimage to Makkah is liable only to those who can afford it. Therefore, it is propagated that those who can not afford to go to Makkah can get the same merit by going on pilgrimage to the tombs of Sufi saints, located nearer to home.

Baljon (1989:193) a scholar on Qurān states that there is no direct mention of saint worship in it. The Prophet also opposed it and said "I forbid you to visit graves." In another context the Prophet had also said, "you may visit them, because they may remind death to you". So the motive to visit the tomb is not to deify them or to make them intermediaries between man and God, but only to remember that one has to leave this mortal world one day and so have faith in Allāh and pray to Him.

A myth associated with the Prophet says that he visited the tombs of martyrs on the night of Shabbebarat (14th day of
Shaban, the Muslim calendar month) and paid tributes to the departed souls. It is believed that Allah would accept all the wishes of devotees on that particular night and also forgive all those who repent for their sins. It is further believed that Allah also forgives the sins of others on whose behalf prayers are offered during that night. So, Muslims remain awaked throughout the night and pray, read Quran or at least recite the first page of it and send supplication to Allah in the name of the departed souls, to forgive their sins.

The teachings and practices of the prophet suggests that one can visit the graves of his parents to send the supplications and also to wash-off their sins. Even the Sufi saints advised the devotees to visit their tombs to get merit which is said to be equivalent to that which one gets by going to Makkah. Gesudaraj of Gulbarga, Karnataka, tells that: "When, for good reason, people were unable to make the pilgrimage to Makkah, a visit once in their lives to his mausoleum would convey the same merit" (Shariff, 1921:131).

In this context, the assurance given by Shah Waliullah, Sufi saint of Ahamed Nagar, Gujarat, needs to be mentioned here. It states "Visiting the saints' tombs is permitted with good purpose because, it confronts people with death" (Baljon, 1989:193).
Siddiqui (1989:14) interprets the pilgrimage to the tombs of Sufi saints in a different way. He says that "This custom began with Sufi saints in the fourteenth century and considers it an obligatory rite to visit the Dargahs of prominent Sufis of the Silsila (order) in the country". Mehadi Raja (1967:21) quoted the Sufi saint Sultanul Arifin of Baudan, Calcutta, who preached to the local people that: "Needy people should visit my grave for three days; and if their desires are not fulfilled they may demolish my grave on the fourth".

The above instance suggests that the Sufi saints have the power to solve both the mundane and spiritual desires of the devotees who made pilgrimage to their tombs. There are certain local beliefs attached to the pilgrimage to the holy tombs also. Such was the case with the Sufi saint of Ajmer-e-Sharief and the sentiments attached in the Indian Muslim mind which says that, 'Seven pilgrimages to Ajmer are equal to performing a Hajj' (Sayed, 1989:241).

There is a similar belief prevalent among the South Indian Muslims also go about the pilgrimage to the tomb of Nagore-e-Sharief. It says that 'those who can not afford to pay visit to Makkah can get the same benefit by making seven visits to the shrine of Nagore-e-Sharief' (Rahim, 1971:21). Like this the earlier hagiological literature available on the Sufi saints suggests that the pilgrimage to the tombs of the Sufis was allowed.
No discrimination was made by the saint of Nagore among his devotees. So this attracted the masses, both rich and poor, to him during his life time also. After his death also people continued to visit his tomb. They continued to believe that he performed miracles even after his death.

Historically speaking, not only the South Indian Maratha rulers but also the Muslim rulers such as the Nawab walajāh I (1749-95) and walajāh IV (1820-25 A.D.) of Arcot, visited and endowed with the income of the Tiruchirapalli coconut plantation, to meet its expenses on rituals and mass feeding of devotees (Bahar-I-Azam-Jahi, Nainar, 1950). This is a travelogue written by Ghulam Abdul Quadir Nazir who was specially employed by the Nawab Walajah-IV to cover his journey to and from Nagore, Tanjavur district, via Tiruchirapalli. It was written originally in Persian and very lucidly translated into English and published by Nainar (1950), University of Madras. It says Nagore, the Makkah for the Muslims of Tamil Nadu, is a place where a great Sūfī saint Sahul Hameed Nagore Andavar's dargāh is supposed to be located. The journey covered a period of Four months from February to June 1823.

Nainar (Ibid:131) also states that the pilgrimage of Arcot Nawab was a state pilgrimage. The Nawab was accompanied by a large number of retainers, troops and servants. This also included a portable mosque, large number of camels, elephants and other pack animals. The Nawab
travelled about 400 miles along the eastern coast from his residence in Madras, to reach Nagore. The much published visit of the Nawab to the shrine, increased its popularity among the local people.

On his pilgrimage trip, the Nawab visited a number of tombs of minor Sufi saints of local significance and greeted the holy men by offering garments and coins. Nainar (1950:27) describes that out of the 125 dargahs of Sufi saints in Tamil Nadu as many as 85 were on the route of his pilgrimage to Nagore-e-Sharief. The Nawab also met a number of holy men affiliated to Sufi path and got their blessings.

At Nagore the Nawab performed the ritual of anointing the sandal paste to the tomb of the saint. The paste filled in a silver vessel was carried by the Nawab himself, on his head (Ibid). In memory of his visit, he gave a large amount of money to build a mosque at Nagore and today it is popularly known as the Big Mosque or Arcot Mosque. Though it is told the Nawab made this pilgrimage with a political motive it became a landmark in the history of the dargah and helped in the propagation of Sufi ritual tradition, particularly that of the holy saint of Nagore.

The saint's tomb at Nagore is venerated by the devotees belonging to different castes and creeds. Further, since Sufism propagates universal brotherhood and love, this feeling also attracts many. Another important factor is the supernatural powers the saint had and the miracles he
performed. These attracted many devotees to the saint and they continued to visit his tomb even after his death.

Since the devotees continued to believe that the saint continues to perform miracles, they think that if one prays at the tomb with devotion he will get all his vows fulfilled. A few case studies recorded and given below, also support this.

There is also a belief that any offerings sent or made to the saint reach him without fail. So, the devotees send their votive objects to the saint with any body who is going on a pilgrimage to the dargah. It is certain that it reaches the saint.

Case No.1

The saint had disciples in many parts of the world and the king of Burma was one among them. When the news of the saint's death reached him he wanted to pay his last respects to his mentor. As a token of this he sent a silk cloth to cover the tomb, and the sandal paste to apply. A letter addressed to saint's spiritual son conveying his deep sense of sorrow, was also with them. The ship which was bringing the holy objects sunk in high sea. But the box which contained all these objects reached the shores of Nagore safely. After knowing its contents the fishermen who fished it out promptly handed it over to the dargah.
There are also instances of sacred objects emerging from the sea in Nagore. This happens in many other Tamil Muslim shrines (cf. Nainar, 1950:23 and Susan Byly, 1990:73). There is also a popular belief among the devotees that the sacred ash brought from the dargāh of Nagore cures ailments. The following case recorded from a Hindu devotee, who came from the neighbouring state of Andra Pradesh, supports this.

**Case No. 2:**

Sri Mahadevappa, is from a village in Andra Pradesh. His wife had a paralytic stroke. All his efforts to bring a cure to her were in vain. One of his friends by name Sri Rasheed Basha, a social worker attached to a non-government organization, gave him the sacred ash brought from the dargāh, where he had gone to attend the annual festival. After a prayer to the saint, Sri Mahadevappa applied it on the body of his wife. Within a few days she was totally cured of the ailment.

Like wise the evil effects of black magic are also removed by applying the sacred ash distributed by the Mujāwar during the Fatihāh ritual at the dargāh. Similar are the beliefs associated with the sandal paste and the holy water brought from the dargāh.

It is believed that the victims of black magic are cured by the miraculous powers of the saint. It is said that during their stay at the dargāh for the cure the victims vomit the things used for bewitching. Often there things are
removed in their dream, by the saint. Such objects as pieces of glass, blade, safety pins, nails, eggs, and the like, which were inside the victim are removed from the victims and have been exhibited in glass cases, at the dargah (photograph No.5). The following case supports this belief:

Case No. 3

Smt. Chandani Bai, born in Chandragiri town of Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh, was bewitched and made to suffer a lot. Later she took a vow to the saint and came on a pilgrimage to the dargah. One night, during her stay in the dargah, she started vomiting such objects as hair pins, safety pins, glass pieces, blades, and eggs. By the time all these objects were thrown out of her body she was completely cured of her problems.

The saint is believed to be not only a witch doctor but also a very good orthopaedician and bone setter. The following case study collected from a Tamil Muslim, who belonged to Sri Lanka, supports this belief. This person, on a pilgrimage during the annual festival of the saint, said that he had been coming on pilgrimage for the last twenty five years.

Case No. 4

Sri Nazeer Ahamed, a Sri Lankan national slipped in his bath room and fractured his thigh bone. He consulted many doctors for a cure and in vain. Finally he took a vow to the saint for a cure. After that
one night in his dream, he felt as if he has been operated upon, by the saint. After the operation he was even asked by the saint to take a walk, which he did. The next day when he woke up, found that he is totally cured. Since then he and his family members have been visiting the dargāh on pilgrimage, during the annual festival. When they came they stay in the dargāh, till the festival is over.

The saint is also believed to cure the smuttering of speech and polio. It is also believed that he can tell his devotees the purposes of their visit and also when exactly his miracles work. Here is a case of a devotee, belonging to Tanjavur, who not only got a cure but was also communicated of this by the saint.

Case No. 5

Sri Narasimhan, an orthodox Brahmin of Tanjavur, has a son who was suffering from polio, for over ten years. As a result the boy could not walk. After failing to get a cure from other methods, he took shelter under the saint for a cure and also vowed to stay in the dargāh for a week. During his stay, one night, he had a dream in which the saint asked him to return to Tanjavur the next day. Before he started the journey back, he visited the dargāh for the last time. On return to the camp he saw his son walking to the door to receive him. The slur in his speech has also gone. On enquiry the boy told that during the night he had felt as if some one was performing a surgery on him but when he opened his eyes he could not see any one in the room. However, felt free in his limbs and could also walk on his own accord.
It is recorded that not only the Orthodox Brahmin, but also elites such as professors also believe in the miraculous powers of the saint. He told that for every newborn child he used to offer the tonsure ceremony to the saint at the dargāh. He also told that his first daughter, who was suffering from fits and convulsion got cured after taking vow to the saint. He strongly believed that the saint had immense powers to cure the convulsions or polio type of diseases and referred the saint as a specialist in this line. He performed three times a day prayer to his family god Shiva and other goddesses also. But he considered the powers of Nagore saint were more effective and so believed him.

There are also cases of devotees who have divine powers in them and also can cure disease. They believe that they got this power from the saint and owing to their faith in him. It is also believed that the saint often appears in some form, even in the guise of an old man and serves the sick. The following case is given to show this and also the strong faith the devotees have in the saint:

Case No. 6

There was an old and poor woman suffering from skin disease. She was told that if she spent 40 days in the dargāh she would be cured of her disease. With great devotion she completed her vow but she did not get the cure. So, she became angry and left the dargāh telling that the saint might be great but he would help only the rich, who could
afford to offer the Fatihāh ritual and also pay the sacred specialist. On her way home, she came across an old man who suggested that she go to a particular potter of Nagore and take medicine from him. She took his advice and went to the potter. She found him a great devotee of the saint and for every act and move made, he recited the name of the saint. But on enquiry he denied, having any such capacities, in him. The woman narrated the discussion she had with the old man. On hearing this the potter casually took a little clay from his wheel and gave it asking her to apply it on her body. When she did that immediately her disease was cured. Then she realised that the old man who directed her to this potter was none other than the saint himself.

This case shows that the saint does not discriminate between the rich and the poor for bestowing his mercy and it is the faith in him which is important.

Like this there are many cases of devotees who got cure from the saint. A press cutting displayed at the dargāh says about an interview of a person given to the All India Radio, Tiruchirapalli, on 16.2.1987. In that he claimed that his son was operated on by the saint in the latter's dream, and cured him of the polio disease. It is also reported in the columns of the press that patients who had gone to hospitals or other dargāhs for cure were called to him by the saint and he cured them. This is evident from the following case study of a resident of Nellore, Andhra Pradesh:
Case No. 7

Bibijan had gone to Masthan Walliallah dargah for a cure. While she was staying there, one night in her sleep she was told by the saint to come to his place for the cure. She was also pointed to a place in Nagore dargah to sit while seeking help. As per the instructions, she came to Nagore and sat in the dargah for three months. Finally she was cured of her ailments.

From our interviews with devotees we also learnt that those who could not afford a pilgrimage could also get a cure by taking vows simply by writing to the dargah. The dargah management makes arrangement for prayers on behalf of them and also sends sacred ritual material (Tabruk or Prasadam) by post. A similar service is also rendered by the dargah for those devotees who can not come to the annual festival. The poor, helpless, disabled, unemployed, sought blessings of the saint in this manner. It is told that by praying like this to the saint, the blind got their eye sight and mentally disturbed owing to witchcraft, physical or psychological strain, also get help from the saint by writing to him. Like this there are a number of cases told to glorify the powers of the saint. Such cases are popular not only in Tanjore region but also in the entire South India.

From the cases given above it is firmly established that the devotees believe in the saint and his supernatural powers. When he was alive, he preached and practised love,
equality, fraternity without any discrimination. So, people flocked round him in large numbers from all sections and faiths. The same faith continues even today. We can rather say that it is still increased.

From the information derived from the devotees it is learnt that most of the pilgrims came for a ritual meeting of the saint. Majority of them visited the dargāh with family members. The existence and experience of the saint and his miraculous powers are known world over. It is also found that majority of the pilgrims were there in the dargāh on their own and not by compulsion or force. It is found that many of the devotee families have been in contact with the dargāh since long and in some cases, for generations too. The opinion of the devotees about the dargāh as a sacred place is evident from this. The pilgrims accepted that they liked the place for its calm and quite serene and secular atmosphere.

Like this the dargāh of Nagore has been meeting the needs of devotees and also promoting religious tolerance. In course of time dargāh became popular as a pilgrimage centre. As a result many more buildings were built on the dargāh premises, to meet the needs of devotees. Like this over the years the dargāh of Nagore-e-Sharief has transformed itself into a sacred complex.
DARGAH AND ITS REGION

The saint Sahul Hameed Nagore came and settled in Tanjore region to spread the Sufi philosophy. His residence became a centre of religious activities to which all the people including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, et al., in the area attended. Despite the meeting of several religious, linguistic, and ethnic groups the Tanjore region has maintained a spirit of religious tolerance and harmony.

The socio-religious profile of the Dargah

Today the dargah of Nagore Andavar is not only a sacred place for Muslims but also for devotees from other religious faiths. The building which houses the dargah such as the Rowla Sharif, pillared halls, pir mandapam, minarets, also show a fair combination of both Hindu and Muslim architectural styles.

Another point is playing of holy music in the dargah as a medium of sacred performance to the saint. The Classical Islam does not permit playing of music in any form at mosques. It is very well known that playing of holy music is a part of Hindu ritual tradition and the same has been adopted by the dargah. Thirdly, participation of Hindus in many activities of the dargah is apparently visible. At the time of celebration of the annual festival, Hindu devotees participate in a big way. Offering of a shawl by the descendants of a Hindu devotee is another example. The
appearance of non-animate art and the application of arabesque, geometrical designs are in the styles of Islamic art and architecture. But the beautiful carvings on the doors and door frames of the tomb Chamber of the saint are best citations for the influence of Hindu art and craftsmanship. The main hall built by a Hindu devotee with excellent designs, art carving and painting, reflect the synthesis of both Hindu and Muslim cultural traditions. The design and arrangement of tiles on the roof tops of the minarets of dargāh are a style, which is commonly found on the house roof tops in villages in Tanjore region, in South India.

A close examination of the minarets and other structures with the domes (Kalasa), will reveal the Hindu influence on them. Further, the golden dome over the tomb Chamber was donated by a Hindu Brahmin devotee. Of the five silver domes on the minarets, only one is built by a Muslim devotee and the other four were built by Hindu devotees. This clearly shows that the Hindus were and are the devotees of the saint and generously made offerings to the dargāh. Further more domes are usually found on the Hindu temples. But the domes on the Rowla Sharief and the minarets reflect the synthesis of Hindu and Islamic elements in the dargāh, as these are built at the suggestions of the then dargāh authorities. The local influence of the builders were, therefore, clearly visible. The saint on his part did not observe any kind of
discrimination between his devotees whether they are Hindus or Muslims and so even today one can see a harmonious atmosphere prevailing in the sacred complex. It is noticed that a building was built by a Maraikkar and it was known as Maraikkar mosque. This Maraikkar mosque, is outside the dargāh structure, is built on the model of Tanjore Maratha palace and from a distance both the buildings look alike. This shows that the saint had devotees who were Hindus and they as a part of their offering constructed mosques in Hindu style of architecture and offered to the dargāh. The important point is that they were accepted by the Sufis.

The Maratha rulers not only contributed towards the construction of different building structures in the dargāh premises but also liberally gave land grants for the maintenance of the dargāh. These helped in the propagation of the Sufi faith on one hand and provided the descendants of the saint with an opportunity to make a living, on the other. It is with the income from these lands that the ritual activities at the dargāh are conducted today.

Palaiandi Pillai, a Hindu devotee of the saint, not only dedicated his entire life to the service of the saint but also wished to be buried in the soil where the dargāh is located. He had told his children that he and his family members be buried in this sacred land. As a result, the tombs of members of this devotee and his family are found in Nagore, beside the guest house, constructed by him for the
pilgrims. As his offering Pillai also built two guest houses one for the Muslim and the other for Hindu pilgrims. His descendants when visit the shrine annually, to offer the sacred shawl to the saint, stay here. As a prevailing custom, some Hindu devotees have taken the saint as their favourite deity and also preserve the old shawls in their domestic altar and worship them along with their gods. On Thursdays, which is a week day of the shrine, these devotees observe a fast and before breaking it visit the dargāh and distribute sweets in the neighbourhood. This shows their devotion to the saint and his teachings and also serves as an example of Hindu-Sūfī religious synthesis and co-existence.

Place of Music in the Sūfī tradition

In Islām, music is considered unholy and so meant only for entertainment. On this ground the Muslim fundamentalists do not endorse playing of pipe music in and around mosques. According to Nizamuddin (1977:305) even listening to music is forbidden in Islām. Hameed (1986) quoting Abdul Quadir (1951:59) states that: "It is significant that though in the beginning of Islām, music had also been discouraged like painting, yet the contact of Islām with Persia, brought about a change in the attitude of Muslims towards it, particularly under the influence of Sūfīs or Muslim mystics, who believed in the efficacy of music as a means of elevating the soul and as an aid to spiritual progress". Islām believes that music
distracts the attention of a person from prayer; so absolute silence is needed to be observed to get complete absorption in the prayer.

Contrary to this, in Sufism playing of music is allowed. This is similar to the Hindu practice where singing of music is considered prayer to God. Of the two types of pleasures provided by Hindus to their gods i.e., the bodily pleasures and stage pleasures Anga and Ranga Bhoga (cf. Gurumurthy, 1995); singing falls under the latter type. They also believe that gods can be pleased and influenced in their action by giving them something, as offering, praising or serving them. Like this in Sufism, we can find a few customs which are forbidden in Classical Islam. Among them singing of music is one. The other untraditional features are the lighting of the sacred lamps, taking vows, and offering of material goods to the saint’s tomb. Coming on a pilgrimage is yet another deviation from Islamic tradition. In India these were allowed since most of the devotees were recent converts from the local or folk Hinduism. To make their adjustment to the new religion easy, the preachers of the new religion allowed them to retain the old customs and beliefs with them as long as they stayed in the faith and followed its fundamentals such as belief in Allâh, inviting the priests for the fairs and also followed the ritual order of Islam. Like this, the holy car festival procession, sacred lamp worship, camphor offering, got a place in the ritual tradition of the dargâh of Nagore.
Sufism is a type of folk-Islâm, which is found not only in India but also outside the continent. Its religious philosophy is derived from both Shia and Sunni Islamic sects. To popularise the ritual tradition, they also made it easy to the local converts by allowing them to retain some of their past traditions such as idol worship. The structures which houses dargâh often look like Hindu temples with silver doors, and domes. The presence of a holy water tank is also a must. This is true even in case of the Sûfî centre of Ajmer, where the dargâh of Khawaja Moinuddin Chisthi is located with in a Hindu temple structure (Curriee, 1989). Here we can see a few Hindus working as priests in a few sacred centres and Hindu ascetics claiming a share in the free food distributed by the dargâh. Observance of Basanth Panchami in Ajmir dargâh and Krishna Janmastami in Nizamuddin dargâh of Delhi are other activities to show the harmonious co-existence of the two ritual traditions.

Annual festival and its impact on the Region

It is found that the ritual activities such as the procession of the holy cars with the sacred flags meant for hoisting on the minarets and sandal paste to annoint the tomb of the saint, have become a part and parcel of Sûfî ritual tradition in Nagore dargâh. Firing of crackers, playing of drums while going in procession, and carrying the models of the offerings, which are observed during the annual festival of the saint, reflect the practices observed in Hindu temples
in the Tanjore region. Though these practices are not acceptable in Classical Islam, they are continued and have become a part of the dargāh ritual tradition. Through this the local Muslims come close to the Hindu community and vice-versa.

In addition to these, the local Muslims and the descendants venerate the names of Allāh, the Prophet and the saints and also hold special festivities in their honour, every year. These occasions serve as a meeting place for devotees. For example, in the name of Abdul Quadir Jealani, the Eleventh month of Rabi II is observed as a month of feast and special dishes for which he had a liking, are distributed to the devotees in his memory, by the dargāh management to the devotees (For more details on festivals see Chapter on Sacred Performances).

Like wise, anniversaries of the Prophet and Sufī saints are celebrated in all the sacred centres under Nagore sacred complex, with great pomp and gaiety. These celebrations commence with the planting of a flag-staff like the one in the Hindu temples and left for certain number of days. In the assembly of devotees for the annual festival, one can find a large number of devotees belonging to different faiths. Though asceticism is positively condemned in the Qurān and the Hadīs, it is associated in the popular mind with supernatural powers, and there can be no doubt that most of the miracles with which the saint, credited after his death are
due to the uncommon self-denial, piety, and devotion exhibited while living.

Impact of the dargāh ritual observances on the devotees:

Classical Islām though discourages saint worship and visit to tombs, the beliefs and practices of the Prophet encourage it; to meet their departed relatives, who were helpful and kind during their life time. This became very popular in India because of two reasons. Firstly, the new converts from folk, Hindu and tribal ritual traditions, were familiar with the idol worship and a ban on this by the Classical Islām brought vacuum and insecurity in them. The second explanation given is that the visit to the saint's tomb will remind them of death, which in turn makes one morally good and upright. But in due course of time this got changed. Instead now, the Islamic tradition requires the pilgrims to pray for the redemption and peaceful state of the departed souls. In memory of these souls alms giving was also advocated.

So we need have to wonder that the practice of visiting the graves forms a marked feature in the religious life of the Muhammadans and that the tomb of the founder of Islām and the burial place of its Chief Confessors have become the objects of great devotional reverence. Pilgrims at Makkah (except the Wahhabis and Ahle-Hadis) always proceed to Al-Madinah to visit the Prophet's shrine and to claim an
interest in his intercessions. In all Islamic republics there are shrines, which are visited by devotees in order to obtain intercessions with the departed saint.

Fatihah ritual offered in the name of the saint or any other departed soul is an approved practice in Islâm. However, the daily practices in the dargâh reflect the synthesis of both the Hindu and Islamic ritual traditions. Pilgrims irrespective of caste or religious identity apply oil from the sacred lamps on their forehead, and take home the water from the sacred well at the dargâh, as sanctified object. This too is a remnant of the Hindu ritual tradition. These beliefs and rituals are allowed to continue with the belief in the ritual synthesis of the two religious traditions, at the local level. It is apt to quote Stein in this respect, who has said: "The shrine of a Muslim saint marks the site of some local cult which was practised on the spot long before the introduction of Islâm ("Stein, Kalhanas Raja Tarangini, London, 1900: 249, Quoted by Rahim, 1971). This opinion of Stein (1900:249) is very much applicable to the belief system of the South Indian Muslims who still go to temples of Hindu gods or goddesses seeking their blessings and favours, besides following their own religious traditions.

At Nagore dargâh, the sacred specialists, i.e., the Mujâwar and the Adhînam, allow the devotees to practise folk religious practices and also bless the pilgrims, by keeping
the holy sandals of the saint on the head of the pilgrims. This too is a Hindu custom. A few Muslim pilgrims kiss the quotations from the Qurān that are embedded on the walls of the dargāh, especially the ones in the main hall. After the Fatihāh ritual sanctified material is given to all the pilgrims. This is similar to the custom of distribution of Prasadam to the pilgrims in Hindu temples. Like this the rituals observed in the Nagore dargāh appear more similar to those in Hindu temples and this suggests a synthesis of two religious ritual traditions.

Impact of dargāh on Tanjore region

The ideals taught by the Nagore saint are similar to those told in the Qurān and interpreted and practised by the Prophet. The Nagore saint, belongs to the Quadari spiritual order of Syed Abdul Quadir Jelani, who was related to the Prophet both spiritually and genealogically. Like his grand father Syed Abdul Quadir Jelani of Bagadad, the Nagore saint became popular among the Sufis. He had entered the spiritual order in Sufi tradition and became a king of saints. He not only preached but also practised love, equality, fraternity and justice as enjoined in Islām. With this sense of universal brotherhood wherever he went he earned love and veneration of all the people in the region.

Further the Sūfī tradition believes that the souls of their saints are immortal. So, it is strongly believed that the soul of Nagore saint resides at Nagore dargāh, even
today. With this belief the devotees come to him for divine help. It is also believed that his miracle making powers are active even today. This is evident from the case studies.

The study revealed that the classical Islam has been accepted in distorted form by the marginal groups such as Maraikkars, Rowthers, Dudekula, Kayalar and Labbai, who were earlier Tamil speaking Hindu castes. The worship of tombs of saints and going on pilgrimage, obviously constitute a rather unorthodox practice in a monotheistic religion. For many persons the occasions of annual and other festivals have become pleasure trips. Muslims with opposed ideas such as the members of Wahabi movement, Ahale-Hadīs movement, Tablīq and anti-saint worship movements, have launched programmes to rid Islam of un-Islamic practices. It is understandable that instances of development and spread of modern science and technology have prompted Islam, to study into its basic teachings. They have done this in order to see whether it is perfectly compatible with whatever has been brought to light by recent discoveries and inventions (Rahim, 1971:164).

In the preceding chapters we have studied the three interrelated phenomena of the sacred complex - the sacred geography, sacred performances and sacred specialists of the dargāh. These interrelated phenomena of Sufī religions tradition existing in the dargāh, have provided an opportunity to the dargāh administration to bring cultural synthesis among the Hindu and Islamic faiths. This study has made a modest attempt to enlighten the role of dargāh and
Sufism in bringing the Hindu-Muslim brotherhood and cultural interaction between the two major religions in the region. On the basis of these findings we have drawn certain conclusions which are given in the next and final chapter - Conclusions.

Foot Notes:

1 The flag hoisting during the annual festival carries the Zulphikar emblem and it is ceremoniously hoisted on the occasion, on a tall and imposing wooden pole. It is not clear from the text, as to how this Hindu custom got included in the Sufi tradition. The Sanskrit term Thuvaja and the Tamil term Kodi mean something erected. It therefore, has connotations of hope, desire (especially erotic desire which is physically expressed as erection) pride, arrogance, will, and the like. Like this whatever raises man to a higher level of understanding and activity is conveyed by hoisting a flag during the festival of the saint. The flag in the traditional sense means a resolution to exert and will to succeed. Hoisting the flag also suggests setting out to conquer. The devotees coming in to the dargah would have to resolve to conquer his own basic nature, to set out on a war within oneself and mental disposition by looking at the flag hoisted aloft at the mast would be a reminder for conquering his material desires and to work for a better religious life.

2 Cheheliam - the word denotes the 40 days death ritual, observed by the Muslims in the Indian sub-continent. In the present context, the saint’s annual festival is interpreted by the lineal descendants of the saint, as the annual festival. This is a symbolic representation of the 40 days death ritual which is observed annually by them. It is so, because, the saint is revived on that particular day and the tradition is continued by the dargah Trust by observing them as a festival.

3 The word literally means supplication. According to the folk Islamic tradition, the devotees send the supplication to the dead for their benefit in the next world. It is believed to be of high value through which the sins of the deceased can be reduced and send benefits to the dead by their living kinsmen.