Kashmir has, since time immemorial abounded in temples, mosques and shrines. There is hardly a locality without a temple, a mosque or a shrine. Being the home of saints and seers, mystics and derveshes, the Valley has been known as Reshwar.

The tradition of saint-hood and Reshism did not cease to exert its influence even after Islam was introduced into Kashmir, rather there was a progressive growth in the belief of people in saints, relics and shrines. It was partly due to the conversion of Hindus of the Valley to Islam. The process of conversion in Kashmir was unique in the sense that it did not prevent the neo-Muslims to retain some of their traditional practices like faith in saints and shrines and other objects of worship, which pristine Islam does not allow. In fact, Kashmir passed through the course of integration of Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim—most of the Hindus and Buddhists having embraced Islam—streams of religion and culture, in a manner, the like of which was not to be witnessed anywhere on the sub-continent. If the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal evolved the worship of satyapir, the two communities in Kashmir nurtured the worship of Nund Rishi and his relics and the shrines, which today are widely dispersed. Alongwith Nund Rishi, Lal Ded or Lal Moj, as she is generally called was and is still looked upon as a self-realized saint commanding respect of both the communities. The sayings respectively the shrucks and vakyas of these two are at the tip of every
Kashmiris tongue. Then there is a host of Saiyids and Rishis, viz., Saiyid Ali Hamadani, Bam-ud-Din, Batmaloo Sahib, Reehmol Sahib, and Baba Reshi and last yet not least Makhdoom Sahib and Pir-i-Dastgir (Kahnov) who are looked upon as guardian saints and saviours by the people of Kashmir. On occasions of pleasure and pain, rejoicing and suffering in prosperity and calamity, they throng at the shrines of these saints, make obeisance and offerings. They pray for blessing and averseion of a catastrophe.

The people of Kashmir are of the firm opinion that their solidarity, economic welfare and political stability depend on the pleasure of these saints. Therefore, they do nothing to incur the wrath of these saints. During the week-long annual Urs of Reehmol Sahib, the entire population of the Anantnag town upto Bijbehara on the highway abstain from taking meat. This is a custom nowhere to be met with among the Muslims.

With the saints and shrines are associated the mujavirs and Babas, a class of people who draw their sustenance from the offerings of the people. Only a few of them now live up to the teachings and noble ideals of the saints. By and large, these custodians of the shrines exploit the ignorant and superstitious masses to feather their own nests. Very few of them are well versed in Fiqh, Shariat and other branches of religion, impart right type of education and the training to the laity. Some of these mujavirs are seen to beg and sometimes extract money from the pilgrims which gives rise to corruption.
In the present work an attempt has been made to examine all these problems but there is scope for further research and indepth study on the role of mujavirs and Babzadas associated with the shrines. An effort has also been made to highlight the contribution of the shrines towards education. There is need to streamline and coordinate the educational activities of these shrines and this could easily constitute a viable subject of an indepth study. The present work has sought to put the socio-cultural, political and economic impact of the shrines in perspective.

The emergence of the Ahl-i-Hadith movement has been posing a challenge to the religio-legal validity of the shrines. It deserves closer study which would hopefully yield good results. In fact, the question of the relevance of the shrines and relics to modern man is likely to become a debatable subject in near or distant future. But before that a research project on this theme could be undertaken to some advantage.