**Concept of Philanthropy in Islam – A Case Study of Khanqahs and Sufi Shrines in Pakistan**

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**Abstract**

This paper unveils the Philanthropic perspective of Khanqahs and shrines of Sufi Saints entrenched in Islamic Ideology. These have always served as significant training centers and substantially contributed towards the religious, social and spiritual upbringing of humanity at large. Furthermore, these institutions have staged a significant role in relieving the sufferings and grappling with social and economic issues especially of the lower rung of society. The founders of these Khanqahs were great Islamic and mystic figures who set aside their entire span of life for Philanthropic ends to promote peace and sublime moral values and thus to rid the society of ethical, religious, political and economic ills corroding humanistic bounds. After the decease of these sacred figures, their shrines became great Socio-Religious institutions and hence took the form of Philanthropic organizations meant for the welfare of the needy and poverty – stricken humanity. These institutions are striving to their utmost in various directions. They have set up schools, free lodges, established health centers, hospitals, orphan care homes and places where hungry and needy could feed them self for free etc.

The present study explores the concept of Philanthropy underlying the injunctions of Islam. The research has been delimited to five major shrines in Pakistan for data collection. A detailed questionnaire was filled up by the target research population. It followed a mixed paradigm, qualitative as well as quantitative. The study will not only dilate on the positive aspects but also on the lacunas in the role model of Khanqahs and shrines as, institutions in Pakistan.

1. **Introduction**

 Religion has been central to the formation and evolution of the Muslim world’s political and social landscape and has historically played a significant role in Philanthropy based activities and in the provision of social welfare. However, very little is known about the nature and role of religious institutions and organisations and their contribution in addressing the development challenges the world face. Pakistan among 55 Muslim countries is a clear example and a case study of this phenomenon[[2]](#footnote-2). ‘Faith-based organisation’ (FBO) is another term used for such philanthropic religious institutions like Madrasas, Khanqahs or Sufi Shrines; This term has become prominent internationally in the last two or three decades.

The study is focused largely on Khanqahs and Sufi shrines as philanthropic institutions established in Punjab Pakistan, a religiously diverse Province that faces significant challenges, but also has a history of development and social activism.

**1.1 Religion and charity in Pakistan**

 The link between religion and charity has existed historically across the faith traditions rep- resented in the Islamic World. The numbers of mosques, Sufi Khanqahs and madrasas during the 7th century onward, with the advent of Muslim rule, became important sites of philanthropic and social welfare activities[[3]](#footnote-3).

The colonial period in South-Asia also saw an influx of Christian missionaries in the region who were involved in education, healthcare and awareness raising around various social issues (ibid.: 17). Many of the institutions set up by these missionaries on the bases of religious motivation continue to flourish today. Furthermore, the colonial period also witnessed an increase in Islamic revivalism and led to the establishment of a network of madrasas and philanthropic institutions run by Sufi Shrines management in Indo-Pak sub-continent (ibid.: 17–18).

Religious forms of charity, or ‘financial worship’ have historically played a key role in funding charity and philanthropy at the individual and institutional levels in South Asia, with zakat and Sadaqaat being the largest source of such funding in Pakistan. There are also several other categories of charitable giving within Islam apart from zakat and Sadaqaat, including waqf (religious endowment)[[4]](#footnote-4). These forms of charity aim to purify wealth, better the self, and improve the chances of attaining the nearness of Allah in this life and here after.

While many NGOs receive funding from international donors, much of the local philanthropic activity that takes place in Pakistan is closely tied to religious belief and practice. According to a report by the Aga Khan foundation (AKF) [[5]](#footnote-5), “the near universal context for giving in Pakistan is that of religion, specifically Islam”[[6]](#footnote-6). The National Survey of Individual Giving, which was conducted in 1998 – 99 and is cited in the report (ibid.: 44), found that 98% of respondents claimed religious faith as a motivation for donating for charitable purposes. Furthermore, 94% of donations went to religious institutions and causes, which were not defined. The AKF study estimated that the people of Pakistan contributed 41 billion rupees (1.5% of the GDP) and volunteered 1.6 billion hours of time to philanthropic activities in 1998 alone, including to religious organisations. Many of the organisations included in this study relied largely on individual, religious donations rather than institutional funding.

* 1. **Islamic Concept of Philanthropy and Charity**

 Islam has introduced a society where people care for the elderly, the destitute, the dispossessed and the displaced. It proposes that Prosperous, influential, knowledgeable and talented people should make use of all their gifts to help the people who find themselves in desperate financial straits. A true believer reaches out the people who are beset with harsh conditions regardless of their creed or ethnicity. One of the biggest challenges people face is lack of enough resources to meet their immediate needs. That is why Islam underscores the need of the welfare of the needy. The humanitarian souls are always revered and respected in the traditions of Islam and history of Muslim World.

In the view of Islam Spending in charity on the good of our fellow creatures is the conduct of the believers who surrender themselves to the will of Allah, but the people who reject philanthropic work are infidels.

*And when it is said to them: “Spend (in the way of Allah) of what Allah has given you,” the disbelievers say to the believers: “Shall we feed that (poor) man whom, if Allah so willed, He would feed (Himself)?”*[[7]](#footnote-7)

So, as the above verse states, the well-off who are antagonistic to the very notion of feeding the have-nots in society reveal an inhumane, misanthropic and a heathen streak in their character.

In the estimation of Imam al-Razi, a great Islamic Scholar, the innermost purpose of the acts of worship is twofold: obedience to the divine laws and regulations and affection for human beings. He quotes the following verse of the Quran:

*And I created the jinn and human beings solely to adopt My servitude.*[[8]](#footnote-8)

Interpreting the verse, he writes, for what type of worship Allah created the jinn and the humans? To us that worship is revering the divine injunctions and showing compassion to Allah’s creatures, for Islamic law is not empty of them.[[9]](#footnote-9)

The infirm, the poor, the disadvantaged and the unwell suffer in many parts of the world. They are deprived of adequate food, clothing, housing, clean water and health care, and no one meets their needs. Also, they stand in need of voluntary giving of time, assistance and money. The Muslim religion encourages its adherents to aid the less fortunate in the immediate vicinity. The individuals who discharge their responsibility will be in a state of supreme felicity on the Day of Gathering; Traditions state the reward of the people who serve fellow humans sincerely.

The preaching of the Prophet especially attracted the poor and the unfortunate members of society because Islam takes care of the needs of people, in general, and the deprived and the destitute. Also, he demonstrated through his conduct that putting aside personal interest for the sake of fellow beings is ideal and every believer should try to live up to this moral excellence. After discharging obligatory acts of devotion and religious rituals, the Prophet a preferred providing for fellow human beings to supererogatory acts of worship. A hadith states the excellent merit of engaging in social welfare activities, which gladden the hearts of people.

Anas b. Malik (R.A), reported that once he submitted to Allah’s Messenger (PBUH):

“Allah’s Messenger, what is dearer to you: my giving a loaf of bread to charity or my offering a hundred cycles of voluntary prayer?” The Prophet a said: “I find donating a loaf of bread dearer than praying a hundred cycles of voluntary prayer.”

Then Anas asked Allah’s Messenger what he liked better: the fulfilment of the need of a Muslim or the performance of a hundred cycles of supererogatory prayer. The Messenger a said: “To satisfy the real need of an indigent Muslim is dearer to me than the performance of a thousand cycles of supererogatory prayer.”

Then Anas asked Allah’s Messenger what he liked better: abandoning an unlawful morsel or performing a thousand cycles of voluntary prayer. The Messenger said: “Abandoning an unlawful morsel is dearer to me than performing two thousand cycles of supererogatory prayer.”

Then Anas asked Allah’s Messenger what he liked better: shunning backbiting or performing two thousand cycles of supererogatory prayer. The Messenger said: “Shunning backbiting is dearer to me than performing ten thousand cycles of supererogatory prayer.”

Then Anas asked Allah’s Messenger a what he liked better: addressing the need of a widow or performing ten thousand cycles of supererogatory prayer. The Messenger said: “Addressing the need of a widow is dearer to me than performing thirty thousand cycles of supererogatory prayer.”

Then Anas asked Allah’s Messenger what he liked better: keeping the company of children or sitting in the mosque. The Messenger said: “Keeping the company of children for a while is dearer to me than going into seclusion in this mosque of mine for the sole purpose of worshipping (*Aitekaf*).”

Then Anas asked Allah’s Messenger what he liked better: spending wealth on children or spending in Allah’s cause. The Messenger said: “If someone spends a single dirham on the training of his children, it is better than spending ten thousand dirhams in Allah’s cause.”

Then Anas asked Allah’s Messenger what he liked better: treating the parents excellently or engaging in devotions for a thousand years. The Messenger said: “Anas, the truth has come and falsehood has passed away. Falsehood is bound to pass away. In my estimation, treating the parents excellently is superior to engaging in devotions for two million years.”

1. **Nature of the Problem**

It has been hypothesised that Khanqahs and Sufi shrines as institutions may have advantages with respect to their religious status and fan following but, they are not the spaces which are engaged in social development neither the economic development of the society. In comparison to secular non-governmental Philanthropic organisations (NGOs), Sufi shrines as Philanthropies and not given the due weight nor, most of the studies have assessed their economic and socio-developmental contributions to the society. In contrast, some argue that there is a ‘dark side’ of such institutions, many of which are potentially dangerous in that they are inherently discriminatory and encourage division based on religious differences[[10]](#footnote-10),[[11]](#footnote-11). In addition, they are said to be out of touch with contemporary development thinking that emphasises empowerment and sustainable development over charity and relief. In practice, little empirical evidence has been presented to support any of these assertions, especially in developing country contexts. Furthermore, there is a lack of analytical clarity about the working of Sufi Shrines and how they are contributing to the society.

* 1. **Objectives of the study**

This study aimed to examine whether the Khanqahs and Sufi Shrines of Pakistan as ‘faith-based organisations’, are contributing in social and Economic development of the society significantly or not. All the Sufi Shrines selected for inclusion in the study were somehow involved in the betterment of the poor and marginalised sectors of society, and are the most popular ones in the region. All the selected Shrines as an institution work in similar sectors and geographical areas, allowing for a comparison of their approaches and relationships with communities. The study assessed whether and how an explicit religious and spiritual motivation and/or affiliation influences the characteristics of institutions engaged in development-related activities, in part to assess whether these shrines are just a place for performing religious Sufi rituals or institutions benefiting the society socially as well as economically.

1. **Historical Context and Literature Review**

Muslim pilgrimages may be divided into two broad categories: obligatory and voluntary. This is in contrast with the Christian or Hindu tradition, for example, in which pilgrimage is a non-obligatory religious practice, or Sikhism in which it is discouraged. The obligatory pilgrimage in Islam is, of course, the Hajj to Mecca, although the obligation is tempered by the pilgrim's financial and physical ability[[12]](#footnote-12).

The Quran enjoins the believers to "Perform the pilgrimage and the visit for Allah."

The voluntary pilgrimage (ziarat or ziara) may be divided into two distinct types for analytical purposes. First, a religious journey may be undertaken for a purely emotive or sentimental reason. Such a non-obligatory religious journey may be undertaken to listen to a holy discourse of a Sufi saint at some Khanqah or any other religious message by or in behalf of an Imam. Such a visit also may be made for personal religious and spiritual uplift. In addition, such a sentimental journey may be made to participate in a periodic festival held in honour of a saint, or to commemorate a special day of martyrdom, passion, birthday, and other such occasions related to religious, or even some especially venerated royal, personages.

A second type of voluntary pilgrimage may be made to the Khanqahs of Sufis or their Shrines, for reasons related to the problems of mundane existence; Fulfilment of a worldly needs may be a major reason for such visits. Such as, personal health or the health of a loved one, Education, seeking counselling in matrimonial affairs, for the resolution of disputes, food and shelter etc. A promise to visit a saint, or a saint's grave or Shrine, may be made for chronic non-psychosomatic, as well as for psychosomatic, diseases. Supplications may be made to Allah while standing at such places for having an offspring, or good luck in an enterprise. Clearly, some of these pilgrimages are primarily supplicatory, whereas others virtually contractual.

But both rely upon the *baraka* (blessing) of the especially esteemed saint[[13]](#footnote-13). Islamic centres of ziarat may be classified as forming levels of an informal hierarchy, such as regional, sub regional and local, according to the cultural diversity of each level.

**3.1 Understanding the nature and activities of ‘Khanqahs’ and ‘Sufi Shrines’**

The following section provides brief profiles of the Sufi Khanqahs and Shrines in several parts of the world, their nature and activities towards socio-economic development.

* ***Sufi Khanqahs***

The Sufi order of Islam has added a large number of Khanqahs and shrines to the Islamic religious circulation system throughout the Middle East, North Africa, parts of sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, western China, and the Central Asian countries. Most of these Khanqahs and shrines are of regional importance within the framework of the linguistic region of a domiciled saint, but some have a following that cuts across international boundaries, partly due to territorial changes or emergence of new nations. According to Ira Lapidus (1988, 262- 263)[[14]](#footnote-14), Sufism became central to the structure of lineage societies after the 12th century.

The earliest reference to the concept of ribat or (Khanqah) as a Sufi Philanthropic institution is provided by Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri (1990)[[15]](#footnote-15) in relation to Abu Yazid al-Bistami, who died in 261 AH/875 CE. Abu Yazid al-Bistami is reported to have gone one night to a ribat (Khanqah) to recollect God's name on one of the walls of that ribat. He stayed there until dawn without uttering a word. When asked why, he answered: "(While there), there had passed through my mind a (rude) word that I once uttered in my childhood and I was ashamed to mention God – may He be blessed and exalted"[[16]](#footnote-16). A reference is also made to a famous early ribat (Khanqah) in Abbadan, an island in the mouth of Shatt al-Arab that was frequented by early Sufis and their devotes, in which Sahl al-Tustari (d. 283 AH/896 CE), an eminent early Sufi theorist and exegete from Basrah (Al-Qushayri 1990), engaged in religious and community services. Ribats (Khanqahs) were also the places where some Sufis resided together with other oppressed and week segments of the society for their safety and self-defence during war times and other brutal invasions of their lands by foreigners.

Ribats (Khanqahs) continued to exist throughout the subsequent centuries. Both their presence and importance did not appear to dwindle even after the rapid rise and spread of Khanqahs as more specialised and sophisticated Sufi religious, educational and Philanthropic institutions in the 4th, 5th and 6th AH/ 10th, 11th and 12th CE centuries. Abu Nasr Abd al-Rahim (d. 514 AH/1120 CE), a son of Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri, is said to have preached both in a ribat (Khanqah) and a madrasah (school), as we will see later (Ibn al-Mulaqqan 1998)[[17]](#footnote-17). Ribats (Khanqah) as Sufi hospices have been mentioned as late as the 7th, 8th and 9th AH/ 13th, 14th and 15th CE centuries. Ibn Jubayr (d. 614 AH/1217 CE) (1981)[[18]](#footnote-18) mentioned them, in his travel memoirs as a remarkable sight he witnessed in Damascus. Al-Maqrizi (1998)[[19]](#footnote-19), who died in 845 AH/1441 CE, also mentioned at least twelve ribats (Khanqah) that are featured permanently in the urban morphology of Cairo together with other Sufi Philanthropic institutions. Shihab al-Din Umar al-Suhrawardi (1984)[[20]](#footnote-20) spoke at length in his book 'Awarif al-Ma'arif about Sufi Philanthropic institutions and how a Sufi ought the Origins and Rise of Sufi Institutions

to behave when entering, while inside and when leaving them.

* **Model Khanqah**

Most of the Khanqahs established by these Sufis were Inclusive of education centres where the poor classes could send their children for learning free of cost; lodges, where homeless and wayfarers could spend couple of nights; Mess services (Langar) on large scale, where hundreds of poor and hungry people were fed on voluntary basis; free counselling services were offered to commoners for the resolution of their family and business disputes. Every Khanqah had a mosque attached to it where these Sufis delivered their sermons and discourses on the topics like, faith, religion, social behaviour and human rights, this was extra to what these Sufis were doing for the Socio-economic development of the society. This model of Khanqah based on serving humanity, became one of the reasons for the large-scale conversion of Hindus and followers of other religions to Islam.

After the demise of these Sufis, they were usually buried in those Khanqahs, which they had established themselves. People who were benefiting socially, economically, religiously and spiritually from these Khanqahs remained loyal to them and continued to visit these Khanqahs which had now become shrines of the founder Sufis after their demise.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Islam is a vibrant religion intertwined in the daily life of people at the local level. At that level, components of the Islamic religious circulation include Mosques, Madrasas, Khanqahs and holy shrines and even the humble graves of locally respected saints and holy men were associated with wisdom and became centres for the service of humanity. Historically speaking, these institutions have played a tremendous role in the social-economic development of society throughout history. This is why Khawaja Mooen-ud-Din Ajmari became known as ‘Khawaja Ghareeb Nawaj’ ‘the helper of the Poor.’ Another example is the Khanqah of Khawaja Nizam-ud-Din Awliya, which became known for feeding the poor and hungry on a large scale. Some scholars state that the amount of food cooked at the Khanqah Nizam-ud-Din would consume over 2800 kilograms of salt each month. On one occasion, when people had been left homeless after an attack by foreign invaders, Khawaja Nizam-ud-Din instructed the management of his Khanqah to re-build the houses, which had been destroyed, at the expense of the Khanqah. he personally supervised the whole operation.[[22]](#footnote-22)

* **Financial support and Management**

These Khanqahs and Sufi Shrines were financed by the generous donations of devotees, affiliates and the visitors. These financial contributions enabled these institutions to become models of philanthropic activity. In addition, certain Khanqahs provided a religious, spiritual and moral behavioural training that far exceeded what other Sufi institutions were providing in the way of philanthropic service to society.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Coleman and Eisner (1995) characterize the Khanqahs and Sufi shrines as "alternative routes to the sacred." however, in our view, is only partially true, since these holy places only complement Muslim religious circulation. No site can replace the centrality of Mecca Muazzama and Madinah Munawara"[[24]](#footnote-24).

* ***Sufi Shrines***

Bennigsen and Wimbush (1985)[[25]](#footnote-25) have identified and mapped many Khanqahs and Sufi shrines operating in different parts of the world; for example: 32 main "working" holy places of the Sufis in the Caucasus only, and 59 in Central Asia. And many more could be found in Middle eastern and south Asian regions of the world.

* ***Sufi Shrines of South Asia***

Subhan (1960)[[26]](#footnote-26) has listed scores of Sufi Khanqahs and shrines in India and Pakistan. These lists include the location of the shrine, and the date of death of the saint associated with each shrine. Although several locations are only vaguely identified (for example, "Bengal"), it is clear that all of these shrines developed during and after the thirteenth century. The largest number of shrines (188) is attributed to the Chishti order of Sufis, although the shrines of Suhrawardi (72), Qadri (116), Naqshbandi (64), and those of a number of minor or irregular orders (103), are also listed. Some of these shrines are virtually of international importance, for example Data Ali Hajveeri, Khawaja Moeen-ud-Din Ajmeri, Baba Fareed Gang-e-Shakar, Hazrat Baha-ud-Din Zakaria, Khawaja Nizam-ud-Din Awliya, Hazrat Mujadid Alf-e-Thani and Baba Bulle Shah; whereas others are more modest, being patronized in the framework of a local dialect region.

When the Islamic missionaries arrived in South Asia, they found people class of people and have-nots of the societies in socio-economic miseries, as well as under the political oppressions of ruling classes of those eras. The low cast discrimination was at its rise as well which kept the poor classes of society away from their basic human rights; such as education, justice system, enough food to feed their families and shelter. These Sufis built Khanqahs as Philanthropic institutions in various parts of the region on the concept of “serving the Humanity” which is the core of the preaching’s of Islam.

* **Development experts on Khanqah or Shrine based Philanthropic organizations**

The concept of Khanqah or Shrine based Philanthropic organizations has been extensively discussed and debated in development circles but with little agreement over their precise quantum of benefit to the society. Clarke and Jennings defines such institutions as “an organisation that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith”[[27]](#footnote-27).

Preferring the term ‘religious NGOs’, Berger defines these as: formal organisations whose identity and mission are self-consciously derived from the teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditions and which operates on a non-profit, independent, voluntary basis to promote and realize collectively articulated ideas about the public good at the national or international level. [[28]](#footnote-28)

Clarke, in his typology of such institutions, defines ‘faith-based charitable or development organisations’ as organisations that “mobilise the faithful in support of the poor and other social groups, and which fund or manage projects which tackle poverty and social exclusion”[[29]](#footnote-29). These definitions, although seemingly straightforward, mask a great deal of complexity and ambiguity. Jeavons (2003) argues for a nuanced and historically contextualised understanding of faith-based Philanthropies that accounts for the diversity within the category.

Aside from the definitional aspects of classifying faith-based Philanthropies, there is a large amount of debate about the possible benefits and disadvantages of working with faith-based Philanthropies as development partners. On the positive side, there is a belief that faith-based Philanthropies are more effective in reaching the poorest. Lunn, for example, states:

ROs [religious organizations] stand out because of their commitment to and zeal for serving people and communities. They are perceived to work for the public good and, in comparison with government agencies, it is believed that they are more sensitive to people in times of catastrophe, chaos or conflict, are responsive to people’s needs and flexible in their provision, act with honesty and take distribution seriously.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Clarke (2006)[[31]](#footnote-31) and Williams and Demerath (1998)[[32]](#footnote-32) argue that faith-based Philanthropies have advantages in terms of being able to draw on spiritual and moral resources as motivating factors in gaining support and effecting social change. Furthermore, Berger (2003)[[33]](#footnote-33) argues that faith-based Philanthropies are often highly net- worked nationally and internationally, which provides them with social capital in the form of human and financial resources. Martin, Chau and Patel (2007)[[34]](#footnote-34) argue that such institutions have a longer-term commitment to the communities in which they work compared to secular NGOs. It is also argued that are usually less dependent on donor funds, relying more on individual donations[[35]](#footnote-35), which provides them with greater independence.

At the same time, critics warn against the potential dangers of working with faith-based Philanthropies as development partners. They are often perceived as being linked to proselytization, and there is a concern that people who are poor and desperate are more vulnerable to this kind of pressure[[36]](#footnote-36). De Kadt (2009)[[37]](#footnote-37) is particularly critical of those faith-based Philanthropies that promote rigid and inflexible versions of religion, which aim to regulate social and cultural interaction. Others point to the divisive potential of faith-based Philanthropies, especially in areas that have experienced religious conflict (see Flanigan 2010). Furthermore, Pearson and Tomalin (2008)[[38]](#footnote-38) are wary of an over-reliance on faith-based Philanthropies, which often take conservative stances on gender-related issues and can pose a threat to advances made with respect to women’s rights.

1. **Methodology**

This research was conducted over the course of 5 weeks, by two researchers. Most of the fieldwork took place in Lahore, Kasur, Pakpatan and Multan and involved conducting interviews with representatives of the selected Shrines and business owners working in the surroundings of those shrines.

* Interviews were conducted with the ‘executive officer’ of *Data Darbar, Mr Shykh Abdul Qayyum* on12th March 2016; The manager of the shrine of *Baba Bulleh Shah, Mr Gulzar Ahmad Khan* on 19th March 2016; Mr *Zahid Iqbal*, the assistant manager at the shrine of *Baba Farid Shakar Ganj* on 26th March 2016 and Mr *Arshad Saqqi,* the manager at shrines of Hazrat *Bahaud Din Zakriya* and his grandson *Shah Rukan-e-Aalam* on 2nd April 2016. The interviews of the owners of the business and the surveys were conducted on the same dates as well. These officials provided us with the information about the food distribution, annual income of the shrine through donations and other sources, welfare projects operating under the administration of those shrines, residence given to employees of the shrine and the number of Qawwals (traditional Singers) attached to those shrines. The information related to the annual incomes of shrine related businesses, the number of employed persons and their annual salary packages has been collected by the distribution of a questionnaire among the business owners working in the proximity of those shrines.
* Businesses related to these shrines were surveyed within one kilometer radius of each shrine. The kinds of business which were included in survey are those which were related specifically to the visitors of the shrines. We found a large market of bicycle spare parts just beside the shrine of *Data Ali Hajveeri (Data Debar),* but we did not include that business in our survey as it was not confined to visitors of shrines. We calculated the average annual income of those businesses by taking two samples from each category of business and then multiplying this average by the total number of businesses in that category. The aggregate income generation from each business operating in the surrounding area of each shrine was computed by adding all the products of the average annual income from two specimens to the total number of that category of business.
* We surveyed two shops as samples from each category of business. A sample of the questionnaire distributed and returned to us from each business is attached in Appendix 1. The total number of each category of business was multiplied with average numbers of employed persons by that business to calculate the number of economically advantaged households from each category of business. Then we multiplied the number of economically advantaged households to 6.3[[39]](#footnote-39), to get the total number of people receiving some economic benefit from each shrine. We calculated the total number of people who were receiving economic benefit from the activities generated by the shrine, either by direct employment at the shrine or indirectly, by summing up the number of all economically advantaged persons from all businesses.
1. **Results and Discussion:**
* ***Shrine of Hazrat Data Ali Hajveeri (Data Derbar)***

The ‘executive officer’ of *Data Derbar, Shykh Abdul Qayyum*, who has served 32 years in department of Auqaf, mentioned that on average *10 thousand* poor people are fed by the services, visitors and devotees of this great Sufi shrine, which is equivalent to Rs. 146 million annually at the rate of Rs. 40 for one meal per person. The average annual income of *Data Derbar* is around Rs. 300 million, from which Rs. 35 million and 7.6 million are collected through the auction of contracts with those who look after the shoes of worshippers, contracts with those running stalls and car parking officials. The rest of the income is generated through generous donations.

Four welfare projects are operating under the administration of *Data Darbar*. The first is “*Data Darbar hospital,*” which provides 24/7 free services to the needy. An amount of Rs. 28 million per annum is being spent on health care at *Data Darbar Hospital*. It is a full-fledged hospital with 95 indoor beds and departments of gynecology, dental, ophthalmological, minor surgical, ears and throat, gastrological and department for outdoor patients. On average 547.5 thousand patients receive clinical treatment in the outpatients’ department and eye operations for eleven thousand patients are conducted there annually. Seventy-three thousand gynae patients are examined annually. This department has operation facility and the doctors (35), paramedical (100) and administrative staff (65) receive Rs. 900 thousand, Rs. 480 thousand and Rs. 420 thousand annual salaries respectively. Other than the hospital, there are 16 “*Data Darbar medical dispensaries*” from which 9 are in Lahore city and 7 are out of the city where 9.125 thousand patients receive free clinical medical treatment annually.

The second welfare project is “*Ali Hajveeri handicraft school*” which provides free crafting education to 50 female students. The major skills taught in this school are stitching, embroidering and cooking. The Third project is TEVTA[[40]](#footnote-40) affiliated “*Jamia Hajveeri Madrasa,*” which has 350 enrolled students who get free education in Islamic sciences along with computer education for basic and professional software of accounting and designing. Free shoes, clothes and an annual scholarship are also given to the students of this madrassa.

The Fourth project operating under Data Darbar management is provision of dowry, consisting of Rs. 20 thousand each to 600 deserving brides every year. On three days of ‘Uras[[41]](#footnote-41)’, the provincial department of Auqaf spends Rs. 10 million (on average) for arrangements of spiritual gatherings (*mehfils*) in which Rs. 1.5 million are distributed among *nasheed singers and Qawwals*[[42]](#footnote-42). It was also noted that around 400 mosques, which are operated under the Auqaf of Punjab are completely dependent on the income generated from the shrine of Data Sahib. Small mosques usually have two employees whereas large mosques have three or more. These two employees are ‘Khateeb’ and ‘Moazan’ and receive salaries of 10 and 15 thousand respectively with other financial benefits and pension after retirement. Interestingly, 80 percent of the employed people working at these mosques belong to an Islamic school of thought that opposes the concept of Khanqahs and the building Sufi Shrines. Despite this, their salaries one of the popular Sufi Shrines of Pakistan.

We surveyed the economic activities within one kilometer radius of each shrine and which were directly related to that shrine. There are 80 cooks at *Data Derbar* and each of them earns on average Rs. 3.21 million annually and Rs. 650 thousand in the month of Uras. There are 9 employees (on average) employed at each cooking center and each employee earns Rs. 228 thousand annually. At the shrine of *Data Derbar*, 90 shops of Tasbeeh counters, caps, dates, flowers, jewelry and shawls and each of these earns on average Rs. 321 thousand annually and Rs. 60 thousand in the month of Uras. This type of business usually has one employee (on average) who earns Rs. 90 thousand annually. There are 15 restaurants for breakfast, lunch and dinner and each on average makes a profit of 2.1 million annually and Rs. 275 thousand in the month of Uras. Restaurants have nine employees on average and each gets a salary of Rs. 102 thousand annually. There are sixteen shops of perfumes and each of them on average earn profits of Rs. 330 thousand annually and Rs. 45 thousand in the month or Uras. These are all self-employed types of businesses. We found 52 restaurants with Rs. 4.2 million annual profits (on average) in the surroundings of Data Derbar. These restaurants are instructed to remain closed in the month of Uras by law enforcement agencies for security purposes. Each restaurant has on average seven employees with annual salary of Rs. 138 thousand. We also found approximately 200 hawkers who sell fruits and other perishable eatables and each of them earns a profit of Rs. 132 thousand annually and Rs. 20 thousand net income in the month of Uras. Each of the six shoe keeper’s stalls on average earns Rs. 6.6 million annually and Rs. 450 thousand in the month of Uras. Each shoe keeper stall on average has five employees with Rs. 150 thousand annual salary. There are 6 car parking stands and each on average earns Rs. 3.3 million annually. Each parking stand has on average 5 employees with a salary of Rs. 165 thousand annually. The approximate annual total income of Rs. 629.76 million and Rs. 72.65 million in the month of Uras is generated by the economic activities related to this shrine. This amount is distributed among 1,409 households and 8,924 people, in Pakistan, the average number of members of each household is 6.3[[43]](#footnote-43).

* **Shrine of *Baba Farid Shakar Ganj***

An interview was conducted with Mr *Zahid Iqbal*, the assistance manager at shrine of *Baba Farid Shakar Ganj* who has been serving the department of Auqaf for six years. Around three thousand people on average receive food at this shrine daily, which is the equivalent of Rs. 43.8 million annually. The average annual income at the shrine of *Baba Farid Shakar Ganj* from all means and resources is Rs. 60 million. Out of this amount, Rs. 5.2 million is collected through the signing of contracts for shoe-keeping stalls. The car parking stand has been closed for security reasons since 2010 after the bomb blast in the shrine’s premises, which is causing a loss of Rs. 7 million annually. The uniqueness of this shrine is that it is provides accommodation for forty employees of Auqaf Punjab. There are two welfare projects run by the administration of this shrine. The first project is “*Baba Farid Shifa Khana,*” a mini hospital where on average 36.5 thousand deserving patients get free clinical treatment annually. The second project is the provision of dowry for needy brides. The project provides Rs. 15 thousand to 150 poor brides annually. Moreover, from the abbot (*Sajada Nasheen*) of this shrine, one thousand people get free food in the last ten days of the month of Ramadan. There are 42 registered qawwals at this shrine and each of them earns an annual income of Rs. 312 thousand. Each qawwal has on average seven group members. According to the shrine administration, around three million people visit this shrine in the three days of Uras and almost everyone enjoys free food costing the shrine about Rs. 120 million.

There are eleven cooks working in the surroundings of this shrine and each of them earns Rs. 1.32 million annually and Rs. 250 thousand in the month of Uras. Each cook on average has four employees with a salary of 78 thousand annually. The survey of this shrine indicated that around 138 shops were selling various items such as Tasbeeh counters, caps, dates, flowers, shawls and perfumes. On average, the annual net income of each shop is Rs. 1.35 million and Rs. 300 thousand in the month of Uras. Each shop of this category has on average five employees with a salary of 81 thousand annually. There are 148 shops of special sugar (*Shakar*) and jewelry with annual income of Rs. 930 thousand each and Rs. 130 thousand in the month of Uras. These are self-employed types of businesses without any employees. There are 132 restaurants for tea, breakfast, lunch and dinner and each earns a profit of Rs. 456 thousand (on average) and Rs. 127.5 thousand in the month of Uras. Each restaurant has on average five employees with an annual salary of Rs. 78 thousand. There are 12 hotels in the surroundings as well and each of them on average earns an annual net income of Rs. 990 thousand. On average, each hotel has five employees with an annual salary of Rs. 84 thousand. There are approximately 160 hawkers and each one is earning on average Rs. 162 thousand annually and Rs. 30 thousand in the month of Uras. 42 books stores and stalls were also found with Islamic books and *Punjabi Sufi* poetry. These book stores earn Rs. 540 thousand annually (on average) and Rs. 65 thousand in the month of Uras. There are 26 general stores and each is earning Rs. 750 thousand annually and Rs. 65 thousand in the month of Uras. 2 shoe-keeper’s stalls are inside the shrine and each one on average earns Rs. 2.7 million and Rs. 700 thousand in the month of Uras. Each shoe-keeper stall has six employees and each receives a salary of Rs. 87 thousand annually. There are four private parking stands. Each of them on average earns Rs. 2.1 million annually and Rs. 750 thousand in the month of Uras. Each parking stand employs 4 workers and each of them receives a salary of Rs. 78 thousand annually. Approximately, the annual total income of Rs. 505.536 million and Rs. 91.75 million in the month of Uras is generated by all the economic activities happening in and around this shrine. This amount is distributed among 1,704 households and 10,732 people. We can conclude that the income per capita at shrine of *Baba Farid Shakar Ganj* is lower than the income of *Data Derbar*.

* **Shrine of *Baba Bulleh Shah***

The manager at the shrine of *Baba Bulleh Shah, Mr Gulzar Ahmad Khan* was interviewed. According to him,on average 200 poor people get food daily from this shrine, which is worth Rs. 2.92 million annually. The annual average income at this shrine from all income generating activities is Rs. 12.5 million. Rs. 6 million of this amount is collected from the combined contracts of shoe-keeping stalls, parking stands, flower shops and book shops. This shrine contributes to the zonal fund to arrange the dowry for the poor and needy brides. An annual free medical camp is arranged on Uras. On average 20 thousand patients are examined and get free medicines through this medical camp.

Twelve qawwals are affiliated with this shrine and each of them on average earns Rs. 108 thousand annually. On average, each group of qawwals at this shrine consists of three persons. There are fourteen shops of Tasbeeh counters, caps, dates, flowers, shawls and perfumes within one kilometer radius of this shrine and each of them earns, on average, a profit of Rs. 180 million annually and Rs. 45 thousand in the month of Uras. These are small shops without any employees. Six small restaurants were found with 300 thousand annual income (on average) and Rs. 55 thousand in the month of Uras. Each restaurant on average has 3 employees and each of them earns an annual salary of 78 thousand. We also found approximately 100 hawkers who sell fruits and other perishable eatables and each of them earns Rs. 93 thousand annually and Rs. 11 thousand net income in the month of Uras. There is one car parking stand with an annual income of Rs. 780 thousand and Rs. 120 thousand in the month of Uras. Two shoe-keepers’ stalls at this shrine earn an annual income of Rs. 600 thousand and Rs. 75 thousand in the month of Uras. Each of them has employed two persons and each one of them receives an annual salary of Rs. 75 thousand. The *Kasur* district, where the shrine of *Baba Bulleh Shah* is located, is famous for its traditional fried fish, *kasuri methi* ((قصوری میتھی, *falooda* ((فالودہ, *andrasay* ((اندرسے[[44]](#footnote-44) and iron pots. We found 15 shops of fish with an annual income of Rs. 630 thousand and Rs. 95 thousand in the month of Uras. Each shop has on average two employees and each employee has an annual income of Rs. 114 thousand. Fifty small shops of *kasuri methi* ((قصوری میتھی are earning on average Rs. 162 thousand annually and Rs. 19 thousand in the month of Uras. Both *falooda* ((فالودہ, *andrasay* ((اندرسے and iron pots shops have no employees. We found 26 shops of *falooda* ((فالودہ, *andrasay* ((اندرسے with an annual income of Rs. 390 thousand (on average) and Rs. 52.5 thousand in the month of Uras. Nine shops of iron pots earn on average Rs. 360 thousand annually and Rs. 35 thousand in the moth of Uras. We estimated that, approximately, an annual total income of Rs. 47.826 million and Rs. 6.385 million in the month of Uras is generated by all economic activities related to this shrine. This amount is distributed among 260 households and 1,638people.

* **Shrines of *Bahaud Din Zakriya and Shah Rukan-e-Aalam***

Multan is known as *Madina-tu-lawliya* (city of Sufis). We visited the shrines of Hazrat *Bahaud Din Zakriya*and and Hazrat *Shah Rukan-e-Aalam*. We did not find much income generating revenue in relation to these Shrines except shoe-keeper’s stalls, shawls and qawwals. Temporary bazaars are established during the days of Uras but remain closed during the rest of the year. The manager of these shrines, Mr *Arshad Saqqi,* who has been serving the department of Auqaf for the last 12 years, told us in his interview that on average 500 people enjoy free food at these two shrines daily, costing Rs. 7.3 million annually. The amount of Rs. 12.5 million is collected from all the income generating activities of these two shrines. Of this amount, Rs. 8 million is collected from the combined signing of contracts for shoe-keeping stalls, parking, flower shops and shawls. Around 50 people get employment from these businesses and each of them, on average, earns Rs. 48 thousand annually. A mini hospital with one male and one female doctor is working under the administration of these two adjacent shrines where, on average, 200 patients are examined and get free medicines costing the hospital Rs. 1.8 million annually. In the three days of Uras, 40 thousand followers and devotes visit these shrines and almost everyone gets free food. Daily 300 poor people, on average, enjoy food provided by the abbot (Sajada Nasheen) of this shrine. There are two educational projects operating under the administration of these shrines, *madrassa Dar-ul-Nisa Janazgah* (for 200 female students) and *Bahaud Din madrassa* (for 30 male students). Basic Islamic education is provided at these madrasas. A contract of Rs. 100 thousand is also drawn up for illuminating the shrine during the three days of Uras.

1. **Conclusion**

In this article, we have argued that the Khanqahs and Sufi Shrines in Pakistan have huge potential as philanthropic institutions and that they are providing several kinds of assistance to society socially and economically, for example, informational support, instrumental support, emotional/psychological support, spiritual and religious training to disciples and visitors, lodging and shelter to homeless and food for thousands of hungry people on a monthly basis. Besides this direct kind of assistance, these institutions provide thousands of job opportunities in the country and support thousands of households financially on monthly basis. Moreover, this kind of support facilitates the personal development and well-being of individuals and families who visit these Khanqahs and Shrines.

We could conclude our study of shrines in Pakistan by saying that, at present, these Khanqahs are still operating according to the pattern on which they were originally established. This pattern is in keeping with the core elements of Islamic Ideology, which is about helping one’s neighbour and serving the whole of the humanity by the surrender of one’s time, knowledge and skill and even one’s life in the service of humanity.

Our study also noted some discrepancies in the mismanagement of funds. This calls for structural improvements in these institutions, which the government could facilitate by taking more interest in their mode of operation and by giving them greater recognition and professional status as philanthropic organizations. A proper external audit system could also be introduced to help these intuitions grow more professional and socially.

This study raises a set of challenges for research on Sufi philanthropic institutions in Pakistan and beyond. While we have focused on the role of social and economic developmental support provided by these institutions in Pakistan, it is not clear at this point whether this kind of developmental support is provided at Sufi institutions in the broader context of Pakistan as well as in other Muslim societies where Sufi institutions operate at present. In addition, there is scope for more research on social networking as a form of social support among individuals and families who are associated with and have an allegiance to Sufi institutions.

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12. (Pickthall 1930, 50) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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39. In Pakistan, 6.3 members per each household on average; statistics published by Pakistan bureau of statistics, available at <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/pslm/publications/hies2013_14/tables/table01.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. 30 Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Uras (from Arabic: عرس‎), is the death anniversary of a Sufi saint in South Asia, usually held at the saint's dargah (shrine) [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. 32 A singer how sings Sufi devotional music [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Statistics published by Pakistan bureau of statistics, available at <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/pslm/publications/hies2013_14/tables/table01.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Kasuri methi is dried form of Fenugreek, Falooda and Andrasay are traditional sweets [↑](#footnote-ref-44)