

Shrine Ethnographic Experience

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1) Introduction

a) Purpose of visiting the shrine

Despite having lived in Lahore for more than fifteen years now (and having been a regular visitor of the city even when I wasn't living here), my lack of comprehension in relation to what this city has to offer through its scenically modern as well as historical attractions has and still continues to, baffle me in many ways. This has been particularly true for certain historically and spiritually significant sites of the city, including shrines & mosques, of which I still continue to (very unfortunately, if I may say so myself) possess little knowledge about. Needless to say, it then comes as no surprise that upon being informed of this assignment for my linguistic anthropology class, I took it upon myself to take this opportunity not only as a means of completing the assignment itself, but also to better familiarize myself with what my city has to offer; encompassing elements of both spirituality and Sufism within a largely urbanized realm of regular hustle and bustle. This was thus, my first time visiting a shrine and I felt like a tourist in my own city, perhaps in the best way possible.

My reasons for picking the Shrine of Shah Jamal are two-fold. On the one hand, owing to its close proximity and easy access to my university, it felt like a very feasible option. On the other hand, my surface-level (but largely potent) knowledge about this shrine prior to visiting it myself proved to be of utmost significance, as well as the experiences narrated to me regarding the shrine from my friends who have already been there. Known for its vast gatherings and historical traditions, the shrine of Shah Jamal had already been a source of captivation for me owing to its famous 'Thursday Nights', which I had long-since been made aware of but which I had never had the opportunity of visiting (and which unfortunately, I couldn't this time either, owing to the unstable political conditions of the country during the week of my visit). As such, I had to pick a different day, but the hopes of being able to physically witness the long-since withstanding tradition of trance-like dancing and music amidst an enormous crowd of the shrine's devotees is what propelled me to pick this

particular shrine for this project, despite later being deprived of this opportunity at that point in time. I hope to revisit it again someday on a Thursday, and my experience at the shrine nonetheless, proved to be largely significant in many ways

Description

Located at the heart of Muslim Town and within a three-minute drive from Forman Christian College, the dome of the shrine can be spotted from a mile away; glistening as bright as ever in the early afternoon sun. The outside of the building of the shrine itself was surrounded by a number of small shops; ranging from toy shops to shops that selling items relevant to the shrine itself; including candles and ribbons. At first glance, the entrance of the shrine looks relatively smaller than one would have expected (or which was my case, at least), owing to perhaps it being located in a largely narrow (and somewhat cramped) street, but it is only after one enters the shrine that the actual size of the shrine is both recognized and appreciated.

As is the case with most shrines, the entrance to the shrine demonstrated a very obvious segregation based on gender; with different entrances for both men and women. What lay ahead of the entrance however, was a vast courtyard, to the left of which lay the masjid that encompasses the compound that serves as the shrine of Shah Jamal.

Owing to my choice of choosing to visit the shrine during the early hours of the afternoon, the female section of the shrine was largely secluded, minus the presence of two other women besides myself. The scorching heat within this time of the year in Lahore coupled with the fact that I chose to visit the shrine on a working day meant that besides being largely secluded, the atmosphere within the shrine itself was also significantly peaceful. Whilst located next to the entrance of a shrine is an office wherein a public officer responsible for the welfare of the shrine sits, I chose to instead interview a middle-aged man who referred to himself as the caretaker of the shrine, claiming that he had worked there for many years. Taking his word at face-value and choosing his responses as the focal point of relevance in relation to this paper, thus began my interviewing process.

It is also interesting to note here that despite the female section of the shrine being largely empty, the outside of the shrine was predominately occupied by men (indicating also a potentially larger number of men visiting the shrine when compared to women). Perhaps what proved to be one of the highlights of this experience was my unfortunate negligence in relation to the values and rules to be upheld by the visitors of the shrine; one of which is the requirement of all women to wear a dupatta to the shrine. Having never been to a shrine in my entire life, I was not fully aware of this rule and thus ended up being given stares and

snarky glances from the men outside the shrine; two of which also came up to me and urged me to wear a dupatta.

Methodology

Essentially (and as per the requirement of this project), we were required to interview one of the caretakers of our chosen shrine, focusing on the central question of the nature of the kalam used at the shrine. As such, once I was done observing and taking pictures of the shrine and its surrounding compounds, I decided to look around for potential caretakers of the shrine for the purpose of interviewing them. Due to the shrine being mostly secluded at that time of the day, I approached the only other two women besides myself present within the compound and asked them if they knew who the caretaker was. Proclaiming that they were regular visitors of the shrine and thus knew pretty much everyone who worked there, they pointed towards a middle-aged man at the far corner of the compound; a sweeper by profession who had worked there for many years and thus knew more about the shrine than anybody else there did. I approached the man, and politely asked him if he would be fine with me interviewing him for my work regarding the shrine, and he told me that he would be more than happy to be involved. This was thus the man that I chose to interview for the purpose of my work, and whose answers were deeply insightful and valuable in many ways from both a linguistic as well as historical point of view.

ii. Account of Scripts

Inscription Number	Location	Language	Verse, Pir's saying, etc.
1	Entrance of the female compound of the shrine	Urdu	An 'importance notice' poster informing people visiting the shrine to not pay monetary donations to the shrine.
2	On a wall directly above the compound wherein the shrine is located	Arabic & Urdu	An inscription of Surah Maida, a Qur'anic verse that highlights the oneness of God and the Holy Book.
3	Within the compound and outside of the gated room wherein the actual shrine is present	Urdu	A framed inscription/script sealed to the wall that highlights the life and historical significance of Baba Shah Jamal; his contributions and why he should be remembered.

4	Entrance of the male compound of the shrine	Urdu	A framed inscription/script very similar to (3), but with lesser detail and more to the point.
5	Towards the backside of the female compound of the shrine	Arabic	A framed inscription of Dua-e Qanoot, a Qur'anic verse.
6	At the backside of the female compound of the shrine, on a bookshelf	Urdu & Arabic	A bookshelf consisting of Holy Books and books on Sufism & the life of Baba Shah Jamal. (Since there were too many, I will write about two of the books that the caretaker spoke about in detail).
7	Female compound; bookshelf	Urdu	A written script about the Quranic interpretation of life after death & how it should be interpreted by modern-day Muslims.

8	Female compound; bookshelf	Urdu	A written script about the many Quranic verses that are deemed to be significant in terms of their 'healing' powers, with written accounts and interviews from those people who benefitted from them.		
9	Outside the room wherein the shrine rests; male compound	Urdu & Arabic	A framed inscription denoting the name of the person the shrine belongs to (Baba Shah Jamal), with a few Quranic verses mentioned, to be		

			recited before entering the shrine		
10	Female compound, entrance	Urdu	A poster issued & hung by the authorities responsible for overseeing the shrine; a written code of conduct of all sorts denoting the rules of the shrine, including reciting Surah Fatiha before entering the shrine as well as making sure that the Wuzu (ablution) has been performed by those wishing to pray at the shrine.		

11	Both male and female compounds of the shrine	Arabic	Multiple walls within both the compounds wherein the Quranic Shahada (the declaration of the Oneness of God) is engraved.
12	The gated room wherein the shrine itself is located; on the ceiling of the room.	Arabic	The 99 names of Allah, written on the ceiling on the room of the shrine.

Account of Symbols

Symbol	Location	What the symbol meant
A pot of salt	Female compound; next to the room of the shrine	According to the caretaker of the shrine, the salt present in the pot had healing powers and could be of great benefit to those who were to utilize it.
A tree	Towards the backside of the female compound	Deemed as being 'holy' by regular visitors of the shrine, the tree is significant in that its branches are used by devotees of the shrine as a means of getting their wishes fulfilled, by wishing upon ribbons which are then tied to the branches of the tree.
A small slab of marble	Exact location not known; shown to me by the caretaker	Once rubbed upon the body, the slab of marble (believed to be containing healing powers) cures its users of any diseases they may be suffering from
A mini compound/ 'resting area' of Baba Shah Jamal	Basement of the male compound of the shrine	Deemed to have been the 'resting area' of Baba Shah Jamal, the mini compound; largely secluded and hidden from the actual shrine holds historical significance, with the area itself having been surrounded by candles.
A shelf/rack for 'diyas' (candles) engraved to the wall	Female compound; next to the 'holy' tree	A tradition undertaken by regular visitors of the shrine, the 'diyas' are lit and placed on the shelf, with the hopes of one's wishes getting fulfilled.

III) Transcription from Interview (my chosen excerpt from the entire interview)

(The following translated portion of the interview was chosen on the basis of its relevancy to me and how I found it to be the most interesting aspect of the entire interviewing process. It has little to do with the central question directed towards the caretaker of the shrine, which shall be discussed in the next part of this assignment).

(The caretaker had introduced himself as the ‘Baba’ of the shrine, which is also how I referred to him throughout the entire interviewing process. I’ve used the letter ‘S’ to signify my parts of the interview).

Baba: (pointing to the trees lying ahead of us within the compound of the shrine): People don’t just come here for the purpose of paying respect to Baba Shah Jamal, the trees here are very important to a lot of people in many ways.

S: Is that so? (rubbing the sweat off my forehead with the ends of my kameez). Are those ribbons that I am seeing tied to that one particular tree? (I squint my eyes and point towards the tree), what significance does this tree hold?

Baba: (smiles) Now if only you’d come here a little later, I would have given you a ribbon myself to tie to this tree here! We’re out of ribbons at the moment unfortunately. But see here, people have long-since believed that tying ribbons to this tree will fulfill their wishes; a holy tree then you could say. It’s a very old tree, and look at the amount of ribbons on it! People believe in it for a reason.

S: I see. I was wondering-

Baba: (excitedly) Which reminds me, let me also show you something else. (Leaves for about a minute, comes back holding what looks like a small marble slab in his hands).

Baba: You might want to take a look at this. You’ll find that this slab of marble will be beneficial for you in many ways. Like the tree, this is also known for its healing powers, and will cure you of all diseases if you rub it over yourself.

(The Baba holds the slab over my shoulder and rubs it over my head for a brief moment and then taps my head with his hand)

Baba (proclaims with pride): Jeetay raho beta. (May you live long, little one).

S: (I smile nervously and inspect the slab of marble, hand it back to the baba and decide to inquire about other objects with ‘healing powers’ within the shrine).

S: Are there other things over here that people use to fulfill their wishes or which they think is holy in some way?

Baba (once again points to the area surrounding the trees): That entire area, I would say. You see those *diyas*? (candles), people light these usually at night for the hopes of their *mannats* (wishes) getting fulfilled. Any wish really, any problem that you have.

S: Do they bring their own candles or are there candles available within both compounds of the shrine?

Baba: (pauses and sighs): I think you didn't look at the shops located right next to the shrine. The ribbons, the candles, everything can be purchased from there.

S: Interesting. So how does this process work? If I for example, place a *diya* here and my wish later gets fulfilled, do I come back here and light another *diya* as a thank-you token?

Baba: You know what you have to do if that happens? Bring a small lock with you, attach it to the barbed wire. Lock it and keep the key with you. Come back 2-3 days later with another *mannat* that you may have, open the lock and throw it in a river with running water.

(At this point I had to hold back a small laugh, I wish I had inquired about the barbed wire he was talking about, since I couldn't see any near-by within the premises of the compound, nor was the presence of running water anywhere near-by).

S: That's new, could you also tell me-

(One of the only two women in the shrine besides myself walks up to me and taps me on my shoulder).

The woman: (inquiringly, though I could tell that my attire was not completely fit by the shrine's dress code, and could thus sense the woman's dismay). Please adjust your dupatta, are you from around here?

S: (embarrassingly) Oh I'm sorry, yes, I am. (Adjusting my dupatta over my head in an orderly fashion) This is my first time visiting a shrine though, do you come here often?

The woman: (smiling) All the time. (points to the 'mini shrine' next to Baba Shah Jamal's shrine, wherein lays the son of Baba Shah Jamal), I have conversations with Baba here very often. It feels as if he's listening to me. (looks at me inquiringly) Are you here from abroad? Work purposes? I think I may have something which you would like to see.

S: (hesitatingly) Sure um, like I said I actually am from around h-

The woman: Look at this. (produces a small book from her bag and cuts me off mid conversation in the process). It consists of certain Quranic ayats that have greatly helped people, and people have written narratives about how their desires and wishes were fulfilled by reciting these verses. (Flips through the pages excitedly). Any problem, any issue related to money, marriage proposals etc. that people have had but which were solved through verses like the *Alam Sharif* have been mentioned here. An old man published this for people like us to benefit from it.

S: So, what do I recite for my wishes to be fulfilled? Any specific verses?

The woman: (flips the pages and points to a number of different ayats in the book): *Ayat ul Kursi, the Alam Sharif, Surah Taubah*. You can recite them all together or one at a time but the more the recitations, the more likely it is you will be rewarded soon.

(The woman holds the book out to me and insists that I take it, to which I politely object, and thank her for her input before turning my attention to Baba standing behind me, patiently waiting for me to ask him more questions).

IV) Discussion of what was learned

- **The nature of the *Kalaam* of the Shrine**

As the focal point of interest in relation to this assignment as well as the interviewing process as a whole, the answers surrounding the kalaam of the shrine and the significance of that kalaam proved to be the most relevant aspect of my trip to the shrine. Upon asking the caretaker about the nature of the kalaam of the shrine, I was presented with a number of insightful answers (it should be kept in mind however, that I had to consistently bring this question up many times during my visit, owing to the fact that the caretaker was having trouble understanding what it was that I was inquiring about). As such, the caretaker emphasized upon the notion of the shrine not having a specific kalaam, elaborating on the many ways in which the Holy Quran was the central script used within the domain of the shrine, with the visitors of the shrine reading the Quran at lengths and praying at the shrine (as well as its surrounding ‘symbols’) for their wishes to be fulfilled.

Upon additional emphasis on this question however, the caretaker then showed me around the compound of the shrine, familiarizing me with the different religiously as well as culturally significant ‘texts’ available within the shrine. Introducing me to a bookshelf that contained different Islamically relevant books and scripts, the caretaker took a few out from the bookshelf and elaborated on the nature of some of them, with Quranic siparabs (the division of the Quran into 30 elaborate books) as well as books written on Islamic rulings and teachings regarding issues such as those surrounding life and death, the significance of rituals such as prayer and fasting. Not much later, a woman present in the shrine (as elaborated upon in the earlier section of this assignment), presented a book to me which she had borrowed from the shrine’s shelf. This particular book, containing narratives of various individuals who had benefitted from specific Quranic verses, was held sacred by the woman who had presented it to me, and inevitably due to the book being the property of the domain of the shrine, could also be deemed as being largely relevant to other visitors of the shrine.

Additionally, a framed inscription highlighting the life and significance of Baba Shah Jamal was hung on the wall next to the entrance of the room of the shrine. According to the caretaker, most new visitors would firstly be encouraged to read about the historical relevance of Baba Shah Jamal, and would then be encouraged to proceed to the shrine to offer their prayers. Written in pure Urdu (and also quite difficult for me to understand fully), this particular piece of writing is very significant to the shrine, and is placed in both the male and female compounds of the shrine.

Specific Quran verses are deeply relevant to the shrine, with *ayats* such as Surah Al-Maida, the Shahada as well as the Dua-e-Qanoot being engraved within the walls of the shrine, signifying the Oneness of God and the significance of the Holy Quran, which are scriptural elements that are common to most shrines. The caretaker had deeply emphasized upon the nature of these verses; presenting me with a pamphlet which was placed on a small shelf next to the main door of the room of the shrine, within which were mentioned certain Quranic verses. This pamphlet could be read by those who wished to familiarize themselves with specific verses they could recite during their prayers in the shrine. From where I was standing outside the room of the tomb itself (women were not allowed to go inside the room of the tomb), I could see further Islamic inscriptions on the walls of the room; with the 99 names of Allah carefully calligraphed on the ceiling of the room with the most beautiful architecture; silver chandeliers above the tomb dangling brightly.

- **The significance of the symbols present within the shrine, and what they represented**

Interestingly, whilst I entered the shrine with the hopes of understanding the nature of the *kalaam* that was being used there, the significant sense of symbolism that was present within the shrine in relation to many of its inner components proved to be an equally exciting as well as informative experience for me. Briefly having been highlighted in the table above, specific objects such as a pot of sand as well as a slab of marble were known to have healing powers, and could restore one's 'good health' if they were to be utilized, as emphasized upon by the caretaker of the shrine.

In relation to this however, the trees of the female compound of the shrine were significant in terms of their symbolism in many ways. There were two major trees within this area, one of which (located at the very end of the female compound) was deemed as being a 'holy' tree by the caretaker as well as regular visitors of the shrine. Known to be a source of wish fulfillment, the tree had a vast number of ribbons tied to it, with the notion of the ribbons representing the wishes of those who had tied them, and that the tree in all its sacredness would inevitably fulfill them. Located right opposite to this tree is a decorated engraving in the form of a rack/shelf made of marble, wherein *diyas* (candles) are placed by those who

believe that lighting those candles and placing them on the shelf will lead to their *mannats* (wishes) getting fulfilled. Additionally, mentioned by the caretaker was the notion of bringing a small lock & attaching it to a barbed wire for the purpose both making a wish as well as a thank-you token in the case of the fulfillment of a wish. The lock was to then be thrown into running water after 2-3 days. Whilst I did not completely understand the notion of such an act (and regret not having had inquired about it further to the caretaker), the certainty with which the caretaker emphasized upon this practice in relation to his body language and ease of speech, shed light on the potentiality of him having narrated this practice to multiple other visitors as well, as well at a personal level, the significance that these practices held for him too.

What's interesting to note here is that the significance of specific symbols/objects within the shrine is not just upheld by the caretaker of the shrine, but has become an eminent aspect of the nature of the shrine itself. This is particularly true for 'symbols' such as the tree and the rack of candles, since the items needed for the symbolic 'rituals' to be performed in relation to these objects can be purchased from the premises of the shrine itself, with small shops selling these items located at the main entrance of the shrine. As such, these 'symbols' are important aspects of the shrine from a historical perspective as well as from the personal perspective of regular visitors of the shrine.

Towards the end of my trip, the caretaker offered to take me to another compound within the basement of the building of the shrine, wherein lay the 'resting area' of Baba Shah Jamal (for context: this resting area was deemed to be the area wherein the Baba Shah Jamal would often sit & ponder). On the one hand, I was wholly flattered owing to the area not being completely accessible to most visitors of the shrine, whilst on the other hand, the practically empty shrine & the lack of people with me made me reluctant to go to this compound all by myself. To my good luck, I was accompanied to this compound with a female supervisor of the shrine, who dictated the significance of this area to me. Now largely a school for local children, the basement also serves as the once-significant 'resting area' of Baba Shah Jamal, with depleted candles surrounding this vastly small area within the compound. According to the supervisor, this area was not accessible to the general public and the few select people who would be informed of this area, were encouraged to offer their prayers within this compound as well. At this point, I inquired about the nature of the prayers being offered here, with the supervisor informing me that this area was deemed to be more 'private' when compared to the large sense of collectivism which was present within the compound of the shrine itself, which meant that the people here were more likely to pray in private as opposed to being a part of a larger *mehfil* (a gathering). Essentially however, it was mostly a primary school (with a 'Shah Jamal Primary School' sign at the top of the room confirming this). Whilst this does not necessarily constitute as a symbol when compared to the other

‘symbolic’ objects within the shrine owing to its lack of symbolic value, it was nonetheless a largely unexpected and equal parts insightful trip.

Whilst on our way towards the basement of this resting area, we crossed the male compound of the shrine (which was empty at that point in time), and wherein I could make out some symbols/inscriptions which were also present within the female compound of the shrine including a historical inscription of the life & significance of Baba Shah Jamal and framed inscriptions of specific Quranic verses such as the Shahada, as well as another rack for *diyas*. It is however interesting to note that the female compound of the shrine seemingly contained a greater number of objects of symbolic value as opposed to the male compound, wherein I believed greater emphasis on prayers and the recitation of the Quran was placed. With the help of the female supervisor, I was also shown the prayer room of the male compound; a beautiful shade of golden from the inside, a nice contrast to the otherwise largely white and red color palette of the architecture of the shrine.

- **At a personal level, what was learned?**

Being my first experience of visiting a shrine, the many preconceived assumptions and expectations that I held prior to visiting the shrine itself were both debunked as well as equal parts relevant in many ways. An experience of all sorts, there were moments during my visit wherein I was awestruck in relation to the consistent insights I was being given about the significance of the shrine, alongside moments of sheer frustration and annoyance. The latter in this relation, proved to be my state of mind for the most part of the first half of the trip, with constant side-eyes and uncalled-for glances being thrown my way by not just men but also by the women surrounding the building of the shrine. Whilst I wasn’t completely uncomfortable with my choice of shrine for this assignment, perhaps it had also been my initial short sightedness in relation to preparing myself for this trip which inevitably led to many awkward encounters during the first hour of my visit to the shrine.

Firstly, my lack of a dupatta/scarf (I unfortunately had forgotten to wear one since I do not normally wear a dupatta), attracted significant attention as soon as I got out of my car, and continued to be a source of consistent attention being thrown my way, by both men and women alike. As such, as soon as I was done taking pictures of the exterior of the building of the shrine, I was stopped by one of the men sitting outside the shrine, who insisted that I wear a scarf before entering the shrine, and upon informing him of negligence in relation to bringing a scarf with me, he proceeded to give me a very judgemental glance and declared that I should have ‘been more careful, why wasn’t I more careful?.’ Interestingly enough, I did not and still do not blame him for reacting the way he did; what with my lack of regard for the rules and regulations of the shrine in relation to its dress code having been significantly prominent from my side to the other people present within the shrine, although

this was anything but intentional. Perhaps due to this visit having been my first visit to any shrine ever, I had assumed that I was prepared with all that I needed for my trip, albeit then missing out on what was perhaps needed the most from my side for this particular shrine, as would have been the case with any other shrine and the significance that is placed on following culturally and religiously rooted norms of dress code within these shrines.

With that being said, my frustration was not directed at this notion, but upon the reactions of most of the people present within both the inside of the shrine as well as outside of it, who felt the need to consistently throw glances my way, alongside a few of them actually coming up to me and telling me to wear a scarf. Since I could not find a shop nearby the shrine from wherein I could have potentially purchased a scarf for myself, I excused my negligence multiple times and proceeded to make my way towards the inside of the female compound of the shrine; wondering how and why my dress code (or my unintentional disrespect for it) mattered so much in relation to my purpose of going to the shrine, since I too, like the rest of them, wished to offer my prayers at the shrine and pay my regards. As such, why should I have been treated differently solely based on my lack of conformity to their dress code? Alongside this very question, other questions also continued to linger in my mind in relation to my appearance and the way I carried myself within the premises of the female compound of the shrine and the ways in which this influenced my interaction with the caretaker and the practitioners there, which shall be discussed in detail later within this section.

Noticing already the deep-rooted emphasis on upholding historically and religiously significant norms and values, this notion was further reinforced when I noticed that the entrance of the shrine had been divided into two sections; one for men and one for women. Interestingly, the gate to the woman's shrine was closed, which meant that I had to make my way towards the female compound of the shrine through the men's gate. Subtle instances of obvious gender-based segregation (and to a certain extent, gender-oriented bias) were prominent in many ways throughout the entirety of my visit to the shrine, but perhaps what stood out the most to me was how the room holding the tomb of Baba Shah Jamal itself was more widely accessible to the men's compound as opposed to the women's compound, which instead had small bars at the entrance, thereby making it impossible for women to go to the room wherein the tomb lay. Instead (and according to the caretaker), women were encouraged to offer their prayers on Baba Shah Jamal's adopted son's shrine; located right next to the room holding Baba Shah Jamal's shrine and which was also more accessible given that it was out in the open. The purpose of such a regulation made little sense to me, and the caretaker did not have a proper explanation to this either after I questioned him about it. As such, the significance and persistence of religious ideals in relation to the culture of Pakistan within the shrine proved to be of focal significance with regards to my study of the shrine, particularly those ideals that were related to gender.

Interestingly, I had little background information about the history as well as the significance of Baba Shah Jamal prior to visiting the shrine, and one of my major reasons for visiting this particular shrine (mentioned earlier within this paper as well), was being able to actively participate in some of its weekly rituals which I had heard about; including its ‘Thursday Nights’, which are famous for bringing together vast crowds of people from all walks of life within the city for a night of joyful singing and music. The ground next to the room of the tomb in the female compound is where this ritual takes place, and although I could not visit the shrine on my initially decided day of Thursday, I was nonetheless captivated by the caretaker’s detailed description of this ritual; proclaiming that he had participated in it multiple times. What struck me as the main purpose of this tradition was the coming together of multiple groups of people to celebrate a personality that was held in deep relevance to them, through the use of dancing and singing to demonstrate their devotion and appreciation for him. Finding this to be deeply touching at a personal level, I was equal parts captivated by the spirit of the people themselves, taking out time from their busy lives on a weekday for this purpose and creating an environment of shared solidarity and unity for the mutual benefit of everyone not through grief and mourning, but through a state of joy and happiness; a central aspect of Sufism itself.

Coming back to the first half of this section however, there were multiple instances wherein I was mistaken to be a foreigner (due to my skin complexion, the fact that I was writing in my notebook in English as well as due to my lack of a dupatta), which greatly influenced the answers given to me by pretty much everyone that I encountered during the entirety of my trip to the shrine. On the one hand, it benefitted me in a number of ways, particularly the instant willingness of multiple people within the female compound of the shrine in relation to participating in my ‘research’ process, whilst on the other hand, it also unfortunately ‘singled’ me out in many ways. For starters, once inside the shrine, I was not pestered by the caretaker and the female supervisor to wear a scarf (although when I was later taken to the empty male compound of the shrine, the caretaker gave me his scarf to wear to the prayer room) owing to perhaps the fact that they assumed that I was not from the city. Later, a regular visitor of the shrine walked up to me and asked me if I would let her participate in my ‘research process’, and inquired if I had come from ‘abroad.’ Interestingly, despite debunking and denying this notion multiple times in front of everyone who had held this assumption about me, no one seemed to have listened to me and continued to go out of their way to cater to the needs of my purpose there. It was largely also due to this reason that I was shown the ‘secret’ prayer room/school at the basement of the male compound of the shrine, the caretaker consistently proclaiming that he did not allow ‘ordinary’ people to visit this part of the shrine. Whilst I was oddly flattered, I couldn’t help but wonder why their treatment towards me should differ from perhaps their treatment of other people visiting the shrine for the same purpose as myself, and this bias of treating ‘foreigners’ in a far more

hospitable/respectable way than local visitors of the shrine did not sit well with me. Although largely deeply culturally rooted (and common to most shrines and other historically relevant places for foreigners visiting countries like Pakistan) and justifiable in many ways, this notion was yet another example of the ever-persistence relevance of traditional values/biases displayed by most individuals I was consistently exposed to within and outside of the premises of the shrine itself.

But above all, what I was able to take away at an emotional and largely intellectual level from my visit to this shrine was the acceptance and understanding of other people's way of living, even if their life choices were starkly in contrast to mine. From the significance of the 'sacred' trees of the shrine to the slab of marble containing 'healing powers', it occurred to me that regular visitors of the shrine deeply valued and upheld the notion of miracles; the idea that these symbols present within the shrine would fulfill their heart's deepest wishes, that the depth of their belief within them would determine the intensity of the miracles they were hoping to achieve for themselves. What also greatly moved me was the deep-rooted affection that regular visitors of the shrine held for Baba Shah Jamal and his adopted son; with the caretaker telling me about how some people would sit within the shrine for hours on end, praying and reading the Holy Quran. A source of solace for many people indeed, the woman who had actively participated in helping me in my purpose at the shrine (and has been outlined in the above transcription as well), had mentioned how she could sense that the 'Baba was listening to her' whilst she would have conversations with him next to his adopted son's tomb had not only deeply moved me but had also allowed me to see the world from the perspective of people like that woman who were able to gain a certain level of solace and hope within an otherwise largely helpless state of being.

Conclusion

Prior to visiting the shrine itself, it is safe to say that I had multiple assumptions in relation to both the kalaam as well as the nature of the shrine, with my visit both confirming whilst equal parts debunking many of these assumptions that I had. Whilst my experience was meaningful to me in many ways in terms of allowing me to recognize the significance of religious notions as a 'coping mechanism' of all sorts within otherwise destitute situations, as well as understanding the relevance and prominence of Sufism (although surprisingly, despite being a Sufi shrine, there was little mention of Sufism in relation to the kalaam of the shrine), it above all, allowed me to gain a better understanding of those ways of living that differ from mine; encouraging me to be more accepting of those ideals that whilst might make little sense to me, continue to be a source of great significance for many people. Although never having been rigid in terms of my beliefs, it is safe to say that my lack of knowledge and prior experience in relation to visiting and observing shrines around my city meant that it was easy for me to have become susceptible to certain biases with regards to

the ways these shrines operate, as well as the religious notions that they aim to propagate to the general public that deeply value these shrines.

As such, this is what I was then able to take away the most from my visit to Baba Shah Jamal's shrine; greater acceptance of a way of living that vastly differs from mine through a close inspection of the ways in which these people both emotionally as well as psychologically depend on the shrine; be it the 'healing powers' that it promises through its vast symbols and/or the 'miracles' it guarantees through the recitation of specific Quranic verses through a thorough understanding of the Quranic kalaam of the shrine. Above all, it is able to do so whilst bringing vast numbers of people together for a state of religious solidarity encompassed through the simple joys of music and dancing, its walls and compounds promising solace in the otherwise ever-increasing hustle and bustle of the city itself. Whilst this was my first visit to a shrine, I would like to believe that it certainly won't be my last.

Photography

Part 1: Entrance of the Shrine (including its immediate surroundings)



(the shops surrounding the shrine, selling items of valuable use to visitors of the shrine, including flowers and candles)



(highlighted above from left to right: the main entrance to the female compound of the shrine, followed by a view from the top of the stairs. At the bottom right: main entrance of the shrine)

Part 2: The premises of the female compound of the shrine

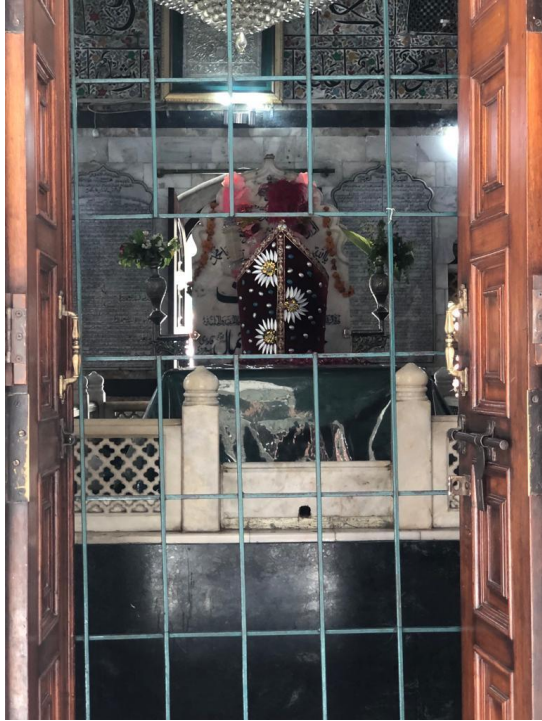




(highlighted above: the immediate premises of the shrine surrounding the room of the tomb of Baba Shah Jamal. At the top right: the main courtyard for the 'Urs' with sadly no practitioners).

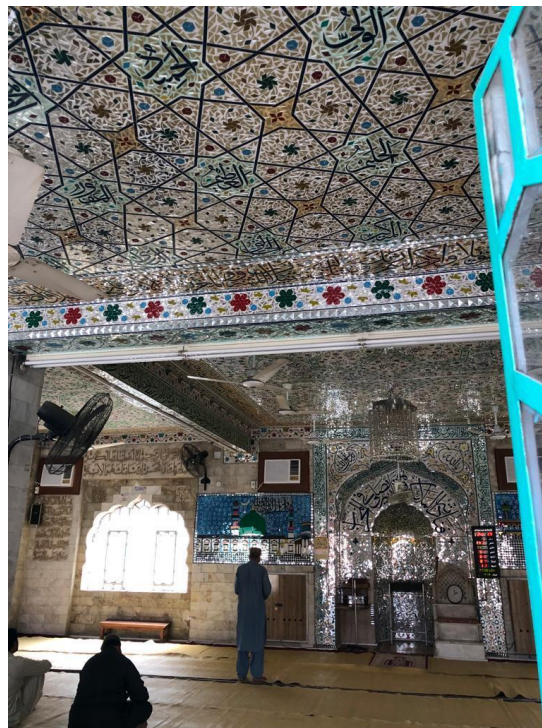
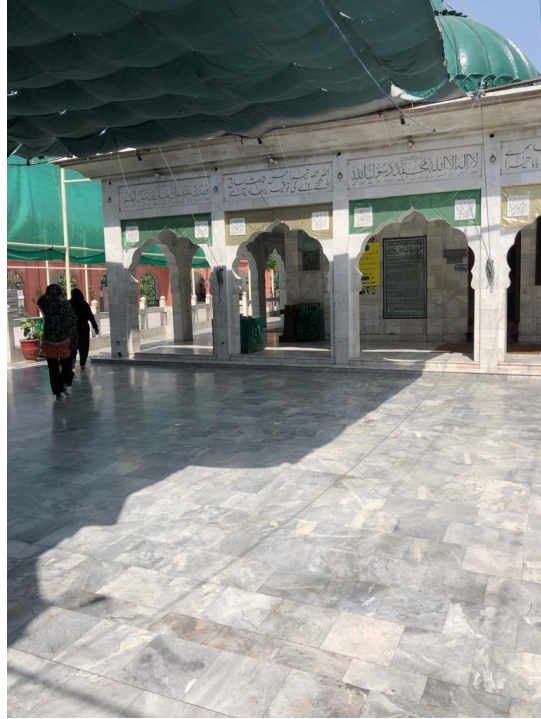
Part 3: The Tomb of Shah Jamal, and the area surrounding it





(highlighted above: the gated room of the tomb of Shah Jamal, since women are not allowed to go inside. Top right: A 'mini' tomb of the adopted son of Baba Shah Jamal, in the open and thus more accessible to the women visiting the shrine).

Part 4: The male compound of the shrine, and the area surrounding it



(highlighted above at the top right: Quranic verses further amplifying the notion of the Holy Quran being the 'kalaam' of the shrine. At the bottom right: A prayer room, absent within the shrine however).

Part 5: Prominent 'Symbols' of the Shrine



(highlighted above: the symbols discussed in the paper, including a slab of marble, a pot of salt, a tree to which have been tied a number of ribbons, a rack for holding 'dijas').

Part 6: Inscriptions within the shrine highlighting the 'Kalam' of the shrine



(highlighted above from left to right: a historical background of Baba Shah Jamal containing interesting anecdotes of his life, an inscription of Surah al-Maida, a bookshelf containing Islamic books and another framed inscription of Baba Shah Jamal's life)

(highlighted above: a book of ‘miracles’ prominent and popular amongst the visitors of the shrine, an inscription of the Dua-e-Qanoot, a code of conduct of the shrine including mentions of Quranic ideals such as Wuzu – ablution and an overview of some of the existing mentioned inscriptions, except that these were present in the male compound of the shrine)

Part 7: The Basement of the Shrine



(highlighted above from left to right: a primary school located in the basement of the male compound of the shrine, with the sentence written on the board translating into 'Baba Shah Jamal Primary School.' Bottom left: A prayer area for Baba Shah Jamal for visitors, also deemed as his 'resting spot,' according to specific claims made by the caretaker that Baba Shah Jamal used to rest here during his lifetime).