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Impact of Colonialism on the Spiritual Successor (*Diwan*) and the Successor-Disciple (*Piri-Muridi*)
Relationship of Baba Farid's *Dargah*

Abstract:

The article focuses on the influence of the British Empire over the workings of the *Dargah* of Baba Farid Ganj Shaker in West Punjab. It includes a study of the evolution of the spiritual successor and the political and social impact of the British policies on the workings of the *Dargah*. The paper also focuses on how the political changes by the British administration caused the successors to deviate from the original practices of the *Dargah* that existed before British rule. It also analyzes the development of the relationship between the successor and disciples from the 13th Century to date.

Keywords: Dargah, Pir, Baba Farid, British Empire

Introduction:

Even though departed Sufis are most respected of all, existing Pirs are also regarded with huge reverence. Murideen are required to dedicate themselves completely to their Pirs, obeying their every teaching to the letter. The position of a Pir can only be attained after having experienced extensive training as a Murid. Pirs convey their mystical awareness to their heirs. *Dargah* are hence managed by existing pirs. Some of whom are merely *Sajjada Nashin*, existing offspring of the great departed Sufi, but still representing his *Baraka* and consequently given contributions by *aficionados*. Living Pirs are frequently hunted by Murideen in pursuit of spiritual awareness. All through the Punjab Pirs are as much required as healers as they are as spiritual directors. Eaton (2003). Hassan and Kamal (2010) investigate that a hereditary successor of a Sufi or spiritual teacher is called by various names such as *Sajjada Nashin*, *Gaddi Nashin* or *Khalifa*. The title of *Diwan*, meaning 'Revenue Collector' is exclusive to the spiritual successor belonging to *Dargah* of Baba Farid and holds the same role as *Sajjada Nashin*. *Diwan* is an identical term for the *Sajjada Nashin*. In case of Baba Farid's family, the term *Diwan* exactly represents Income Accumulator which was applied for *Sajjada Nashin* particularly in Baba Farid's case *The Diwan* is the executive force that regulates the socio-religious and the architectural settings of the *Dargah*. *Sajj ādah nashīn* is essentially a descendant from the family of *Šūfī* and *Mutawallī* may be any one deputed for administration and looking after the shrine. Ghafoor (2010) explore that in local dialect he is also referred to as *Pir*, a title used for a pious person who uses his spiritual power and blessings to guide his followers called *Murids* to attain union with Almighty Allah. The term *Murid* according to Esposito, is referred to an individual who commits his life to another person called *Pir* in learning Sufism. The nexus between a *Pir* and his *Murid* of Baba Farid's *Dargah* has been of fundamental importance throughout various eras Esposito (2003). A historic study of the *Dargah* of Baba Farid reveals the impact of various regimes over the spiritual succession and its workings since the 13th Century. The spiritual successors of Baba Farid were Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, Naseer-ud-Din Charagh Delhvi. Badr-ud-Din Sulemaan, Baba Farid's eldest son's recommendation as *Diwan* (1265-81 A.D.) straightaway established an example of genetic based spiritual management. Thus *Shaykh* Ala-ud-Din Mauj Daryaa (1281-1334), the eldest son of Badr-ud-Din Sulemaan was the following *Diwan*. During his lengthy tenure, he cheered the support of Delhi court contrasting the existing model of his father and grandfather. Though this practice of genetic leadership and its involvement in government affairs was against the *Chishtiya* Sufism; this gave rise to the numbers of *Murideen* from even beyond the main city Ghafoor (2010). The problem of spiritual string of the mystic legacy of Baba Farid. She explains that according to the principles of Sufism, it was the spiritual lineage that was important; heredity by blood held no significance but it must be taking on spiritual height of the selected *Diwan* Singh and Gaur (2009). The criterion of choosing a successor was traditionally based on the spiritual aspect rather than blood relation with the *Sufi* Master. Those who were ignorant of these codes, comprising mundane inhabitants and disciples plus the sovereigns, made contact with the successors of the Baba Farid for numerous motives. ut *Dargah* and its offsprings. The arrival of Tughluq dynasty (1321-98), transformed the whole setup for the family of Baba Farid. In the late *Khilji*'s period, Head of Dipsalpur

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Sultan Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughluq who was upcoming Sultan, came to be fascinated by the spiritual ability and piousness of the *Diwan* Alaal-ud-Din Mauj Daryaa. Approaching years, presented Baba Farid's *Dargah* and its administration in a totally different shape. As the *Dargah* started to develop under the sponsorship of Delhi regime, consequently it had to be more reliant on court benefaction for its financial setup. Muhammad Bin Tughluq approved a donation to strengthen the tradition of *Langar*. In 14th Century, the *Dargah's* fame and its spiritual influence extended beyond the Indian Region. People began to put up small honoring *Dargahs* to venerate the charisma of Baba Farid all the way through the rural areas of the Central Punjab. *Dargah* of Baba Farid substantially established its spiritual supremacy all over the region, equivalent to the political and administrative sovereign of the kings.

The emergence of such local *Dargahs* certified and transmitted the fact that spiritual realm of Baba Farid's *Dargah* has been immensely strong within the territorial limits and beyond. For the period of the Sultanate and Mughal, established practice of socio-economic and political support/government involvement which had started at *Dargaha* by the *Diwans'* administration merged the indigenous classification of values and beliefs into a bigger and comprehensive cultural practice Ghafoor (2010)

By the sixteenth century the *Mughal* administration became conscious about the political aptitude of these *Dargahs* and utilized them as intercessors through which they could regulate the tempestuous *Jat* troops. Moreover, it was about this time that the *Jat* groups began settling down in the Punjab and taking to agriculture, a development much in line with the Mughal interest in maximizing the revenue-generating capacity of the land. Technologically, this development was made possible by the extension of the Persian wheel into the arid plains of the Punjab in the medieval period Eaton (2003).

Throughout this period the *Jat* groups retained their devotional focus on the shrines, gradually becoming ever more closely integrated with their ritual structure. For these groups, then, adhesion to Islam effectively meant adhesion to one of these shrines." In other words, the devotion of those troops for the *Dargah* was exploited by the ruling regime. For ages, Baba Farid's *Dargah* operated in two ways. One, it furnished Islam to the tribe leadership; Islam was reachable through this *Dargah* even to devotees within tribe. Second, through this *Dargah* tribe leadership got a righteous opportunity to take part in the *Sultanate* or *Mughal* courts. With this substantial arbitrator role, as an organization, Baba Farid's *Dargah* had to be utilized by Delhi that was hub of political authority. That royal patronage worked as the pay back for the *Diwan* of Pakpattan and they had to do numerous tasks for the Mughal regime. The portion of all indigenous crops, owned by local inhabitants, was offered to *Diwans* and they dispatched it to the ruler of that time on which profit was collected through gentle procedure. This also highlights the economic dimension of Baba Farid's *Dargah*. By the mid of 18th century, Central Punjab's irresponsible administration of Mughals was about to collapse. Numerous tribes under their strong leadership affirmed their independent federations. Punjab came under the Sikh Regime and later the British Rule.

In the course of the British Empire beginning 1857, the institution of *Dargah* and its role at the economic and social level was affected by the policies made by the administration. The *Dargah* was then run by the Board of Revenue that supervised the finances of the *Dargah* and utilized them on community development projects such as laying of roads, building bridges etc. As stated by the Religious Endowment Act 1863, a board was created by the court that controlled the *Dargah's* activities such as *Urs* observances. *Urs* is an Arabic word and commonly used in Sufi literature which denotes marriage between bride and bridegroom. The demise of a Sufi is considered as a time of reunification with his creator, hence observed as a happy event. *Urs* is also the mutual name for various |Sufi| rituals at the death centennial of a Sufi. Each Sufi order observes its individual *Urs* performances Eaton (1978).

In this period, the function of *Diwan* which was minimized in the course of Sikh era, again started to perform strongly but had to face numerous issues. David Gilmartin points out the problem confronted by the *Diwan* as landowning patrician who gained political and monetary advantages from the colonial government, and consequently they had to build strong affiliations with the British establishment for mutual collaboration, largely under the conditions launched by the "Alienation of Land Act of 1901." Gilmartin (1988)

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Such as, by the twentieth century, the offsprings of Baba Farid owned bulk of land in the Pakpattan “tehsil” where the *Dargah* is located, included some 43,000 lands in altogether Kamran (2017). Such huge landholdings turned out to be the tools not only of monetary feasibility but political influence for the *Diwans* as well who nourished colonial establishment as traitors. In the second half of the 19th century British government prevented itself from the formerly functioning of administrator support to the holy places such as the *Masajid* (plural of *Masjid*), temples or *Dargahs*. The Act XX of 1863 was formulated for the execution of the legitimate measures to deal with the indigenous religious organizations. According to that act the government was not allowed to financially assist directly the religious organizations directly nor could it have straight power over them. Still, with the aim of forming a linkage with the “rural hierarchies of mediation” an arrangement was developed by the British management by which the indigenous establishments and beliefs could be amalgamated into the realm. This is how British imperial system affirmed cooperation with lots of rural *Dargahs* regardless of the certified government strategy saying besides. The happenings of 1857 compelled the British to gain knowledge of the political sway of the *Diwans* on the Punjabi common people Gilmartin, (1988). Such as the indigenous political sway, the *Diwans* exercised “obvious interest” as articulated by the Lieutenant Governor. He reasonably observed the *Diwan* as:

“an individual of territorial influence between the government officials and a population almost exclusively pastoral and agricultural, and as shown by recent experience very liable to be moved to insurrection by sudden and inadequate causes”. Eaton (1978)

Accordingly, many *Diwans* worked in different positions for the British government in its rural management such as “*zaildars*”, ostensible judges and participants of the district panel. Wrangle over the revenue from the lands pushed the British authorities to interfere, henceforth, pulling them even nearer to the spiritual successors thereby establishing their political position. The *Dargahs* governed by them were occupied by the “Court of Wards”, an assessment to look after the “*jagirs*” of huge landowner families captivated by the crisis of debit deficit. All that proved that the successors had dual character. They enjoyed not just the status of mystical superiority and the role of the agents of indigenous Islam rather they carried out enormous political impact and power as huge “*zimindars*” and the traitors of the government.

After freedom, in 1960, the Department of *Auqaf* was established this, after an official notification, took possession of Baba Farid’s *Dargah* administratively. This led to the minimization of the role of *Diwan* who has to act as symbolically now with no actual authority in the *Dargah*. Ayub Khan’s government (1958–69) established the ministry of *Auqaf* that was to take control of the shrines of Sufi saints as well as other religious institutions. The ministry’s functions included custodianship of the shrines and mosques, regulation of their incomes, appointment of staff and supervision of rituals. Through its control of shrines, the ministry of *Auqaf* aimed to re-educate the rural illiterate masses on the personalities and roles of the Sufi saints whose graves were converted into *dargahs* and *mazars* (places of visits and pilgrimage), and do away with the authority of the shrines’ custodians. The money generated through the donations by the devotees was spent on projects which the governments had created and therefore did not reach the poor who had initially been helped through these donations. Despite its jurisdiction over the activities of the shrines, the Ministry of *Auqaf* has not been able to completely do away with the role of the *sajjada nishins*, who claim enormous popular support and allegiance. The state imposed itself on the shrine structures although it was well aware that any harm to shrines would bring public wrath on their heads.

They therefore limited their Still, for the oldest custom to be continued; *Diwan* unlocks the *Bahishti Darwaza* (the door of heaven) on 5th and 6th of Muharram after sunset and executes the *Urs* linked rituals. In the clarification of this name and tradition it is believed that once, when Nizam-ud-Din, the descendant of Baba Farid, was in attendance at the *Dargah*, he had a image of Muhammad s.a.w.w at this door, and saying: “O Nizam-ud-Din whosoever shall enter this door will be saved.” From that time the door has been recognized by the name of the door of Heaven (*Bahisti Darwaza*). Apart from this symbolic performance, the part of *Diwan* at *Dargah* has been limited. All the management is done by the *Auqaf* Department through its Yearly Progress Program. *Auqaf* Department has set an allowance (Rs5.00 lacs) for yearly expenses of the *Diwan* household. Since last two periods, *Auqaf* Department has

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attained neighboring Southern side reserved land to enlarge the *Dargah* sites and to make its approach easy from Saahiwal Highway Hatley (2007).

While the British Colonial establishments controlled the *Dargahs* in Indian Subcontinent as a socio-religious organization, accumulating currency they totally overlooked its spiritual and revered values. Execution of the ceremonials at the time of yearly celebrated *Urs* of the *Sufis* was commenced under the supervision of Government representatives. This type of supervision not just badly spoiled the crux and uniqueness of the institution of Muslim *Dargahs* but their mystical and socio-cultural reputation was also shaken Martin (1988).

Eaton (1978) investigates that 19th century was basically the age of anti-colonial and patriotic endeavor in which mystical orders contributed as leading networks for Muslim cultural expressions and utilization. *Dargahs*, including all its particulars such as the *Sufi* whom it belongs to, its audience, its administration and associated rituals, were started to be used as hubs of diffusing spiritual harmony. The advocates, the mystical missions and gatherings, got through the *Dargahs* and graves which had established throughout the mausoleums. The tombs of the *Sufis* and their heirs emerged as huge socio-religious centers. Owing to its ceremonials the institution of *Dargah* made Islam reachable to the ignorant people. It made practically possible for mundane public to comprehend and feel the alive and strong demonstrations of the “divine order” and incorporated them into its “ritualized drama.” Everyone, from “participants to “patrons”, equally got the benefits from this process mystic ritualization. Sufism along with its linked essentials has always been the source of protection, accommodation, free food and “social cohesiveness” for all kind of folks. This cultural connectivity is obvious at the time of *Urs* when the ritual performances are on its top. Hatley (2007) narrates

“Certainly, this identity was/is revived and maintained at congregation and mass events through communal actions. It is in this context, that the cult of the Prophet or the legend of the messiah built around a leading person, the Shaykh, Murshid or Pir, became as important as the use of religious symbols.”

The *Piri-Muridi* is a vital element of Islamic customs and the strong bonding between a *Pir* and his *Murid* makes the basis of *Sufi* institution. The *Dargah* of *Chishti Sufi* Baba Farid Ganj Shaker at Pakpattan is of utmost importance with regard to *Piri-Muridi* relationship. The piousness and devoutness of a *Pir* emerged due to their involvement in preaching of Islam, mysticism, outstanding contribution in local poetry and social work at the *Dargah* of Baba Farid. The *Pir* and *Murid* come closer to each other due to their connection to Baba Farid. It is believed that the *Pir* not only inherits all the qualities of the deceased holy *Sufi* but also they are gifted by Almighty Allah with the same piousness, spiritual powers and blessing as were wned by the *Sufi*. The eminence of the *Pir* in eyes of *Murideen* is same as of original *Sufi*. This is the reason that followers and common people pay honor and revere the *Pir* and his family more than other noble elite. Knowing this fact, a *Pir* uses blind trust and faith of people as a source to gain political advantages. Resultantly, they are accepted as political and religious experts in their constituencies as in the case of Baba Farid’s family Ewing (1984). The aim of a *Murid* to be in *Piri-Muridi* is to dissolve his inner self into his *Pir* keeping his body physically intact. By doing so, a *Murid* enlightens himself with ultimate truth of *Tauheed* (Oneness of Allah) which leads him to get closer to almighty Allah. Although, there is no scientific or logical evidence to effectiveness and belief of *Piri-Muridi* relationship and customs but it is somehow justified due to the continuous social practice that has been taking place since centuries coupled with lack of reasoning for non-belief and intense self-support by the practitioners. *Sufis* enjoys veneration because people especially their followers think them a source to purify and spiritualize their inner selves while strictly adhering to human values, to strengthen their sacred faiths. People, in state of spiritual emptiness and imperfection due to materialism of contemporary world, find divine strength and inner fulfillment in the company of pious, miraculous and charismatic *Sufis* and *Pirs*.

Eaton (1993) elaborates the word *Karamaat* (miracles) of *Pirs* compels the hard believers and followers to strengthen their associations with *Pirs* in quest of soul purity and religious refinement. One of the ways of strengthening affiliation with *pirs* is taking *Bait* at his hands. In this ceremony, the *Murid* makes a solemn promise to act upon the *Pir*’s directions while the *Pir* accepts the obligation of mentoring the *Murid* through the everyday worldly and spiritual issues of the latter’s life. References from Quran and *Sunnah* are quoted to justify the *Piri-*

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Muridi affiliation. The role of *Pir* is much more versatile and authoritative in comparison to *Maulvi* (religious teacher who calls five time *Azaan* in *Masjid*)'s role. A *Pir* is as a mediator between the *Sufi* and the believers, a healer of somatic and psychic diseases, an exorcist and a spiritual mentor Esposito (2003).

In addition to the spiritual and religious help, *pirs* also resolves social, health, domestic and financial issues of their followers/*Murideen* by using mystical methods like *Tawiz* (amulet), *Dam* (recitation of verses from Quran) etc. *Murideen* not only look for spiritual and religious guidance but also seek solution for their social needs and financial issues from their *Pirs*. This converts *Piri-Muridi* into a socio-economic and political relationship other than just a spiritual or religious one. Despite discernible changes in the institution and negative perception of these changes, it is still upholding its communal, economic, political, and scholastic functions.

Despite of hefty presence of *Masjid* and *Mullas* in the villages, they haven't really surrogated a persistent model of religious influence that a *pir* personify and the *Dargahs* carry as *Barakat*. The blessed fascination or *Barakat* is diffused from *Pir*'s generations to the next from the eleventh century onwards. In Max Weber's words, "charismatic authority" is conceivably best implicit as more or less blood like matter that runs through the veins of a *pir* and bestows him with *Baraka* Hassan and Kamal (2010).

Blessedness is also characterized for *Pir*'s *Dargah* which is considered to be driven by the virtue of the *Baraka* acceded from the *Pir* himself. Piously soaked blessed person, the *Pir*, does bait by generating a tie with the *Murid*, a promise of spiritual loyalty, thus the *Murid* strictly follow his *Pir* considering him as his lord. *Pir* carries out double role: he not only accomplishes the everyday desires of the *Murid* but also perform as a negotiator between him and Allah. *Chishti* order produces the supreme pressure on the rural Punjabi individuals "cutting across" the limits of trust and relationship. The *Sufis* of *Chishti* order symbolize syncretistic civilizing philosophy that exhibits substantial room for the supporters of other devotions. Being lords of large landings along with the religious authority, the *Pirs* of Punjab are perfectly positioned to participate as leaders in rural political affairs.

Gradually this socio-religious relationship between teacher and disciple has grown and transformed into a setup which is contradictory to the original essence of the teachings of Baba Farid Another aspect of this change the writer Kelley Pemberton articulates that, "In the Sufi milieu, the authority of the shaikh or alim may have declined, in the sense that texts could provide ready-made answers to questions about the faith, and could encourage readers to rely on their own powers of discrimination, or alternatively, on the authority provided by group transmission (and discussion) of the information therein. Indeed, many of the didactic texts available in shrines today (those written both pre- and post-Partition) are intended for both solitary and group recitation, and the texts make these intentions explicit... Access to texts that explain how to make amulets (*taviz* , *falita*) and to effect cures using, among other things, Quranic verses and the names of God, has provided some individuals, women and men alike, with the tools to set up their own healing practices, particularly in the small, "auxiliary" shrines (*hujra-gahs*, *chilla-gahs*) affiliated with larger, public burial shrines (*dargahs*). They are able to do so without the express permission (*ijaza*) of a Sufi shaikh or *pir* and it is this lack of authority for the practices of "self-styled" *Pirs* that has incurred the censure of Sufis of the established orders." As centuries passed by, there are certain adverse and undesired changes injected into the system like the position of spiritual successor being inherited by contemporary *Pirs* instead of erudition or devoutness or knowledge of divinity Pemberton (2002).

These *Pirs* enjoys same honor and devotion of their followers as was done by creator of *Sufi* orders regardless of their experience of religious and spiritual matters.

Another unwanted and destructive change is direct or indirect involvement in politics. Sufism itself has indeed quickly grown into politicized, since its meaning has developed gradually more the locus of discussion inside the Pakistani public circle. It is not a fixed world of sense and deed. It is and has been a main factor of identity politics in Pakistan. It supports groups along with individuals to transfer and express their uniqueness often in extremely varying ways. A rhetoric of deterioration, exploitation and at times, total criticism, controlled the public speech on "Sufism", and predominantly on the system of meaning and practices focused around shrines and *pirs* (the Sufis and

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their much evaluated offspring Gaddi Nashins), whose sacredness had been established in popular culture. In the vast historical course of the “Ideologization of Islam”, Sufism has come under consecutive assaults and has progressively been actualized as a new type Ernst (2005).

“Piri-muridi, the relationship between a spiritual master and his disciple, was viewed by many modernists as “authoritarian” in nature and as structuring the hierarchies of local culture and politics-hence against the democratic ethos promoted both by “Islam” and by the new post-colonial State. According to who was in power. But in its bid to take control of it, the State actually strengthened more than it reformed the shrine culture. Besides, shrines, as places of huge communal gatherings, became platforms for the State to relay its ideology to the masses and, by showing allegiance to the saints, find a source of Islamic legitimacy for its own authority. Ex-president Musharraf commended the GADDI NASHIN for “his effort to create unity among Muslims” Martin (1988)

Belonging to a Sufi order and indulging in Sufi practices under the guidance of a sheikh do not presuppose any given position in the political arena. As a matter of fact, pirs can be found in all Pakistani parties.” Since eleventh century onward, the institution of *Dargahs* came under the patronage of the regimes and it started to receive huge endowments especially in form of land. It was, to a certain extent, a matter of strategy by the regime of the time to financially support the *Dargah*’s institution. The motive behind this strategy was to get and protect the *Diwan*’s faithfulness. Ian Talbot makes available the factual evidence regarding the acquired owned assets, mostly in form of acres, by the different *Pir* families for the period of the colonial age. This aristocratic status provided them a strong opportunity for their actual participation in politics of the Punjab. After the institutionalization of colonial control and with the breakdown of Muslim Political power *Sufis* were by and large switched or denoted by *Pirs* who were usually not a perfect representative replica of their predecessor *Sufis* Philippon (2009).

A number of these *Pirs* had cooperated with the colonial government. Then again, there were several who kept themselves away from getting involved in colonial state’s affairs. The participation of the *Pirs* of Baba Farid’s family in politics is a sheer contrast to the strict *Chishti Sufi* principle of keeping themselves completely aloof from government affairs. Even today the *Chishti* family has political impact and performs noteworthy part in indigenous politics for the duration of elections of Provincial and National Assemblies. It is a renowned fact that the role of these *Pirs* has transformed to that of an administrator in Pakistan’s power politics.

They somehow work as political mediators on behalf of the government. Such *Chishti Pirs* exploit their *Murideen* and their strong spiritual affiliation with Baba Farid and his *Dargah* to get into power during election campaigns thereby receiving huge votes of their *Murideen* in the whole district of Sahiwal in Punjab.

The infusion of materialism in modern society has instigated *Chishti Pirs* to practice receiving gifts/*Nazzrana* from their *Murideen* which is, again, a complete deviation from *Chishti Sufi* principles of not keeping *Nazzrana* for their personal use. However in contemporary times the *Pirs* of Baba Farid’s *Dargah* have made this practice personalized. Hence, with the passage of time, the eminent *Dargahs* have gotten hold of massive assets out of huge donations from the government and substantial consecratory offerings presented by the aficionados Rozehnal (2007).

Owing to the possession of wealth, and position the *Pir* and his tribe controls both monetary benefits and traditional position and prestige against other classes. They themselves do not labor as agriculturists but on the whole rest on reapers who are their aficionados in fact. The interest is no longer spiritual but political role is selfish and control over the lower masses is more political than spiritual over the masses for the sake of votes Shahid (2009)

Conclusion

Hence, it has been observed that post partition; a transformation has taken place and affected the spiritual influence of descendants of Baba Farid over the society. The teachings and practices are now more infused with materialism and the original purpose of spiritual grooming is lost. Moreover, the *Dargah* entertains the interests of the government, thus inviting political interferences. The government elite in Pakistan constantly require the support of these *Sajjada Nashins*’ due to their political and economic influence that they exercise over millions of their

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Murideen mostly in villages where seventy percent of Pakistani population still lives, thereby implementing control over the masses through the successors of the *Dargah*. This can be changed for the better. The government can utilize the political role and spiritual role of the *Diwan* with his *Baraka* based power for socio-religious growth and for tackling intense societal issues such as extremism. The lands associated with *Dargahs* can be used for communal development and ways can be devised to help elevate the economic status of the masses through their inclusion. The *Diwan*, without relying on other support should hold the aim to revive the original role of the *Dargah* with the exclusion of material interests, by focusing on spiritually grooming the thousands of devotees that are received by the *Dargahs* annually.

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