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Title of the thesis	SACRED PLACE AND PILGRIMAGE IN A PLURAL SOCIETY: A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF PROMINENT <i>DARGAHS</i> OF DELHI

ABSTRACT

Statement of the Problem

Sacred place and pilgrimage has acquired a prominent place in the study of cultural geography. Despite the fact that large number of scholars have done considerable work in this field studies of *dargahs* as sacred sites and places of pilgrimage have altogether been neglected in India. *Dargahs* of *Sufi* saints presents a significant landscape feature in the sacred topography of any region. Infact their sacredness transcends the barriers of caste, colour and gender. A major function of these *dargahs*, which are considered as sacred places, is their role in the integration of plural society in the countries of South Asia. In this context, a geographical analysis of sacred places (*dargahs*) of Delhi is of paramount importance.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are: (1) To understand the philosophy, meaning, stages, states and principles of Sufism. (2) To describe the distribution of *dargahs* in Delhi in general and their silsilas in particular. (3) To fully understand the sacred landscape, symbolism and rituals of prominent *dargahs* of Delhi. (4) To comprehend the dynamics of the spatial pattern of the flow of pilgrims with respect to their socio economic characteristics to these *dargahs* from different parts of the country and abroad. (5) To understand the experiential landscape of some of the pilgrims in these prominent *dargahs*.

Database and Methodology

In this research, data have been collected by utilizing both primary and secondary sources. Besides using the newer framework of cultural geographic research methodology, we have also utilized the traditional methodology. We have given more importance to the interpretative methodology of newer

cultural geography wherein the process of making *dargahs* as sacred places, their symbolism, the soundscape, the landscape and the hyrophanic landscape of the pilgrims have been interpreted.

The Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in the fact that although enough research has been done on the Hindu sacred places, *dargah* as sacred place and pilgrimage centres have been entirely neglected by Indian geographers therefore this study tries to fill this gap. Moreover, since *dargahs* as sacred places transcends the religious barriers their study would reinforce the communal harmony in a plural society.

Summary of Conclusions

The thesis has been divided into five chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. In the introductory part, we have defined the research problem, objectives, database, methodology, literature review, and significance and scope of the study. In the first chapter, we have tried to understand the etymology of the word *Sufi* and its meaning. Moreover, we have also discussed the stages, states, principles and devotional acts of a *Sufi*. In the second chapter, we have briefly described the prominent *Sufi silsilas*, the arrival and origin of Sufism in South Asia. Furthermore, the distribution of *dargahs* with respect to their orders in Delhi has been described. The third chapter is related with conceptual framework pertaining to *dargah* as a sacred place. We have tried to understand the process of making a *dargah* sacred by interpreting myths, legends and miracles. Further, we have discussed the religious symbolism, symbolism in Islam and *Sufi* symbolism. Besides this, we have also explained the *piri-muridi* relationship, articles of mystic regalia and soundscape. Our fourth, fifth and sixth chapters deal with the lives of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, Hazrat Qutbuddin Kaki and Hazrat Nasiruddin Chiragh-e-Delhi respectively. In these chapters, we have covered the life histories of the saints, the environment of the *dargah*, their historical evolution, *dargah* symbolism, rituals, urs and management of the *dargahs*. For all these *dargahs*, we have also collected primary data and analyzed the pilgrims and the process of pilgrimage, wherein the spatial distribution, demographic and social background of pilgrims according to occasion and distance has been explained. In the last, we have also collected and interpreted the narratives of three persons from each *dargah*. In the concluding section, we have tried to summarize the findings of the thesis.