

THE MYSTICAL LANDSCAPE OF TUJJAR SHARIEF: A STUDY OF ZIYARAT MAQDOOMI SAHIB

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Abstract

Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib, situated at Tujjar Sharief in the Sopore–Zaingeer region of north Kashmir, is one of the most respected Sufi shrines of the area. It is associated with Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom (RA), popularly known as Maqdoomi Sahib, and reflects the strong Sufi traditions and shared cultural values of Kashmir. Since medieval times, the shrine has served not only as a place of prayer but also as a centre for spiritual learning, moral teachings, and social unity. Devotees from different parts of Kashmir visit the shrine regularly, regardless of their social or economic background. Daily prayers and annual religious gatherings highlight the living Sufi spirit of humility, devotion, and compassion. The calm natural surroundings and simple architecture add to its peaceful and spiritual environment. Culturally and socially, the shrine has helped preserve local traditions, oral stories, and devotional practices, while promoting communal harmony. Today, it also holds potential for pilgrimage and cultural tourism if developed carefully, ensuring that its spiritual character is protected. This paper examines the historical background and legacy of Ziyarat Maqdoomi sahib, a famous shrine in the Tujjar Sharief Zaingeer, Sopore Baramulla District of Kashmir Valley.

Keywords: Shrine, devotion, sacrifice, visits, prayer, traditions, legacy

INTRODUCTION:

Kashmir has long been regarded as a land of spiritual depth and mystical traditions, where religion, culture, and landscape are intricately intertwined. Among the many sacred spaces that define this spiritual geography, Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib at Tujjar Sharief in the Zaingeer region of Sopore occupies a place of exceptional reverence. The shrine is associated with Hazrat Sheikh Jamal-ud-Din, popularly known as Maqdoom Sahib, a distinguished Sufi saint whose teachings and spiritual influence played a significant role in shaping the Islamic mystical tradition in Kashmir. Over centuries, the Ziyarat has emerged not merely as a religious monument but as a living center of faith, devotion, and communal harmony. **Biography with family background of Maqdoomi Sahib (Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom), linked to Tujjar Sharief in the Zaingeer region of Sopore:**

Hazrat **Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom** (1494 – 1576), popularly known as **Maqdoomi Sahib** or **Mehboob-ul-Alam** and **Sultan-ul-Arifeen**, was a celebrated Sufi saint and mystic from Kashmir. He was born in **Tujjar Sharief**, near Sopore, to **Baba Usman Raina** and **Bibi Maryam**. His family belonged to the **Chandra-Vanshi Rajput (Raina) clan**, noted as hereditary landlords and respected in the region. His father was a learned and pious man who encouraged his education. From an early age, Hamza showed spiritual inclination and studied the Quran locally, later pursuing higher Islamic sciences and Sufism under renowned teachers in Srinagar. He became a leading spiritual guide, teaching ethics, mysticism, and Hanafi Islamic thought across Kashmir. Maqdoomi Sahib's life and teachings deeply influenced Kashmiri spiritual culture, and his shrine continues to be a revered pilgrimage site. Tujjar Sharief feels holy because of the shrine of Makhdoom Sahib. People of every class and faith come all year to sit, pray, and feel calm. The saint taught love, humility, and living together, and the village still follows that mood. Long ago the shrine was a school, kitchen, and meeting place; stories and songs were shared here so old customs stay alive. Each summer the urs festival brings crowds who share food, sing, and remember the saint, tightening village bonds. Today visitors also arrive for peace, history, and fresh mountain air, so the little settlement is becoming a quiet heritage stop. By looking after the grave, songs, and hospitality, locals keep both their faith and

their landscape alive. Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom (RA), popularly known as Maqdoomi Sahib, was a revered Sufi saint of medieval Kashmir. He played a vital role in spreading Islamic mysticism, moral values, and spiritual discipline. Known for his piety, humility, and scholarship, he guided people through teachings of faith, compassion, and devotion. The **legacy of Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib, Tujjar Sharief** can be understood across spiritual, social, cultural, and historical dimensions. Its enduring influence has shaped not only religious life in Zaingeer but also the broader mystical tradition of Kashmir.

Spiritual Legacy

The primary legacy of Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib is its status as a centre of Sufi spirituality. The shrine, dedicated to Hazrat Sheikh Jamal-ud-Din (Maqdoom Sahib), promoted the concepts of inner purity, devotion to God, humility, and love for humanity. These teachings contributed to the peaceful establishment of Islam in Kashmir, emphasizing ethical behaviour and spiritual discipline over strict orthodoxy. The shrine has inspired generations of followers seeking spiritual guidance and moral clarity.

Social and Communal Legacy

Historically, the Ziyarat served as a space for communal cooperation and inclusion. It transcended social class and locational boundaries, accepting devotees from all backgrounds. Ritual meetings, communal prayers, and the annual urs promoted a shared spiritual identity, fostering unity and mutual respect in Kashmiri society. The shrine therefore helped to promote communal harmony in the Zaingeer region.

Cultural Legacy

Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib conserved and transmitted intangible cultural assets, such as oral traditions, devotional activities, and local customs. The rituals associated with the shrine represent Kashmir's multifaceted culture, in which Sufi traditions coexist with regional practices. This cultural continuity maintained local identity while also preserving Tujjar Sharief's mystical attitude.

Educational and Moral Legacy

The shrine, like many Sufi organizations, functioned as an informal learning centre, providing moral and spiritual guidance. It shaped ethical values such as compassion, tolerance, patience, and service to others—principles that are still essential in modern society.

Contemporary Legacy

Today, the legacy of Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib includes spiritual tourism and heritage awareness. It serves as a symbol of Kashmir's Sufi heritage and a reminder of peaceful religious cooperation. Its enduring importance illustrates spiritual traditions' ability to preserve cultural identity in the face of social and political change. Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib's legacy is rooted in its long-standing contribution to Kashmir's spiritual environment, communal unity, and cultural continuity, making it an important symbol of the region's Sufi tradition. The art and architecture of Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib in Tujjar Sharief exhibit the unique blend of spirituality, simplicity, and regional aesthetics that distinguishes Kashmir's Sufi shrines. Unlike the enormous Islamic architecture found in imperial centres, the shrine is a simple yet powerfully symbolic architectural form that prioritizes spiritual presence above material grandeur. Its architecture complements the natural and cultural surroundings of the Zaingeer region, underlining the close bond between sacred space and the environment.

The Ziyarat's structure is based on the traditional Kashmiri shrine typology, with indigenous building materials including wood and stone. The shrine structure is often comprised of a sanctuary containing the renowned tomb and a courtyard that serves as a common gathering spot for followers. The usage of wooden materials, such as carved pillars, beams, and ceilings, indicates the survival of Kashmir's indigenous handicraft. These wooden features are frequently adorned with modest floral and geometric motifs, evoking Islamic artistic traditions while being grounded in local design aesthetics. Artistically, the shrine avoids unnecessary decoration, which is consistent with Sufi ideals of humility and spiritual meditation. The inside is peaceful, with soft lighting, prayer nooks, and sacred linens adorning the tomb. Calligraphic inscriptions, which are typically verses from the Qur'an or invocations in praise of God, improve the spiritual atmosphere and serve as visual manifestations of devotion. The green and white colour schemes associated with Sufi shrines represent cleanliness, calm, and divine connection. The surrounding terrain enhances the architectural character of the Ziyarat. Trees, open areas, and paths add to a peaceful environment ideal for meditation and prayer. Overall, Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib's art and architecture represent Kashmir's Sufi history, combining aesthetic restraint, local craftsmanship, and spiritual symbolism to

create a sacred setting centred on devotion, introspection, and social harmony. Tujjar Sharief, the festival linked with Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib, is also known as the Urs Sharief of Hazrat Sheikh Jamal-ud-Din. The Urs is observed yearly on the saint's death anniversary, according to the Islamic (Hijri) lunar calendar. The actual Gregorian date varies year after year, as it does at most Sufi shrines in Kashmir. The commemoration often lasts one to three days and includes special prayers, recitation of the Qur'an, communal zikr (remembrance of God), and massive gatherings of devotees from Zaingeer and the neighbouring areas. The Urs represents the saint's spiritual union with God and is celebrated as a sacred and joyful occasion rather than a time of sadness.

Dishes prepared during the festival

Food plays an important role in the Urs celebrations, reflecting the Sufi tradition of **langar (community kitchen)**, which emphasizes equality, charity, and hospitality. The dishes prepared are generally simple, locally rooted, and offered freely to devotees:

- **Rice-based meals**, often plain rice served with lentils (dal) or light vegetable curries
- **Taher or Zarda** (sweet rice prepared with sugar, dry fruits, and mild spices), commonly distributed as tabarruk (blessed food)
- **Halwa**, especially suji (semolina) halwa, prepared for communal sharing
- **Kehwa (traditional Kashmiri saffron tea)**, served to visitors and devotees
- Seasonal local vegetables such as **nadru (lotus stem)** and greens, depending on availability
- Unlike grand feasts, the food at Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib is simple and reflects Sufi values of humility, service, and sharing. Eating together during the Urs strengthens social unity and helps preserve the cultural and spiritual traditions of Tujjar Sharief. Beyond its religious role, the shrine also supports the local economy of the Zaingeer region. Pilgrimage and Urs gatherings create livelihood opportunities for transport providers, small shopkeepers, food vendors, and sellers of religious items. Donations and offerings are used for community meals, shrine upkeep, and helping the needy, showing the Sufi spirit of social welfare. The shrine also encourages spiritual and heritage tourism, benefiting nearby areas. Overall, Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib supports a faith-based economy that blends devotion, charity, and community livelihood.

Tujjar Sharief Shrine will manage its religious and spiritual affairs on its own, without control or interference from the Central or State Waqf Boards, as announced by Khwaja Farooq Renzushah.

The ancestral shrine of Hazrat Makhdoom Sahib, belonging to the historic Raina dynasty and situated in Tujjar Sharief, has been officially declared spiritually independent. This means the shrine is free from the administrative control of both the Central and State Waqf Boards. The announcement was made by Khwaja Farooq Renzushah, who is the Chief Patron of the Makhdoom Trust, a privately registered Awqaf that manages the shrine. Khwaja Farooq Renzushah explained that since 2004, several important shrines, including Tujjar Sharief, were placed in an "unspecified" category. This status helped these shrines maintain their spiritual freedom and traditional management. Mohammad Sultan Makhdoomi, the Sajada Nasheen of the shrine, said that in the past there were repeated efforts by the Kashmir Specified Waqf and later by the J&K Specified Waqf to take control of the shrine. However, he stressed that the foundation stone of the shrine was laid jointly by Khwaja Farooq Renzushah, Late Shah Sahib, and himself, in front of thousands of devotees, making its independent character clear. Late Peer Mohammad Yaseen of Harwan strongly opposed any takeover attempts, stating that such actions would be against the law, as the shrine was already registered as a private Awqaf. Official records confirm that important parts of the shrine, including Paith Astaan and Boen Astaan, were publicly established. During this period, the shrine faced serious challenges, including threats from hostile elements and even an armed attack, in which one devotee lost his life and others were injured. Because of growing distrust in the Specified Waqf system formed in 2004, the Makhdoom Awaqaf Trust was independently registered in the Srinagar court. This ensured that only the court has legal authority over the shrine. Renzushah expressed hope that Tujjar Sharief will remain protected unless future policies clearly redefine the status of all unspecified Waqf properties.

CONCLUSION

Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib at Tujjar Sharief is a key symbol of Kashmir's Sufi heritage, showing the strong connection between faith, culture, and community life. Inspired by the teachings of Hazrat Sheikh Jamal-ud-Din (Maqdoom Sahib), the shrine teaches devotion, humility, kindness, and social harmony. It is not only a place of worship but also a center that protects cultural traditions, brings people together, and offers moral guidance. Its simple architecture reflects Sufi ideals and local Kashmiri art. Annual Urs celebrations

keep traditions alive, support local livelihoods, and promote spiritual and heritage tourism. The study of **Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib at Tujjar Sharief** highlights the shrine as a deeply meaningful spiritual and cultural landscape that reflects the essence of Kashmir's Sufi tradition. More than a physical place of worship, the shrine represents a living spiritual space where faith, culture, and community life come together in a harmonious way. Rooted in the teachings of Hazrat Sheikh Jamal-ud-Din (Maqdoom Sahib), the Ziyarat continues to promote values of devotion, humility, compassion, and peaceful coexistence, which have long shaped the social fabric of the region. The mystical landscape of Tujjar Sharief is closely connected with the daily lives of the local people. The shrine functions as a center for spiritual guidance, moral learning, and social unity, attracting devotees from different backgrounds without distinction. Its simple architecture and natural surroundings reflect Sufi ideals of simplicity and closeness to nature, while also preserving local Kashmiri craftsmanship and traditions. Rituals, prayers, and annual Urs celebrations keep the spiritual heritage alive and strengthen the collective identity of the community. This study also shows that Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib plays an important role beyond spirituality. It supports local livelihoods through pilgrimage-related activities and contributes to spiritual and heritage tourism in the region. At the same time, its continued relevance demonstrates the resilience of Sufi institutions in maintaining harmony during social and political change. In conclusion, Ziyarat Maqdoomi Sahib stands as a symbol of inclusive spirituality, cultural continuity, and social cohesion. The mystical landscape of Tujjar Sharief reminds us that such sacred spaces are vital not only for religious devotion but also for preserving peace, identity, and shared values in Kashmir's society.

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