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Animals' Healing in Sufi Traditions of Pakistan: A Historical Account Riaz Ahmad

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Abstract

This article seeks to examine how animals historically have been healed in Sufi traditions of Pakistan. It underscores that animals have been treated through Sufis' spiritual blessings, application of indigenous folk medicine by them, healing at Sufi shrines, and even in past animals were resurrected through the spiritual and miraculous intervention of the Sufis. Nonetheless, the implications of the healing stories, seem to reflect and give glimpses of diverse natures of the subjective consideration of animals involved.

Keywords: Animals, Healing, Sufis, Shrines, Resurrection.

Introduction

Historically animals remained interacting with Sufis and at various Sufi shrines. However, healing of them had always been a pertinnent perspective of this interaction. In social and cultural contexts and values of Pakistan, most common in practice, they were brought to Sufis by their human masters and healed by the Sufis, through their blessings. In other important forms, while they remained in Sufis' companionship, the latter treated them with the application of indigenous folk treatment, besides other ways. Then, animals' healing have been a rampant practice at Sufi shrines of the country too. Finally, animals also have been recorded, in past, for their resurrection performed by Sufi saints. Thus, this article tries to answer the question how various forms of animal healing in Sufi traditions of Pakistan remained celebrated in past?

Healing of Animals in Sufis' blessings

In conformity to the healing to animals in Sufis lives, in the pre-1947 periods, there is a number stories to discuss here. Haji Gaggan Wattozai, a Sufi enshrined at Kasur city, is recorded for miraculously healing a sick horse. Then, Sheikh Khalo Batakzai, also from Kasur, is said to be requested by some merchants, for their horses to heal so the animals healed. Then, Sufi Baba Jalaluddin (d. 1976) is also pertinent in this regard. He was locally known as 'Abba Jee' (The father) at his village in the Tehsil of Kot Radha Kishan. He was a close disciple of Sufi Mian Ghulam Ullah Sani la Sani and sincere devotee to the shrine of much celebrated Sufi of Punjab, Mian Sher M. Sharaqpuri. Baba Jalaluddin used to practice some remedial and healing ways to treat almost each and every form of livestock like buffalo, cow, horse, and goat. The remedial practice involved some of the leftover bread in the 'lungar khana' (the shrine's kitchen) at his Sufi master's tomb. He applied this practice for animals, at the town of the shrine (Sharaqpur Sharif) as well as at his own town (Kot Radha Kishan). Baba Jalaluddin

used to collect and bring with him, the unconsumed bread and leftover pieces, from the shrine with a view to treating the sick animals with this foodstuff. The animals got well and cured by eating just some pieces of the leftover bread in the 'lungar khana' (the shrine's kitchen). This practice got into penetration in the rural neighboring that a large number of farmers and dairy keepers used to visit the healer. It is not a surprise that till this day, even many years after saint Jalaluddin's demise, the practice is observed, to an extent, in his village."

However, about the story, the hagiographer has some other aspects and its meaning too. He says that the miracles of the cure or healing were, in actuality, the consequences to the blessings of Sufi saint Mian Sani and that the healing miracles performed by the hands of Baba Jalaluddin. He adds that saint Jalaluddin was also empowered, spiritually, to disperse the treatment for those couples who had no children of their own. And, this spiritual capability too was the gift of Sufi saint Mian Sani who instructed him to prepare a water drink from the touch of a flower which was given to him by the Sufi Mian Sani. The hagiographer also stresses that the animals obey and be obedient to the orders and wills of a true Sufi saint. iv Then, another story in the same lines has something to tell about Sufi Shah M. Ismail Naqashbandi. Maulana Ghulam Hassan, from Lahore, narrated an experience which he witnessed personally. He said that once while the saint was present, at Sharaqpur Sharif, on the annual Urs of his Sufi master, a peasant came with a request to table before the saint. The applicant, having a dough of flour in his hand, requested for the saint's blessings, for his buffalo who did provide unexpectedly little amount of milk and did always create troubles, for the peasant, while he milked it. The saint instructed the Maulana Ghulam Hussan, who was sitting in his company, to recite some 'dum' (verses of blessings), on the dough. Complying with the saint's instruction, he did so. The peasant, happily, took the blessingsladen dough and left the place. Ghulam Hussain narrated that in his remaining life he used to recite the same verses for any sick or disturb livestock and miraculously seen the recovery. He believed, while describing the whole event, that it was the blessings of his saint that he became capable of performing healing animals. VIt is for long centuries ago that saints had been celebrated as patrons of different diseases and respective medical professions, several due to their suffering with the same medical issue during their lives. Elaborating, it is like if a saint suffered from a disease related to an eye, the people celebrated him as patron saint of eyes' health. So, the saints' miraculous scenes remained celebrated through their depiction in the paintings, sculptures, and other artistic works. vi

In past, Christian saints were also celebrated as patron and healers to animals that suffered from some diseases. Their miraculous healing scenes were depicted in the paintings, sculptures, and other ways of representation. There were saints who were regarded as patron of horses too. St. Anthony cured horse. He became veterinarians' patron. St. Oswald became a universal protector of animal health. Shepherds and butchers were under the protection of patron saints. On 1st day of feast of St. Anthony the Hermit, cattle are/were free of work/labor, etc. they just walk around the church devoted to the saint.^{vii}

Healing in Sufis' Companionship

Sufis and animals had lived and shared their lives with each others as companions. They cared for each other, fulfilling active roles as companions with cooperation. Some of the Sufis had lived with and experienced so much interaction with animals that they became, to be known

as, the masters/patrons Sufis of those animals. In this group of Sufi-animal interaction the animals are discussed to be treated, by their human companions those are Sufi saints, with attitudes and attributes of individuality, subjectivity, and agency. And, all the said attitudes and attributes reflect animals' consideration as subjective entities. Hence, healing of animals seems a remarkable characteristic of this historical interaction and companionship.

Indigenous Treatment

In this category, there is a list of stories about animals' healing while they experienced long term relationship with the Sufis. Syed Talib Hussain (March, 2004), a Sufi saint enshrined at village Padhana, chak 45, in Pattoki, Kasur, is celebrated for his companionship with various animals including peacocks, chicks, horse, Peru (from Turkey class), ostrich, cats, and canines. The number of canines is said about eight at one point of time. He was very fond of and liked black francolin but he couldn't convince himself to cage a bird. Throughout his entire life, birds were routinely fed by him, early in the morning, wherever saint lived. Viii Syed Talib Hussain (d. 2004), of Pattoki, Baba Zafar (d. 2008), of Kasur, and Saen Faryad, from Kasur, all shared hard times with their companion canines. Both, Syed Talib Hussain Gillani and Baba Zafar, had experiences of encounters, in the midst of silence of night, between porcupines and their dogs. The narrator tells story of Syed Talib's animal that the canine's loud cries made the Sufi to come out of his place of worship. Sufi rushed on the spot, rescued the animal, and found that many quills (sharp spines) had been pierced into several parts of canine's body. The badly injured dog was bleeding badly, at various body parts. The saint took the attacked animals into his lap and returned to his abode. He did remove pierced spines, one by one, applied ointment, and fed the canine with ghee (clarified butter) added warm milk. The saint also incorporated medicine, made from indigenous herbs and spices, in the treatment which was followed up for several coming days. Finally, the canine survived the suffering, healed healthy, and spent life at the saint's abode. ix And, in the case of Baba Zafar's canine companion, once, a concurine attacked one of his dogs with a number of swines pierced into the canine's body. The saint took the deadly injured animal in his lap and kept on picking the swines out of canine's flesh. It left deep tragic moments for the saint in the wake of the dog's succumbing to death. Taking the described manifestations of the experiences of animals, the point of author Susanne Lijmbach becomes pertinent here. She regards the ability to experience as an essential characteristic of any subjective entity. Therefore, in this sense, she brings animals into subjectivity although into another type of subjectivity than humans. xi Furthermore, Saen Faryad, a homeless 'faqeer' lives along with a pack of his canine companions, at the city graveyard, near old General Bus Stand, Kasur. He himself informs that he is a disciple and follower of the Sufi masters of 'Golra Sharif'. He has company of several canine companions. At times, he has up to seven dogs with him. All of them live in the graveyard having camping there.xii Last two Sufis have their identical features with a couple of Majzoob Sufis, during medieval Egypt. Sufis in both eras are described feeding dogs, living with them, lived in graveyard with dogs shared bread with the dogs.xiii Moreover, Saen Faryad also has stories to himself tell. According to him, he brings his companion canines to the town veterinary care centre, when any of his dog companions gets sick. Anyhow, he himself too treats and cares for them at home at sometimes. Once, one of canines got critically injured consequent to an accident with a loader rickshaw that hit and ran over him. He took him to vet care and followed up treatment full of personal care at their residence camp. Still, the 'darvesh' regrets about the accident and identifies the injury marks, showing his concern, over the healed body part of the animal.xiv Then, the Sufi of Wazirabad, northern Punjab, Khawaja Goharuddin Ahmad (1868-1952) is also celebrated for his interaction with animals. His hagiographer, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Asif Hazaravi describes, in the background to his interaction with animals, some animal-centric stories of the pious life of the holy Prophet (PBUH). These stories also include some animals that had a speech with the holy Prophet (PBUH). Khawaja Goharuddin Ahmad had a routine to commute from his place 'Jaindar Sharif' to the place of his Sufi Sheikh, 'Chogani Sharif' (a village), and back, travelling almost eight miles distance, on feet. This was his daily routine, anyhow, there was a forest in the way. On his way, he had often interactions with a 'gohh', a monitor lizard. They communicated with each other on various subjects, including the subject of the unity of the God. One day, the Khawaja found the monitor lizard suffered from some injury. He treated the animal's wound, cleaned it, and dressed it with a piece of cloth. Then, the animal left the scene and went away.xv

The above described stories of sharing of hard times between Sufis and their animals and Sufi's compassionate attitudes and attention to them reflect benevolent paternalism and compassionate treatment of animals during their suffering. It is what Ingrid H. Tague, in her "Animal Companions: Pets and Social Change in Eighteenth Century Britain", points to that during the last decade of eighteenth century, consideration for the emotional and compassionate attention towards the suffering of others is emphasized. Animals were also come under this regarding.xvi According to Tague, the eighteenth century children's writers also employed animals' sufferings and feelings with the objective to lesson children with morality. And, since pet-keeping was regarded as benevolent paternalism, compassionate treatment of animals was also stressed. And, the love for the pets had become the sign of virtue. The practice became a feature of British identity. It became the synonymous for the protection of the weak.xvii Thus, Sufis interacted with animals with an evolved set of features. It is what ethologists urge, in order to grasp better knowledge about animals, the change and refinement in the methods to better study and comprehend the behavioral lives of the animal subjects.xviii So, what Martha Nussbaum points to in "Frontiers of Justice" that on having developed a "sense of the animal itself as an agent and a subject, a creature to whom something is due, a creature who is itself an end," a new set of obligations becomes incumbent upon us.xix They considered their companion animals morally and as moral beings too. It is the same stance what behaviorists prefer for their consideration.xx

Additionally, although canine companions are celebrated with more strong, what Nathan Hofer notes, stories featuring qualities of loyalty and fidelity^{xxi} yet Sufi saints are narrated to demonstrate, through their attitudes, what Karalyn Kendall Marwick aligns her argument with Erica Fudge who says "cohabiting/coexisting with dogs requires an imaginative leap". And, that imaginative leap is about thinking that what things my dog may be experiencing/thinking that means to try to think along with the dog. And, they agree that it may feel difficult or impossible yet it is essential. So, this imaginative leap leaves one to recognize that communicative and interpretive jobs are the liability of both partners. Hence, both Marwick and Erica converge on the canines' potential to counter humanism that keeps humans at their unique central position in the interaction. And, it results in a new multiplicity of interspecies relationships. And, pertaining to behavioral communication and living in coexistence, and co-

evolution, even in tough times, Morwick claims that it was not the human agency to domesticate the dogs rather it was/is a co-evolution which worked/works both ways.^{xxii}

Animals' Healing at Sufi shrines

There are Sufi shrines which have been believed and celebrated as the centres of healing for animals. It is notable that there are some of them that have been believed fruitful for treatment of animals or centers for cure of medical problems caused by any animal to a human or another animal. It is the popular beliefs which motivate devotees to pay visitation to these places. The shrine of Chhuto Faqir, in Tharparker, Sindh, is venerated and visited, by the pastoralist communities, belonging to both the Muslim as well as the Hindus, living in the Sindh province. These pastoralist communities, majority of whom are from Tharparkar region, have beliefs that by visiting and bringing, their goats and sheep, to this shrine, may be cured and protected, from some diseases which are harmful to animals' lives. Families belonging to these communities even donate a single sheep annually to the shrine with the belief that, in this way, their herds would remain healthy, for whole of the year to come. It is also the belief of these communities that, while they bring their animals at shrine, if any one of them dies here, the death would be a guarantee for other animals to get blessed protection of the saint. However, it is a practice, among these communities, to sacrifice at least a single goat/sheep, in order to contribute in the preparation of 'lungar', on annual festival at the shrine.xxiii In addition, there is a practice of some animal-centric beliefs at the shrine of Khawaja M. Amin (d. 1325 hijri) in Chakoori Sharif, Gujrat region. There were a garden and water well associated with the shrine. The well is still present there. It is narrated by the saint's disciples that the saint himself said about the well that whosoever would drink the water from here would be relieved from a single illness at a time. The same fact has been heard by the hagiographer personally from his parents as well as the elders of the village. Moreover, he himself observed personally that people did visit the well, drink the water, washed their hands and face. People even would bring here to their animals (livestock). Particularly, those oxen which didn't plough at field soil, they were brought at the well and were made to draw water from there. And, after their visit to the well of the saint, the oxen began to work/plough properly. It is the fact of peoples' beliefs that even when the well remains out of order the oxen were made to circle the well for seven times so that they become ready to plough at fields. And, till this day, people and animals get cure from diseases from this well.xxiv

Apart from, There are also shrines where believers get, for themselves and for their animals, healing from any injury or disease caused by some other animals. Located at Bahadarpur, in Multan region, the shrine of Peer Auliya e Ghouri is famous for cure from animal bites, like bite of a dog. Not only people get cure from bite but animals too. XXV Then, in Balochistan province, shrines of Bibi Naikzan and Bibi Nazo (Jasoban/Johan) are also celebrated and requested for the treatment of dog-bites. XXVI In actuality, in the province of Baluchistan, there are some particular socio-cultural contexts and values that support these beliefs, sanctity of the places, and popularity of the animal-centric folkloric elements in Sufi values. Therefore, there are several shrines which have been celebrated for the miraculous power of the soil/earth of their courtyards. The soil is believed to be the potential remedy and treatment for the bites of dogs, scorpions, snakes, and other harmful animals. The soil to be used for the said purposes is locally called as 'khorda' which is rubbed on the wound. Shrines of Hazrat Syed Karim, Syed Moris Shah, Hazrat Aamo Agha, and Faqeer Hotek are famous for the

purpose. It is normal among the nomads of the region to keep the 'khorda' in their luggage, to avoid the potential attacks and bites by the poisonous animals.**xvii

In the region of northern Punjab, the shrine of Hazrat Paak Rehman Naushahi Qadri is very famous. The saint died during Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's times. The Sufi saint is celebrated due to the obedience and discipline of snakes he enjoyed. His check on the Snakes' poison was very well known among the masses. It is said that when he reached Bhari Shreef and selected a place for his sitting and residence, people warned him about a large poisonous snake. He cared for nothing. And, it is also said that till the present day, there is no incident reported regarding any snakebite to a human or any other animal. The place is now occupied by a complex of shrine, mosque, khankah, and a travelers' lodge. It is said that on the occasion of annual 'Urs' (annual day), the nearby river water becomes available which is not the case for other days.xxviii Even, there are traditions where animals are believed to heal humans. The shrine of Sufi Karam Ilahi (1838-1929) at Gujrat is famous for the association of crows. In fact, the Sufi saint held special compassion and care for crows.

Therefore he is popularly known as master of crows or patron of crows. Crows are usually present at the shrine. Devotees and visitors extend various forms of offerings for the crows at shrines. There are seen different types of pots. Regarding service to crows, pots are kept here for water, rice, and other types of grains and food. Usually, numerous crows remain sitting on trees around the shrine. Anyhow, at shrine, 'lungar' (food) is given to crows in priority. It is also believed amongst devotees that children with the speech issues or stutter issues get cured if they drink water from the same vessels as the crows. *xxix* Conversely, crows had been in the belief systems of past societies. They were sacred to Athena, Greek goddes of Wisdom and other beliefs in Greece. Then, they have been in beliefs of native North Americans and people of modern India too. *xxx* Anyhow, concerning folklore about animals' healing at shrines, Karl Steel also incorporated some of Medieval beliefs in his study. He states, "Elites admired and even mourned their horses, dogs, and hawks; the latter, for example, were sent to the shrines of saints to be healed, and those who mocked this saintly solicitude for mere beasts tended to find themselves blinded or paralyzed." *xxxii

Resurrection Miracles

In addition, besides healing to animals, there are stories that entail the resurrection of dead animals. As far as resurrection miracles are concerned, Mian Akhwand Saeed Hussainzai and Sheikh Yousuf bin Sheikh Batak, Sufi saints of Kasur city are remembered and celebrated. Mian Akhwand Saeed Hussainzai is related with the performance of resurrection of a horse. **xxiii** Sheikh Yousuf bin Sheikh Batak was a shepherd and used to slaughter and give his goats' meat to 'darveshes' and the needy. It is said that on returning home, he did struck wood sticks in the soil and put on it the hides/skins of the slaughtered animals. So, in this miraculous way, the slaughtered animals resurrected or restored again. It is also narrated that the saint's brothers disliked that practice and imprisoned him at home. **xxxiii** The preceding stories are having its' relation to a Pakhtoon tribe of pre-modern Kasur. The business of horses' trade was a common profession amongst the Khaweshgi tribesmen so many miracle stories are surrounding it. There is another resurrection story that pertains to Sultan Abdul Hakim of Multan region. It is said that, besides the experience of having communication with a jackal, he also resurrected a bird. **xxxiv** Past humans had experiences with and perceptions toward animals in myriad ways. Examining animals in medieval perceptions, Esther Cohen

depicts not only animals' position and peoples' attitudes to them, but also saints' glorification through their spiritual powers to resurrect the dead animals.xxxv

Then, within the category of the theme 'resurrection', there is a well documented and celebrated story about the seventeenth century Sufi, Hazrat Mian Mir (1550-1635), the famous Sufi saint of Lahore. Three of his hagiographers, Maulana Peer Ghulam Dastageer Nami, Iqbal Ahmad, and Tahir Lahori, describe the story of resurrection to a bird that was shot dead by a young slinger-boy. The Sheikh caressed on the dead bird with his hand and the bird resurrected miraculously. She flew away in the trees consequent to the miracle performed by the Sufi.xxxvi

Additionally, in respect of the ressurection stories, Syed Bila Noosh also known as Sheikh Baladar, a saint belonging to and enshrined at Naushki, in Balochistan is described to show resurrection of an animal. The resurrection story begins with the presence of the saint along with his followers at an invitation of dinner, by the regional ruler of Kalat. It is said that the ruler out of enmity, got cooked a cat, in the evening meal, prepared for the guests. But, the saint got to know the reality. And, he performed the miracle of the resurrection of the cooked cat. The story also included the turning of curry into honey, by the miraculous power of the saint, and the transformation of poisonous water into sweet water (Sharbat). Adding to miraculous, it narrates that the ruler also inflicted an anaconda and lions on to the saint but the later made it all tamed. It is also said that he hit the ground with his shawl and the soil picked the fire, momentarily. Ultimately, the ruler requested for his forgiveness and kept on sending one third of the income of Kalat to his shrine in Naushki. XXXVIII The set of miracles composed in this story reflects an amount of exaggeration. At a single place and piece of time, the saint is said to render not a single form of miracle but several ones. The resurrection of cooked cat, curry turning to honey, poisonous water turned to sweet water, and control over the most poisnous and lethal beasts like snake and lions, respectively, and even more than it. In fact, the hagiographer has done all the axaggeration into the folkloric stories or he did compile as many miracles as he did listen from any oral sources. It may also be seemingly possible that he compiled all the spread miraculous stories into a single happening, as a final outcome of the craft. Christa Gray and James Corke Webster argues that hagiographers play their part as instigator to the veneration of Saints or they do respond to this veneration. Hagiographies are the texts that emerge from devotion to saints and it also aim to elevate this devotion. Hagiographers perform their role to heighten saints' position through employing various strategies.xxxviii

Then, next story of an animal's resurrection is assigned to Mian Natha Dewan Qadri (d. 1618). It is said that one day Mian Natha, while walking on the street, saw a dead rotten rodent lying on the ground. The animal's bones had been separated from the flesh. Mian Natha, communicated with it, "why are you lying in this condition, get up and go to your place. The rat got resurrected immediately and moved away.** The Sufi saint Bari Imam, the saint of Islamabad, has been much celebrated on account of his living in the midst of hilly forests of presently called Islamabad regions. He has been described in sundry hagiographical writings about his often interactions with animals. He is also narrated to perform miracles pertaining to domestic as well as wild animals. One of the celebrated stories, of his interactions and performance of miraculous power, with animals is about the resurrection of a large number of buffaloes and the stoning of a calf. The story runs as the saint needed milk for his

consumption and one of his disciples owned a large number of buffaloes. The disciple, in order to serve his saint master, began to bring milk of his livestock on daily basis. But, he experienced that each of the buffaloes he milk would get died. But, he displayed his perseverance for serving his master and endured the losses continuously. So, on the day number seventy, he did lost seventy of his buffaloes and was left with only one member of livestock, a young calf. Next day, with view to keep up the supply of the milk to his saint, he requested, to his near ones and dear ones, to lend some amount of milk for his saint but he was refused with the words that nobody would risk the life of his/her livestock. And, when he visited his Sufi master with empty handed, the Sufi asked about the matter. He explained all the situation of the matter. The saint directed him to bring the milk of the remaining livestock, the young calf. He was hesitant due to the unusual condition but he obeyed and began to milk the calf. Miraculously, the calf yielded the milk which was supplied to the Sufi saint. But, on the very next day, the calf got died too. He informed the saint about the happening. The saint instructed him to visit the bank of area's well known lake called 'Neela'n Nadi' and call your buffalos without turning back to see the lake. He complied almost accordingly and all of his cattle came out but, at the last moment, he turned his neck, and the last animal, the calf was turned into a stone. And, as hagiographer of the saint writes, till this day, the same calf's stoned statue is still located, at up in the hills' top, at above the point of the saint's 'chilla gah' (the place of meditation or committed worship).xl

The stories of resurrection are quite prevalent in the narration of classic Sufis. Resurrection of a cow by Imam Jaffar Sadiq has had its celebration. The Imam had tried to keep his identity undisclosed, in this event. This story has some alignment with the dictum of Hazrat Hamid Tirmizi about the display/demonstration of miraculous power. He says, according to Maulana Ashraf Thanvi's 'Maqalat-e-Sufiya', "a saint himself or herself doesn't demonstrate the miraculous power rather he/she tries to hide it but the universe does it expressed". Then, there is a description about the restoration of an eaten chicken by the Sheikh ul Azam, Ghous Paak. Hazrat Rabia Basri is also given the credit for the resurrection of a donkey. Kiv 'Risalatul-Qushairiya' includes numerous stories about resurrection of dead animals by saintly figures.

Conclusion

In summary, the case studies and stories of animal healing in Sufi traditions of Pakistan demonstrates that animal healing entailed not just a single perspective. It reflects people's beliefs and their devotion to Sufis and Sufi shrines. I also includes the socio-cultural life of Sufi shrines with regard to the animal health care. Importantly, this study shows how Sufis' spirituality is measured and recorded in their hagiographies vis-à-vis animals' healing. Then, it also display that how far resurrection of animals remain part and parcel for a Sufi's celebration among the masses. However, the most significant perspective lies in the animals' subjective care and ethical consideration by those Sufis who kept on experiencing companionship with animals especially the pet animals, during latter's health concerns. These sorts of manifestations really show the social relations, empathy, compassion, and blurring boundaries between humans and non-humans. Thus, within the perspectives of Sufi traditions, animal healing in Pakistani socio-cultural contexts and values not just reflects spiritual aspects rather it also contains active social interactions leading to animals' subjective treatment. And, notably, such types of treatment can be noticed in the periods since the

creation of Pakistan. On the contrary, prior to this milestone, there remained stories of resurrection in rampant with little space for healing. Anyhow, it is the era after 1947 that contains healing stories with almost no story of resurrection. Thus, this era leaves impact upon animals as their subjectivity and ethical interaction in the healing episodes, by the Sufi saints, in Pakistani traditions.

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