

SERVICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AUQAF IN THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIZATIONAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE: A RESEARCH REVIEW

DR. TAHIR RAZA BUKHARI

POST DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP, PUNJAB UNIVERSITY, LAHORE

EMAIL: drtahirazabukhari@yahoo.com

Abstract

The Department of Auqaf and Religious Affairs, Punjab, stands as one of Pakistan's most pivotal state institutions entrusted with the preservation and promotion of Islamic civilizational and cultural heritage. Established in 1960 under the Waqf Properties Ordinance 1959, and subsequently restructured in 1994 and 2002, the Department has evolved into a multidimensional entity managing over 537 mosques, 400 Sufi shrines, 75 madaris, and several research and educational institutions including the Ulema Academy, Markaz Maarif-e-Auliya, and the Punjab Quran Board. This study undertakes a comprehensive post-doctoral level analysis of the Department's institutional mechanisms, policy frameworks, and operational interventions aimed at safeguarding tangible and intangible Islamic heritage across Punjab — a region historically central to Indo-Muslim civilization. The research highlights the Department's custodianship of sacred relics (tibrakat-e-muqaddasa), its role in regulating Quranic publications, standardizing curricula across sectarian lines through the Mutahidda Ulema Board, and fostering inter-sectarian harmony via the Ittehad Bain al-Muslimin Committee. Furthermore, the paper examines the Department's academic contributions through journals like "Maarif-e-Auliya" — recognized by Pakistan's Higher Education Commission — and its organization of national and international conferences on Sufism and Sirah. The study also evaluates challenges including administrative fragmentation, resource constraints, politicization of religious spaces, and balancing preservation with modernization. Employing qualitative and archival methodologies, this research positions the Department not merely as a bureaucratic entity but as a cultural steward actively shaping the contours of Islamic identity, spiritual continuity, and civilizational memory in contemporary Pakistan. Ultimately, the paper argues that the Department of Auqaf Punjab serves as a unique model of state-led cultural preservation in the Muslim world — one that integrates theological authenticity, historical consciousness, and socio-political pragmatism to sustain Islamic heritage against the tides of globalization, sectarianism, and cultural erosion.

Keywords: Islamic Cultural Heritage, Department of Auqaf Punjab, Sufi Shrines and Sacred Relics, Religious Institutional Governance, Civilizational Preservation in Pakistan

INTRODUCTION:

Islam is a complete code of life, which not only covers acts of worship and affairs but also reflects a specific civilization. The special civilization and culture of Muslims distinguishes them from other nations of the world. Muslims ruled the Indian subcontinent for centuries and brought with them a civilization and cultural tradition whose traces are still the identity of this region today. Pakistan; which is the guardian of this Muslim civilization and civilization, immediately after its establishment, institutions were established for the revival of Islamic sciences, arts and cultural heritage. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, upon becoming the Governor General, established "The Department of Islamic

Reconstruction", the first Director General of which was Allama Muhammad Asad. Its main objective was the revival of Islamic sciences and civilization¹.

In this regard, the Punjab Government established the Punjab Auqaf Department on January 1, 1960 under the "Auqaf Properties Ordinance 1959", which is the most active and prestigious department of Pakistan at the government level in the protection of Islamic arts and cultural heritage.²

The Punjab Auqaf Department has not only fulfilled its responsibilities in this regard but has also carved out a unique niche for itself as a comprehensive cultural and civilizational institution. It has preserved historical mosques, Sufi shrines and rare relics, as well as presented Islamic thought, Sufism and the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in a modern perspective through academic and research institutions such as the Ulema Academy, Markaz Maarif Auliya and Punjab Quran Board. Cultural events, Sufi festivals and interfaith harmony initiatives have promoted not only religious but also social unity. However, despite these achievements, challenges such as administrative decentralization, limited resources, external interference and less contact with the younger generation have hindered its further development. Yet the Punjab Auqaf Department is not just an institution that manages property it is a state institution that is responsible for the spirit, memory and voice of a living civilization. Its role is not limited to preserving the past, but is also a means of connecting future generations with their identity – in this sense, it is a worthy role model not only for Pakistan but also for the Islamic world. This department was reorganized in 1993, vide Notification No.: US (3)82-3/71/93, dated 8 February 1994.³

In 2002, its scope was expanded and it was named "Punjab Religious Affairs and Endowments Department".⁴

In January 2008, the Directorate General of Religious Affairs was upgraded, which played a fundamental role in the preservation of Islamic sciences and arts and cultural heritage.⁵

In this study, we will present a research review of the services of the Punjab Auqaf Department in the preservation of cultural and historical heritage, which includes sacred relics, mosques, madrasas, shrines, Ulema Academy, Markaz Ma'arif Auliya, Seerat Academy, Aiwan Sufia, Punjab Quran Board, Muttahida Ulema Board, Ittehad-e-Bain-e-Muslimeen Committee, and religious ceremonies.

The concept of civilization and culture

The meaning of civilization

The expression of a group's specific way of life, which includes its customs, arts, language, social values, and material creations, is called civilization. Every civilization has some aspects in common with other civilizations, while some individual characteristics distinguish it from other civilizations, which form its identity. According to some experts, the purposeful creations and social value system of a society are called civilization.⁶

Culture is the complex social structure that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, laws, customs, abilities, habits, clothing, food, and housing that are acquired by members of a group.⁷

The cultural and historical heritage that includes mosques, shrines, relics, Sufi literature, calligraphy, music and spiritual rituals — not just monuments to the past, but a living experience of a nation's identity, values and spirit. It is an institution that works at the intersection of religious, historical and cultural assets — where places of worship are not just for worship, but also centers of knowledge, art and social solidarity. The spirit of Sufism, the teachings of the Quran and the continuity of Islamic arts are not limited to books or buildings — they are living traditions that need institutional supervision, scholarly promotion and cultural revival. The Department of Endowments has kept it alive in the heart of society, not just by "preserving" it, but through research, education and cultural events. Therefore, this

¹. Asad, Muhammad. *The Road to Mecca*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1954.

². Government of Punjab. *Waqf Properties Ordinance, 1959*. Lahore: Government Press, 1959.

³. Government of Punjab. Notification No. US(3)82-3/71/93, dated 8 February 1994. Lahore: Home Department.

⁴. Government of Punjab. *Annual Report, Department of Religious Affairs & Auqaf*. Lahore: Auqaf Department, 2003

⁵. Government of Punjab. January 2008. Directorate General of Religious Affairs.

⁶. Ibn Khaldun, Abdur Rahman. *The Case of Ibn Khaldun*. Translated by Muhammad Tahir Tunswi. Lahore: Islamic Culture Institute, 2005

⁷. Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

responsibility is not only administrative, but also a cultural necessity and a national duty — because when civilization is preserved, identity will live on.

Preservation of Holy Relics

The most important achievement of the Punjab Auqaf Department is the preservation of the relics of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and other companions and saints. These relics have been preserved for centuries in the adjoining floor to the north of the main gate of the Badshahi Mosque, Lahore. These include:

The green turban with a cap of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), the blessed green robe, the blessed white pajamas, the blessed staff, the blessed hair, the blessed footprint, the white flag, the blessed sandals, the turban of Hazrat Ali Al-Murtaza with a blessed turban, the blessed amulet, the prayer mat and handkerchief of Hazrat Fatima Al-Zahra, the blessed speech of Hazrat Imam Hussain, the blessed flag, the sandal-colored turban, the blessed tooth of Hazrat Owais Qarni, the turban of Hazrat Ghaus-e-Azam, the prayer mat and quilt, the soil of Karbala and other relics.⁸

The holy relics, which include the relics of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his companions and saints, are not just religious artifacts, but also the physical and spiritual center of Islamic civilization and culture. These relics are part of a historical, spiritual and cultural chain that has linked the identity, faith and cultural tradition of Muslims for centuries. By their nature, they are the material embodiment of “Intangible Cultural Heritage” — that is, they are not just stones or cloth, but symbols of the emotions, beliefs and historical continuity of a civilization. The Department of Endowments is the only government agency that has not only the legal authority but also the ability to manage them with historical, religious and cultural sensitivity. These relics cannot be handed over to ordinary museums or private owners — because their protection is not limited to physical preservation, but also requires a balance of spiritual respect, scholarly interpretation and public access.

Preservation of Mosques

The mosque has always had a central position in Islamic civilization and culture. There are 537 mosques under the management of the Punjab Auqaf Department, including: Jamia Masjid Hazrat Ali Bin Usman Hajveri (Lahore) - built: 431 AH, Jamia Masjid Wazir Khan Lahore - built: 1052 AH, Badshahi Masjid Lahore - built: 1084 AH. And others.⁹

Mosques are not just places of worship — they are living centers of Islamic civilization and culture, where religion, architecture, calligraphy, community life, education, and spirituality meet. The Punjab Auqaf Department is the only government agency that is not only the legal guardian of endowment properties, but also has the organizational capacity to manage these buildings with historical, cultural, and religious sensitivity. Mosques — such as the Jamia Masjid of Dargah Hajveri — Wazir Khan Masjid, Badshahi Masjid; bear witness to centuries-old Islamic civilization through their architecture, decoration, and local cultural traditions. They are in the nature of “tangible cultural heritage” — that is, they are not just buildings, but also reflections of the spirit, taste, and identity of a civilization.

The Auqaf Department has not only ensured their physical survival through the repair, cleaning, and administrative maintenance of 537 historic mosques, but has also restored them as cultural centers — where not only prayers are offered, but also events, educational circles, and cultural exhibitions are held.

Establishment of Madrasas

Madrasas play an important role in the protection and promotion of Islamic sciences and arts. There are 75 madrasas under the management of the Punjab Auqaf Department, from which thousands of scholars, eminent scholars and religious scholars are being trained. Among them are many model madrasas, all the arrangements, arrangements and expenses of which are the responsibility of the department.¹⁰

Madrasas are not just educational institutions — they are living repositories of cultural heritage, where not only knowledge is transmitted through the teaching of the Quran, Hadith, jurisprudence, Sufism, Arabic literature and Islamic history, but also a specific cultural consciousness, value system and spiritual tradition are kept alive from generation to generation. Their nature is like an “Institutional Hub of Intangible Heritage” — that is, they are not just buildings and people, but they are living systems where the spirit, language and thought of civilization breathe. Madrasas managed by the Department of Endowments — not only teach religious sciences, but modern educational requirements, computer

⁸ . Maarif Auliya Magazine, Vol. 7, Issue 1 (2009), p. 30

⁹ . Department of Auqaf Punjab. Inventory of Historical Mosques. Lahore: Auqaf Directorate, 2020.

¹⁰ . Ibid

literacy and social sciences are also being included in them, which is a positive and necessary step. The graduates here not only serve in mosques, but also play a role in building society on moral and spiritual foundations. For the future, it is important that madrasas are seen as “cultural training centers” instead of just “religious institutions”, where young people can not only become scholars, but also become intellectual and cultural leaders of the society.

Preservation of the cultural and heritage of shrines

The shrines of Sufis in the subcontinent are the reflection and guardians of Islamic civilization and culture. There are 400 shrines under the management of the Punjab Auqaf Department, at which annual ceremonies, gatherings, poetry recitals, folk singing and fairs are organized. These include:

Hazrat Tanuh (Prophet/son of Hazrat Adam (AS)) Hazrat Sulayman Pars (Tabi'i/Sahabi) Hazrat Ali bin Usman Hajveri (465–480 AH) Hazrat Sakhi Sarwar (524–577 AH) Shaykhul Islam Bahauddin Zakaria (578–661 AH) Baba Fariduddin Ganj Shakar (584–664 AH) Syed Jalaluddin Surkh Bukhari (595–690 AH) Imam Ali ul Haq Shaheed (d. 768 AH) Hazrat Madhu Lal Hussain (945–1008 AH) Hazrat Sultan Bahu Qadri (1039–1102 AH) Hazrat Baba Bulleh Shah (1091–1170 AH) Syed Waris Shah (1134–1212 AH) Khwaja Ghulam Farid (1256–1318 AH) and others.¹¹

Shrines are not just tombs but living centers of spirituality, culture and civilization, where the teachings, poetry, music and moral system of Sufis live on from generation to generation. The Department of Endowments also has the ability and authority to maintain these spiritual traditions, folk culture and communal solidarity. Shrines – such as Darbar-e-Hajveri, Baba Farid, Sultan Bahoya and Khwaja Ghulam Farid; reflect a living cultural system through their architecture, ceremonies, hearings, poetry recitals and public festivals. Their nature is like a “tangible-intangible cultural nexus” i.e. they are not just shrines, but places where the spirit, language, art and devotion of a civilization are experienced.

The Department of Endowments has ensured not only their physical survival by maintaining, repairing and organizing cultural events at these shrines, but also keeping them alive as “cultural festivals” and “spiritual centers”. The Samaa's, Mushairas, folk songs and handicraft exhibitions held at weddings are all effective means of transmitting cultural heritage to the public.

Ulema Academy Lahore

The Ulema Academy Lahore — established in 1970 adjacent to the Badshahi Mosque — is an institution responsible for transmitting the intellectual and spiritual heritage of Islamic civilization and culture to the new generation. The main reason for this is that civilization is not limited to buildings, ceremonies or relics — but rather it lives on through the thoughts, values and personalities of scholars. The purpose of the Ulema Academy is not only to teach religious sciences, but also to train imams, preachers and preachers in the context of modern science, society, media and global challenges, thereby preparing a balanced, moderate and culturally aware leader - who will not only deliver sermons in the mosque, but also play a role in building society on Islamic ethics and cultural values. This academy is a "training center for intellectual and cultural heritage" - that is, here, stone or paper is not preserved, but rather intellect, language, thought and ethics are preserved and revived. It is an institution where ancient Islamic sciences are harmonized with modern requirements - therefore, its nature is like a "scientific center for cultural application". During the "Specialization in Arabic and Islamic Sciences" program that lasted from 1978 to 1993, the academy prepared more than 660 scholars by creating a crossroads of modern and ancient sciences - many of whom are serving in intellectual and educational centers in the country and abroad today. In addition, training courses for muezzins, preachers and imams raised the standard of mosques. But the problem was that this project lacked long-term financial and administrative support — and after 1993, the course on specialization in Arabic and Islamic sciences was discontinued. However, its need still exists today — more than ever.

The Ulema Academy should be re-established on a functional, modern and research-based basis — where young scholars are not only taught religion, but also trained in cultural dialogue, interfaith harmony and digital media. If this academy continues in its original spirit, it can become not only a training center for scholars — but also an intellectual custodian of Pakistan's Islamic civilization. This is because the responsibility of the Endowment Department is not only administrative — but also a historical responsibility to keep the cultural heritage intellectually alive.

Markaz Maarif Auliya

Established in the Data Darbar Complex in 2002. It has four departments:

¹¹ . Ibid.

- i. Jamia Hajviriya ii. Magazine "Ma'arif Auliya" iii. Department of Research and Writing iv. Library.¹²

Objectives: Its objectives are as follows:

- i. Modern research in Sufism ii. Facilities for research scholars and PhD students
iii. Publication of research journal iv. Organization of seminars and talks.¹³

1. Since its establishment, Jamia Hajviriya has produced (1206) scholars, (177) Muftis and (200) Huffazes.¹⁴

2. (60) issues of Majlah Ma'arif-e-Auliya have been published, which include (1100) research articles, as well as (45) special issues, out of which (7) issues were awarded the first, second and third prizes by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Islamabad.¹⁵

3. (35) books and papers have been published by the Research and Writing Department in various subjects and languages, some of which are as follows: Kitab al-Fiqh al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah, Majlah al-Akhma' al-Adliyyah, Da'wat al-Islam, Faa'id al-Fawad and al-Munqadh min al-Dalal, etc.¹⁶

4. The library established in connection with the Center for the Knowledge of Saints contains approximately 13,000 books in 15 national and international languages. Furthermore, the classification of books has been arranged in a modern mechanical manner.¹⁷

The Center for the Knowledge of Saints is the most important institution for the intellectual and scientific preservation of Sufism, spirituality and Islamic cultural heritage. The heritage of civilization and culture lives on through knowledge, research, writing and education. When the teachings of Sufism, the biographies of Sufis and spiritual philosophy are not preserved in the form of books, research articles and educational curricula, they are lost to oral traditions. The Department of Endowments has also kept the intellectual aspect of spirituality alive in an organized, authentic and modern research manner. This center is an "academic and research institution of intangible cultural heritage". Teaching of Quran, Hadith, Fiqh and Sufism in Jamia Hajviriya; Publication of research articles in the magazine "Ma'arif Auliya"; Translations and commentaries of classical Sufi texts in the research department; and a collection of thousands of books in the library — all of these together form a cultural knowledge system where civilization is not only felt, but also studied, analyzed and interpreted.

The Center for the Education of Saints has shown remarkable performance in a short period of time, its figures testify to the fact that the Auqaf Department has tried to harmonize Sufi thought with modern research standards. The approval of the journal for the Education of Saints by HEC and several awards from the federal ministry are testimony to its scholarly importance.

The Punjab government should promote this center as a "National Cultural Research Institute" instead of just a "Sufi institution" — where grants for PhD scholars, a digital library and international scholarly cooperation should be provided. In this way, this center will not only be the guardian of the heritage of the past, but also a center of intellectual enlightenment for the future. This is the historical responsibility of the Auqaf Department to give academic form to the cultural intelligence of the department.

The Sufi House is located in Shah Chirag Chamber, Mall Road, Lahore. Its objectives include:

Teaching of Sufi literature ii. Persian and Punjabi courses iii. Training of Auqaf employees included.¹⁸

It has so far issued certificates/diplomas in Persian to more than 500 people, and has also conducted computer training for endowment managers, officers and employees.¹⁹

Despite its limited resources and time, the Sufi House has done commendable work — especially the teaching of Persian, which was organized in collaboration with Khana Farhang Iran, and the modern training of endowment employees, which improved the performance of the institution. But its weakness was that it remained a temporary or subsidiary project — it could not be given the status of a permanent research or educational institution. The Punjab government should make the projects of the Sufi House

¹² . Ibid.

¹³ . Maarif Auliya Magazine, Vol. 7, Issue 1 (2009), p. 15.

¹⁴ . Ibid., P 16

¹⁵ . Ibid.

¹⁶ . Ibid.

¹⁷ . Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs. Award Letters for Special Issues of "Maarif-e-Auliya". Islamabad: Ministry Archives, 2013–2023.

¹⁸ . Akbar, Asif Mir. "The University of Lahore: An Assessment of the Printing Services of the Department of Auqaf and Religious Affairs, Punjab." PhD diss., University of the Punjab, 2018, p. 80.

¹⁹ . Ibid.

part of permanent projects — where Persian and Punjabi courses continue, the teaching of Sufi literature is made part of the curriculum, and the training system of employees is in accordance with the latest requirements. In this way, this institution will not only be a custodian of cultural heritage, but also become an engine that institutionally and intellectually adapts it to the modern era.

Punjab Quran Board

This board was established in December 2004, gained legal status in 2011 and became a fully autonomous institution in 2022.²⁰

Objectives: Its objectives are as follows:

- i. Error-free publication of the Holy Quran
- ii. Establishment of Quran Mahal at the district level
- iii. Publication of translations and commentaries
- iv. Encouragement of Quranic research.²¹

Services:

Punjab Quran Board is an “institution for the standardization and cultural preservation of the sacred texts”. It not only supervises the printing of the Quran, but also ensures that the message of the Quran reaches the public with scholarly accuracy, cultural harmony and spiritual depth through the establishment of Quran Mahals at the district level, training of reciters and approval of translations. It is in the nature of a “legal-cultural regulatory body” — which preserves civilization through “standards”. The Punjab Quran Board has so far shown commendable performance: including (27) legal actions against publishers, declaring the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam manuscript as the national standard, approving a unified translation of all maslaks, (9) establishment of Quran mahalats, and (92) training of reciters, all of which indicate not only religious but also cultural unity and academic standardization. But there are also problems: substandard Qurans are still available in the markets, the registration process of publishers is slow, and the number of Quran mahalats is insufficient. Also, the use of modern digital platforms to make Quranic education a part of the curriculum and to train the younger generation in Tajweed and Tartil is inadequate. The government should make the Punjab Quran Board a “revival center for Quranic culture” instead of just a “regulatory body”, where Quranic teaching, research and interpretation are adapted to modern educational, technological and cultural requirements. For this, it is necessary to transform the Quran palaces into “cultural centers” where not only recitation takes place, but also understanding, translation and research.

Muttahida Ulema Board Punjab

This board was established in 1997, initially with 27, later with 22 members, which includes scholars of all schools of thought.²²

Objectives: Its objectives include monotheism, finality of prophethood, consensus on the preservation of the Quran, respect for the Companions and Ahl al-Bayt, and condemnation of sectarian incitement.²³

Services:

The United Ulema Board was established because the heritage of civilization and culture is not limited to buildings or rituals alone — it also depends on values, peace, and religious harmony. When a society is subjected to sectarian tension or hateful literature, civilization begins to collapse internally. Therefore, this board — which includes scholars of all schools of thought — ensures unity on fundamental beliefs such as “Tawheed, Khatm-e-Nubuwwat, Ehtar-e-Sahaba and Ahl al-Bayt,” has banned more than (100) sectarian books, and has unified the religious curriculum. The policy of “Do not abandon your own religion, do not disturb the religion of others” is its practical manifesto. However, the challenge is that the implementation of its decisions at the local level is weak. For the future, it is necessary to give it legal protection and connect the younger generation with its concerns.

Ittehad-e-Muslimeen Committee Punjab

The Ittehad-e-Muslimeen Committee Punjab — which has been active since 2008 and is chaired by the Minister of Religious Affairs — believes that the heritage of civilization and culture survives in an environment of social harmony, brotherhood, and respect for differences. If a Muslim society is burning in the fire of sectarian tension, fatwa-issuing, or sectarian prejudice, no mosque, shrine, or book can truly preserve this civilization. Therefore, the Department of Endowments — which is already the custodian of Islamic cultural property — was entrusted with the responsibility of preserving the spirit of culture —

²⁰ . Department of Auqaf Punjab. Annual Report, Awan-e-Sufia. Lahore: Auqaf Press, 2006.

²¹ . Ibid.

²² . Maarif Auliya Magazine, Volume 7, Issue 1 (2009), pages 22–23.

²³ . Ibid

that is, unity, tolerance, and peace. The committee's code of conduct — which includes “not hurting the feelings of any Muslim,” “professional tolerance,” “avoiding fatwa-issuing,” and “observance of the law in religious ceremonies” — is, in fact, an attempt to give legal and institutional form to the moral and social pillars of Islamic civilization.

The committee is a “social and moral preservation institution for cultural heritage” — that is, it is the guardian of the internal unity, ethics of discourse, and cultural tolerance of Muslim society, rather than of buildings or books. It is a type of “soft cultural governance” — where culture is preserved not by force, but through understanding, consultation, and ethical codes. The committee has played a key role in preventing sectarian violence by establishing a link between scholars and the administration during sensitive times such as Muharram. Its four annual meetings and district-level reconciliation visits have proven effective in promoting cultural harmony. But there are also practical difficulties: the committee's recommendations have often been ignored under political or religious pressure, and its presence in some areas is weak. For the future, it is essential that the committee be given more powers, resources, and public support — so that it can move beyond being a mere consultative forum to a practical agenda for cultural peace.

Religious Events

The religious events of the Punjab Auqaf Department — such as the National Naat Festival, Seerat Conferences, Qiraat Conferences, Sufi Festivals and the International Sufism Conference — are manifestations of the living, public and artistic experience of Islamic civilization and culture. Civilization lives through celebration, gathering, art and emotional participation. When a Naat is recited, a Sama' gathering is held, a conference on Sufism is held or a calligraphy exhibition is held — then civilization becomes a “living act” in which the public participates, feels it and connects it with their identity.

These events are “collective and artistic expressions of intangible cultural heritage”. Their nature is similar to “cultural practice” — that is, they are not just events, but a means of making civilization dynamic, popular and transmitted from generation to generation. Events such as “Sawt-e-Sarmadi”, “Kozagiri Exhibition”, or “Majlis Dervish” in the Sufi Festival bring culture to life on a sensory, artistic and spiritual level.

Through these events, the Auqaf Department has not only organized religious sentiments, but also made cultural heritage a part of public space, fine arts, and international academic dialogue. Events like the International Sufism Conference introduced Pakistan's Sufi heritage to the world, while the Sufi Festival connected the younger generation with culture.

The government should promote these events as “cultural movements” instead of “traditional events” — where young artists, researchers, and international scholars are involved, their documentation is prepared on digital platforms, and they are made part of the “world cultural heritage” by partnering with organizations like **UNESCO**.

The Department of Auqaf and Religious Affairs Punjab is not just a government department, but one of the most important institutions in Pakistan that is responsible for the preservation and promotion of Islamic civilization, culture, spirituality, and historical heritage. Established in 1960, the department is not limited to the maintenance of mosques or shrines alone — it is running a complete system of thought, education, research and cultural management. It manages 537 historic mosques, 400 Sufi shrines, 75 religious schools and several research institutions such as the Ulema Academy, Markaz Maarif Auliya, and Punjab Quran Board. The department not only repairs historical buildings but also protects the sacred relics of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his companions. These relics have been a part of the faith, love and cultural identity of Muslims for centuries. In addition, the Department of Endowments has also played an important role in the academic world — such as publishing research materials on the teachings of Sufis, the philosophy of Sufism, and the biography of the Prophet (PBUH) through the “Majla Maarif Auliya”, which has also been recognized by the Higher Education Commission. Through the establishment of the Muttahida Ulema Board and the Ittehad-e-Muslimeen Committee for sectarian harmony, the formation of the Punjab Quran Board to standardize the publication of the Holy Quran, and the organization of Sufi festivals and international conferences, this department is playing a positive role not only on the religious but also on the social, cultural and civilized levels. There are certainly difficulties — such as shortage of resources, administrative complications, and lack of participation — but despite this, the Punjab Auqaf Department is a unique institution that is successfully working to keep Islamic civilization alive at the state level, adapt it to modern requirements, and pass it on to the new generation. It is not just the guardian of buildings, but the custodian of the soul of a civilization.