

# Ajmer Sharif (Khwaja Gharib Nawaz) Dargah and Urs

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**Source:** *PIB & The Hindu*

The 808th Urs (death anniversary) of Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti observed on March 1st, 2020.

## About Urs

- Many pilgrims including from Pakistan visit the Ajmer and offer chadars (sacred clothes) at the dargah during Urs
- Urs began on 17 February and will continue until 6 March.

## About Khwaja Gharib Nawaz Dargah

- It is a **Sufi shrine (dargah) of the revered Sufi saint, Moinuddin Chishti**, located at Ajmer, Rajasthan, India.
- The shrine has **Chisti's grave (Maqbara)**
- **Constructed with white marble, it has 11 arches and a Persian inscription running through the full length of the building.**
- It has a marble dome and the actual tomb inside is surrounded by a silver platform.
- The structure was expanded as local and national rulers came to pray here. In 1332, the Sultan of Delhi (Tughluq dynasty) Mohammad Bin Tughluq constructed a dargah (a commemoration structure constructed around the tomb of Muslim saints, where people from all religions come to pray and ask for favours) and it grew in popularity and size over the years.
- The tomb attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims every year on the death anniversary of the saint
- People from every religion, caste, creed come here and

offer a traditional “chadar” to seek blessings of this Sufi saint

- The structure was subsequently expanded by a number of rulers including many saints.

### **Construction and additions to the Dargah**

- The original dargah was made of wood, Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence mentioned in their work Sufi Martyrs of Love. A stone canopy was built over it later.
- The first concrete evidence of construction in the dargah complex is the cupola of the shrine that was embellished in 1532, as indicated in an inscription written in golden letters in the northern wall of the tomb. This is the beautiful dome we see today also.
- In keeping with Indo-Islamic architecture, **a lotus adorns the dome and a golden crown offered by Nawab Haider Ali Khan** of Rampur sits on top of it.
- Most of the additions made to the shrine were done during the **reign of Akbar**, by the emperor himself.
- **Akbar first visited the shrine in 1562** after he heard wandering minstrels singing the praise of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti as he was returning from a hunt.
- In **1568, Akbar offered a degah, or brass cauldron, for cooking of langar. This was ensconced at the entrance.**
- **Another cauldron was offered by Jahangir in 1614.** It is placed opposite the first cauldron. Both cauldrons are in use today.
- Devotees offer sacks of rice and wheat for the gruel that is cooked here. Only vegetarian food is cooked in this dargah.
- **Akbar gave instructions to build mosques and khanqahs in Ajmer in 1569. The Akbari mosque of red sandstone is probably a result of those orders.**
- An elegant **mosque was also built by Shah Jahan in 1637** and is to the west of the shrine, along with the Shah Jahani Darwaza.

## About Moinuddin Chishti

- Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishti occupies a prominent place amongst the spiritual healers of the world.
- Moinuddin Chishti was a sufi mystic saint and philosopher.
- Moinuddin Hasan Chishti was **born in Sijistan (modern-day Sistan) in Iran** in 1141-42 CE.
- After receiving **Khilafat at the age of 52 from Sheikh Usman Harawani**, he went on Hajj to Mecca and Medina. While he was praying in the Prophet's mosque in Medina, the Khwaja is said to have heard the Prophet telling him to go to Hindustan and to the city of Ajmer.
- At that time, he had no idea where Ajmer was. However, he proceeded via Baghdad and Herat to Lahore and then to Delhi and Ajmer.
- Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti started living and preaching in Ajmer.
- His instructive discourses, full of spiritual insights, soon drew the local populace as well as kings and nobles and peasants and the poor from far and wide.
- **The shrine has been visited by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Sher Shah Suri, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Dara Shukoh, Jahanara Begum and Aurangzeb, among many others.**