

The Sermon on the Mount and Punjabi Sufi Voices

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Abstract

This research paper explores parallels between Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and selected Punjabi Sufi poetry to illuminate them in a Punjabi context. These teachings share themes with Punjabi Sufi saints and poets, including poverty in spirit, heavenly treasures, meekness, purity of heart, returning good for evil, trusting God, undivided love, light of the world, the heavenly Father's care, holy pearls, suffering for righteousness, flaunting in charity, judging others, loving enemies, universal brotherhood, heartfelt seeking, daily bread, and grapes from thorn bushes.

Keywords: Sermon on the Mount, Beatitudes, Punjabi Sufi Poetry, Intertextuality, Christian-Muslim Dialogue

Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus Christ's renowned charter for Christian living, echoing throughout the canonical books of the New Testament, including both the apostolic epistles and the accounts of Jesus' life. Ancient Church history understood it as the foundational document for Christian ethics "the key to Christianity" and humanity's highest moral aspirations. Augustine named it the perfect standard of Christian life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was transformed by this Sermon, basing his influential, *The Cost of Discipleship* on it a book that profoundly shaped twentieth-century Christian thought. Mahatma Gandhi was deeply inspired by the Sermon on the Mount ("Beatitudes: Values to Be Fully Human, 2026"). He highlighted its practical significance in public affairs and drew from it to develop his Satyagraha philosophy of non-violence and non-resistance (Mathew, 2026). Civil rights leader John Lewis emphasized living by Jesus' Beatitudes for world peace, stating, "If humankind would only live by the words of Jesus in the Beatitudes, the world would finally be at peace with itself." Muslim perspectives on Gospel teachings vary widely. Popular narratives claim Jesus' teachings were altered (*tahrif*-تحريف) or superseded (*mansookh*-منسوخ), though few Muslims verify their teachers' claims about

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scriptural authenticity. Yet the Sermon challenges both Christians and non-Christians alike, remaining relevant across faiths today.

Sufism reveals profound engagement with Jesus. Muslim classical literature portrays him as healer, life-giver, and ascetic model for spiritual life. Javad Nurbakhsh observes that scarcely a Sufi poet fails to cite Jesus, viewing him as al-Insān al-Kāmil (the perfect human) and supreme spiritual master. From the 19th century, Western scholars termed *tasawwuf* (تصوف) “Sufism.” In Pakistan, Sufis (*awliya*, allies of Allah) remain revered patron saints whose poetry endures across generations.

Scholars note complex Christian-Muslim dynamics. Jamal Malik sees theological tensions but Salafi attempts to appropriate the Sermon; Safi Kaskas offers excellent Beatitudes reflections; most remarkably, Syed Ahmad Khan deeply influenced by Sufi thought-wrote this luminous commentary on Matthew 5: “This sermon of Honorable Messiah is called Sermon on the Mount. The admonition is totally full of light without any admixture from the darkness of proofs. It is utterly bright. It brings about a great effect in the spirit of the person. When the good-hearted reads this sermon one will encounter at that very moment the same bright light by which the heart will firmly believe that this is the effect of that same Holy Spirit which until then was contained in the words.”

Punjab, land of five rivers, connects spiritually to Jesus’ five wounds, sources of eternal life recalled during Holy Communion, especially Lent. Tradition holds St. Thomas brought Christianity to Taxila (52 CE) after doubting the resurrection: “Unless I see... the print of the nails” (John 20: 25; Phan, 2011, p. 9). Punjabi churches worldwide sing: “*Lahoo janaan vichon wag ke aaya des hamare.*” [Trans. Blood from those wounds reached our land Punjab].

This intertextual study examines Sermon on the Mount parallels in Punjabi Sufi poetry by Baba Farid (1173-1266); Shah Hussain (1538-1599); Sultan Bahu (1628-1691); Bulleh Shah (1680-1757); Waris Shah (1722-1798); and Mian Muhammad Bakhsh (1830-1907). This study traces intertextual relationships verbal echoes, thematic resonances, and theological motifs between the Sermon on the Mount and Punjabi Sufi poetry, without claiming direct dependence or theological equivalence. Intertextuality examines how texts influence one another through allusions, echoes, and shared motifs, where later works resonate with or reinterpret earlier ones. This study applies it to trace connections between the Sermon on the

Mount and Punjabi Sufi poetry. This study will benefit the 154.5 million Punjabi speakers worldwide, particularly Muslims and Christians, and Sikhs and Hindus in general (Ali et al., 2024).

Significance of this Work

Sectarian divisions have emerged as a significant characteristic of contemporary Pakistan, where tensions continue not only between the predominantly Sunni population and the approximately 25% Shia community, but also within Sunni communities themselves, including Barelvi, Deobandi, and Ahl-e-Hadith groups. The state backing along with Saudi influence for reform-oriented Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith trends has accelerated the marginalization of Sufi-oriented or “popular” Islamic practices. This transformation is evident in the growing authority of Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith adherents over Barelvi mosques, with more than a hundred such cases reported in Karachi alone (Talbot, 2015). Since 2005, violent attacks on Sufi shrines and saints have intensified, reflecting the growing intolerance Frembgen describes as an ideological rejection of Sufism by hard-line Islamist groups (Made for Minds, 2013). Despite Sufism’s historic role in promoting peace and interreligious harmony, Barelvi extremism has recently emerged as a serious threat (Dawn News, 2024). Unfortunately, a powerful Barelvi fraction, (Syed, 2021) has led violent attacks on Christian neighborhoods, burning churches and homes in incidents such as Jaranwala (August 2023) and Sargodha (May 2024). These acts, often justified under blasphemy claims, endanger Pakistan’s religious minorities (Bitter Winter, 2024).

Against this backdrop, this study proposes an intertextual exploration between Punjabi Sufi poetry and the Sermon on the Mount. By uncovering their shared ethical and spiritual values, it seeks to open new avenues for interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding of particular value to students of intertextuality and interfaith studies. This study will be a great asset to the 154.5 million Punjabi speaking audience scattered around the globe particularly Muslims and Christians and in general Sikhs and Hindus as well.

Now let us discuss a few major themes of the Sermon on the Mount, tracing their intertextual echoes through select Punjabi verses by the Sufi saints of Punjab.

Poverty in Spirit

Jesus proclaims, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3). This Beatitude calls for inner emptiness and openness to divine

grace, not material poverty. “The Beatitudes are... secrets to Jesus' heart itself,” revealing kingdom richness through transformation. Jesus embodied this, emptying Himself as a servant (Phil 2:7).

Farid captures this:

Mat hondee hoey Ayaanaa, taan hondey hoey nataanaa,

Unhondey aap wandaey, ko eysaa bhagat sadaaey (Ahmad, 2004, p. 19).

[Though wise, claims none; though powerful, acts powerless; gives all away—true saint.]

Farid's bhagat (a saint or a religious devotee) mirrors Jesus' childlike humility (Mt 18:4): chosen zuhd (detachment), renouncing arrogance for God's will.

Heavenly Treasures

Jesus instructs: “Do not store up treasures on earth... but treasures in heaven... for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt. 6:19-21). Earthly wealth fades; heavenly treasure endures through loving the needy: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for me” (Mt. 25:40). Paul affirms the unseen is eternal (2 Cor. 4:18).

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh warns:

Danishmandaan da kaam naaheen dunyaa tey dil laana,

Is wohttee lakh khaawand keetey, jo keta so khaana.

[The wise shun worldly love; this treacherous bride devours all].

Jesus, Paul, and Bakhsh agree: true wisdom seeks eternal heavenly treasure over fleeting earthly glamour.

Meekness

Jesus declares, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Mt. 5:5). Meekness is self-denial, putting God first and rejecting arrogance, not self-punishment. It promises kingdom inheritance through humility.

Farid teaches:

Meyn noon munj kar Nikki Ker K Kut,

Bharey Khazane Rabb de jo Bhaway so lut.

[Crush your ego completely; only then access God's treasures].

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh warns:

Uchaa Naan Rakhaaya jis nay chullhey de wich saryaa,

Neevaan ho ke langh Mohammad langh jaaeyn gaa araya.

[The proud burn in fire; humble Muhammad passes through eternal life].

Jesus exemplified this by serving others (Lk. 22:27). Farid's ego-crushing and Bakhsh's humility echo Jesus' call: true meekness unlocks heavenly reward.

Purity of Heart

Jesus teaches, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt. 5:8). Only those free from worldly desires encounter divine presence through inner cleansing.

Sultan Bahu affirms:

Rab onhaan nu milda Bahu

nitaan jinhaan achiyaan hu (Folk Punjab, n.d.)

[O Bahu! Only those encounter with God].

Who have pure intentions of the heart

Farid adds:

Fareeda dukh sukh iku kar

Dil thien laa vikaar

Alla bhulaave so bhala

Taan labhi darbar

[Farid, look upon pleasure and pain as the same; eradicate corruption from your heart.

Whatever pleases the Lord God is good; understand this, and you will reach his court] (Folk Punjab, n.d.).

Both Sufis echo Jesus: purity enables divine vision, blessing the spiritually transformed.

Returning Good for Evil

Jesus commands, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you" (Mt 5:44). He rejects retaliation: "Do not resist an evil person... turn the other cheek" (Mt 5:39). Paul echoes, "Overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

Farid teaches:

Fareeda bure da bhala kar

Gussa mann na handaai

Dehi rog na lag ee

Palle sabh kujh paai.

[Farid! Return good for the evil you receive, don't drive (your) heart with anger. So that later your body may not suffer pain, and you could achieve everything] (Ahmad, 2004).

Farid's wisdom aligns with Jesus: nonviolence heals the heart and brings divine reward, leaving justice to God.

Trusting God

Jesus urges complete trust in God's provision: "Look at the birds of the air... your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt. 6:26-34). Worry reveals little faith; God as Father knows and meets every need. Sultan Bahu warns: ["Any moment you are negligent in remembrance of God is a moment spent in denial of God"] (Sufi Poetry, 2024). Constant watchfulness (Lk. 21:36) counters distrust.

Bulleh Shah illustrates:

Vaikh bandeyya / Asman te udde panchi

Vaikh te Sahee ki karde ne

Na O' karde rizq zakheera / Na O' bhuke marde ne

Kaddi kisse ne urday panchi / bhukke marde vaikh ne?

banday hi karde rizq zakheera / banday hi bhukke marde ne...(Sufi.com, 2018).

["See, O Humans / The birds flying high in the skies / Just see what they do / Neither do they hoard their food / Nor do they starving die / Has anyone ever seen / Birds dying of hunger? / Its humans who hoard / And humans who of hunger die"].

Jesus, Bahu, and Bulleh Shah converge: birds thrive without hoarding; humans suffer from faithless worry. Trust God's daily care over tomorrow's fears.

A Divided Love

Jesus teaches that a true disciple cannot be double-hearted: "No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt 6:24). Here, mammon (an Aramaic term) refers to wealth or material riches; Jesus contrasts wholehearted love for God with attachment to money, status, and worldly desire. A believer may live in the world, but cannot let the world become a rival master to God.

Waris Shah pictures this divided love through the image of two suitors:

Dunya tay O sukh nai panda jahira do ghran da sanjha

Iko pasa rakh le ni Heeray, Ya khairray Ya Ranjha!

[One cannot find comfort if depends upon two lovers O Heer! [Beloved] You must choose between Ranja [lover] or Khairay [rival]

In this verse, Ranjha symbolizes the true Beloved, while Khaira stands for the deceptive attractions of the world. Just as Heer must choose one lover, so the believer must choose undivided loyalty to God rather than trying to love both God and the “mammon” of this age.

Light of the World

Jesus calls his followers “the light of the world”: “A city set on a hill cannot be hidden... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:14-16). This light banishes ignorance, sin, and despair, reflecting Jesus Himself: “I am the light of the world” (Jn 8:12). Believers illuminate creation through good deeds, bringing hope and life to a darkened world.

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh prays:

Baal chiragh ishq da mera roshan kar de seena

Dil de deeve di rushnai jave wich zameena (Folk.Punjab, 2024).

[O God! Kindle the lamp of Ishq (true love) And enlighten my heart,
Let the light of my heart spread all over the earth] (Pakistan Web, 2024).

Bakhsh seeks ishq (Sufi divine love for Allah) to radiate from his heart across the earth, paralleling Jesus’ command for visible good works. According to Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, “the only way we could know the Creator is through true love and this true love can only be found in the heart of a true believer”. John affirms this universal truth: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (1-Jn 4:7-8). Bakhsh’s prayer thus manifests Jesus’ teaching: divine love, kindled within, shines outwardly to glorify the Creator through compassionate deeds.

The Care of the Heavenly Father

Jesus assures believers of God’s intimate care: “Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him” (Mt 6:8). The Heavenly Father foreknows and provides for His children's needs without prompting.

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh marvels at this providence:

Manghey bahjo deyen Muradhan, bey andaz shumaran

Jo ahsaan meray tey kitey, dam dam shukar ghuzaran

[Without being asked, You fulfill longings beyond measure and number. For the kindness You have shown me, I give thanks with every breath].

Bakhsh celebrates God's unsolicited generosity countless blessings flowing without request. This evokes constant gratitude ("*dam dam shukar*"), mirroring Jesus' call to trust divine care. Yet many receive daily provisions unaware, missing opportunities for thankful living, humility, and generosity toward others in need. Both texts reveal a God who knows and gives before we ask, deserving endless praise.

Holy Pearls

Jesus warns, "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces" (Mt 7:6). Holy wisdom, more precious than jewels (Prov 3:15-17), must be protected from those who cannot value it, those degraded to animal-like states who reject truth and attack the messenger. (True Riches Radio, 2024).

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh echoes this discernment:

Khasan Di Gal Aama Agay Nahi Munasib Karni

Mithee kheer paka Muhammad kutyaan aggey dharnee.

[Speaking wisdom to insincere people is like making kheer (pudding) only to offer it to dogs] (Sufi poetry, 2024).

Bakhsh's image captures Jesus' teaching: sharing wisdom with the spiritually blind is futile, like offering delicacies to dogs. Both urge discernment, wisdom, not withdrawal. Believers must prayerfully assess receptivity, using God-given insight to share truth effectively while guarding its sanctity.

Suffering for Righteousness

Jesus blesses those persecuted: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Mt. 5:10-12). Believers facing verbal and physical hostility for God's path find joy amid trials, following the prophets' example (Jn. 16:33). Jacques Philippe notes Jesus embodied all Beatitudes on Calvary: "absolutely poor, afflicted, meek... persecuted for justice." (Jacques, 2018, p. 11).

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh affirms:

Kandey sakht gulaban waaley doroon weykh na daryey,

Chobhaan jhaley rat chawayey jhol phuleen tadh bharye (Sufi Poetry, 2024).

[Don't fear the thorns of roses from a distance; without enduring pricks and bleeding, you cannot fill your pouch with flowers].

Bakhsh captures the Sufi truth: roses require thorns. Suffering paves the narrow path to divine fellowship (Mt. 7:13-14). Paul calls it his "thorn in the flesh" (2-Cor. 12:7-10); Job accepts both good and trouble. Jesus, prophets, apostles, and Bakhsh agree: righteous suffering yields eternal joy and reward.

Flaunting in Charity

Jesus warns against showy charity: "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them... But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly" (Mt. 6:1-4). Earnest giving flows quietly from love for God and His image-bearers, crushing no one's dignity. God honors secret acts with heavenly reward.

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh echoes:

Sabar kareen naumeed naa hoween lesayn ajar janaabon,

Mithey howan rehmaanee behtr kaar shataaboon.

[Be patient and never lose hope, for you will receive your reward from God. Deeds performed quietly with patience are divine and superior to those rushed in folly].

Bakhsh urges patient trust in divine reward over human praise. Both Jesus and the poet exalt hidden charity pure, dignified, eternally rewarded over flaunting that seeks earthly glory.

Judging Others

Jesus warns: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged... Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (Mt. 7:1-5). Judging others' intentions usurps God's role, destroys relationships, and invites reciprocal judgment. Hypocrites ignore their planks while fixating on others' specks.

Baba Farid advises:

Fareedaa, jay tu akal lateef

kaalay likh na laykh,

aapnahay Girayvaan mai,

sir neevaa kar daykh (Folk Punjab, 2024).

[Farid! If you possess good sense, do not stain your scroll with darkness. Bow your head, look inward, before taking the backbiter's role].

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh adds:

Enhnaa galan theen keeh labhdaa eyb kisey da karnaa,
Aapna aap sanbhaal Muhammad jo karna so bharnaa.

[What do we gain through backbiting? Save yourself, O Muhammad! For as you sow, so shall you reap] (Sufi Poetry, 2024).

Bulleh Shah concludes:

Buray banday nu main laban turya par bura na laba koi,
jad main andar jhati payee te main to bura na koi.

[I set out seeking wicked people, yet found not one. In the end, I looked within and saw none more wicked than myself].

All teach self-examination over condemnation: remove your log first, reap what you sow, look inward to avoid isolation.

Loving the Enemies

Jesus revolutionizes enmity: “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you... that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:44-48). He upends worldly retaliation, calling followers to mirror God’s impartial grace, sun and rain for all. Radical love marks divine family, embracing sinners under grace’s shawl, fostering universal brotherhood.

Baba Farid teaches nonviolence:

Farida! Jo teyn maaran mukiyaan tinhaan ha naa maareen ghum,
Apney ghar jayey peyr tinhaan de chum.

[Don’t return blow for blow, but kiss the feet of the one who strikes you and withdraw to your recess].

Farid continues:

Farida burey daa bhalaa kar, ghusaa man naa handhaa,
Deyhee rog naa lag ee, palley sabh kujh paa.

[Return good for evil; don’t drive your heart with anger, lest your body suffer and you lose all].

Jesus embodies this, washing Judas’ feet (Jn. 13:1-17). Pope Francis echoed it, washing migrants’ feet (Esteves, 2016). Jesus is referring to this act of servant-hood

not simply a re-enactment of footwashing but an act of true love that honors God and his creation as well. Jesus is truly seeking a community of footwashers who follow the true servant (Hauerwas & Wells, 2011).

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh warns:

Dushman maray tay khushi na kariye sajna wi mar jana...

Deegar tay din aaya Muhammad, tay oudak nu dub jana...

[Do not rejoice at your enemy's death, for friends perish too; death's day comes for all].

Their wisdom invites communities to transform curses to blessings, hatred to foot-kissing servant love, and enmity to shared mortality's respect perfecting God's impartial care.

Universal Brotherhood

Jesus unveils God's impartial grace: "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt. 5:45). Divine love transcends human divisions; believers imitate this as God's children (Eph. 5:1), rejecting caste and disparity. All humanity bears God's image (Gen. 1:27), forming one family.

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh illustrates:

Ik kaaley ik sabz kabootar ik chitey ban aaey,

Muddhoon ikko nasal Muhammad, aggoon rang wataaey.

[Pigeons black, green, or white were one originally; colors came later].

Baba Farid affirms:

Faridaa khalq meyn khalq, khalq wasey Rab maanh,

Mandaa kis noon aakhyyey, jaan tis bin koe naanh.

[Creator dwells in creation, creation in Creator, who calls anyone lowly, when all essence is His?]

Bulleh Shah seeks transcendence:

Chal Bulleya chal othe chalye jithe sare anne,

Na koi saadi zaat pachhaane, na koi saanu manne.

[O Bulleh Shah, go where all are blind—no one recognizes caste or honors us].

Sufi sages align with Jesus: unity beyond color, status, or image, love all as God's reflection, dissolving self in divine embrace.

Heartfelt Seeking

Jesus urges persistent prayer: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you... how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” (Mt. 7:7-11). God desires trust through effort. He knows our needs yet invites asking. This leads to the Golden Rule: “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them” (Mt. 7:12).

Mian Muhammad Bakhsh affirms:

Dhoondaan wala rehya na khal, dhondh keti jis sache,

Dhoond kareyndajo murr aaya, dhoondh ohdey ey kachee (Sufi Poetry, 2024).

[A true seeker will never remain empty-handed. His search was halfhearted if he returns empty-handed] (Sufism, 2009).

Both teach wholehearted pursuit unlocks divine gifts. Half measures fail; persistent faith receives heavenly treasures and transforms relationships.

Daily Bread

Jesus models daily dependence: “Give us today our daily bread” (Mt 6:11). Believers trust God amid life’s challenges for personal, family, and community needs. Human life exceeds food or shelter; sustained by God, they seek His provision ceaselessly.

Baba Farid teaches contentment:

Rukhi sukhi kha ke

Thanda pani pee

Dekh parai choparri

Na tarsaaen gee (Folk Punjab, 2024).

[Eat dry bread, drink cold water. Farid, seeing others’ buttered bread, do not envy].

Both exalt trust without greed: daily miracles suffice; thankful hearts find satisfaction in God's humble gifts, free from coveting others’ excess.

Grapes from thorn bushes

Jesus Says: You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them” (Matt. 7:16-20 NKJV).

Actions speaks louder than words. These verses serve as an alarm regarding the claims about false prophets. The fruits here represent outcomes of a person's faith, actions and his choices. There are some trees which look identical but when they produce fruit then they are recognized fully. St. Thomas Aquinas, building on St. Augustine, highlighted the connection between the Beatitudes and the seven gifts of the Spirit" (Jacques, 2028, p.13). Mentioned in Galatians 5: 22-24, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their self with its passions and desires." (Bible reference, 2024). These attributes or fruits of the spirit indicates the character of a believer and external obedience who is not a hearer of the word but a follower of the word.

Fraid says:

Farida! Lorey dakh bajoryaan, Kikar Beejey Jat

Handhey Unn Kataindaa, Pedhaa Lorey pat

[Farid the *Jat* (farmer) wants to eat grapes but plants the *Kikar* (Acacia tree). He spins wool but wishes to wear silk] (Ahmad, 2004, p. 46).

Farid says that a farmer cannot collect grapes from acacia tree similarly it is not possible for a man to do evil act in his life and then he expects a place in heaven. Farid through this example alarms his readers to sow good seeds through good deeds for God and his creation so that they can reap a harvest of God's grace, mercy and compassion.

The Sermon on the Mount concludes with the parable of two builders—one whose house stands firm on rock, the other whose collapses on sand (Mt. 7:24–27). This is a powerful exhortation to action, encouraging us to put the New Covenant into practice rather than just being content with saying "Lord, Lord", therefore, doing the desire of the heavenly Father who is in heaven will put the believers on the solid rock.

Conclusion

Punjabi Sufi poetry shows striking parallels with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount teachings through shared symbols, metaphors, and meanings. Reading them together illuminates the deeper, contextual, and culturally resonant layers of Christ's message. This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach to the Sermon on the Mount, viewed through Punjabi Sufi philosophy and poetry. It explores shared spiritual principles, parallels, convergences, and differences between Jesus Christ's central teachings and

select Sufi verses. This study provides an opportunity to understand the two different mystical paths of Christianity and Islam and offers insights to explore common grounds between these spiritual traditions for dialogue to promote social cohesion for human flourishing. This study achieves its objectives by exploring the thematic connections between the Sermon on the Mount and Punjabi Sufi Poetry. It also initiates a deeper dialogue, engagements and a deeper inquiry for further exploration in this field of study among the scholars, theologians, spiritual seekers and interfaith practitioners from Muslim and Christian traditions. Conceivably, it may not be clear at that point that those Sufi poets have direct access to the text of the Gospel. This claim may not be substantiated but it seems that the Sufis have some connections with the teaching of Jesus, through various interactions of their teachers or great teachers in the Middle Eastern, Central Asian, South Asian and Western expressions of Christian thought embedded in asceticism, monastic life and practices (Thomas, pp. 19-38, 2003). Are the parallels in teachings of Jesus and Punjabi Sufis coincidental, or they have some interactions and relationships? The cumulative effects of these parallel themes carry some weight. However, we cannot say that this meeting points were completely impossible. The encounter of Punjabi Sufis with Christian sacred text is quite inevitable in the Indian Subcontinent. These Sufi poets demonstrated strong proficiency in Persian and Arabic, the former was an official language of the Mughal Empire and later was the language of the sacred text. Emperor Akbar also rendered many translations of various religious texts (Mukhtar, 2024, p. 138). The *Mir'at al-Quds* (Mirror of Holiness), Jerome Xavier's Persian life of Christ for Akbar, harmonizes Christian narrative with Islamic sensibilities through adapted miracles and theology. Its original manuscript resides at Lahore Museum; a copy is held by Bible Society, Anarkali, Lahore (Carvalho, 2012). Scholars frequently debate whether Abu 'l-Fazl produced a complete Persian Bible translation or merely rendered selected passages, as historical records remain inconclusive regarding the full extent of his work (Kuczkiewicz-Fraś, 2011, p.2). The presentation of printed materials from the Antwerp press in Belgium to Emperor Akbar by Jesuit missionaries underscores the transregional exchange of theological ideas in the late sixteenth century. It illustrates how Jesuits employed European print culture, particularly works produced by the Plantin Press in Antwerp, to engage the Mughal court in intellectual and interreligious dialogue (Bailey, 1998). Emperor Jahangir (1569-1627) also received a copy of the Persian Bible from Jesuits priests in 1609 (Ali, 2016, p.102). The great grandson of Emperor Akbar, Dara Shikoh (1615-1659), the crown Prince and a Sufi also had interreligious discourses with Christian priests (Dara Shikho, 2016).

The mystical interactions with Christianity in Indian Subcontinent are not limited only to Sufis but trace their connections with Bkhakti Movement as well that started in 7th Century to 8th Century India. There are very strong parallels between the teachings of the New Testament, Christian Sacraments and Kabir Panth and its practices. Kabir is an outstanding leader in Bkhakti Movement (Keay, 1931, pp. 169-176).

This interplay of coordination with the teaching of Jesus and Sufis poetry can be observed by a few themes presented in this current study. Sufi poetic narratives run parallel to Jesus' teachings, especially those in the Sermon on the Mount. This idea cannot be held that the Punjabi Sufis were ignorant of the Gospel text, as the Gospel was available in Indian Subcontinent in Persian and Arabic languages during Mughal Empire (Ali, 2016, p.102). Additionally, there were a number of Christian paintings produced and displayed with Christian texts on the walls of Mughal forts in India (The Heritage Lab, 2016). And the various strands of Sufi mystics have direct access to the Mughal Political order especially the *Naqshbandis* and *Chishtis* and to a lesser degree the Qadiris (Aslam, 2021, pp. 3-9).

The traces of Christianity goes much earlier than the arrival of the British in India. Christianity has ancient foot prints in the Indian Subcontinent and particularly in Punjab. The Christian history starts from the arrival of Saint Thomas in the Punjab, North Western and Southern parts of India in the first century, where he planted churches (Ullah, 2010, p. 16). At the time of Umayyad invasion by Muhammad Bin Qasim in Sindh, Baluchistan and Makran in 712 BCE there was a large number of Christians and other religious minority groups in Multan (*Keshap Puri*) (Tabassum & Javaid, 2019, pp. 125-138). Multan is called "*Madina-tul-Auliya*" (Madina of Saints) due to the presence of a large number of shrines and tombs in Multan. This city became home to great Sufi Saints and many of the Punjabi Sufi Saints have ancestral connections with this place. When Al-Beruni of Nainava travelled across India from 1017-1030 he reported a huge number of Christian presence and it was in 1017 near the invasion of Mahmood of Ghazanvi. Later, Shams ud-Din Iltutmish (r. 1211–1236) banned the foreign missionaries to India. Sultan Khilji allowed Christian missionaries to formally enter into visit India (Tabassum & Javaid, 2019, pp. 125-138).

There were Christians existing in India from various lands during Mughal Emperor Akbar's (1542-1605) rule (Urfa, 2021, p. 7). Later, Jesuits missionaries preached to Emperor Akbar and he allowed building the first church in Lahore (Ali,

2016, p. 74). Many Hindus and Muslims became Christians in King Akbar's era (Ali, 2016, p. 74). Later on, some of his predecessors allowed the missionaries to work in Lahore and a very small number of people publicly became Christian in Lahore Ullah, (2010, p.371). King Akbar facilitated the translation of the four Gospels in Persian in collaboration with Jerome Xavier who was a Jesuit priest. (New World Encyclopedia, 2016).

Prior to the arrival of Islam, there exist traces of Nestorian Christianity Baluchistan and Sindh (Urfa, 2021, pp. 6-7). The discovery of a huge marble Christian cross in Skardu located in the high mountain range of Kavardo in Baltistan sheds new light on the ancient existence of Christianity in this land that is now Pakistan (Missionary Sisters of St. Columban, 2020). This cross strengthen the evidence of the presence of Nestorian Christianity in Bactria (Keay, 1931, p.169) and modern day Northern Pakistan. This cross was found not far from Silk Road and it weighs three to four tons measuring six feet and seven inches in height and six feet and four inches in width (Barkat, 2024). There were strong Christian presence in Pre-Islamic Persia (Iran) from the early centuries of Christianity (Encyclopedia, Iranica, 2024). Iranian Christians migrated to India in the fourth century, as a result of sever persecution by the king (Urfa, 2021, p. 5). Persian culture and language has a great influence in all spheres of life in Pakistan a few Punjabi Sufi poets also composed poetry in Persian along with Punjabi.

Sufi saints in the Indian subcontinent frequently embraced syncretic approaches, weaving in local customs, languages, and cultural forms into their spiritual instruction. This fusion promoted cultural interchange and interfaith harmony across religious groups. Such traditions have mutually enriched one another via textual exchanges and lived practices.

This thematic analysis of intertwined threads and essence of Sermon on the Mount and Punjabi Sufi poetry suggests that there might has been some borrowing of ideas from the teachings of Jesus. But borrowing is not the main point discussed here. The present textual examination invites the adherents of these two streams of spirituality and knowledge for dialogue, a deeper study and understating of each other's sacred texts, cooperation for the service of humanity and good will. The life and teachings of Jesus and Punjabi Sufis advocates devotion to the divine, universal brotherhood, equality, love for all, compassion and empathy. The bitter seeds and weeds of hatred, negativity and doubts will further divide the fertile land of Punjab

but the seeds of love, quest for truth, understating and embracing one another with open hearts will unite this land.

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