

Takiya- Contribution to Spiritual Culture, Degradation & Revival.

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Etymology is not too relevant to my topic but it is worth mention that the word is used in quite different meanings in the three lexicons viz; Kashmiri, Urdu and Persian. In all these three languages it means either a pillow or a resting place of recluse where generally a spiritualist imparts spiritual training to his disciples and simultaneously showers blessings upon general devotees. Such places where saintly figures meditate after severance of social connections have remained dominant in Kashmir so many villages in the countryside are even by now identified with affix or suffix of Takiya. In spite our record is silent about its conception and role. Even the exhaustive description given by Sir Walter Lawrence in his Valley of Kashmir and the first and third volumes of Tariekh-i-Hassan wherein such mention was relevant too are silent. The first volume of Encyclopedia of Kashmirian contains entries about nine great Khanqahqas but no mention has been made as what does a Kanqah mean. Had such attempt been made there would have automatically crept in mention of the institution of Takiya as that is the initial form of Khanqah and final form in it or around it is the shrine of the saint, the founder of that prayer place. It is inferable from the situation that as the institution had corrupted in total degradation probably by the end of nineteenth century so the term was generally censored. Its degradation became proverbial for utter inaction, lethargy and parasitic nature of visitors to degraded Takiya. Kamil's this verse is speaking evidence.

Saine Lukh Takyan Andar Geeraan Madik,

Had not my legal knowledge come to my rescue I would hardly embark upon this theme though had personal association with these spiritual centers but not with the degraded Shode Takiya. The eminent jurists like Sir Ameer Ali, AAA Faizi, DF Mulla and others have in their commentaries on Waqf Law made sufficient references of Takiya even defining its evolution, aims and objects. Those discussions are not based on Muslim Jurisprudence, Fiqah but on court judgments in relation to the special influences on Muslims of the sub-continent. In this regard valuable and authoritative information is contained in Privy Council Full Bench Judgment reported in AIR 1938 Privy Council PP202-205. Let me quote the following excerpt from the judgment delivered by Sir Shadi Lal on his behalf and on behalf of Lord Thankerton and Lord Wright. It reads:

"A Takiya is a place where a Faqir or Dervish (a person who abjures world and becomes a humble servitor of God) resides before his pious life and teachings attract public notice and before disciples gather round him and a place is constructed for their lodgment. A Takiya is recognized by law as a religious institution and a grant and endowment to it is a valid Waqf."

In another judgment of Lahore High Court reported in AIR 1925 evolution of saint's grave into a shrine is discussed and from that cogent discussion it transpires that initially a pious man devoted to God and his creature abjures the social life, chooses a resting place either around a graveyard or an open place out of the locality and meditates there, sooner attracts public attention, people come to seek his succor; as efficacy in his prayers achieves fame the seekers of spiritual guidance throng around him, sooner a hut is constructed for him which in the meantime requires a humble abode- a sort of boarding house for neo initiates, Faqirs and dervishes. Necessarily

a kitchen (*Langer Khana*) also comes up. As eminence of the Dervish reaches to the charisma of sainthood the same Takiya turns into Khanqah. On his death the saint is buried in those precincts and the place develops into a Dargah (Shrine).

In this background the first question arises whether the Takiya in Kashmir bears similarity in its formation and purpose with that of the Takiya in the sub-continent. Secondly has it developed under the Indian influence? Studying the emergence of Muslim society in Kashmir which started from 910 AD (when the ruler of Sind Umar Bin Abdullah deputed on the request of local petty Raja Mehrok, a scholar to translate Quran in local dialect) up to the end of 19th century India left no influence worth mention upon Kashmir Muslim. It was the Central Asian influence that devised the spiritual life of Kashmiri Mussalman. Only one instance is sufficient. From the start of twelfth century it was Chisti spiritual code that dominated the sub-continent but that clan was introduced here by the end of seventeenth century by Radho Mohammad Chisti. Therefore I infer that the institution of Takiya here in Kashmir did not develop under Indian influence. In 14th century every nook and corner of Kashmir witnessed parallel two streams of spirituality. On the one side Syed saints spread a disciplined network of preaching centers and on the other Reshi Dervishes occupied caves or open spaces under Chinar or other sprawling trees or by the side of water bodies or in thick jungles. Both had one and the same manifesto but with thin difference of particular strains. I have no evidence, even remote to claim that either the hermitages of Reshis or meditation centers of Syed saints had received nomenclature of Takiya but assert that the interaction of these two parallel centers gave rise to a common type of resting place for local Faqirs and Dervishes who were not Reshies and nor were strictly local peers. Their meditation centers and schools of spiritual guidance were called Takiya. This particular institution might have started emergence some time during later

period of Shahmiri rule or by the start of Chak Rule. Reshiyat too had then evolved into a sort of hermitage as they too suffered for political unrest. We cannot attribute any political manifesto to Reshi Movement but nonetheless its total involvement with public works gained popularity for them that attracted intrigues from exploiters. We have reports about some later Dervishes who had received initial training from outside Kashmir in neighboring Punjab so such Faqirs borrowed the name there from or it too had come from Central Asian country. Dr. Riaz in his historic work on Syed Ali Hamdani in Persian book titled: 'Shah Hamdan' discusses on the basis of research conducted by Dr. Ali Asghar Hikmat that Alvi Domes (gunbadi Alvi) had special spiritual attraction for Alvi tribe where they used to meditate in isolation and would impart training to seekers. It is an admitted fact that Kashmir celestial culture is greatly influenced by that sect of spiritualists so they in Kashmir changed the architectural design and instead built wooden sheds for their mission. Those wooden structures later evolved as Takiyas of Faqirs. It is so inferred from the architect of Khanqahas built in Kashmir which are all exclusively wooden. The pivotal question arises about its functioning, import and purpose. The reply to that question meets our theme.

As said the institution has been censored by our predecessors so the reply shall be derived from my autobiographical account. For last six decades from my early childhood I have visited specified type of Takiyas and have witnessed minutely the working of Shode Takiya too. Thus I have come across three types of this institution.

From Shahr Khas pilgrims would on foot traverse the twenty-two mile distance up to the shrine of Tsarari Sharief with utmost reverence. Part of the journey was tough hilly tract above Nagam. In this journey there were three main halting\resting places and all the three were Takiyas. The first was the Takiya of Faqir "Lal

Shah". On that site situates today the bus stand of posh colony of Lal Nagar. The Faqir had probably died before my birth or during my early childhood but the Takiya was run by his woman disciple Aze Feqraani. As I recollect she had no spirituality but she would serve those pilgrims who would stop for rest there. Generally in early morning she would bring pitchers of water from a distance which she would keep properly covered under lids upon the wooden shelves fixed with standing three sprawling Chinars there. The general travelers would quench thirst there and proceed ahead. Many pilgrims from the City would carry sugar, tea and breads with them and would seek preparation of Qahwa there in her Takiya. In return meager offerings would be paid which met expenditure of the abode. During unfair season or for tedious nature of journey the pilgrims who would on return reach late to the place would stay in the Takiya. Thus it had become a sort of Sarai for pilgrims of Tsarar.

The pilgrim would then by afternoon reach Nagam wherefrom he had to cover tough terrains of Hapat Naar, Rehkay and Kokarseen so would take rest at the foot of mound in a well decorated Takiya which is presently the shrine of that Takiyadar Dervesh. After climbing the Kokarseen at about sunset the pilgrim would invariably seek blessings from Nabir Mut who had a decorated wooden Takiya upon a big chunk of land adorned with almond trees near Nagar Khana the entry point into the town. Like Badam Wari at Srinagar the residents of that area would enjoy the festival of almond flowers in this neat and clean Takiya. The elite of area would visit the place but with offerings of sweet drinks and Kulchas but under the density of trees the spoiled youth would play rummy with lesser or no stakes. The Takiyadar Nabir Mut was an effective tall and robust Faqir dresses in neat and clean gown stitched of rags, had big rod usually with him and had pet ram which died natural death at too advanced age and was given formal burial.

At the gate of Takiya standing by the side of the semi-sane dervish the then Dy. P.M, the late Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad received the last traditional Khanqashi procession and led that to the Shrine as was routine. It was in mid fifties that the Dervish died. Gradually that beautiful spot fell in dilapidation and finally to general encroachment. He had no recruits for spiritual training and I do not know whether he had gained any spiritual eminence but his usual quote 'that sooner from my Takiya to the Takiya of Noor Din Wali there will be a ruin.' That two Kilometer space was really a burnt deserted ruin in May 1995.

The real and dominant spiritual abode was Takiya of Shalimar. It was culmination of that institution though the City was dotted with good number of degraded Takiyas of Charas addicts. One such center formed close locale to the first ever Reading Room which mothered the J&K struggle against aristocracy. Before we introduce the real purport of this spiritual institution through Shalimar Takiya and few other similar ones it is proper to introduce readers to its polluted form. It is reasonably inferable from circumstantial evidence that under the pangs of severe misrule and oppression during Pathan, Sikh and Dogra rulers not only temporal life of Kashmiri fell scared and sandwiched but even the spirit also felt suffocated. That religious suffocation reached its zenith with the start of Sikh Rule which committed worst sacrilege even with the high ranking spiritual centers like the Mosque of Shah Hamadan and the Shahi Mosque; though the former was saved from the ordered destruction but the later was desecrated. The wave of desecration could not spare Takiya so the frustrated spiritualist resorted to perfect hermitage. To keep his feelings dead he found momentary relief in drowsiness so resorted to Charas. Hence the Huqa became inalienable asset of the degraded Takiya. Instead of spiritual disciple his attendant picked up the art of decoration of Huqa, developed special knack to grow locally leaves of tobacco,

became expert in making the paste of dry tobacco leaves, learnt to fill the pasted material in the Chillum and knew the tact to insert inside the layers of the paste the similarly prepared tablet of Charas extract known as Atter. Gradually the spiritual character vanished with smoke of Atter and the keeper of Takiya turned into Kakri who would from that place like the keeper of tavern, the Saqi of Persian Poets serve with Charas the prodigals from higher middle class whose resources had squeezed terribly but had to maintain a false economic status. That spoiled youth resorted to Takiya as they could hardly afford solace from the beauty of Tashwan. I have seen a good number of Kakries who would appear in every important fare at Pakharpora, Aish Muqam, Bejbhara, Khan Sahib, Zakora etc. They would carry well decorated Huqa and were well dressed and turbaned. Later on during Dogra period opium too entered into Takiya and the attendant who administered the doses of that drug was known as Madik. A dynasty under that surname lived in between Mohallas of Tashwan and Qalamdan Pora. It is the locality where Kamil spent his youth so such Takiya provided material to his verse supra.

Let us revert from darkness to the light. The Takiya at Shalimar not only guided the derailed majority from the nadir of vice to the path of virtue by imbibing the stress upon Nimaz on every made the fear of Almighty the guiding principal of the society. It simultaneously contributed spiritual mandate to the struggle against oppression and flourished the tradition of mystic poetry. An eminent jurist of the State the late Ghulam Hassan Nehvi has in the biography of Syed Mirak Shazh Kashani given precise account of the emergence of this Takiya. Syed Fazal-lu-lah Gurdezi lived in Lahore during the reign of Mharaja Ranjit Singh who too used to pay respects at his place of hermitage. Two devotees from Kashmir also visited frequently who were Abdul Qadir and Amir Din. The saint gazed upon Qadir and during ecstasy murmured: 'what a dazzling

gem'; Qadir fell at his feet, left his worldly engagements and opted to serve his master. He was called by his master 'as Lal-the gem so was known only by that name. After receiving spiritual authority (Irshad) Lal Sahib came to Kashmir but did not go to his home. Instead he occupied an open space at Shalimar which sooner evolved into a Takiya, a center of spirituality. He appointed as his successor one Abdul Qadoos who led the Takiya to widespread fame. Syed Mirak Sahib took birth during the Khilafat of Qadoos and when he was only sixteen the master of Qadoos viz; Lal Sahib informed spiritually the former that he had to deliver the trusted office to that budding youth. Qadoos went to the house of Meerak in the heart of City and begged the boy from his elder brother GM Naqash. After the death of Qadoos, Kashani was crowned as the keeper of Takiya in 1342 AH when he was twenty seven year old. He created a history of warrior spiritualist during his fifty year active life of the keeper of that Takiya. He developed that place into a resort of beauty for solace of sensitive mind. A Khanqah also was built and on his death on 24th Shawal 1391 he was buried in the same precinct which now is a shrine of reverence.

It has been hinted that he guided hundreds to pious life and was moral sanction behind our national struggle. I will only quote one historical event which conveys volumes about his popularity as the master of spiritual situation. Unfortunate to usual misguidance our all agitation boiled down into Hungamas. Kashmir history cannot produce parallel to the discipline with which sacred agitation for recovery of the Holy Relic was conducted. But it too yielded negative dividends as the leaders of the movement facilitated for petty interests the imposition of such governance which demolished all the traces of Special Status. As magistrate on duty for that tiresome period I have witnessed its all phases. Critical stage was the identification of the recovered asset. The situation was too tense; to our ill luck we have always been sandwiched in

between hawks and doves. Hawks, the Home Secretary Vishnu Sahay ICS and the head of IB Mr. Malik were bent upon to wash the precincts of Hazratbal with innocent blood and the Doves Late Lal Bahadur Shastri and Maulana Masoodi were too apprehensively eager to avoid the blood bath. Locally too emotional guys had merged the eminence of the spiritual center with the politics of unachievable destination. Those elements wished that the seers and saints called for identification should create doubt. As the Magistrate on duty I stood in between shivering ADM Mirza Saif-ud- Din Ahmad and the late Malik Ghulam Rasool IPS, the DIGP. All the seers and scholars pinned their hopes in the efficacy of the guidance of Meerak Sahib who said in low voice: "In my sinful life I have never dared to gaze upon the glass case containing this Holy Treasure but the impact of the vision of its case would leave upon my mind the similar impact which I receive at the moment; Insha Allah must be the same"

One of my class fellows in Tsarar-i-Sharief High School, grandson of poet Mustafa Shah Mr. Gyas-ud-Din was not well with his studies but somehow pulled on up to 9th class. His family profession was Pir Mureedi but he could not make up with that job too and even failed in Oriental studies so frustrated went to the Takiya of Meerak Sahib who bestowed all his pleasures specially upon him and directed him to have meditation in isolation. Perfectly coming out from trial he was allowed to recruit independently the seekers of Truth which he did from his abode at Rupawan Village from 1956. His influence as master guide spread widely and even modern educated and religious scholars were attracted. By eighties he was eager to establish a Takiya which would carry the tradition on the same design as devised at Shalimar. In 1993 a family of his devotees gifted to him for Takiya five Kanals of land in village Baba Har near Pulwama town. I accompanied him to that place during the zenith of militancy and the land was all mud but he constructed a hut there, left his wife and children and sooner attracted both

rustic and elite. The hutment was reconstructed in a glass house, a grand mosque, boarding house for Faqirs and a running kitchen which fed with simple Dal and Bata about hundred visitors a day. Pir Syed Gyas-ud-Din Bukhari simultaneously purchased land at Drusso for construction of Darul-Uloom. He had revived the Reshi tradition of recruiting of small girls, Tsate Kore and would give them spiritual training and on their puberty the Takiya would meet the simple expenses of their marriage and usually the groom too would be his recruited disciple. On his death on 19, Mrch 2009 the Takiya owned property worth corers of rupees which he has through his Will declared Waqf but his son has made that subject of litigation. The Takiya had such intellectual manifesto for the reason that the Pir Sahib R.A. had recruited scholars like Molvi Abdul Gani, Dr. Nazir Azad. Dr. Hayat, Abdur Rahim Rather, DFO Syedien and other eminent personalities as his disciples. Though he was not a poet but collected the scattered poetry of Mustafa Shah, compiled and published that. It is now known as Takiya Rehmatabad.

At Chakreshi Pora Bandipore Hazrat Kausar Afghani(RA) also meditated for about four decades in isolation but the place did not develop into a Takiya or Khanqah. He used to guide the seekers and allow them to remain part and parcel of social life. It is therefore that after his death in 1983 his disciple Molvi Azizullah would casually hold meditation sessions there. As his disciple he remained involved with his master but lived a busy social life as 'A' grade contractor and as a preacher.

At Tral the Late Sharief-ud-Din Naqashbandi succeeded a Takiyadar who had very little fame but in forties spiritually Shrief Sahib was directed to spread peace of mind among the seekers from that ruined center. That also had a lodging and boarding for the seekers and they would from their own offerings be fed with simple diet. That Takiya made one innovation by attaching with the mosque a library of religious books. He too attracted well educated

cadre who include my teacher Jinab Qari Mohammad Shafi and my class fellow at AMU Aligarh Mr. Mohammad Khalil. The former was crowned with Khilafat but lately he reverted to his abode at Saderable. Thus that Takiya has not carried with the tradition.

Other Takiyas of importance were those of Qadir Kral of Hirri Kupwara. Qadir Sahib had at his advanced age when I visited his hermitage lived a normal life though reports narrate that during his youth he lived as Majzoob which Lawrence translated as soothsayer. In my view neither the word soothsayer nor insane can convey the gamut of the word Majzoob.

Another Kral, Gaffar Sahib of Takiya Waterhell lived like an insane and like Sula Sahib of Badasgam did not recruit cadres. The both attained fame by solving worldly problems of visitors. Both of them used code phraseology which only permanent and regular visitors could interpret. Qadir Sahib had inherited a Takiya whereas Sula Sahib neither inherited nor created. Qadir Sahib became bone of contention between two bosom friends, my worthy teachers the late Mohammad Tahir Bukhari of Waterhell and the late Mohammad Abdullah Dev. The former used to dub in his Friday sermons the visitors to the Takiya of Kral as misguided agents of devil and on the other hand Dev along with his family would usually visit Takiya and would sing on harmonium to appease the otherwise abnormal Dervish. It is common gossip that Gaffar Sahib revolutionized the destiny of Dev and imposed blindness upon Bukhari. At times superstitions possess some convincing reason.

In case the Takiya Rehmat Abad at Baba Har is run according to the will of the founder it might carry ahead the real institution of Takiya with revolutionized dimensions. Otherwise measures of revival might require some time more or might be consigned to history.