

## **Takiya as a Cultural Institution with special reference to Takiya-e-Mirak Sahib.**

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Kashmir or Kasheer is also known as "*Pir Waer*" meaning Land of Reshis. By this title, it is self explanatory that Kashmir is an abode of saints, Sufis, Pirs, Faqirs and Reshis who have shunned the worldly ways and tread on a path of spirituality. Kashmir is a meeting ground of many religions and diverse faiths. Muslims, Pandits, Sikhs, Buddhists are have a claim to calling themselves Kashmiris. All religions exist peacefully here with people of every religion respecting the religions and beliefs of others.

If there is an Urs of any Muslims saint, it is not only observed by Muslims but by all the Kashmirs. Similarly *Mela Kheer Bhawani* a religious gathering of Pañdits attracts Muslims also. By this we can infer that common populace of Kashmir people does not hold a prejudice towards any religion and share a common spiritual ground. Sufis and saints form a shared commonality between all faiths and beliefs.

There have been many Saints, Sufis and Faqirs in Kashmir about which masses still have devotion without even knowing which religion they belonged to. So we can say that a Pir, a Faqir or a Reshi is important for everyone and is respected by everyone.

### ***Who is a Pir? or who is a Faqir?***

The simple answer to this question is "anyone who sacrifices everything in order to find the path of God". Usually these Faqirs wander from place to place, shun their homes and their comforts, go to far off places in order to search solitude and thereby to search for God. But when these Faqirs find a proper place where they are able to perform their religious practices in isolation without any



ones interference and this place becomes their permanent living place it is referred to as **Takiya**.

If we look for the synonyms of the term Takiya, we will come to know that the word Takiya has a number of connotations in different languages. Generally a Takiya refers to a cushion or support means a cushion.

While referring to word Takiya in Kashmiri, it means a permanent sitting place of Faqir which with passage of time develops into a full fledged institution imparting social services. Takiya once formed an integral part of Kashmiri culture as is evident by the fact that every place had its own Takiya and number of places are either prefixed or suffixed with the term Takiya e.g Takiya Lal sahib, Pandach Takiya, Takiya-e- Bahram Sahib etc. These takeriyas were sort of sitting places where a Faqir would take residence and then with time number of disciples would also follow. The Takiya would also at many times graduate to become a place for social gathering. However in maximum Takeriyas women were not allowed.

In old times there were some Takeriyas where people used to smoke Charas and these Takeriyas were referred to as **Shoda Takiya**. However in maximum Takeriyas people used to get knowledge beyond worldly affairs from the Faqir.

Takiya was taken care by the Takeriyadar or Sajjad-e-Nashin of Takiya. After death of Faqir, the second person who may or may not be identified by the Faqir was taken as Sajjad-e-Nashin, the successor.

One important aspect of Takiya is that it is not only meant for the people of only one religion but people from different religions can come to the Takkia irrespective of their caste or creed.

### **Takiya-e-Mirak sahib**

Takiya-e-Mirak sahib is situated at Shalimar Srinagar which is almost 13 Kms away from Lal Chowk-the city centre. The Takiya



was started by Lal sahib. Initially he started this Takiya at Umerhair Buchpora, near Soura and named it Takiya-e-Lal sahib. Then he started another Takiya named Takiya-e-Lal Sahib Kud Sahib which is situated at Chandpora, Harwan. Ultimately the main Takiya known as Takiya-e-Mirak sahib was set up by Lal Sahib at Shalimar.

The present Sajjad-e- Nashin or Takiyadar of this Takiya is Faqir Dilawar Sahib. This Takiya is one of the biggest Takiyas in Kashmir. Almost 60 people on permanent basis are residing in this Takiya.

During my research in this Takiya I saw that this Takiya acts as a big destitute home. I saw a number of mentally challenged people being taken care at this Takiya. Unfortunately in our society such people are not given any acceptance.

To my surprise I got to know that number of such mentally challenged people have become sane there without any medication and the medicine given to them was nothing other than love, affection and care.

**Takiya-e-Mirak** sahib has its own charitable trust which runs under chairmanship of Faqir Dilawar sahib named 'Syed Mirak Shah Trust'. The Trust provides the following services:-

1. It runs a high school, where number of students study free of cost.
2. It also runs a big Maktab or Darsghah in the premises of Takiya to provide religious education.
3. This Takiya has a big *langer* where almost 25 people are working as cooks. It provides food to hundreds of daily devotees. On daily basis almost 75 kgs of rice and 14-15 kgs of vegetables are cooked.
4. Takiya-e-Mirak Sahib has a big cattle shed, where there are 3 cows and 60 sheep.



The Takiya has almost 17 Kanals of land. It has a huge infrastructure which includes a big mosque, shrine, 50-60 rooms, a big cattle shed, 3-5 store rooms and a large *langer* khana.

Hundreds of people on daily basis visit this Takiya with the belief that this is a pious place and they will be blessed with the blessings and prayers of the Faqir. Irrespective of religion, caste and creed people throng this place and present offerings which vary from Grains to bakery etc.

The Takkia is often surrounded by the fragrance of sweet smelling essence of *Kahwa* boiling in the traditional Samovar. Bakery served with it ranges from Varmul Bakirkhani to Pampori Sheermal (which people get as offerings).

Number of days are observed as Urs. 12<sup>th</sup> Rabi-ul-awal as Lal Sahibs day, 9<sup>th</sup> Ziqad as Kud Sahib's day, 24<sup>th</sup> Shawal as Mirak Sahib's day and 18<sup>th</sup> Jamiad-u-sani as Din Sahib's day.

At times there is a Sufi Mehfil, where different singers sing mesmerizing Sufi Songs. Number of people present during this Mehfil start Dhikr-e-illahi and get detached from this world.

On special occasions such as Eid, the Faqir gives clothes to the permanent members of Takiya and also gives them eidi. If any member has to visit home he is provided with the money as if a family member is going out for some work.

Usually on Sundays thousands of people come to visit this place. A number of people have started commercial practices also. On the entry point of Takiya, there is an incense stick seller who also sells photographs of various Faqirs, which people buy out of faith for prosperity. Number of *Masala wajni* come from adjacent areas to sell *masala*, which is enjoyed especially by the children who come with their parents and people also take this masala home as *tabaruk*.

Takiya as it has been maligned by some is not a refuge of drug addicts.