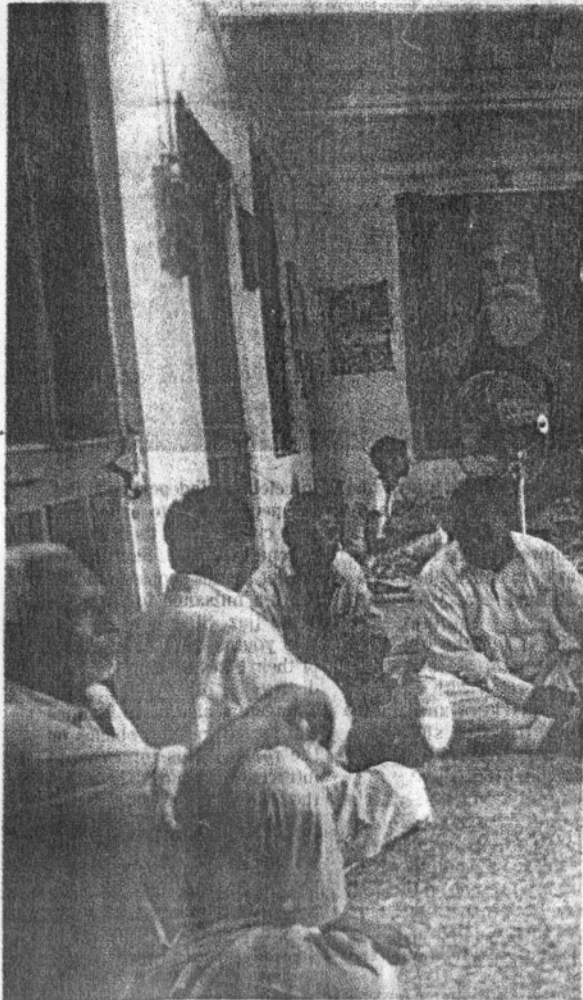


Out of city

As things change — for better, for worse, — the old gives way to the new. Among it the traditional takias of Lahore

By Suhail Akhter

Lahore News 11.2.08



Takias were once the places where late-comers once spent their nights after the gates of the city were closed as per routine to guard against the criminals and wild animals. They were used for holding social meetings, concerts and even wrestling bouts. Lahore had takias outside all its gates, beside other takias located in the city suburbs. A tall tree, spacious rooms and a

vast courtyard were permanent features of takias which were built in a simple style.

Proper security system at these takias was an attraction for the visiting traders to stay there. People used these takias as rest houses even during daytime.

In more recent times takias were used as community centres where senior citizens would spend their spare time. An occasional mushaira and

musical performance were among the activities that took place at these takias.

A few well-known takias like Goshala and Viamshala and a takia near Billian Wali Sarkar boasted of having hosted memorable wrestling competitions and as nurseries for wrestlers.

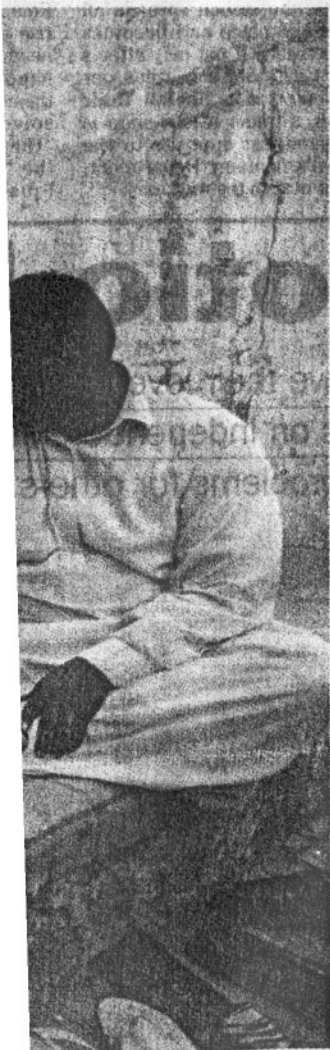
Some of the famous takias in Lahore were, Takia Sabir Shah (outside Raushnai Gate, Badshahi Mosque and Lahore

Fort); Takia Sher Ali and Takia Baalmeekiaan (outside Taxali Gate); Takia Qutab Shah and Takia Khirki Peer (behind the Mazar of Data Sahib); Takia Tajey Shah and Takia Meerasiaan (outside Mochi Gate on Chamberlain Road, Gowalmandi); Takia Laloo Saeen (outside Kashmiri Gate); Takia Jhangi (in Iqbal Park); Takia Sabz Peer (inside Taxali Gate in Shahi Mohallah) and Takia Raham Saeen, Takia

Viamshala, Takia Gowshala (outside Taxali Gate on Katcha Mohni Road).

Lack of public interest and indifference to the issue has hastened the erosion of these community centres. "A majority of old takias of Lahore are now history," says Munawar of Mochi Gate.

Takias being exclusive places, some of these may in the past have been used by groups of people for activities



Viamshala, Takia Gowshala (outside Taxali Gate on Katcha Mohni Road).

Lack of public interest and indifference to the issue has hastened the erosion of these community centres. "A majority of old takias of Lahore are now history," says Munawar of Mochi Gate.

Takias being exclusive places, some of these may in the past have been used by groups of people for activities

that could only be carried out away from public gaze. But with the increase in crime over the years, many among these have come to be regarded as serving only one purpose: that of a safe haven for criminals of all kinds. As these were public places, these takias could be much more easily grabbed by the qabza groups and gambling mafias. Plazas were built on their site — something

In more recent times takias were used as community centres where senior citizens would spend their spare time. An occasional mushaira and musical performance were among the activities that took place at these takias.

which couldn't have been achieved without help from the concerned government officials.

That these takias can return to Lahore in their original form seems impossible. But as they say, hope never dies and unreasonable, utterly unacceptable demands continue to be made. "The authorities should rebuild and wherever possible restore these social institutions of the city," says Iqbal Pervaiz.