

Independence Day Greetings to all our Readers

ॐ नमामि त्वां शारदा देवीं,
महाभागीं भगवतीं काश्मीर पुरवासिनीं,
विद्या दायिनीं रक्ष मां रक्ष माम् । नमामि त्वाम् ।

här-van

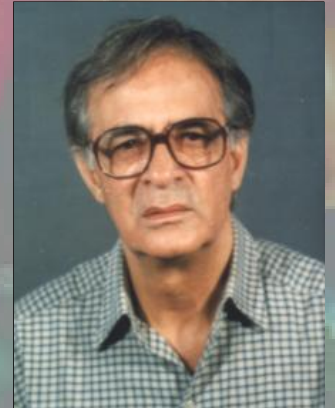
Monthly net-journal of 'Project Zaan'



हॉर-वन

‘प्रोजेक्ट ज्ञान’ की मासिक नेट-पत्रिका

वर्ष २ : अंक ८ ~ Vol 2 : No. 8
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Special Feature
Onkar Aima

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Late Onkar Aima****Contributions from:**

Onkar Aima (From the literary archives)
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Brij Nath Watal Betab
Capt. A.K.Misri
Chand Dhar
J.L.Manwati
Kapil Raina
M.K.Raina
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Rakesh Kapoor
Ravinder Ravi
Savitri Aima
Seema Mattoo
S.P.Kachru
Sunil Mattoo
T.N.Bhan
T.N.Dhar 'Kundan'

Editorial

Kundan

The First Milestone

It was on the Fifteenth August last year that we launched this project of the 'här-van'. We are proud to have reached the first milestone of completing one year of the issue of this net-magazine. This achievement has been possible by the active cooperation of our esteemed writers and valued readers. We are thankful to them and to those readers in particular who wrote to us their views and comments, as also to those who sent us their suggestions from time to time. Our readers would have observed that we have made a conscious effort to maintain a high degree of standard and stuck to our policy of including only original articles and poems in these issues. Even then we are aware that there is a lot of scope for improvement. We shall strive to touch newer heights of literary excellence and succeed in projecting to the readers at large the rich culture of Kashmir, several millennia old tradition and the vast scope of our sweet language, our mother tongue.

We have deliberately chosen to include contributions in all the three languages, Kashmiri, Hindi and English. We would have liked to include articles in Sanskrit as well so that the rich contribution of our great scholars is highlighted for the benefit of the younger generation. Our endeavour is to reach as vast a reading elite as possible and we know there is a sizeable section of our community that is still more comfortable with English and/or Hindi. May be in the not too distant a future our mother tongue is in use on a wider scale in the Standardized Devanagari script. At that time it may become more prudent to restrict our magazine to one language only. One thing is however clear that we shall continue to include only that material, which is in relation to Kashmir or Kashmiris. We are trying our best to steer clear of politics and controversial negative topics. We are also not in competition with other magazines and journals issued either in print or on the net. We are of the opinion that each organization and each team is doing a yeoman's service to the community by writing about its pluses and minuses, problems and possibilities. We in our small way are also contributing our mite. We feel that community service is a 'Yajna' (sacred fire) wherein every one of us has to offer his oblation or 'Ahuti.' The 'här-van' team has this Persian couplet of the great Persian poet Shamas Tabrez, as its guiding motto:

न शबम न शब परस्तम, कि हदीसे ख्वाब गोयम

चू रफीके आफताबम हमा ज़े आफताब गोयम

(I am neither the night nor a worshipper of the night that you should expect from me the tales of dreams. I am directly related to the Sun, whatever I

(Continued on Page 3)

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will say will be in relation to the Sun and the light.)

This issue is dedicated to the sacred memory of Late Shri Omkar Aima for he was a shining star of our community, a brilliant son of Kashmir, a talented actor, a thorough gentleman and above all a noble human being. He has left an indelible mark on various facets of our community. We thought it proper to pay homage to him, remember him and recollect his good deeds through the pages of this magazine and have earmarked a sizeable portion of this first issue of the second year to him. We are grateful to all those writers who knew him closely and intimately and were kind to write about him at our invitation. We know there would be many more writers and his friends who would have gladly written about him but due to paucity of time and lack of contact we could not reach everyone. Shri Aima left his mortal frame at his prime, when the community needed him and his services. We have only to say this to his departed soul, *'Bade shauq se sun raha tha zamana, tum hi so gaye dastan kehte kehte – People were all ears to what you had to say, with intense fondness; but alas! You yourself fell asleep while narrating the absorbing tale.'*



Editors' Note

We accept write-ups on any topic concerning Kashmir, Kashmiri language and Kashmiris, or a topic of common interest in Hindi, Kashmiri and English. The write-ups should be original and exclusive to '**här-van**', except for News, Views and Reviews. Kindly note that we do not intend to include the previously published material in '**här-van**' except in very special cases. Kindly e-mail your write-ups to us at:

editorharvan@yahoo.co.in

Readers may note that the views expressed in signed articles are not necessarily those of the
Project Zaan
or
'här-van'.

Editors' Mail

We have received good response from our readers on Dr. K.L.Chowdhury's write-up 'Of Bhagwans & Babs', some agreeing with his viewpoint, some dis-agreeing. All the responses are reproduced here. The fact that the arguments have been put forth in a cordial manner without losing tempers, proves our readers' maturity and openness to constructive discussion. Thanks.

- *Editor.*

bhatjl1@gmail.com

Respected Raina Sahib,
Thanks, thanks a lot for mailing me the July edition of 'här-van'. Thanks again for including my write-up titled 'Yogiraj Swami Nand Lal Ji Maharaj'. It also gave me an occasion to read the article of our learned author and physician Sh K.L. Chowdhry titled 'Of Bhagwaans and Babs'. The views expressed here are definitely the author's own but definitely liable to raise a tumult in the minds of numberless devotees of numerous Saints and Bhabas. I would only venture to add to the unlimited knowledge of Doctor Sahib that the basic spirit of religion and spirituality is based more on belief and less on logic and the magnificent edifice of Indian culture is simply strong with the strength of the same belief of the millions of India. SEDBUB was a great *grihasti* saint with unique attributes who did not like to make a show of his abilities but was essentially invested with high spiritual awakening that was simply felt by anyone whoever met him. And while writing the piece Doctor Sahib himself also displays a feeling of reverence for SEDBUB as he has had an occasion to treat his material body of some trouble and further regarding the comment of GUNWATI, the esteemed wife of SEDBUB, it is again the same lack of awakening which makes us all the victims of the glare of the false grandeur of this temporal world without any ultimate certainty.

With kind regards,

J.L.Bhat

Atlanta, USA

The editor 'här-van',
This has reference to a nice and thought provoking article by Dr KL Chowdhury 'OF

BHAGWANS AND BABS'. As we all know Dr Sahab is an intellectual who is a crusader and wants our community to think and act rationally. It is not unusual for an awakened soul to point out the deficiencies that have crept into our social structure which is primarily driven by our religious faith. Bhagwans and Babs have been an inseparable part of our social and religious ethos since the beginning of our society. The fact is that intellectuals who form a microscopic presence in any society expect these godmen to be intellectuals like them. Some of these Bhagwan like personalities may be intellectuals like the legendary saints/savants Abhinav Gupta, Lalleswary or the modern day Swami Lakshman Joo, but most of them are ordinary souls with some spiritual awakening. Kashmir is full of such personalities. That is why it is called *Reshwar*. These persons have guided our community from time to time in maintaining high moral and spiritual standards of life. In the post migration period when KP community was under great stress, these persons guided them by providing the necessary moral support and organizing community services. I am reminded of a conversation with a high ranking KP in USA who was reciting some Sanskrit prayers with wrong wordings. When I pointed it to him, his response was, "how does it matter so long as it generates *bhavna* in me." That sums up our faith in the Bhagwans and Babs. The bulk of any society, including KPs, are generally people who are bothered about their success in their day to day life, to whom these godmen provide easy way out. They have neither need, nor desire to look beyond. They will never know what are Doctor Sahabs feeling about these godmen because they hardly read these write ups. They live in their world and will continue to do so. Even this mighty upheaval of total uprootedness from their thousands year old habitat will not awaken them.

Piaray Raina

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Dear Editor,

I would like to thank Shri J L Bhat for his writeup on Sed Bub, Dr. K.L.Chowdhury for detailing his views on Bhagwans and Babs, and finally the editors of 'här-van' for inviting our views on the belief. Since the issue is very sensitive, I would

like to give my personal views, with an apology to those who may not agree with me.

After my marriage, I observed there was a photograph of an old person in Namaskar posture, alongside the photographs and images of other deities in the decently decorated Puja Room of my in-laws. I was told that it was the photograph of one Bub Saab and I need to pay my obeisance to him along with other deities daily as a routine. Assuming him to be some noble soul of the family who may have lived long back, I did not ask any questions. The person was worshipped and continues to be worshipped till date as a God by every member of our family. To enhance my knowledge, I was told by my parents (in-law) that Bub Saab was responsible for all that they had achieved in life and that he gave them whatever they asked for. There was no reason for me to question their faith. I started doing the same thing they had been doing, i.e. worshipping Bub Saab alongwith other gods. Some time later, at the instance of my mother (in-law), a photograph of Bub Saab adorned my room as well. With the passage of time, I accepted Bub Saab as one of the Gods and made it a point to touch his feet while leaving for my job.

It was only after reading the write-up by Shri J.L.Bhat that I came to know that Bub Saab was none other than Sed Bub. And I also came to know of the link between Bub Saab and my family. In fact, my mother (in-law) hailed from Hanjiwara. Her parents were very close to Bub Saab and that is why the tradition of worshipping him as a god continued in our household as well. Now I also carry the same belief and worship Bub Saab as god.

Well, I don't have a reason to approve or disprove the powers of Bub Saab, or for that matter, any of the Bubs, but I understand, it is the custom in a family which is inherited by people and they start believing or disbelieving the things. I also worship Lord Shiva, Ganesha, Sri Krishna and now Sai Baba, though I have not seen any of them personally but have heard about them and read in the books. I also shower flowers and milk on Shivalinga (because my elders did it and I learnt it from them), and with the passage of time, I generated belief in His powers. For every good thing happening to me and my family, we assume it is because of our faith in the gods and Bub Saab. Right or wrong, I don't know!

There is a proverb in Kashmiri "Peer Chhuna Bod, Yakeen Chhu Bod". Perhaps we all subscribe to that.

Anita Dhar

Gole Market, New Delhi

Dear Editor,

This has reference to Dr. K.L.Chowdhury's write-up 'Of Bhagwaan's & Bubs' and your invitation to readers to send their considered views on the subject. While I agree that many people are gifted with talent or supernatural powers which they exhibit on different occasions, I am not sure if all of them need to be recognised as Gods (or Babs). I illustrate it with an example from my own home.

My late father whom we fondly called Baaji Saab, had acquired considerable knowledge in the field of astrology and numerology from his Guru, whose name I don't remember now. Baaji Saab was highly revered by people for his correct or near-correct revelations. I quote two instances here.

Once in the year 1969, a cousin of mine was about to deliver her first child in Mumbai. Two or three days before her delivery, we asked Baaji Saab to check if the delivery would be normal. He asked us to note down the time (of asking him this question). We noted it on a paper and gave it to him. He sat on his 'aasan', took paper and pen and started calculating something. In about half an hour, he came out with a startling revelation, "Delivery will be normal but the girl child will not survive." We were aghast. He could not give any details. Next day as we heard the news of my cousin having delivered a male child, we were glad that my father's prophesy was proved wrong. However, in the evening came the news that the child died in the evening. The revelation proved to be half wrong, half right. Was he a 'Bab' or was he not?

It was the year 1977. My cousin brother working at Uri, Kashmir was transferred to Leh. Though he was yet to get the orders, he came to know that the person who he was to relieve at Leh, had already come to Srinagar after handing over his charge temporarily to someone else in his office. It meant that my cousin had to go to Leh immediately. Shocked to know about his transfer to Ladakh, he came home and told about it to Baaji Saab. Baaji Saab, as usual noted the time and started his calculations. This time he

came out with an un-believable statement. "You are not going to Ladakh in any case, because you have to come more closer to your home than you are at present. Ladakh is no question because it is very far from here." This revelation however did not bring much relief to my cousin, as according to standing rules then, the Ladakh transfers were never cancelled (except in very special cases) and the transferees had to be relieved immediately without waiting for the relievers. A miracle happened thereafter. My cousin never got the order, nor did the order reach his administrative office at Sopore. After about a fortnight, he went to his Direction Office in Srinagar to enquire about it. There was another shock waiting for him, this time a pleasant shock. The order was kept in abeyance by the government as the Superintending Engineer at Leh had objected to posting of fresh staff instead of experienced staff. In a week's time, government issued a fresh order, cancelled the old one and posted senior staff to Leh. Surprisingly within a month, my cousin was transferred to Kangan, 40 Kms. away from Srinagar while Uri was 101 Kms. away.

Another story relates to the Guru of my father. Once during his younger days, he (my father) alongwith his three friends, went to visit his Guru somewhere near Nawa Kadal. While they passed through our courtyard, they saw a bitch delivering pups. They thought of testing their Guru's powers. On reaching his Guru's home, they asked him a question, "Guruji, a child was borne to someone as soon as we left our home. Can you tell us something about the child." Guruji asked them to give him the approximate time of birth. They gave it. Guruji closed his eyes for some time and asked, "Is it one child or many?" "No, only one", replied my father. "Go and check, if he is still alive", asked Guruji. The foursome left, reached our home and found one pup dead and another alive. "Guruji, he is alive", they said on their return. Guruji took a paper, made some calculations and asked them as to what precisely they wanted to know. My father said, 'Guruji, tell us what will the child achieve in his life.' "Nothing", said Guruji, "Only roam around like a dog and eat."

Once we asked Baaji Saab as to how he could make such truthful revelations, and if he had some supernatural powers? His reply was, "No, not supernatural power, just perfect calculations and blessings from my Guru." Pre-occupied with

earning our livelihood, we had no inclination to know more about his calculations. My youngest brother Ramanji had, but he died at a very young age of 20 years, much before my father died.

My father left for his heavenly abode in the year 1982. I still ask myself, "Was Baaji Saab just an ordinary person with a little of gifted talent, or, we simply failed to make a 'Bab' out of him?"

Ashok Razdan
ashokrazdan52@yahoo.com

BHU, Varanasi

Dear Raina Sahab,
Namaskar. It was a delight to read Dr. KL Chowdhury's write-up on Bhagwans and Babs in the latest issue of 'här-van'.

Kashmir had a severe winter which kept people indoors. Some intelligent persons made use of the leisure to create a band of chillam-smoking men around them and within weeks the intelligent 'Guru' would attain fame due to the efforts of a close circle of men and women. The fame thus acquired would allow the 'guru' and his 'chellas' to enjoy life without putting in any kind of labour for years on end. These little bhagwans and babs have invariably been charas-smoking, lazy, and at times 'immoral' people, whose families, if they had one, have suffered in more ways than one.

The concluding para of Dr. Chowdhury's article is weighty; that -what he states there- has to be the yardstick to measure a spiritually-inclined person's contribution and worth to the society at large.

Sincerely,

Raj Nath Bhat
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New Delhi

Mahara Namaskar.
Kindly find my views on Dr. K.L.Chowdhury's write-up 'Of Bhagwans & Babs' attached. Please judge this on its merits. I should not sound harsh to Dr. Chowdhury Sahib, who is a shining star in our community. My only purpose is to protect the 'Bagwans and Babs' who otherwise get a good opposition from non-Hindus.

With warm regards.

Brij Nath Betab
bnbetab@yahoo.co.in

[Editor's Note: Shri Betab Sahib has written an extensive article on the topic, giving references to scriptures and documenting some facts based on his personal experience and knowledge. The article is included as a separate writeup in this issue.]

Sainik School, Nagrota, Jammu

Respected Raina Sahib,
Namaskar,
Apropos to article written by Dr K L Chowdhury, 'Of Bhagwan and Babs' which is thought provoking and relevant topic about the aspect of spirituality. I think, while understanding the contents of the article in the right perspective we should not hurt sentiments of any individual or group. It is true that followings of 'Babs and Bhagwans' has increased among Kashmiri Pandits after 'migration'. The Kashmiri pandit Diaspora finds solitude in it because such things are linked to the nostalgic memory of our past in Kashmir. It is true that no saint of Kashmir claimed himself as 'Bhagwan' but people bestowed title of Bhagwan on them, the sanctity of which is debatable. This type of following may give rise to blind faith and dogma and reduce our religion and 'Sanskriti' to observance of some rituals, which is very far from spirituality. It is also true that thousands of people assemble at some religious congregation, have some 'Prasad' and then again join world of vices and voids, thus gaining nothing in terms of spritualty. This all is due to improper dissemination of spiritual legacy to people. This is more so important because our younger generation is not able to identify with spiritual legacy of our great culture. It is therefore high time that we not only understand but also preach true spirituality to our younger generation lest they forget everything in years to come.

Truly yours,

Verender Dembi

Versova, Mumbai

Dear Raina Sahab,
Apropos 'Of Bhagwaans & Babs' appearing in July 2008 issue of 'här-van', Dr. K.L.Chowdhury has simply & simultaneously addressed the mythical belief bordering on complacency of reverential reasoning as also the mundane fact that Babs had, like any other human being, normal

physiological needs, constraints, compulsions etc. To understate any such facts of life is blissfully devoid of any divinity or context hence bearing no wisdom. Nevertheless, their heights of spiritual greatness & enormity of people's faith in them, remains another matter altogether, therefore, cannot be debated too.

Kind regards,

S.P.Kachru
spkachru@rediffmail.com

Nagpur, Maharashtra

Dear Sir,

I am enclosing P.N.Raina's three books viz. 'Jeevani-Swami Govind Kaul', 'Vanvun-A Collection of Henzey Vanvun' and 'Collection of Leelas of Swami Govind Kaul'. I hope you will find the books of interest and give them coverage in the 'här-van'. I will be highly thankful if you can go through the works and provide your valuable feedback and comments so that there is further improvement in the books in future.

Regards,

A.K.Raina

veeruz@gmail.com

Namaskar,

'här-van' online edition has become like a monthly elixir dosage for me. Yesterday while reciting one of your edited online Kashmiri Bhajans, I was thinking to ask you about my contribution to 'här-van'. I would like to send a few articles on career selection and growth prospectus for youngsters. Would it be feasible to allocate a small space called 'Career 4 you', which I can write every month for 'här-van'. I wish to showcase opportunities available in new segments, succesful case studies, out of world workarounds and to increase intrapreneurship as well as enterpreneurship within our generations.

Regards

Veer Ji Wangoo

[Yes, why not? 'här-van' is your own journal and you can regularly subscribe to it. We will be honoured with your participation. - Editor]

deepakganju@hotmail.com

Dear Maharaj ji,

Thanks for sending the latest issue of 'här-van'. It was nice to read some informative articles in this issue. I appreciate the efforts of your journal in

promoting Kashmiri and Hindi languages. Our good wishes are always with you and we wish you success in your efforts.

With best wishes,

Deepak Ganju
Editor, Shehjar

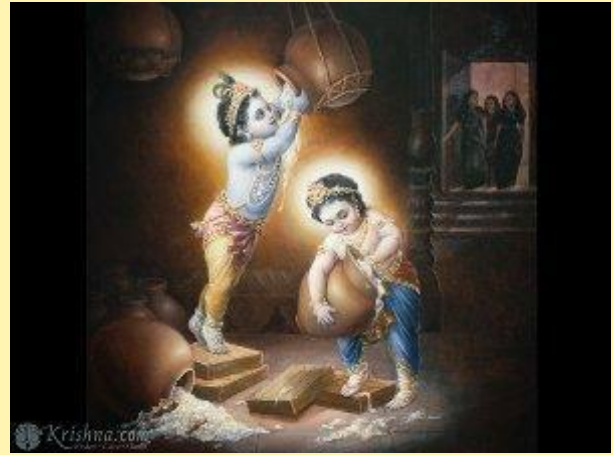
ushabhat2@rediffmail.com

Dear Mr. Raina

Namaskar! Thanks for forwarding the latest issue of 'här-van'. We highly appreciate your commitment to the community.

Regards,

Usha Bhat



**‘हॉरवान’
की ओर से
पाठकों को
जन्म अष्टमी
की
हार्दिक
शुभ कामनाएं**

हमारे कवि और कवयित्रियां

अर्जुन देव मजबूर

अँरनिमाल - १८६५ में छपी पुस्तक

अँरनिमाल अठारहवीं शतब्दी की वह कवयित्री है जिस के वचन आज तक कश्मीरियों के घरों में गाए जाते हैं। कुछ वर्ष पूर्व एक वरिष्ठ कश्मीरी लेखक ने इस सुप्रसिद्ध कवयित्री के होने से ही इनकार कर दिया था। मैं ने कोइ ८० लेखकों के बीच, जो प्रेस क्लब, जम्मू में एकत्र थे, इस चैलेंज को स्वीकार किया और अँरनिमाल पर कोई ९० पृष्ठों की पुस्तक २००५ में मुट्टी कैम्प में रिलीज़ की। डा. के.एल.चौधरी, सुप्रसिद्ध फिज़िशन तथा कवि ने इस काम की बेहद सराहना की। इस के अतिरिक्त अन्य सभी कश्मीरी लेखकों ने इस काम की सराहना की। डा. आर.एल.भट्ट, प्रधान 'सम्प्रति' ने इस पुस्तक पर व्याखात्मक भाषण दिया।

इस पुस्तक की काफी चर्चा हुई और जम्मू की लगभग सभी पत्रिकाओं ने इस कार्य-क्रम को बड़े बड़े शीर्षक दे कर छापा। मैं ने इस पुस्तक में इस कवयित्री के कोई ३६ वचन एकत्र किये हैं और इन के बारे में प्रमाण भी उपस्थित किए हैं।

मैं ने इस सम्बन्ध में शोध कार्य जारी रखा। मेरे एक मित्र लेखक हैं डा. तामीरी। वह सामाजिक विषयों पर खोज करके अपने लेख 'कश्मीर सेंटिनल' में छापते हैं। एक दिन उन्होंने कहा कि अँरनिमाल पर श्री सुदर्शन काशकारी ने १८६५ में एक पुस्तक हिन्दी लिपि में लिखी है। मैं ने डा. तामीरी से उस पुस्तक की कापी मंगाने या ढूँढकर उपलब्ध कराने के बारे में कहा। उन्होंने काफी परिश्रम के पश्चात इस नई पुस्तक की एक प्रति अम्रीका से मंगवाई। डा. सुदर्शन काशकारी के पौत्र अम्रीका में कार्यरत हैं। यह प्रति उन से ही प्राप्त हुई।

डा. सुदर्शन काशकारी जे. एन्ड के. के सूचना मंत्रालय में कार्यरत थे। उन्होंने तीन पुस्तकें लिखी हैं।

- १) कश्मीरी मुहावरे
- २) पोशिगोंद (कश्मीरी कविता संग्रह)
- ३) अँरनिमाल

अँरनिमाल - नई खोज

यह पुस्तिका कुल २४ पृष्ठों की है। इस में पहले अँरनिमाल की जीवनी पर प्रकाश डाला गया है। श्री काशकारी लिखते हैं कि श्री भवानी दास काचरू (नेकू) ने जो बहरे-तवील लिखी है, उस में कहा है कि उन्हें फिरंगियों (अंग्रेजों) ने

किसी दूर जगह लेकर कैद कर दिया था। वे अपनी लम्बी बहर की कविताओं में, जो फ़ारसी भाषा में हैं, लिखते हैं: "मैं क्या करूँ? मैं अपने वतन से दूर कैद में डाल दिया गया हूँ। मुझे अपना कश्मीर, घर, वितस्ता तथा कश्मीर का सौंदर्य याद आ रहा है। जाने कब मुझे आज़ाद किया जायेगा?" कहते हैं कि जब वे कैद से रिहा हुए तो वे पलहालन जाकर अँरनिमाल से मिलकर उसे कैद का हाल सुनाना चाहते थे और उसे अपने घर रैनावारी ले जाना चाहते थे। किन्तु जब वे पलहालन पहुंचे तो अँरनिमाल मर चुकी थी और वह वापिस रैनावारी लौट आए।

श्री सुदर्शन काशकारी की पुस्तक में वचन दिये गये हैं जिन का मतन (text) अन्य सभी मतनों से शुद्ध है। यह सभी वचन मेरी पुस्तक 'अँरनिमाल' (नस्तालीक तथा हिन्दी लिपि) में छपे हुए हैं। श्री काशकारी की पुस्तक इस बात का प्रमाण है कि अँरनिमाल और उसके काव्य पर कोई एतिराज़ नहीं कर सकता क्योंकि श्री काशकारी एक शोधकर्ता तथा सरकारी अधिकारी थे। अतः अब यह कोई नहीं कह सकता कि अँरनिमाल थी ही नहीं, और यदि थी तो उस ने दो चार वचन ही लिखे थे। अँरनिमाल एक दुखी स्त्री थी और उस ने बेबाकी से अपने दुःख का इज़हार किया है। पलहालन में आज भी बूढ़े और बुज़र्ग उसको मानते हैं। कश्मीरी डिपार्टमेंट (कश्मीर यूनिवर्सिटी) के प्रो. मजरूह रशीद ने एक सेमिनार में कहा कि उसकी माँ जो आरवनी, कुलगाम की रहने वाली थी, अँरनिमाल के वचन गाया करती थी। पलहालन के एक मुस्लिम मित्र (उनका पता जलदी में नहीं मिल रहा) ने मुझ से अँरनिमाल पुस्तक मंगाई। उनकी बेटी एम.ए. कश्मीरी सोश्यालाजी में अँरनिमाल पर भी काम कर रही है, यह पुस्तक इसी बेटी के लिये उन्हें चाहिये थी। मैं ने उस पेड की शाख का एक फोटो भी पलहालन से मंगाया है जिसके नीचे बैठ कर अँरनिमाल कविता लिखा करती थी।

मैं ने हिन्दी लिपि में लिखी सुदर्शन काशकारी की पुस्तिका डा. आर.एल.भट्ट को दी है और कहा है कि वे किसी संस्थान द्वारा इसे प्रकाशित करायें।



Samarpan by Sadhak

Piyaray Raina

KARMA YOGA (PATH OF RITUALS)

[Saddhak is the pen name of Shri Piyaray Raina . Shri Raina is President of Samarpan Public Charitable Trust (Regd) which among other things is involved with bringing awareness of our cultural heritage among our youth. He is a regular contributor of religious articles in various community journals in India and abroad. He is the author of book 'Socio-Cultural and Religious Traditions of Kashmiri Pandits' published in USA. He lives in Atlanta, USA and DLF Gurgaon, India]



In the previous instalment of this series, three ways of achieving liberation (*moksha*) were described as :

1. *Karm Yoga*
2. *Bhakti Yaga*
3. *Jnan Yoga Yoga*

In the present installment we will focus on *Karm Yoga*.

The concept of *Karm Yoga* among Hindus is highly misplaced. It is generally confused with the Hindu philosophical doctrine of *Karma* and reincarnation which is the foundation of Hindu Dharma. Briefly stated this doctrine says 'as you sow, so shall you reap'. A good moral action is rewarded with good reward and consequently a bad moral action will cause punishment. All deeds are stored as *Sanchit Karmas* and at the time of reincarnation, this is taken into account in determining the next life of individual. Thus a person who lives a good moral life is called a *Karm Yogi*. As against this *Karm Yoga* is the path of rituals. Performance of rituals has been described as a way for liberation but it does not convey that the performer is a *Karm Yogi*. *Karm Yogi* is a person of very high intellect who has not only grasped the Vedic philosophy but is/has been living to its standards. In the Bhagwad Gita Lord Krishna states:

"The two fold path was given by me, O sinless one (Arjuna), to the world in the beginning; The path of knowledge (*jnana yoga*) to the discerning (i.e intellectuals) and path of action (*Karm Yoga*) to the ordinary mortals." - 3/1 BG

It is the ordinary mortals who form the substratum of any society. There are very few intellectuals in each society. Therefore, *Karm Yoga* has aptly been described as the path of ordinary mortals. The underlying thought in this process of liberation is the Vedic thought that *Devas* (unseen beings without form) guide our destiny. Another quote from Bhagwad Gita clarifies it :

"Cherish the *Devas* with this (*yagnya*) and may those *Devas* cherish you; Thus cherishing one

another you shall reap the supreme good." - 3/11 BG

Yajurveda, one of the four Vedas, describes in detail the liturgy for performance of Vedic rituals. Since the number of rituals and associated recitations of hymns is very long, these were reduced to smaller number in due course of time by dropping some rituals and reducing the number of recitations, which came to be known as *Karmkanda*. At a later period even this *Karmkanda* became regional in character due to variation in the traditions of Hindus to accommodate local geographic factors and teachings of local savants. Thus we have *Karmkandas* for various regions. Kashmiri Pandits have their own *Karmkanda*.

Karmic Rituals :

There are two types of worship:

- 1) *Homa (havan)*: This is a Vedic tradition of offering oblations to *Devas* involving use of fireplace (*agnikund*) along with Vedic prayers
- 2) *Puja/pathe*: This is a post Vedic tradition involving recitations of mantras and eulogies (*Stuties*) of deities along with actions. No use of fireplace is made.

The various rituals of *Karm Yoga* may be stated as under:

a) Nitya Karmas (obligatory rituals) :

These rituals are recommended to be performed daily. They include:

- a) *Snana*: Bathing at river bank along with recitation of mantras for various actions while bathing.
- b) *Sandhya Vandna*: Worship of Sun god at river bank after bathing.
- c) *Panch Mahayagnya*: This involves performing five *yagnyas* :
 - i) *Dev yagnya*: Offerings made to *Ist deva* (family deity) along with other deities.
 - ii) *Pitr yagnya*: Offerings of water along with other materials (*tarpan*) made to one's ancestors.
 - iii) *Brhm yagnya*: Recitations of sacred verses from religious scriptures
 - iv) *Bhut yagnya*: Also known as *Balivaishvdeva*. It is an act of offering cooked food items in homa and

partaking left portion as Prasad by family members. Cooked food is also offered to cows, dogs, crows, manes, ants.

v) *Atithi yagnya*: This is an act of offering cooked food to guests at home before consuming it by family members.

b) **Naimittika Karmas (Samskaras to be performed in life time) :**

The performance of these rites called *samskaras* is the essence of Hindu Traditions. They are described as 'religious purificatory rites and ceremonies for sanctifying the body, mind and intellect of an individual so that the individual may become full fledged member of community.' These rites are made either by the parents of an individual when he is a child or by himself. The number of these *samskaras* varies from region to region. Kashmiri Pandits have about 16 *samskaras*. Some of the surviving *samskaras* are: *Simontkrn* (Baby shower), *Jatakarm* (birth of baby), *Namakrm* (naming the baby), *Zar Kasai* (first tonsure of male baby), *Upanyana mekhal* and *vivah* (marriage).

c) **Antyashti and Shradha :**

As per Hindu traditions, performance of death rituals after the death of an individual by his progeny is essential ritual.

d) **Panchdev yagnyas (homas) :**

Performance of homas to gain favours from various deities for success in a business venture, curing ailment or for community welfare is a common practice.

e) **Religious festivals :**

Pujas and homas are performed on various occasions such as *Shivratri*, *Navratras*, *Dipavali Sankranti*, birthday, *Bhumi puja* (construction of new house), *Greh Pravesh* (entering new house) etc.



Mysticism & Religion

C.L.Raina

A LOOK ON THE BHAGVAD-GITA

1) Bhagvadgita or the Gita is the song of the Divine. This sacred text is a portion of the epic Mahabharata. The essence of Bhagvadgita is that Krishna Consciousness is universal in nature. Krishna represents the Divine being, who incarnates time and again for upholding the Dharma/righteousness.



- 2) God is both personal and impersonal and can be approached through Yoga, worship, intellect and service to the needy.
- 3) No strict laws of rituals have been emphasised; rather the Love for Ishvara/Divine being is more essential to attain the proximity with Krishna .
- 4) On the empirical scene, Krishna happened to be the friend and brother-in-law of Arjuna. Krishna's sister was married to Arjuna.
- 5) The Mahabharata war took place in the Dwapara Yuga for 18 days, after the sermon on *Dharma* was given by Lord Krishna to Arjuna, emphasising the Immortality of the Atman/soul. Arjuna represents man with strength but clouded with emotion for not fighting for his own just cause.
- 6) Human suffering needs to be removed through the Ichha Shakti 'Will to do and Act', of the aspirant like Arjuna with a firm faith in Divinity.
- 7) Arjuna was hesitant to fight, but Shri Krishna taught him the *NISHKAMA KARMA YOGA*, which means self-less action without caring for the results. The results are the fruits of one's own actions.
- 8) The course of cosmic evolution is necessary in attaining nearness to Godhead. The Lord is more than the Prakriti/ manifestation. Why? Manifestation is subject to the laws of nature. But Godhead/Divinity transcends the Prakriti/NATURE, as well.
- 9) The physical body is subject to change, which is viewed as growth and later decay and death, but *ATMAN/Soul/Spirit* is unchanged. It does not get mutated.
- 10) The main source of soul is the Primordial Self, which is Brahman of the Upanishads and Ishvara as referred to in the Vedas .
- 11) The Yoga is the vibrant force, to understand the Parmatman/Lord. This can be seen in the OM , which is *Ekaakshara Brahma*/monosyllable Brahman.
- 12) The Universal form of the Divine can be seen by any person, who is one with the *Param Purusha*/ the Divine being, like Arjuna.
- 13) *Yoga Karmasu Kaushalam*/ Yoga is to be taken as the perfection in any legitimate action. It means to be absorbed in one's own duty. It means the single pointed concentration, to achieve the higher perfection.
- 14) Lastly, Krishna is the Divine being and Arjuna is the man of strong action, based on Dharma. Both are complementary to each other to destroy the *Asuri Shakti*, on the earth planet. Asuri means all the components which destroy peace, harmony, ecology and being bent upon doing unrighteous actions to satisfy their Adharma/ false ego. ❁



My Medical Journey

Dr. K.L.Chowdhury



WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES DRESS MAKE ?

*Does it matter what dress I wear
So long it is clean
and my conscience clear?*

*What a doctor needs is a soft touch
A sweet tongue, a patient ear
A strong intuition, a quick insight
And an eye that sees far and near.*

*Hippocratic Oath is my moral code
Medical texts my scripture
The patient my laboratory
The hospital my house of prayer.*

From 'More poems in exile' (unpublished)
By K L Chowdhury

Barbarshah Bridge and Barbarshah Road are the life line between the ancient and the modern city of Srinagar. They link Sathu and the rest of downtown with Regal Chowk, Residency Road, and Amira Kadal - the bustling 'civil lines' and heartthrobs of the city. It was into a cul-de-sac from Barbarshah Road that we moved house from Rajveri Kadal in 1962. The site was just ideal for a home, being the junction between the old and new city and, yet, a retreat flanked as we were on two sides by the sprawling lawns of SP College from where with the foliage of huge Chinars overflowed to our backyard. Across the road is the famous Ramji temple and, further away, near the bridge, the mosque from where the morning bells and the call of the muezzin, respectively, would float gently into my bedroom in perfect accord and harmony.

Barbarshah Road was also called the 'love lane' not because lovers would pass by hand in hand like they do now-a-days, but because it brought streams

of students from the old city to the two premier institutions of Kashmir, the S P College and the Govt. College for women. They buzzed on the street in the morning when the institutions opened and in the evening when they closed. Girls walked in their own groups and so did the boys, desiring and eyeing each other discretely but hardly ever speaking or walking together. There was love in their hearts - unexpressed and unrequited - not that an occasional eve-teasing incident did not occur.



I graduated the same year as we moved to Barbarshah Road and began my professional career from there. Being centrally placed, I was quite accessible to patients. I started with my own relatives and friends who put implicit faith in me and it was they who, by word of mouth, were instrumental in building my practice. Charity begins at home and so did my practice of medicine on my own people.

It was the winter of 1979. By then I was an Assistant Professor of Medicine in Medical College Srinagar and fully established in practice. It was snowing lightly on a morning. I was home, enjoying my winter break of six weeks from the Medical College and sipping a cup of tea when an uncle of my mother stepped in, panting and puffing. He was a patient of chronic bronchitis and asthma. He dusted the snow off his umbrella, left it in a corner on the verandah and sat on a chair by my side, visibly breathless. It took him time to collect his breath, inhaling it with all the effort of his chest, neck and shoulder muscles and exhaling it in white streams from his pouted mouth, blowing out his cheeks and flaring his nostrils with every respiratory excursion. Though he lived across the bridge in Sathu Payeen, less than a half mile away, he should not have come out in snow. I told him so.

"I have not come for myself; I am doing fine with the medicines you have prescribed." He managed to speak through pauses and breaks. "But, I would like you to come with me right away."

I did not like to be disturbed on this halcyon morning, the dulcet grey sky sending down swarms

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of snow flakes which danced and landed softly, noiselessly on every conceivable object from rooftops to trees to bushes to lawns to fences to walls to eaves to verandahs to porches to window panes – slowly changing the landscape into a fairyland. I wondered what had brought my phlegmatic, asthmatic granduncle early in the morning if it was not concerning himself.

“Please, pick your bag and come along,” he said in a plaintive, yet confident tone.

He knew that I did not like to go for home visits. But this must be a desperate situation and it was difficult to say no to him for, Gopi Nath Khan, as was his name, was a fond cousin of my mother. She would often recall wonderful memories of her childhood spent in his house. When she lost her mother young, Gopi Nath and his wife stepped in to fill the void. Being older, he was more like a father than a brother to her and she revered him. If he asked a little favor I had no heart to deny him, neither the nerve, even as he asked it on that snowy morning when I was looking across the window re-living the snowy memories of my own childhood. I was planning a snowman with the help of my little daughters who were also home for the winter break. “Where are we going in this snow?” I ventured to ask.

“I will tell you on the way. Come along as you are; you do not need to change your dress.”

I was wearing my Pheron, a Kangri keeping me warm under its broad span. I did not mind his suggestion to visit the patient in the casual dress I was wearing; I was in a hurry to go out in the snow and leave footprints on the virgin white path before the morning strollers spoil it. I picked my bag in one hand and umbrella in the other and we both set out.

“You are going to examine Nila Kanth. You know him; he has been ill for quite some time. A couple of doctors have visited him and prescribed medicines but he is making no headway. He asked me yesterday to bring the best doctor of the town to examine him and I could not think of anyone better than you.”

Nilkanth was an old bachelor living a reclusive life in the outhouse of Gopi Nath. He had nobody to call his own. His sister, Rajreni, who was Gopi Nath’s aunty, had invited him to live with her in the outhouse after her husband’s demise. Rajreni lived only a few years after that and Nila Kanth was left on his own. A court case was hanging fire for many years between Gopi Nath and Nila Kanth regarding the

outhouse to which Nila Kanth now claimed ownership. But that did not stand between the two when he took ill and was not able to fend for himself. Gopi Nath and his family took upon themselves the moral responsibility to feed him and look after him. They brought doctors and medicines.

We walked along the snowy path up the Barbarshah Road. I made a bow near the portals of the temple, invoking lord Ram to grant me the healing touch. The canal under the Barbarshah Bridge was a pretty ribbon adorned on either side with Dongas with white sloping roofs. Snow flakes came down in swarms dissolving in placid water of the canal like lovesick creatures on a fatal tryst. The street shops were still closed. It was a difficult walk because of my companion with whom I labored to keep my pace slow. Speaking with me, while we walked, made it more laborious for him.

“Some years back you advised me to move to the plains during the winter months because of my asthma. Since then I have been going to Jammu every winter from December to March. It is already 16th of December this year but Nil Kanth is holding me back. We cannot leave him behind to die. Please do something to revive him enough to be able to travel with us to Jammu. If I do not move to the plains I may not last the winter.”

Nila Kanth was crouched in a bed on the floor, almost invisible under a huge quilt and three blankets, a skullcap worn down on the face to just allow a glimpse of his slit eyes that were glued with exudate, fish mouth that was bluish from cyanosis and nostrils that flared in and out with respiration. I took my place by his right side. On the left, Gopi Nath, removing a Kangri from under the layers of his coverings, spoke in his ear: “Nila Kanth, I got you the best doctor. Now tell him all your problems.”

Nilakanth lifted his bent head with difficulty and we supported him with cushions behind his back. He was barely audible; his words came out slowly, haltingly with a nasal twang from an un-repaired cleft palate. That might have been one of the reasons for his lifelong bachelorhood, even when his menial job would qualify him for a spouse. He was short in stature, bent in his back, hard of hearing and breathing hard from the mere effort of speaking. He strained to open his eyes into a narrow chink, peering at me and trying to speak from behind a grizzled beard and emitting foul odor, the yellow of turmeric from a previous dinner staining the angles of his mouth. He complained of fullness and loss of

appetite, breathlessness and loss of sleep, restlessness and loss of strength. Examination revealed that he suffered from an advanced heart failure from hypertension complicated by chronic bronchitis, asthma and anemia. His legs were swollen, pressure sores forming under his heels and buttocks.

I wrote out a prescription and asked my leave. The return walk home at my usual brisk pace was a treat; it took me just seven minutes. I forgot about the patient as I got down rolling snowballs to fashion a snowman out of them with the help of my children.

Next morning was clear. A bright sunrise, piercing through the mesh of Chinars, started flirting with the snow, thawing it with the warmth of love, dripping it from the roofs, raising little spouts as drops fell down in small puddles on the ground below the eaves. I was lighting a fire in the saw-dust heating stove in our family room when Gopi Nath Khan announced himself again with his guttural cough and a gruffly good morning.

"I am so sorry to bother you again, but you will have to do an encore."

"But why?" I was puzzled and irritated.

"You know, I made a mistake asking you to visit Nila Kanth in your pheron yesterday. After you left, we got the medicines from the pharmacy but he refused to take them. 'I have not heard of a physician in a pheron,' he was sarcastic as he fished out the pass book of his post-office savings account from his shirt pocket and tossed it at me. 'What use my savings if they can't fetch me a good doctor?' Please save me from a difficult situation; I will feel guilty if he dies unattended and uncared."

"Oh, I thought he seemed too ill to notice my dress and bearing. In any case, does it matter what dress I wear? And, if I visit him again, don't you think he will recognize me? Please try some one else?" I suggested some names.

"Yes, it now seems to me that it does matter what dress you wear. I beg you to visit him again; for my sake. You will have to put on your jacket and trousers, sport a necktie, and don a hat. Please do it for me; I will never ask you again." He was very earnest.

I had no choice. I changed into a professional outfit and went visiting again. Nil Kanth was told that I was a foreign-trained doctor who had worked wonders with patients. He got animated. Collecting his last shreds of energy, he waxed satirical in his dry, quivering, halting, nasal voice, about how a

novice had visited him the pervious day and how he had flatly refused to accept the drugs for he valued his life more than money and would not be mismanaged by a quack in a pheron masquerading as a physician. He did not elaborate on his problem but spoke about Dr. New and Dr. Wasper, two missionary doctors who revolutionized the practice of medicine in Kashmir, Dr. Gwashalal Koul who introduced quixotic forms of therapy, even one time giving a good thrashing to a patient as an antidote to poisoning, and Dr. Alijan, the living legend and a household name.

After a brief examination of the patient I rewrote the previous day's prescription. Gopi Nath Khan walked with me back to my home, much against my admonition. He was a bespectacled sick old man, baldish and slightly built, wasted in the cheeks and temples, stopped from advanced respiratory illness, barely managing to walk and talk simultaneously. But he had questions to ask.

"I know he is quite ill and will take time to rally and recover. Yet, there is no way I can postpone my departure to Jammu. I am already late by two weeks and feel the pressure in my chest after yesterday's snow fall. Can I stand the frost and the cold winds that will follow? I want to take him along with us? That is our only option. Do you think he will make the journey?"

"No, he won't. I do not think he will cross the Banihal tunnel," I said in a reflex even before he had completed his question. It was not a considered opinion; it just came out in a flash. This was not the first time I surprised someone with a fatal prognosis, without a second thought, when asked how long a patient would survive a terminal illness. One time, a patient of heart block was admitted with me. He would go into repeated cardiac standstill and we revived him every time. He stabilized and his attendants thought it was time to take him home since he had had no attacks for a full week. The patient lived nearby at Nawab Bazar and they would bring him back if the attacks recurred, they said. I could not persuade them to stay on and when it was time to take leave they thanked me for all I had done. I made a passing remark: I hope he crosses the Nawab Bazar Bridge alive. The bridge was only a half furlong from the hospital. We were still with our ward round when they brought him back hardly after twenty minutes. He had sustained another cardiac arrest while crossing the bridge and they had returned midway from the bridge. But it was too late!

A second time, my brother-in-law brought with him his landlord from Shopian where he was posted as an agricultural assistant. I diagnosed terminal cancer of stomach and asked my brother-in-law to take him back for it was no use wasting time and effort when he should be spending his last days with family.

"I live in the room directly below him and he groans with pain for the whole night. I can't sleep a wink. Can you do something to relieve his pain, please?"

"I will write an analgesics but he won't have to suffer long."

"How long?" he asked

"Three weeks." It was not a calculated answer, nor a prophecy, just a flash. The words come out even before they were formed in my mind.

It was exactly twenty one days later that the patient departed for the other world where there is no pain, no loss of sleep.

There have been many incidents of this unintended, reflex prophesying. And yet, there are numerous occasions I retort back that I am no soothsayer, or astrologer, when asked how long a patient is going to take to complete his mortal journey.

This time, however, Gopi Nath Khan did not heed my pun. Armed with my prescription and spurred on by a marginal improvement in his patient, he boarded a bus to Jammu along with his wife, his son and his patient. The overdressed patient was laid down on two seats booked for him, and draped from foot to face with a heavy blanket, warmed with a Kangri. The driver, who raised a minor objection to carrying a sick patient, was told that he was not as sick as he was weak. The fellow passengers asked questions which were duly replied about the nature of his illness, the treating doctor, the drugs, the food he could take and the reason they were traveling. A good bonhomie was established and the bus trundled and labored along the road disfigured by ditches and potholes. The temperature had dropped to 10 degrees Celsius and it got colder as they reached Anantnag and on to Qazigund. Gopi Nath and his family spoon-fed their patient every hour with warm tea from the thermos, speaking loud in his ear every time. The passengers showed lot of concern and sympathy. Soon the bus negotiated the curves to gain the heights of Lower and Upper Munda and reached the tunnel. This was the end of the valley. Gopi Nath was happy that they would cross the tunnel in another ten minutes to be on the other

side on their way to Jammu.

The tunnel was dark, the temperature dropped another degree and the bus took a somber look. My parting words suddenly rang an eerie note in Gopi Nath's ears. No, I had just spoken at the cusp of the moment and could not be serious, he reassured himself. Besides, the journey had been quite uneventful till now. He collected his thoughts and asked his son to keep a watch on Nil Kanth as they trundled along.

As the bus reached near the middle of the tunnel there was a sudden gasp from the patient. Gopi Nath's son, who was occupying the seat near him, bent down to see. Nil Kanth had stopped breathing. He put his fingers on his pulse but could not feel any flow of blood. He became nervous and whispered in the ear of his father, sitting across the aisle. Gopi Nath's heart gave a thud. He had blundered. He had not accepted medical advice. He was responsible for this catastrophe. The passengers would get very upset and angry. The driver would get mad; he had made inquiries at the time of their boarding and now might force them to disembark. All these thoughts rushed and he thought out a plan. He counseled caution and silence and admonished his son against breaking this news to any passenger and to play the farce of speaking in the ear of the dead person from time to time.

Soon light appeared at the other end of the tunnel and they were on the road again. It was bright outside like Nila Kanth going to a world of new light! The passengers asked the welfare of the patient. Gopi Nath's son spoke in the ear of the dead body. "Why does he not make any sound?" one of the passengers asked.

"He is fast asleep; I think we should not disturb him," the son replied.

But Gopi Nath's wife sensed trouble looking at the pale and frightened faces of her son and husband. Gopi Nath told her to shut up and not create a ruckus. She could wail and weep after they reached their destination. Till then no tears, no sobbing, no crying, no browbeating. The lady choked herself with grief but did not utter a sound. The bus kept moving.

It was all a charade from there onwards. They kept on mumbling nothings in the patient's ear, 'would you care for some milk, would you like to eat a biscuit, what about some orange juice?' and so on, and then to the passengers, 'he says he has no appetite and would like to be left alone.'

When it was lunchtime, the passengers

wondered why none of the family ate anything. In Hindu custom, you do not eat till the last rites of the dead are performed.

“We are full from a heavy breakfast. Bus travel makes us sick, so we keep to tea and water. The patient is not hungry. He felt very cold and wants to sleep undisturbed.”

But the proximity of a dead body and choked emotions got the better of the family and they decided to get down at Udhampur where they had a relative who could be depended upon to help in the cremation. By the time they reached Jammu, another 90 kilometers away, it would be dusk and they would not be able to perform the last rites till the next day.

When the bus halted for a break in Udhampur, they announced the sudden demise of their patient. Lady Gopi Nath started beating her chest, crying aloud, weeping for the departed. Gopi Nath and son maintained their composure and asked the driver to deliver their baggage. The passengers were awe struck; they sensed that death had taken place much earlier but empathized. The driver and his conductor remarked that next time they would not be duped into allowing a dying passenger on board.

Cremation took place the same day with the help of their relative in Udhampur. After a couple of days the ashes were immersed in the stream that flows in the town and the family moved on to Jammu to spend the winter there.

My change of dress to a formal wear did not matter in the final outcome of the patient!



काव्य

त्रिलोकी नाथ दर 'कुन्दन'

सूरथ सीरथ



मे पुछ काल ओबुरस यि क्रेहन्यार क्युथ छुय ?
 दोपुम तँम्य बु छुस दर-बदर हालि हॉरान
 न छम जाय बेहनस, न आराम करनस
 खबर छम नु वति हुंज न मँजिल अँछन तल
 न छुम पय बु गछु कोत, न लय काँसि सुत्यन
 तमी छुस बु लोगमुत दकन तय डुलन अज।
 बु क्रेशान छुस कांह कर्यम ना रफाकथ
 कर्यम लोलु नज़राह तु बाव्यम मुहब्बत।
 बु यीरान तु गीरान, पकान नेबु रोस्तुय
 मँलिथ सूर पानस, दिवान वँन्य चु-तरफय।
 मगर कांह नु मेलान मे दरदिल दर्दमंद
 कर्यम युस मे अथुरोट, वुछम हाल दिलकुय।
 तमी छुस दिवान छँड, दिवान वँन्य बु लोलस
 मे छम आश पगहुच, पगाह शोलि आलम।
 गरा छुम वसान दारि ओश रॉत्य रातस
 गरा छुस वदान दँय दूहस लोलु चेश्मव।
 योहय ओश दिवान जिंदगी आबु जोयन
 क्वलन, त्रागुनय, नागरादन तु चेश्मन।
 अमी सुत्य छे सर-सब्ज बुतराथ चॉनी
 बनान छुय यि अमर्यथ, नवान जिंदगौनी।
 यिवान येलि बु छुस छ्यफ ह्यवान सॉर्य तारख
 खँटिथ जून रोजान, चलान सिरिं तामथ।
 गरान छुस नबस प्यठ स्वंजल रंग बरँगी
 दिवान त्रेशि हतिनय बु छुस त्रेश वाराह
 तिथय तावु लदनय छु शेहजार वातान।
 मु वुछ यथ च रुपस तु क्रेहन्यार बदनस
 मे रोस रावि जगतुक यि अनहार सोरुय
 मे रोस रावि येमि कायनातुक यि नक्शय।
 तमी छुय यि कुन्दन ग्यवान गीत म्यौनी
 तमी छुस स्वखन लोलुकी बोज़नावान।।

'OF BHAGWAANS & BABS' - A REJOINDER

I value the efforts of revered doctor Shri K.L.Chowdhury Sahib and he is welcome to propagate a scientific temperament in the society of the Kashmiri Pandits, though the issue primarily revolves round the basic belief of faith; the faith that moves the heavens. With reference to his write up titled 'Of Bhagwaans and Babs', I have my view point and would like to put it forth.

Kashmiri dictionary produced by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and languages, in the year 1972, With late professor S.K.Toshkhani as its Chief Editor mentions that the word 'Bub' as used in Kashmiri, means the father or the grand father. It is originally derived from a Prakrit word 'Bapha'. It also denotes a fatherly figure or a person of father's stature. The synonymous of this word in Persian that Kashmiri Muslims speak is *Baba*. (Every Kashmiri Muslim prefers to use this word instead of 'Moul' even today).

The word 'Bagwan', as used by Kashmiris is the Sanskrit word Bhagwan, that is derived from the root *Bhagha*, connoting one of the twelve attributes of the sun and used as a Qualifier for Lord Vasudeva, Bhagwan Krishna.

In the same context this title is also used as a suffix with the names of Lord Shankara and Lord Vishnu. In this context the word means the Lord, a *Devta*, a deity. So when we talk of either a Bub or a Bhagwan we generally refer either to a god or a fatherly person or a person whom we treat as such.

As far as my understanding goes, the phenomenon of Bhagwans and Bubs is not recent in our society. Our Language Kashmiri is full of such quotes and phrases that make a direct reference to this phenomenon. Some of the words are, *Bateh bub*, *Babh budtam te khadmata kartam*, *Babeh nether te yemi dameh*, *Che chookh miyon bubh khodai*, *Bub chukh-Mol chukh*, and *Bub aey chookh*. And the famous Kashmiri folk song that goes like this.

*Babh maliyon yele chu aasanay,
Sabh malyon tele chu basanay,
Babh miyaneo zindh rozu panay
Jan vandyo yari jananay.*

Like wise for Bhagwan we have the following expressions, *Bagwana daya kar*, *Soruy Chu Bagwans tam*, *Bagwan kare soruy theek*, *Su Chu*

bhagwan bhakhit and Che chookh miyon bagwan.

Having known these words, we easily recognize that the word bub has been used to denote someone beyond ones own father and the word Bagwan something beyond the lord. In the post exodus period of 1989, these words have got widely associated with the 'Ashrams' and the 'Gurus' particularly in Jammu where the majority of our society halted.

The word Bub in today's world is a respectful title or nom-de-plume given to a Guru by his followers. A guru is a very common word as far as our Brahminical life is concerned. *Upnayan* ceremony or a *Mekhala* was just the ceremony of sending a child to a guru at an Ashram. Maharishi Vyas is considered as the first Guru and *Brahspati* is the Guru of *Devatas*. One day in the Hindu calendar *Aashad Purnima* is dedicated to the Guru Pooja.

Guru is also one of the nine *Grahas (Planets)*. Brahma and Vishnu are also called gurus. *Guru Brahma guru Vishnu*

A guru in Kashmiri has come to be called as a 'GOR' (*Guru Tritya* as *gor Trey*) and unfortunately due to certain social conditions this word lost its respectability in our society. (This happened despite the fact that without our gurus, our ritualistic life is impossible). So in our times the educated class of followers have adopted the word Bub as an alternate and a Guru has come to be called with a more respectful title of 'Bub'.

The word Bub also tips more closeness, proximity and affection and a guru's abode is called an Ashram. Certain Gurus are given the *upadi* of Bhagwan by their followers, as they believe that their guru has/had attained that stature.

To my mind there is nothing new with the establishment of these Ashrams and Gurus or 'bubs' and 'Bagwans' as they are only an extension of our Vedic life and rituals.

Any Kashmiri who has read Laugaksh Bhaskar, Manu Smriti or Nilamata Purana will agree with me that enterprising of different *Varna Ashrams* under the aegis of great Rishis and Acharyas was a Vedic requisite that made the social order, in our Kashmiri Brhminical society as well. This order in our society is still intact under the lineages of different gotras.



Every gotra has a lineage to a Rishi, who had a Vedic Ashram.

Old texts are full of references to such different Ashrams that existed in the Kashmir valley. Just to quote a few, Lokaprakasha has a reference to the present village of Balhom (Near khrew) as Balashrama.

Rajatarangini is full of details of such Ashrams. One such reference is about Hayasirsasrama. It is mentioned that Muni Sandilya was practicing great austerities in order to obtain the sight of the goddess Sharda. (By the way my gotra is Dev Sandilya). The goddess appeared to him at Ghosa (Gushi) and promised to show herself as Shakti in the Sharda forest. 'Thereafter the goddess vanished from his sight at the Hayasirsasrama', modern Hayhom. In fact the famous Sharda temple (Or the Sharde Peetham) was nothing but an 'Ashram'.

The important question here is that why did this system re-surface in Jammu to such a great dimension? My assertion would be that this system had never vanished totally. Had it vanished then, we would not have been able to re-establish it, like we did it in the post nineties period. And the proofs for my assertion are the Ashrams that we had in Kashmir. We had the famous Ashram of Swami Laxman joo at Ishber. We had the famous and the most picturesque Ashram at Nagdandi. We had the famous Ashram with a beautiful lotus pond at Gosain Gund. We had the famous Ashram at Gautam Nag. These are the names of some of the Ashrams that exist even today, though in dilapidated condition. Every such Ashram was headed by or 'looked after' by some Rishi or saint or some godly man.

The only difference then and now is that firstly in those days in Kashmir we were indifferent to the activities of such Ashrams, due to the influence of Islamic persecution that haunted us till we finally were hounded out in January 1989. And secondly the social set up that had developed particularly after the partition in 1947, had made such Ashrams irrelevant for a common Kashmiri Brahman. That is the reason why not many Kashmiris visited even Swami Laxman Joo at his Ashram at Ishber. This in turn is the reason that not many among us today are aware of Trika Philosophy known as Kashmir Shaivism.

With this background, the Ashrams were ignored, the pious men in the society were called as Mahatmas (Like Mahatma Pandit Krishna Joo Razdan), and those who had set out on the path to seek and realize the God were called Sadh (sadhush).

Though there were certain exceptions, like Grata Bub was called 'Bub' and Kral Bub was also called 'Bub', even in Kashmir and before the seventh migration. This entire scenario however changed with the forced exodus in 1989.

The seventh exodus of Brahmans from Kashmir was a big catastrophe. It was more tragic than the partition of India in 1947 and more dastardly than the massacre at the Jalianwala Bagh. One tragic aspect of this migration was that it started in the month of January 1989, when the government offices were functioning from Jammu and were expected to return to the valley with the onset of spring. Those of the Kashmiri Hindu families who were not prepared to leave their homes and hearths left under compulsion thinking that they shall also be returning with the *Darbar Move* as the situation by then shall improve in the valley. This however proved untrue. The situation did not improve. The Muslim majority had some other plans to accomplish. The Pandits could not return and they found themselves ruined and shattered completely. An entire community was made a refugee in not only in its own country but in its own state and by its own people.

With faith in human beings lost, trust in the neighborhood broken and the scars of the killings of many community stalwarts and prominent personalities and the near and the dear ones getting compounded with the loss of property back home the entire community was engulfed by shock, distress and gloominess.

The worst part of this was that the state machinery miserably failed to mitigate the sufferings of the people, who had overnight become paupers. The scorching heat and the snake bites in the summer months and the heavy rains during the monsoon made life a real hell. Under these circumstances a large number of people had the danger of turning nutty, losing their mental balance and going astray. For an entire community, the earth beneath was stony, the roads were snaky and the skies above were blistering. Life had lost hope.

Thankfully the traditions came to our rescue and some godly men and women and saints and some pious men took upon themselves the onus of molding this tragedy to a more positive direction. This Endeavour gave birth to Ashrams and Bhagwans and Bubs, to which Dr. Chowdhury Sahib has pointed to. This saved not only the life of many Kashmiris but inculcated a positive attitude in them, particularly among the distressed ones, the women

folk, the innocent children, the matured girls and the unemployed ones. Some real Bhagwan had proved Lord Krishna's promise come true.

Yada yad hi dharmase glani bhavati.....

I have every reason to believe the believers. Because I have the personal experience. Because I know a Kashmiri lady at Jammu who was widowed at the age of fifty, could absorb and traverse the vagaries of life by visiting the Ashram of a 'Bhagwan' and chanting his name every time. Her unshattered faith in her 'Bhagwan' certainly helped her and she today is a very happy grany, with her two sons doing very well in life.

Doctor Sahib himself is a witness to all the sufferings of our community. Any person who in those turbulent times of migration could provide some solace to any one, was his Bagwan. Any person who could provide some succor was a Bub. It was a time when all of us were suffering and sailing in the same boat, even a ray of hope shown by some one would make him a Bagwan.

With a little bit of personal knowledge, I can say with confidence and with out the fear of contradiction that many among the doctor fraternity to which the learned writer belongs, also played the role of 'Bubs' and 'Bhagwans' for many sufferers and patients and continue to do so till date. Shriya Bhatt hospital in Jammu is a result of the efforts of such Bagwans only.

Now coming to his curing of 'Sed Bab', no one can refute what a doctor says about his patient. I cannot argue this as I am not a doctor and also did not know Sed Bab. But a religious minded person like me, in all my humility, would like to remind doctor sahib about the piles of Adi-Shankara that no one could cure and Adi Shankara repeatedly requested the team of doctors to go away and not try medicating him. The doctors ultimately failed and respected Adi Shankara's wish. (Reference: 'The traditional life of Sri Sankaracharya by Madhava-Vidyaranya', And the 'Life and philosophy of Sri Shankacharya by Swami Mukhyananda')

One would also refer to Rama Krishna Parmahansa whose throat wound is said to have become cancerous. (Please refer to the book 'The Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna' or any book on the life and teachings of Ramakrishna- Parmahansa).

One gets inquisitive enough to know if Doctor Sahib knows that our most reverend Shaiva Acharya Swami Laxman joo's physical body suffered for about six seven months before He left the mortal remains.

I understand that all great men have believed that any 'God' who took birth in a human body has had to fulfill the *dharm*a of the human body. This is what exactly Sri Ramakrishna Parmahansa told his disciples. We also have the examples of Lord Rama, who never declared that he was a god, yet every one during Rama's life time accepted him as a god. Then this God had to live such a hard life despite being a prince in the world. Lord Krishna had to fight despite the fact that he knew and had declared that He was a god. I am sure that Doctor Sahib knows that Bhagwan Buddha, who was enlightened, died due to food poisoning.

Having argued against his contention in a humble way, one tends to agree with Doctor Sahib on certain points. One such point is regarding 'no new illuminating information'. This is a grave situation. In our community there is really a dearth of writers. Such writers, who would first read then digest and observe and then write. Contrary to this, unfortunately, some of our community magazines and some of their editors have been encouraging those writers who do not have the acumen to write. The reason is that these editors either are misfit for the job or the magazines are suffering due to the infighting of the organization or some near ones are being preferred over genuine writers like our Sahitya Akademy. Secondly our writers do not read what our seniors and our elders have written. Thirdly we have a tendency of writing what already has been written.

In my opinion the editors of our community magazines can do a lot to set this trend right. Again after migration we do not have good libraries available to those who are interested in reading good stuff. Our writers do not have a platform like the Radio Kashmir or the Tagore Hall or the Cultural Academy, where their thoughts and writings would be heard, analyzed, scrutinized and corrected. Old Sanskrit texts need to be translated so that we can also understand what all has been written by our forefathers, particularly on Spirituality, Shaivism, Poetics and Aesthetics, of which our ancestors were the masters. Regarding the comment that 'write ups fall short of expectations in creating a sense of spirituality', I have the submission that I have heard some realized men saying that 'spirituality is a matter of self experience'. They call it *Shaktipath* in terms of Kashmir Shaivism.

Regarding the word Karma Yogi, I fail to understand why every single obituary in the columns of news papers and community magazines are using this word with every departed soul? Is every

single individual a Karma Yogi or to quote from Abhinavagupta's Gitartha Samgraha, "He who is established in Yoga, having abandoned the fruit of action, attains lasting peace; he who is not attained in yoga, being attached to the fruits of action is firmly bound by the force of desire" (Chp-5 Shloka 12)

*Yuktah karma phalam tyaktva
Shantim acanthi naishtikim
Ayuktah kama karena
Phale sakto nibadhyate.*

Regarding miracles and aberrations of nature, I want to share with the readers what my father has written about Swami Atma Ram Ji of Gosain Gund, where my father Shri Janki Nath Ji, with whom I am putting up at Delhi, was working as a Patwari.

'Shiv ji Chiken of Srinagar was a close acquaintance of Swami Ji. Long back, on his tenth day of Nirvana, Swami Ji had to go to Srinagar but it rained heavily. Swami Ji called his *shishyas* Sh. Sarvananda ji and Sh. Nath ji and directed them that no body shall disturb him as he wants to sleep. Every body took it normally and thought that due to heavy rains, Swami Ji must have cancelled going to Srinagar. But every one was taken aback when after some days Sh. Raghu Nath Mattoo and his wife came to see Swami Ji at his ashram and Mrs. Mattoo innocently asked Swami Ji in presence of every one as to how He had managed to come back from Srinagar on the *tenth day* of Shiv ji, when it was raining very heavy. Every one now knew Swami Ji's 'Yog Maya trick'. Swami Ji was perplexed. He rebuked her and immediately deviated the topic'.

I can also quote another example of a relation of mine, who is presently living at Jammu. His name is Shri Makhan Lal Bhatt. Bhatt Sahib is a staunch follower of Saint Sona Saeb. Once in Srinagar, Bhatt Sahib met an accident. His vehicle was completely smashed but Bhatt Sahib did not even get bruised. He immediately rushed to Sona Saeb who was then at village Vessu. As Bhatt Sahib was nearing the house of the holy man, the holy man without having told by any one about the arrival of Bhatt Sahib started calling his name. He told the gathering to make some space for Bhatt Sahib. And as Bhatt Sahib reached and bowed before his 'Bub', the holy man undressed himself and showed the audience the injuries inflicted on his entire body. "See what you did to me, Bhatt Sahib, please do not drive so fast in future", he told Sh. Makhan Lal Bhatt Sahib. Any answers to this Doctor Sahib?

I contend that luckily for us the Kashmir Shaivism does not believe in miracles. But Doctor K.L.Chowdhury Sahib is fully conversant that Kashmiris were very famous for black magic. And let me today share with the readers that the famous Kashmiri folk story of Akanandun is simply a tale of black magic (Akayana Ananda). Though no one can refute Doctor Sahib's undertone of developing a scientific temperament in the society, the fact of the matter is that some of our Bhagwans and Bubs have certainly lived up to their names and have proved Abhinavagupta correct who points out to the characteristics of a seeker, as laid down in *Shripurvasastra*:

- 1) Unflinching faith in God;
- 2) Realization of Mantras;
- 3) Successful conclusion of the activities undertaken; so on and so forth.

(Introduction to Tantraloka by R.C.Dwivedi).

At the risk of repeating myself, I assert that these are matters of faith and are beyond justification of logic for ordinary people like me. But this faith of Kashmiris made the Adi Shankara realize the *Shakti tatva* of Shiva and he proclaimed thus.

*Shivah shaktyayuktoyadi
bhavatishaktah prabhavitum
Na ce devam devonakhalu
kusalah spanditu mapi
Atastva maradyam harihara
virincadibhivapi
Pranantum stotumva
katha makrta punyah prabhavati.*

This faith made thousands of followers of Abhinavagupta to follow their master to the cave that became their permanent abode in the world above. It is this faith that shall keep the tradition of Bagwans and Bubs alive and it is this faith that shall one day make us return to our roots in Kashmir. *Tathastu.*



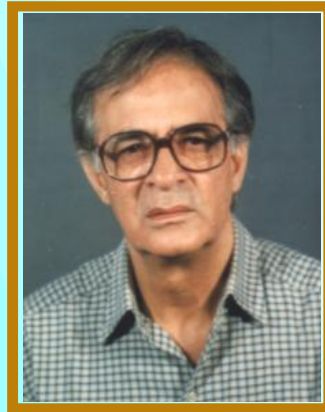
Attention Readers

The following features have not been included in this issue due to paucity of space. The same will continue in the September 2008 issue:

1. Story of Gule Bakawali
2. Yogiraj Swami Nandlal Ji Maharaj
3. Sisilubar - Kya Kya Vanu

SPECIAL FEATURE

Remembering The Philanthropist



Late Onkar Aima

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Pure for Sure**... **J.L.Manwari**

If I were a poet, I would pour my heart out and compose an 'elegy', if I was a Pastor, I would sing a 'requiem' and if I were a painter, I would paint a full canvass portraying the multifaceted personality of Kashmir's proud and beloved son Onkar Aima, who breathed his last on 28th September 2002; But, unfortunately, I am neither a poet, nor a Pastor, nor a painter, so I take refuge in a Canto of the seventh chapter of Bhagvad Gita, which, in my humble opinion, broadly encompasses the persona of Aima Saheb. Lord Krishna enunciates thus the virtues of Godly persons with divine nature in this Canto, which undoubtedly Onkar was:

"Fearless, purification of one's existence, inquisitiveness of spiritual knowledge, charity, austerity, simplicity, truthfulness, freedom from anger, compassion, fortitude, cleanliness, passion for honour. These are the transcendental qualities of Godly men with divine nature O Partha."

Born in a venerable family of 'Datatreya Kaul 'Gotra', Aima was the nickname acquired by the family as it is said, the family was gifted with the boon to be osteopaths (Waatangaer) who provide healing touch to people with orthopaedic dislocations. At their Fateh Kadal joint family compound, it is believed, long queues of people with orthopaedic ailments would be attended to by the family elders who were gifted thus. Onkar may not have inherited or practised osteopathy of his elders, but surely he had imbibed in abundance the art of providing 'healing touch' of harmony and friendliness which was evident by his exemplary behaviour.

Having been endowed with an impressive tall personality with chiselled Aryan features, Onkar was born with masculine charm. This God-gifted body of exquisite physical features had been enveloped by Aima Saheb by his conscious effort with virtues of a 'human being', which made him the most lovable person.

In the post-Independence era, when the cultural renaissance threw up talents in the field of art and aesthetics in the Valley, naturally Aima Saheb with his handsome personality and

irresistible befriending qualities emerged as unanimous choice for spearheading the cultural movement. Drawn into the cultural vortex, he soon found himself leading the cultural movement of the time. This movement not only revived the folk and traditional theatre of Kashmir but with the passage of time, the movement became 'Progressive Think Tank' of the post-Independence era of Kashmir. By this time, Aima Saheb had mastered the art of friendship which remained most amazing characteristic of his persona. Friendship to him meant life long bond even in the vicissitudes of life - a rare quality in the present day shifting-loyalties scenario.

In those days, the siblings from the ruling clan viz. Bakshi Saheb's family were his cotemporaries. They could also not resist Aima Saheb's infection of friendship. The friendship in the following years grew so much that Onkar became part of the family. Any other person in his place would have exploited the relationship for his personal benefits, as was, sorry to say, wont of many of our Kashmiri Pandits of the time, but Aima Saheb, with his passion for his honour and self-respect knew where to draw the line between friendship and overbearance. This trait of his character endeared him more to his friends and he was considered as a true selfless friend.

When political exigencies forced his politically connected friends to take a different political stance on various burning issues, Aima fearlessly did give vent to his feelings, but it did not create any chasm in the friendship, in fact it continued and became more cohesive. Now that Onkar is gone, the bond I am sure, shall always remain with his bereaved family.

When the history of cultural upsurge in Kashmir would be documented, it would be mentioned loud and clear that Onkar Aima was the lead actor in the first ever made Kashmiri film 'Mänziraath', which bagged the President's silver medal as the best regional film in 1964. Being an



Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima**

ardent student of aesthetics, his passion to satisfy his creative talent brought him to Bombay in 1965 to pursue his career in film industry, leaving his lucrative government gazetted job. The industry was quite receptive and offered this new face a lot of chances and Aima Saheb played different roles under famous banners of that era. But the irrepressible creative artiste in him remained restive. Here, the composite epicurean traits of Onkar, like the refined and discriminating taste, like subtlety of conduct, like exposition of beauty within, like sartorial preferences, like sobriety of approach and the finesse in all walks of life came to his rescue and he was drawn into modelling which he made his profession. In the mid 70s, he rose on the horizon of modelling and rubbed shoulders with the famous models of the time, not only rivalling them but at times excelling them a cut above. He continued modelling till the end of his life.

When Television made its foray in Bombay in 1972, Aima Saheb was perhaps among the first a few who played important roles in the sitcoms which were featured by the Bombay Doordarshan then. Yet the creative bug in him did not sit idle and it made him write, produce and direct many a popular morning shows for Doordarshan.

While he was pursuing his successful modelling career in Bombay, Sadiq Saheb, the then chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir formalised plans for his pet project of making a film on Mehjoor - the poet laureate of Kashmir. Prabhat Mukherjee was commissioned to produce and direct the film. The choice of playing Mehjoor naturally fell on Onkar, who played with aplomb the role of Mehjoor. 'Mehjoor, incidentally was the first bilingual film which was made in Kashmiri and Hindi versions. The film may not have done well commercially but it fortified the belief of Onkar that film medium could well project the essence of 'Kashmiriyat', of which he was an ardent advocate. As a sensitive artiste, Aima strongly believed that 'Kashmiriyat' was quintessence of harmony which, according to him, had its origin in Kashmir Shaivism, in the Vaakhs of Lalla Ded and the Shrukhs of Nund Reshi which taught Kashmiris never to discriminate between the

Muslims and the Pandits. Aima would often quote Lalla Ded's Vaakh to prove the point:

शिव छुय थलि थलि रोजान
मो ज्ञान ह्यौद तु मुसलमान।
त्रुख अय छुख तु पान परजुनाव
स्वय छय साहिबस सुत्य जॉनी ज्ञान।।

Naturally, for such a peace loving person, the ethno-cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits by their Muslim brethren from their homeland lacerated the innocent heart of Onkar and he nearly gasped for breath of harmony. The problem faced by the community in the wake of this turmoil agonised him beyond measure. To help the community members, he joined Kashmiri Pandits' Association - a non-political, social organisation and put his mite in mitigating the miseries of the uprooted youth and provided them whatever succor through the Association.

The diaspora of Kashmiri Pandits, he felt, would wean away Kashmiri youth from their culture and ethos and they would gradually get usurped by the alien culture and in the process Kashmiris would lose their identity. Aima Saheb felt that the least the youth could do to safeguard their identity would be to preserve their language. For this purpose, he instituted 'Mohan Lal Aima Music Awards' in the memory of his brother Mohan Lal Aima - the doyen of Kashmiri music, under the auspices of Kashmiri Pandits' Association. Under the scheme, Kashmiri youth upto the age group of 18 years are given cash awards to sing in Kashmiri. The underlying idea is to inculcate interest in Kashmiri language through music.

Notwithstanding the turmoil of 12 years in Kashmir, being an optimistic to the core, Onkar firmly believed that things would turn in his 'Reshvār' and he would often quote Nadim Saheb's famous verse:

मे छम आश पगहच
पगाह शोलि दुनियाह

To the dozens of youngsters who had landed up in Mumbai after the Pandit exodus, to pursue their

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career in the field of films, Aima Saheb was a father figure for them. He would befriend them irrespective of their age, encourage them and give them tips and share his experiences with them. In fact he was to them a friend, philosopher and guide.

From the family point of view, Aima Saheb was not only a loving husband but caring and understanding too. During their long years of separation when Shakuntalaji was working for State Education Department in Kashmir and Aima Saheb was struggling to make his mark in Bombay, it was their caring attitude for each other which fortified their relationship. Finally, when Shakuntalaji retired and joined her husband in Bombay, the understanding nature of the couple won the hearts of the Mumbai biradari and they were rightly christened 'made for each other'. As a doting father, Onkar always treated his two lovable sons as his friends. He believed that if the children are given good Sanskars, they would grow in the right direction. I am sure the Sanskars of the family would keep Onkar's name always alive.

Rich tributes have been paid to Onkar Aima throughout Jammu & Kashmir by his admirers and contemporaries. A lot of e-mails have been received from abroad lamenting the sad demise of Kashmir's noble and proud son. But the fittest tribute, I presume, has been paid through his last modelling assignment of Bharat Petroleum which he completed midway through his chemotherapy treatment, braving the monstrous disease. The bottomline of the advertisement was 'Pure for Sure'. Surely, Aima Saheb was a Pure Soul and such souls rarely tread this earth.

(From: Milchar, July-September 2002)

Manwati Sahib adds further:

Zindagi Ke Saath Bhi & Zindagi Ke Baad Bhi

"And let today, embrace the past with remembrance".
- Khalil Gibran



When one passes from this ephemeral world to one's eternal abode, after spending one's destined time in this transitory world, it is human

that one tends to come to terms with the pangs of separation as the years pass by. The dust of the times gradually shrouds even the faintest memories of our beloved departed ones'.

But there are some 'Puran Purshas' whose some dominant attributes stand out firmly refusing to get buried under the debris of the time. Such attributes are striking reminders of the qualities of a person which makes him a living example for the posterity after he is long dead and gone. Onkar Aima is / was one such example.

When I had written about Onkar after his demise, I had captioned the 'obit' as 'Pure for sure' taking a cue from the bottom line of one of his popular ads for Hindustan Petroleum. Today I borrow the punchline from the L.I.C. ad. 'ZINDAGI KE SAATH BHI AND ZINDAGI KE BAAD BHI' to describe the essence of friendship of Onkar, which had won him array of friends from all walks of life, irrespective of their age or gender. Here, I recount a few instances of intense tenacity of his friendship.

Mohd. Yusuf Bakshi, son of Haji Noor Mohd. Bakshi - brother of Late Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed (erstwhile Prime-Minister of J&K State) was one of the closest friends of Onkar out of Bhakshi Clan friends.

Way back in 1982, when Abhay, younger son of Onkar, had to take part in the prestigious 'Passing out Parade' of the Indian Air Force, Onkar and his wife being away to Dubai, who else, but his friend Mohd. Yusuf, endearingly called 'Mamu' by the family, would be 'Guardian' to cheer young cadet at the function. Mohd. Yusuf flew all the way from Srinagar to Bombay and further to Poona to be the part of function. A friend rightly befriended.

When the 'great friend' Onkar passed away, Mohd. Yusuf saw to it that he was physically present for a fortnight in Mumbai, cheering up the bereaved family and being a part of the last rites of his friend. One could see anguished and lacerated soul of Mr. Bakshi pouring out his heart in supplication.

In 2006, four long years after the vacuum caused by Onkar's 'flight', Mrs. Aima (Shakun as Onkar used to call her), was taken seriously ill and had to be hospitalized with multiple complications. A word went out to 'Mamu' & the

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next very day he was in Mumbai by the side of her children boosting their spirits - a friend in need.

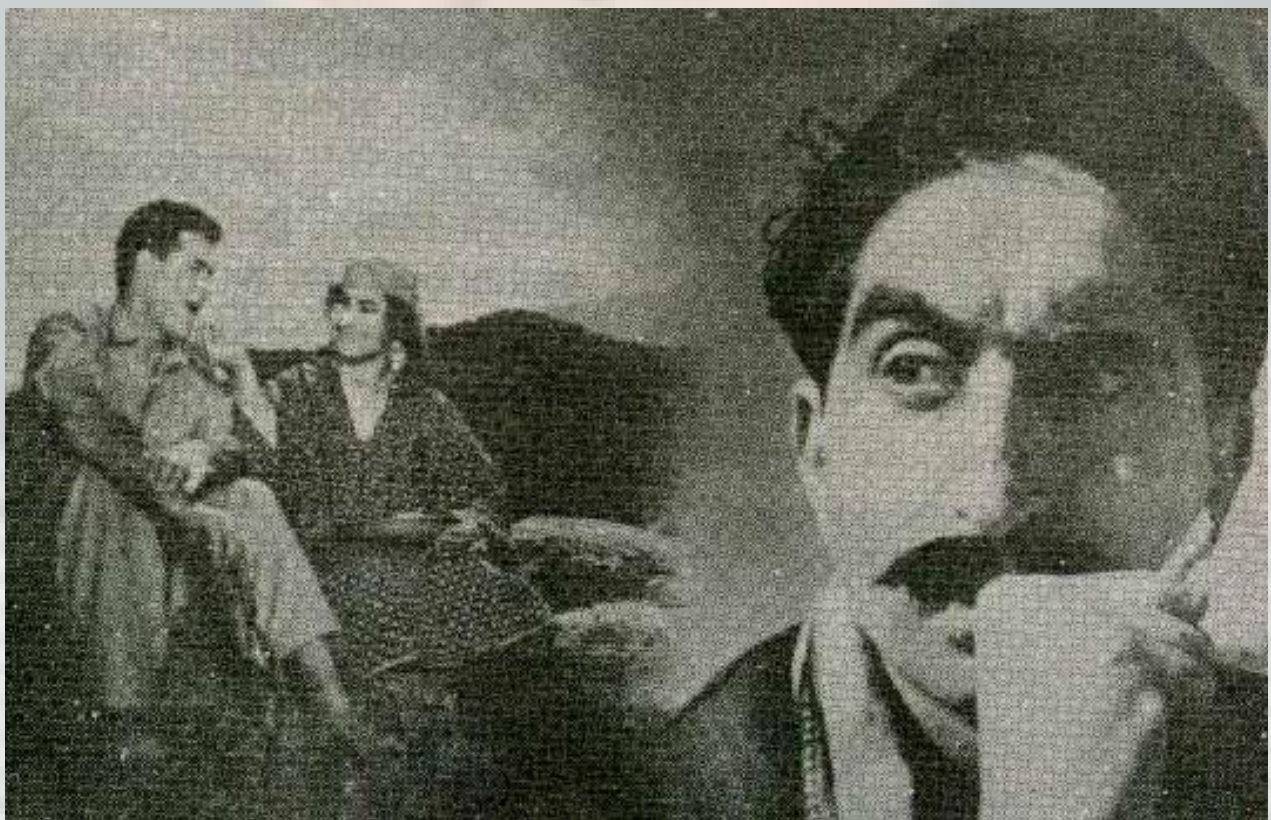
Onkar had mastered the art of friendship. He believed that the relationship between the friends, when on equal keel, without egoistic 'I' and 'Me' surely lasts. He had understood the basics of true-selfless friendship. That was the reason that he continued to have close-knitted friendship throughout his life with his school friends, adulthood friends, office colleagues, social friends, political friends and in his later life his film-world friends, modelling friends or say professional friends. They all loved him, respected him and felt proud to have a friend like him. Indeed a rare quality of a human being.

Onkar believed: 'Significance of Man is not weighed by what he attains, but by the treasure of friendship which he owns.'

Another quality which still reverbrates in the

society was his human touch. Onkar came from a Landlord family. The family did have inherit semblance of feudalistic environment, but Onkar was rebel.

The Progressive Movement in Kashmir after the independence had acquired definitely a socio-leftist stance. Young Onkar was drawn into the movement and he became ardent votary of classless society, with no high and low distinction nor divisive religious paradigams, which made him popular amongst his contemporaries. People of all the ages and genders would open their hearts to him. He possessed a degree of excellence which could embalm a hurt-soul and could also be a part of ecstatic mood of happiness of his fellow-beings who would hold him in reverential awe. For this, quality of his classless, casteless and sans religious divide demeanor he will always be remembered by the future generation.



Onkar Aima with Krishna Wali and Pushkar Bhan in a scene from film 'mänziràth'

(Photo courtesy: www.kousa.org)

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****My Pleasant Rememberances of Nadim Sahib ... Onkar Aima**

Soon after the invasion of the Valley by Pakistan on 22nd October 1947, feudalism in Kashmir had spectacular collapse, people's government was formed and along with it a great cultural upsurge unleashed. In 1948, Kashmir Cultural Front, an organisation of all available artistic talent was formed. This organisation was later re-christened as the National Cultural Congress. Nadim Sahib (Dina Nath Nadim) was one of the leading organisers of the new cultural movement that spearheaded Kashmiri cultural and literary renaissance. The cultural activities were revived, Kashmiri plays were written and staged, which were witnessed by thousands of people both on stage or open air stage. Nadim Sahib emerged the tallest among the Kashmiri poets and play writers. He gave new dimensions to Kashmiri poetry and plays. He introduced Blank Verse, Sonnet and Opera.

In 1950, I was able to form Amar Singh College Dramatic Club with the help and guidance of Principal Mohmed Ahmed. Prof. Nazir Ahmed was incharge of the Club and I was elected Secretary of the Club. 'Mahabharata' and 'Ahuti' were staged by the Club in 1950 and 1951. I played the lead in both plays. 'Ahuti' was a great success. It was for the first time that the girl students of the collage acted in the play 'Ahuti'. In 1952, I was stage director of the play 'Chattaa', staged by the Club. Tasting a little bit of success, I caught the acting and direction bug craze - Passion. I saw the plays staged in Kashmir. I read books but I could not get the feel of it, feel of the stage-craft.

In 1953, a meeting was held by Nadim Sahib at the residence of Mohan Lal Aima, my elder brother. I was asked to serve tea and thus a God-given chance to listen to Nadim Sahib. It is then, I learnt that they were staging 'Opera Bombur Yamberzal'. He spoke calmly but like an expert on stage craft. He listened to all, discussed it and rejected or adopted the suggestions on merit. It is there I learnt that Aima Sahib was to compose the

music and direct the play. Nadim Sahib's knowledge of stage craft, his narration of the theme, the way he expressed his feelings, struck me. I was drawn towards him. In another meeting later on at the same residence, while talking about stage play presentation, he said something like this, "Stage is a creative art in itself and not just a duplicate of what literature (or poems) say". I started having feel of the stage and its magic. I started reading his poems and plays. I had a burning desire to act in the Opera. I did not get a chance. 'Bombur Yamberzal' was a great success. The music of the Opera was highly appreciated and the song 'Bombr Bombro' became very popular. Producer of the film 'Mission Kashmir' Mr. Chopra lifted the lyrics and tune of 'Bombr Bombro' from the original Opera staged in 1953. It created sensation all over India and became very popular.

Ultimately my prayers were granted. In 1956, I got the chance to act in 'Heemal Nagirai' written jointly by Nadim Sahib and Roshan Sahib. While Kemmu Sahib choreographed its dances, the music was composed by Aima Sahib and also directed by him. This Opera like 'Bombur Yamberzal' was based on one of our old folk tales, legends. It is said that in a village in Pulwama, there is a spring known as 'Heemali hund Naag'. This is a very ancient folk tale when Kashmir was inhabited by Nagas and Pishachaas, who had constant strife amongst them to establish supremacy over one another. Nagirai, prince of Nagas is fed up with his cunning queens and he emerges in the house of Souda and Chora Batane as a young boy. They accept him as their son. I played the role of Chora Batane and Roshan that of Souda. Nagirai falls in love with Heemal and marries her. Koonah is sent by Nagas to sow seeds of suspicion in Heemal's



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mind. He succeeds. The efforts of Nagirai to finish animosity and hatred between his people and Pishachaas, to have peace in Kashmir are wasted. In the end, with the help of a hermit, Heemal and Nagirai meet. Their efforts, their sacrifices and their love ultimately awakens both sides. Hatred and animosity are washed off and peace prevails in Kashmir. While 'Bombur ta Yamberzal' depicted triumph of good over evil, 'Heemal Nagirai' depicted victory of love and human spirit. Nadim Sahib had keen ear for sound and rhythm of his native language. He and Aima Sahib made an ideal combination and produced one more stirring opera, rich in tantalizing music, which is important and dominating element of opera, to create emotional impact. Shadow technique was successfully used in the opera which made narration striking.

During making of 'Heemal Nagirai', I got more and more chance to meet, watch, know and understand Nadim Sahib. Both the operas mentioned above, are based on our ancient folk tales. Perhaps he was fascinated by these tales and had a feeling that these are like voices of our ancestors which come to us from sources of our culture and thus should be respected. More I saw Nadim sahib, more I met him, more I read him, I understood and realised that he was simplicity personified:

- a) Simple clothes ... unfussy
- b) Simple Life ... humble, lowly
- c) Simple language ... straight forward plain, effortless
- d) Simple presentation of Operas ...direct, unvarnished

Two things which I marked very keenly about Nadim Sahib were his smile and his expression of eyes. He had a permanent striking and smoothing smile on his face. His eyes, I felt sincerely, were speaking eyes...penetrating.

After reading Nadim Sahib, it does not need great effort to conclude that his great success lies in his mastery of Kashmiri language. Nadim Sahib, the brilliant Kashmiri intellectual enriched his work with simple Kashmiri words and phrases. He established

that language of everyday speech is rich and adaptable for a poetic medium, and does not need to deck itself in borrowed robes. He conveyed ideas most beautifully in simple day to day spoken language and caught the imagination of literate or illiterate Kashmiri. He used the language, which a commoner understood, felt, was touched and did identify with. That made him the most significant poet and opera-writer of the period. His favourite, preferred poem was 'Me Chhan Aash Paghuch' as said by him to Mr. Saqi in a conversation. This poem was his faith, his belief. He believed in universal love, oneness of mankind, peace. In spite of all the turmoils, he had strong faith in tomorrow. Never say die was his motto. This poem 'Me chham aash paghuch ...' is my mood lifter. Whenever I am dejected and depressed by the happenings in the Valley and about the plight of my community, I read this poem again and again. It is sad and unfortunate that this poem could not be put on Chhakree or on any folk tune, because it is music of ideas, not of words. It would have been, I believe, as popular as 'Bombro Bombro or perhaps more.

Nadim Sahib became a legend. He is no more with us. Yet I see him on the top of the Banihal mountain. I see him sometimes facing Valley and singing "Vothee Baaguch Kukilee...". Some other time, I see him facing sky saying "Bu gevu nu az...". It is a faint voice. I cannot hear it clearly. Yet again, at times I see him facing Jammu and Delhi and singing "Me chham aash paghuch, pagaah sholi duniyah...". During all this scene, I see him alone, without any alive member of his old trusted team, on either side of Banihal, responding to his voice. Perhaps they have withdrawn themselves into a shell or perhaps their priorities have changed. Yet I am not disillusioned. I may not live to see the day, but Nadim Sahib's dream morning will come true, all darkness will disappear, violence will go, hatred will vanish, love and peace will prevail.

[Source: www.milchar.com]

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Master Zinda Koul**

...

Onkar Aima

I stepped in the 'Baithak' (drawing room) and as usual said 'Namaskar'. There was no response. This time, to my surprise, my brother-in-law Mr. Amar Nath Raina was not surrounded by his clients and law books. Instead, I saw him a part of the gathering around an elderly person who was saying something very softly to the people around him. This elderly gentleman struck me as a noble, sweet and impressive. Strangely enough, as age would demand, this graceful man did not lean against the wall with a 'Takiya' (pillow) to support his back. He sat erect away from the wall. I kept on gazing at him till he stopped and looked towards me. My head bowed down, my hands automatically went up and with folded hands I said 'Namaskar Mahra'. This is how I met Masterji - Master Zinda Koul, for the first time.

Master Zinda Koul was very affectionately called Masterji. May be, because he started his career as a teacher in Hindu High School and ended his career in Vasanta Girls High School. Otherwise also, whenever I saw him in Raina Sahib's Baithak, surrounded by some persons, he would be the speaker and rest listeners, like a Master with his pupils. He was considered as an ideal teacher. So no wonder he was given the most respected name 'Masterji'.

Masterji was one of the most notable poets of his times. He was much respected by intellectuals and had gatherings, often at his place, which to my knowledge included Prof. P.N.Pushp, Advocate Kanya Lal, Mr. Janki Nath Bakshi, Advocate A.N.Raina, Prof. J.L.Kaul, Prof. Arjun Nath Raina, Mr. S.K.Dullu and Mr. Vidh Lal Aima. Mr. R.C.Kak who rose to become the prime minister of the State, was also one of the admirers of Masterji.

After my marriage, I came to know more about Masterji through my wife Shakuntala, who had been fortunate enough to be his student. She feels proud to have studied Bang-e-dara under his guidance. She has

been highly influenced by him who gave her unbounded affection and shaped her thoughts and beliefs. Her guiding principal 'The only key to happiness is love' has been given to her by Masterji. She often quotes Masterji to express herself. One of her most favourite verses is:



येति कांह नु वदुनावान शुर्यन
येति दीवियय मानान त्रियन
येति कूर गोबुरस खोतु टॉठ
येति न्वश नु कांह कर्मस दयान
जुव छुम ब्रमान गछुहा बु तोर
करनावि तारख ना अपोर

According to Shakuntala, Masterji was a man of few words and was always sweet and nice, although life had been bitter to him. The cruel hands of death had snatched away his elder son at a very young age. Masterji's life was not easy. He had to face lot of problems but he faced life's problems in calm and detached manner. Rightly, he was called a 'Grahasti Sadhu, a Karam Yogi'.

Later I saw Masterji at Bakshi Ghulam Mohd's place, the then deputy prime minister of the State. Bakshi Sahib was sitting in a chair in the lawn of his house and he saw Masterji getting down from the car and went towards him. He received Masterji with 'Namaskar' with folded hands. Bakshi Sahib took the 'Dussa' (shawl) from his shoulders and put it on the legs of Masterji. They sat for long time in the lawn, talking to each other. Bakshi Sahib held Masterji in high esteem and had great respect for him.

It is a great honour and a matter of pride to us that Masterji is the first Kashmiri poet who won the Indian Sahitya Akademi Award in 1956. When I learnt about this award, I

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seriously became interested to know more and more about his beliefs and who said what about him.

Prof. T.N.Raina, in his book 'An Anthology of Modern Kashmiri Verse' says, "Masterji had his early education in 'Maktab' (private school) and passed BA examination as private candidate. Both Prof. Raina and Prof. Kashi Nath Dhar write that Masterji showed great proficiency in learning Persian from a very early age and started writing poetry in Persian under the pen name of 'Sabit'. His poems were published under the title 'Diwan-e-Sabit'. Later he wrote Hindi poems under the title 'Patra Pushp'. Prof Raina writes that Master Zinda Kaul and D.N.Nadim like many other poets, which includes Mehjoor also, gave up their early devotion to Urdu/Persian and started writing in Kashmiri in early forties. What is unique about Masterji is that he started writing in Kashmiri at the age of fifty eight. His 'Sumran', a collection of thirtyfive Kashmiri poems won him the most prestigious award. Prof. Raina says, "Any review of the period of forties would be incomplete without reference to him, for he remains one of the foremost poets of the twentieth century."

When one reads the poems of Masterji, one finds he does not deliver sermons. He does not confuse or complicate the conclusions that he has arrived at, in his life. He is direct and suggestive. What is great about him is that his poems are clear and simple. Prof. Dhar writes, "Kashmir Shaivism, Vedanta and Upanishads are portrayed most eloquently in 'Sumran'." That could be true. But Prof. Raina's views are most intelligible. He explains it simply like this, "Masterji presents in Sumran the eternal conflict between faith, reason and problem of evil and suffering." In one of the poems in Sumran, Masterji suggests clearly that to avoid regrets, one should be careful not to miss the opportunity. This is what he says in one of his famous poems:

स्मरन पनुन्य दिचॉनम प्रेमुक निशानु वेसिये
रँछरुन तोगुम नु रोवुम ओसुम नु बानु वेसिये

But he does not feel dejected. He shows tremendous faith in HIM - the Almighty and is hopeful that there is no dearth in HIS kindness and says in the same poem:

यछ पछ मु हार ब्याखा, ह्यथ यूर्य वाति कांछा
तस छा कॅमी निशानन, बॅर्य बॅर्य खज़ानु वेसिये

He further expresses his faith in HIS mercy for broken hearted ones and says:

दिल फुट्चमुत्यन छु तोशन
यछ गॅर्यमुत्यन छु रोशन
गछ वॅर्यमुत्यन स्वदामन
पृछ गॉयबानु वेसिये

J.N.Bakshi (lovingly called Bhaigash) was a great admirer of Masterji. A.N.Dhar says, "Bhaigash often talked about scholarly and saintly qualities of Masterji and painted Masterji as simple, straight forward, peaceful and self-poised." Here is an illustration from a section of his poem devoted to Masterji by Bhaigash:

इनसान ड्यूतुम अख इनसाना
कनि तल, नु केमिस च़ालान बद
मशरिथ पान ज़ान लोलु मस्ताना
स्यज़रस पज़रस कति छुस हद

One more intellectual Prof. J.L.Koul, an admirer of Masterji says, "His work stands between two worlds of poetic imagination, one that has little hold on the present and the other that borrows little from past."

D.N.Nadim, a poet of the period and a great intellectual and scholar has paid tremendous tributes to Masterji in his 'Goda Kath' and praised his creativity as a poet.

Masterji had great reliance and trust in Almighty and in HIS doings. We find the finest expression of his strong belief in supremacy of faith over reason in following verses of 'Naatayaaree':

म्यानि खोतु युस बरान मे यछ तु लोल
आश तय गाश ओश तय सरकार म्योन

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काँछिवुन मे छारुवुन तय गारुवुन
 प्रारुवुन मे आदनुक दिलदार म्योन
 तँम्य दोपुम केह काल यथ दीशस अंदर
 यथ मकानस रोज़ म्यौनी वथ वुछान
 दूररिस मंज़ वारि फवलनय लोल पोश
 आँस्यजि हमसायन हकन तिम बाँगरान
 तार चोन अद ज़ानु ब, तय कार म्योन

Dr. Bhushan Koul mentions, "Masterji strogly believed in Karma and not in mere words or formalities of puja. He does not leave us guessing as he illustrates in one of his poems:

कृष्ण पूजा क्या छि पालुन तँम्यसुंदुय थोद कर्मयूग
 धर्मचे वति हुंद बनावुन राहबर श्री कृष्ण दीव
 यिम नु वरतावस अनन गीतायि हुंद अख ओड श्लोक
 लाब क्याह थ्यकुनावुनय लूकन अंदर श्री कृष्ण दीव

The poem, which acts from time to time as mood lifter to me and buoy me up is 'Majbooriya'. One has to accept the ups and downs of life as they come, without any complaints and desperation. Have child-like faith in HIM, the Almighty - the soother and the healer. I quote below a stanza of the poem:

वदिहे मनुश्य चेयिहे नु ओश
 वदनस वुछुन तौसीर क्याह
 हँरिथ अँछव किन्य खून क्याह
 छाँविथ पलन सुत्य हीर क्याह
 ब्रुजिथ जि बोज़ान छुम नु कांह
 फँरियाद करनुच ज़ीर क्याह
 लाँयिथ नबस यिम तीर क्याह

Prof. T.N.Raina writes, "Love in Masterji's poems is dominating and God is hound of heaven, forever waiting for man to turn to HIM." Dr. Bhushan Lal Koul puts it more strongly and writes, "To Masterji, love is God and God is love. Source of most of his poems is love." While Prof. Kashi Nath Dhar says

the same thing but in different style, "Masterji's innate introspection rejects the dress and only assimilates the pure."

Regarding love being supreme to Masterji, I take support of poet Firaq, who points out, "If you remove the two themes, which poets (Kashmiri) had restricted themselves to, i.e. Mysticism and Love - Kashmiri poetry disappears." In case of Masterji, Love remains uttermost and I feel his poems without love would perhaps lose its fragrance. Here are some stanzas of his different poems in which Love remains outstanding:

युथ कुलिस सग दिख जँमीनस वाति स्नेह
 लोल येम्य यस काँसि बोर तँम्य बोर दयस
 लोल च़ेय निश द्राव च़ेय वातान च़ववोँर्य
 गाटल्यव यी ज़ोन वॉतिथ पयस
 यी छु लोलुक राज़ यी इसरार म्योन
 प्रारुवुन मे आदनुक दिलदार म्योन

बु छुस पोंपुर च़े दीपस पथ
 च़ौँटिथ यिम जामु करहय गथ
 दिहँम नय जामु च़टनुच वथ
 क्योमाह ह्यू मा मरय लोलो
 लोल मस ज़ाल्यम तु गाल्यम
 यस बुडिथ मोलूम गव
 बीम नशु के त्राविहे मस
 च़्योन खुमारस क्या करे

Mystical poetry has left an indelible mark on the thoughts and conduct of a normal Kashmiri. Like many other poets, Masterji had influence of Rishi cult. Like Lalla Ded, he believed that the universal spiri in one. We must realize HIM whose manifestation we are. This is revealed in the following verses:

पनुन मे तीज़ुकुय आगुर
 यिमन ज़रन अंदर बासुम
 कुन्यर बाँविथ दुई कासुम
 गटे हुँदि गाशरय लोलो

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima**

यिमन ज्वयन अंदर योदवय
छु चाने सँहँज दर्मुक जल
बठ्यन हुंद छुख सम्योमुत मल
मे चावुन आगरय लोलो
पँज्य पान होव रुशि रँस्यतन रेश्यन
पशन ति बँरुख प्रय
अथ रेश्य दर्मस प्यठ तोह्य ति दँरिव
सम दृष्टि तँरिव अपोर

Some intellectuals are of the opinion that Masterji was not happy with the events taking shape in the state in early sixties and his poem 'Karanaavi Taarakh Naa' was out of that. Prof. T.N.Raina feels that this poem has no connection with politics. He finds 'Social awareness' as theme of poem. I find in this poem a cry from heart (वछि वॉलिंजि हुंज क्रख). It is the voice of anguish that torments a sensitive mind. The theme of the poem is more applicable now. This social awareness is today's need. It is a poem which touches my heart, a cry of agony, which comes straight from internal fabrics of heart. It is the voice of millions and millions, who are pained, grieved, tortured, tormented and are suffering in silence.

Let us read a few stanzas of this poem with all concentration:

नाकारु गोमुत नगर सोन
बसुनस नु लायक रुदमुत
लूटस त, हवुसस बॉज बठ
मंजबाग मिस्कीन मूदमुत
पँज्य-यॉर्य, रहबर, रेश्य, वॅली
करताम असि निश मूद्यमुत्य
जुव रँस्य मॅर्य पथ कुन तिहुंघ
मॅत्य मॅर्य तु मंदर रुद्यमुत्य
वथ रावरान मुल्ला तु गोर
करनावि तारख ना अपोर

येति कांह नु वदुनावान शुर्यन
येति दीवियय मानान त्रियन
येति कूर गोबुरस खोत टॉठ
येति च्वश नु कांह कर्मस दुयान
जुव छुम ब्रमान गछुहा बु तोर
करनावि तारख ना अपोर
कांह मा हचर-जद तय बिचोर
कांह मा छु मोत या चोर फ्योर
स्वरुनय नु नफचुच दोर दोर
पशनुक नु व्वश वदनुक नु शोर
संतोश व्रत छख लछ करोर
जुन छुम बदरमान गछुहा बु तोर
करनावि तारख ना अपोर
येलि सारिनय असि टोठि द्य
येलि फेरि पय प्रेयमुक च्वपोर
सॉरी बनन पँज्य किन्य मनुश
रोजी नु येति कांह हून ब्रोर
ती गव जि रामुन नगर खोर
रुजिथ यपॉरी तॅर्य अपोर
जुव छुम ब्रमान गछुहा बु तोर
करनावि तारख ना अपोर

This poem, Masterji has written just before leaving this mortal world on the 4th April 1966. Had he been alive now, मास्टरजी क्या स्वरिहे, I wonder!

[Source: www.milchar.com]

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Kashmiri Pandits and Music**... **Onkar Aima**

It is the need of the time to remind ourselves that Kashmir has a very rich cultural heritage and Kashmiri Pandits have contributed a lot in sustaining it, reviving it and developing it. Kashmir has been a grand arena of arts. There have been poets, dancers, writers, dramatists and musicians, who have attained glory in the literary and art world.

In music world, Kashmiri Pandits, from time to time, have contributed a lot to bring music of uncle of Kalhana, the historian. Bhimanayoka was a great musician of this time.

The instruments during this time were mostly flute, drum, lute, conch and cymbals. There is also mention of hudukka - sort of bagpipe. It is also mentioned in History of Kashmir by Bamzai that Bhiksacara, who occupied the throne for few months, indulged in playing music on earthen pots and on brass vessels.

During medieval Kashmir 1339 to 1819 A.D. - Muslim era - Zain-ul-abidin, Sultan Shah and Hassan Shah were great lovers of music. According to Srivara, author of Zaina Rajatarangini, musical festivals used to be held in Kashmir. It is during this time that Raja of Gwalior sent all standard books on Indian music, which influenced Kashmiri music. Srivara was also a reputed musician and rose to be the head of music department in King Hassan Shah's reign and did lot of service to Kashmiri music. King Hassan Shah also introduced Rabab - Persian musical instrument - to Kashmiri music. Even during this Muslim era, there were eminent and talented musicians like Sooni Bhat, Shridhar Bhat, Ajodya Bhat and Kshakara who developed Kashmiri music. It is because of their efforts that Kashmiri music shows stray resemblance to Indian and Persian music.

It was after the downfall of Chak dynasty that the music of Kashmir received a setback. Kashmir after this started losing art and cultural heritage. But music was kept alive by the genius and interest of individuals. It

withstood storm, tyranny and barbarity.

Arnimol, in her own way, kept the music of Kashmir alive. It is said that Zutshi of Safa Kadal used to have regular musical "Mahfils" in his house. He, it is said, sold his large lengthwise-house by Taks (lengthwise) to continue with his musical "Mahfils" to keep the music of Kashmir alive.

Regarding recent past the names of musicians which come to mind and which I can recollect starts with Ved Lal Vakil, a great lover of music, who helped sustaining Kashmiri music. Amongst others, he taught and trained his two daughters and a son. His two daughters, Rageshwari and Jaijyavanti have made their own mark in the field of music. In early forties, a group of musicians, headed by Prem Nath Chatu, included Sarvanand, R.K. Channa, Wanchu and Mohanlal Aima. They toured villages and sang in towns and would have long musical sittings. Prem Nath Chatu later joined Radio Kashmir.

The contribution of Shamboo Nath Sopori and late Mohanlal Aima to music of Kashmir is quite enormous. The former ran a very successful academy. He taught and produced noted musicians. The latter revolutionized the Kashmiri folk music and gave it a fantastic texture and world appeal. His LP - Kashmiri rhythms and melodies - are still available abroad. He gave music to Pamposh - a short film about Kashmir and first Kashmiri film - MAINZIRAAT - which won President's Silver medal. Pandit Jagan Nath Sheopuri also holds a special place in present day musicians. He is doing a lot of service to Kashmiri music. He is doing special work on Sofiana music. 30 Bolas of Sofiana music have been transferred to notation and a book "Sofiana Kalam Kay Sargam" has been written under his guidance. One cannot over-



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look the contribution of Sat Lal Saytari, Ramkishen Chakkri, and Gopinath Bhat (Bacha), in their own style. In later age, Gopinath would only sing the Sufi poets.

Because of Radio Kashmir, lot of musicians came into the forefront. Nirmala Chutu was one amongst them, who sang for "Mainziraat". Onkar Raina along with well qualified musician Usha Bhagati are doing service to Kashmiri music. Amongst the latest musicians Bhajan Sopori holds a respectable position. He is a noted composer and is giving new dimensions to Kashmiri music. Along with him Kakaji Safaya, who was running an Academy in Srinagar till he was there, and Krishen Langoo are doing a lot to develop the music of Kashmir. All the three have taught a large number of persons. Bhajan Sopori and Krishen Langoo are recent trend setters of Kashmiri music and have successfully composed music for many T.V. Serials.

Today, when Kashmiri Pandits are in a helpless state, living under torn and tattered tents, in rickety camps, in shabby rooms and in vacated stables, mostly in and around Jammu, in Delhi and in other parts of the country, the recent lot of musicians are still active and their spirits have not dampened. Rajendra Kachru, Arti Tikku, Kailash Mehra, Rita Koul, Neerja Pandit and Prerna Jaiikhani are doing notable work and are keeping the music of Kashmir alive. Yet there are many more. It is difficult to keep track of all new musicians yet one cannot forget the names of Basanti Raina, Kiran Koul, Asha Koul, Lovely Chandra, Sunaina Koul, Dhananjay Koul, Neena Kapoor, Mamta Raina,

Amarnath, Sushma Kala, Neena Sapru, Veena Koul Jalali, Shuhul Koul and others. Wherever they are, they are sustaining and serving the music of Kashmir in one form or the other. While they are serving music, they, in turn are being served by music. Music gives them strength and will to face the recent calamity, in calm. These dedicated musicians are giving meaning to life. Through music they are keeping the spirits of Biradari and spirits of those who had to run away from their land, high. They are imparting strength to them to put determined rebuff to the life and to the present circumstances in a heroic manner.

According to BHARATA - the author of 'Natya Shastra' - the aim of music is to express feeling and thought. The present lot of musicians express the feelings and thoughts of hometorn people in an innovative fashion, where words might differ, the pattern may not be the same, the composition might vary but the sound-the meaning-the design is the same-Live for Maej KASHEER and burning urge to go back to their homes with dignity and grace. They provide food for our spirit - elevate us - transport us to the world of tomorrow as the great poet Nadim has said:

"Me Chham aash pagahuch
Pagaah sholi duniyaah"
(I hope for tomorrow
When the world will be beautiful).

That is Music - food for spirit - transport to a beautiful world.

[Article Source: 'Koshur Samachar' and www.ikashmir.org]



Late Mohan Lal Aima, elder brother of Onkar Aima and a doyen of Kashmiri music at a family function. Ashok Pandit can also be seen in the picture.

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Adi Shankaracharya's Visit to Kashmir ... Onkar Aima**

Kashmir has been a sacred place a seat for learning. Swami Paramahansa Yogananda tells us in 'Autobiography of a Yogi' - "Mythological tales in Purana say that the Himalayas are abode of Shiva-King of Yogis". So does Kalidas describes the Himalayas as "The massed laughter of Shiva". 'The Hindu Tradition' mentions that Kashmiri was a center of Shiva Worship and according to some traditions, it was from here that the devotional Shaivism passed on to the rest of India.

Right up from ancient times great scholars, sages, saints, philosophers have been visiting Kashmir to learn, to gain knowledge, to excel in the field of spiritualism, mysticism and religion. Saints and seers found Kashmir a fertile place for the spiritual Sadhana. They always gained by their visit to Kashmir.

The sincere purpose - intention - of this article, to be followed by such other articles, is to remind ourselves - to inform our younger generation - that Kashmiri Pandits have always been torch bearers in different fields. History is witness to it that we have always been GIVERS. We have led and have not been led - we have represented and have not been represented. That is our past - that is our strength - that is what we are. The object is to resolve that the glorious past of thousands of years will not be allowed to be disturbed by unscrupulous elements through subversive efforts and activities for their selfish ends.

Adi Shankaracharya, a great philosopher - a saint of high order, re-established true faith in Upanishads and gave Vedanta philosophy a right footing. He visited Kashmir in first quarter of 9th Century (788-820 A.D) NK Kotru in 'Sivastotravali of Utpaladeva' mentions that when Buddhism was dominating in India, the great Shankaracharya launched a Vigorous Campaign in the South and popularized the

cult of Bhakti, to reduce the influence of Buddhist domination. He had a sweeping tour of the country and defeated Buddhist Scholars with his powerful logic.

"He checked the tidal wave of nihilism (denial of all reality) Says the writer in 'The life of Swami Vivekananda'. At the same time Kashmir was also under strong influence of Buddhism, when Vasugupta appeared on the scene and changed the whole current of religious thoughts. He propagated the 'Siva Sutra', revealed to him by 'Shiva' himself, as engraved on a big stone at the foot of Mahadeva mountain.

Dr Ved Kumari in 'The Nilamata Purana', writes that according to writer of 'Sankara Digvijaya' - 'Sankara visited Kashmir after giving a final blow to Buddhism in the rest of India'. However, according to NK Kotru - "It was in Kashmir that Buddhism received death blow". PN Magazine, a research scholar of repute, writes in 'Shankaracharya Temple and Hill' that Shankaracharya visited Kashmir with the intention of advancing Vedantic knowledge. That time Kashmiris were culturally and spiritually much advanced and believed strongly in the greatness of both Shiva and Shakti. Shankara did not, at that time, when he visited Kashmir, believe in Shakti cult PN Magazine mentions that Shankaracharya with his party camped outside the city of Srinagar, without any boarding and lodging arrangements. Seeing the plight of visitors a virgin was sent to meet Shankara. She found the party uneasy and frustrated because of not being able to cook as no fire was made available to them. The first glimpse of Shakti was exhibited to Shankara by this girl, when Shankara expressed his inability to make a fire, in reply to girl's question that you are so great, can not you make fire. The girl picked



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up two thin wooden sticks (samidhas) into her hand, recited some mantras and rubbed the sticks and fire was produced to the surprise of Shankara. PN Magazine further adds that later a Shastrarth (religious discourse) was arranged between Shankara and a Kashmiri woman. This discourse continued for 17 days. Shankaracharya yielded before the lady in discussion and accepted the predominance of Shakti cult (greatness of Devi).

According to PN Magazine, after accepting predominance of Shakti cult, Shankara wrote Saundarya Lahari, in praise of Shakti, at the top of the hill, known till then as Gopadari Hill. Pandit Gopi Krishan writer that Panchastavi—gamut of Shakti Shastra - a priceless gem - a peerless hymn of praise addressed to Kundalini. The work has been cited as source book by several eminent scholars, but the name of the author has remained undisclosed". According to him the only other work in whole gamut of Shakti Shastra in the country, comparable to Panchastavi is Saundarya Lahari. PN Magazine says that Saundarya Lahari is acclaimed as master-piece in Sanskrit literature. After the visit of Adi Shankaracharya to Kashmir, he became staunch believer of Shakti-Shri Chakra - the symbol of Devi (Goddess) as mentioned in 'Shankara Digvijay' - Life history of Shankaracharya. Thus we know that even, a very knowledge philosopher, a Saint of greater order- Adi Shankaracharya - gained further depth in spiritualism and mysticism in Kashmir. Kashmiri Pandit - great 'Mehman Nawaz' - highly appreciative of knowledge (which has at time sproved undoing for them), awarded a degree of the Sharda Peetha, the highest honour conferred on any dignitary of knowledge when Shankaracharya visited Sharda, a famous temple, Shrine of Goddess Saraswati and a famous university of learning.

This temple is situated about 100 kilometers to the South West of Srinagar,

which is now under occupation of Pakistan. Kashmiri Pandits were not satisfied by this award to Shankaracharya and desired to honour him further more and dedicated the hill and temple where he wrote Saundarya Lahari to the memory of his visit to Kashmir. The hill, till that time known as Gopadri hill and temple are both, thereafter, known as Shankaracharya hill and Shankaracharya temple. 'Kashur Encyclopadia' published by J&K Academy records -"Behind Shiv Lingam at Gopadri (Shankaracharya temple) is Statue of Adi Shankaracharya, which has been installed in 1961, by Shankaracharya of Dwarka Peeth, Pilgrimage to this temple is must be any scholar, philosopher, mystic, saint or seer who visits Kashmir. While writing this I am reminded of a Kashmiri poet, who has said:-

*'Yus chaman paamaal kari tas laar kar
Saz yath dil vaayi Suy raazaah vanav
Yee pagaah asi peyi karun tee azy karav
Aschi kwochhi manz prazli pagahuk aaftab
Azchi berang zindagaani kar hissab'*

*Chase him who comes to bhight the garden,
Speak the word that makes the heart sing, Let
us begin tomorrow's work today, Today is
nurse of tomorrow's Sun Take stock of your
present pallid fate.*

[Article Source: 'Kashmir Serntinal' and www.ikashmkir.org]



Onkar Aima with his family

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Onkar - My Friend**... **Bakshi Mohd. Yusuf ***

Onkar and myself were very close to each other in all aspects of life - and we enjoyed it together. Out of our bunch of friends, he and myself clicked together. Everyone would tease us for this. He was a person who believed in principles and followed them.

Onkar would go out of his way to help anyone and everyone. For this he would get in trouble sometimes, but he faced it smilingly.

Kashmiris are Intelligent, alongwith that he was Brilliant - a Nobility personified. He had good hand writing and grip of all subjects, whatever subject it was.

Onkar was interested in Music and Theatre. He acted in dramas in Amar Singh College, in which college girls participated (if I remember correctly, first time). College girls and their parents trusted him. After drama was over late in the night, we would accompany these girls and drop them at their houses, because he felt, it was our duty to see that these girls reach their homes safely. That was his dedication.

Onkar got introduced to politics - Politics of selfless nature. He suffered in politics. Since he was not an angel but only a human being, he would get upset. Yet he never complained. He faced challenges and believed 'Success is to walk with confidence on the shores of challenge'. Life is not bed of roses, it is also full of failures. He would get disturbed on failures but would face them boldly.

Everyone called him 'Aima' and not Onkar. I do not remember why?

When Onkar got married to my 'Rakhi Sister' Shakuntala Razdan (as she was known then), he felt happy that he got a good life partner. When they got their children Aalok and Abhay, he felt his dream of life was fulfilled. Thank God, we see Onkar in these two children. May God bless them.



One who comes into this world has to die, and that also at the place and the time fixed by Him. So he went away physically from us. But he lives with us day and night through the 'Memories' he left behind. And these memories will live with us till we also leave this world.

Time sails on and the ship of life changes its course, It is our memories which still anchor us to our relationships.

[Author was a close friend of Aima Sahib. He lives in Srinagar, Kashmir.]*



Two friends together.

"He is my Friend, Philosopher and Guide", Aima Sahib used to say of his friend Bakshi Mohd. Yusuf.



Aima Sahib with other Members of the Board of Trustees of Lalla Ded Educational & Welfare Trust at the inauguration of the 'Child-care Centre' at Vasai in March 2000.

Also seen in the picture is Late Shanta Kapoor, Member of the Trust's Parent Body and a veteran social worker.

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Onkar - A Childhood Hero**... **D.N.Wali**

When M.K.Raina informed me that he is carrying a special feature on Late Shri Onkar Aima in the next issue of 'här-van', I was very happy. Onkar deserved it. Rather, we deserved it. But he wanted that I should also contribute to this issue. It was a difficult task for me. I must

confess that I did not know Onkar closely except in his later years. I can at best give my reminiscences howsoever inadequate these may be.

Whenever I think of Onkar Aima I am back to my school days and the post partition scene of Kashmir. It was then one day all the boys started talking of Onkar entering the film world, starting from his appearance as hero in Manzirath. Our image of his was of a tall handsome young man whom we had seen on various youth forms and political platforms of those days. The Kashmir society was in great effervesce those days and a band of dedicated young men were involved in defining the new order and working for it being adopted by the society. Onkar was a part of this band of dedicated group hence he was already visible when the film foray dominated the local news. His handsome persona had all the attraction. I would not hesitate to say that to us he was the definition of what handsome should be. He thus became an instant Hero for the Kashmiri, I being no exception.

The cultural scene of Kashmir in those days also had come to be full of activity. Music, poetics, theatre, fine arts etc, getting a new life. This happened due to great deal of effort by people like Onkar. He would be seen in all forms, though theatre was his special interest. I remember in his later days when somebody said that no copy of the script of Nadims opera Bomber Yamberzal is available, he claimed that he still holds a copy. Even in his later days, I saw him storing good music and taking copies notes from good works in arts.

The accession of Bakshi Ghulam Mohmad as

the then prime minister of the state made Onkar a more prominent figure not only because he was very close to the family but as he was actively involved in making the regime stable and politically coherent. After working as Record officer of J&K Militia, he left for Mumbai the Macca of Indian film industry. We became very hopeful of a prominent place for him on the silver screen. We thought he will make it big there. Better than one time hero Jawahir Kaul had done. We saw him in some roles here and there but not as big as we had imagined. I saw him in his later years advising youngsters from Kashmir aspiring for a place in the visual media, to come together and help each other. There is a great amount of cartelisation in this field. I have faced it in my days. Try to overcome it by helping and promoting each other. In this advice I could sense what could have prevented him from making big in this industry, although he never complained.

By that time I also left Kashmir and kept moving from place to place till I landed in Mumbai. It is here that I got acquainted with this childhood hero of mine, for the first time in flesh blood. I saw the same grace and candor about him. But on personal contact I discovered a very affectionate person in him. He did abound in love for all those who came in touch with him. He was the magnet which attracted stream of people to his apartment in Rattan Priya on Carter Road. Of course he was supplemented by his very affectionate wife Shakantula. They had married by falling in love while at the college. This they had done when such things were not known in Kashmir. That was also the reason they had become celebrities in the local society. We would enjoy listening to their romantic tales as narrated by their



Special Feature

Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima

friends of younger days, of course in their presence.

It is my regret that I came into contact with Onkar only very late in his life. I wish I had known him from much earlier and seen the full range of his personality, or he could have lived few more years so that I could have enjoyed his company. I have another small regret. Some time before his death we visited Matunga to meet the Shankaracharya. There I took him to eatery for South Indian dishes. He liked it. He kept reminding me for a second visit. We could not make before his death. This is my personal regret



At Aalok's wedding in 1987



With Aruna Asif Ali



**With Shakuntala Aima
'Made for Each other'**



With the family members of Late Narinder Bedi, Film Director and son of legendary Rajinder Singh Bedi

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Onkar - My Cousin**... **T.N.Bhan**

Many years ago, in early forties, I was a student of pre-primary class at CMS High School at Fateh Kadal, Srinagar. My brother Brijmohan (now Dr. B.M.Bhan at Srinagar) was also a student of the same school. Sometimes during the recess or after school, we used to go to our aunt's place very close to the school, to be treated to a sumptuous treat of snacks and tea. Our cousins Mohanlal, Onkar and Makhanlal would also join us.

As time passed, Mohanlal after acquiring Master's Degree joined Radio Kashmir at Srinagar. Onkar joined the J&K Government and held responsible position. Being close to a political family, he was caught in the political crossfire and had to come to Mumbai. He had the main role in the Kashmiri movie 'mäziráth' (Mehandiraat) which won President's Award in early sixties. In Mumbai, he had some stints with the commercial ads as a successful male model. He also had a major role in the Hindi movie 'Saraswati Chander'. In the Serial 'Gul-Gulshan-Gulfam', he acted alongwith Parikshit Sahni for a number of episodes. Later on he got an opportunity to work abroad. He worked at Dubai for some time. But

then he returned to Mumbai.

Throughout his career whether as a student or as a government employee at Srinagar, Onkar took active part in all the social events of the society. During the Qabaili raid of the Valley in 1947, his brother Mohanlal and he were active members of National Conference. He along with other volunteers would go around in groups through the streets and lanes of Srinagar and with their slogans encourage people not to lose heart and be fearless. They used to shout in unison 'Hamlaavar Khabardaar, Hum Kashmiri Hain Tayaar'. Those were the days of turmoil for the Valley.

Needless to say that all through his ups and downs, Onkar's better-half Shakuntala stood by him. Together they guided and directed the careers of their two sons Aalok & Abhay.

In Mumbai, Onkar was an active member of Kashmiri Pandits' Association. He attended every function of the Association till his health failed him.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.



T.N.Bhan looking for a reference book in Aima Sahib's library

How much was Aima Sahib attached to Kashmir, can be guessed from these portraits on the walls of his home at Matunga, Mumbai



Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Onkar Aima - My Recollections**

...

T.N.Dhar 'Kundan'

I remember my days in the two colleges back home in Srinagar, Sri Pratap College and Amar Singh College. I was a shy but studious student, who was interested in studies and literary activities only. I had no interest in politics, either student politics or country politics. Even then as with any other student I could not be ignorant about Omkar Aima and his other friends who were very active in politics and related activities. Those were the days when Marx and Lenin influenced youngsters and the progressive writers attracted them a great deal. We often used to hear very big technical words like proletariat, bourgeois, dialectical materialism, exploitation by the capitalists and so on and so forth. Aima was a role model for the movement espousing the cause of the down trodden. Whenever a need arose he and his friends would lead the students, organize strikes and protest marches. All this was peaceful. I vividly remember his slim and tall body and fair distinct Kashmiri colour.

There was a link between these politically conscious and active students like Omkar and me and that was the progressive movement in literature. I was deeply interested in literature and, therefore, could not remain unaware of the writings of progressive writers like Faiz, Jaffari, Majaz, Rashad, Meeranji, Sahir and others. In my own language there were progressive writers led by Dina Nath Nadim whose writings were very popular with this band of students. This interest helped me know and see Aima more often and more intimately. His straightforward and polished demeanour was captivating. This endeared him to the entire student community.

Thereafter I came to know of his marriage with Shakuntala ji, who was very well known to me because of her social and literary activities. I was happy for both of them but lost track of them till I joined Radio Kashmir and had an occasion to work closely with Late Shri Mohan Lal Aima, Omkar's elder brother. (Mohan Lal) Aima Sahib, as we used to call him fondly, was a genius and a great innovative music director. He produced and directed all the musical features written by

me those days and gave me a lot of encouragement. During those days again I met Omkar quite often. He had not changed a bit. There was the same innocent and simple look on his face and a child-like smile on his lips. I did not know about his engagements or profession till one day I chanced to see a Hindi movie in which he had played a prominent role. I was pleasantly surprised to know that Omkar was a talented actor and was seriously involved in this profession. The artist in him had matured and he was committed to his acting. Above all he was a humane person with a heart of gold, compassionate and kind.

I knew that he had chosen Bombay as the place for his activities. In fact I gathered from many acquaintances from that place that he was actively involved in the affairs of the Kashmiri community and was very popular because of his commitment to the cause of Kashmiris living in Maharashtra. He was an active member and later the president of Ragnya Prasad Memorial Foundation under the auspices of which I had the privilege of delivering a talk on the 'Five millennia old culture and literature of Kashmir' at the Constitution Club, New Delhi in December 2000.

**In a pensive mood**

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****The Most Helpful Person**

...

Chand Dhar

▲ tall, handsome personality with a smiling face - this is the first thing that comes to mind while describing Aima uncle. He was the person whom I knew for years as a guide, as a sweet uncle and most of the time as a good friend.

But Why do I remember his as a friend? Though much older than us, he himself wanted to be a friend of us all. We were a group of 10-12 boys and girls of Kashmiri community. All of us in the group had to be at his place at least once a week for interaction on different matters. It was basically in his blood to treat us all in a very friendly manner, even though we were of the age of his children. It was also the love and affection of this great person, which compelled us to meet him on one pretext or the other. Not only him, his wife also was part of our meetings and she would also take part in our chit chat. She is the one having a big heart. This husband wife couple would provide us everything for the weekend, be it food, clothing, even whisky and cigarettes. They were doing it from the bottom of their heart. Their son was also part of our group and one could observe they never discriminated between him and us. Those were our bachelorhood days and we used to have nice homely food, at least on the weekends from our lovable hosts, nay our great benefactors Aima uncle and Shakuntala aunty.

Aima uncle was such a fantastic personality that even our female friends would prefer to spend time with him, leaving us alone. They all used to really enjoy his company. In those days we used to do some cultural programmes for our community. Aima uncle would always offer his help to enable us to run the show in a decent way.

Once it so happened that we were performing a Kashmiri play and we had very little time to practise. We were worried as we could not remember our lines properly. He got to know our problem and immediately came up with a suggestion that he was ready to act as our prompter. It was a great gesture from this

profound personality and we were so much amused and encouraged. He was such a helpful person. He was one of those few Kashmiris who would read Kashmiri in Urdu script at that time. Things became easy for us with his help and we did the show successfully.



Aima uncle always made it a point to be present at all the community picnics and get-togethers. He would make great efforts to see that the cultural shows were a success, rendering all sort of help to organisers and performers. In fact, one could not think of a cultural show without his contribution and presence.

Aima Sahib always encouraged people of our community to converse in Kashmiri and strive to know our roots. He himself was a true Kashmiri in every sense. To my knowledge he was the first person who started 'Mohan Lal Aima Music Awards' in the name of his brother Late Mohan Lal Aima, a doyen of Kashmiri music. Under this competition, children, both in boys' and girls' category, were encouraged to sing Kashmiri songs. Winners were given cash awards, wholly sponsored by Aima uncle himself.

Aima uncle is no more with us 'physically' but 'mentally' he will always remain with us. He was an actor, a class model and an excellent human being. His departure from this materialistic world in the year 2002 created a big vacuum in our community, which can not be filled for a long long time to come.

It may not be out of place to mention that after Aima Sahib, his wife Smt. Shakuntala Aima continues to be a guiding force for us as well as for the youth of today. May God give her a long life, so that we have some consolation receiving good wishes from the better half of Aima Uncle.



Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Uncle is my Idol ... Sunil Mattoo**

When I came to Mumbai, trying to find a foothold in this vast city, it was only Aima Uncle & Aunty's home that made me comfortable in a new city. Right from day one, they never made me feel like an outsider and I always felt welcome in their warm abode.



Over the years Uncle's moral and social support helped me in my personal as well as professional growth. He became my idol and someone whom I would always look upto wishing that in his esteemed company some of his wisdom would brush up on me. Today whenever I think of him, I always hope that I have imbibed his values and principles and that I too age as graciously as he did.

**Time to relax****At Calicut on Aalok's wedding**

A Painting by renowned artist Gulam Rasool Santosh, gifted by the great painter to Aima Sahib. Later, this painting was adopted as its emblem by the Lalla Ded Educational & Welfare Trust.

Still Guiding Us ... Seema Mattoo

'Warm and affectionate' are the words that come to my mind when I think of Aima uncle who would be always there for us with a kind word of advice. There were many leisurely evenings that we (Sunil & me) spend at his place where he would regale us with wonderful anecdotes and time would just fly. His tales from the past were often of his vast experience and encounters in life and they were much more than mere stories.



It's been six years that Uncle is not with us but whenever we take a bold new step in life and venture into unknown territories, I feel as if his blessings are still with us and he is somewhere watching us and guiding us to take the right path.

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****The Outspoken Personality**

...

M.K.Raina

It was sometime in 1994, the year I shifted from Jammu to Mumbai, when a get-together function was held at Kashyap Bhawan, Bhawani Nagar, which I came to know of through my Mamaji Shri Mohan Lal Dhar. Though I was not known to members of the Mumbai biradari, I made it a point to attend the function and get introduced to people around, as also to get acquainted with the Mumbai Association and its office bearers. I was new to Mumbai, having spent five years in Jammu after migrating from the Valley in 1990 at the peak of terrorism, and finally deciding to make Mumbai my future home. It was a new place for me. I was excited as well as confused about the place and the people.

As soon as I entered the premises, I saw a number of stalls raised on the adjacent ground by young boys and girls of the community, for selling Bhajan books & audio tapes and for playing games. Inside the main hall called Kashyap Bhawan, tables had been laid, serving hot Bajjiya and Kashmiri Kehwa. Two women were managing the stalls, who I came to know later, were Pinki Kapoor and Neena Kher. There was lot of rush inside, people chatting and cracking jokes, one pointing to immediate necessity of conducting repairs to Kashyap Bhawan Hall because of leaking roof slab, others enquiring about the forthcoming biradari get-together, a few concerned with the admission of migrant KP children in the Maharashtra professional colleges and so on and so forth.

Having gulped down 3 or 4 cups of Kashmiri Kehwa at the Kehwa Counter, I got thick and thin with Neena and told her all about myself and about the exodus. She introduced me to Shri Moti Kaul, the then President of the Kashmiri Pandits' Association and other office bearers. She was about to introduce me to other people around

when I heard someone informing her of the arrival of some 'Uncle'. I looked at the person entering through the main door of the Hall, who, in my opinion, was amazingly resembling the hero of first Kashmiri film 'mäñziräth', which I had watched in Srinagar atleast thrice during my school days. The 'hero' was still fresh in my mind, having watched him later in a couple of advertisements in the cinema halls. The figure before me was a handsome tall person, wearing light brown jeans and greeting everybody with a smile. I concentrated my eyes on his built-up and asked



Neena Kher to tell me about him. She told me that he was Aima Uncle, as she used to call him fondly. I asked her if he was somehow related to the hero of film 'mäñziräth'. She was shocked. "Don't you know him?" She asked with utter surprise. "No", I said. "He is Onkar Aima, the hero himself", she declared. It was the moment of shock for me now. That so much time had rolled by since 'mäñziräth' film, I could not grasp immediately. I could not conceive that a film hero could come of age so speedily, though I myself had

crossed 45. How fast had time flown!

Neena introduced me to Aima Sahib. He was courteous, soft spoken and loveable. He asked me all about my migration, my family and my further plans at a new place. We sat leisurely in one corner of the Kashyap Bhawan Hall. I told him about my interest in literature, especially Kashmiri literature. He was kind enough to assure me a helping hand as and when I needed it. He asked me to visit his place at Mahim in the days to come, so that we could have interchange of ideas concerning literature. My first impression



Special Feature
Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima

about Aima Sahib was pleasant and comforting.

My association with Aima Sahib got further strengthened with the passage of time. The KPs in and around Vasai founded a charitable educational trust named Lalla Ded Educational and Welfare Trust. Initially there was some resentment to the idea from the Mumbai biradari as they thought it was another social organisation parallel to Kashmiri Pandits' Association, Mumbai. With the good offices of some of the veterans of Mumbai biradari, the misunderstanding was cleared. The Board of Trustees of this Trust, which was scheduled to work in the field of education, had mixed representation from all the areas of Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and North Mumbai. Shri Onkar Aima, a member of the first Board of Trustees, was unanimously elected as the Treasurer of this Trust. Captain A.K.Misri was elected as Chairman.

In the years to come, I got actively involved with the affairs of Kashmiri Pandits' Association. In 1996, I was elected as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Association, where ultimately I took over as General Secretary during the Presidentship of Shri P.N.Wali.

Because of my interest in the Kashmiri literature, Shri P.N.Wali, the then Editor-in-Chief of 'Milchar' asked me to join 'Milchar' editorial team as Coordinating Editor. Shri Aima Sahib was one of the members of the BOT and also a member of the Editorial Board. It was an honour for me to work with the veterans like Wali Sahib and Aima Sahib.

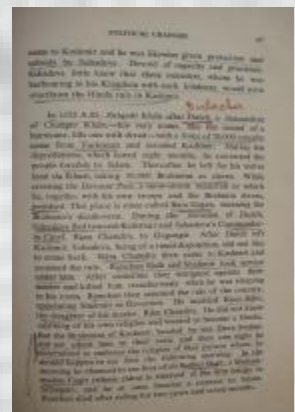
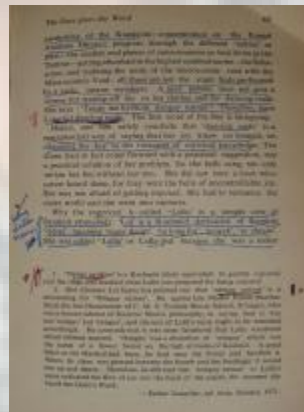
In the following years, the Lalla Ded Educational Trust and Kashmiri Pandits' Association came together to initiate a literary platform in Mumbai. The platform was named 'Project Zaan'. A team to run the affairs of this Project was constituted which consisted of Shri J.N.Kachroo, Shri J.L.Manwati, Shri Onkar Aima, Shri P.N.Wali, Smt. Neelam Trakru, Shri Uday Upendra and myself. I was elected as Convener of the Project. It was from this literary platform that we published information with regard to our



motherland, our language, our culture, our religion, and all that related to Kashmir, Kashmiri and Kashmiris, first through one-page leaflets and then through compendiums under the title of 'Information Digest Series'. Under this programme, a book on the Kashmiri-Devanagari Script for Kashmiri language, namely 'Basic Reader for Kashmiri Language' was also published in the year 2002. In compiling the data for Information Digest Series, as also for the 'Milchar', the contribution from Aima Sahib was immense. He not only went through the vocabulary of 'Basic Reader' himself, but also asked his wife Shakuntalaji (whom I fondly called Masi) to render a helping hand, which she did gladly inspite of paucity of time.

Aima Sahib's write-ups for the Information Digest series were always clear, to the point, and carried the authenticity one would like such digests to have. Aima Sahib would normally select a subject of his choice and write extensively after consulting a number of reference books from his small library, which he was very proud of. He would read and re-read the content a number of times till

he was satisfied that there were no errors and no contradictions with the available literature on the subject. His write-ups were neatly written in his own hand. As a computer operator, how I wished there could be an English font resembling Aima Sahib's hand writing. I always used to



Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima**

secure his writings. While going through the pages of a book, he would even record notes and reference marks on the pages itself, for ready reference in the future. He would point out the discrepancies and conflicts between various authors and try to find out the truth from a book by another author, eventually leading him to acquire it for record and reference. I once requested him to lend me a book named 'The Kashmiri Pandit' by Anand Koul for a few days as I was writing an article on the subject and the book was out of print. He refused straightway, looking straight into my eyes. It was a painful experience for me. I was so close to him and his denial was really a shock to me. After a while, when I was normal, he patted me and asked me to have tea first, which I had quite forgotten because of my emotions. He then explained in detail as to why it is not good to lend one's books. Immediately I remembered an episode of the year 1975. One S.K. Ganjoo was my colleague in the government department in Kashmir where I was serving. My uncle had got me a book on architectural designs of bungalows from Delhi. It was an imported and costly book. My colleague spotted the book in my library and asked for it. He wanted to show it to one of his friends who was about to start constructing his house at Barzulla. Showing abnormal courtesy, I handed him the book and asked him to return it in a week's time and not give it to anyone else. He agreed. After a week, I asked him to get my book back. He requested for some more time. Then a fortnight passed, a month passed, but the book was not returned. I went to his home on a Sunday and repeated my plea. He said smilingly, "My friend did not return it. I think he has lost it somewhere." He was unapologetic. I got highly infuriated. "How did you give my book to someone else", I asked. He smiled again and replied, "Like you gave it to me." I was dumbstuck. The book never came back thereafter and I had to console myself.

After remembering the episode, I lifted my eyes and looked at Aima Sahib with great adoration and thanked him for making me more knowledgeable. While I was leaving his house, he called me back and handed me the book I had asked for. "Now, this is for the first time I am giving my book to anybody. Please take photocopies of

the pages and return it to me as soon as possible", he said, keeping his hand on my shoulder. I was literary dumb with gratitude. I kept my promise and returned the book in a couple of days. The photocopy version of the book is still secured in my library. I value it most, not only because it is not available in the market, but also because it reminds me of Aima Sahib's gesture and his greatness, as and when I open it for reference.

Aima Sahib was closely associated with the Kashmiri Pandits' Association, Mumbai, being a member of its Board of Trustees for a long time. His rigidity for not accepting any post as office bearer, deprived Mumbai biradari of seeing him ever heading the association. It was absolutely his personal decision, which he stuck to till his last, though against wishes of many of his friends and well wishers. As a member of the Board of Trustees, he was one amongst the most regular attendees to participate in the meetings and take active part in the discussions, till his health permitted him. I always watched him attending the meetings with full preparation, carrying with him the agenda letter, a paper to write on and other records relevant to a particular meeting. In spite of the heated arguments between the members on certain occasions, Aima Sahib was always accorded the kind of respect deserved by a noble person.

Aima Sahib was a man of reason and had his own style of working. Though he would always listen to others view points with rapt attention, he would not compromise on the issues which conflicted with his principles. He would put forth his point of view rigidly on a matter of conflict and discuss the things on merit. He was the last man to be silenced by opponent's vociferous voice. In spite of all this, he always maintained good relations with everybody and made it a point that personal relations do not get spoiled because of a heated debate.

Because of leadership qualities and his association with the cultural and theatre groups at the prime of his youth, Aima Sahib was very popular with the masses. He was also very close to the Bakshi family (Late Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed was the prime minister of Kashmir).

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Onkar Aima as an officer in J&K Militia**

After doing his college, he was appointed as a Under-Secretary to the J&K Government in the Home Deptt. and deputed to The J&K Militia as Record Officer. He did not continue with the gazetted job for a long time and resigned to try his luck in the film world. Shri J.L.Manwati has in his write-up 'Pure for Sure' dwelt at length on his days in Mumbai and I need not repeat that again.

From what I gathered about Aima Sahib's life from various quarters, I concluded that he was a man of great stature and great repute. He had the set of principles laid for him, which he always tried to stick to. A few episodes and incidents stated below, will corroborate my statements on him.

While at Srinagar, Aima Sahib's income did not exceed Rs. 200.00 per month, including the salary of his wife Shakuntala who was working as a teacher in the Education Deptt. This was the time when Aalok, his son was to be got admitted in a school. Aima Sahib was very selective about the kind of education his child should have. He got him admitted into the famous but expensive school Burn Hall, where Aalok's monthly fee was Rs. 25.00. It is said that many of Aima Sahib's relations and acquaintances were not happy with

his decision and some of them conveyed their unhappiness to him. In their opinion, it was foolish to spend so much money on the education of a child while parents have to struggle to make both ends meet. Aima Sahib did not relent. He would say, "I will give my children the best possible education in spite of my hardships, come what may!"

Aima Sahib was always comfortable with the youngsters. Girls used to be his fans. It is said that when the young groups comprising boys and girls used to assemble at his place for an intercation or a get-together, he would get special treatment from the girls. They used to sit as close to him as possible, thus annoying the young boys, who would naturally feel envious. As a goodwill gesture, Aima Sahib would then leave the room and allow them to enjoy the company.

Once, during a function at his home in Narsing Garh, Aima Sahib was quietly sitting beside his father Pt. Vedh Lal Kaul. Shri Makhan Lal Kaul, younger brother of Aima Sahib was to get married, and a delegation from the bride's side had come to talk to Aimas and fix the marriage. Besides other family members, Pt. Kina Kaul, elder brother of Pt. Vedh Lal Kaul was also present. After going through the preliminaries, the delegation handed a packet containing money to Pt. Kina Kaul as Shagun. He accepted the packet and held it in his hands. In a flash, Aima Sahib came upto the old person and snatched the packet from him. Everybody was utterly surprised on his action. He took out a one-rupee note from the packet and returned the packet to Bride's people saying, "For God's sake, we are not comfortable with such things. We keep one rupee as Shagun to honour you." It is said, nobody dared to say anything to Aima Sahib, not even his elders, because they knew that Aima Sahib always treated dowry as a curse.

During a get-together, an elderly member of the Mumbai biradari asked Aalok, son of Aima Sahib, "Would you like to have a cigarette, or you don't smoke before your father?" Aima Sahib was also present. Aalok was not a smoker then and Aima Sahib knew it fully well. The elderly person may have spoken in a casual manner, but Aima Sahib replied him thus, "I have asked my sons

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima**

not to feel shy of smoking or drinking as and when they wish to do so, and instead do it in my presence. I don't want an outsider to tell me that he had seen my sons smoking or drinking at my back".

Shakuntala Masi narrated to me some incidents concerning Aima Sahib. She said, once Aima Sahib asked a guest to stay back and have lunch with them. The guest however was in hurry and apologised. Masi asked Aima Sahib as to why doesn't he, before inviting anybody for meals, enquire if she has the provision of food for the guest. To this, Aima Sahib replied, "If you serve a little from what you have to the guest with an open heart and smilingly, it is a thousand times better than if you serve him a variety of dishes with anger in your heart. So we can always share with a guest what we have for us." On another occasion, when she asked a guest if he would like to have tea, Aima Sahib intervened thus, "Don't ask anybody whether he will have tea or not. Serve it to him and he will have it. Even if he has only one or two sips, it meets our purpose of treating him with hospitality, for which we Kashmiris are well known."

Another incident speaks volumes about Aima Sahib's generous character. When his father Pt. Vedh Lal Kaul wanted to distribute his property among his three sons and a daughter, Aima Sahib said to him, "We are all moderately well off, having jobs and our own houses. Only Makhan Lal (Aima Sahib's younger brother) is resourceless and unsettled. Kindly give my share to him."

Peace be upon your soul Aima Sahib! We will always miss you.



Kashmiris will always remember him ... E.N.Watal Betab

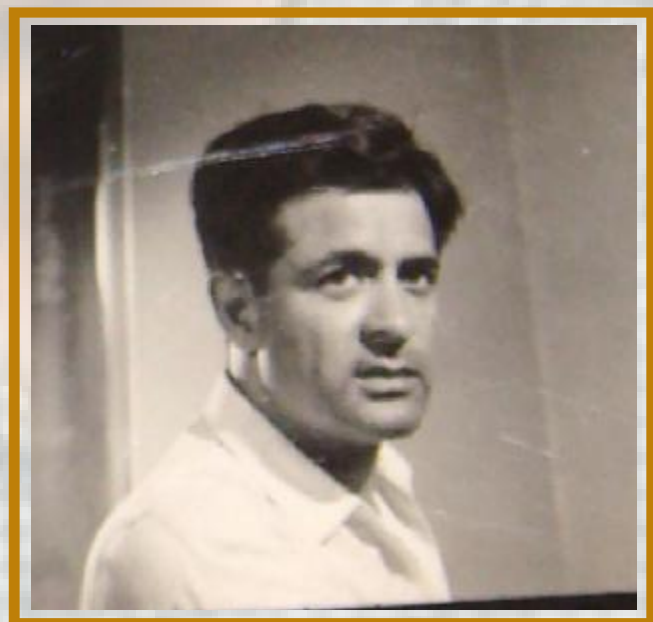
I have seen Onkar Aima Sahib but have never personally met him. I was too young when he was very popular.

Once, I saw him at a shop in Srinagar (Opposite the Coffee House) but I did not get the courage to go up to him and talk to him. It is like seeing Mr. Amitab Bachan and going up to him and saying 'hello'. I still remember that image of a 'Hero'. He was dressed in a grey colour suit. His face was 'cool'. He appeared very calm and seeing him so closely at a shop in Srinagar was just unbelievable for me.

Many of my seniors like Shri Pran Kishore and Shri Shahid Badgami were Aima Sahib's friends. They all had great praise for him.

I know certainly that every one in Kashmir particularly at Radio Kashmir, Srinagar, where I worked for a long time, would remember him and talk about his love for the films. Film Mehjoor was the talk of the town then. His love for Kashmir was unparalleled.

I, as a broadcaster always pay my respects to Aima Sahib, especially when I watch Shri Abhay Aima, his son on CNBC TV. He has a unique style like that of his father.



Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****With him, we shared an intimate bond ... Rakesh Kapoor**

Penning my thoughts about Uncle Onkar, in a very small way gives me an opportunity to pay my respect to a man that I regarded very highly and fondly.

Uncle Onkar had been and Aunt Shanta still is a very important and integral part of my existence and thought process. Our families shared a very close and intimate bond that was built on respect, faith, trust and bonhomie.

Going back in time to my childhood, my first impression of my Uncle was "This man is a movie star". He did play character roles in films but to me he was always a superstar. I would love to hear him speak and hang on to every word of his. I would look forward with unmasked eagerness to our every visit to the Aima home, or their visit to ours.

The most memorable moments that are etched in my mind were the roughish and naughty conversations that my late father and Uncle Aima would share, away from the everyone else's earshot. Uncle and my late mother Shanta Kapoor shared a beautiful and loving relationship. They shared the same passion for their homeland, they shared the same kind of struggle in moving from the Valley and eventually setting up home and hearth in Mumbai. They both loved reading and listening to same kind of music. But with my father, who did not have any of the above mentioned meeting points, Uncle still seemed so comfortable and at peace, and my father felt the same too. They loved each other's company and would laugh away their tears and woes and celebrate their wins and achievements. Their joie de vivre was infectious.

As my power of reasoning and understanding grew in accordance with my age, and sometime beyond it, I deciphered the simple mathematics of their bonding. They were both very young at heart. My Uncle Onkar was like my buddy. He would often tease me and inquire who my current girlfriend was. That mischievous smile and twinkling eyes would give me the courage to

actually confess !!! After My father's untimely demise, Uncle Onkar made it a point to stay in touch with us and see as to how I was charting my course to livelihood and other social commitments.

That was my Uncle Onkar, my Uncle buddy, who at another level was a prominent and an integral pillar of our Kashmiri biradari. He stayed rooted to his homeland and kept the torch of 'Kashmiriyat' burning within him. For him, it was never the 'Politics' of the state of affairs, it was the ethics and morals of the system that mattered. He was never part of any 'Inner Circles', neither did he subscribe to being part of 'wheels within wheels' that has been existing and plaguing our Biradari. He was a simple man, who lived within his simple motto of 'Live and Let Live'.

After the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the valley, he in his own way, went about being a lighthouse to those floundering youths who drifted towards Mumbai, with hopes in their hearts and a prayer on their lips. I miss him, and every time I chance upon a spark of righteousness and self-belief, I miss him even more.

"Uncle buddy, you will never be forgotten by all your loved ones and the ones whose lives you helped resurrect ! May your loving soul always remain in eternal peace."



Aima Sahib with Late Kishori Lal Kapoor. They shared an intimate relation between them.

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Iconic Role Model**... **S.D.Fachru**

At the age when young boys look for an icon or role model to immitate, I chanced to see the advertisement of 'RAYMONDS' winter range in Readers Digest, featuring an elegantly attired model with effects of stunning presence. I concluded - this is what is ultimate in carriage, style & elan. Later, to learn that this debonair was a Kashmiri Pandit gentleman gracing the prestigious advertisement campaign, contributed considerably to my image & esteem for the role model . That I would be able to meet this icon in person ever, seemed pure imagination & wishful thinking at that time but twenty winters later, when I relocated to Mumbai, I found myself meeting & greeting AIMA uncle at Kashyap Bhawan. Though it was still a few years later when I had an opportunity to express my hero worship imagery to him but not surprisingly though, he wore the applauds & appreciations lightly, in a very unassuming manner.

I still vividly recall when he said, "... Even if you have reached the pinnacle of success, you must never forget the persons close to you. Those who act in the shade, in effect, contribute to sustaining your position. There is always

reciprocity and relationship between people, whatever your level may be. Do not walk alone...". This introduction to his sentimental & emotive expressions was to become at once the strength of character as well as weakness for causes close to his heart especially matters enveloping community & cultural concerns.



AIMA uncle's innate reserve & distinct taste bridged his obsessive passion for preserving & promoting the Kashmiri cultural heritage through staging & showcasing what was original, ethnic Kashmiri music & drama, which always remained his greatest passion and delight. A highly visible campaigner himself, AIMA uncle's more profound concerns included increasing ignorance of the cultural heritage of Kashmiri folk music & drama among the community members as much as he would lament his inability to correct an unfair conduct or expression in face of social gullibility of the community. He was a Hero who demonstrated eloquence of distinguished persona and dramatic deftness.

**He encouraged me in Words & Deeds**... **Capt. A.K.Misri**

Tall, Dark and Handsome in every sense of the word. I first met him long, long ago at my Uncle Shri Gopinath Raina's home at Jawahar Nagar. When I was told he was the co-actor in the movie 'GEET' with Jublee Star Rajendra Kumar, I was simply in awe of him. A Shud Kashmiri in Filmy Duniya, directly from the Valley.

The next I met him was on 3rd June 1971 at my Sister's wedding. He had come to receive the Barat. He came in a Red Coupe. It was news then. Today even a Porsche SUV is insignificant. These are my early impressions besides many others.

My association though brief started in 1996 when we both became Trustees of Lalla Ded Educational and Welfare Trust. Between 1996 and

2000, he encouraged me in words and deeds as I had been propped as the Chairman of the Trust. His enthusiasm was contagious. What I liked most about him was when at his home any one would touch upon a topic on Kashmir Music or Art, Onkar would spring up, lean towards the well stocked book shelf and pull out the relevant Book.



I went to the Bahamas in 2001 and lost contact with him. Soon and I don't remember when, I received news that Onkar Aima was no more with us. That was a Sad Day, a sad day for me and a sad day for Lalla Ded Educational and Welfare Trust.



Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****दोपुथम, मगर तोति क्याह गव?****(A Tribute to Aima Sahib)**

...

म.क.रैना

खरन खाव ओसुम, कलस तापु क्रायाह
 खसुन ओस दुशवार बुतशेरि बालस ।
 दैछिन्य नार खोवर्य बियाबान ज़ांगुल
 दोपुथम, मगर तोति क्याह गव ?

सफर कूठ ओसुम, स्यठाह दूर मैज़िल
 मददगार कुस तय कस प्यठ छु दावा ?
 हुमिस जोश सोर्यव, येमिस नो मोहल्लथ
 दोपुथम, मगर तोति क्याह गव ?

सँद्रस से-मंज़स अलम सॉन्य यीरय
 तरुनस मे ओसुम अख ज़ॉन्य* नावाह ।
 मँशरिथ ज़बान छुस, किथु दिमु बु आलव
 दोपुथम, मगर तोति क्याह गव ?

कति सोन आगुर तु कथ जायि ज़ामुत्य
 कुस गव सिकंदर तु शाहमीर, बडशाह ?
 कूताह परुन प्योम कल्हण क्षेमेंदर
 दोपुथम, मगर तोति क्याह गव ?

अडसारि मडसारि यूताह ति ह्योकुमय
 यथ पोशि वारे सगुवान रुदुस ।
 केंचन हुर्यर गव तु केंह रुद्य नालन
 दोपुथम, मगर तोति क्याह गव ?

बिहिथ ज़ॉन्य नमसुय आलव च्चे द्युतुथम
 दोपुथम रवां छुस, मे छम आश पगहुच** ।
 'पगहुक सिरिं वुछनि गर अँस्य न आसव'
 दोपुथम, मगर तोति क्याह गव ?

अख अख सँमिथ गव सफर सोन आसान
 मैज़िल अँछन तल, मगर चोन दूर्यर ।
 आवाज़ चॉनी आकॉश्य आयम
 दोपुथम, मगर तोति क्याह गव ?

* प्रोजेक्ट ज्ञान

** स्वर्गीय दीना नाथ नादिम की एक पंक्ति, जो ऐमा साहिब को बहुत प्रिय थी।

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****An Eternal Shadow of Onkar**

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Ravinder Ravi

"For men may come and men may go, I shall go on ever", thus spake Sir Spring Rice. This universe, a great creation of a supreme power, is indeed a fact as well as a mystery. By the 'fact' I mean living and non living things perish gradually or with the passage of time. 'Mystery' is what we can not perceive even after having realized spiritual mastery. Thus we may say, inevitable happens come what may.

The wheel of time spins non-stop, bringing new faces to the fore and taking older ones with it. Some faces leave an indelible mark on the horizon and some are lost with the wind as it comes. Some times what happens is, if you are not acquainted with a particular person but still recognize his contribution, it is indeed a great tribute to him. There are some heroes, who remain unsung and there are others who are non entities but they get what they do not deserve.

I had heard about a community member, having a unique distinction of being associated with the first ever Kashmiri feature film 'Manzi Raath'. This path breaking Kashmiri film not only proved a watershed in film-making in Kashmir but also laid a strong base for the Kashmiri films to be produced in Kashmir. Living Legends, like Pushkar Bhan, Abdul Rehman Bhat and Mohd. Sultan Pandit were other characters of this film. Other legend late Som Nath Sadhu was an important member of the cast. And one more versatile actor in the film about whom I have mentioned above without his name was none other than the one and only Onkar Aima.

A towering personality, cool looking, thin but robust physique, thoughtful and bespectacled, Onkar Aima wore a complete look of a great human being. He would have been 70 plus in 2002 when he left this mortal world. He left behind a great legacy in film making. Based in Mumbai, he remained active in the film city till his last breath, doing films and other creative works. His advertisement on television regarding petroleum was liked by one and all. Its repeated telecasts told the story of his creative genius.

With his high ideas, ideals and values, Onkar

Aima was a down to earth icon.

It was way back in nineties, when I met this luminary for the first time. I remember that it was a hot summer afternoon, when our bulletin was about to start and he dropped in at our Unit in the News Services Division of All India Radio. He introduced himself with great humility. Although visibly calm, satisfied and soft-spoken, he opened up during talks with my colleagues in the Unit. On being asked, how he felt in the Kashmiri Unit, he replied, he felt as if he was at home in Kashmir. Nostalgic, as it was evident from his face, Onkar was quick in saying, "We may be far away from our Valley of ancestors but we are proud and aboriginal Kashmiris." He seemed to be proud of his service and devotion to the nation and I also could discover that being a real artist, his heart was out for his brethren in trouble. It was a grievous blow to the whole of Kashmiri community to hear about the death of a Karmayogi.

Onkar Aima may not be physically with us today but his shadow follows wherever he is remembered.



**द्वहस गाश हुरि गुल तु गुलज़ार प्रज़लन
जँमीनस सुसर लागि तु सबज़ार प्रज़लन ।
वछस मंज़ हुमिस लोलु फंवार प्रज़लन
पगाह शोलि दुनियाह । ।**

These lines of Nadim Sahib were very dear to Aima Sahib. He would generally quote them to show his optimism about our bright future.

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****'Onkar' to all and 'Mamu' to us**

...

Kapil Raina

Yes, this is about the noble person and well known personality of the Kashmiri Community, called Onkar Aima.

I grew up seeing him as one of my 'Mamus'. He was adored by all and being the most handsome man of the valley, everyone was naturally attracted towards him. As children, we were a bit scared of him because of his overwhelming persona and his unique style of fondling us which was in a sort of reprimanding manner. Occasionally, he played pranks with us and was at times naughty within acceptable levels. His sense of humour and child like playfulness made him a favourite amongst us. He married an equally great lady Shakuntala – our Mami (Shokkai to him), who needs no introduction. She is a lady, we are proud of and is our prized possession. Mami always stood apart in her intelligence, knowledge and stature from the rest of her contemporaries in the valley. They made an excellent couple.

Mamu was the hero of the only Kashmiri hit movie ever made called "MAINZ-RAAT". Being his nephew, I felt great in those days when all my friends in school would surround me, talk about this film and were keen to know more about the person he was.

When I came to Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1973, Mamu was already here and we got more close. Alongwith my brother Ravi and cousin Satish Kaul, the actor (Our elder Mamu, Mohanlal Aima's son), we have pleasant memories of our social get togethers with Mamu.

Now from Mamu, he became our Friend, Guide, Guardian and yet continued to be our most revered uncle. He never put any embargos on us which was quite unusual in our community in those days. Both his children Alok and Abhay are our darlings and they have the same reverence with us that we had for Mamu.

After my marriage to Basanti, our bond grew stronger and both Mamu and Mami became natural heads of our family. As women would have a crush on him, we would jokingly admit to Mamu that we were scared to leave our wives alone with

him. He would blush, laugh and be really amused to hear that. The love and affection they (Mamu & Mami) have showered on my family is difficult to express in words. Even today, when my children visit India, their first priority is to visit Mami.



Apart from my personal relationship, Mamu was universally kind to everyone irrespective of cast, creed and colour. He was very close to our Kashmiri Community in Mumbai and contributed significantly towards the welfare of our biradari. I remember the youth wing of the 70's was so fond of him that a regular visit to the Aimas was part of the routine. Both Mami & Mamu have showered immense love to all and no one could leave the 'Aima House' without a meal. Several cultural events were organized in Mumbai through their active participation.

Despite the familiarity, the Aimas never imposed their views which perhaps drew everyone (especially youngsters) to maintain a life long relationship of love and respect with them. Omkar Mamu was ahead of his times and I am fortunate to have been closely associated with him. We will always miss him.

**Aima-speak**

'Be responsible to your Zameer (conscience). Let others say what they say'.

'Relationship is not what you are born into. Relationship is what you yourself make'.

'If you have a real friend, you always live'.

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****Uncle's words still ring in my ears**

...

Neena Kher

I knew Aima Uncle since three decades. It was at a wedding reception where I first saw him. I was so thrilled to see him, being the first Kashmiri actor with a tall and handsome personality and it was during this time that he had shifted base from Srinagar to Mumbai.

Then there were many such occasions like Hawan, Cultural Programme and weddings where we would often meet. With the passage of time, my association with him and his family became more closer and I almost became a part of his family. During this time, I also became close to Alok and Abhay when we formed our own youth group. Aima uncle was very impressed with my social activities in KPA youth group and my active participation in Hawan and Cultural programmes. He also got me elected to the Board of Trustees of Kashmiri Pandits' Association, Mumbai.

Aima uncle was an emotional and sensitive person. During BOT meetings, we would have heated arguments and discussions between us, but once out of it, we would be one. Because of the cool temperament of almost all members of KPA, he would always say that KPA was the best among all KP associations. He would request everybody to keep that reputation intact.

Towards the end, in the year of his illness he had become quite a changed person. He would not talk much but would say, "Whether I live or not, please do not fight between yourselves." Saying so, he would become very emotional. These words of Aima uncle still ring in my ears.

**I have lost an advisor and guide**

...

M.L.Mattoo

I happened to meet Aima sahib through some of my friends and relations once in Srinagar.

In Mumbai we became very close friends during our association as Trustees of KPA. As a Trustee he was honest to the purpose and an extremely suggestive person.

His aims, objectives and thoughts about the service to the community were similar to mine. As a result we worked together for the purpose, whenever we received requests for educational and medical assistance. He was one who was dedicated to the cause of displaced Kashmiri Pandits. For instance as I know, he was the person to have arranged the 1st accommodation for students during counselling sessions. Not only that, he silently helped the needy personally without anybody knowing it, and he occasionally called on me for my advice and help.

As he was an artist, he worked and helped all budding artists who came from the Valley. I have personally witnessed on many occasions that all these young artists would speak very high

of him and held him in high esteem. Outside KPA meetings, we used to meet often and discuss various problems facing the community at large.

I got the shocking news of Mr. Aima's demise when I was in Kolkata. It was an extremely sad moment personally for me. I had met him a day prior to leaving for Kolkotta.

With Mr. Onkar Aima's demise, I lost an advisor and a guide. I must mention here that Smt. Shakuntala, wife of Late Mr. Aima, has been very kind to KPA by donating Rs. 2.00 Lakh in her husband's name for the Khargar Project of KPA, Mumbai.

**MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE**

Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist ~ Late Onkar Aima****His Spirit Is There To Guide Us**

...

Savitri Aima

Nature so vast, has many things to offer. It's the alertness and sensitivity of human mind and soul, which helps one to take what it wants from it and leave what is not required. It bestows us with our parents, our loved ones, and many others, who may not be related to us, yet have played a very vital role in making of our lives.

It becomes all the more difficult if one has to pen down the experiences, or memories of the ones who have played a key role in our lives. To pen down means to limit our thoughts, to bind them. Whereas love, care, guidance is more vast than a written periphery.

Mr. Onkar Aima or "Daddy" (that is how we all lovingly addressed him) was my beloved Uncle (biologically), my father's elder brother. But the love, the care and the guidance or the learning in the family, never made us say that he is my Uncle, because that thought never arose in the mind. We as children were groomed and guided by our elders to be one rather than segregate the relations.

This grooming and guidance reminds me of one of the interesting incidents of my childhood (perhaps when I was in class 2). While coming back home from school in the school bus, my seniors would ask me, "What is your father's name". And I would happily tell them that I have three fathers and three mothers and their names are How ever when I look back now, I thank all the elders in our family for imbibing these values in me. Perhaps 'Daddy' played a vital role in it.

To pen down memories of one's father means endless thoughts. Thus let me pen down, those interesting and learning incidents, which as a grown up person, I used to share with 'Daddy'. At the outset, he gave an impression of a very serious person. But as one would strike a right chord with him, the interaction and learning would be endless.

His interest in music and cricket were the topics of discussion with me, whenever he would come down to Delhi to stay with us. As every one in the family is an ardent cricket lover, and I for one was very fond of collecting sports magazines,

his quest for new reading material would make him question me, "So what is the new collection you have?" One had to be ready with what ever was available.

An ardent Sufi-music lover, he would go through my collections of music and guide me to listen to something more fruitful and meaningful. He would explain the verses of the song, be it Qawwali, Kashmiri Naat, Kalaam or Ghazal, in such an intricate manner, which became a learning in itself.

Carelessness had no place in his life. To arrange the things at home, or to fix up his own clothes and fix up things at home became an example in itself for the younger ones to learn.

Resolving problems in the family. Ensuring that everything concluded in a systematic and peaceful manner was what he loved. A Social person. He had many friends. The meticulous manner in which he preserved everyone's details was worthwhile to learn from.

He gave an impression of a quiet person, however his mind was always working towards the welfare of family members or towards the ones who sought his help.

His cheerfulness came forward in many forms. He would often tease me by asking, "So what do you call your brothers? Bhaiya and Jaan bhai? Who is who, and how often do they call you? (I lovingly call my brothers Alok Aima as Bhaiya and Abhay Aima as Jaanbhai).

It so happened that a couple of times he was with us during Navratri festival. As I fast on all 8 days, he would often tease me by asking, "Are you again upto potatoes, nothing else to prepare and share with others? you will never learn. what's going to happen to you?"

Memories are endless and thoughts many. Some which are a treasure and some for all. To pen down all means to go on. However I would sum up by something more sensitive and touching, which shook the whole family.

He for one was very badly shaken, and that



Special Feature**Remembering The Philanthropist
Late Onkar Aima**

was the death of my younger brother 'Major Sushil Aima' in year 1999 during Kargil War. An incident which makes one proud with honour, yet there is silent pain within. I remember Daddy's face, silent, observant, trying to reconcile yet crying within. Consoling each one of us, interacting with people who came over, interacting with authorities who came for various details, with calm mind yet having a war of emotions and thoughts within himself. Though physically he was in Bombay, but mentally he would be with my father and mother, motivating them to move on in life. Words cannot express the pain and agony which all of us were going through and he was no exception.

My dearest Daddy gave up his mortal coil in year 2002, but prior to that he kept moving on, fighting with the deadliest disease of 'Cancer'. He knew what he was going through and knew what it was going to lead to. Yet the fear, or losing of near and dear ones did not reflect on his face. Everyone trying to give in their best. Dearest Jaanbhai (Abhay Aima) giving his best, looking for the best of the treatments for his father with a calm and poised behaviour, knew how to make him feel comfortable for what ever days he was going to be there. Death is nothing but a transition of life towards something new and serene yet we find it difficult and painful to accept it.

I had visited Bombay in August 2002, just for a week to see Daddy. It became the last meeting apparently. He was on treatment. Lot of things happening together, pain within him, sugar levels varying, yet a smile on his face. He would listen to Sai Bhajans (an ardent devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba) and seek his blessings with open hands, with tears rolling down his face. He and only he knew, what he was asking during those end moments of his life. Perhaps peace and happiness for all those whom he cared for, or may be for the eternal guidance which would be the next course of his soul's journey. His silent face with intense sensitivity in front of Sai Baba's photograph is what I can never forget for the years to come. For us, his spirit is there to guide even now, though physical frame may have merged with nature.

**'här-van'****GREETS****ITS****READERS****ON****INDEPENDENCE****DAY****AND****JANAM****ASHTAMI**