



मिळुंचार MILCHAR

October - November 2003



Kashmir's Silk Embroidery with floral patterns

Between Ourselves

... M.L.Mattoo, President

Namaskar.

●On Sunday, the 19th October 2003, we had a unique occasion at Kashyap Bhawan where we had organised the 4th Kashmiri Quiz Contest under Project Zaan and simultaneously the inauguration of the much awaited renovation of the accommodation reserved for patients coming to Mumbai for specialised treatment. A large number of Biradari members were present on the occasion. Along with this we also had a visit and blessings of Jagatguru Shankaracharya Shri Swami Amritanand Devtirthji Maharaj of Kashyap Meru (Kashmir Peeth, Srinagar), nominated by the Varanasiya Vidvat Parishad, Kashi Governing body of the 'Shankaracharyas' who has assumed his Aasan at Shankaracharya Temple, Srinagar on 13th September 2003. The renovated flat was inaugurated by Smt. Somavati Wazir W/o of Late Shyam Lal Wazir along with Jagatguru Swamiji. A small pooja was performed by our guruji Shri Ramji Sabni in the flat along with the B.O.T. members. A lunch was sponsored and served by Shri. Om Takoo, Proprietor 'Poush' restaurant, Andheri (W). Our sincere thanks to him for his voluntary service.

Swamiji explained to the members his action plan for Jammu and Kashmir. He also had an exclusive and brief meeting with the B.O.T. members, giving details of the priorities he had earmarked in a Memorandum submitted to the President of India. Text of the Memorandum is given somewhere else in this issue.

●**Project Zaan** : 4th Kashmiri Quiz Contests under this Project were conducted on the same day in the afternoon. For this, lot of efforts had been made by the organisers but the participation was discouraging. Trophies were also given away to the last year's winners. Our assessment is that we desire and talk a lot about maintaining our language and heritage but fail to act on it by non-participation. World over is a cry by our community that language is the only bonding factor which should be learned and spoken by all of us, more so by our children, but action is nowhere. Kindly give it a thought again.

●B.O.T was pleased to authorise a donation of Rs. 10,000/- to A.I.K.S. and a DD was handed over to the President A.I.K.S. at New Delhi recently.

●During my recent visit to Jammu, I had a lot of interaction with various Kashmiri Pandit organisational heads, like Shri T.N. Khosa, Shri Vaishnavi, Shri H.L.Chatta and Shri R.K.Bhat (AIKS youth) about their activities and fulfilling various social obligations and mitigating the miseries of the migrant community. A great service being done by them indeed. One of the unique occasion observed was performing the mass Yagnopavit ceremony of nearly 30 boys by the All India Kashmiri Pandit Sanatan Dharam Sabha, Jammu - a laudable community service taken up by its leaders every year.

●I had a long standing desire to visit the Migrant Camp Schools in Jammu. I took an opportunity to visit the Muthi, Purkhoo & Mishriwalla camp schools and collected some first hand information. One of the visible and often spoken plight of these children is undernourishment, due to which they suffer from joint pains, rickety legs and paleness. The basic requirements for this is medicines like Calcium, Iron and other energy

revitalisers. I shall try to make a brief report of this to circulate among the Biradari members and try and procure these medicines through their good offices. Another pathetic situation in the Camps is the problem of unemployment of youth who have completed their graduation or high school education. Many of these youths are prepared to return to the Valley and get killed rather than remain unemployed.

On the other hand the Chief Minister, Mufti Sayeed has thought of a novel way of giving jobs to the Muslims under the guise of combating militancy by planning to give a stipend of Rs.3000/- to each terrorist who surrenders to the government and would also be on the pay roll of the state government like any other employee. In addition an amount of Rs.2,00,000/- would be kept in a fixed deposit for each of the surrendered militant. The irony is that not a single political outfit of the Kashmiri Pandits has raised their voice against this policy of the government. This the reason why the government of India has taken us, the Kashmiri Pandits, for granted and Mufti has the audacity to say in a recent press interview in London, that the Kashmiri Pandits are a miniscule community and are capable of taking care of themselves.

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Editorial

... P.N.Wali

Elderly in the community

One of the serious issues presently coming up is the problem of the aged. This does not only concern society as a whole but has special ramifications as far our community is concerned. It is time we start thinking seriously about it.

With the increase in average life span (63 years at present) the number of old people in the society is increasing. These are people who have already spent their working life. They have less income, if any, at this stage. Even the savings made in the past have started yielding less and less of returns due to the decrease in the interest rates. Their needs for increased medical attention increases expenses on this account. A stage comes when they are not able to fully look after themselves and need physical help even for day to day activities.

Besides the physical and financial needs, there are the psychological needs, need for expression and need for association. With the age, insecurity also increases. One looks for support from those around him. The psychological needs are sometimes more difficult to meet than even the physical ones.

The needs of the old people have become more pronounced due to the breaking up of the joint family system in our country. Under the umbrella of joint family, the old received both physical and psychological support. And they were many times given the honour of heading the family unit. The fall of joint family system is an accepted fact now and we need not go into its causes, whether they were inroads of the new patterns of thinking among the young or the imperatives of the clustered city life etc. The greatest victims of the demise of the system are the old people.

Let us see the problem from our community perspective. We have stuck to joint family system much longer than others have, and nuclear families have invaded us less till our young people were forced to look for greener pastures outside Kashmir where all opportunities of occupation and progress were denied to them. The old generally stuck to their homes in the Valley, visiting their offspring in winter months and getting their visit back in the summers. While they enjoyed the partial family union for part of the year, they had the sense of security in their homes and society. Even this has fallen apart with exodus. The secure epicenter in the Valley is lost. Youngsters are scattered around the country if not the globe. Such places can not often accommodate the old. Where will they go? Many of them have opted for Jammu city, even constructed a couple of rooms to accommodate themselves to escape payment of monthly rent. They find many of their relatives at least of their age in Jammu. They can meet them more often. Jammu not being a very big town, travel within the city is possible and effortable. To fill the psychological gulf, the temples and ashrams build in Jammu with their enumerable havans and annual days, do their spiritual best.

But how far will this quasi settlement of old and the weary continue. Further increase in the age and losing of life partners will make things more difficult. World over efforts have been made to help this situation institutionally. Old age settlements are coming up. These are not necessarily charities. The inhabitants pay for keep. But they provide all the facilities, physical security, medical attention etc. What is more important is that they become communes for the old. They mix and socialize among themselves. Few of such places have come up in some other places in India.

Could we think of something like this for our community. I wish we would. They will be needed before long. And our elders will feel more at ease with their own kind rather than in a mixed crowd. Old age homes of this type, partially or fully run as charitable institutions may also be required. These will be beneficial for the people who need old age support of all kind. If initiative is taken in setting up these places there will be people ready to support the cause.

I wish the thinking in the community should start now. This year has been declared by the UN as year of the old. Many suggestions have been given in the UN declaration. But note worthy is the fact that it also wants special attention for old people who have been refugees. We are a typical example of the refugees in our own land. Our old people therefore come in the category envisaged by the UNO. We need to follow it up.

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From the Pages of History

... J.N. Kachroo

Beyond Symbolism - Our Rituals

Taking courage in my both hands, I have ventured taking a leaf from the age-old history of our rich heritage rather than from the usual temporal history for this column. At the very outset, I must confess that I have little knowledge or study of our scriptures, mythology or philosophy. Just as a seeker of truth, what follows is a layman's interpretation of a very common ritual. I also wish to convey my readiness to correction. If it comes, it could further may aim of finding as well disseminating the meaning of rituals to suit the modern mind of the growing generations.

Since my childhood, I have been having birthday pooja and witnessing the same of other members of my family. On birthdays of the male-members of the family, the 'Kula Guru' would bring from his home an artistically made 'Raksha', the wrist-band of red thread, with seven knots. Even now, the audio cassette that substitutes the 'Guru' directs the 'Jejman' to tie seven knots on the wrist-band. This 'Raksha' is reverentially placed in a plate on flower petals. Each of the knot is to be applied a Tilak. While the Tilak is being applied on each by turns, the 'Guru' recites some mantras dedicating them (knots) to Aswathama, Bali, Vyas, Hanuman, Kripacharya and Parashurama, in that order. They are seven immortals in the Indian (Hindu) tradition.

These seven knots thus personify the seven immortals whom we worship on our birthdays. It is commonly believed that prayers are offered so that the subject of the ritual is granted immortality - a long life - like the seven immortals. To a modern mind, it is often a Wishful Prayer. And therefore, non-belief. But if the values each symbolises are borne in mind even during the 'pooja' period year after year and reminded of on the birthday, celebrations/pooja one attends or is a witness of, perhaps human conduct would be more sublime.

The values these immortals symbolise, are to be universal and basic truths which transcend time and space. The related truths or values to these immortals are derived from their actions in their 'lives'. They, ad-seriatim are:

1) Aswathama, the Consequence of an Unethical Conduct; 2) Bali - Valour and Charity with grace; 3) Vyas, the Continuity of erudition; 4) Hanuman, Righteous Conduct, Selfless Devotion and Courage; 5) Vibhisana, his Conviction in his ideal of righteousness; 6) Kripacharya, his Impartiality in the discharge of his duty; 7) Parashurama, his Humility, despite his prowess and might.

There must be some logic in their order. Whatever the logic may be, let us examine each from a common man's interpretation, implication and pragmatic application.

Aswathama had acquired mastery over the ultimate weapon. But he broke all the established ethical norms when he, along with a group of his companions, entered by stealth the Camp of Pandavas in their absence and got a number of men killed. He was caught but not killed. His Crown jewel - a gem - was prised out of his head. He was condemned to live for ever, the wound never to heal. He attained immortality, but not an

envious one. His name is a reminder to the mortals, never to resort to an unethical conduct however powerful he/she may be. Every one has the potential to own and practise this truth, only if he/she wills. Hence perhaps, its pre-eminent position in aforesaid catalogue of values.

Bali knew who Vamana was. Yet he was prepared to surrender all he had to his lord. King Bali stands for his valour and charity. Everybody may not be as prosperous as Bali. But one can be graceful while giving charity whatever one can afford. No show.

It may not be possible for a common man to reach the height of scholarship and erudition of Vyas. But study of his works and understanding even a fraction of his wisdom, would be rewarding. His works belong to human race, irrespective of time and geographical boundaries. Truly immortal messages! Let the mortals discover them for their own benefit and elevation.

Hanuman, embodiment of energy and strength should be revered for his courage, righteous conduct and above all his selfless devotion. He stands for potential that is inherent in all of us.

Vibhisana's example of fearlessness and courage of conviction make him immortal. These dispositions are increasingly becoming rare in public life today. Therefore the chaos.

Kripacharya, takes priority over a more renowned teacher Dronacharya, the Guru of 'Danudhar Arjun' to immortality. Kripacharya is a symbol of impartiality. He has no Eklavya episode to shadow his career.

And lastly Parashuram, the master of martial arts, had no temporal ambition. He lived a hermit's life, though he could be a Samrat, if he had liked to be. He was one who was never hesitant to admit his mistake. He publicly apologised to both Ram and Lakshman for his mistake at the time of Sita's Swayamvar. Parashuram symbolises excellence and strength, tempered by humility.

Going back to the ritual. After the Janam Divas pooja and invocations, the 'Raksha', the wrist band with seven knots is tied round the right hand wrist of the 'birthday boy'. This is supposed to be changed by a similar one at the next birthday. It has thus to remain a part of the person throughout his life. To what purpose? Evidently to remind the wearer of the 'band' constantly that the seven knots personify the seven immortals who symbolise a string of values. They are supposed to send cosmic vibrations to the individual to sublimate human behaviour by practising them.

Let us consider one more practice. A new 'Jenu', the holy thread of three or six strands is renewed by the eligible on each birthday. He is expected to wash it everyday and to repeat the sacred 'Gayatri Natra'. There is no such prescription for the 'Raksha', the wrist band. The mere view of the seven knots is sufficient to rouse his conscience and act as governors. It can be effective only if the moral tenets they represent are conveyed for motor response by the sensory perceptions. Pre-requisite condition is the awareness of the message these symbols carry.

All these truths/values are symbolised by no less than seven individuals, each endowed with extraordinary attributes. The Sceptics may doubt the practicability of observing all of them by an ordinary human in his/her mundane life. It is believed that the lessons derived from the examples of Asawathama (Ethical Conduct) and Parshuram (Humility despite prowess) are all encompassing.

Is it not the right time to interpret the various symbols that our rituals represent so as to stem the waning faith of the growing generations exposed to the pulls and pressures generated in the global village they live in? Would it not enhance love of and loyalty to the faith and fold?

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Sweet and Sour

... Tribhuwan N.Bhan

Fantasy and Reality

Last Sunday, I boarded the local train at Churchgate. Being Sunday, the compartment was almost empty and there was absolute silence. As the train was about to enter the next railway station i.e. Marine Lines, I could hear someone shouting, "Thief, thief ...". Out of curiosity, I alighted at Marine Lines and walked in the direction from which the sound of the words 'Thief, thief' could be heard. I reached Marine Drive and saw a tall old man wearing a long Kaftan-type outfit standing on the parapet of the drive. His long silvery grey beard and hair were being tossed about due to the sea breeze. He wore a hair-band round his forehead to keep his long hair rather orderly. In his hand, he held a long staff, which was at least a foot longer than the height of the man. He was looking in the westerly direction and shouting loudly "Thief, thief". I went close to him. Looking at his face, I could see his deep sunken eyes and felt as if penetrating beams were emanating from them. He with his weird countenance and attire did not seem to me an inhabitant of this planet. I had to sum up all the courage and strength and ask him, "Where is the thief?" "There is the thief", he said and pointed towards the west. As I could see no one except the setting sun, I told him, "I do not see anybody except the setting sun." "That one, the setting sun is the thief. He is going behind the horizon after having robbed a day from the life span of every living being. He is the biggest thief !!!" He held my hand firmly. His grip was strong like a steel grip. It was astonishing to realise that despite being so old, he had so much physical strength.

I tried to wriggle out my hand from his grip but he would not let go of my hand. As he walked briskly with long strides, I had to run by his side. To keep pace with him was not an easy task. It fatigued me. He then showed me a place of worship with serpentine queues of devotees outside it. "Do you see these people? They are the people who have absolute faith in God. They will perform all their religious rituals, worship their deity and ask God to protect them all the time. According to them, God is 'omnipresent'. They believe, He will be by their side always irrespective of what they indulge in. Their misplaced faith means protection to them. Remember the heartless and ruthless dacoits of Chambal valley. They would begin their day by performing puja and worship their deity, put a long black Tilak on their foreheads before indulging in loot, plunder, arson and murder. It was their faith made them believe that they were receiving protection from their deity, had a divine mandate and thus lived a charmed life. Ravana too was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. He thought he was invincible due to Lord Shiva's blessings. But then he met his Nemesis in Ram whose Sita he had abducted."

Saying this he made me walk a long distance more and pointed out to me a group of people who were being tempted and brain-washed by a few religious fanatics, in the garb of preachers. They were being coaxed to indulge in nefarious and questionable activities, create anarchy in the name of religion and thereby they would benefit monetarily and otherwise too. This group of people heard the so-called preachers but turned their backs on all the temptations they were offered. "My dear, did you observe this scene? This group of people who did not want to do anything wrong despite all that they were promised, were the ones who have fear of God". The old man summarised all that we had seen by saying, "There are basically two kinds of people, some have faith in God and others have fear

of God. The former believe that by making offerings at places of worship, rubbing their foreheads at the entrance and by performing all the religious rituals regularly, God will provide divine protection to them, even when they may deprive other human beings of basic necessities of life. But the latter think that God is almighty and will not spare any wrong-doer, be he strong or weak, rich or poor, low or high. This fear prevents them from indulging in anything questionable, unethical or deprecatory. It is the latter ones who are nearest to God, who dwells in their hearts. While the former are farthest from God."

Saying this, he loosened his grip on my wrist, which had become numb by then and suddenly disappeared, as if he had made himself air into which he vanished mysteriously.

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Of Country & People

... ***Dr. J.P.N.Trakru***

Division of India

My official tours took me to different parts of India. During the course of my travel I met people from different walks of life. On discussing the partition of India, I found majority of the people held Nehru responsible for division of India. Recently, I read a book titled 'The Man Who Divided India' by Rafiq Zakaria. He holds Jinnah wholly and solely responsible for the partition of India. I have attempted to give a gist of the details as enumerated in his book in chronological order.

Early years of Jinnah :

He did not have purely conventional Islamic background and therefore had no religious acceptance among the generality of Muslims. Jinnah could neither read the Quran nor did he say his prayers or fast during Ramzan. He did not perform Haj either. He was a bright and smart man having natural aptitude for law, which he studied in England. During his two years stay in London he practiced the art of oratory and specialized in cross examination. He loved to argue and score points.

Political Initiation :

Jinnah returned from England to Bombay where he applied for a job as Presidency Magistrate and got a temporary appointment. Subsequently he practiced law. He did not have any contact with his parents except his younger sister Fatima who came to live with him and served him as his companion for the rest of his life.

While in Bombay he was drawn into politics and came in contact with Dadabai Nauroji, and later with Sir Ferozsha Mehta. He felt more comfortable with westernized Parsis than orthodox Muslims. He found the Congress more to his liking and not only attended but also took active interest in the deliberation of the 20th Annual Session of the Congress held at Bombay in December 1904. He later went to London as a Congress Member, with a delegation led by Gopal Krishan Gokhale where they pleaded for a larger share in administration for Indians. During this travel, he came in close contact with Gokhale who found Jinnah a young progressive Muslim, free from any communal prejudice. In his early days he was against the division of India favoured by orthodox Muslims like Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan. Jinnah stood solidly by the agitating Hindu Bengalis during Hindu-Muslim agitations in 1906. Jinnah refused to join the All India Muslim League founded in Dhaka as a counter force to the Congress. By such actions, Jinnah became the darling of the Congress leaders. In 1906, the Viceroy assured Muslim leaders of Dhaka of a separate electorate. Jinnah strongly reacted against it, fearing that the British policy of divide and rule would eventually harm the Muslims and deprive them of participation in national life. Jinnah collaborated with the Congress and actively worked against the Muslim communists calling them as the enemies of the nation. He deprecated the separatist policy advocated by the Muslim League.

However despite the protest by the Congress, the British made a provision for separate electorate for the Muslims in the Indian Council Act of 1909. At the 25th session of the Congress held at Allahabad in 1910, Jinnah moved a resolution condemning provision of reserving separate seats for Muslims in municipalities and other local bodies. He said it would sow the seeds of division between Hindus and Muslims. Despite this resolution Jinnah did not hesitate to take personal advantage of it and contested

the election to the Viceroy's Executive Council from the reserve Muslim constituency of Bombay and got elected. It was a turning point in his political career but he pursued it cautiously. He cleverly managed the contradictions in the two streams of communalism and nationalism. He also took care not to antagonize the Hindus while working for Muslims.

The generality of Muslims felt alienated from him after he refused to support the Khilafat movement. But Gandhi supported it. Though isolated, Jinnah did not give up his efforts to unite the Hindus and Muslims to obtain constitutional reforms safeguarding the interests of the Muslims. The worst blow that he suffered was the rejection of his amendment to the Nehru Report of 1928. At first, the Hindus distrusted him but later even the Muslims doubted his motives. Consequently he was so disheartened that he decided to give up politics and retire in London. There too he made futile efforts to find new political pastures by trying to enter the House of Commons.

Jinnah however could not rest content for long, his burning desire was to be in the limelight and this drove him to regain his position. He came back to India with a new determination. From an avowed nationalist, he became an arch communalist. He took an aggressive anti-Hindu stand and concentrated all his energies on mobilizing the Muslims. He made it his mission to unite the Muslims and activate the moribund League. He became a born-again Muslim, hoping to rise on the convenient shoulders of communalism. In the process, he discarded Hindus but he could not easily mix with illiterate Muslim masses. He felt comfortable only among the western educated elite. Despite the arrogance in his approach, he managed to become the darling of the Muslims. He exploited their religious leaning and inculcated in them the fear of Hindu domination. He coined the two nation theory, stressing on vital differences between the Hindus and the Muslims. He convinced the Muslims that Hindus would never share power with them. Their sole objective, he told them was to oust the British and establish Hindu raj and subjugate them, so as to avenge the alleged atrocities committed by the medieval Muslim rulers.

His approach was totally changed from that of his earlier days until the last seven or eight years of his life. With this changed approach he made himself politically vulnerable, the British now accepted him as the authentic representative of the Muslims and eventually the Congress too conceded that status to him, even if unwillingly. He felt truly elevated when he was equated with Gandhi. He steadfastly pursued his objective to partition the country. He used every political means and organizational measures to counter his opponents and often had better of them. He did not deviate from armchair politics and still managed to win over the Muslim masses. He missed no opportunity to pour venom on the Congress and the Hindus but always kept the British on his side. Within the League, he was able to have complete sway. Jinnah's weapon was not logic but debating skills in which few could equal him. Also there are indeed few instances in History where a leader had been able to achieve so much by doing so little except through play of words. He once remarked that he got Pakistan by using the services of his secretary and a typewriter.

It was purely a political move to fulfill his obsessive ambition. He played his game so cleverly that he not only amassed a huge following of the illiterate masses but also gathered around him such lieutenants who obeyed him blindly. He silenced his opponents and thus emerged as the unchallenged leader 'The Quaid-I-Azam' (the great leader). Jinnah had no doubt used Islam to obtain his Pakistan but as soon as it came into existence, he clarified that he would run the newly born state on modern western lines. He believed in concentrating all powers in his hands and made that clear when he appointed himself as the

Governor General of Pakistan. He had vowed that he would provide Muslims a separate homeland to free them from Hindu domination. But what has really happened is that they have been permanently enslaved, two thirds of them to the Hindus and remaining one third which constitutes Pakistan to power brokers and drug peddlers. A noted Pakistani author Ahmed Rashid has pointed out Pakistan has become the hotbed of the biggest smuggling racket in the world enmeshed with Pakistani smugglers, transporters, drug barons' bureaucrats, politicians and army officers.

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Our Heritage

Aspects of Kashmiri Pandit Culture – 1

... *Raj Nath Bhat (BHU)*

Background

Kashmiri Pandits have been a profoundly religious people; religion has played a pivotal role in shaping their customs, rituals, rites, festivals and fasts, ceremonies, food habits and the worship of their deities. Kashmir is widely known as the birth-place of ‘Kashmir Shaivism’ – a philosophy expounding the unity of Shiva and Shakti. Hence, Shaiva, Bhakti and Tantra constitute the substratum of the ritualistic worship of Kashmiri Pandits on which the tall edifice of the worship of Vishnu (Krishna and Ram), Lakshmi and Saraswati, and a host of other deities has been built.

Kashmir has also been a great centre of learning for several centuries. It has been a major centre of Buddhist learning for nearly a millennium during which period a sizeable number of revered Kashmiri Buddhist scholars travelled as far as Sri Lanka in the South and Tibet and China in the North. The contribution of these scholars commands a place of pride in the extant Buddhist philosophy. Unfortunately, this tradition was brought to an almost abrupt end by the Pathan and Mongol invaders in the 14th century C.E.

Though the advent of Islam produced a clash of civilizations, it also brought into being a ‘composite culture’ in which saintly figures (Rshi, Pir, Mot, Shah) came to be revered and respected equally by the polytheistic Hindu as well as the monotheistic Muslim.

This journey through over three millennia has shaped the cultural moorings of the Kashmiri Pandit (KP hereafter) and provided him with a vast corpus of impressions and expressions, which have given him a distinct cultural identity.

Today the KP is on the crossroads, bewildered and baffled, homeless and nameless. His progeny is in a flux, unsure of its morrow and unaware of the traditions that its forefathers held dear to their hearts. This paper records some of the major socio-cultural beliefs, traditions, customs and festivals of the KP with the hope that the younger KP generation will know, learn, and comprehend the essence of KP culture which evolved long periods of peace and turmoil.

Festivals and Fasts:

Festivals break the monotony of everyday work and provide the members of a community with an opportunity to feel cheerful, happy and relaxed. Hindu festivals have a deep spiritual import and religious significance and have also a social and hygienic element in them. On festival days people take an early morning bath and pray and meditate which gives them peace of mind and a new vigour.

In their lunar calendar, KPs observe a number of festivals and fasts, most of which fall in the dark fortnight (Krishna paksh). The eighth (ashtami), eleventh (ekadashi) and fifteenth (Amavas/ Purnima) days of both dark as well as bright fortnights, and the 4th day of the dark fortnights (Sankat Chaturthi) are considered so auspicious that people would observe fast on these days.

KP new-year (*Navreh*) begins on the first day of the bright fortnight of the month of Chaitra. On the eve of Navreh, a *thali* full of rice is decorated with fresh flowers, currency notes, pen and inkpot, curds, figurine/picture of a deity and (dry)fruits. Early in the morning, the one who wakes up first (usually the lady of the house), sees this *thali* as the first object in the New Year and then takes it to all other members of the family, wakes them up to enable them to see the decorated *thali* before seeing anything else. This signifies a wish and hope that the new year would bring wisdom and blessing to every member of the family all through the year.

On the 3rd day of *Navreh*, the community members go out to nearby parks, temples, or outing spots to enable people to meet each other after nearly four months of snowy-winter. It is a social gathering where men, women and children put on their best attire to get ready for the new year chores. The eighth and the ninth days of the same fortnight are observed as Durga Ashtami and Ram Navami respectively. The fortnight marks the beginning of Spring, an important junction of climatic and solar influences. Durga Ashtami is celebrated to propitiate Shakti to seek her blessing and mercy. The eighth day of the dark fortnights of the Zyesht and Ashar months are also celebrated with great devotion, when people throng the Rajnya temple at Tulumula (Gandarbal), and Akingam, Lokutpur (Anantnag) to pray and worship Maa Shakti.

The 14th day of the bright fortnight of the Ashara month is specially dedicated to Jwalaji, the Goddess of fire. People in large numbers go to Khrew, 20 kms. from Srinagar and offer yellow rice and lamb's lung to the Goddess.

Purnima of the Shravana month is the day of Lord Shiva. On this day pilgrims reach the holy Amarnath cave to have a 'darshan' of the holy ice-lingam. People also go to Thajivor (near Bijbehara) to pray at the ancient Shiva temple there.

The sixth day of the dark fortnight of Bhadrapada is sacred to women. On this day, known as *Chandan Shashthi*, women observe a dawn to dusk fast and bathe sixty times during the day.

The eighth day of the dark fortnight of Bhadrapada is celebrated as the birthday of Krishna, the 8th incarnation of Lord Vishnu. On this day people sing in daintly decorated temples prayer songs in admiration of Lord Krishna. They do not eat solid food till midnight.

The Amavasya of the same fortnight is called *Darbi Mawas*. On this day the family Guru (purohit) brings '*Darab*', a special kind of grass, which is tied to the main entrance of the house.

The Ashtami of the bright half of Bhadrapada is known as Ganga Ashtami. On this day people go on a pilgrimage to Gangabal. The 14th day of the same fortnight is called '*Anta Chaturdashi*'. On this day the family purohit brings '*anta*' a special thread which married women wear along with '*atûhór*', a threaded bunch of silk tied to one's ear. The '*anta*' is cleaned and worshipped like a 'Janev', the sacred thread worn by men. The 4th day of this fortnight is dedicated to Vinayak, the son of Shiva. Families prepare special sweet rotis known as '*pan*' on this day or during the remaining days of this fortnight. When the '*pan*' is ready, it is worshipped and the tale of its origin is recited by the eldest member of the family. The *rotis* are distributed among the neighbours and relations as '*pan naveed*'.

The dark half of Asoj is the fortnight of ancestors, *pitra paksh* (kàmbûrⁱ pachh). During this fortnight people pay homage to their dead parents, grandparents, great grandparents by performing Shraadh and giving away rice, money, fruits, clothes and other things to the needy.

Mahanavami and Dussehra, marking Lord Rama's victory over the demon Ravana, fall on the 9th and 10th days of the bright half of Asoj. Episodes from Ramayana are enacted during this period.

Diwali, the festival of lights, falls on the 14th day of the dark half of the Kartika month. All the corners, windows, balconies and eddies of the house are illuminated with lights. It is also believed that Lord Rama returned to Ayodhya on this day and Lord Krishna killed the demon Narakasura; hence, this day symbolizes the triumph of good over evil.

The third day of the bright half of Magara month is celebrated as the day of the 'Guru' (*Guru tritya*). Before the advent of Islam in Kashmir, scholars were awarded degrees to honour their academic achievements on this day (a precursor to present-day convocations). On this day, the family purohit brings a picture of Goddess Saraswati for a new-born baby or a new daughter-in-law in the family. On the Purnima of the same fortnight yellow rice (*tâhâr*) is prepared early in the morning and served as *prasad* to children and adults in the family.

During the dark half of the month of Posh, the deity of the house is propitiated for seeking his blessings. The deity (*dayût*) is served rice and cooked and raw fish on any chosen day between the 1st and the fourteenth of the fortnight. On the day of the feast, called '*gàdû batû*', fish and rice is placed in the uppermost storey of the house late in the evening for the *dayût* who is expected to shower blessings on the family.

The Amawasya of the same fortnight is the auspicious day of 'khétsi mâvas', when rice mixed with moong beans and other cereals is cooked in the evening to please the 'yaksha' (*yóchh*) so that he casts no evil on the members of the family. The 'cereal-rice' (*yéchhû tsót*) is placed at so a spot outside the house, believed to be the yaksha's place.

The 7th day of the dark half of the month of Marga is observed as the death anniversary of Mata Roopabhawani and the 11th day of the same fortnight is observed as *Bhimsen ekadashi*. It is believed, that from this day the earth begins to warm up and snow starts melting. The *purnima* of this month is celebrated as Kaw purnima (*kâv pûním*), that is *crow's purnima*. On this day, the cup of a laddle like object, '*kâvû pôtul*' - crow's idol (a square front cup made of hay with a willow handle) is filled with a little rice and vegetables and the children of the family are made to go to the upper storey of the house and invite crows to the feast. The children invite the crows thus :

काव बटु कावो, ख्यचरे कावो

यितु बा गंगुबलु, श्राना द्याना कॅरिथ

सानि नवि लरि, वरि बतु खेनि

"Crow pandit-crow, cereal- rice crow
come from Gangabal, bath meditation having done,
to our new house, to eat cereal-rice"

Shivratri (*herath*) is the most auspicious KP festival. Beginning on the first day of the dark half of Phalgun, its celebration continues for twenty three days till the 8th day of the

bright half of the same month. During this period the house is cleaned thoroughly for getting it ready for the marriage of Shiva and Parvati on the 13th day of the dark fortnight.

The 13th is the wedding night when *watukh*, Shiva in bachelor as well as in bridegroom forms, is worshipped along with the bride Parvati, Kapaliks, Shaligram till late in the night. Watukh, that is, 'Shiva's marriage party, is worshipped for four days, upto the 1st day of the bright half of the month. On this day, watukh is cleaned (*parmuzun / parimarjan*) of all the flower petals etc. at a tap in the compound of the house. Then it is taken back into the house where the eldest lady of the house bolts the entrance-door from inside. The members carrying the watukh knock at the door and the following exchange of words takes place :

कुस छुवु? [Who is there ?]

राम ब्रोर [Ram the cat]

क्या ह्यथ? [what have you brought with you?]

अन्न, दन, गुर्य गुपन, और जुव [With food, money, cattle, good health] ... and so on.

At the end of the *watak* puja Shivratri prasad in the form of kernels of walnut and *roti* made from rice flour is distributed amongst neighbours and relatives. The distribution of the prasad is completed before the 8th day of the bright half.

The 11th day of the bright fortnight marks the beginning of *sònth* (Spring). On the eve of *sònth*, a *thali* full of rice is decorated as on the new-year eve to be seen as the first thing on the morning of *ekadashi*.

Rituals and Rites :

The domestic rites and rituals among the Hindus are popularly known as *Karma* and *Sanskara*. In the form of Karmas they are cherished as programmes of duty to be observed by all householders and as Sanskaras, these enable the devotee to make their observance rhythmical. The rites and rituals serve the external and internal modes of purity (*shrùts*). Together they constitute certain ceremonies beginning with the *Garbhadhaana* or the rite of impregnation and ending with the *anteshti* or the funeral rite including *Shraddha*. These can be divided into pre-natal, natal, post-natal, prenuptial, nuptial, post-nuptial, pre-obituary, obituary, and post-obituary.

Marriage :

Hindu marriage is not a social contract but a religious institution, a sacrament in which besides the bride and the groom, there is a spiritual or divine element on which the permanent relationship between the husband and the wife depends. The husband and the wife are responsible not only to each other, they also owe allegiance to the divine element. This mystic aspect of Hindu marriage necessitates a number of symbols. The marriage creates a new bond between the bride and the groom. They have to rear up this union by dedicating their entire energy in the direction of their common interest and ideal.

Marriage is possible only between those families which have had no kinship for seven generations on the paternal side and four generations on the maternal side. Once the boy and the girl consent to join as man and wife in a life-long bond, their parents meet in a temple in the company of the middleman (if there is any) and some select family members from both the sides to vow that they would join the two families in a new bond of kinship

This ritual is known as *kasam dríy*. This is followed by a formal engagement ceremony (*tàkh*) in which some members of the groom's family and relatives visit the bride's place to partake of a rich feast. The party brings a Saree and some ornaments, which the bride is made to wear by her would be sister-in-law. During this ceremony, the two parties exchange flowers and vow to join the two families through wedlock. A younger brother or sister of the bride accompanies the groom's party with a gift of clothes for the groom.

After this function the two families begin to make preparations for the marriage ceremony which is held on some auspicious day after consulting a purohit.

- To be continued

Stories for the Children

... M.K. Raina

Three Questions – Part 4

Murlidharan learned about the day, date and time of the coronation ceremony. The astrologer within him awoke. He became suspicious about the time. Something was wrong, he felt. He started studying the grahas prevailing at the time of the ceremony. His suspicion was not unfounded. The time fixed for Varun's coronation was the most inauspicious one. He had no doubt now, but was not in a position to pronounce the truth. He tried to keep his calm though he was highly disturbed.

On the day of coronation, he accompanied Guru Vasudeva to the place, where ceremony was to be held. They occupied their seats in the front row. Ground was overflowing with people. The royal family was yet to arrive.

The king, queen and the prince arrived in a royal carriage. All of them ascended on to the dais specially erected for the purpose. People shouted jayjaykar in praise of the king, the queen and the prince. The Mahamantri gave details of the ceremony.

The jyotshi in Murlidharan, kept pricking his conscience. He was in a fix. Time was running out. He could not decide what to do? In the anxious state of mind, he unknowingly pressed Vasudeva's hand. Vasudeva turned to him. Murlidharan was sweating profusely. Guru felt, Murlidharan wanted to say something but was not able to speak. He patted him gently and asked him to speak out. Murlidharan revealed that the time chosen for the coronation was most inauspicious as per his calculations. Guru Vasudeva was perplexed. How could the illiterate Murlidharan make astrological calculations? Murlidharan pleaded with him to convey his message to the king. Guru Vasudeva was in a fix. He could not decide what to do? On Murlidharan's insistence, he decided to present him before the king.

Before the Raj-jyotshi could stand up to announce commencement of the coronation ceremony, Vasudeva got up and climbed on to the dais. He requested the king to grant Murlidharan an audience immediately. Having high regards for Guru Vasudeva, the king agreed.

Murlidharan was still sweating. He requested the King to postpone the ceremony as the time was very inauspicious. On hearing this, the King and the Raj-jyotshi were taken aback. Raj-jyotshi refuted Murlidharan's claim. The King was confused. He asked Murlidharan, "Who are you and on what basis do you refute our Raj-jyotshi's calculations." Murlidharan replied, "Your Majesty! My real name is Narsimha. I cannot tell you anything more about myself now. But I stand by my prediction. The time calculated by your Raj-jyotshi is most inauspicious. Coronation of Rajkumar Varun at this time, will be disastrous." "But how do we believe your words?" asked the Mahamantri. Narsimha said, "A little before the designated time, Sun will be completely eclipsed. The country will be engulfed into complete darkness. There will be no light for quite some time. If this happens, my prediction should be taken as correct". "And if it does not happen?", asked the King. "In that case I offer my head", replied Narsimha. The King announced, "Let our Raj-jyotshi keep everything ready for the ceremony. If the Sun is eclipsed, the ceremony will automatically stand postponed. And if it does not happen, the coronation will proceed as per programme and Narsimha shall be beheaded immediately after the ceremony."

King's decision was hailed by everybody. Narsimha was held captive by the guards. Guru Vasudeva was standing beside him. He was feeling pity for poor Narsimha. "How can Narsimha make such a prediction and prove the Raj-jyotshi wrong", thought he. He was sure Narsimha would face death.

But things happened exactly as Narsimha had predicted. Soon, the Sun was completely eclipsed. There was complete darkness. Nothing around was visible. The king and the queen and all others were terrified. The crowd stood mesmerised. This phenomenon lasted a few minutes. Immediately, after the Sun shone again, the king stood up and embraced Narsimha. Vasudeva was glad but confused. Raj-jyotshi had vanished from the dais to escape ensuing punishment. Narsimha was designated as the new Raj-jyotshi. He was asked to present himself in the Raj Bhawan next day, for a formal ceremony.

Vasudeva and Narsimha returned to the Ashram. Vasudeva was still in shock. He could not make out as to how an illiterate person could make such an accurate prediction. He did not ask Narsimha any questions. Instead he decided to put the truth before the King.

The following day, Vasudeva accompanied Narsimha to the Raj Mahal. Before the formal ceremony, Vasudeva approached the king and said, "Your Majesty! I am greatly pleased to have my dear Narsimha appointed as Raj-jyotshi. But before this is done, It is my duty to tell you some facts about him. Narsimha has been with me for the last fifteen years. He is illiterate and does not know a word about astrology. How could he work out the exact happening, is still a mystery to me? If he really is an astrologer, then why did he lie? Ashram is a sacred place for bringing up the most noble breed of children. How can one lie while seeking admission to such a place. If Narsimha is really lied except under most compelling circumstances, I request your majesty to give him a befitting punishment."

The king looked at Narsimha and asked him to divulge the truth. Narsimha stood with his head low and eyes filled with tears. He said, "Yes, Your Majesty! I am a liar. I deserve to be punished. But I would like to reveal the circumstances which compelled me to hide the truth." Narsimha then narrated his story to the king. At the end, Narsimha said, "I had to lie out of compulsion. Had I not lied, I would have been caught by my king and punished. I am however still surprised, how could my prediction go wrong in his case?"

The king did not pronounce his judgement. He ordered that Narsimha be kept in custody till a final decision was taken.



"That was Narsimha's story", Guru Vasudeva concluded. He said to Ananta, "The king will take a decision soon. I am myself in pain, to see Narsimha in custody. But I am helpless. Lying is a sin and in an Ashram, it is the biggest sin."



When the king ordered Narsimha's custody, he was not sure of the facts. He could not make out as to why Narsimha's prediction in case of his own king had gone wrong. He counselled with his aides, but they could also provide no clue.

One day, the king discussed the issue with the queen. She was also worried for Narsimha. After all, he had saved them from a disaster. She thought for a while and said, "Why don't we call the villager Sehdeva, whose wife had also delivered a baby that day". "What can he do", asked the king. "I think the answer lies there only", replied the queen.

The king sent an emissary to Narsimha's village to fetch Sehdeva. When he came, the queen asked him if he knew the astrologer Narsimha? Sehdeva was sore with that name. He told the queen, "I don't want to talk about him. He made a wrong prediction. He said that my child would die the same day. My daughter is very much alive. She has read all Vedas and has become an epithet of knowledge."

The queen got the answer. Narsimha was really a great astrologer. She told the king, "It is evident that the timing of the birth of two babies were messed up. So horoscopes also changed hands. One meant for the king was delivered to Sehdeva and that meant for Sehdeva was given to the king. There was nothing wrong with the predictions.

The king was delighted. Narsimha was released and brought before the king. He was accorded a warm reception by all. Guru Vasudeva was called to the palace. He was relieved to know that Narsimha had only lied under very compelling circumstances. He sent a message for Narsimha's wife Rohini, his son Gautama and Ananta. On the same day, Narsimha was formally appointed as Raj-jyotshi. He touched the feet of the king, the queen and Guru Vasudeva in reverence.



Ananta got the answer to his third question: What is that which one can not hide for long? And the answer was 'One's roots'.

Ananta had answers for all the three questions now. His mission was complete but he still had some time left at his disposal. He desired to seek more knowledge from Guru Vasudeva. So he decided to stay back in the Ashram.

In less than one year's time, Ananta read and memorised all vedas and other religious scriptures. He also got acquainted with the codes and customs concerning worldly affairs. He now sought Guru Vasudeva's permission to leave. Guru, with a heavy heart allowed him to go. All boys of the Ashram were grieved. And so was Gautama, who had found a good companion in Ananta. But Ananta had no option.

While on his way back, Ananta thought, "Did I not commit a sin by not revealing my identity to Guru Vasudeva?" He decided to seek its answer from his Rajguru on reaching his palace.



Ananta was back in Saraspur. It was almost a year after he had left Mihira. When he reached the palatial house of Mihira, he was shocked to find that the house now belonged to Kalpaka, the rich man who lived across Saraswati. Ananta enquired from the dwarfpal who was previously in Mihira's employment, as to how did the house transfer to his new master. Dwarfpal replied, "Mihira became very greedy. In his thirst for more riches, he challenged Kalpaka to a game of dice. Kalpaka accepted the challenge. Mihira lost the first game and with that some riches. Kalpaka wanted him to withdraw. But Mihira insisted on continuing with the game. In the hope of winning back, he kept on playing game after game till he lost everything. His wives abandoned him when he turned pauper. "And where is Mihira?", asked Ananta. "He has started afresh, carving stones at his old place", replied dwarfpal.

Ananta went to the river bank to meet Mihira. He found Mihira engrossed in carving a block of stone. Mihira did not see Ananta till he came very close. Mihira looked up and greeted Ananta with a radiant and smiling face. Ananta had never before seen such a smile on his face. Ananta sat down. But even before he could speak, Mihira said, "Look, don't ask me any questions. I have come a long way since you met me first. I craved for riches and I was able to achieve all that I wanted. But there was no contentment. At every step, I felt inferior to yet another rich man. I wanted to be the wealthiest. My first wife, who had supported me all through the bad phase of my life, left me. I am sure, even if I had succeeded in getting all of Kalpaka's wealth, I would not have been satisfied. I have realised there is no end to this lust. It is only the contentment that brings lasting pleasure". Ananta then corrected his answer to the first question: 'One's lasting pleasure does not lie in riches. It lies in one's contentment.'

Mihira requested Ananta to stay with him for a day, not as his worker, but as a friend. Ananta stayed back and tasted the delicious food cooked by Mihira.

Ananta left Saraspur next morning. He had a fortnight before his time limit of five years would elapse. He felt sure that his answers to the three questions were correct. On his way to Arunagiri, he had to fulfill his promise of visiting Anusuya at Chandri.



When Ananta reached Chandri, he was shocked to see Anusuya in a pitiable condition. His son had contracted an illness which was unheard of in the region. His legs were first paralysed, then his arms and in about a year's time, his entire body was affected. All treatment given to him had failed. The child lay motionless on the floor. Anusuya had spent all his wealth and had also sold off his land for treatment of the child. Someone suggested that the Tantrik who had earlier cured Pushpalata, be called. But Anusuya felt helpless as he had nothing left to pay the tantrik.

Ananta was in a shocked state of mind. He could not see Anusuya and Pushpalata in agony. He wanted to console them, so he stayed with them.

With each passing day, child's condition worsened. One morning they found that the child had lost his sight. Pushpalata screamed in anguish and threw her body at the feet of her house deity. Ananta became restless. He could not bear any more with Anusuya's and Pushpalata's pitiable state. He sent for the Tantrik.

Tantrik came and examined the child. He was confident that he could cure the child in a day. But he would not be able to restore his vision. Ananta asked him his fee, and also if there was a possibility of restoring the child's eyesight? Tantrik asked for a hefty sum as his fees. Ananta promised to pay him the fee only after the child was cured of paralysis. The Tantrik informed told him that the child's vision could be restored only if someone donated his eyes. "But who would donate his eyes", thought Ananta.

Tantrik went ahead with the treatment. By Sunset, the child had completely recovered from the paralysis. But he had no vision. Pushpalata embraced her child.

As soon as the Tantrik stood up to leave, Pushpalata in a very calm and composed manner caught him by his hand. With a strange smile on her face, she looked directly into the Tantrik's eyes and said, "You can't leave before you carve out my eyes and restore my child's sight." And the Tantrik did it.

- To be continued.

National Schools of Kashmir

... J. N. Kachroo

An Institution with a Mission - 2

In continuation to what appeared in the previous issue of Milchar, a brief account of the ups and downs of the Institution between 1938 and 1968 is attempted. Details are beyond the scope of this article.

From early forties, Pt. Balkak Dhar was succeeded as president by Late AN.Kak, a prominent lawyer, an MLA and the elder brother of R.C.Kak, the then prime minister of J&K state. Late Srikanth Kaul Vakil was the secretary till his death in mid forties, when S.D.Dhar, Conservator replaced him.

The Institution had its golden period between 1938 to 1948. Following the opening of the Srinagar school, a large contingent of highly qualified teachers was inducted. Some of them were posted at Baramulla against some experienced ones, who were transferred to Srinagar. Thus both schools got a blend of experience and youth. This proved advantageous to both.

The Baramulla school showed consistent performance. It grew in prestige and enhanced its reputation in the entire area including the present Kupwara district. It began to be patronised by the elite of the times. It had the unique distinction of being adjudged as an 'Excellent School', entitling it to a bonus of 25% of the grant-in-aid. Late N.L.Kitroo, an upright and reputed officer was the Inspector of Schools. His judgement was endorsed by the Director of Education, K.G.Saiydan after personal verification.

The Srinagar school started with distinct advantages; its central location in Karan Nagar with a growing neighbourhood; the reputation of its parent institute; good will of the literate sections; qualified and experienced staff and government support. No wonder, it enrolled students from all over the city and from all the socio-economic stratas of the society. Some names of outstanding students of that period, given hereunder will bear testimony to the contribution of the two schools.

Crisis:

The tribal attack of 1947 was a blow to the Baramulla school. Its buildings were vandalised, its furniture, equipment, library and laboratory damaged. Its two senior teachers, dozens of students were killed. When the school reopened after the town was liberated, the roll had drastically been reduced due to migration. The staff was impoverished due to loss, death of relatives and arson. No feeder or hostel survived.

The President of the institution, A.N.Kak had to leave the state because of political compulsions. S.D.Dhar assumed the role of acting president. The M.C. depended solely on the members of the core group.

The institution faced a series of crises. Ignoring their chronology, they were:

1. The Srinagar school building along its contents, excepting basic records, was reduced to ashes in a fire. Thanks to late S.K.Kaul, not actively involved with the M.C., and thanks to the owner Late D.N.Mathoo, the building was reconstructed and the school housed back. But the school could not be furnished and equipped for want of funds.

2. In the name of nationalisation of private education, the government ordered suspension of grant-in-aid, and taking over of private schools. The management was taken off guard. After protracted negotiations, the government took over the Baramulla school, its movable and immovable assets (building and play fields) without any compensation to the rightful owners., the M.C., which retained the Srinagar school. The staff was demoralised. About 12 qualified and young teachers migrated from the Valley. Almost 25 teachers joined the government service. The M.C. slashed the salary of remaining staff by 25%.

Imbued with the spirit of service and sacrifice, the resilient group of founders, with the belief that the institution would rise like the proverbial Phoenix, put their act together and decided to fight. The focuss of the mission was the service of the less privileged in the context of unfortunate deaths, old age of some and migration of a few. Non availability of young recruits added to their woes. However, they succeeded in retaining the services of three youngmen namely late P.N.Kuchroo, J.N.Patwari and the writer of this article. Unfortunately, P.N.Kuchroo died shortly after a few years. Keeping the size of the school in view, the number of eligible teachers was miserably inadequate. The management decided to hire on contract retired teachers. No means an ideal solution!

Struggle for survival :

The period between 1949 to 1953 was the worst, with no funds. August 1953 political events brought some hope. Grant-in-aid was restored. But the revised rules complicated the procedures to earn grants. The school hardly managed the salary expenses, no capital investment was possible. The following were the main features of the Struggle Period:

a) Luckily most of the students on roll in 1950 continued with the school

b) Admission in lower classes dwindled, especially from the neighbourhood and the middle class. To make up the numbers, admissions were liberalised. Quality of the new entrants could not be controlled. 9th and 10th classes grew in numbers beyond what the faculty could hold. Academic standards declined. The quantitative results tended to touch the nadir. The only silver lining was offered by some exceptionally bright students who would lend some semblance of quality to the otherwise poor show.

c) Again the old guards, especially late B.D.Kaul rose to the occasion. He persuaded late S.K.Kaul to take over as President. Other members of the M.C. were Justice J.N.Bhat, P.N.Kaul IFS, Conservator (Secretary), S.D.Dhar (Actt), J.N.Hashia IPS, G.A.Burza, MLA, G.R.Dar, Joint Director Education, as government representative and the writer as employees' representative, D.N.Raina, J.N.Misri and S.L.Raina as ex-officio members. The Committee took a historic decision of retiring all employees who were 64 plus, on April 1, 1969. Only D.N.Raina continued in his service for sometime more. He took over as the Principal and I was designated Head Master in my own grade and pay. The task of reconstruction started from 1969.

During the period ending 1968-69, the following (positions they held at that time or in due course of time are shown in brackets), brought honour to themselves and to the school. The list is based on my memory. Omissions are inevitable, but not intentional. The details are subject to amendment.

Ghulam Mohidin Shah and Harbans Singh Azad (Cabinet Ministers), P.N.Kaul, R.C.Raina and Prof. Nasarullah (Chief secretaries), M.S.Pandit (Ex Financial Commisioner, now Chairman, Muslim Auqaf Trust), Mir Mukhtar Kanth, Dr. O.N.Wakhlu and Dr. O.N.Kaul (Principals, REC, Srinagar), M.L.Shalia (Central Railways), J.L.Kak (CPWD), M.L.Mattoo (BPCL), S.N.Kaul, B.L.Misri, C.L.Mattoo, G.R.Lone (Chief Engineers), Dr. Assadullah Lone (Principal, Medical College, Lahore), Dr. Hameed Karra (Director, medical Education), Dr. A.K.Kaul (Principal, College of Dentistry), Dr. H.K.Koul (HOD, Pathology, Medical College, Srinagar), Dr. R.K.Chrangoo (Surgeon, Medical College, Jammu), Dr. Nissar A. Wafai, Dr. Naresh Kaul, Dr. B.L.Kaul, Dr. Ashok K. Kaul (all working abroad), Dr. Ajay Dhar, Dr. Wali (AIIMS), Allah Bux (DIG Police), Late Dr. Duni Kumar Razdan (Director, Gardens & Parks), K.L.Zutshi (Chairman, NHPC), Rajen Kaul (CEO, Arya Communications), M.K.Kilam (ED, ONGC) Dr. C.L.Kaul (ONGC), B.M.Kher (GM, ONGC), Surinder Kachroo (GM, WTC, Mumbai), P.K.Wattal (Head, Processing Division, Nuclear Recycle Group, BARC), Romesh Kachroo (VP, Arya Communications) T.K.Bhan, MK.Khosa, Kuldeep Raina, R.R.Khosa (all engineers working at different places), S.K.Kaul (HPEB), Late Moti Lal Misri, Late Tika Lal Taploo (Social/political activist), Late Banshi Parimoo, Veer Munshi (Artistes), M.L.Kemmu (of Banda Pather fame), Late Virendra Razdan, Chand Dhar (TV artistes), Dr. K.N.Pandita (Director, Central Asian Studies, Kashmir University), Prof.Hassnan, M.L.Kher (Zonal Education Officer), Dr. R.K.Tiku (SKUAST), Surrinder Tikoo (Manager, Central Bank), Prof. B.L.Raina (Maths), Dr. Ravi Raina (Research Laboratory, Jammu), B.K.Das (Principal, M.Dass School, Jammu), Prof. M.L.Raina (now in USA), Dr. B.K.Moza, Dr. Ashwini Chrangoo.

Some of the above responded to my earlier appeal. I expect more to oblige.

(To be concluded)

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On Record

"I am arrive by passenger train Ahmedpur station and my belly is too much swelling with jackfruit. I am therefore went to privy.

Just I doing the nuisance that guard making whistle blow for train to go off and I am running with 'lotah' in one hand and 'dhoti' in the next when I am fall over and expose all my shocking to man and female women on platform. I am got leaved at Ahmedpur station.

This too much bad, if passenger go to make dung , that dam guard not wait train five minutes for him. I am therefore pray your honour to make big fine on that guard for public sake. Otherwise I am making big report to papers."

Okhil Chandra Sen wrote this letter to the Sahibganj divisional railway office in 1909. It is on display at the Railway Museum in New Delhi. It was also reproduced under the caption 'Travellers' Tales' in the Far Eastern Economic Review.

Any guess as to why this letter is of historic value? It apparently led to the introduction of toilets on trains!

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अग्निशेखर कृत 'कालवृक्ष की छाया में'

— एक दृष्टिकोण

I am no voracious reader. At best, I can term myself a 'casual reader'. But, one evening, when, courtesy Shri Moti Kaul, I received a copy of Dr. Agnishekhar's book titled 'कालवृक्ष की छाया में', I couldn't leave the book until I devoured all the 159 pages of this engrossing and thought-provoking collection of poems at one go. I wondered, what made me to cling to the book so assiduously. Was it 'Satisar' - the caption given to the first set of 34 poems which mesmerised me, or, was it the historic nostalgia of my native land, which held me spellbound?

Going through 'Ek to Chountees' poems of Satisar Section, wherein the poet has brought alive the mythical and the historical characters of Satisar in a smooth cascade-like flow of his verse, I felt as if one more 'Tarang' had been added to Kalhana's Rajatarangini, which could aptly be called the 'Trasdi Palayan Ki' tarang.

It was evident how deeply the sensitive soul of the poet had been lacerated by the forcible eviction of our community members from their native land and the subsequent afflictions of body and mind that they have undergone in the hostile climes and antagonising atmosphere. Every little poem is a cry of agony of the poet's mind and each line oozes the pain which makes reader bleed in virtual reality.

Even in the second segment 'अन्य कवितारें', the poet is pained at the lip sympathy with the CAUSE of the brethren settled abroad, or the apathy of the powers that be, in the country. The lament and the anguish of the poet is amply reflected in each poem.

It has been paradoxical tragedy of 'Nagas', the original inhabitants of Satisar to have suffered at the hands of Pishachas even in the pre-historic era, as recorded in Nilamata Purana. Even later recorded history is replete with instances when 'Nagas' have been forced to flee from their native land under the terrorising rule of 'Malechhas'. So our lament is genuine.

Our community, no doubt, has suffered a grave blow since the upheaval of 1990, which has brought us to near-disintegration and has created political and intellectual vacuum in the community. But does that mean we should become a 'quom' of 'Rudalis' - beating our chests and crying all the time. Let us not cry any more. Let us resolve to put an end to this perennial lamentations.

Dear Agnishekharji, it is for the intellectual people like you who are blessed with 'Saraswati Prasad' of effective oration and powerful pen to realise that nothing shall be achieved by lamenting over our past. You, I am sure, shall be well aware that our Seers have exhorted in many of our scriptures that continuous lamentation puts our conscience 'चैतन्य' in a gloomy mode and the urge to act gradually ebbs and withdraws. Finally, in the process, the pulsating energy 'उल्लास' of the soul gets into limbo. In such a state of resignation and surrender one could easily fall asleep under the 'छाया' of your 'कालवृक्ष' and thus would pave the way for inertia to envelope us.

I would like the poet in Agnishekhar to ignite the fire 'अग्नि' and raise it to pinnacle 'शेखर' to inspire our young generation who would no more lament but engage themselves in constructive work which would make them proud of belonging to Satisar.

You can do it.

Here I would like to conclude with a few lines borrowed from 'शशांग', your fellow-poet:

भेद मिटादो आज यहां अपने और वीराने का
सब के हित संकल्पों का है वक्त आज दोहराने का ।
काम बडा है आज सामने नवयुग के निर्मान का
जो भी अपनी भूमिका हो उसे सतत निभाने का ।।

... J.L.Manwati

• • • • •

Poetry

करुम चारय हरे साईं

म.क.रैना

बरस तल यिथ हलम दारय
करुम चारय हरे साईं ।
रँटिथ दामन तँतिय प्रारय
करुम चारय हरे साईं ॥

द्वहय बु तु म्योन कोरमुत छुम
न सोरमुत चोन नावुय जांह ।
पँतिमि वेलय करय ज़ारय
करुम चारय हरे साईं ॥

म्य मा कोरमुत ज़हुन्य अथु रोट
यँतीमस काँसि मज़लूमस ।
दज़ुन मा छुम तमिय नारय
करुम चारय हरे साईं ॥

म्य छोवुम कूत गंगा ज़ल
मनस छुम मल, च़ोलुम नो जांह ।
बख़्शतम नतु गछ़य मारय
करुम चारय हरे साईं ॥

करुम अनुग्रह, क्षमा पापन
हरुम व्वन्य रूग शापन हुंद ।
पथर छुस, यीतनय आरय
करुम चारय हरे साईं ॥

बु फ़यूरुस तीर्थन धामन

कमन शहरन कमन गामन ।
वुछिम प्रथ जायि यी पारय
"दिवान तारय हरे साई" ।।

वुजनाव सोन आज़ाद वतन

■ ब.क.मोज़ा, कोलकता

येति दिल आसि डोलमुत खोफ़ सुत्त्य
तु कलु आसि जुक्योमुत ब्वन ।

येति नोन आसि अँलिम न आसनु किन्त्य
तु बे अँलिम आसन बरजस्तु फवलान ।

येति वतन आसि यिवान छलु फलु करनु
खर्यौली देवारव तु मसलव सुत्त्य ।

येति अलफ़ाज़ आसन वुज़ान तु व्वतलान
अपज़्यारि कि सँगीन च़कि प्यठु ।

येति न थकवुनि कूशिशु आसन नेरि फवलान
तथ मुकामस कुन युस छु मुतज़ाद पूरु आसनस ।

येति साफ़ दँरियायि वजूहात आसि रँस्य् गछ़ान
वौरान मेच्चि सहरायि न आसनस मंज़ ।

येति ज़मीर यिवान आसि पथ कुन लमनु
हर हमेशि तंग खयालन तु अमालन कुन ।

तमि नरक़ुकि सँगीन आज़ाँदी निशि
म्यानि बबु च़ु वुज़नाव सोन गौफ़िल वतन ।

शखदारी

... लाल लक्षमन

द्वह अकि काकस आफताब रामस
बागवथ वोनमस शामस ताम ।
द्यव दियि बतु म्योड यियि व्यचारे
लाल लक्षमन शखदारे द्राव ॥

शामन वोननम, वौराग औनथम
बतु मेंडि बापथ वोनथम वीद ।
अँस्यु न सौँ ज़ानोय यिमु ज़ासकारे
लाल लक्षमन शखदारे द्राव ॥

न आये वह आंखों में

... म. ल. खर, नेरूल

हज़ार यादों के सपने सजाये आंखों में
मगर न आना था उन को न आये वह आंखों में
नज़र का धोका है सारा, या दिल की बे करारी है
तुम्हारे सिवा अगर कुछ समाये आंखों में
जलन दिल की सही, जिंदगी के आंगन में
वह चांदनी सा चेहरा मुसकराये आंखों में
आहवारों की तरह चारों ओर फिरता हूं
फिर भी तुम नहीं आते मेरी आंखों में
बनते हमदर्द सभी, नीता भी, साधू, पंडित भी
मगर दिलों का हाल कोई कब सुनाये आंखों में



Children's Page

... Compiled by 'Kostur'

'Increase your Knowledge' Series:

How Birds Find Their Way

Like NASA space shuttles, birds have several back-up systems for orientation and navigation that they can call upon.

Landmarks are particularly important. Often birds circle a nest or roost site before leaving as if refreshing their memory of the geography of the place. They observe the position of the Sun and crosscheck it with their biological clocks. If the Sun is behind clouds, but a little blue sky is visible, they can detect the changing angle of polarised light as the Sun crosses the sky and orientate using that. Night flyers have the stars to guide them, and night migrants flying in the Northern Hemisphere use the fixed position of the Pole Star to find their way.

If the sky is overcast, there is another almost fail-safe system. Thanks to tiny particles of magnetic material in their heads and necks, birds can detect the lines of force that make up the Earth's magnetic field. The lines rise at an angle to the Earth's surface, so, in perceiving the angle at which lines intersect the ground, a bird can pinpoint its position on the planet with considerable accuracy.



ज़रा हंसिये

मोटा ग्राहक ललचाई नज़रों से ट्रे में रखे बड़े केक को तक रहा था। बेकरी वाले ने पूछा, 'कहिये जनाब, आप को क्या पसंद है?'

मोटा ग्राहक बोला, 'मुझे तो वह मक्खन भरा पेस्ट्री से सजाया हुआ केक पसंद है।'

बेकरी वाले ने केक की तरफ हाथ बढ़ाया ही था कि मोटा ग्राहक आह भर कर बोला, 'मगर मैं लूंगा वही सूखे टोस्ट।'



Project ZAAN

Know Your Language

Peculiar Kashmiri Words & Phrases - 4

बंगि द,लि वाट bangí délí wàt+h

(commencing a work with incomplete or improper materials ~ something done just temporarily)

बंगि मंज नचुन bangí manz natsún

(to labour in vain)

ब्रेठ गछुन brèt+h gatshún

(to become stupid)

ब्रॉय जून brârⁱ zùn

(deceitful light of moon in the latter half of the night, giving impression of the dawn)

मुजि वूठ mújí wùnt+h

(a fat greedy fool)

मनुसावुन manûsàwún

(to dedicate anything with appropriate religious ceremonies ~ to offer in charity ~ to leave anything or anybody without care)

मलु मॉस्य् malû mänsⁱ

(one who follows the prescribed rites and obligations connected with an intercalary month)

मर्यचि कोन mâríchí kòn

(cholera or similar violent epidemic, capable of killing people)

मुशरान मोड múshràn mónđ

(a huge evil spirit infested at a fixed place)

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Report & Biradari News

Visit of Shankaracharya of Kashyap Meru Peeth to Mumbai.

His Holiness Shri Swami Amritanand Devtirathji Maharaj, Shankaracharya of Kashyap Meru (Kashmir) Peeth, on his way from Delhi to Pune, was very kind to pay a visit to Kashyap Bhawan and interact with the members of the Board of Trustees of Kashmiri Pandits' Association. His Holiness also addressed the biradari gathering and stayed at Kasyap Bhawan for about 5 hours.

Zaan Quiz Contest:

This programme could not be held strictly as per schedule though full scale arrangements had been made by the organisers, expecting a good turnout of members for the Competition. The programme had to be rescheduled in view of the visit of His Holiness Shri Swami Amritanand Devtirathji Maharaj, Shankaracharya of Kashyap Meru (Kashmir) Peeth, at a very short notice.

Since most of the people left the venue after having stayed with His Holiness till 4.00 PM. not many were left to participate in the Competitions. A Kashmiri Language Refresher Course was however held in the evening, with an audience of about 30 people. Quiz Contests were held thereafter, with only a few children and 18 elders.

It may be mentioned that the lunch for about 120 people attending the Event, was sponsored by **POUSH**, a Kashmiri Cuisine Restaurant at Andheri (Courtesy Om Takoo) as part of their contribution to the cause of Project Zaan. The Zaan Committee and the Kashmiri Pandits' Association thank them for the honoured gesture.

Following were declared the Winners:

1. Kashmiri Recitation (Sub Junior category)

Only Contestant **Priyanka Kaul --- First**

2. Quiz Contest (Sub Junior Category)

Priyanka Kaul ... First

Mineet Kaul ... Second

Chetna Shah ... Third

3. Reading Kashmiri (Junior Category)

Only Contestant **Shifali Raina ... First**

4. Reading Kashmiri (Senior category)

Only Contestant **Ashish Safaya ... First**

5. Quiz Contest (Elders)

i) Vicharnaag Team ... First

(Team Members: Sarla Kaul, Meena Kaul, Shifali Raina)

ii) Tulmul Team ... Second

(Team Members: Neelam Shah, C.L.Raina, Suriender Kachroo)

iii) Devibal Team... Third

(Team Members: Ashish Safaya, Capt. Rakesh Shah, Sunil Mattoo)
Awards and Cash Prizes were given away to the last year's Zaan Quiz Winners and Crossword winners respectively. As already notified, Cash Prizes of Rs. 50.00 each for the 5 All-correct Crosswords have been sponsored by Impressions, Printers and Publishers, Vasai. This year, the Cash Prizes were also given for not-all-correct entries, to encourage children.

Sunil Fotedar:

Sunil Fotedar, the Web Master of 'Milchar' and 'Zaan' has shifted his residence from Texas to 3202, Wheaton Way # A, Ellicott City, MD 21043-4258, USA, where he has taken a contract job for the Social Security Administration (SSA).

KPA congratulates him and wishes him all success with the new assignment.

New Website for Kashmiri Music:

A new Website for Kashmiri Music, including Bhajans and Pooja has been developed by Sunil Fotedar of Texas. The site can be accessed at:

<http://RadioKashmir.org>

Sunil Fotedar is also the Web Master for Milchar (www.milchar.com) and Zaan (www.zaan.net).

News from Delhi (Input Dalip Langoo):

Miltsar Group of Kashmir presented a Kashmiri Cultural Show at the national Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) on 13th November 2003 on the eve of the J&K Day. The show was organised by NIFT to educate students all about Kashmiri heritage. The Cultural Dance Show was part of the long 3 day exhibition at the NIFT premises, New Delhi. The music and dance of Kashmir was appreciated for its costumes, harmonious beats and soothing melody of Kashmiri songs. The Miltsar Group congratulated and thanked the organisers for the noble mission and its success.

VCD of Film BUB in Kashmiri

VCD of BUB, a Kashmiri film produced after a gap of 38 years, has been released. The VCD is available at Sanjay Electronics, Shop No. 9, Kashmiri Market, Near Subway, INA, New Delhi (sanjaye_koul@yahoo.com). It may be recalled that the award winning film, produced by NFDC and directed by Jyoti Sarup, features Virendra Razdan (Vidhur of Mahabharata fame) and K.K.Raina in the lead roles. Shri Razdan is no more with us now.

New assignment

Smt. Neerja Mattoo of Joshi Apartments, Lallubhai Park Road, Andheri has joined the S.P.Jain Institute of Management and Research, Mumbai as Co-Chairperson, Centre for Development of Corporate Citizenship. Congratulations from KPA.



Annual Merit Scholarship

The **Lalla Ded Educational & Welfare Trust** invites applications for awarding Annual Merit Scholarship of Rs. 2500.00 each to one Kashmiri Pandit boy and a girl pursuing their studies in the field of Pharmacy. Candidates desirous of applying for the said scholarship, should do so in the following format:

Name in block letters: _____ Father's Name: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Residential Address with Pin Code: _____
Tel. No. & E-mail ID: _____
Name and address of the Institute where studying: _____
Examination Passed Board / University Year Agg. %age

X

XII

FY B. Pharm:

SY B. Pharm:

TY B. Pharm:

Any other Scholarship secured:

Any other Achievement:

Signature of the Candidate:

M.L.Mattoo
Chairman

Applications along with photograph, attested copies of marks sheets/cerificates should be addressed to:

The Chairman
Lalla Ded Educational & Welfare Trust
Pushp Vihar, Shastri Nagar, Vasai Road (W),
Dist. Thane 401 202.
Tel. No : 0250-2342777

Note: Last date for receiving applications is 15th January 2004.

Letters

☐ I have received a copy of Milchar today. The material printed in Kashmiri using Arnimal looks good. I would like to congratulate the Editor, Milchar for being ahead of Koshur Samachar and Khir Bhawani Times in printing the Kashmiri materials in the modified Kashmiri script. Unfortunately, these journals have not yet switched over to the new script for some administrative problems.

Omkar N.Koul, Delhi

☐ At times, I was frustrated to lose the touch to our values and community. But today surprisingly, I found this website (www.milchar.com) which brought life to a dead. I have somewhat regained and polished my cultural ethics and believe me, I have been on this site for the past 4 hours now. I don't wish to exit but I have to because of my professional commitments.

Ramesh Raina, India

☐ Great to have a site (www.milchar.com) like this. Do Mumbai KPs visit this site? No entry in the Guestbook from them till now. Come on Mumbai !!!

Uteesh Dhar, Oman

☐ I wish I had words to express myself on the Project ZAAN that you have been nurturing for last some years with thought and action and rare dedication. The stalwarts of Kashmiri Pandit Association Mumbai and Lal-Ded Educational and Welfare Trust deserve all praise and aplomb for having developed this Project originally for Mumbai Baradari and now for exploring its useful application further beyond in far off places of our country and in overseas diaspora of our uprooted Kashmiri Pandit community. Allow me to congratulate you and all the stalwarts of our community in Mumbai who have been associated with this remarkable creative effort. I express my gratitude to you all for having started on this great thought which by itself is a revolutionary movement. ZAAN is our PAHCHAN; our identity, information and something more which cannot be described in words. One of the prime objectives of living organisms is to preserve the identity and so it does not require to be emphasized how important it is for our community members to preserve our ZAAN not only in Mumbai but also throughout the diaspora of our exile. As such, cooperation to this movement has to be spontaneous and whole hearted and this assumes mine also.

Dr. B.K.Moza, Kolkata

