

ALL INDIA KASHMIRI SAMAJ : HUB OF A GLOBAL NETWORK

— By *Maharaj Krishen Kaw, President, AIKS*

This is a good time to take a fresh look at the All India Kashmiri Samaj. Set up around 1980, the organization has completed a quarter century and this is a convenient milestone for assessing its performance.

AIKS is not like India, which had a constitution created due to the historic necessity of providing a legal framework to a newly formed country. It is more like the United States of America, where the thirteen newly liberated territories *suo motu* decided to join together and form a new federation.

Many of the Kashmiri Sabhas are much older than AIKS. Some are even centenarians. It is some of these pre-existent Sabhas, which felt the need for an umbrella organization that would provide a direction to the entire community and an impetus to its various socio-cultural movements. Thus AIKS was not something foisted from above; it was a felt need of the affiliated units.

Initially, AIKS was a social organization. Its main activity was to hold an annual general meeting, which would also be the occasion for a get together for Pandits across the country. During the day, there were speeches. The evenings were spent in a convivial atmosphere and usually ended with a sumptuous dinner hosted by the local Sabha. Discussions generally revolved round the major problems of the Diasporas in those days, namely, the increasing difficulty of getting Kashmiri priests and cooks and the problems of arranging matches within the community.

The turning point came when the Seventh Exodus of the community took place in 1990 and almost 3.5 lakh Pandits fled overnight from the valley towards Jammu, Delhi, Chandigarh and other destinations around the country. Overnight the focus shifted and all KP organizations got involved in tackling this massive tragedy and in helping the community get back on its feet. In the process, many things changed.

First, the basic issue became one of survival. The themes of the conferences changed to when and how members of the community would return to the valley, what the conditions of the refugees were, both in and out of camps, what the Central and State Governments were doing for their relief and rehabilitation, what reservations and concessions members of the community and their wards should be given and so on.

Secondly, the number of refugee Pandits vastly overshadowed the numbers of the earlier Diasporas. Refugee Pandits dominated the scene. Wherever they

found that existing organizations did not fulfil their aspirations in full measure, they set up parallel organizations of their own. In some of the Sabhas they put up their own candidates for the various positions of office-bearers and managed to have several of them elected.

Thirdly, all KP organizations ceased to be merely sociocultural. Although none of them actually declared themselves to be political in character, all of them were forced to take up the issues of survival, which included the matters relating to their political existence too.

Fourthly, some of our local outfits and some of the overseas organizations took up cudgels on behalf of the community with international and United Nations organizations, as also with local Parliamentarians and political leadership. They kept the flag of the community flying in various fora, created Kashmiri caucuses, countered disinformation campaigns launched by our enemies and so on.

Fifthly, organizations and individuals took up issues in national fora, with varying degrees of success. The National Commission of Human Rights declared that the Kashmiri Pandits had been subjected to conditions akin to genocide, but not genocide. The National Commission for Minorities recommended to the Central Government that Kashmiri Pandits should be declared as a regional minority in Jammu and Kashmir State, but with little effect. There were several judgments by the J&K High Court and Delhi High Court in favour of Kashmiri Pandits, but the State Government ignored most of these.

Sixthly, there was a wild scramble for creation of new organizations, some of them local, some claiming to represent the State of J&K, and some claiming an all India character. This was especially true of Jammu and Delhi, where scores of such outfits sprang up. This created the impression that the Kashmiri Pandits were a disunited lot and spoke in a dozen discordant voices.

Lastly, there was sporadic talk of floating a separate political party of Kashmiri Pandits, but no one was sure whether such a party would have any future.

As far as the AIKS is concerned, under the dynamic leadership of Brigadier Madan, D.N.Munshi and J.N.Kaul, it performed wonders in the task of relief and rehabilitation and providing leadership to the beleaguered community. There were well-orchestrated campaigns of protest, in which all affiliates around the country participated, delegations waited on the political masters of the moment and

memoranda were submitted. Many important concessions were wrested from the Government.

When we look towards the future, the initiatives that need to be taken by the AIKS can be summarized as follows :

- AIKS should provide an organizational framework that can accommodate different shades of opinion, with a common minimum agenda on which all are agreed. The new constitution on which all are agreed. The new constitution adopted last year has kept a provision for such framework. There can be strong affiliates and there can be weak affiliates. Some organizations can be loose affiliates, with a separate agenda of their own but subscribing to the common minimum agenda of the AIKS.
- We have already held several meetings with the major frontline organizations and there is near unanimity that the AIKS can be a Global Network of Kashmiri Pandit Organizations. Already, AIKS has 52 affiliates and more applications for affiliation are in the pipeline. All the frontline organizations have declared that they consider AIKS to be the apex organization and would follow its lead. Even within Panun Kashmir, there is a movement towards an understanding with AIKS and we are very hopeful about the outcome. Thus the longstanding criticism leveled against the community that it does not have a collective voice would at last be met.
- AIKS has already hammered out the Common Minimum Agenda for the community. This was unanimously adopted by the entire KP leadership in an IIC meeting held in July 2005. This can be further fleshed out as we go along, but the basic draft is already in place.
- As far as the political agenda of the community is concerned this was thrashed out in the Conference held at Bangalore in December 2004. The Bangalore Declaration is a comprehensive document detailing all our political demands and has been unanimously adopted by the community leadership.
- There is an agenda for Social Reform, which was among the earliest to be debated and adopted in our Jammu conclave held in June 2004.
- There is a National Policy on Kashmir, the draft of which was also adopted at the Jammu conclave of June 2004. This provides a comprehensive outline of what the Government policy on Kashmir should be.

- In our latest Conference at Chandigarh held in September 2005, we have outlined a Strategy for Self-reliance which gives a clarion call to the youth to learn to stand on their own feet.
- We have drafted a Bill for the take-over and management of Hindu shrines and properties appurtenant thereto in the valley. The National Conference has already tabled this Bill in the Assembly in its last session. We are optimistic about the outcome.
- We have created a National Placement Bureau in the AIKS, which is manfully trying to adjust unemployed youth in jobs.
- Our next initiative will be a Conclave for Corporate Leaders, so as to enlist their support to the various community programmes.
- We have outlined several new initiatives : a Global Directory of Kashmiri Pandits, living anywhere in the world, a Global Matrimonial Site with online matching of *teknis*, video-conferencing facilities etc to facilitate matrimonial tie-ups within the community and a Global Website hyper linking all KP websites in existence. These initiatives are already in progress at various stages of implementation as a natural process. What is required is a push from the AIKS to ensure that various local Directories are standardized and then collated into a single directory and so on in respect of each of the initiatives.

As we move forward in time, AIKS will become stronger and stronger as a single, united voice of the entire Kashmiri Pandit community. It will have multiple agenda, some for the short-term, some for the medium term and some for the long term. It will have something for everyone, those in the valley, those wanting to return, those not wanting to return, those already settled wherever they are in India and abroad and so on. It will have something to offer the old people, the youth and the children, and something for the womenfolk too.

But for all this to happen, we need a stronger participation from the community. The following points for action emerge, if our dream is to become a reality :

- ✓ We need to build an AIKS World Headquarters in a building of our own, possibly at New Delhi. For this we have to take a plot of land from the DDA and then construct a well-designed building.
- ✓ We need a good mouthpiece for the community. Naad has seen many improvements over the last two years, but it

needs fuller support in terms of subscriptions, articles, advertisements etc.

- ✓ We need funds. Affiliates need to collect funds and pass on a portion to AIKS. We also need fund collection drives directly for the AIKS.
- ✓ There is an AIKS Relief Fund. It should have an annual inflow of a least Rs 1 crore and a similar outflow.
- ✓ There should be possibilities of educational scholarships and medical relief to deserving cases.
- ✓ AIKS should be able to harness the potential for fundraising worldwide and route it through its local affiliates, and generally keep an unobtrusive eye on fund utilization.
- ✓ Above all, there is need for persons of integrity and commitment and total selflessness to man the various positions in the AIKS, so as to provide a cogent, rational and farsighted leadership to the community.

We, who currently look after the affairs in the AIKS, have a vision for the future. But this vision can only be realized if we all share the same vision, have faith in one another and pull together in the same direction. Let us hope that we have the blessing of the Divine in what we are attempting to do.

I call upon all the enlightened members of the community to help us in this noble endeavour.

ONE OBJECTIVE, MANY STRATEGIES

The struggle of our beleaguered community has entered a vital phase. The situation is so complex that there is need for an offensive on many fronts. All India Kashmiri Samaj has operationalised a multi-pronged strategy, the results of which will be visible in the next few weeks.

- ◆ The offensive was initiated with my open letter to the Prime Minister, which was publicised far and wide. The PMO has taken note of the strident tone of our attack on the Govt's policies.
- ◆ We carefully drafted eleven Parliament Questions about the various burning questions facing the community and sent these to fourteen Friends of Kashmir. All the questions were asked.
- ◆ Our draft Bill on takeover of management of Hindu temples in the valley has been tabled in the State Assembly. In written communications to me, both Shri Farooq Abdullah and Smt. Khem Lata Wakhloo

have pledged their support for the Bill during the next session.

- ◆ We have filed a comprehensive writ petition before the Supreme Court of India. This encompasses a wide range of issues facing the community, in matters where we have so far failed to obtain redress from the authorities. We hope that the Court will decisively intervene.

- ◆ We have requested our advocate to obtain a copy of the orders passed by the Court in Bitta Karatey's case, so that we can file a review petition as a supplementary plea in our writ petition.

- ◆ Taking note of the fact that the Indian nation is not sufficiently aware of the overall strategy of terrorists, we decided to start a campaign for national awakening on Martyrs' Day. In an unprecedented show of strength, more than 400 people participated in the rally at Jantar Mantar.

We have also decided to seek the support of sister groups in the country so as to broad base our struggle. Shiv Khara's group has already responded to our call.

- ◆ The next phase of the campaign will move to Kolkatta where we have decided to celebrate the silver jubilee of AIKS, along with the golden jubilee celebrations of Kashmir Sabha at Kolkatta. All affiliates are requested to participate in full strength in the EC/AGM meeting and the Conference on "Kashmiri Pandits : Towards A National Awakening".

- ◆ Shiban Dudha attended an International Conference at Stockholm and was able to bring the problems faced by Kashmiri Pandits to the forefront of the deliberations.

- ◆ The General Secretary also held a meeting at London with Smt. Krishna Bhan, the dynamic President of Indo-European Kashmir Forum and other members. The IEKF wants AIKS to assume its rightful place as a World Congress of Kashmiri Pandits.

- ◆ Nearer home, the Chief Minister of Haryana has positively responded to our suggestions and ordered that relief of Rs. 1000 be paid to each Kashmiri migrant family with effect from 1.4.2006. All officers have been asked to extend the benefit of Govt. schemes to them on the pattern of Punjab and Delhi.

AIKS continues on its onward march with the unstinted support of the entire community and unmindful of a few misguided souls who neither do anything themselves nor like others doing anything. May God show them the light!

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GIVE AIKS A NEW LOOK

— By *Dr. N. L. Zutshi, Ex-President AIKS and KPA, Bombay*

GIVE AIKS A NEW LOOK is appearing in the thirty seventh Annual **VITASTA** under an appropriate title "Sabha, Samaj & Sammelan—A Mantra for Kashmiri Pandit Solidarity". This Annual coincides with the golden jubilee year of Kashmiri Sabha, Calcutta, an occasion which calls for felicitations, first to Calcutta Sabha, for its Golden Jubilee, second to **VITASTA**, for this Annual which coincides with the Golden Jubilee and third to Dr. Brij Krishen Moza, for editing the prestigious **VITASTA** for all these decades, year after year. Editor Moza has given us a treat — a well researched, thematic and objective publications — all in the service of Kashmiri Pandit (KP) cause. In this process two names have become synonymous, **VITASTA & MOZA**. Wish Moza Sahib to continue doing this good work for years to come.

A word for Calcutta Sabha. While joining the main stream rich Bangla culture, Sabha maintained the distinct purity and identity of KP-culture. Official Organ, **VITASTA**, speaks for itself. Their presentations of cultural events are true to the original; ethnic character is retained and maintained. Craving for ethnic music of one's home country is satisfying as their presentations are not shadowed by the local or filmy influence. Elsewhere presentations tend to become a fashionable six piece orchestra. Preference is given to poetry of Parmanand, Razdan, Zinda Kaul and Nadim among others.

Moza Sahib reminds me that theme of this year's **VITASTA** is based on what we discussed some years back. Was it way back in 80's, as long as I remember, I do not remember, what he said and what I said then, but what I say here, may be different, but then that is the crux of the matter.

Back home, confined as we were to seven bridges of "Kasheer", much of our socialising occurred within that geography. For purposes of collective religious celebrations, or giving vent to our feelings on political issues, or even to here a visiting leader or a dignitary, we would rally at i) Sanathan Dharam Yuvak Sabha at Sheetal Nath Bhavan ii) to respond to our community slogan 'jai-kara-har-har-mahadev' iii) to follow one leader, Pandit Shiv Narain Fotedar. Then it was almost a norm, one Sabha, one platform, one leader and one slogan.

Since we are now scattered all over the world, we have given ourselves scores of platforms, calling these by all sorts of names. In this outreaching process, we have thus created more number of such platforms than desired. Over the last few years their

growth has been faster than mushrooms. Some have since divided and sub-divided. Some have appeared, disappeared and then re-appeared. Some had a short span of life. Some represented not beyond their managing committee members. Process is a non-stop chain reaction. Instead of bringing in solidarity, community stands polarised and divided into various pressure groups, more often than not holding diagonally opposite view points. One wonders, all this effort for who and on whose behalf — Kashmiri Pandits—a miniscule community.

To many voices for too few of us, all divergent to each other. No wonder no one takes us seriously. Just to say that AIKS represents 50 or 100 units does not make a big difference as it does not make us more than our numbers, may be, on the contrary reflects that we are that much more divided. Useful objective these units could serve, is off-set by the lack of response to a central command, to 'SPEAK AND ACT AS ONE'. Result is discord. Community is fragmented more than ever before.

To preserve our identity and what all goes with it, is the precise role which a local organisation is designed for. For achieving this objective, each organisation is guided by its 'Aims and Objects' and obligation towards the law, in case of being a registered body. Recent AIKS directive says that we should have Sabhas and Samitis, all over, in villages, towns and cities. Good. This part is easy. No problem, we have perfected our skill at it. Directive further says "attempts should be made to federate these small units into state level bodies". Here a logical question arises, who does it? Make no mistake, this is precisely the role of AIKS. Fact happens to be, that barring at the most a dozen affiliates, most of the units have no worthwhile link with the Apex Body. Beyond paying one time affiliation fee, wonder how many are in good standing to vote, how many attend the meetings and how many even respond to a circular. In what way do these affiliates benefit by the affiliation, except to share a common appearance on the AIKS Affiliate's list, to make it impressive. If the link is as good as that, what kind of supervision the central body can exercise and for what. Units do not need guidance as to how these should or should not conduct their affairs, which are mostly socio-cultural in nature, barring a few which additionally are involved in some welfare activities. How can then centre exercise any sort of involvement, in units or federation of units? Yes, this is possible only if units

look up to Apex Body for something, which means units must feel the NEED for AIKS. This brings out, therefore, that AIKS HAS TO BECOME A NEED BASED ORGANISATION.

Ideally, we ought to have AIKS with its various branches, all over, say, AIKS — Bangalore, AIKS — Kashi, AIKS — Jhumri Tulayya, like of which we have Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA), KOA—USA, KOA—Canada, KOA—Australia etc. For the country of size of USA, we have ten zones, each one is KOA—Zone 1, KOA—Zone 2 etc. Further by US law KOA shall limit its activities to welfare and socio-cultural activities only. For purposes of liaison with US Government and be active on the political front, KOA has a separate body called Indo-American Kashmir forum (IAKF). This is a formula for AIKS to affiliate units into zonal federates.

A case study : On going back to our home

My wife and I, went to have a cup of tea at a Jammu Dhaba, soon after migration. Two elderly Kp's already seated were engrossed in a conversation. Overheard : "No, never mind, on Haerat we could not go, at the most by Navreh, we will be back in our homes". This incident is now 16 years old. How sad. However, current scenario, on 'going back to our homes' is sadder still. This is somewhat as follows :

Let us go...we go now...not until they make it safe for us to return...we only go to a protected zone....no zones, whole Kashmir is ours...whoever likes to go can go....if we go, we go all together...we only go if our Muslim neighbors apologize...let them invite us and welcome us...we only go when government invites us...we have no faith in this or that government...we will never return to ghettos government wishes to provide...if Hurriyat, why not we being consulted...we will not settle on anything less than a homeland, not even an inch less...they cannot treat us as second class citizens...we must have constitutional guarantees...unless we are assured of our share of jobs, granted loans for rebuilding and starting businesses...reserve 10 MLA seats and 3 MP seats for us...at the minimum until last gun is fired.

The above is not a charter of demands, but a sample survey of divided opinions on a single issue of vital importance to us. Each opinion is owned, closely and dearly held by one or the other of our leaders. Each opinion is owned, closely and dearly held by one or the other of our leaders. Each one offers his solution as the only one and assures that he will not rest until

he delivers. Should they tell themselves, what they tell us to believe, their inner voice will tell them that what they believe is not going to happen. Based on above scenario, what shall we consider a common minimum program for AIKS to adopt. Probably none. Only logical option is NOT TO GO. Why not? Follow the example of *Puraney-Kashmiris*, Sindhis and Punjabis from Pakistan who all never looked back. AIKS at Chandigarh Conference, surmised very close to it, "that we are doomed to settle elsewhere rather than in our homeland". How true, but what happens to those in camps who are anxiously waiting for something to happen for the last 15 years. Wonder how many will draw comfort from the words "to be positive in outlook, philosophical about the past and optimistic about the future".

Government intentions in this regard, are clear. For first 15 years, it was one room tenement, and by the time, it will be time, one generation is gone, and there will be no one left to be provided for. Governor Saxena, is honest enough to say that a resourceful community such as Kashmiri Pandits should not depend too much on government help. Means on our own we have to learn to do something for ourselves. Sooner the better.

AIKS need not to volunteer to plan for Government of India, to help sort out Kashmir National Plan, foreign affairs plan or whatever. It does not interest any government to do what we wish them to do. A government of whichever hue, precisely does what suits it the most, always with an eye to be around in office in the present term and also the next. A case of a pro-Hindu organisation, BJP, is a typical example. When in power, what they did for us is too well known, and now in opposition they assure us to raise the question in the parliament!! However, it is Shiv Sena supremo, who almost appeared as an Avatar in what he did for our student's community. Otherwise, for all our pleadings, we received a patient hearing, lip sympathy and broken promises.

Now, appropriate for our planners at AIKS, is to do instead, draw and keep in readiness, a Kashmiri Pandit Disaster Management Plan, to devise means and methods, the way we can meet the situation in case leftover 5,000 and odd KP's in the valley are suddenly evicted, and also how to handle the problem of those who are already in camps. Chandigarh resolve needs now to be translated into an action plan. Self help.

Essential motivation for which, Justice (Mr.) P. N. Bakshi, judge at Allahabad High Court, in 1980, founded All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS) was to help keep the ethnic peculiarities of Kashmiri Pandit community alive on an all India level. He strongly believed if ethnicity goes, the identity goes and if the

identity goes we must believe that we are dead. With a religious bent of mind and as a ritualist, he felt sad, that some of us did not care much about the rituals peculiar to us, which used to be celebrated with a distinct local fervor. He believed that there could be no two opinions, about the fact that we derive our inspiration from Kashmir and our motherland is the fountainhead of our culture. To keep our ethnic characteristic alive AIKS should limit itself as a non-political body wedded only to socio-cultural activities and general welfare of the community. He was afraid that should AIKS include the welfare of valley Pandits on its agenda, same will be detrimental to the safety and interests of our Biradari back home and it will be mis-construed that AIKS has been set up for a political agenda which J & K government at that time would not take kindly. Justice Bakshi suggested that any time in the future if need arises, we may have a separate all India organisation, exclusively meant for a political agenda. Despite opposition by many, he insisted that let AIKS remain as such without making any change in its basic characteristics. He also gave some guidelines : rotate the office of President, this will help the involvement of different regions, set up more Samajs' but do not encourage more than one in a single town, metropolis or city, which will indicate a division within the community (as a follow up of this Kashmiri Pandit Mandal Trust and Kashmiri Pandit Association, both functioning from Bombay were merged into one), holding of annual conferences by rotation at different places will help social integration of the community. Reflecting back, I believe the founder president had a Vision.

A well attended and an impressive function held at Allahabad witnessed the birth of AIKS in 1979. This move, first ever to set up an all India body of Kashmiri Pandits was well received. A number of organisation affiliated. Kashmiri Samiti Delhi (KSD) was reluctant to join. Without affiliating KSD, representing a largest conglomeration of Pandits outside the valley, AIKS felt itself incomplete. Persuasion mounted, till KSD finally agreed to join, which coincided soon after Anantnag Holocaust. Why this reluctance? With a mind set as the largest conglomerate of Pandits, KSD showed reluctance to join as it did not wish to be second in command to AIKS. They would rather settle it as a relationship in parallels. This manifested, time and again in surfacing up differences between KSD and AIKS, till a showdown occurred recently.

Historically, when Col. P. N. Kak (Retd.), wished to be relieved of the responsibility as the president of AIKS, there were no takers. At the persuasion of some AIKS well wishers at that time I took over as the president at this critical juncture in the history of AIKS, which, otherwise could have gone into oblivion. I wished to

have a term of two more years as president to enable me to do whatever I had planned to do but that was not to be. I was voted out, against a KSD sponsored, otherwise, an unknown candidate to AIKS circles. Manipulation appeared clever as the casting vote against me was the one from my own base unit, KPA Bombay. Why did it happen? The answer brings out that KSD did not wish for AIKS to continue to function from Bombay for two more years. It wished it to be seated Delhi as early as possible. They succeeded and since then AIKS is stuck at Delhi for last so many years.

Earlier while in office, something happened for which I owe the responsibility and consider it a case of poor judgment and as a historical error. With access to disturbing reports emanating from the valley, having heard emotionally charged members of the delegation to the 4th All India Conference at Bombay, and finally being impressed by the presentation of a high level delegation to AIKS-Anantnag-Holocaust 1986, I felt myself at cross-roads, being split up between my personal views and those as President AIKS, owing allegiance to AIKS founders vision. Other delegates to the holocaust conference were in favor of AIKS to take on as principal coordinator in all activities of KP organisations all over. Youth Wing of Kashmiri Pandit Association Bombay wanted AIKS to go a step further, to give a call for youth to take up arms to defend our biradari in the valley. In all humility, I accepted to endorse the first demand but refused to accept the Youth Wing demand. Explaining, I said, that history has that KP's never resorted to taking up arms in self-defense. We have always fought our way out with the help of a "kalam" and never by "talwaar". I call this demand of youth wing as misguided, for which they never again were kind to me.

After a debate with myself, I admit through the columns of VITASTA, that I feel sad to have accepted the 1986-course modification for AIKS, to take up political matters on its agenda against the wishes of its founder. Recent unpleasant events convinced me that original role of AIKS ought to have remained limited to socio-cultural objectives only. On the other hand, for political matters and liaison with government agencies, KSD, on its own, did reasonable good job, with an added advantage of being located in the vicinity of seat of power at Delhi. KSD could have done a better job, without carrying a burden of feeling that its work is overshadowed by the parallel efforts of AIKS. It is a mere coincidence that AIKS found itself around in Delhi for such a long time that it could afford to visit the corridors of power. If positioned elsewhere as it ought to be it would be difficult for AIKS to take this kind of assignment. With AIKS having given a call for Self Reliance, which as it is overdue, the respective roles of AIKS and KSD should become distinctly clear.

Before it is too late, let this be clear that this author does not claim a monopoly on wisdom (Dana) and there being no personal agenda, in suggesting what is being suggested through these columns. It is the question of what exact role suits AIKS the best. In other words this is to suggest precisely what is expected of it as an Apex Body. As a first assignment, it has to do whatever it takes to determine, HOW, to bring around a callous, indifferent and an individualistic KP to behave and act differently. This can be brought out well by a Leader, who can practice and perform a mass conversion phenomenon. Leaders are not born. They acquire the leadership qualities, which attracts the followers to a viewpoint. If we did not have one for the last 50 years, let us not leave the next 50 blank. AIKS can fill in this vacuum, with only one difference, it is collective leadership of an institution versus an individual. Programs put out by AIKS have to have a magnetic attraction and the power to penetrate the hard core barriers of individualistic resistance. Thus AIKS needs a motivated young cadre, to be trained and infused and indoctrinated with leadership qualities. This phenomenon is amply visible in overseas countries. Young motivated do a better job than seniors.

Our social problems are not new. These have persisted to exist for a long time now. If anything, these have run amuck with every passing day. By their appearance, ever since, on reams of paper as resolutions, these will not disappear. Magnitude of problems is deep rooted. It needs us to dig deeper to the root level to find an answer WHY DOES-IT-HAPPEN? If we do succeed to get at it, then the remedial measures will be HOW-TO-DO-IT? Here-under two examples are presented to illustrate :

Take the question of marriages, marriages out of community, and marriages out of religion and marriages out of country and so on. We felt handicapped soon after partition, 1947, due to loss of middle man's services. Thanks to Koshur Samachar and number of other community publications, now nearly 300 community matrimonial ads appear every month. Wide range of choices, careers, and jobs held, income, inheritance and social standing etc. for both boys and girls is available. Photos and videos are exchanged, meetings are held before a spouse is selected. Beyond this what else lures boys and girls to go out of fold? We have got to go under the skin to determine WHY. What exactly is it, dowry...parents being around...after marriage treatment or what? Will AIKS Matrimonial web site lure defaulters to change their mind. Unless a reason is found no solution is possible. Who can provide an answer other than AIKS Youth Wing.

Again on the question of languages. We have to learn to make a distinction between Kashmiri as mother

tongue and Kashmiri being taught like any other language. Former needs us to be next to the cradle. It is the parent's job to implant a mother tongue. If it does not happen we have to find WHY? Is it deliberate on the part of parents not to speak to an infant in Kashmiri. To learn a language is different. Learning can be imparted not before age 5 when the question of script arises by which time we have missed the bus. It is very difficult for a person to learn a language beyond this age and more often you end up with one-sided conversations where one party speaks in Kashmiri and you get the reply in Hindi or English. It is ridiculous for charitable institutions to conduct classes in teaching a language which otherwise is the basic duty of a parent(s) to give to a child. Whatever the reason, even the Muslims (as I have observed) in Kashmir feel it is "uncool" to teach Kashmiri to their younger generation. That is way it is no more a "valid passport" for entry into our motherland. Even the local press in Srinagar, was imploring its readers not to give up the language. Let us find and answer and then seek a solution otherwise for all practical purposes most of our 2nd and 3rd generation has already lost it as a mother tongue.

Similar studies need to be conducted on all other social evils. It might reveal that some of the measures AIKS has suggested, may fall in the category of personal and private. However to make a headway let us conduct a two step analysis to find out why these evils happen and how can they be solved. Let us not forget Sudhaar Samiti, under the patronage of Kashyap Bhandu was successful in one single reform that a "Pheran" became a Saree. Ever since, customs have increased manifold. A strong force of ladies wing and youth wing could offer some solutions or conclusions.

A NEW LOOK AIKS appeared first in Naad, June 2005 New look is presented here in the form of an Action Plan, to suggest the ways AIKS may be raised to a global level, assigning it a full agenda of its own and not just a compromise on a common minimum program. An apex body cannot afford to change its stance every now and then. It has to have a definite program of its own which in itself becomes the basis of a rallying point for willing units to affiliate with AIKS. Essential motivation behind the new look is to create Forum for Future, which takes care of socio-cultural and welfare needs of the community for future generations to come. The way it is presented here restores independence to AIKS, without any overlap. This should suit all concerned.

- 1) Since AIKS was founded in 1979, demographically a sea change has occurred. We are now here, there and everywhere. Whatever the circumstance, all need to be linked and inter-linked into a close knit community.

Recommended : AIKS may extend its scope to encompass and int-link those in the valley, those in camps, those in rest of India and abroad.

2) All these pockets of community are roped in as an International Forum.

Recommended : To make above operationally viable and effective, let AIKS become All World Kashmiri Samaj (AWKS)

3) For effective management and administration at grass roots level and to involve all concerned in an active participation.

Recommended : Divide the globe into 10 zones, based on geographical and demographical considerations. All units comprising a zone, will Elect a President, who in turn becomes Elected Vice-President of AWKS. Office of the zonal President, becomes a branch office of AWKS. In this manner a link within the zone and zone to President AWKS will be established. Holding of meetings and participation becomes manageable. Elected Vice-President will represent zone member units at the meetings. All zones shall have equal voting rights.

4) Head offices, President office and branch offices be set up to achieve maximum participation.

Recommended : Registered office of AWKS will be considered as Head Office which will be located in Delhi, India. President's office will be the one wherefrom the President presides. Zone offices are the Branch offices of AWKS, 10 in number.

5) For effective management, AWKS shall delegate some of its functions to Zones, which may already have necessary experience in handling such particular assignments.

Recommended : Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta be recognised as the Nodal Agency for all matters cultural. Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi, be recognised as Nodal Agency on political matters and liaison with government agencies, Kashmiri Pandit Association, Bombay be strengthened to take up the need for medical aid at their Kashyap Bhavan facility, Laleshwari Education Trust, Bombay be recognised to evolve a satisfactory script for Kashmiri, particularly for those who are not exposed to either Arabic or Hindi scripts, Indo-American Forum be recognised to deal with USA government on all political matters.

6) AWKS plans for the overall development of community.

Recommended : Plans be evolved for KP disaster management, KP-Project development as per the requirements at zonal levels.

7) AWKS takes up some projects in hand on priority basis.

Recommended : Hostel accommodation for boys and girls studying in Pune, Navi Mumbai and Bangalore. Upgrading of Kashmir Bhavan, Delhi to a level of Kashmir International Centre.

8) There is a need for young motivated cadre with acumen for leadership.

Recommended : AWKS imparts training to a dynamic youthful cadre willing to take up leadership of the community and implement its programs on a professional and scientific basis.

9) An organisation without FUNDS is as good as crippled. Measures are taken to raise the funds on a large scale basis.

Recommended : AWKS may adopt commercial and professional ways to raise the funds. Learning from successful NGO's, funds could be collected against viable schemes, to set up schools, colleges, medical centers, old age homes etc. Use professional skills, the way you make a success of a sick industrial unit. Feasibility of projects, transparency, and accountability will ensure general participation, and may be as well involve donor cum investment shy biradari members also.

10) On all matters, when opinion becomes conflicting and a way wide apart as a result when community is held as hostage to the confusion which also hampers the progress of implementation, AWKS, may resort to settling the matters on democratic principles of majority vote.

Recommended : AWKS appoints an Independent Agency to conduct an Opinion Poll and resolve the issue by a majority vote. This could be immediately applied on going back to our homes.

SUM-UP : Looking at Future with Hope. AIKS—call for Self Reliance, call for Pandits solidarity, are all taken care of in GIVE AIKS A NEW LOOK. Let it become a forum for future and provide leadership.

A.I.K.S., PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS — 1980

By

Mr. Justice P.N. Bakshi at The Second All India Kashmiri Samaj Conference Held in Calcutta on 27th & 28th December, 1980

Honoured Chief Guest, Lt. Col. Kak, President of the Local Kashmiri Samaj, Members on the dias, fellow delegates, Ladies & Gentlemen.

I am extremely happy to be present here this morning amidst my fellow brethren from all parts of the country. As you know we have been scattered all over during the last 50 years and even though we are now in the farthest corners of the country, I do feel that we are losing track of each other as a result of which there appears to be no cohesion, no harmony and no co-operation between each one of us. It was this idea which was mooted out by the Kashmiri Samaj of Allahabad and more strictly speaking which originated in Bombay through my revered late cousin Shri Sham Sunder Nath Sopori which we caught hold of and worked upon early this year in the month of March since we organised our first Conference in Allahabad. Before I speak to you about what we have done in the last nine months and what we wish to do in future, let me at the outset thank from the bottom of my heart the Kashmir Sabha Calcutta, Col. Kak, Mr. Dhar, Mr. Razdan and each and every member of the Managing Committee who have been so kind, so considerate as to make almost an unimaginable comfortable arrangement for me, as well as all the delegates that have come here. They have set up a standard which might be even difficult for the successors to emulate, but I am happy at the potentiality which this local Samaj has exhibited. When we called the first meeting of the Samaj in Allahabad it was just a haphazard affair, first we invited the provincial Samajs, the response was encouraging, and therefore we took the courage to invite other Samaj of whom we could get the addresses. Thirteen Samajs were represented at the last conference at Allahabad. During the span of last 9 months, I am really happy to inform you, that we have grown and today we have 22 Samajs affiliated with the All India Kashmiri Samaj. We have added 9 Samajs in 9 months. Five are absolutely new which have been born at Patiala, at Ahmedabad, at Hyderabad, at Moradabad and Jodhpur. The most recent addition is Moradabad about 15 days back and Jodhpur about 3 weeks back. The other four were

asleep, they were in slumber, they have been rejuvenated and asked to join us and actively participate. The position therefore is that today we have 22 active Samajs doing the work for our community who are represented in this meeting. We have also tried to expand the activities of the Samaj outside our country, because we do not want to limit our activities in any manner whatsoever and our objectives are ultimately to have an International Association of Kashmiris.

We have at present enrolled Mr. Ganjoo from London and Mr. Prabhat Hukku from Liberia and one more member from New York whose letter I was expecting but have not yet received but it might have reached Allahabad already. So on the roll we have two overseas members. Dr. K. N. Kaul and Mr. B. L. Razdan have promised me yesterday that in their numerous trips to foreign countries they will try to expand our activities and enrol more and more overseas members of the All India Kashmiri Samaj.

On the social side, we have taken up three projects. The first project was trying to help young men in getting employment. I have been receiving applications from Srinagar, from Jammu, from Delhi, the capital itself, and from Agra, wanting assistance in securing employment. These applications have been forwarded to the various centres with the request for help and I dare say that through our efforts some of the unemployed or unsatisfactorily employed have been employed during the course of the year. They are few in number, the start has been made and we shall try to develop this project.

The other aspect which we are trying to develop is the assistance given to various Samajs and individuals in setting marriages. We have opened a Marriage Bureau at Allahabad and I understand the same work is being done here at Calcutta also. We have been receiving numerous applications preparing a register and we shall co-ordinate our activities and then give the various references to the willing parties so that they can negotiate. In this manner we have also succeeded in settling a couple of marriages. This aspect will also be developed that I have no doubt that success will be with us.

[Reproduced from the Vitasta Annual, 1981 — Kashmirs in 2000 A.D.]

The third aspect which we have taken up and in respect of which a resolution had also been passed in the last conference was, fight against the dowry system. This is a very pernicious evil which is very rampant and appears to grow with a greater speed than it can be suppressed. I had also the occasion of personally addressing few of our Samajs at different places in which this topic was touched and since yesterday, that I am here, we have been discussing this matter again and again with the various members we have come across and especially the member of the Calcutta Sabha. It is a very knotty problem but it has got to be tackled and we do hope that in times to come we will tackle this problem psychologically because I feel that a psychological approach is more important in this case than any other. However, we will take that matter up in our business session and we will discuss it further, and to devise ways and means to deal with this question.

Now, apart from this report which I have given regarding the progress of the association, I would like to mention one or two matters which have struck as because I feel it is necessary to exchange ideas on those topics. One of them is that there seems to be a very artificial distinction between the Kashmiri speaking Kashmiris coming from Kashmir and the non-Kashmiri speaking Kashmiris who have already migrated to this part of the country 300 years ago or may be 100 years ago. There appears to be an artificial barrier which does not permit assimilation of both these sections of our society. Numerous reasons have been given for this distinction. Some people say that when Kashmiri speaking Kashmiris come together they start speaking Kashmiri, with the result proceedings and mixup with them becomes difficult, because we do not know their language. Others say that certain sections are suffering from an inferiority complex. And the third opinion is that certain sections are suffering from superiority complex. In this way innumerable reasons are given. Whether we have migrated 100 years ago from Kashmir or 50 years ago or 10 years ago, or today, it makes no difference at all, because we are the sons of the same land. This artificial barrier which is trying to keep us away should be completely eradicated and there should be no such distinction. There should be a spirit of accommodation and tolerance. If somebody objects because he cannot understand the Kashmiri language, don't speak it. It is all right, we should learn the language, it's our own language. It's our mother tongue, and we are sorry we do not know it. I for one have volunteered to learn the Kashmiri language from any of my Kashmiri brethren who is living in Allahabad. I volunteered and told him to

come to me every Sunday, have his lunch with me and teach me the Kashmiri language. So we want to learn it and if facilities are provided there is no reason why we should not pick it up, but the position that I can't speak it today should not be a barrier between you and me. Make me learn it and if I can't understand you, then don't speak it for the time being, speak a language by which I can understand you. So from both sides it has got to be a spirit of give and take, so that we can really understand each other in the proper spirit. I am sure if that is the procedure and the method by which we try to understand each others difficulties, this artificial barrier will vanish and we will be able to come closer more and more.

The other question which has been agitating my mind and which I have felt, also requires mentioning is that we are ashamed of calling ourselves Kashmiris. I am very frank, I am very blunt, but I think bluntness and frankness is necessary. We are ashamed of saying we are going to attend a meeting of the Kashmiri Samaj. We are not ashamed of saying that we are going to attend a meeting of an International Association or a particular mission of a particular club. But we are ashamed of saying that we are going to attend a meeting of the Kashmiri Association. Why? Because there seems to be a misconception that if we say so, we will be called communalists, that we are communal minded; we don't think in the higher perspective, and therefore no communalism, no Kashmirism? And we must hide the fact that we are going to the meeting of the Kashmiri Samaj? When I am asked in my own city whether I organised or was I responsible for organizing a Kashmiri Sabha in quarters which were rather high, I had no hesitation in saying yes, I did for the benefit of my community and my country. We have got in London, Welsh Association, Scotch Associations, I have been to London three times. Nobody in Britain says that a Welsh Association or a Scot Association is communal Association. Nobody says that a Welshman or a Scot is not a Brithisher. Why should we think on narrow lines that because we are members of a Kashmiri Association we are not Indians? We are Indians. Indians first. We are Kashmiris cum Indians. There is no hostility, there is no conflict between the Kashmiri culture and the Indian culture. We have not formed this association to fight against Indian culture, we have not formed it to fight against our nationalistic activities. As a matter of fact, the object is to get the community which is scattered here and there together so that we can flow in a regular stream for

▲ *Contd. Pg 19*

ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT PT. DWARKANATH MUNSHI ON ASSUMING HIS OFFICE AT JAIPUR,* 27TH JULY, 1991

I am overwhelmed and at once awed and elevated by the signal honour you have bestowed on me by electing me to this high office of the President of All India Kashmiri Samaj.

I follow here some of the most eminent personalities of our community who have adorned this office from time to time, imparted their prestige and prudence to it and brought lustre to it and us all. I had the privilege of watching my immediate predecessor Brig. Ravi Madan at work and was fascinated and amazed at his blazing enthusiasm and tireless efforts in the service of the community.

In electing me, ladies and gentlemen, may I say that you have invested a small man with the greatness that goes with this august office and an ordinary person with extraordinary responsibility.

When I reflect on all this and much more that is awaiting me, I take heart and courage from the trust and confidence you have so magnanimously reposed in me, and the advice and support that would flow to me in abundant measure and inspire me and us all to steer our community out of our present troubles into a more brilliant and fragrant future for ourselves and our country. Here permit me a very personal observation to assure, in all humility, you who are assembled here and those of our Biradari who are watching us from afar, in our motherland as well as across the continents, that I shall spare no effort to render myself worthy of your generosity.

The remarkably smooth, sober and businesslike manner, yet with a touch of geniality and intimacy, with which the Annual General Meeting and the election was conducted is not only heartening and encouraging for me but is most gratifying otherwise. Here we have exhibited a splendid spirit of solidarity and unity and efficiency to the joy and fulfilment of our friends and well wishers and to the utter dismay of our foes. It is a measure of the sagacity of the Biradari spread across the country, and the healthy consciousness of the perils facing our community that we have shown to the world that while we value individual opinions and beliefs most, we also know that it is only collective wisdom and coordinated action on our part that will lead us to victory over the adversities facing us today.

I will here refer briefly to just one startling development of recent days, which has brought the Kashmir problem to a politically critical and fateful stage. The air is thick with reports and suggestions that the time has come for a political solution to the insurrectional uprising in the valley. We do not dispute the desirability and need of the political process as such, but we do hold that the time and the milieu are

not ripe yet. This, however, is a larger issue for a deeper debate. What we emphasise at the moment is that no political parleys and solutions drawn therefrom will be sound and durable unless the Kashmiri Pandit community is intimately and constantly associated with the deliberations and discussions, in their own right, whenever and at whatever level these are held. The nation and the Government can no longer ignore the community and its plight and except at the cost of its own doom. Further, we have a good measure of the Kashmiri mind and psyche and it would be only proper and fruitful for the Government to make full use of our knowledge and understanding of the problem in its various aspects/dimensions.

This is not the occasion for me to go into the details of those dimensions. Suffice it to say these relate to the flower of our community lost to the guns of the marauders and the risk that faces the living at every turn, our women dishonoured, our temples seized and desecrated, our property of incalculable worth taken over or rotting. They relate to the brutalising of our present and coming generations, of their wretched circumstances turning young boys and girls of great brilliance and promise into mindless violent, and bitter youth of tomorrow.

Above all it is our heritage and identity and culture and our motherland – the valley – which is fast disappearing and slipping out of our hands.

The first and the most urgent task for us is, therefore, to address ourselves to securing an honourable participation in any political process to come. And that has to be a combined and coordinated effort of all the federating units. An outline programme has got to be formulated forthwith which we hope to pursue aggressively with full vigour. The units have always been doing commendable, indeed inspiring work all along. And together we will all work and overcome.

I had earlier referred to the meticulous and efficient manner in which this convention has been organised and conducted. The credit for all this belongs primarily to the hosts – the Kashmiri Pandit Association of Jaipur. It has been a great experience of pleasure, bonhomie and business here.

Before, I had the slightest inkling of what was to happen here, the Association has put me in a heavy debt of gratitude a special invitation to me to this convention in this beautiful city of Jaipur rich in history and culture. It had further done me honour by asking me to speak before this distinguished assembly. But I was destined differently, I came and enjoyed and felt honoured. I now return with the sweetest memories. Thank you.

Jai Hind

*Reproduced from *Bahar-E-Kashmir 1991*, pg5

AIKS : A POTENTIAL MOVEMENT OF KASHMIRI PANDIT DIASPORA*

— *Dr. B. K. Moza, Calcutta*

Introduction

All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS) is a remarkable movement of Kashmiri Pandit diaspora of twentieth century. This movement has had its organisational birth exactly two decades back and has behind it a great potential of thoughtful objectives for the survival and advancement of the scattered Kashmiri Pandit (KP) community. This is an appropriate time to review the performance of this intrinsically potential movement. Often a question mark is generally raised as to whether AIKS has come up to the objectives for which this movement was started?

In this paper a perspective of this organization and its evolution are being discussed with a view to reviewing its achievements and short-comings and creating a brainstorm for making it more effective and purposeful in fulfilling the objectives for which it was originally set up.

Historically Kashmiri Pandit migrants settled in various parts of India, tried to live closer to each other for reasons of social contacts, participation in each other's moments of joy and sorrow, safety considerations, mother tongue and such commonalities, observance of festivals and festivities and for such reasons as matrimonial contacts and information thereof etc. Naturally it became necessary as also convenient for them to form a Society, Sabha, Association or call it by any other nomenclature to perform up to these expectations. The purpose also being to perpetuate community traditions and culture as far as possible and thus preserve the community identity.

Twentieth Century Diaspora

Initially, after the partition, the diaspora of Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) found its cause in entirely a different reason. In 1947 after the invasion of Kashmir by raiders across the border and subsequent accession of J & K State to India there was transfer of power from Maharaja to popular Government of National Conference led by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah who was a leader of the masses which essentially comprised of the majority Muslim community. Since KPs were in a minority they had to bear the brunt of injustice, very unfortunately, despite their full involvement and glorious contribution to the freedom movement of Kashmir. With the purpose of

implementing Socialistic Pattern of Society, the measures of reservations for the so called downtrodden and the preferences for the majority became the guiding principles for the local Governments to achieve popularity and good will of the masses which comprised the vote bank. Unfortunately the Kashmiri Pandit community did not fall in this preferred criteria. Accordingly the merit became a secondary consideration and whether justified or not the Kashmiri Pandits became the victims of discrimination and such misrule of far reaching consequences. Despite their merit and capabilities they were deprived of their due rights on account of being a minority in the valley; they were denied their rightful share in the nominations for higher education, since at that time there were no professional colleges in Kashmir; they were also denied deserving jobs since the yardstick for employment was not essentially the merit or seniority but the community label one had tagged to one self. Land reforms, implemented for the first time anywhere in the country, enacting land to the tiller, added to this set back of KP community and therefore for all these collective reasons Kashmiri Pandits had to come out gradually in search of their livelihood, employment and opportunities for higher education. As a result an ongoing process of migration of KPs to places set in which they accepted as a fate accomplished. Large number of families came out of Kashmir and for one or the other reason they settled in the length and breadth of the country though Delhi and other metropolitan cities in the North became their first choice. These migrants had their home and hearth in Kashmir where they used to go whenever an occasion arose essentially on the occurrence of deaths of their kith and kin, generally elderly, who used to remain in Kashmir or on the occasion of the marriages and such festive occasions in the family. This diaspora was, therefore, different from the earlier ones which because of difficult conditions of communication, transportation and absolutely hostile atmosphere were irreversible migrations forcing almost absolute isolation from those relations left behind in the valley. Such an inevitable diaspora of this type continued on this pattern till 1989-90 when the militancy in Kashmir took a very violent shape and Kashmiri Pandits had to become displaced internally almost en-masse as refugees in their own country. In nutshell the

**[Reproduced from the Vitasta Annual, 1999-2000, Vol. XXXIII, "Kashyap Bandhu" Centenary Number, pages 93-96.]*

twentieth century diaspora of Kashmiri Pandits from their motherland became the result of firstly they being discriminated and politically deprived as a minority and secondly towards the end decade of the millennium, they being terrorised to abandon their centuries' old hearths and homes in their motherland on account of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism unleashed by the neighbouring Islamic country as a proxy war against India.

Formation of AIKS

Kashmiri Pandits settled outside the state or within it formed their community associations essentially for social as also for political reasons. This led to the formation of various Kashmiri Pandit organizations in various parts of the country and abroad, each having its own objectives and priorities. However, in general, there was no cohesion amongst such numerous organizations, no common approach to solve their common problems particularly on social front. All the representative Associations were feeling a vacuum in their relationship, a missing link in coordination with one another till the leadership role was taken by Kashmiri Samaj of Allahabad. They called, in the first stage, a get-together of U.P. Associations and then of All India organizations and in March 1980 the first All India Samaj meeting was held at Allahabad under the Presidentship of Mr. Justice P.N. Bakshi which led to the formation of this federal organization. Within nine months' time the second Conference of AIKS was held at Calcutta on 27th and 28th December 1980 where more than fifteen Sabhas/ Samities/Samajs of Kashmir Pandits had a historical Conference and the draft Constitution of the AIKS was adopted. Separately the Presidential Address delivered by Justice P.N. Bakshi is included in this publication for ready reference which appeared in the "Kashmir in 2000 A.D." Annual Number (1981) of the Vitasta, Calcutta of which I happened to be the editor. AIKS received at this stage the support of 22 KP organisations. Few members from Srinagar also participated in this historical Conference. The main emphasis was on creating a movement amongst Kashmiri Pandits for bringing about cohesiveness amongst themselves and breaking the barriers of distinction amongst the Kashmiri speaking and non-Kashmiri speaking Kashmiri Pandits on the premise that both were the sons of the same land. The objectives of the Samaj were essentially of coordinating amongst the affiliated units matters related to social aspects, to improving employment opportunities, matrimonial rapport, discouraging dowry curse which has been a serious issue, bringing out a news-letter/publication of relevant information for circulation amongst member units, providing relief and medical assistance propagating the Kashmiri

language and preserving the Kashmiri Pandit culture and heritage. Annual get-togethers were held for reviewing the activities of the Samaj and developing a closer connection with our roots in Kashmir. In fact AIKS was purported to become the Apex Body of Kashmiri Pandits. Soon it had four organizations from Kashmir affiliated to it and comprised of a total affiliation of 38 units of which there were few from overseas also. As regards its office it was initially decided to have a rotating one, it being the place of its elected President. It was assumed that this would as well bring in some variety and also motivate the improved results. After Justice Bakshi, respectively Col P.N.Kak, affectionately known as Papa (the then President of Calcutta Sabha), Dr. N.L. Zutshi (President of Bombay Pandit Sabha), Brig R.N. Madan, (President of Jaipur Sabha), became the Presidents after a tenure of two year's term each. Since Delhi is the main nerve centre of activities and because the complexion of KP problems took a different turn then, Delhi became the Head Quarter of AIKS as soon as Dr. Zutshi's tenure was over and respectively Brig. R.N. Madan, Shri, D.N. Munshi and Shri J.N. Kaul (President of Faridabad Samiti) operated from Delhi and performed commendably. Shri J.N. Kaul is presently the President of AIKS for the sixth year.

Sabhas, Samaj & Samellan

At the Jodhpur Conference in 1982 I had the opportunity of communicating a paper entitled, "Sabhas, Samaj and Samellan" which was subsequently published in the Vitasta Annual 1983, and reproduced in the Martand, Srinagar in three instalments on 2nd, 8th & 14th June 1983. A clear line of demarcation in responsibilities and objectives was drawn between a Sabha/Samiti and the Samaj. Whilst the Sabha/Samiti or similar local affiliate was assumed to play the pertinent role as the representative organisation of KPs at a particular location, looking after the interests of community locally at that location, it was clearly assumed in this paper, that the main objective of the AIKS was to coordinate the activities of the local affiliates, initiate a common plan of action for our roots or for preserving the tradition, culture and heritage of our community and playing the role of an Apex Body with full responsibility and authority to take care of the common objectives of the community and coordinating the same, through the affiliated units. The common community agenda could be generation of funds, establishment of Trusts, Endowments, awards and recognitions for our community individuals for their excellent performances, creating educational institutions which would have as their essential objectives the preservation of Kashmiri Pandit culture, literature, heritage and Kashmiri language. It was also assigned

to safe-guard community assets and interests particularly in Kashmir. It was also assumed to create Institutions for preserving our Vidic system of Karam-Kand and create awareness and respect and provide for prospective employment of our Gurujis. One of the important objectives considered for our Apex Body was to enable community windows to be opened to healthier trends and practices amongst other communities in India or abroad to encourage excellence, infuse newer trends, bring about social reforms and related enlightenments. To facilitate this coordination an Annual Get-together of all the affiliated units was considered necessary as the "Samellan" where all important matters which required general discussion and general approval of the affiliated units were discussed for implementation. In this proposal a clear demarcation was drawn between the objectives of a local unit and the Apex Body, AIKS, so that there was no overlapping of objectives. It extended further in detailing the role of AIKS as the Apex Body and the respect and authority it required so as to function appropriately up to its assigned objectives. Of the 10 objectives which AIKS was assigned the first and foremost objective read as follows. "To coordinate activities of all Sabhas for common programmes of community welfare and to bring them closer to one another."

KP Exodus & AIKS

The traumatic exodus of KPs from Kashmir in 1989-90 and their ethnic cleansing from the valley brought about an added responsibility on AIKS suddenly and therefore the priorities of its agenda shifted to the relief and rehabilitation of the uprooted brotheren from the valley. Though ten years have passed this problem is still as critical and serious and continues to remain unresolved because of its very difficult and chaotic prognosis. However, AIKS has emerged as a very important player to avert demoralisation of the suffering brotheren and in providing possible relief and help in refugee camps. In this connection the Jaipur Convention held in 1991 was a milestone in the history of AIKS. Pt. Dwarkanath Munshi was unanimously elected as the President of AIKS and a line of action was drawn. To bring awareness to Kashmiri Pandit problem an Advisory Committee of well known Kashmiri Pandit authorities was formed so that with their advice and help, Governmental, national and international assistance was received to solve the rehabilitation of uprooted KPs from the valley. AIKS Trust was formed as an independent arm of the AIKS and funds were collected for extending relief to the displaced victims and providing financial resource for various action plans that AIKS considered purposeful for mitigating the sufferings of

the victimised brotheren. To bring about unity amongst various frontal organizations at Jammu, a Migrant Action Committee was formed with (late) Mr. M.L. Aima as its President and this Committee worked very dedicatedly under the leadership of Mr. Munshi to create a joint front (AIKS-MAC) for solving the day to day problems that were being faced by the migrants in Camps at Jammu and Udhampur. A MAHASAMELLAN of all the units was proposed to be held which, however, could not be organized on the scale as originally conceived. Further with the assistance of Shri J.N. Kaul who was then the President of Faridabad Samiti and President of S.O.S., a Computer Training Centre was established at Faridabad which has been providing training to displaced youth from the camps free of cost and has also succeeded in providing employment to the trainees who have been trained at this centre. This has been one of the greatest achievements of AIKS and this activity is successfully being continued under the leadership of Shri J.N. Kaul. The publication of AIKS, Naad, was started and from a News Letter it has now developed into a recognised community journal : this is being edited by Shri Omkar Kachru. In 1994 Shri J. N. Kaul took over as the President of AIKS and with his personal recognitions and dedicated efforts, AIKS has further received impetus and financial strength to continue with the on-going projects of AIKS whether in camps or at Faridabad Computer Centre or at its Head Quarter at Delhi related to K.P. rehabilitation issues.

Present Objectives of AIKS

In order to discuss the present performance of AIKS and suggest improvements it is necessary to consider firstly the presently obtaining objectives of the AIKS which are as follows:

- (a) To provide relief, including educational, medical facilities to the poor and to carry on their activities of general public utility.
- (b) To promote educational, social activities and national integration cultural, preserve and promote economic and spiritual integration and welfare of the people.
- (c) To work for various public charitable objects.
- (d) To carry on other activities such as publication of journals etc. in furtherance of the activities of the Samaj.
- (e) To guide, coordinate & monitor the various activities of unit members.

(Reproduced, verbatim, from NAAD, Vol. 7, No. 10, 1997)

The above objectives of AIKS, which are currently obtaining, need a thorough examination and insight to

create a brainstorm for the functioning of AIKS as the Apex Body of Kashmiri Pandit organizations. The fundamental questions which arise are as follows:

- (1) Why the objectives are generalised and not specifically attributed to Kashmiri Pandits and their unit organisations?
- (2) In Which respect these objectives are different from those of any other unit not responsible and accountable as the Apex Body of KP organizations? Some of the Affiliates may be performing in still more important objectives, pertaining to KPs.
- (3) The only differentiating function of AIKS is to coordinate the affiliated units and provide them guidance for community Action Plans. Why this objective is not the first priority of AIKS, the Apex Body?

Discussion

The objectives of an Organization are supposedly based on logic and one would not oversimplify the rationale of above objectives as assumed presently by our Apex Body. However, it is apparent that we still feel desirable to only imply Kashmiri Pandit connection and not to highlight it. In his Presidential Address (reproduced in this Annual) in the 1st., Annual meeting of AIKS held at Calcutta, Justice Bakshi pointed out this weakness of Kashmiri Pandits and preferred to be "blunt" about this. Objectives define, determine and direct the subsequent activities of an organization and therefore it is high time our AIKS restructures its objectives and prioritises these to suit those of an apex body of Kashmiri Pandits. Whatever AIKS is presently doing is more or less the same what an affiliated unit may be doing. But AIKS was formed as the Apex Body of KP organizations and therefore its prime role should be that of a co-ordinator or initiator of Action-plans of common interest of all the affiliated units. Whilst delegating the action on various agenda to its frontal or specialist units it should monitor the performance on common agenda and help in solving the difficulties which the units may be facing and create resources and infrastructure for member units to facilitate action on the common and priority agenda for the survival and advancement of the community as a whole. That such a performance is not an easy job, is being recognised whilst drawing attention to this, but functionally that is what is expected of an Apex Body. The functions of AIKS require to be divided in 1) Political, 2) Social, 3) Cultural, 4) Financial and 5) Miscellaneous Action

plans. There should not be many agenda under these heads; just one agendum of highest common interest and priority to the community in each should be taken up by AIKS for its implementation. The actions on these agenda will be carried out along with the help of concerned frontal affiliated units based in appropriate locations and having necessary capabilities to perform as Action Leaders. A procedure requires to be worked out so that involvement of all the affiliated units is achieved for the implementation of these few but essential agenda of AIKS which should be of common interest to the KP community. The Apex Body has to work out measures by which duplication of the same activity is minimised, as far as possible, and maximum attention is given to achieving quality of performance and effective implementation. How all this can be achieved requires involvement of all the affiliated units, no matter where it is situated. This requires a brain storm to enable such a thing practically happening. It is the function of Apex Body to organize the same, restricting its emphasis on only few issues. It is repeated that implementation of such action plans is an uphill task but that is what is expected of an Apex Body. Our community requires to change and develop leaders and that is the role which our Apex Body has to perform.

Conclusion

AIKS is the Apex Body of KP organizations spread over globally. There is a need for functional restructuring of AIKS for which its present objectives require to be looked into so that it performs up to the expectations for which this organization was formed. Its main role is that of a cohesive, coordinating monitor and up to this objective it has to work out and brain storm the action plans. First the organizational concept of the Apex Body is to be well identified and appropriately supported by strengths of authority and resources. Then only can AIKS succeed in solving our fundamental problems like rehabilitation of our uprooted brotheren, developing a working script for our mother tongue and preserving our identity. AIKS is a great movement of Kashmiri Pandit 20th century diaspora but it has still to gain momentum to perform up to the objectives it was formed and to the responsibilities it has acquired being the Apex Body of Kashmiri Pandits scattered globally. Action on this proposal will be befitting homage to Shri KASHYAP BANDHU to whom this paper is dedicated whilst observing his birth centenary.

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KASHMIRI PANDIT ORGANISATIONS : THEIR GENESIS AND PRESENT DAY RELEVANCE

— *By Prof. S. K. Shah, Jammu*

Historical Perspective :

Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) by nature are highly individualistic and do not have a penchant for collective organisation. This is understandable because by and large they are intellectually oriented and prefer not to be led. This may also be due to persecution they have suffered through generations and the resultant mistrust in others and a strong instinct of self-preservation. However, there may be an aversion for organisation but there is none for collective response. While most individuals would aver that they think in a different manner and do not agree with each other, the fact remains they all think, act and react alike. Probably the most classic example of the latter is the way they moved out of the valley following the terrorist turmoil, without any organisation, planning, consultation or even informing their near and dear ones, yet in an identical fashion. This background is essential in order to understand the genesis of K P Organisations.

Throughout the tumultuous periods of misrule during medieval times, KPs evolved an instinctive capacity of survival through personal ingenuity. A collective organisation during this period was unthinkable. It was only during the stable Dogra rule that they heaved a sigh of relief and looked upon themselves as a community and indulged in collective activity. However, this collective activity was restricted to groups celebrating various festivals and functions that were primarily localised. While there are records of KPs organising themselves for a collective cause in nineteenth century, it is surprising that the first formal Sabha was not formed in Kashmir but in Jammu. It was formed by a small group of Government employees who used to move to Jammu for six months during what used to be called as "Durbar Move". It was in 1913, following the death of one such employee in Jammu, when they were handicapped for performing funeral and other rituals, that they approached the then Maharaja for permission to form a Sabha. The Maharaja gave the permission and even granted them lease to a piece of land outside what were then the town limits of Jammu. Thus the first Kashmiri Pandit Sabha came into existence through an order from the Maharaja in 1914 with its headquarters at Ambphalla in Jammu. This Sabha had purely a social mandate as was

specified in the order, and it continued to have the same till the large scale exodus of KPs in early nineties of the last century.

In Kashmir, the first Sabha, named as Yuvak Sabha with its headquarters at Shitalnath in Srinagar, was formed following large scale Muslim political activity in early twentieth century which had primarily communal overtones. It was formed to protect the interests of the minuscule Pandit minority. The communal activity on the part of the majority community resulted in several riots, notably the one in 1931 when the community was targeted for no fault of theirs. Ever since its formation this Sabha remained active both socially and politically and even published a daily newspaper "The Martand" which found its way in every K.P. home. It has, however, to be admitted that the Sabha was not necessarily proactive but was generally reacting to the political processes and changes that were unfolding throughout the thirties and forties of the twentieth century. Perhaps the most proactive movement was the one led by Kashyapa Bandhu in bringing about a social reform and transformation that galvanised the entire community. All other proactive movements were rather subdued and had only a marginal effect. The change over of Muslim Conference, which was till then a communal party, to National Conference with a supposed secular policy brought about a schism in Yuvak Sabha on the issue whether to support it or not and as a result several senior leaders left the Sabha to join the newly formed party. It would be out of place to go into the ramifications that followed this development. However, it needs to be mentioned that the schism of whether to support the National Conference and after 1947 the ruling party or not, dogged the Sabha throughout its existence and resulted into several splits and formation of parallel outfits. Some of the more prominent ones included the Samaj Sudhar Samiti in fifties and All India Kashmiri Pandit Conference (AIKPC) in seventies and thereabout. In the meantime Yuvak Sabha itself had changed its name to All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC).

The various outfits that were floated from time to time were not necessarily on ideological bases but more on personality clashes. This process mushroomed into an epidemic of outfits after the

exodus, notably in Jammu, though other centres of KP concentration like Delhi did not lag far behind. M. J. Akbar was not far off the mark when while eulogising and appreciating the community added as a tailpiece that it had "a remarkable capacity of endless splitting".

Sabhas outside the State :

Kashmiri Pandits have a long history of exodus from the valley. During the periods of religious persecution, waves of K.Ps. left the valley to settle down in relatively peaceful conditions in other parts of the country. Being an intellectual community given to erudition, they preferred to settle in the cities and seek government and white collar jobs and vocations. Thus small concentrations of the community came into existence in cities like, Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Allahabad, Lucknow, Gwalior, Bhopal, Jaipur, Kolkata to name a few locations. What goes to the credit of these displaced families is that while involving themselves in the activities of their adopted regions, they retained their traditional culture and rituals in their pristine shape and thereby maintained their identity, in spite of losing all touch with the valley and Kashmiri language. Several centuries of displacement did bring about some changes in their psyche but the cultural strength held them together as a community. It was this strength that gave them a social discipline not to get absorbed by cross marriages and to insist on marriage within the community, however depleted it might be. They maintained their linkages through an intricate web of social grouping and family relations. There were thus nuclei of Sabhas in all these towns and they were in contact with each other on a social level.

After 1947 the exodus from the valley got accelerated due to covert and overt policy of discrimination against the community at all levels. Being academically oriented, the well educated and bright young men of the community found no future prospects in the state and preferred to look for green pastures in other parts of the country and abroad in an atmosphere free from prejudice and apathy. This process of exodus was a continuous phenomenon all through, eventually culminating into a mass exodus in early nineties when they were forcibly pushed out from their homes.

The Sabhas that were active in various towns comprised the settled families from generations. Some of these, especially those of Lucknow, Allahabad, Agra and some other places were fairly well organised. The newly arrived members, generally students in the beginning, followed by

permanent settlers, got aligned with these Sabhas and found a cultural solace in them. There was, however, some amount of difference and in some cases diffidence during this association. Most of the earlier settlers had retained the customs and rituals in the same form as they existed when they had moved out of the valley. The new settlers had since revised and modified their customs adjusting them with times. Moreover, the earlier settlers had lost touch with the Kashmiri language except for names of specific functions and rituals and of course Kashmiri dishes. The earlier settlers referred to the new ones as Taza Kashmiris (new Kashmiris).

During sixties and seventies of the last century it was the community of earlier settlers who made first attempts to evolve a national association of the various Sabhas within and outside Kashmir. The initiative came from Allahabad Sabha through Justice Bakshi who approached the different organisations, especially those in Kashmir, to evolve a loose federation so that the Sabhas could coordinate with each other. As would be expected he only received a lukewarm response from organisations in Kashmir. But after the insecurity generated following Parmeshwari episode movement and its aftermath, the organisations were more receptive and thus the first seeds of what eventually became the All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS) were sown.

Developments after the mass exodus :

The mass exodus of KPs following the holocaust of 1989-90 took the community both within and outside the state totally by surprise. None of the organisations or Sabhas was prepared for such an eventuality even though the warning bells had been ringing for quite some time. That may have been true even of the government agencies. There was no planning or direction from any of the organisations and the exodus was surprisingly a mass effort on individual initiatives. In hindsight it was probably one of the most judicious and organised responses under the circumstances. It was only after the exodus that the different organisations started becoming proactive in Jammu, Delhi and elsewhere.

In order to understand the functioning and role of the various organisations we have to make a distinction between the established Sabhas and the political groups or movements within the community. The failure to appreciate this difference creates the confusion and gives an impression of cacophony within the community which is only apparent and not a real picture. Most of the Sabhas are institutions that have a long history and tradition of service to the

community. They had only a regional or local mandate and functioned within a limited geographic framework at least up to the time of mass exodus. The major ones among them would be the ASKPC (in exile after the exodus, its main area of operation being Kashmir valley). Kashmiri Pandit Sabha Jammu, Kashmiri Samiti Delhi, Kashmiri Pandit Association Mumbai, Kashmir Sabha, Kolkata and Kashmir Overseas Association with operations in USA and Europe. In addition there were Sabhas and associations in almost every major town of the country. The AIKS, the national federating body, claims affiliation of 42 such Sabhas. AIKS itself got strengthened only after the exodus when it formed a trust and got headquartered in New Delhi and started functioning as a nodal federating agency of all Sabhas and Samitis.

Prior to exodus almost all Sabhas were non-political social organisations. But in a period of crisis like the one that the community faced after exodus, the social and political boundaries get obliterated and the two merge into a common mandate. Thus all the Sabhas became hubs of socio-political activities, although they were hardly equipped to handle the problems of such a huge mass of humanity and to provide them a rational leadership. In spite of that it goes to the credit of most of them that they responded to the situation in a positive manner and did their best under extremely trying circumstances.

One of the major political movements that followed the mass exodus of KPs was what came to be known as Panun Kashmir (PK). It was a reaction to a blatant injustice meted out to a peace-loving community for no fault of theirs except that it refused to be part of anti-national and seditious activities and belonged to a different religion. The movement caught the imagination of every KP and galvanized the youth in no small measure. It had its sway in almost every centre of KP concentration and for many years remained a driving force for the entire community. It was a befitting reply to the so called "Azadi" of a religious majority that in the real terms was a communal movement aimed at religious cleansing of the Hindu minority.

Because of the inability of the community to appreciate the difference between a political movement and the role of the Sabhas, by and large it was felt as if the different Sabhas were at loggerheads with this movement (which they were not), since they did not come out in the open in its support. A Sabha is an institution and it represents all shades of opinion. It can provide covert support to any political movement that is for the good of the community. But it need not take a stance since it is supposed to be apolitical. It should be in a position to respond to all situations and cannot afford to fall hopelessly in love with any slogan, however attractive it might be at any point of time, since it may have to change its stance in a different set of circumstances. But at the same time it can provide a forum for debating the issues and evolving a consensus and even use its clout to support any movement that may be the need of the hour. As against that a political movement has a particular goal and needs to pursue that relentlessly and cannot afford to change its stance or objective. There is no contradiction in this policy and the relationship between political movements and Sabhas is of a symbiotic nature. But since KPs did not have much experience of political maneuvering and running sustained movements, they wasted a lot of their time, energy, drive and initiative in fighting quixotic battles against imaginary windmills within the community itself.

Streamlining the organisations and future prospects :

A lot of outfits have sprung up during last few years that tend to portray some political opinion. Bulk of these are just outfits on paper and they become known only through press statements. Most of them do so in a bid to find their name in press. Even if a few might be outfits with some kind of a support, they represent only a shade of political opinion and need not be taken very seriously unless that opinion is debated in a wider forum. However, these divergent press statements give an impression as if the community is totally confused and split into factions, which is not the case. KPs after dislocation have evolved loud thinking through press as a hobby that misleads everybody, including sometimes the community members themselves.

**I am reminded of an event in 1986 which in hindsight indicates how complacent the community was at that point of time. Traveling in interior areas of Kashmir with an American professor and his wife during the course of professional work, I was reminded of the danger that was looming. The professor's wife was a social scientist who had worked in Algeria, Tunisia, Albania and Egypt. She used to meet villagers while we were busy in our work. At the end of the visit she warned me in no uncertain terms. She was apprehensive about the security of Hindu minority and she said that we were sitting on a "keg of gunpowder" and any day there could be an explosion. If a foreign woman who did not know the local language could gather as much in three weeks, how the residents could be so blind is beyond comprehension.*

That brings us to the core issues of how the Sabhas can operate, keeping the welfare of the community as their sole objective. While every Sabha is a geographic entity and is primarily a representative of the members of the community living in that area, it has necessarily to be a part of the whole, especially in the changed circumstances where the very bases of the KP cultural moorings are imperiled. Even otherwise the geographical barriers are rapidly becoming irrelevant in the modern world and happenings in any area become important for the entire globe. There is a great need to ensure that the Sabhas do not operate in isolation and for that purpose it is necessary to strengthen the federating body or the Samaj. AIKS is a federal organisation having various Sabhas as its affiliates. It has enormous service to its credit under the able stewardship of some outstanding members of the community. However, there has been some deficiency in its evolution as a federal body and at times it tends to get into competition with its own federal units. Likewise some Sabhas tend to outgrow their shoes and act as parallel bodies outside the gambit of the federation. These are negative trends that need to be

curbed. That is possible only if we have continuous debates and discussions among the various federating units to streamline the operational mechanism. It is also necessary to have periodic brain-storming sessions to evolve a strategy for the future welfare of the community on social, cultural and political fronts. That is what should constitute Samellan or regular periodic debates among the intellectuals, thinkers and well-wishers of the community.

In order to ensure that the Samaj operates in unison and takes all Sabhas in its stride there is a need to evolve an organised federal system with clearly marked objectives. It is necessary to debate as to how it can be achieved. It may need a review and modification of the Constitution of the Samaj. One of the options can be not to elect the President of the Samaj in the manner it is done now but choosing the President by rotation from presidents of the affiliate Sabhas and having nominees from various Sabhas on the executive. There can be many other options but these can only be evolved after a threadbare discussion. It is time that the community takes this issue in right earnest and organises a Samellan solely for this purpose.

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the purpose of doing national good. That is the object of combining the entire community together so that we may flow in the same stream and we could say that the Kashmiri Association has discharged its national duty. That is our object, and that is how we help the country. We are enrolling Overseas members. These Overseas members are sending us Dollars, they are sending us Pounds, we are earning foreign exchange. What is this for? That is for the country. Therefore, you are earning foreign exchange. You are a serviceful community; a community that is earning foreign exchange for the Government, for the State. So we are serving the State and not doing any disservice to the State. We don't eliminate or exclude from our membership our girls and boys who have married outside the community. We assimilate them. If the boy is a Kashmiri it does not matter to which community the other spouse belongs. We have them as our

members. We are assimilating them-cultural integration. How can one get an impression we are indulging in the anti-national activities? As a matter of fact, it is one of the most nationalistic activities to promote social and cultural integration. This is what we are doing. So, the objects with which our Samaj has been formed are wholly nationalistic and I cannot see any reason why we should be shy of saying that we are members of the Kashmiri Samaj. These being our laudable objects, we are here to form the association to serve ourselves, to consolidate ourselves, for the service of our country. I would now close my speech with just two lines quoted from a famous Kashmiri poet of Lucknow, Pandit Brij Narain Chakbast :

गुरुर और जहल को बस दूर से सलाम करो
कुछ अपने कौम के बच्चों का इन्तजाम करो
यह बात याद रहे जान रहे या न रहे
जमीन रहे न रहे, आसमान रहे न रहे।

Thank you

K. P. SANASTHAS FOR COMMUNITY SURVIVAL, CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND RESURGENCE

— By *Prof. C. L. Sadhu, Jammu*

Having had my long association with All State Kashmiri Pandit conference (ASKPC), Sanatan Dharam Yuvak Sabha Sheetalnath in the valley in sixtee's, as young activist and later as strong social activist and executive member under late Dr. S. N. Peshin in early eightee's, I recall many harrowing events in this very historical Sheetalnath ground which has been center of activities for me and many of my colleagues right after the partition. The K. P. community witnessed manifold aggression on political, social, economic, and religious fronts by the powers that were. Severe discrimination in admissions, in recruitment, in services religious encroachments, victimisation of K.P minority under Agrarian Reforms, abduction of some K.P girls – all was perpetrated on the K.P community. The Parmeshewri agitation and the 1986 riots in District Anantnag and around was fully addressed by ASKPC/ and AIKPC. There were always hectic moments at ASKPC, Sheetalnath, with stormy sessions, framing of the committees on various issues confronting the beleaguered community and presentation preparation of Memoranda's to the higher echelons both in the state & at the centre. Whereas both ASKPC & AIKPC were fighting for economic & political survival, Samaj Sudhar Samithi was functioning on the social front. In the unparalleled devastation, atrocity & genocide perpetrated by the Pan-Islamic fundamentalists, the community was uprooted and hounded out in mass migration in Jan. 1990 and yet another exodus and exile to this scholarly peace loving persecuted community. Udampur, Jammu, Himachal, Cities of Punjab, Delhi, Noida, Gurgaon, Ghaziabad and other places elsewhere in the country became quasi-permanent abodes of the displaced pandits. K.P Sabha Jammu bore the initial brunt of K.P's mass migration from the valley and extended its logistics whatever available to members of the displaced families.

A convention under the aegis of ASKPC was convened at Jammu soon after migration and many resolves were made with main slogan of providing

security and safer zones in the valley for return of K.P's. Our young and youth activists revolted, consolidated themselves, converged and declared separate Home land for 7 lakh displaced K.P's on right side of river Jhelum, with union territory status, through another convention Marg Darshan 1991 Resolution at Abhinav theater Jammu and a new forceful group sprouted called, Pannun Kashmir. This group it may be recorded displayed much needed determination and worked hard at the National & International levels, in scuttling the disinformation campaign let loose by Pak & ISI against the K.P community.

All India Kashmiri Samaj, AIKS, a confederating apex body of all K.P Sanasthas, Sabhas, Samitis, Associations, Forums all over the country and abroad/ overseas at UK & USA had to face a new challenge as its activities were earlier restricted to K.P's Social & Cultural domains only hither to before. It has its record of providing much needed succor in the rehabilitation of the displaced campers at Jammu & the Educational/Medical assistance to the most deserving cases of our displaced children/adolescents including the destitute's. A trust under the ambit of Samaj-AIKS Trust was set up with the sole objective of helping the displaced in the economic rehabilitation. Here it may be mentioned that there is a need for setting up an executive apparatus for the intense coordination between AIKS & AIKS Trust.

Many other K.P Organisations, Displaced K.P community in camps, groups & K.P alliance associations sprouted out at Jammu/Delhi with perhaps their local compulsions & needs or in many cases partly because of the inherent mechanisms of the powers that be instrumentalising them diluting the main issues of K.Ps return & rehabilitation. The main Organisations pleading vociferously the cause of displaced K.P's are Jammu Kashmir Vichar Manch, JKVM, All Kashmiri Pandit Solidarity Conference (AKPSC). Others are by & large camp oriented as, All Migrants Camp Coordination Committee, Kul Hind Nov Soan Kashmir Front, Kashmir Secular Alliance (KSA),

Youth wing AIKS; Kashmiri Hindu Conference, Kashmiri Hindu youth Forum. Vistapit Yuva Vikas Sangathan & the like.

In this dispensation of diaspora the K.P organisation & Sanasthas who stood already established & those sprouted out after exodus with most of the Sabhas having by now set up Kashmiri Bhawans, stand as symbols of our ethnic belongingness, recognition & K.P identity. Our growing generations who are alien to KOSHUR Language and devoid of any awareness about our rich socio-cultural traditions, customs, rituals, festivals, Kashmiri Food & cousins are acclimatised with our rich heritage by participating in Hawans, on important festivals & cultural Programmes & activities. Sabhas/Samati's are our strong community centers where from our deep-rooted grievances are highlighted and serve a platform for our intimate interpersonal, inter-social relationships. They are the strong catalysts for providing the placements to our educated unemployed and if properly planed serve as nerve centers for providing productive vocational courses, placement Bureaus, the latest & updated occupational futuristic trends and information of the entire world of work.

An analysis of the perspective and the objective of all Sabhas, Samitis, Associations arising out of displaced K.P Migrant Camps at Jammu/Udhampur Delhi vis-a-vis, All India Kashmiri Samaj concerning our Rehabilitation & future survival, our inalienable right to return to valley with dignity & honour with all our riders of Constitutional, political, economic social, religious, guarantees in contrast to the strong perspective & slogan of Pannun Kashmir of our Return entirely in a different Geophysical formation in separate Homeland in the valley with union territory status have been all along a differing perception that persists right from the historical Marg Darshan-91

Resolution. This controversy is eating the vitals of our displaced community particularly in camps who for their own compulsions are lured by the powers that be and their hirelings promising jobs to the unemployed youths, security & logistics with all fake & false mechanisms create all erosions to a well resolute determinations of these strong activists.

This controversy needs to be resolved once for all by according a fair representation to all groups among the camps, K.P Sanasthas, / Sabhas / Samiti's / Associations / Pannun Kashmir/ all the emerging K.P group & Forums and also representation from overseas organisations in UK/USA under the aegis of All India Kashmiri Samaj, and strongly chart out a common programme and fix perfectly agenda concerning our Return and Rehabilitation, Future Survival, Self-Reliant agendas, its layout & execution with utmost dedication & conviction with viable conceptual framework which has been thoroughly discussed & deliberated at EC/AGM, at Chandigarh Jammu & Bangalore. A follow-up action is already under way by organising a conclave of executives under the aegis of AIKS. The scope of this conclave can further be widened with setting up of All India K.P Council of personnel of eminence relating to Hi-Tech Information Technology, Management, Industry, Medicine, Agriculture, Engineering, Academics etc. A small beginning but calculated one be made and pushed forward after preparing the blue-prints phase-wise, targetwise in setting up the Institute (S) and selecting the appropriate occupational oriented courses in accordance with the latest occupational trends deliberating over the operational strategies in exploring & augmenting the resources within & outside the community in terms of Men, Material & Money & the overall executions. Let the AIKS provide lead & directions and leave the community project (S) to the Council to take care of it independently.

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ALL INDIA KASHMIRI SAMAJ, (AIKS) : A BRIEF HISTORY

— Edited by *Mr. Vijay Saqi, New Delhi*

AIKS was founded in March 1980 with Justice P. N. Bakshi as its founder President in Allahabad. The initial objective being to set up an all India body of Kashmiri Pandits with all the associations and Sabha's of the community, operating in different parts of the country. The Central Body had identified areas of work :

- i) Helping young men and women in securing employment.
- ii) Securing suitable matches for boys and girls of marriageable ages, within the community.
- iii) Taking measures and issuing instruction to deprecate evils of dowry system.
- iv) Co-ordinate with various Kashmiri Samities/Associations, based in various places in India and abroad, where Kashmiri families have migrated and exist in large numbers.
- v) Arrange annual meetings at All India level, where it would give opportunities to representatives of affiliate associations, to come together socially and understand each other's problems and remedial measures.
- vi) Get into contact with Kashmiris, living and employed in various parts of the world. Helping in securing admission for their children in Indian Colleges / Universities, as well as helping in making suggestion with regard to nuptial engagements. Residents of foreign countries would also prove helpful to local members of Kashmiri Community in various ways.

The affiliation of associations to All India Kashmiri Samaj was voluntary which continues till date and there would be no compulsion on any unit/affiliate, to join the Central Body.

The constitution was adopted at the IInd Conference of AIKS, held at Calcutta, on 27th/28th December, 1980. It was a historic conference where many decisions were taken in the interest of the community. Later overseas Kashmiri Pandits were made members. The Samaj later initiated move and was a catalyst in setting up Sabhas/Samities of Kashmiri Pandits, where they were in good numbers without an Association. This facilitated better representation of the Kashmiri Baradari in the AIKS.

Initially AIKS focused on social and cultural ventures, restricting its role to providing relief, educational and medical facilities and extended a helping hand to the deserving members of the community. In 1984 **Col. P. N. KAK took over as president of AIKS.** The Samaj widened its activities by playing greater attention to various issues affecting Kashmiries, within the J&K State. **Dr. N. L. ZUTSHI took over as**

president in 1987. A number of meetings of the Executive Committee of the AIKS were held, touching upon the problems and constraints facing AIKS the community. Short term and long term plans and targets were drawn and implemented. **Brig. R. N. MADDAN became president of the All India Body in 1990.** He emphasized the need for consolidation and interaction of all existing affiliated units, setting up units where they were not in existence, and reactivating the inactive units. Marriage Bureau Cells were also set up at Allahabad, Delhi, Bombay and Varanasi, with a view to ensuring marriages of Kashmiri boys and girls within the community.

Shri D. N. Munshi was elected president in July 1991. It was a period when in the aftermath of the forced exodus of 1990, a great calamity had befallen on the K. P. Community in Kashmir, on account of disastrous activities of terrorists, inspired and abetted by Pakistan, forcing them to leave their homes and hearths and take shelter in Jammu, Delhi and other states of India, as refugees in their own country. Realising that over 58000 K.P. families including over 3 lakh children, men and women, old sick and infirm, cultured, peace loving, had been uprooted by fierce fanatics from flourishing homes, languishing in desolate places, deprived of basic human rights, passing their days and nights in sub-human conditions, apathy of Central and State Governments, in taking appropriate steps for restoration of normalcy, crucial problems being faced by the displaced community, condemned to live without succour and hope, the AIKS and its affiliates, in India and abroad, took various steps in pooling resources, to rescue the peace-loving, educated and cultured community, fallen on adversity, to rise and stand on their own as creative proud human beings. The AIKS drew-up action plans, appointed several expert autonomous committees, to offer suggestion in fashioning a new and creative future for the beleaguered community.

For the first time, the AIKS had its regular office at D-90, Sarojini Nagar, New Delhi-110023. Earlier the office of AIKS functioned from Kashmir Bhawan, Amar Colony and thereafter, from a small premises in South Extension, New Delhi. AIKS was successful in getting established as a Nodal Cell, concentrating on extracting from the Govt. authorities promises for implementation of programmes of relief, rehabilitation and welfare. For publicising its activities, the AIKS made use of its own organ NAAD as well as KOSHUR SAMACHAR. The most important among these steps was the setting up of the high

profile AIKS Advisory Council, Comprising of eminent and experienced members of the Community, from different walks of life, intellectuals, administration, educationists, diplomats, legal luminaries, defence top-brass, writers and others of national stature.

One of the major tasks attempted was the establishment of the AIKS TRUST, as an important arm of the AIKS. A Trust Deed was drawn up and vetted by legal experts, for community requirements, eventually setting up the Trust as a registered deed, which came into operation w.e.f. February 26, 1993. In short, AIKS TRUST, sponsored by AIKS, is a TRUST for supporting approved programmes from AIKS and its affiliates. Programmes of the Trust include :

- a) Students support programmes (School education)
- b) Secretarial practices Training Centres.
- c) Craft Training-cum-production Centres.
- d) Assistance for technical and professional courses
- e) Assistance for pursuing college education
- f) Working Women's hostel at Noida
- g) Assistance in group marriages
- h) Assistance in group Yagnopavits
- i) Financial assistance on medical ground
- j) Financial assistance to helpless, indigent, widows, displaced persons

SHRI J. N. KAUL took over as president in April 1994. A doyen in the field of social service in India and abroad, continues to head a vast network of SOS Children's Villages in India, a voluntary international social service organisation, dedicated to the cause of deprived children. During the presidentship of Shri J. N. Kaul (Padmashri), a lot was achieved, especially in the area of assistance to the most needy in the community, reaching out to large number of displaced persons, residing in various camps in and around Jammu, who needed financial assistance in various forms, help extended to young men and women in carving out their careers for themselves, after intensive training and placement.

Financial help was also rendered in organising mass Yagnopavits and solemnising the marriages of grown up boys and girls.

Hosted by Kashmiri Sewak Samaj, Fardabad, the AIKS under the presidentship of Sh. J. N. Kaul, held a two days conference, in the first week of May, 1994 in which presidents and General secretaries of all affiliates and other special invitees, participated. The following resolutions were adopted :

We will return to Kashmir : Yes, but when it is fully integrated with India, where we can live without fear and with dignity and honour, where we can preserve our identity and culture.

Any attempt to manipulate us and to disrupt our unity by an individual or a group/agency, will be fought

with all our might. In this hour of crisis, we must stand united, if we have to survive.

In collaboration with Kashmiri Pandit Sabha Jammu, AIKS organised a K. P. Conclave at Jammu, on 9th & 10th September 1995. The issues concerning the community were discussed in detail.

AIKS and its various affiliates, organised a meeting on 20-03-1996, at Kashmir Bhawan, New Delhi where the proposal of the government to send back KP's to valley in security zones was rejected.

SH. M. K. KAW took over as president on 15th March, 2003. Consequent upon being elected as President, Shri M. K. Kaw, stated that Kashmiri Pandit, the victims of a genocidal mania were facing one of the most agonising periods in their history. The community had to be ever vigilant and alert, and respond proactively to the emerging situations, seeking support of all National Parties, to solve their problems and primarily look after the interests of the displaced community. He dwelt on the need for evolving a common strategy to work on a minimum agenda which could then be pursued with the Govt. and various political parties.

He announced the plan of action for the next three years :

1. Build up the office and infrastructure of the AIKS so as to give it a solid foundation.
2. Create a democratic system of functioning through Committees and panels, which report to each other.
3. Take all decisions by consensus.
4. Institute Constitutional reforms.
5. Build a sound financial base.
6. Implement a programme for the amelioration of the condition of Kashmiri Pandits in general and those in distress (in camps and non-camps) in particular.
7. Formulate and implement a programme for development of the community and social reforms, especially in the context of issues relating to women and children.
8. Formulate a realistic national policy on Kashmir and Create a political consensus for its adoption and implementation.
9. Convert the AIKS into the single moderate, mainstream voice of Kashmiri Pandits and try to forge a consensus in between the persons and parties, holding different shades of opinion.
10. Delegate functions and powers to zonal and unit levels, so as to ensure better monitoring and coordination among the associates and other units.

A two day National Executive Meet of AIKS, having delegates from various affiliates including Mumbai, Bangalore, Varanasi, Delhi, Chandigarh, Faridabad, Udhampur and Jammu, was held on 20th & 21st Sept.

2003, in which different facets of problems faced by Kashmiri Pandits, particularly by those living in camps, were deliberated upon. A delegation of the AIKS visited the migrant camps at Muthi and Nagrota, to have a first hand knowledge about the prevailing conditions in the camps. The delegation was headed by President of AIKS, Shri M. K. Kaw and took up the issues of concern with the authorities. Kaw held meetings with the President, Prime Minister, Home Minister, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and other dignitaries and discussed the issues and problems facing the community with them. A national Policy on Kashmir was prepared. Some of its highlights are :

- a) The Kashmir problem is not about territory. It is not about Pakistan getting hold of the Kashmir Valley. It is about the Pakistan-dream of dismembering India and creating Nizam-e-Mustafa in the whole sub-continent.
- b) Pakistan will not stop bleeding India, even if Kashmir is handed over to it on a platter. They want the rest of India too.
- c) India's strategy should be to destroy the entire infrastructure of terror in the Valley and across the border if necessary, through, preemptive strikes, so that Pandits can return en-masse and be once again India's visible secular symbol in the Valley.
- d) Kashmir is an inseparable part of India. India has to reorient her perceptions, reinvent strategies and rediscover the will and courage to survive as a nation. If Kashmir goes, it will be the beginning of the end of India's sovereignty and integrity.

With the help of affiliates and well wishers of Kashmiri Pandits, International Community was also mobilised in favour of KP's.

Three American Senators Michal W. Honda, Sherrod Brown and Jim Mc Dermott joined Kashmiri Pandits in observing the Martyrs Day (2004). In their messages on the occasion Jim Mc Dermott said that he whole heartedly supports this solemn observance. Mr. Sherrod Brown says no people in South Asia have suffered more than Kashmiri Pandits. This community has been brutalised by the fundamentalists, disguised as freedom fighters, leading to mass exodus of the community. It is my sincere hope that the world community will not forget the Human Rights abuses suffered by Kashmiri Pandits and it must not fail to protect their thousands of year's old culture and ancestral heritage.

Led by President, Sh. M. K. Kaw, an AIKS delegation had a meeting with Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister, on 29-10-2004. The delegation appraised the P.M. of their perception regarding the ongoing dialogue process and role of Kashmiri Pandits. The P.M. assured the delegation that all their genuine demands including the employment package, the relief and rehabilitation problems, issues confronting Pandits still living in the Valley, would be looked into.

The two days global conference of K.P's held on 18th & 19th Dec. 2004 in Bangalore gave mandate to the AIKS to decide for an honorable and dignified return of Kashmiri Pandits, living in exile since 1990, with constitutional guarantees, ensuring their political, economic, social and cultural rights. The conference made it amply clear that the Pandits will return to the Valley in wholesale and not in piecemeal, when the conditions are conducive and entire infrastructure of terror is demolished. It also stressed the modernisation of all "madrasas" and "maqtabas" preaching religious disharmony.

The conference placed on record its gratitude and appreciation for the graciousness shown by the Karnataka Govt. headed by Sh. Dharam Singh, for announcing a grant of Rs. 25 lacs for the construction of Kashmiri Bhawan, housing a cultural and Research Centre and reservations in educational institutions. The two days conference was organised by the AIKS in collaboration with its Bangalore affiliate, Kashmiri Hindu Samiti, (Karnatak) Regd. It also resolved that the President of the AIKS, Shri M. K. Kaw should represent the community in the Parliament. It urged the Govt. to nominate Sh. Kaw to the Rajya Sabha, as promised by the P.M. and demanded changes in the constitution, to ensure representation to the Pandits in the Parliament, J&K legislature, Union Cabinet and J&K Council of Ministers.

Led by President AIKS Sh. M. K. Kaw, AIKS delegation held a series of meetings with senior diplomats in American Embassy and British High Commission in New Delhi. The delegation expressed serious concern over the silence of west on the human rights situation of Kashmiri Pandits, now living in 16th year of their exile, in their own country. It was the hard work and focus of the AIKS office bearers that Sushma Chowdhary committee accepted all the demands of the community put forth by AIKS.

18 Recommendations of the Sushma Chaudhary Committee Report on displaced Kashmiris were accepted by the Prime Minister.

AIKS official organ Naad was given a face lift in both content and presentation and by now it has emerged as the voice of the community. Several Special issues are the hall mark of this monthly magazine, now a house hold name. The subscription base of the magazine has increased manifold. The Samaj is now publishing the first Kashmir literary magazine VAAKH in Devnagri script. It was released at a largely attended impressive function in Pamposh Enclave School premises, on 29th october, 2005 by Sh. M. K. Kaw. Underlining the need of preserving Kashmiri language and its distinct culture, Shri Kaw cautioned that K. P's will lose their individuality if enough steps are not taken to pressurise and protest its identity. A poetry symposium in Kashmiri was organised on the Occasion.

Another impressive function was held in Jammu for release of VAAKH. Senior poet Shri Kashi Nath Bhagwan released it and vice president AIKS Sh. A. K. Deewani explained the aims and objectives of the magazine and assured that the Samaj will make all out efforts to make the magazine more attractive and presentable.

Friends of Kashmir

AIKS has formulated a forum of Friends of Kashmir. It Consists of Members of Parliament and other people of eminence besides members of Jammu and Kashmir legislature. In the first meeting held at India International Centre Annex, over 100 persons participated during the month of Feb, 2005, with Friends of Kashmir.

The AIKS has published the document on the National Policy on Kashmir and circulated the same, to all the affiliates, national political parties, State Governments and the central Govt.

The issue of deletion of names of K.P's from the electoral roles in J&K was taken up with the election commission in 2005. The E. C. assured the AIKS that it would extend the date upto 31-10-2005. The E. C. while identifying with the issues raised by the AIKS sought co-operation of the apex body (AIKS) to work as a nodal agency for revision of electoral rolls for K. P. migrants, over the length and breadth of the country.

The revised constitution of the AIKS has also been published and circulated to all the affiliates of AIKS in India and abroad, for their information and guidance.

AIKS also prepared and published 'An agenda for social reform' and circulated the same for guidance and follow-up. It focuses several pressing social issues facing the community.

AIKS National Placement Bureau

As a result of establishing AIKS National Placement Bureau, quite a number of qualified displaced youth, have been able to secure gainful employment. From time to time, lists of candidates, in need of jobs, indicating their qualifications, are published in NAAD. Besides information of vacancies in different offices, Govt. and private, is also published in the column of NAAD, to enable the job-seekers to apply for employment.

Draft of Temple Bill

On initiative from the AIKS, draft of a Temple Bill was adopted by the National Conference, which has been introduced as a private members' Bill in the last session of the legislative assembly of J&K state. There is growing support for the Bill and it is likely to become a law in near future.

AIKS petition seeking relief for the displaced community members has been admitted by the Supreme Court of India and State and the central government have been asked to file their replies in 40 days.

A two day conclave of the apex body was held in Chandigarh in collaboration with Kashmiri Sahayak Sabha Chandigarh where future streagy for the apex body was given a firm shape.

This year AIKS is celebrating its Silver Jubilee year; 24 stalwarts were honoured at a function in Delhi in October 2006. Many more are being honoured in Kolkata session on 24th and 25th of December. A "Musharra in Kashmiri was the highlight of the award ceremony which remains unparalleled in the history of the Capital.

AIKS – APEX Body – Upholder of vision of plurality

In brief, the AIKS is now an apex body of over 60 federating units of Kashmiris in India and abroad. It is a democratic, forward looking organisation, primarily devoted to resolving various problems, facing Kashmiris, living in camps and non-camp areas, in Delhi, Jammu and other places. Victims of a genocidal drive, the Kashmiri Pandits lay emphasis on dignified return to the Valley, as its central task. The AIKS and its affiliates are trying their best to resolve the complex issue in cooperation with the majority community in Kashmir, if possible. The AIKS considers that the major hurdle in the accomplishment of the desired objective, is the present mindset of a section of the majority community in the state, which is totally alien to the deeply humanitarian ethos of Kashmiri. The fundamentalist, divisive and regressive religious trend introduced by Jamat-i-Islami, has dealt a lethal blow to the centuries old unity and solidarity of Kashmiries. The fundamentalists are today the advanced guard of Pakistan's proxy war in Kashmir.

The AIKS also believes that without defeating Pakistan/POK based insurgency, both militarily and politically, a congenial atmosphere cannot be created for the return of Kashmiri Pandits to their homeland and to ensure their safety and rehabilitation. The survival of Kashmiri Pandits and their safety and rehabilitation in Kashmir, is a national problem.

The AIKS looks at the problem in the context of India's abiding faith in multilingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious character of the Republic of India. India survives when its plurality survives.

The apex body has a blue print of the plan of action ready for the next three years. Under the dynamic leadership of Sh. Kaw, AIKS will continue to scale new hights to ensure better future for the community in exile.

The author is the Editor of the NAAD, the official organ of A. I. K. S. This article is the edited version of the document drafted by Shri L. C. Kaul a founder member of A.I.K.S. & ex-secretary of A.I.K.S., Trust.

THE BOOK OF LIFE

— By **Hira Lal Wangnoo**, New Delhi

'When you read the book which is yourself, there is not the reader and the book separate from you. The book is you'.

Are you aware that the Autobiography of each one of us – our own book of life — is being written on the pages of time? Everyday is a page. Every year is a chapter.

Examine the chapters which have already been written. Do they reveal a person who has been so Kind, Serene, Humane, Secure, without fear, Cheerful, Generous, Helpful, Self-confident, Humble? Or a person who has been Unkind, Intolerant, Petty, Greedy, Egoistic, Jealous, Spiteful, Insecure, Fearful, always grousing and complaining?

Does your book of life satisfy you, or would you wish to suppress it? Read quietly, sensitively, the pages already written. Are you pleased with those pages? Or are you Ashamed? Have you known yourself by self observation or have you lived your life mechanically, selfishly, in a disorderly way, blind to your own habits and characteristics?

Will you improve the chapters that are to follow? Will you make the ending better than the beginning?

Visualise your thoughts being recorded in your book of life. See your words and deeds and relationships being inscribed on its pages. Moment by moment, the story of your life is being written. If you are quietly, objectively alert, you can observe your thoughts and actions. As skill in self-observation improves, self-knowledge increases. Self-observation and self-knowledge lead to a clear comprehension about the causes and consequences of one's actions. This makes us aware of which action is right one some time in the future. Thus, ultimately, preceptive insight itself results in the right action at the right moment.

You say kind words, Do helpful things, have courage, stand up for the right, keep your word. You care for people. You become a giver instead of a taker, A builder instead of a destroyer. You are calm and serene.

It is your own book of life. It is upto you to write it as you will. Day by day your book grows towards the completed volume of your life. You cannot do anything about what you have already written. But, look at those white pages ahead! They invite you to make the rest of the chapters deeply satisfying by acting rightly in the present. The potential is within you. Make it a fine piece of work'.

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