

## KASHMIRI PANDIT SABHA, AMBPHALLA, JAMMU

—By *Triloki Nath Khosa, Jammu*

The KP Sabha, Jammu has a meaningfully secular and consistently non-controversial history of nearly a century. It is, perhaps, the oldest registered organisation of Kashmiri Pandits; then mostly Government employees under the Dogra regime. The system of Darbar Move, introduced by the Dogra rulers, would bring sizable KPs to Jammu with the Darbar Move, for the winter months. The KP employees, generally moving without their families, would remain confined to Jammu for the six months of the winter; visits to valley were very difficult because of the treacherous road journey that would normally take two days to reach Srinagar from Jammu. Generally, because of heavy snow and frequent landslides, the Banihal Cart Road would remain blocked, at times, for months together, during the winter season. A subtle feeling of homesickness and isolation on the part of the KP employees, stationed in Jammu, was therefore a natural phenomenon. That must have been the basic cause for them to nurse an idea to form themselves into a socio-cultural organisation in Jammu. Thus, it was in 1913 AD that the Kashmiri Sahayak Sabha was formed and an office accommodation for it hired, at Rs. 3/- per month, at Shalimar Road Jammu. Soon thereafter, the Sabha under the slightly modified name of Kashmiri Pandit Sahayak Sabha, was formally registered under the Command Order No : 8489 dated 21.02.1914 of His Highness Maharaja Pratap Singh Ji. Subsequently, in 1916, the Sabha was renamed as Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, Jammu.

Serious riots broke out in the valley in July 1931 in which KPs became the worst target. They suddenly felt their vulnerability to communal frenzy. With the formation of Muslim Conference by Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah in 1932 and with the beginning of fermentation of communal politics by the die-hard zealots, discontent and exasperation of KPs got further intensified. That subsequently found expression in the form of an agitation/movement spearheaded by the young KP youths, mostly unemployed. Around the same time, need was also felt for enforcing social reforms within the community as a result of which the Women's Welfare Trust came into being in the valley. A clarion call was given for enforcing social reforms including a call for replacement of Pheran by Sari by the KP women to give them an emancipated look as also freedom from the shackles of misplaced conventions. Slogans for widow marriage and against dowry were also raised. Out of this upheaval of the community that had a little bit of churning effect too, Pt Kashyap Bandhu was allowed to emerge as a leader. The KP Sabha Jammu became an effective integral part of the movement. As a sequel to the formation of Women's Welfare Trust in the valley, the KP Women's League was

formed in Jammu, under the Presidentship of Mrs. Deviki Koul.

In November 1932, KP Sabha, Jammu purchased a piece of land measuring 64 Marlas, for Rs. 668/- from one Badr-u-din. In 1934, a community hall, named Kashyap Niwas, was built, under the Presidentship of Pt. Iqbal Krishen Dhar and supervision of Pt. Maheshwar Nath Koul, at a cost of Rs. 3500/- (which included Rs. 2500 collected as donation for the purposes). Almost all the KP employees along with their families had engaged themselves in Kar-Seva for raising this construction. Some of them had donated bricks and other building material that they would carry on their heads to the site. In 1944, Raja Upinder Krishen Koul, the then Governor of Jammu, donated Rs. 2100/- for construction of a boundary wall of the Sabha premises. The KP Sabha became a centre of socio-cultural activities of the KPs in Jammu. The Sharika Temple was constructed in the Sabha premises in July/August 1951 and magnificent idols of Lord Shiva and Lord Ganesha were installed therein, in 1954. With the construction of the temple, the activities of the Sabha got extended to fulfill the religious aspirations too of the KPs as also of other Hindus living in its vicinity. Subsequently, in 1960, the Maha Laxmi Temple was constructed and Murti of Shri Mata Ragnya was installed therein by the side of an improvised spring, to give it a look of a replica of Tullamulla Asthapan of the valley. Later on, a magnificent Ram Darbar was set up, on the other side of the main Sharika Temple. Bairaw Nath Temple was also shaped which exists in the outer complex of Sabha. This place is used for Hawans and Yegnopavit ceremonies too. Raising of these additional temples provided an added momentum to the religious activities of the Sabha. With all the important festivals like Hurra-Ashtami (as an important part of Maha Shivaratri Festival), Navareh, Zangatrai, Navratra as a whole, Bhairav Janam-Din-Puja, Raksha Bhandan, Janma Ashtami etc having come to be held/celebrated with all fervour and enthusiasm in the Sabha premises, number of visitors to the Sabha went on increasing quite appreciably. Simultaneously, the Sabha had also undertaken to provide Mrityu-Samagri to the people on no profit no loss basis. All these activities made KP Sabha a hub of socio-cultural and religious activities in Jammu, not only for the KPs but also for all the other sections of the Jammu populace.

The KP Sabha shared, substantially and very effectively, the burden of the community which it had to bear in tackling the abduction case of Parmeshori, in 1967, batches of volunteers had gone to Srinagar from Jammu to supplement the efforts of our brethren there, besides arranging rallies and

demonstrations in Jammu itself. The KP Sabha, Jammu again, jumped headlong into the fray in 1986 when our community virtually faced "Trial Exodus" as a preparatory machination on the part of the "enemy" to push through the "Final Exodus" of 1990.

The year 1990 threw KP Sabha Jammu in an unprecedentedly trying situation. The Exodus was unpredictably so fast, so sudden and so large that an all round confusion erupted on Jammu city streets and other towns. Tens of thousands of our brethren— men and women, young and old, newborn and toddlers, infirm and handicapped — hounded out of their homes and hearths, had to land suddenly in Jammu. Because of being virtually, then, the single sole organisation concerned with the welfare of the KPs, the KP Sabha Jammu had to bear the initial shock of the catastrophe and to plan and execute the immediate relief measures. The onus, therefore, fell directly on the then President of KP Sabha, Dr. Kaushalya Wali who with the help of her trusted associates like Pt. T N Khosa, Pt. B L Bhat, Prof. A N Sadhu, Pt. Ashok Kher, Pt. Kishenji Khosa and Pt. A K Mirza undertook the onerous job of arranging and distributing immediate relief to our distressed and displaced brethren. The influx was quite large; both in magnitude and frequency, and the Govt. assistance was quite inadequate. The KP Sabha volunteers, particularly Pt. T N Khosa and Pt. B L Bhat, pressed their personal vehicles in service for providing immediate succor to the destitute. The Sabha Hall was thrown open for the displaced to take refuge there.

The Sabha lost virtually no time in undertaking to meet the educational needs of the young displaced children, considering the fact that education has been the mainstay of our community. Pt. T N Khosa, immediately after taking over the reigns of the Sabha in 1994 launched a scheme in collaboration with KOA for providing scholarships for undergoing professional courses by the students and also for assistance to school going displaced children to the tune of Rs. 4 crores and 50 Lakhs (on both accounts), provided to hundreds of deserving students thus far. Under yet another programme, initiated by the KOA in collaboration with KP Sabha, the displaced camp children are provided with a financial assistance of Rs. 10,000/- per annum, per child, for prosecuting studies in schools up to and including their 12<sup>th</sup> class. Both the programmes are still in force.

Besides, a large number of widows are provided monthly pension by the Sabha, Medical-aid is provided to patients admitted in hospitals, and, otherwise also, financial assistance is provided to needy migrants to enable them to perform marriage ceremonies of their daughters. From the year 2004, the Sabha has initiated a new programme, in collaboration with a Non

Kashmiri NRI-NGO, named WIDE USA, under which vocational courses relating to computer learning, refrigeration, dress designing, electrification, beauty treatment etc. are conducted for school dropouts from the camps. These courses are run with the financial assistance of Jan Shiksha Sanasthan (Ministry of HRD) Jammu and Infosys Eyes, Muthi.

The KP Sabha complex is now sprawled over an area of seven Kanals with several building complexes standing thereon. The Kashyap Niwas initially built in 1935, has recently been completely renovated, reshaped, refurnished and wood panelled, during the tenure of the incumbent President, Pt. T N Khosa. It now serves as a beautiful auditorium for holding socio-cultural, religious and literary meets. A huge building complex was raised, during the Presidentship of Dr. Kaushalya Wali on the adjoining piece of land acquired earlier during the Presidentship of Pt. Jagan Nath Bhat. Later on, one more storey was added to it, again during the Presidentship of Pt. T N Khosa, to serve as community centre. The present fair value of the Sabha complex (land and buildings only) is estimated to be Rs. 10 to 15 crores. The current earning of the Sabha, on account of the rental of the shops and buildings, is about Rs. 5 lakhs per annum.

Last but not the least, the KP Sabha, Jammu has earned a name at the global level. Verily, the credit goes to all those who have rendered and continued to render selfless service dispassionately and with a sense of complete detachment, for its integrated development.

It may also need a special mention here that the KP Sabha enjoys uniqueness of having entertained Shrimati Indira Gandhi with tea in a Kashmiri-Pandit-Cup (KHOSU) on the occasion of her visit to the Sabha, in 1977.

The top it all, the KP Sabha, Jammu has also a distinction of having been headed, by the stalwarts and luminaries of our community as detailed below. Pt. Nand Lal Kaul (1914-18), Pt. R. K. Kitchloo (1918-23), Pt. Parmanand (1923-25), Pt. R. C. Pandita (1925-27), Pt. A. C. Dhar (1927-30), Pt. R. B. A. N. Purbi (1930-32), Pt. B. L. Nehru (1932-34), Pt. J. N. Koul (1934-35), Pt. I. K. Dhar (1935-37), Pt. R. L. Kak (1937-1941), Pt. Jia Lal Koul (1941-1945), Pt. S. L. Koul (1945-50), Pt. J. L. Koul (Jalali) (1950-57), Pt. J. L. Kilam (1957-58), Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar (1963-64), Pt. Prem Nath Koul (1964-70), Pt. Jagar Nath Bhat (1970-81), Pt. Radha Krishen Bhat (1981-85), Pt. T. N. Peshin (1985-89), Pt. Koshalya Wali (Prof.) (1989-94), Pt. T. N. Khosa (1994- ). The Sabha has the privilege of being headed currently (for the last more than twelve years) by Pt. T. N. Khosa, an untiringly effective social activist endowed with profound sensitivity and, above all, an unswerving faith in God.

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## KASHMIRI PANDIT SABHA, AMRITSAR

— By *Prof. O. N. Bhat, Amritsar*

The oldest Kashmiri Pandit Organisation of any sort, Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, Amritsar was founded in 1908 by a group of well meaning and earnest Kashmiri Pandits living in Amritsar. This leading group was activated by one visionary, **Kashmiri Mal Matto**, a renowned advocate of his time, in Amritsar. Endowed with keen foresight and equally keen dedication to the cause of the community, he donated a precious plot of land in the hub of city, measuring around 1500 square yards, for building a focal point for the community, in the shape of a Dharamshala along with a **Shivala**. He wanted the community to have a place of interaction and at the same time provide a lodge to the Kashmiri Pandits, visiting Amritsar either on their way to Haridwar and other places or way back. It was in the same year that these visionaries formed themselves into a regular committee under the first **President, Sh. Manohar Lal Kitchloo with Pt. Bishember Nath Shivpuri, Pt. Kashmira Mal Matto and Pt. SHANKER Guru**, a pujari, as the members. They built a **Shivala** adjoining a **Dharmshala** with two utility rooms to begin with. These earnest Kashmiri Pandits continued on their untiring efforts and motivated other leading **Kashmiri Pandits, Sh. Ram Nath Tolal, Dr. Shiv Narain Razdan, Sh. Durga Parasd Razdan, Sh. Kailash Nath Tickoo and Sh. Bihari Lal Kitchloo**.

In the year 1916 **Sh. Manohar Lal Kitchloo S/o Sh. Bihari Lal Kitchloo** donated one three-storey building, Thakur Dwar, with two small shops to the **Kashmiri Pandit Sabha**. This building happens to be two kilometers away from the main dharmshala of the Sabha. Here too a **Shivala** was built initially and then whole building came under the control of the Sabha. The Sabha continued to progress under the aegis of the galaxy of far-seeing personalities, all Kashmiri Pandits, in essence. Personal donations, charat at the temple and the rent generated from a few shops, initially built on the road side of the building, helped in meeting the day to day expenses of the **Sabha** and in extending the complex.

The **Sabha** gave itself a working constitution in 1929. However, two amendments were brought about in the original constitution in 1960 and 1974.

The **Sabha** was registered under the name, **Kashmiri Pandit Sabha**, with the Registrar of Societies (**No.15, 1956**) India, Punjab.

Coming together of the eminent personalities of the town, like **Dr. Shiv Narain Razdan** a health officer of Amritsar, and more so, **Sh. Arjan Nath Mattoo** (an eminent scholar of Sanskrit and english) Principal, Hindu College, Amritsar, gave the **Sabha** a name and an honour. **Dr. Shiv Narain Razdan** got the shops at the main complex built while Principal **Arjan Nath**

**Mattoo** got yet one adjacent wing added to the complex. The shape and size of the complex was extended and so expanded the domain of the activities of the Sabha. The untiring single-minded mission of these committed people, who laid the edifice of the present complex, has continued to grow into a vibrant and dynamic Socio-cultural organisation.

We remember these far-sighted people reverentially and try to synchronise our **Annual Havan** with the **foundation day celebration**. A commemorative meeting in honor of these noble spirits is held on that day, to remind ourselves of their selfless service to the community and to apprise the younger generation of their stellar role.

The Sabha is at present the nodal center for Socio-Cultural interface of the community as a whole. For an active and fruitful interaction, we reach out to each and every member of community to participate in the affairs of the Sabha. For the intent, we have zealously continued to celebrate the community festivals in traditional style. **Pandit Shakar Guru** the founding member and pujari, had initiated this healthy practice of holding a **Havan**, to give the community a sense of belonging. And we hold the practice very dear to our heart.

**"Zangtraï"** is yet one more occasion to revive the cherished celebration of ages, when Sabha plays host, **"Maluin"**, to the Kashmiri women. Every one old and young, gather at the Sabha on the day where the long last **"Cher Chot"** and **"Khewa"**, **"Nadar Pakoda"**, **"Atha Gath"**, **"Zang"**, **"Noon"** and other things are reinvented and revived. We are sensitive to our ethnic taste and identity.

The Sabha has been carefully looking after the affairs of the organisation in consonance with the vision of its founding fathers. The main complex consists of :-

1. A **Shivala** with the adjacent **Hanuman Mandir** and **Mata Mandir**.
2. A **Sat sang** hall housing on one of its sides 'moortis' of **Ram Drbar, Laxmi Narain and Radha Krishan**.
3. Nine rooms on the ground floor comprising of :- (1) the meeting hall of the sabha (2) the office (3) two rooms for pujaris (4) five utility rooms (mainly used for yatries)

Besides, there are combined bath rooms and toilets, provided for the ground floor.

**1st Floor** : we have

- ❖ One big community hall which accommodates about 500 people (dining & meeting).

- ❖ Adjacent the main hall, we have one community Kitchen.
- ❖ Two rooms with bath rooms.
- ❖ Another set of six rooms with attached kitchens and baths

At the second **Shivala** at Katra Dai Singh, we have :

1. At the ground floor a temple with a **Shivala, Durga Mata** and **Radha Krishan**

2. A Sat Sang hall

a) Two rooms with bath and kitchen for Pujari  
The Sabha owns **37 shops** built around the complex which along with some rooms on the first floor of the main complex fetch us an amount of Rs. 25,000.00 per month as income and Rs. 20,000.00 as charat and donations.

We have regular staff consisting of one Caretaker/ Manager, One Clerk, Three Pujaris, a sweeper, one peon and sundry others for the smooth function of the trusts.

Our monthly expenses come to around Rs. 40,000.00. Our accounts are transparently maintained and regularly audited by a Chartered Accountant. Besides any member of the Sabha can do a random check of the accounts.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The founding members gave the Sabha a constitution, which enshrines the aims and objectives of the **Sabha** in its preamble.

1. Uphold and perpetuate the culture and tradition of the **Kashmiri Pandit** community.
2. Provide succour to the members of the community in distress.
3. Frequent interaction of the community members over the celebration of the typical festivals like **Shivratri, Navreh, Zang Trai, Janam Ashtami** etc..
4. Guard the interests of the Sabha : social, cultural as well as financial with zeal.
5. Hold regular annual general elections to the posts of the office bearers of the Sabha, which shall comprise of a Governing Council and General Sabha. The Governing Council is a body of eleven trustees with :-  
  1. President, 2. Vice President, 3. Secretary General, 4. General Secretary, 5. Cashier, 6. Caretaker/Store Keeper, 7. And five trustees.
8. The activities of the General Sabha are coordinated by the General Secretary of the Sabha, who works in tandem with the Trust

Secretary. Simultaneous with the annual election, the President in consultation with other office bearers forms different committees to look after the various activities of the Sabha, They are

1. Construction and repair work.
2. Help to the needy people.
3. Festival celebration.
4. Yatri welfare.
5. Tenants and legal matters.

Over the years, the Sabha has been doing its best, zealously, to live up to the dream of the founding fathers and work in every possible way to help our biradari members in need. At the present we have eleven trustees and thirty members of the **Sabha**. as migrants, which entitled them to Government help. We also helped them to find temporary means of earning. The **Sabha** has been a home to many aged, lonely and distressed men and women of the community. Even at present we have an old and a lonely lady, properly sheltered and cared for.

Our unit has been proactive in the causes that the community holds very dear and we spare no efforts in trying to mitigate the suffering of members of our community. Our Sabha allots a handsome sum of money in its annual budget to help :

- a) The Needy students in their studies.
- b) Reach out to the very poor families especially migrants and offer them token financial help
- c) arrange board and lodge of the community people who come to Amritsar for treatment of various ailments
- d) arrange medical help for deserving cases

With the each passing year and with each increase in the revenues of the **Sabha** we increase allotment for help in the budget proportionately.

We have so far distributed lakhs of rupees in this noble endeavour and hope to continue increasingly doing so. We are fortunate enough to have amongst us **Shri Durga Nath Koul**, a young octogenarian as life patron. His association with the Sabha has been for more than six decades. His unbounded love and single minded dedication to the cause of the community in general and the interests of the Sabha in particular are phenomenal. Under his overseeing stewardship, the Sabha has grown and developed remarkably well. He reaches out to his well to do friends and collects huge donations for the welfare of the community. Words fail to express the saga of this crusader of the community causes and achievements. We wish him a long long life to be with us.

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## ALL STATE KASHMIRI PANDIT CONFERENCE-SANATAN DHARM YUVAK SABHA

— By *J. N. Saproo, Jammu*

Kashmiri Pandits are the aborigines of Kashmir for over 6000 years. These Saraswats were reportedly highly skilled and knowledgeable and were greatly interested in religious pursuits as per their own culture, civilisation and spiritualism. Their spiritual bent of mind had reportedly provided them with miraculous powers. The Islamic influence spread in Kashmir around 13th century and this took deep roots because of many reasons, one of these being the violent, fundamentalist and non-tolerant actions of Islamic rulers from time to time. This resulted in severe repercussions, murders, conversions, exodus and insecurity of these aborigines. Over a period of time their insecurity made them cautious about their religious identity. So an organisation namely Sanatan Dharm Sabha was formed to safeguard their interests.

In the year 1925, Sir Hari Singh was crowned as Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir. These days Pt. Hargopal Koul, lawyer of repute, had taken over as president of S.D.S of Pandits. Sheikh Moh'd Abdulla had already floated Muslim Conference with Moulvi Moh'd Yousuf Shah in an attempt to mitigate the troubles faced by the Muslims and to look after their interests. The time demanded that dynamic steps be taken to ameliorate the lot of the people specially of Muslims. But the Sheikh realised that Muslims who were very backward could not flourish alone unless the doors of Muslim Conference were opened for Hindus as well. So he wanted to convert Muslim Conference into National conference. This too was not agreed upon by Moulvi and others. This made him to come out of Muslim Conference and float a separate body namely National conference, in the year 1931.

Soon an agitation was launched which unfortunately took a different direction, becoming unfavourable for Pandits, who immediately launched a movement and gave it the name 'BREAD MOVEMENT' alias "Roti Agitation". Pt. Kashyap Bandhu ji had already taken over the charge of the Sanatan Dharm Sabha as its president; as an effective writer he had nurtured Martand and as a capable organiser he roped in the youth.

The slogan "HUM KIYA CHAHE-ROTI, ROTI" became common. Bandhuji did understand that unless the mental reformation is brought among the community

members, things could not improve. And he introduced SOCIAL REFORM from the premises of Sheetal Nath the premises and office buildings, provided by Sathu people. This was thus given the name of Sharika Bhawan, Sheetal Nath. To make the social reform an effective movement, children of the age of six and above were organised localitywise, to rally in groups chanting the mantra "*pheran gaw kahre llayen bakh, dapaan dichnam kmeeza sharaak, ditim pyzaar yem samayan mubarak dhoti shilwaran*". Pheran got replaced by Dhoti, Kammez and Shilver. The author of this article, having been influenced by his elder brother, Shri R.K. Saproo, a senior teacher of mathematics, serving a noble cause of educating females through women welfare trust, got enrolled in Bal Vibag in 1931 when he was hardly 6-7 years of age. Bandhuji introduced Hari parbat as "Sharikawaer" and advised the pandits to visit Sharika Peeth Hari Parbat on each Sunday morning.

Time passed on, the pandit community attained Jagriti. This was their only organisation and Martand was the only paper coming out from Kashmir. The reputation and effectiveness of the Sabhas was felt far and wide; the political demand of the community turned into a political struggle. The Sabha was given the name of ALL STATE KASHMIRI PANDIT CONFERENCE SHRI SANATAN DHARM YUVAK SABHA (SDY), SHARIKA BHAWAN SHEETALNATH, SRINAGAR." The Sabha attained dynamic dimension and Sheikh Abdullah of National conference, took every opportunity to tempt Pandits to join his party (NC), though the fundamentalist group from among the majority community was hostile to them. However the Pandits were so united and strong that in each area they combated the attempts of aggression by such hostile elements.

The strength of the Sabha was resting on the unity of the community and every male and female was taken as a member of the S.D.Y. Sabha. The people, for obvious reasons, had established personal contact with this organisation and its leadership. The economic base was strengthened in as much as each family would monthly donate rupee one and "mochiful", some rice for the Sabha. The Martand press and the news paper Martand, also generated some revenue.

Some how personal temptations, changed the scenario. Besides, the future betterment of the Pandit community, warranted Bandhu ji to join National Conference and work with Sheikh. Accordingly he did so. At this stage the Sabha had a strong executive body comprising of Pt. Jialal Kilam, a very popular lawyer; Pt. Srikanth Chakku also a lawyer, P. N. Bakshi, D. N. Kotru, S. N. Daftari, V. L. Sumbly, M. N. Braru, P. N. Bakshi, Tarachand Dassi, Sukhdev Ganjoo, L. N. Dhar, N. N Dhar, Sheo Narayan Fotedar, Janki Nath Bhat, Janki Nath Bhan, both lawyers, and many others, After Bandhuhji's exit, others also preferred to go to national conference. So Pt. J. L. Kilam and P. N. Bazaz also followed the suit.

Now Pt. Sheo Narayan Fotedar was elected as President of the Sabha. He reorganised the youth and the Mahavir Dal, Somyar Dal, Alakshwari Dal, Rainawari Dal, Batyar Dal, Ganpatyar Dal etc. The youth coming from nook and corner of the valley joined different Dal's with different uniforms, and weapons like "Trishul, Gurza or Disk, Barchi" and so on. They watched the interests of the pandits within their localities. The author was heading the youth wing at that time.

In the year 1937 Durga Nag temple Shrine, which was controlled and effectively managed and governed by Shiv Rattan Giri Mahant, had turned into an asset. Rattan Giri fell ill. He formed a TRUST to control the Shrine after his death. When he passed away, the Govtt. came forward to transfer the shrine to Dharmarth Trust. Shri R. C. Kak was the Minister in waiting during Maharaja Hari Singh's time. He wanted to oblige Maharaja. But the Pandits, through S. D. Y Sabha, came forward and S. D. Y. Sabha launched an agitation from Sheetal Nath. The author was also involved as a Satyagrahi in Durga Nag along with Pt. Amarnath Kak, also Satyagrahi of Durga Nag movement. After a month's struggle, when the top leaders of the Pandit community were already under arrest, the case was taken to the court of law. The leaders were released and the Satyagraha ended. The court adjudging the situation, gave the decision in favour of the community and the Govt. lost the case.

By this time the National conference had attained a strong political status with the backing of Indian leaders like Pt. Nehru, Bapuji and others. By this time Shri R. C. Kak had taken over as the Prime Minister of the state. Maharaja had jailed the Sheikh and others, who had given a call for "Quit Kashmir". And in the year 1947 the country was divided and Pakistan had come into existence; Kashmir continued under Maharaja. Pakistan sent Quabalis to invade Kashmir. These invading elements reached nearby Shalteng and bullets pierced the premises of the people living

in Srinagar city. S. D. Y. Sabha stood firm and upheld the enthusiasm of the community.

Many Kashmiri Pandits, who were on duty in Baramulla, Muzaffarabad, Uri and others places where these Quabalis had invaded, lost their lives and some remained untraceable as shri Sarwanand Saheb etc. Pt. Kesho Nath Sodagar, serving in Excise Deptt. at Baramulla, somehow, remained in disguise. The author was at Mirpur/Kotli but some how escaped from there. The military potential of the Maharaja had finished with the death of Brigadier Rajinder Singh. It Seemed that the Quit Kashmir call of National Conference had achieved its results.

Maharaja planned to run away. He got Sheikh and his colleagues released from jail and asked him to forget everything of the past and form the Government and save Kashmir from Pakistan. He also called the president of S. D. Y. Sabha, Pt. Shiv Narayan Fotedar and advised him to save Pandits and equip them with guns for self defence. But here the S. D. Y. Sabha took a decision that they did not want guns, but they would live as they did till then, by virtue of their own ability. If they had taken up guns, their survival would have been hardly for an hour or so. This was a historical and a wise decision. Thus the Maharaja after appointing Sheikh as Emergency Care-taker of the Govt. left with its caravan for Jammu. As a first thing, that was essential, Sheikh approached, with the letter of Maharaja, the central Indian leaders, seeking help to withstand the aggression. So Kashmir was saved.

Then came the Economic Reforms like, "Land to Tillers"; Employment etc. This shattered the economic fibre of the Pandit community. The Pandit community had to face adverse economic, social and political aftermath with severe consequences and this storm could not be resisted. They faced the pinch of discrimination under Sheikh Sahib's leadership. Though National Conference was the ruling party of strength, the S. D. Y. Sabha with Pt. Fotedar as its president, stood firm that unless the NC. Govt. sorts out the problems of Pandits, it will not join National Conference. With the Bakhshi Saheb as a sympathiser, brought understanding between Fotedar and Sheikh. Fotedar was sent as member Parliament, retaining the leadership of the Sabha.

Sheikh Sahab fought for "HINDU MUSLIM SIKH ITIHAD" and organised people in each locality to guard the minorities. The S. D. Y. Sabha took a decision to cooperate with him at such a juncture and the slogans like. "Hamlaawar Khabardar, Hum Kashmiri Hain TAYYAR? Kadam Kadam Challengi Hum Mahaaz per ladeinge Hum, Hindu Muslim Sikh Itihad,

Zindabad, Zindabad" and so no. This was thus done jointly by Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus. But the value and unity of Pandit community had started declining and economic stringency and other related matters had started eating into the vitals of the Sabha. Yet Fotedar Sahab went on maintaining the Sabha. The Martand press got closed "Mochiful" was stopped, and the political affiliations brought division in rank and file of the community. The Sheikh inducted Fotedar as Chairman of the Legislative Council. Yet he remained the President of the Sabha. The author recollects when on Janam Ashtami Day, the function was presided over by Sheikh Saheb at Sheetal Nath, Fotedar replied to Sheikh that he served Hindus and Muslims equally and yet if any body would say that he is "phirkaparast", he is so. This was the occasion when a Historical Resolution was passed that the Pandits, through S.D.Y. Sabha, politically merge with National Conference retaining socio-economic affairs to itself. At this time the author of the article was the Secretary of the Sabha.

Dr. S. N. Peshin then was the Director health Services, being a member of National conference and Shyam Lal Saraf was the Health Minister. Peshin Sahab was sent to London for F. R. C. S. and on his return he was denied the post of Director Health services but was allowed to join as Supdt. of Hospital. This he declined and came out of the Govt. and also from the National Conference. He tried to find out a slot in the SDY Sabha. Somehow or the other he was inclined to be the President. So he could not stay in for long. On the other hand Pt. Gopi Kishen who was then serving in Education Deptt. as Supdt. in Direction office, was drawn toward these activities and he was able to take over Chota Bazar premises with the associated help of a teachers group. So Peshin Saheb joined hands with him to dislodge Fotedar and take over S.D.Y. Sabha, but they could not. Hence they formed parallel Sabha. Thus the rank and file of the Sabha got divided. The author of this article organised Sangathan Committee bringing all confrontatist on a common platform to remove any mutual difference. Unfortunately some events delayed the move and Moi-Muqadas episode came forth. This was a crucial time as the very existence of Pandits was threatened. Pt. Nehru, one evening, expressed that he was happy that at that crucial time also there was complete communal harmony in Kashmir.

The negotiations restarted, but soon Pt. Nehru passed away. S. D. Y. Sabha through its Secretary and organisor-the author of this article, mourned the death

of Nehruji befittingly. The entire job including immersion of ashes at Shadipur was entrusted to Sangathan Committee by the Govt.

Again the negotiations started and this time every body assured that they would fall in line with each other and would work for unity, united planning and action. But this did not happen, as soon after this, the matter was again in pell-mell.

Pt. Fotedar was repaid in bad coins by the Pandit community at the fag end of his life and then Pt. Harjee Lal a retired Revenue officer took over as president of the Sabha. He was a strong person but self interested people around him frustrated him all the time. Soon Tadoo-ground episode took place. This was a confrontaiton of army at Tadoo ground and the people living nearby. The Sheikh was interested to get the vast area of Tadoo Ground vacated by army. The S. D. Y. Sabha played its role. The author of this article on account of Shri Fotedar having been dislooged from the Sabha; had disassociated with the Sabha. But after its control went to Pt. Harjeelal Raina, the author was approached through M. L. Mian to rejoin the Sabha. So under compulsion, he did so as its General Secretary. Harjeelal soon decided to leave for America for a short period and handed over the Presidentship to the author of this article. The author in an attempt to rope in all disintegrated and divided elements together and reshape the Sabha, where in a meeting Dr. Peshin seemed to be very anxious to be the President, but he was frustrated. What happened afterwards is a sad story; the control of this Sabha, however, passed on to Shri A. N. Vaishnavi who is still the President.

The author of this article was kidnapped by millitants on 9th march 1990 after taking part in the deliberations of all party parliamentary Delegation in Srinagar and was traced out after two day's captivity. He is gradually gaining the lost memory of important events of his life vis-a-vis Sanatan Dharam Yuvak Sabha All State Kashmiri Pandit. Conference. Though it is not possible to recollect all the events in this article, suffices to record that the said Sabha is an old and representative organisation and its official organ Martand was the oldest paper in Kashmir. The Sabha had gained popularity far and wide in the country as a role model. But alas! all that vigour, vitality, gal and dynamism is gone and the leadership calibre and enthusiasm is missing now. Our community after migration in 1990 is in distress, no body to care for them. Yet we are proud of ourselves.

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*The author is a stalwart of S.D. Yuvak Sabha, Srinagar, having been its Secretary & President prior to migration. Mailing address : 222, M. L. A Hostel (o), Jammu.*

## **KASHMIR BHAWAN, DELHI**

— By **A. K. Kaul**, New Delhi

Imagine the situation. Young educated KPs fresh from their schools and colleges with bleak prospects of employment locally, descended on Delhi in search of means of livelihood. Delhi, being the seat of the Central Government, offered many avenues of employment in government offices. Just armed with their certificates and a few clothes these youngmen dared to venture into the unknown zone. Each one was on his own. Lucky few had relatives here to whom they repaired but the overwhelming majority had to fend for themselves. They lodged themselves in dormitories, rickety barsatis, dharmashalas and serais. After taking a bread slice and a cup of tea as breakfast they would make rounds of various offices, quite a few crossed each other and often exchanged notes on their experiences. This led to frequent interactions. Madras Hotel in Connaught Place became the centre point of this process. Individual job seekers would exchange notes and plan their itinerary for the next day. This proved quite effective. Since they were generally short on money and resources they started planning their movements to save effort and resources. An unwritten and unstated bond developed between them. Somehow, they remained in touch. An urgent need for blood donation for a colleague in 1953 led the samaritans to converge themselves into an organisation which was then named as "Kashmiri Sahyak Sabha" the precursor of the present day Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi.

Having woven themselves into a Sabha, the pioneers then started thinking of having their own socio-cultural centre. Such stalwarts as S/Shri M. N. Kaul, S. L. Shakdher, K. L. Malla, Samsar Chand Kaul, Shambo Nath Khachru, Dr. R. K. Bhan and many more worked in tandem to approach the government for allotting a suitable piece of land in New Delhi. The efforts bore fruit in 1966 when a piece of land in Amar Colony, Lajpat Nagar was allotted to the Sabha. Not content to rest on their laurels, the community leaders now planned to construct a building on the allotted piece of land. Appropriately they called it Kashmir Bhawan. Bhoomi Pujan was performed on February 11, 1967 by Shri Samsar Chand Kaul, the founder President of the Sabha/Samiti. The foundation stone was laid next day, February 12, 1967, by Dr. H. N. Kunzru, a great Kashmiri of national eminence. Kashmir Bhawan is a standing tribute to these pioneers who gave their blood and sweat to make it possible. Collecting funds, which was an arduous task, supervising the construction, arranging of manpower and material was all done with great honesty and sincerity. Some of the community members contributed in kind like cement, bricks, pipes and planks.

If Kashmir Bhawan, in the genre of Shital Nath, does not inspire you nothing will.

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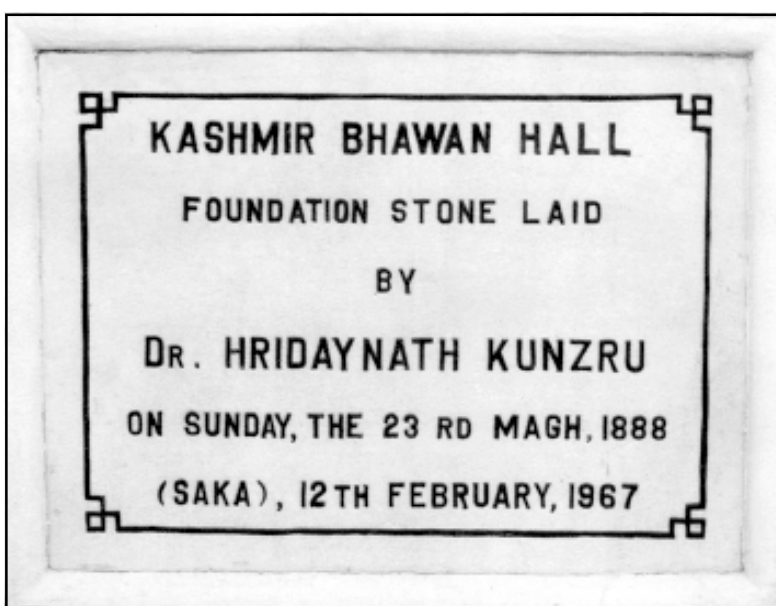
*This contribution also appeared in the "Koshur Samachar", February, 2006 pgs. 3 and 6-9*

## RED LETTER DAY FOR BIRADARI

*The foundation of Kashmir Bhawan was laid on February 11 and 12, 1967. On February 11, the auspicious Bhoomi Pujan was organised and on Feb 12, Dr. H. N. Kunzru laid the foundation stone. We are reproducing a write up on the subject as contained in February 1967 issue of Koshur Samachar. For this we are grateful to Shri Badri Narayan Bhatt who has meticulously maintained and indexed Koshur Samachar right from its earlier avatar, Samiti Samachar. He was on its first Editorial Board and later also served as its Editor. This 74 year old veteran's interest in the Samiti and Samachar is unabated. We bow to him in deep deference.*

**A. K. Kaul**  
Editor-In-Chief  
Koshur Samachar

It was a red letter day in the annals of the Samiti when, on Saturday, the 11th February 1967, at the auspicious muhurat, **Shri M. N. Kaul, M. P.**, one of the distinguished members of the Biradari and an honoured patron of the Samiti, performed the auspicious puja in connection with the foundation stone laying ceremony of



the Kashmir Bhawan at the Samiti's plot at Amar Colony, New Delhi. The puja was initiated by **Pandit Samsar Chand Kaul**, the founder President of the Samiti. The Bhawan, it will be recalled, is a project of our dreams, to complete which the Samiti has been straining every nerve ever since its coming into existence a decade and a half ago, in order to provide to the Biradari in the Capital a centre for socio-cultural activities. At the end of the solemn function 'naveed was distributed to all those present on the occasion.

In a brief talk with the Samiti's workers, **Shri Kaul** praised the selfless service rendered by them and exhorted them to continue this service with the same zeal and fervor so that the Bhawan would soon become a reality.

This unique occasion was celebrated at an impressive social function held on the following day – Sunday, the 12th February — at the Bhawan site itself when a

large concourse of the members of the Biradari – men, women and children – assembled there in a festive mood to watch the laying of the foundation stone of the Bhawan by **Dr. H. N. Kunzru**, distinguished member of the Biradari and an elder statesman of the country. Besides **Dr. Kunzru** who

presided at the function, others who graced the Sunday festivities included **Raja Upendra Kishan Kaul** and **Shri Maharaj Kishan Dhar**, ex-Governor of Kashmir.

Welcoming the guests and the members of the Biradari on the auspicious occasion, the President of the Samiti, **Shri K. L. Malla**, dilated upon the circumstances that brought the Samiti into being and explained its aims, objectives and programmes. He also gave to the gathering an idea of the progress which the Samiti had made towards the collection of the Building Construction Fund which stood now at Rs. 40,000 though the actual amount required for the construction of the Bhawan was estimated at Rs. 2 lakhs or so. Shri Malla made fervent appeal to the Biradari to donate liberally to the Fund so that the long-cherished dream of the community to have a socio-cultural centre of their own in the capital came to be true. He also referred to the publication of the monthly journal **Kashur Samachar** and the

commendable work it was doing towards dissemination of information in regard to the affairs of the Biradari.

**Shri Malla** paid glowing tributes to the unostentatious and selfless service rendered to the Samiti by **Shri Shambhu Nath Khachroo** who, he said, was the real inspiration behind all that the samiti has been doing and standing for. It was **Shri Khachroo's** sincere and vigilant eye that was responsible for the progress for the Samiti in all directions, since its inception, he added.

After laying the foundation-stone of the Bhawan, **Dr. H. N. Kunzru** expressed the fervent hope that through the Bhawan the Samiti will amply fulfil its main objective which should be to inculcate and foster the spirit of friendship, sympathy and understanding among the members of the Biradari. He observed that since the cost of education was rapidly going up in the country, it should be one of the aims of the Samiti to render help to the needy though intelligent students of the community. Students needed help not only from the Government which was doing what ever it could in the matter, but also from the society. If the Samiti could, therefore, address itself to this problem, observed **Dr. Kunzru**, it would fulfil one of its laudable objectives. He had no doubt that the Bhawan would certainly come up in brick and mortar in course of time if the sincerity of purpose continued. He lauded the Samiti's efforts in rendering much-needed help to one another in the Biradari and said that if the community remained conscious of that purpose, one of the aims for which the Bhawan is needed, would be amply fulfilled.

**Dr. Kunzru** made a few heartening references to the changed climate in Kashmir itself and said that the spirit of unity and mutual help was permeating the entire society there. People had displayed not only the necessary alertness and vigilance but also steadfastness and remarkable unity in the face of very difficult situations and grave dangers. He expressed the hope that a similar harmony and spirit of cooperation would be displayed by the Biradari here as well so that the functioning of the Samiti would act as an example for similar other like-minded institutions.

**Dr. Kunzru** agreed with the views of the President and advised that the construction of the Bhawan should be started without delay because otherwise the building costs might go up with the passage of time. He was confident that the money would start coming in once the construction was actually started.

In his brief speech, **Dr. R. K. Bhan** observed that the occasion was one of rejoicing for the entire Biradari who deserved congratulations not only for the successful efforts of the Samiti towards the construction of the Bhawan but also for the achievements in other socio-cultural aspects. He also said that we should not rest content with the laying of the foundation stone but should see that the Bhawan comes up in brick and mortar too in the shortest possible time.

**Pandit Samasar Chand Kaul**, the founder-President of the Samiti, recalled the difficult days when the Samiti was in the formative stages and the hard labour which the members had to put in to collect money for the Building Fund. He expressed his sense of deep satisfaction over the fact that the idea that had been conceived in the earliest stages was beginning to take shape. He prayed for the day to come soon when the Biradari would be able to celebrate social events like these in the Bhawan itself.

**Shri Prem Nath Dar**, a former President of the Samiti, in his speech emphasized the need for maintaining and enriching our valuable cultural heritage, especially our mothertongue. He expressed that any tendency of neglecting our mothertongue in our homes would be unfortunate. He suggested that the Samiti should organise more and more cultural activities like dramas, mushairas etc. in Kashmiri in order to inculcate an interest in the mothertongue,

A variety entertainment programme of dance and music was also presented on the occasion. The highlight of this programme was "Chhakri" presented by Samiti's own workers. The song for the "Chhakri" had been specially composed for the occasion by **Shri T. N. Dar 'Kundan'** and was widely appreciated.

Light refreshments were served to the gathering before the function came to a close. ■

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## KASHMIR SABHA, CALCUTTA

— By *Dr. B. K. Moza, Kolkata*

It looks, as if yesterday, but the sands of time have, as if a mirage, the foot prints of Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta, ingrained for last fifty years. Seeing the contemporary scenario it is a matter of pride to recapitulate, replay and review the milestones which reveal the glorious march ahead, its existence and futuristic course of this Sabha. Though representing a small number of community members all along, the records reveal that its founding fathers had laid a firm structure of systems for this organization so that it withstood the onslaughts of time.

Kashmiri Pandits have a heritage of documenting chronologies and histories; Kalhan, Jonaraja, Srivara, Prajya Bhatta and so on and so forth showed to the world how to record histories and how important it is to do so, as they did in recording the history of Kings of Kashmir, "Rajatarangini" with inputs, from the prevailing history of Bharata, as it obtained then. Exactly in these foot steps, the history of Kashmir Sabha is recorded from time to time which provides a chronology of events; successes and failures. I look forward to Kashmir Sabha bringing out the published records of its history, as contributed by many, separately, over this period. Without any prejudice and only for my present purpose, it suffices to refer to few documents only which simplify my task in revealing what Kashmir Sabha is; rather than further documenting this chronology which has already been done. In this context, (late) Mr. S. S. Raina recorded, "Kashmir Sabha : Its Aims and Achievement—and Failures", in 1960. Dr. B. K. Moza, visualized "A Perspective of Kashmiri Pandits" in the same year and both appeared in the first Annual Number of Kashmir Sabha in 1960, respectively on page Nos. 21 and 29, revealing the systems that were laid at that time, based on the contemporary pressures of the community, as then obtained, to chalk out the road map that was necessary for its future growth. This covered first four years of Sabha. Mr. Mohan Krishen Ogra in 1981 (Vitasta Annual Number 1981 page 129) recorded further developments and covered thereby first twenty five years of our Sabha. Mr. Ashok Dhar, in his contribution (Vitasta Annual Number 2001-2002), summed up bench mark developments and these documents of earlier period and also expanded the horizon further, covering the first forty-five years of Kashmir Sabha. This paper is reproduced herewith in this Number, since it also provides, for ready reference, a consolidated version of the previously

documented papers ; Shri Udai Kaul has highlighted the achievements of the Sabha in this Annual Number (2005-2006, Volume No XXXVII) and that provides a literary view of its fifty years chronology.

Historical documentation has many purposes and one of these is to derive determining strengths, based on the experiences and events that have offered a distinguishable stature to our Kashmir Sabha. To do so, I would prefer resorting to reverse engineering in this paper rather than to repeating the fifty years old chronology. As happens with old Organisations, there are lean periods which have not been properly recorded. So here I am reviewing the eventful developments, as these are shaping now, with a view to those which carry us back to its fifty years old origin. This should bring out the determining features of its glorious existence in its Golden Jubilee year. And if these have meaningful purpose, the other Sabhas may take a hint from these.

**Delegation to Youth :** In the formation of Kashmir Sabha in 1956, essentially a group of young members, in twenties, was in the fore-front. Some of these members later on migrated to other places and/or passed away and the remaining ones, having by now added fifty years to their age, are still continuing to be at the helm of affairs in Kolkata. However, the present accent has been in delegating our second generation youth, in our Kolkata Diaspore, to bear the yoke and be prepared for the inevitable. Our Sabha has been traditionally a community joint family and as such the younger people would prefer to be at the back seat for a very reasonable reason that they are too busy with their official work and have got used to their elders, in looking after the affairs of joint family. Yet, they have grown in the tradition of being obedient to their elders, even if at the cost of some irritation, natural to age gap and are available to bear the yoke. I extend them my affectionate tribute for the sincere efforts they make as our bulwark Many of them have grown with the Sabha, having started as the toddlers in our then observed Children functions, further got inducted, at an appropriate age as Executive Committee members and later on exposed to executive positions of Secretary, Treasurer and Vice President and then to the leadership position of the President. It is creditable that they are performing to the best of their possibilities and carrying the priorities of the Sabha

forward. What is distinguishing is their observing the Constitutional dream of Sabha, that, "organization is supreme and not the personalities." So our present leader rests on the steering, to carry the team and keep it in confidence with great respect, intimacy and feelings of involvement. What is visible is a team of youngsters with high spirits. They are carrying the day to day responsibilities conventionally, though now the emphasis is shifting from meetings, to laptop conferences. Even though they have not been brought up in Kashmir, they are observing our traditional monthly festivities and such practices in our Kashmir Bhawan. The convention of two years term is generally followed though, originally, to discourage the personality cult, the Executive was changed every year and the elections held, by secret ballot. Presently two years is its term, exceptions being certain emergencies and exigencies when the term of the Executive Body has been extended beyond two years, and the Executive is evolved unanimously. Though generally all along, yet, in recent times particularly, it is at great persuasion that a new candidate accepts the responsibility of the President or an office bearer of the Sabha. Our Mr. Piyaray Lal Sapru, with all his outstanding & consistent contributions to Sabha, has been exceptional in this respect, in not being the President of Sabha upto now. And, he is in the helm of Kashmir Sabha matters, all along, with dedication.

One can foresee some vacuum arising in future as our third generation youth are generally migrating to other places for studies or better opportunities or to abroad for the same reasons. But this futuristic apprehension has to be left to future and one can hope our youngsters will take care of their heritage in all circumstances and at all times. Yes, the Sabha has to give a serious thought to this emerging problem and ensure its continuity, in times, to come, keeping in view the objectives that our founding fathers have considered worth preserving. There is a need to make our Kashmir Bhawan as the focal point, as it has remained up till now and preserve its exclusive identity as the temple of our heritage and abode of our joint community family. For this to be achieved, time has to be found out to make it a hub for preserving our community priorities, be it Kashmiri language classes, Seminars, Interactive workshops, literary pursuits and researches using its rare library, sports, functions, besides other avenues it is opening for its survival. Perhaps it will not be out of place to mention that our children have been exposed to playing, "Kodian—Haaru" on Shivratri/Salaam occasions in our Bhawan and such practices have to be continued. It is again creditable that even though

very far off from Kashmir our youngsters still do talk in Kashmiri, whenever desirable. This agenda has to be carried further with conviction and given due importance to preserve our heritage. At this point I wish to sound a note of caution that preserving our identity and that of our Kashmir Bhawan, as already conceived earlier, has to be priority objective. Though very tempting, commercial ventures should be sifted thoughtfully, so that these do not dilute, in essential respects, the bench marks and fundamentals of identity preservation our Kashmir Bhawan is holding.

**Observance of Priorities :** Our Sabha continues to be the local guardian for the community; be it observing our monthly festivals or rituals, reacting to our concerns about our roots in Kashmir, helping the deserving members of Biradari in distress, being available to each other, with feelings of involvement on occasions of sorrow, or sickness and so on and so forth. These local issues continue to be priority and that is a very time consuming affair. Preserving Kashmiri culture, the cuisine and other relevant measures have been by now established as good practices to carry on. It is hoped that these practices will be carried forward.

Though, Sabha is still keeping up its tradition as a Socio-cultural organization, since 1990 it has as well as risen up to the political demands as and when required. This is in consonance with the trends that our Apex Body, A.I.K.S., is following. This extends the scope of responsibilities towards the objective of attending to our roots in Kashmir. Funds have been provided to the displaced in the camps, for meeting the educational expenses of the needy in places away from Kolkata, encouraging deserving individuals financially for, educational, intellectual, philanthropic and/or charitable purposes. Presently Kashmir Sabha is meeting the educational expenses of many needy students at Jammu as referred by the local organizations.

The Sabha has contributed to the concept that as a local unit it has to support the Apex Body, AIKS, for co-ordinating the minimum agenda of the community at large and implement the essentials of Sabha, Samaj and Samellan, "Mantra", for preserving community identity. Every year it is extending financial contribution to AIKS, to meet its expenses irrespective of whether other affiliates are following this requirement. In this context, it is also creditable that Sabha is hosting the Samellan of AIKS, this year, to mark its Golden Jubilee celebration. Here again the accent has been in prioritizing on a major community involvement at global level and share its feelings of achievement and satisfaction on a larger community base and in brainstorming our minimum agenda,

rather than having a hoopla to celebrate its fifty years of existence as a fun fair. And the fact is that there is no infrastructure or required wherewithal to hold such Samellans; yet it is offering its might to this community cause, to bring about solidarity, as a means, to achieving preservation of our identity, as the noble end.

**Self Reliance :** Self reliance has been the hall mark of the Sabha from the beginning and this has been held up all along. Individual, "Mochifol," has been the source of income for a long time. The practice observed earlier was to extend this small token to a larger base which perhaps is even now meaningful. Even for constructing Kashmir Bhawan, the aim was to achieve the goal with our own efforts in one go, thanks to the leadership provided by its, the then, President, Shri Autar Krishen Dhar. Our Kashmir Bhawan comprises of three storeyed, building having a fully tiled ground floor hall about 1600 sq. feet in area, a first floor with another small hall about 800 square feet in area, three rooms, kitchen and a toilet block, a second floor with seven rooms and toilet block and a roof beautifully walled with dome shaped illumination points, crazy mosaic floor and over head tanks. The ground floor hall is generally used for our festive get-togethers and functions and as an auditorium. On the second floor is our "Baithakhana", where we have our monthly executive meetings and adjacent to this is our small, yet, prestigious library of resource-books, chronologies and epics; books on Kashmiri language, history, culture and politics etc., and is duly provided with copies of the major community journals that are brought out in our Kashmiri Pandit, diaspora. Besides the main building there is an attached macro kitchen provision for bigger functions and ceremonies. Kashmir Bhawan was built in 1992-93, in one go as an emergency to give shape to our decades old desires, to provide shelter to the displaced victims of Kashmiri Pandit exodus, reaching Calcutta for employment, education and medical treatment or such exigencies. This purpose it did serve at that time but inflow to Calcutta has been marginal as a trend. However, it continues as our identity, call it Kheer Bhawani or Parbat—the Reshwaer"; "Maatamaal" or "Malyun" and "Thaka-paend" or "Yatri—Nivas", for guests visiting us from beyond Kolkata etc. But to us, in general, and during our relaxed get-togethers, it is a phenomenon of emotions to be seen and felt, to be believed. Even for helping the few, major cases of distress, Sabha has depended on individual contributions to tide over the expenses. Vitasta has been the essential source of income in earlier times. The seed money for constructing the Bhawan was from the income

generated by the Vitasta. In fact till then Vitasta was being brought out yearly, whenever possible, each volume bearing the calender year, suffix. It was at this time that we had to bring out three volumes, one after another, within two years which required introducing the financial year suffix; the practice continues since then. Presently, Kashmir Bhawan donations received for celebrating the marriages and such festivities continues to be a great help. The sponsorship of festivities and family get-togethers, boosted in 1997, continues even now, adding to the revenues of the Sabha. Our cultural functions involving the children, young and not so young, male and female members, have become an established agenda for the pertinent get-togethers throughout the year. Our veteran, Shri B. M. Misri in the forefront, a team of our talented members is contributing with interest and enthusiasm, to the success of our such programmes.

**Keeping away narrow attitudes :** As practiced by the founding fathers, there have never been any uncalled for feelings of 'Old' Kashmiris and 'New Kashmiris' or regional and caste barriers in running the affairs of the Sabha. In fact, two non-Kashmiri speaking Kashmiri ladies, Mrs. S. K. Handoo and Mrs. Subhadra Haksar, organized the Navroz function in March 1955, when the seed was sown for the need of a Sabha. Many meetings were held thereafter to crystallize the formation of the Sabha and its Constitution during the year. This was followed by a get together, held at the residence of Shri Jagan Nathji Munshi, in early 1956 and a Sub-Committee formed to give it a practical shape. On the 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1956, the red letter day for the community in Calcutta, the Sabha was formed; the inauguration, having been held in the Federation Hall with feelings of joy, commitment, pride and challenge, difficult to describe. However, this spirit is still continuing and there are no such barriers of language and caste. In running the affairs of the Sabha many Kashmiris, of our earlier diaspora, not habituated to speak in Kashmiri, attended Kashmiri language classes for almost three years voluntarily, to be at ease with this language. The first workshop on learning Kashmiri language, under the auspices of UGC, organized by Dr. Roop Krishen Bhat was held in our Kashmir Bhawan in 2001. It was reportedly a great success. One of our potential organizers of the forthcoming Samellan, is Mrs. Sushmita Jyotshi, a Bengali by birth and Kashmiri by marriage. She along with our young stalwarts M/s Vinodh Dhar, Vikesh Trisal, Rakesh Kaul, Ratan Moza and others, is making all efforts to ensure comfortable stay of the delegates to our AIKS

"Samellan" and its fulfilling proceedings. Another of our daughter-in-laws, of Bengali parentage admits, to note humorously, that in her next Janam also she must have a Kashmiri Panditani as the mother-in-law to have Rogan Josh and Kabargah, prepared by her. Whilst mentioning this, I would not say that all is ideal in our fast changing attitudes in Kolkata. But that is something relevant to the changes which our society, in general, is facing. The point that is being emphasized is that Kashmir Sabha today is still following the good practices laid by its founding fathers and this has to continue.

**Role of women :** Women have played a very important role in the functioning of our Sabha. Mrs. Subhadra Haksar has been the President of the Sabha for years and that also twice. Mrs. Niva Kaul has been the editor of the Vitasta, Devnagri section, for decades. So have been our young ladies at the fore front, in organizing our cultural functions, training for our Kashmiri cuisine, Children functions, in writing editorial columns of our Vitasta and so and so forth. The number is so large that I would not risk enumerating the same in haste and missing to mention by name any one. Whilst, extending my regards and love to them, what I wish to highlight is that this has been our achievement, and a successful motivation, to have their involvement and this has to be continued. The generation gap is being respected as natural reality and not any reason for allergic sensitivity; rather it has to be turned into an opportunity and advantage, so that this becomes our heritage for future generations in Kolkata. After all our sons, in yester years, have become the fathers in today's realities and the response they are getting from our grand children, should reveal the pinch of this natural phenomena, which the Society in general, has been facings all along.

**Good Management :** Managing the affairs of Kashmir Sabha, on good practices has been the concern from the beginning and it continues to be the great concern now also. There is no doubt that now the frontiers of management are fast advancing on corporate levels, to suit the requirements of time; vast problems and projects, competition, bottom line concepts, diversifications, macro-interests and globalization are pertinent perceptions. Our community having got uprooted from its, homeland, Kashmir, requires managerial skills and revolutionary perceptions for exploring solutions to our rehabilitation and return. Therefore, creative managers and innovative intellectuals have to be at the fore front in solving our community problems, with resources of thought and action. Kashmir Sabha

has, accordingly, to rise to the occasion and evolve necessary capabilities and strategies to be purposeful. Involvement, efficiency and accountability have been our heritage in running the affairs of Kashmir Sabha and this, very gratifyingly, is being continued and the message to convey is that it has to continue as our bench mark in years to come. Besides, creative projects have to be developed and managed to keep pace with changing times and its present pressures. Our Kashmir Bhawan modernization with computer facilities has taken a beating though significant amount of money was collected, as personal contribution, from abroad with this objective in mind.

**Literary Pursuits :** Our Kashmir Sabha has been eager right from its beginning to preserve our literary heritage and excel in the same. In the early years of its existence, funds were scarce, yet, in 1957 a booklet was brought out on "Rituals and Festival of Kashmir Pandits". The distinguishing point to note is that all efforts were made to look for the relevant knowledge, concerning these festivals. Therefore each festival/ritual description had an explanatory note about their origin, basis or significance. This was followed by bringing out a monthly News Letter in August 1959, circulated amongst Biradari members, free of cost, to update them about Biradari news and views and about matters concerning our Sabha. To finance this venture in future, it was considered necessary to bring out a Souvenir having commercial advertisements to provide for the Kashmir Sabha expenses. This led to the birth of the first Annual Number of the News and Views in 1960 with (late) Shri S. S. Raina and Mr. M. K. Ogra as the editors. In 1961 the Annual Number, edited by Shri C. N. Kashkari, now based on Ohio, USA, was brought out with the name, "Vitasta", and the official organ of the Sabha continues to be published under this name. From 1978 onwards the Vitasta Annuals are as a practice thematic, focused and research based. Though at times with hiccups and presently the monthly not being brought out, the Vitasta is flowing over the decades majestically. Its annual numbers have become our identity and a matter of our recognised achievement and pride. We have also created a great human resource in running this prestigious publication in all respects. But this resource is hesitant to come forward. I wished to ascertain that I was not the hurdle and so retired from this responsibility five years back. But that has not changed the scenario, rather it has become the worse; in between only one Number appeared, edited creditably by Mrs. Reena Dhar. I had to retrace presently to enable publication of the present Special

Number for Golden Jubilee. Circumstances have also been responsible for this adversity, as one after another two potential Secretaries of the Sabha, got transferred to other places in last one and half years and two of our dedicated editors, Mrs. Niva Kaul and Mrs. Prabha Tankha have been bed ridden seriously for almost one year. This pain is there and continues to be felt perceptibly, in the Sabha's activities and in the hearts of Biradari at Kolkata. I extend my prayers for the early recovery of our colleagues. I am also hopeful that my message will find response in motivating the pool of resources, we have, to ensure the health of the Vitasta, the river of knowledge, so that it is enabled to flow majestically in future and all times to come. I am becoming emotional at reviewing this sad reality. So, I conclude, this submission, that our Sabha has been something different, possessing great values, is reasonably free from petty squabbles, sensitivities and bizarre individualistic sentiments; that are eating our community vitals. Our outlook has been broad and concern about our larger issues have been our hall mark. It is gratifying to observe that this is being maintained and carried forward with conviction. I wish our younger stalwarts, Good luck and God speed in not only carrying this heritage

forward by themselves but also ensuring that our still younger generations carry it forward equally intensely. Their commitments are different, their attachments with Kashmir are historical and so is the reality in preserving our other tenets of heritage in the fast changing times. So, as great managers and scientists they have to find the ways and means so that this commitment is carried forward in space and time and on the sands of time, with foot-prints continuing to be ingrained with deeper impressions. Why? What? When? How? I leave to our younger stalwarts to ponder about.

In this article some few names of our stalwarts have been mentioned, in conveying a point under reference; the other articles which are supplementing this, have detailed list. Yet, any description about our Sabha is incomplete with paying respects, regards and love to all the Karam Yogis, whose self less efforts have created our Sabha and reached it to what it is today. A detailed list of these dedicated stalwarts will have to be compiled who served as the pivots of our Sabha and the key persons of a particular activity at a particular time. This will require separate efforts; the list of the Presidents is already documented and it is reproduced below :

Dr. G. L. Vaishnavi (1956);  
 Mr. J. N. Kaul (1957)  
 Mr. B. P. Wanchoo (1958);  
 Mr. C. L. Watal (1959)  
 Mr. J. N. Kaul (1960);  
 Mr. P. N. Haksar (1961-62)  
 Mr. M. L. Zutshi (1963-64);  
 Mrs. Subhadra Haksar (1965-66)  
 Mr. M. L. Zutshi (1967-68);  
 Mr. M. K. Ogra (1968-69)  
 Mr. M. L. Zutshi (1969-70);  
 Mrs. Subhadra Haksar (1970-78)

Col. P. N. Kak (1978-81);  
 Mr. P. L. Dhar (1981-83)  
 Mr. B. L. Razdan (1983-1985)  
 Mr. P. L. Dhar (1985-1987)  
 Mr. B. L. Razdan (1987-88);  
 Mr. P. K. Bhan (1988-90)  
 Mr. A. K. Dhar (1990-97);  
 Dr. B. K. Moza (1997-1999)  
 Mr. Udai Kaul (1999-2001);  
 Mr. B. M. Misri (2001-03)  
 Mr. L. N. Kaul (2003-2005);  
 Mr. V. R. Moza (2005-2007)

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*The author is a founding member of the Sabha and the Editor-in-Chief of 'its' official organ, the Vitasta.  
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## A MEMORABLE LETTER FOR CALCUTTA BIRADARI

(WRITTEN BY LATE RESPECTED KASHYAP BANDHUJI WHILST ON DEATH-BED)

— Gairoo, Noorpore, Dec. 18, 1985

My dear Dr. Moza,

God bless you. I received your both letters one in the ending days of November and the other in the 1st week of December. I am on bed for 10 days and have asked my cousin to help me to take the composition of this letter. I regret I cannot accomplish the article you need within the time that you have prescribed. The reasons are as under :

On receiving your first letter I thought that in the 1st week of Dec. I shall complete my contribution and you will get it in the last week of Dec. But God willed otherwise; on 27th Nov. some friends from Srinagar visited me at my village. They requested me to go down to Srinagar on 1st of Dec. for a few hours and return by the evening. The task was pressing and I could not say "No". As on 1st Dec. they had called to Srinagar all their delegates from villages and towns and it was their request that I should address these delegates. I agreed and on 1st Dec. those friends came to my village and carried me to Srinagar. The place where they had arranged the *Samelan* is a newly—built building by Dharmarth and is known as "Ranbeer Bhavan". Its Hall is very grand and commodious, equipped with all necessary arrangements but unfortunately no heating arrangements are available there nor even *Engitheer* or *Kangree*. I had to sit in this hall, speak to a large gathering for about two hours and these good people never thought that a man 87 years of age, needs something to warm himself. God bless them. They are all in their young age and possibly forgot that an old man in this Dec. needs something to keep himself warm besides his warm aprons. In the evening at 6' O'clock I returned to my house by a car and found myself shivering and indisposed.

In Oct. '85 some friends came to me with their assignment to be helped in their works. The assignment was "All those Kashmiri Pandits young and old who took leading part in those forgotten bitter communal days when Kashmir was invaded by outsiders, under the instructions of British government to be annihilated and wanted to do away with Hindu rule of Kashmir." These were black days when every Kashmiri Pandit was supposed to be younger brother of Maharaja Hari Singh and any slap, any stick or any stone was a stick or a stone directed to Maharaja; when administration was completely broken and communalism was rampant and ringing through the streets of Kashmir, all day and night. It

was something God's grace and the determination of those young men who, as if with their heads in their palms, were in the streets to help themselves and their community. Possibly there might be 5% of those young brave sons of Kashmir living now in their old age like me and the rest have vanished possibly to convey to their forefathers in heaven the story of 1931.

These friends contacted me on 1st Dec. It was rather shabby and insolent to tell these friends that I was not fit, because this date was fixed two months earlier. I got up and remained with those friends for 6 hours, completed  $\frac{3}{4}$  th of the job, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  th is yet to be completed. I requested them to come to this place again on 10th Dec. but I was flat on my bed with fever, cough and cold. I am still in that condition Today my doctor, an efficient man, told me that I should go down to Srinagar for complete check up, possibly my heart is involved. My friend, when I write you these lines I feel ashamed but you can understand my plight.

**There are some young men, thousands of miles away from their native land, living in Calcutta who want to know the paper MARTAND that jumped into that communal, simmering fire cauldron that Kashmir was in and how this great paper became one of the strong instruments to extinguish this fire. It is a shame for me that when these young men approach me with the request that I should throw some light on that episode, I say that I am ill or that I was ill and could not write anything about it. My friend, God knows how I feel really sorry that I am completely unable to send my contribution by the time you need it. My old age is a barrier for it and I am suffering so seriously that my doctor advised me to move to hospital for check up. My dear Doctor I have not the privilege of knowing you personally but as a spokesman of those friends of Calcutta kindly communicate my difficulty.**

I solemnly promise that as soon as I am well. I will send my contribution whenever you will command, provided I am still in this world.

With my blessings and prayers for the long lives of you all.

My greetings to you all.

I am lovingly yours,  
Sd. (Kashyap Bandhu)

Reproduced from the *Vitasta Annual "Martand Number"*, Vol. XXI, 1985, pg.iii. Band... passed away in the night on 18th December, 1985

## KASHMIR SABHA, CALCUTTA – IN RETROSPECT & PROSPECT

— By *Ashok Dhar, Calcutta*

It is now an acknowledged fact that the Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta has become a Socio-cultural Institution in its own right. What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow, perhaps aptly fits this Sabha as well. It has been amongst the first to bring out a Baradari Newsletter for almost forty five years; perhaps the first to construct a Kashmir Bhavan of its own; the first to start Kashmiri language classes; the first to start a community Hearth Watuk Pooja and develop a well stocked Library devoted to Kashmiri history, literature and culture; amongst the first to bring out annual issues of VITASTA (since 1960), a magazine so rich in literary content; conduct unanimous elections of office bearers for about five decades etc. the list of achievements can go on and on . . . The role played by the Sabha to help maintain Kashmiri heritage and provide a meeting ground for the Baradari to share joys and sorrows is indeed commendable by any standard of bench marking with comparable socio-cultural organisations.

My study and work assignments have taken me and my family to many locations – from Srinagar to Nainital, Kanpur, Delhi, Lucknow, Chandigarh, Jammu, Calcutta, Jeddah, Dubai and now back to Calcutta. Where next, I guess only God knows. Courtesy these re-locations in India and abroad, we have had interactions with many Kashmiris wherever we were stationed and often heard a word of praise for the Sabha in Calcutta and its activities. No wonder, VITASTA keeps receiving nostalgic letters from the Baradari members who leave Calcutta after a brief stay. One wonders, what has made this Sabha so different? Who have made it possible? Where is it heading now? I attempted to get some answers largely from the previous issues of VITASTA, which I guess in the era of knowledge and information sharing, can provide a road map for other Sabhas, if they so desire. I also hope that the next generation of Kashmiris in Eastern India (which this Sabha represents) will keep our community united preserving its unique secular identity, especially in the changed scenario of our forced migration from the valley for past ten years.

### How Sabha Was Born

Calcutta has been a home to a limited numbers of Kashmiri Pandits for a long long time. Around partition of India, in little groups they often thought of forming a social and cultural association, which they could call their own. During Dr. Katjus's Governership of West Bengal, many of the Kashmiri Pandits had occasion to meet one another at his place, the Governor's House, on Navroz (Navreh) once every year, in which his daughter Smt. Subhadra Haksar used to play a leading role. Immediately after the Tribal raids in 1947-48, there was a gradual increase in numbers of Kashmiri Pandits from the valley and these youngmen felt uprooted from their well knit family bonds, lost in the multitudes of life in an alien land which was hubbling and bubbling with industrial activity handling half of India's total exports.

It was largely this group of uprooted youngmen who felt badly the need of a common meeting ground where they could revive something of their social cohesiveness, which gives meaning to life. Perhaps, after an initial period of uneasiness they would have also resigned to the inevitable, but for a significant development which proved to be a turning point. In March 1955, on the Navreh day, a gracious lady (Smt. S. K. Handoo, wife of Shri Handoo of Imperial Bank) took it upon herself to issue individual invitations for a New Year's get-together to all members of Baradari whose addresses she and some enthusiastic persons could gather. Most people saw one another for the first time. Everybody felt an urgent need for some form of an organisation.

To make it possible, a meeting was held at residence of Shri J. N. Munshi and a seven-member sub-committee was formed in February 1956 to give a practical shape to the idea. Thus Kashmir Sabha was formally inaugurated on February 19, 1956 at the Federation Hall when about fifty persons gathered together and after adopting the Constitution of the Sabha elected the first executive committee under the Presidentship of Dr. Govindjoo Vaishnavi with Shri S. S. Raina as the Secretary who was the pivot of the

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[Reproduced for *Vitasta Annual XXXV, 2000-02, Pg-149*]

Sabha at that time. Since then, the Sabha has strived unitedly to fulfill its aims and objectives, simple and noble, which can stand out as a model for all Sabhas. These are :

### **Aims & Objectives**

- A) To foster and encourage social and cultural contacts and welfare activities among its members in particular and the Kashmiri Pandit Community in general.
- B) To meet at and observe together the social, cultural and other festivals in which Kashmiri Pandit Community is interested.
- C) To provide aid and relief, to the extent possible, to the authenticated and deserving cases of distress in the community.
- D) To discuss problems of common interest and take steps to represent, wherever necessary, the interests of its members in particular and the Kashmiri Pandit community in general
- E) To purchase, acquire and / or otherwise obtain property both movable and immovable, and receive donations etc, for furthering the aims and objects of the Sabha.
- F) Provided that the activities referred to in Sub-clause a,b,c & d above shall be construed to exclude subjects, activities etc. of political nature.

### **A United Sabha**

Thanks to the far sightedness of the founding members of the Sabha, the Constitution has detailed the procedure for membership, sources and administration of funds, election of office bearers etc. to make sure that the Sabha served faithfully the interests of the Baradari without giving to anybody a chance to make it a personal show or to use it for ulterior or personal purposes. Hence, organisation has always remained supreme and personalities have remained in the background as far as possible. The Executive Committee elected each year by the general body of members has always been elected unanimously. To make sure that no person occupies a particular position for a number of years – a bone of contention in many places – the constitution provides that no executive post can be held by the same person for more than two years. The elected Executive Committee meets once a month to discuss issues of common interest to the community. Disagreements are not uncommon but never have these led to creation of dissenting groups, thanks to the commitment of the Baradari in Calcutta to the moral – “United we stand, Divided we Fall”.

### **Blend of “New & Old”**

“New” and “Old” are relative terms. It was common practice from the 50’s to the late 80’s of last century to refer to the Kashmiri speaking Pandit migrants from Kashmir after partition as the “New” Kashmiris by their brethren whose forefathers had migrated from the valley since the sixteenth century either to escape the fanaticism of foreign Muslim rulers or to seek greater heights in India. The “Old” Kashmiri Pandit families of Kauls, Nehrus, Saprus, Katjus, Bhans, Dhar, Haksars, Wanchoos are well remembered for their contribution in nation building. This group of “Old” Kashmiris by sheer dint of hard work and intelligence had achieved great heights. At the same time they had successfully maintained a good social network and retained most of the Kashmiri rituals with appropriate adjustments as dictated by the constraints in their new places of stay. This blend of “Old” and “New” still exists and it is a pleasure to see Atals, Haksars, Tikus, Tankhas and others sharing their moments of joy and community rituals with post-partition migrants in the Kashmir Bhavan at Salt Lake. I have reasons to believe that with passage of some more years, this distinction of “New” & “Old” will totally disappear.

Once the Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta took a formal shape in 1956, it was doubly blessed. The enthusiasm of “New” Kashmiris was ably supported whole heartedly by the “Old” members of the Baradari. Some of the early settlers even came forward to lead the Sabha from the front as office bearers of the Sabha like Shri P. N. Haksar, Smt. Subhadra Haksar, Shri K. N. Baqaya, Smt. Bilas Razdan, shri B. P. Wanchoo and others. From the “New” Kashmiris, the leadership provided was equally rich in talent who shared a common vision for the community irrespective of their social or economic status or Kashmiri language speaking capability. In the eyes of the Sabha, all members were treated with equal respect. Late Shri M. L. Zutshi, Lt. Col. P. N. Kak (Retd.), popularly known as Papa by most Calcuttans, Shri M. M. Dhar, Dr. M. K. Raina, Shri S. S. Raina, Shri C. L. Wattal, Shri M. K. Ogra, Late Shri S. N. Wali, Shri Udai Kaul, Dr. C. L. Kashkari, Shri P. L. Sapru, Dr. B. K. Moza, Shri B. L. Razdan, Shri B. L. Raina, Shri P. L. Dhar, Shri P. N. Tiku, Shri B. M. Misri, Late Shri J. L. Kaul, Shri A. K. Dhar, Shri B. L. Tickoo, Shri Pajan and many others dedicated stalwarts from the “New” Kashmiris provided a right blend to lead and conduct the affairs of the Sabha for many years.

While it is generally true that organisation has always been supreme and individuals have always been in

the background, I guess it will be not incorrect to say that at least on one occasion in recent years, the leadership provided by one man stood a shade above the rest. It was during the Presidentship of Shri Avtar Kishen Dhar, that the Sabha constructed the Kashmir Bhavan and saw a new direction in community social events. Few would disagree with his superb and exceptional performance as a leader with great commitment to the cause of preserving our identity. Wish he could spare his time to play a stellar role for our Baradari on an All India and Global level.

A Bhavan of their own was the dream of Baradari in Calcutta since 60's when a very big plot of land was procured at Sonarpur, near Jadavpur, which for unfortunate political unrest in West Bengal at that time had to be abandoned. A key role was played by Shri M. M. Dhar in purchase of the land at Sonarpur and by Shri M. K. Ogra in procuring a plot for constructing the Bhavan at Salt Lake.

Perhaps, it would be a fitting tribute to dedicate the Golden Jubilee Issue of VITASTA to such stalwarts in our community who have helped create such a Sabha and include therein a consolidated list of all office bearers for past fifty years with chronological record of events. Our future generations should know the causes that were so dear to their parents and grand parents and be motivated to contribute their best in years ahead to further preserve our distinct cultural identity.

### **Packed yearly Social Events' Calendar**

In keeping with its aims and objectives, the Sabha organises a series of social events addressing the social and cultural yearning of most members and for all age groups. There is hardly any month when Baradari members don't get opportunity to meet one another. The events include an annual picnic, various competitions in games and sports for children, functions on Shivratri, Navreh, Roop Bhavani Day, Jestha Ashtami, Zangtrai, Gazals Night, Dance and Music competitions for children and many others. Shri B. M. Misri has been playing a key role in these events. Smt. Shakti Kaul and Shri L. N. Kaul together with Shri Rakesh Kaul are conspicuous by the dedicated contributions they make towards the administration of Kashmir Bhawan and the hospitality that is provided over here.

It is common practice now to perform marriage, Yugnopavit and other social functions as per traditional Kashmiri rituals at the Kashmir Bhavan by most Baradari members.

### **VITASTA – keeps all in touch**

Annual issue of VITASTA is one of the most sought after, literarily rich publication brought out by any KP

association. The annual numbers have in addition been able to raise significant revenue for the activities of the Sabha. Well focussed numbers like Bahar-i-Kashmir, Homage to Nehru, Homage to Indira Gandhi, Martand, Kashmir 2000, Kashmir Bhavan – Three Numbers, Preserving Kashmiri Pandit Identity, Contribution of Kashmiri Pandits to Indian Culture, and now Kashyap Bandhu Number are some of the Collector Numbers issued by the Sabha. These numbers have raised necessary finance for running the activities of Sabha and provide capital to part finance construction of the Kashmir Bhavan at Salt Lake.

While Shri S. S. Raina, Dr. Chaman Lal Kashkari, Dr. M. K. Raina, Smt. Mohini Raina and others played a key role in editing the annual numbers in early years, a noteworthy contribution has been that of Dr. B. K. Moza in editing the annual numbers consistently for decades and raising the level of this magazine to such heights of literary acclaim. In addition, he has inspired younger generation (M. K. Kaul), Anjali Rajdan, Anju Munshi, Vivek Kaul, Rajiv Sapru, Jyoti Sapru, Ashok Dhar and others) to undertake editing work or the magazine section comprising of Hindi and Kashmiri languages, a key role was played by Shri M. K. Ogra in early years which has been followed consistently for many many years by Smt. Niva Kaul with great finesse. The contribution of husband-wife editorial team of Smt. Jyoti and Shri Rajiv Sapru of Monthly Issues of VITASTA is remarkable. The Quiz competition run through this Monthly is a great hit with children.

### **Kashmir Sabha Trust to support the needy**

With whatever resources that could have been raised, the Baradari has always stood ahead in helping the needy amongst us. Be it help for a kidney transplant or help in gaining employment or sending contributions to help the recent groups of migrants from Kashmir or activities of the All India Kashmir Samaj and its other affiliated units. All members have tried to make concern and solidarity for the welfare of the Baradari.

### **Looking ahead**

It is a matter of great satisfaction that our Baradari today has formed similar organised groups at the places of their chosen stay all over the world. Many changes are inevitable with the changed world order and the speed with which we will observe, orient, decide and act to find ways of preserving our cultural heritage and identity will decide our existence as a distinct cultural group. These little groups can use

▲ *Contd. Pg 48*

## ASSOCIATES MUMBAI – KASHMIRI PANDIT ASSOCIATION

— By *P. N. Wali, Mumbai*

One of the most discussed topics in any gathering of Kashmiri Pandits is unity in the community, which appears to elude us all the time. There is a feeling that we are not united. We do not allow any one to emerge as a leader. We are good as individuals and can not work as groups. We do not have a feeling for the community and are not ready to contribute to its cause.

I am not sure that all this is the real picture. Where ever we go, we seek each other. Even when we board a train we scan passenger list to see whether a community person is traveling in the compartment. The presence of DEJHORE, hanging from ladies ear is enough to make us offer greetings, whatever part of world we may be in. Then, of course, there is the presence of a large number of KP bodies, associations, samatis, sabhas, samajs, and what you have. Each town big or small has an association of their own. Some towns like Jammu or Delhi have distinction of having more than one such body. The number of these bodies may run into few hundreds. These associations are not only in India only but also in a number of foreign countries. Each body will have at least 10 to 15 active members and a larger number, participating in their activities. This is quite a number considering the over all size of the community. This is a proof that we are socially inclined as for our community is concerned.

Many of us are not happy with the way our associations are working or what they are achieving. Some go to the extent of saying that they are wasting their resources, of course, of which often not much are available. We are at critical best when it comes to finding fault with the working of our associations. Before passing any such judgment on the working of these bodies let us proceed to examine the basic purpose for which such bodies are set up. Forget what is written in their constitutions. Let us go to the basics. People have lot of expectations. Some expect them to work for the welfare of the community, what ever that means. Some want them to work for return of community back to the valley, when personally they have no inclination of returning even if conditions were all fine. Some even mention larger aim of throwing terrorism out of Kashmir. Some want preservation of culture. Some want preservation of Kashmiri language. Still others want a Kashmiri Guru ji at each center. There is no end to the list, the vaguer the better.

These are goals worthy of being attended to. But are the local associations to fight for all of them. Of course associations are doing their little bit towards many of them if not all these things. But the achievements, as the nature of things is, are not significant. I would like to think of at least one basic purpose all these bodies aim to achieve. It is, to my thinking, to give the KPs living in these places a sense of Identity.

After leaving Kashmir (whether before or after exodus) our first concern is to establish ourselves. Find descent means of livelihood. Next comes a place for living, preferably our own. Good education for our children. It is at this stage we feel the psychological need for identity. In the sea of humanity around us we look for our individuality — our identity. It is at this stage we look for 'associations'. It is this basic purpose all associations serve. Kashmiri Pandits Association (KPA) Mumbai, is no exception to this rule. It has for the last half a century been the symbol of identity for those who chose to make the metropolis of Mumbai as there home.

### **The Symbols**

Most associations hold functions like Havans, Navreh, picnic, get to gethers, cultural events, etc. These are symbols of identity. They serve to enhance our sense of identity. Havan is usually the most well attended function. I learn that community Havans are being held even in USA and a Muslim country like Oman. Pune holds one every month. In Mumbai Havan is an annual event for more than forty years and usually attracts maximum participation. Earlier it was being held at a rented premise in the Khar suburb of Mumbai. After the Association acquired its own premise it is being held at its own place. For last few years New Mumbai has been tried as venue. In earlier days the association members used to go from home to home to make collections for the Havan. Later it was given up when collections on the day almost matched the expenditure. These days it leaves a good surplus.

### **The Beginning**

Mumbai had some KPs even before 1947. Some came, consequent to situations in Kashmir. Persons coming from Kashmir got considerable support in settling down from persons like late Pt. Prithvi Nath Razdan and late Pt. Hriday Nath Bamzai. In early

fifties couple of attempts were made to form an Association, but what worked was a visit by Pt. Shivnarayan Fotedar in early fifties which culminated into the formation of Kashmiri Pandits Association. The question whether the Pandit word should be part of the name was resolved in favor of its inclusion. The Association was got registered as a charitable trust under the local laws. It has enjoyed exemption IT Act under Sec. 80G.

During these nearly fifty years the Association had its highs and lows. Many well intentioned people served the Association with dedication. The list of these people is long but I would like to mention one for particular reason. He held Association banner whenever it fell in low periods. It was Pt. Niranjana Nath Wanchoo whose name became almost synonymous with that of the Association itself.

Mumbai had one more Association called Kashmir Mandal Trust. It represented KPs of the older generations (old Kashmiris). It was, in late seventies, merged with KPA.

### **A House of Its Own**

Like all associations KPA had from the very beginning nurtured a wish to have premises of its own. A home owned is a physical symbol of identity. It is piece of common ownership. For acquiring one in Mumbai you need lot of money. The Association went about it very systematically. It found holding fund raising shows in the Bollywood city as a reasonable way out. Money was collected from tickets and advertisements for the souvenir issued on such occasions. Show's greats, like Vijayanti Mala, Kishore Kumar, Hemant Kumar, Sitara Devi were artists on such shows. The tradition of the annual show continues till date. Only, now it has become an all Kashmiri affair and no entry fee is charged.

With funds collected search for a suitable place started. The result was the Kashyap Bhavan hall and two flats adjoining the same in a housing cooperative. Not an entirely satisfactory solution but an optimum one for that. KPA was keen to provide some resting place in Mumbai for those who visited the place for medical treatment. This is the reason for acquiring the living accommodation with Kashyap Bhavan.

### **A New Place**

With the increase in the number of KPs in Mumbai, this should be more than one thousand families (not all enrolled), KPA showed ambition for a bigger place and preferably on land of its own. It has now been allotted a piece of developed land admeasuring more than six hundred square meters in Kharghar, New

Mumbai. It is planning a cultural center at the place, that may cost one crore of rupees. It is systematically going ahead with it.

### **Reaction to Outside Events**

No doubt the stated aim of the Association is to address itself to the needs of Mumbai Biradari but has not remained immune to the events affecting the community elsewhere. 1967 KP agitation was one such early event. It came together on the occasion. It collected funds and sent them to Kashmir.

Of course 1990 was too big a catastrophe to escape its attention. Immediate response was to come on streets to draw the attention of world to the emerging situation. The first such demonstration was held in Fort area on 24th March, 1990. A huge public meeting addressed among others by Shri Jagmohan was organised. The Association was concerned about the disinformation campaign then being unleashed. A number of press conferences were held. It went a step further and produced two documentaries one in English and one in Hindi – Sharnarathi Apne Desh Mein. These were screened throughout the world.

Relief was another area of activity. Money was collected for the purpose. Maharashtra C.M was approached who shelled out Rs. 5 lacs. It was one of the earliest to rush relief material to the camps. It helped to build a temporary school in one of the camps. Scholarships, school uniforms, text books, are distributed from time to time. Financial assistance to some families in Kashmir itself was also done.

Support to the students availing the benefit of special reservation offered by the government of Maharashtra has been another important activity. It includes liaison with the authorities and other associations. Accommodation is arranged in Mumbai for those coming to seek admissions.

### **Medical Relief**

One of the objectives of the Association has been to help members of community in physical distress. Providing space at Mumbai to outside patients and their attendants has not been seen as enough. It has set up fund for medical assistance. It was earlier confined to those in Mumbai, but has been extended selectively to outsiders. An eye camp was held for general public.

### **Culture and Language**

Besides the annual cultural event, functions like Navreh etc. are held to enhance cultural awareness. But a very serious attempt was made under the project Zaan, in collaboration with Lal Ded Trust. It

included publication of Information Digest and holding the Zaan Quiz.

Zaan project has also made its contribution in helping enhance reading and speaking capacity of Kashmiri language. A primer in Kashmiri language was produced.

### **Publication**

Milchar has, for long time, served as the information link of the Mumbai Biradari. Long time back it was started as a news letter in Hindi. Later it became an English publication. For the last few years it has English, Hindi and Kashmiri sections. It has traveled a long way from news letter to emerge as a magazine.

Every two or three years, a community directory is published; business like attitude.

### **Mumbai Culture**

It is not strange that whatever may be our own culture and inherited way of thinking, we are affected by the culture of the place we live in. Delhi over the

centuries has been center of power and therefore activities of its inhabitants are coloured by mechanisms of power and struggle to maintain it. Mumbai is business center and the thinking of its inhabitants is fashioned likewise. KPs of Mumbai have always shown a business like attitude. Whether it is collecting funds or managing them, it is the same way. It is almost a history that elections are regularly held to elect the board of trustees. Except for one year the trustees are unanimously elected without having to cast a vote. In Mumbai time is the most precious commodity. People are hard pressed for time. They can spare money but cannot spare time. They, therefore, appreciate anyone who dose spare some time for community affairs.

### **At The End**

I have hinted at number of activities undertaken by KPA Mumbai; each with a specific purpose and an objective, yet the underling aim is to provide a super structure that can help in enhancing the feeling of identity. The road is long. Objective is luadable.

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## **Kashmiri Sabha, Calcutta – In Retrospect & Project**

▼ *Contd. from Pg 45*

their collective wisdom to decide best ways forward to preserve our identity in their chosen places of stay. Of course an umbrella organisation of all such Groups with their total support and active involvement can be a great support and active involvement can be a great cohesive force. Fortunately, despite being dispersed in far-flung areas in India and abroad, the Baradari has displayed a unique resilience to face calamities with all its might.

There is no community without its share of doubting Thomasses and our community cannot claim to be any exception to the rule. A culture of applause for whoever makes any token contribution can in such predicaments help us all. We should have reasons to believe that our community will have a bright future ahead, be it in social, cultural or economic fronts. We need to put on Yellow Hats of optimism and work to help needy ones amongst us.

Sabhas have come to stay and transform the inner urges and cumulative beliefs of our community gathered through six thousand years of history. They should provide a link between the present generation with the generations gone by. If we want that the view we hold of our culture should be understood and appreciated by others, we have got to establish some kind of harmony between it and the outside expression in our actual living and that is what I guess is being so successfully done by the Sabha in Calcutta. I am confident that the next generation of Kashmiris in Eastern India (which the Sabha represents) will keep our community united, preserving its unique homogeneous identity, especially in Eastern India (which this Sabha represents) will keep our community united, preserving its unique homogeneous identity, especially in the changed scenario of our forced migration from the valley for past ten years. Looking ahead, I have full hope that Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta will prosper with the blessings of Mata Kshir Bhavani along with other Sabhas of our Baradari elsewhere.

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## DAWN OF THE 'ZAAAN'—MUMBAI

— By *J. L. Manwati, Mumbai*

History stands witness that Kashmiri Pandits – the original inhabitants of Kashmir, have had to flee Kashmir a number of times under the tyrannical rule of various Muslim rulers. However, the resilient and adoptable character of Pandits brought them back time and again, and they flourished in the Valley. But, the pre-planned ethno-cleansing of the Pandits towards the fag end of 1989 culminated in the mass exodus of the Pandits and created a fear psychosis of such a dimension in the years that followed, that Kashmiri Pandits could not think of returning to their native land thereafter. Depressed and dejected, they got scattered all over the country—mostly living a life of perdition in Jammu. Scattered and disintegrated thus, the community started getting disillusioned and losing touch with their ethnical and cultural roots. In the hostile lands, our language became the biggest casualty.

In the darkness which had enveloped us in mid-nineties, notwithstanding the political affronts taken by our leaders, we, at Lalla Ded Educational and Welfare Trust, felt that if we had to resurrect our dwindling identity, we shall have to preserve our language which could be the only cementing force, with which we could bind our community together. Thus 'Zaan' was conceived, and launched as 'Project Zaan' in collaboration with Kashmiri Pandits' Association, Mumbai.

A group of dedicated persons got together in 1998, under the guidance of Shri J. N. Kachroo – ex-Principal of National High School, Karan Nagar, Srinagar, and a programme for young and not-so-young biradari members, with a view to inculcate interest in our mother tongue, was envisaged and named 'Zaan'. The underlying idea of Project Zaan was contemplated to acquaint our biradari members and make them cognizant; aware about the various facets of Kashmir – its historical facts and truths, its customs and culture, its rites and rituals etc. with an emphasis on the Kashmiri language.

The perplex question was how to approach a youngster, who had been away from his native land, who was deprived of the benefits of joint family mother tongue conversation, who had, wittingly or unwittingly, been drawn into a syndrome of relating with a language either for academic or day-to-day conversational purposes, other than that of his mother tongue.

After debating the pros and cons of the dilemma, the core group of the Project Zaan decided to publish small 'Information Digests' dealing with history, geography, rites, rituals, religion, language, literature, customs etc. and other related subjects on Kashmir. This simple introduction on the various facet of the Valley, it was felt, would widen the 'Zaan' (knowledge) amongst the young members of our biradari about their motherland. This effort, of dissemination of information, was well received by the community. But how would one gauge the extent of assimilation of this Zaan Information Digest? Project Zaan, therefore came up with the idea of holding of a Quiz Contest – a game show popular with youngsters, on the basis of the information furnished through Information Digest.

The basic instinct of trial of skill to outshine in competition and the recognition in the community forum became a propelling force for the youngsters to seriously study the information contained in the Digest and prepare themselves for the competitive event. The enthusiasm and the spirit with which the prospective competitors lined up for the professionally organised First Quiz Contest of the Zaan held in April 2000, and the keen interest demonstrated by the parents and other members of the community by their presence in numbers, was a signal for the organisers that Project Zaan was the answer to bridge the missing link with the motherland.

Encouraged by the tremendous response, the Project worked relentlessly and came out with Volume 2 of the Information Digest, which covered the various topics on Kashmir in more detail and depth. While compilation work on Volume 2 was in progress, the duo of Shri M. K. Raina and Smt. Neelam Trakru of Project Zaan were giving finishing touches to 'Basic Reader for Kashmiri Language' in Devanagari-Kashmiri script as adopted by the Script Standardisation Committee in 1995. This was the first ever attempt by any Kashmiri organisation to come out with a basic reader in Devanagari-Kashmiri. This book was released in March 2001 as Volume 3 under the series of Information Digests under the Project. Based on the computed information of these 3 volumes a 'Question Bank' of 300 questions was devised for the future and subsequent annual quiz contests, which were held in 2001 and 2002 with great aplomb. In order to make the 'Quiz Contests',

by now eagerly looked forward to by young and not-so-young biradari participants, more memorable and eventful, trophies for the winners and participants were instituted in the name of the sponsors of specific contests.

The excitement created by the publication of the 'Reader', it was felt, would not serve the purpose of making members conversant with the language as such, therefore, it was decided to hold intermittently Kashmiri language classes and workshops, wherein the basics of the language would be taught and explained. Such workshops assumed role of influential tools to further create the desired interest in the language.

At this stage Project Zaan interacted with some prominent overseas Kashmiri Pandit organisations for the benefit of our youngsters who lived in the foreign lands. On his visit to India, Dr. S. N. Ganju of Kashmir Bhawan Centre, UK was highly impressed by the work of Project Zaan in preserving the cultural identity of Kashmir and its language. The Organisation placed an order for 50 sets of all the three volumes of Information Digest in the first instalment. This kind gesture of recognition of the work of Project Zaan made us to think of going global. In the process we came across a selfless and dedicated person in Shri Sunil Fotedar of USA, who had created various websites, which he was feeding with whatever data he would get on Kashmir. Shri Fotedar was kind enough to create an exclusive website [www.zaan.net](http://www.zaan.net) for entire Zaan programme. Who says there is dearth of Samaritans in the community? Zaan thus crossed the geographical barriers and spread aroma world over. A good number of Kashmiri Pandits, who have visited the site since its inception, have flooded us with their comments/e-mails, appreciating the laudable efforts of Project Zaan in preserving the ethnicity of Kashmir in its true perspective. That the message of the Zaan has not crossed the geographical boundaries, but the purposeful zest of the Project, for preservation of Kashmiri language has an emotional appeal for any

Kashmiri as such, can be sampled by this message dated 6 December 2003 from a UK based Kashmiri Muslim boy Aatif Ahmad Mahjoor.

**"Excellent site. Superb layout and info. Keep up the good work. At least you have not forgotten the Kashmiri language. The attitude of Kashmiris in Kashmir to their own language is appalling. Best wishes for your efforts and God bless".**

In April 2003, Zaan as per the projected programme came out with Volume 4 of the Information Digest. Based on the information compiled in this volume together with the information in the earlier volumes, it conducted the 4<sup>th</sup> Quiz Contest on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2003.

Meanwhile, Project Zaan published the Revised edition of the 'Basic Reader for Kashmiri Language' in Devanagari-Kashmiri, using the script now streamlined by the expert linguists. A novel feature of the 'Reader' is that alongside the Devanagari-Kashmiri version, Indo-Roman version has been given for the benefit of such readers who may not be conversant with their own language and the Devanagari script. They shall find it easy to read and comprehend Kashmiri through Indo-Roman version.

The spirit of Zaan has, no doubt soared, but the organisers feel that time has come to enrich the contents of its future Information Digests in consonance with the set objectives of Zaan and widen its reach. For this purpose, the Project is considering to enlist cooperation of some writers who have shown their willingness to contribute their might in this regard. Simultaneously, the Project has on its anvil nominating Regional Centres at the places where Kashmiri Pandits have settled in large numbers in the post exodus era, in the country and in the foreign lands. Such Centres will provide necessary platforms to spread the message of Zaan and thus help the community in keeping alive the spirit of Kashmiri Pandits, bounded with ethnic roots of its motherland.

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## PANUN KASHMIR — SOME THOUGHTS

— BY *Prof. K. N. Pandita, Jammu*

Not too surprising, many stories were invented and many canards floated to malign the first ever solid political movement of Kashmiri Pandits. The Parmeshwari movement of 1968 could be called the precursor of the simmering discontent of the Pandit community towards neo-communal policies of the State government. But the Parmeshwari movement had too narrow a base and too limited objectives to be classified as anything near a political movement.

On the other hand, PK movement was broad — based encompassing not only the exiled community and its components within the country but also its chapter outside the country. It had an infinitely solid political cause to make it credible in the eyes of international humanitarian organisation including the UN Human Rights Commission.

Several factors lent it tremendous support apart from making it popular down to the grassroots level. Firstly, the movement was launched by the people in exile. They had lost their homes and hearths, their jobs and their means of sustenance. Their plans for their future were shattered and the world seemed a big deluge to them. This common denominator was the great cementing force for all sections of our community. Common adversity breeds commonality of action and reaction. Camp dwelling, a phenomenon hitherto unknown to us, became as icon that spoke of our adversity and beckoned us to a unified line of action.

Marg Darshan resolution of 1991 was passed at Jammu by nearly three thousand delegates of the community in exile. They had travelled from far and wide in the country to lend their support to a political forum that had visionary programme unprecedented in the history of the community. Thus this historic resolution had the mass support and remains a landmark in our history for all times to come.

There are irresponsible critics and commentators who say that Marg Darshan resolution was a reaction out of haste and anger. Others characterised it a wild dream that would never be fulfilled. There was no dearth of pessimists among the moribund sections of our community. But the force of events paid not a tuppence to these canards : the swift movement of events generated widespread acclamation for the movement and its leadership.

The fact is that community leaders deliberated over the entire issue for weeks and months before the

final stage of tabling the resolution arrived. There were brain – storming meetings and corner meetings, debates and discussions so much so that one may say true bean-splitting took place. Interestingly even some among those who formed the highest echelons of the movement later on, were sceptical of its success in the beginning when the debate heated up. But notwithstanding all doubts and misgivings, pessimistic and ultra-cautious approaches, nobody could stop the tide sweeping the community with full force.

Again some were brazen faced, enough to link us up to the Indian intelligence agencies and categorised us as their handiwork. One wished they had an iota of understanding of the policy of Indian authorities towards the Pandits in exile. I can say with a fair amount of conviction that if the Indian intelligence agencies had the level of capability and originality so as to float this movement of the exiled community, Kashmir question would never have become an albatross round their necks.

The truth was the reverse of it. Indian intelligence agencies were at a loss to understand the invisible hand shaping the movement. It was an enigma to them that the Pandit youth even in the remotest corner of India, were enthusiastically supportive of PK. They were prepared to make full contribution towards its success. The intelligence sleuths were probing all vulnerable sources to ascertain that no foreign country, particularly, the Maoists were extending overt or covert support to us. Its deep concern was to see that the exiled community did not mend its fences with the militants because, as we came to know later, they had a vested interest in Kashmir militancy. If we were not unwittingly ultra nationalists, limelight would have turned on us long before. Only history will say whether we had faulted in our tactics.

That PK leadership came essentially from RSS cadres is true to a large extent. As already hinted the Parmeshwari episode of 1968 was an eye opener and a dormant catalyst to the resurgence of the Pandit factor. It should be remembered that the Parmeshwari episode happened when the government of the State was in the hands of “progressive” leadership, which had threatened to shut down the Radio Kashmir if it continued to tell the

truth about the events shaping in Kashmir. This was an indirect indictment of the Government of India by a leadership that feigned to swear by secularism and democracy. How were the Pandits to size up Indian "secular democracy"?

Blatant anti-Pandit policy of the State government was reflected in its very ugly form when the Congress leadership of the valley instigated communal frenzy resulting in the attack on the Pandits and their shrines in some places of Anantnag district in 1986. Apart from this type of direct intimidation, the Pandits had been closely watching the rising crescendo of Islamism in the valley from the times of the execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan. The widespread loot and arson inflicted by the NC goons on Jama'at-e-Islami cadres in Anantnag district in the aftermath of that execution and later on a fringe show of Islamic fraternity with the Jama'at at the behest of Saudi intermediaries, could not escape the eyes of the Pandits. They were witness to the re-assembling of Pan-Islamism forces and "Double Farooq" legend testified to it. Re-vitalisation of Plebiscite Front and its muscular wing namely Al Fath posed undeclared threat to the Pandit minority community in the valley. When Farooq came to power in 1986-7 elections, he promised to close down the Jamaat-i-Islami seminaries throughout the valley. But it all ended up in the endorsement of autonomous status of the *madrasah* usually called the breeding places of Islamic fanaticism. Thousands of its teachers were absorbed in State service thus legitimizing their religious agenda.

The agenda of the *madrasah* seriously jeopardised communal atmosphere in far flung villages with thinnest possible Hindu population which almost had to beg its survival. Undeclared non-cooperation of the majority community with the small and insignificant rural Hindu population adversely affected latter's agrarian pursuits and landed them in economic straits. With no vote bank leverage to manipulate political apparatus, with job opportunities severely restricted and petty trade shorn of social goodwill, the Pandits had begun to sense their economic and political strangulation.

The Pandits very clearly understood the writing on the wall. The Indian government closed its eyes to harsh realities. Sheikh's second tenure beginning in 1975 and lasting for nearly a decade laid the foundation for communalisation or Islamisation of Kashmir. During this period the Saudi and Pakistani intelligence agencies made deep inroads in the valley and to their satisfaction they found that the ruling structure was more than just permissive.

New Delhi's inability to make proper assessment of anti-India undercurrent sweeping through the length and breadth of the valley during the second stint of the Sheikh and its cowardly handling of the enforcement team episode made the Pandits very insecure. In late 80s, Governor Jagmohan's repetitive entreaties to the centre to react to the worsening political atmosphere in the State yielded no result. The situation was becoming alarming day after day.

New Delhi miserably failed to size up the political importance of Marg Darshan resolution. Lopsided segments of Congress party left no stone unturned to label PK as a separatist and communally oriented group. The charges of Balkanizing the country were levelled against us. The irony was that these charges coming from responsible official circles were levelled without even once talking to us and trying to understand what we said. Home Ministry relied on the reports of its intelligence sources who seldom work against the broad features of government's policy.

The worse was yet to come. Indian print media, by and large, never hesitated to show us its hostility. Making a fetish of secularism and harping on Kashmir as the secular symbol of India, they hurled full throated invective on the Pandits. How the history was being distorted is unbelievable. But of course here and there a beacon of light did try to ward off disbelief. For example late H. V. Kamath stands out in this context.

The fallacy of India's Kashmir policy is that it always tried to project Kashmir as the hallmark of India's secular tradition. Nothing could be far from truth. The story of atrocities perpetrated on the Hindus of Kashmir valley by the locals during the 1947 raid of the tribesmen and Pakistani militias has never been told in part or in full. Those who harp on secular harmony in Kashmir are abysmally ignorant of Kashmir's true history. What they have read is blatant distortion and understating of bitter truths. Ground reality had been much different from the accounts and commentaries of biased historians. By projecting Kashmir as India's symbol of secularism, New Delhi was inadvertently exposing the minuscule Pandit minority to gravest danger. And the perceived danger ultimately struck them in 1990 and with vengeance.

We, who launched a struggle for Homeland, were more than convinced that this demand was a viable solution of Kashmir problem. The question of dividing the country did not arise. India had been partitioned on communal basis. Congress party, that resisted partition for half a decade, had no qualms of conscience to concede the demand of the Muslim

League. How then does Kashmir enjoy special sanctity that it should not be partitioned? And in fact, we never wanted partition : all that we demanded was a Homeland within the territory of Indian Union. If this led to the same demand in Muslim minority provinces in India, then one can say that India was all the time presenting a false and fabricated Utopia of a "democratic secular state" to the international community. In that sense India's secularism is a sham and her democracy only a matter of convenience and not of conviction.

Secondly, if the Kashmir Muslims wanted liberation (*najat*) from the Indians, we the Pandits wanted *najat* from the Muslim domination in Kashmir. It was that simple. But no less a person than Farooq Abdullah said in a public rally in R. S. Pora that Pandit Homeland would be formed on his dead body alone. This was repetition of the pledge Mahatma Gandhi had made regarding the partition of India. And lo and behold both things happened.

The UN Human Rights Commission charter elaborates the rights of indigenous people. We the Pandits come under the purview of that charter. We have been fighting our case at the UN bodies besides at other non-UN platforms.

In regard to the Pandits, the Government of India has always been adopting a totally non-serious and unconcerned attitude. To the Commission of International Jurists (CIJ), a highly credible NGO with the UN HRC, where top world bureaucrats come together, the Indian government handed over a written formal statement on Kashmir insurgency in which it categorically said that two thousand and five hundred Pandit families were forced to leave their home and hearth at the point of gun in Kashmir and it was tantamount to ethnic cleansing of a minority community. But to the world community at international fora Indian official delegations never talked of atrocities committed by the majority community against the minority community in Kashmir. The double – speak is self-explanatory.

The Panun Kashmir brought two cases before the National Human Rights Commission. In one they sought to be declared Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) — a nomenclature formally approved and frequently used by various bodies of the UN Commission (now Council) on Human Rights. It has to be stated that the precise name of the UN Human Rights Commission or Council is "Human Rights Commission (non Council) for Minorities". It is a recognised fact that those whose human rights are frequently violated belong to silent minorities.

The J&K Government coined many words for the extirpated Pandits. "*mohajir, mafzur, mukhbir, la pata*

etc. The sobriquet depended on the situation and conditions in which it had to be brought into action. For the ruling Kashmiri Muslim majority, the Pandits were all but Kashmiris. The Sheikh had labelled them as 'Indian spies'. Officially in revenue documents of the State we have been mentioned as "*mafzur*" meaning absconding persons. However, the State government calls us "Migrants". In appeasement, the Government of India follows suit, and the Indian press, which has fallen in line, never raised any question on the feasibility of application of the term to the Pandits. Did we migrate out of free will and would we return out of our free will?

Let me go into some detail. There are more than 3.5 million people in the world who have been extirpated from their native places but who did not leave the international borders of their country like the Pandits. The United Nations coined the term 'Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) for them. The standardized term is used by all UN bodies both formally and informally in their documentation system. The UN Secretary General appointed a reputed scholar of international law, namely Francis Deng, — an ethnic African — as Secretary General's Special Rapporteur on Internally Displaced Person. In a briefing at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva in April 2002, Francis Deng's response to the question of this writer was reported by the *Kashmir Herald* as follows :

Geneva, April 15 : The decade-long struggle waged by the representatives of 350,000 internally displaced Kashmiri Pandits at the sessions of the UN Human Rights Commission and the Sub-Commission in Geneva has, at last, drawn the attention of the Commission towards their plight, and now stands properly documented in the annals of the United Nations history. In the face of opposition from many quarters including the Indian Home Ministry over the years, the Pandit representatives persevered with their unrelenting struggle of lobbying with members, NGOs, special rapporteurs, delegates and the correspondents at the headquarter of the world forum of Human Rights. On 11 April 2002, Mr. Francis Deng, UNHRC Special Rapporteur on Internally Displaced Persons held a briefing at the UN in Geneva to present the contours of his latest report on the IDPs world over and to respond to the queries of the delegates. In his two-hour long briefing, at the UN in Geneva to present the contours of his latest report on the IDPs world over and to respond to the queries of the delegates. In his two-hour long briefing, Mr. Deng gave a broad description of the existing situation of nearly three and a half million IDPs all over the globe and the measures taken or not taken by the local governments and the UN Human Rights Commission to bring some relief to them. The exposition dealt

with various aspects of internal displacement from nature to man-made calamities such as xenophobia, ethnic-religious cleansing, discrimination, communal hatred and economic strangulation. In reply to a question from Dr. K. N. Pandita, the accredited delegate of the African Commission for Health and Human Rights Promoters (an NGO with ECOSOC Status), who has been leading the decade-long struggle at Geneva, as to how the Special Rapporteur reacted to a situation in which the local governments insisted on calling them "migrants" despite their fulfilling all the stipulated conditions of IDPs definition, Mr. Deng said that no doubt member countries were sovereign in making their decisions but being signatories to the Human Rights Covenant, they agree to go by the resolutions of the UN bodies. Elaborating on the issue, Mr. Deng informed Dr. Pandita that his (Special Rapporteur's) office had taken a note of the internal displacement in Kashmir and this had been properly and formally recorded. The following relevant portion from the text of the report was formally conveyed to him :

"Displacement from Kashmir : As many as 350,000 Kashmiris, mostly Hindu Pandits, have been displaced since 1990 as a result of long-standing conflict in Kashmir between the Indian armed forces and separatists among the majority Muslim community. According to the Indian authorities, continuing violence in Kashmir led to the deaths of 762 civilians in 2000. Some 250,000 displaced Kashmiris are living in or near the city of Jammu, both in camps for the displaced and in their homes. An estimated 100,000 Kashmiris are displaced elsewhere in India, primarily in the New Delhi area".

Talking to the newsmen in Geneva, Dr. Pandita said that this documentation in the UN records was authentication of the history of the Pandit mass exodus from their homeland in 1990, which the Union and the State governments were obliged to reverse keeping in mind that the relevant bodies of the UN Human Rights Commission strongly recommended the return of the IDPs in a concentrated form for secured restitution in Pandit homeland. He said it was a breakthrough in a long stalemate over the issue, which he had been pursuing for last twelve years.

This statement throws up several aspects of the issue. Firstly, the Government of India being a signatory to the Human Rights Covenant, had the obligation to declare the exiled Pandits as IDPs. But it failed to do so meaning thereby that the issue was politicised. Secondly, the Pandits had not left the borders of their State and as such fulfilled all the conditions laid down in the UN Human Rights Covenant. Thirdly, the United Nations recognised them as IDPs and this has gone into its documents.

Fourthly, according to the UN procedures, the Pandit IDPs are entitled to all the rights and privileges as are granted to international refugees including the right to seek asylum in foreign countries. The Pandits are free and entitled to benefit from this provision.

By denying the proper nomenclature to the displaced Pandits, the National Human Rights Commission of India has created a grave situation in which its credentials with the UN Human Rights Commission are under question.

The second issue which Panun Kashmir took up with the NHRC was of genocide of the Pandits. This issue was hotly debated and the PK provided all necessary evidence and documents supporting its stand that genocide had been affected in their case. Unfortunately, once again politics was inducted by the august body against the terms of reference that give direction to its deliberations.

I would strongly ask those of our detractors that had the Panun Kashmir been a show piece of the Indian agencies, we would not have met unjust and illegal treatment at the hands of the top agencies of the government. I shall not refer to the tone and tenor of the National Human Rights Commission when it conducted sessions of discussing Panun Kashmir's requests.

It will be pertinent to mention at this place that when the Godhra tragedy happened, the same National Human Rights Commission of India dispatched its observer team within 48 hours to report on the situation. It proceeded with its act of condemnation of the massacre of innocent human beings and also issued a verdict against the government of Gujarat. On the other hand when it sent its delegation to conduct an independent inquiry into the Wandhama killing of 30 defenceless Pandits, neither a word of condemnation of the killings was uttered nor was the delegation's report made public all these years. From these instances, the impartiality of the National Human Rights Commission becomes suspect. At least the Pandit religious minority community expects no justice from it.

I will not mention the cold apathy of the Union Government towards the displaced Pandits here. But I shall certainly make a pointed reference to the Indian print media. A sizeable section of Indian print media not only failed to highlight the tragedy that had befallen the Hindu minority community of Kashmir, but also had, unfortunately, distorted and brutalised the facts of history to the maligning of the Pandits. Their tirade against the Pandits has not stopped even today. This is obviously part of disinformation campaign of our adversaries, in which sections of media and officialdom, too, has a role. Panun Kashmir took upon itself to counter this disinformation

campaign and galvanised its national and overseas chapters into action. Many American Congressmen have a far more clear picture of the Pandit case today than what they knew of it during the early days of their extirpation.

The 1996 Anandpur Sahib march of Panun Kashmir activists was the high watermark of our extended struggle for creating awareness of our case in broader Indian masses. This had become necessary in view of apathy of the Indian political and ruling class. The response shown by the Punjab Sikh community was superb. Our message spread from closed religious circles to broad Sikh community and the Punjab ruling segment. Chandigarh-based dailies, and *The Tribune* in particular, gave coverage to the event and Panun Kashmir message spread to the entire State of Punjab.

In other states, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal Pandit Associations under one name or the other, conveyed their affiliation to the main body and our delegations established liaison with them to dovetail their programmes to the basic philosophy of Panun Kashmir. The highly satisfying development was that the demand of Pandit Homeland was fully endorsed by one and all.

The Homeland demand was not only aimed at finding a way of return of the Pandits to their birth place. It catered to wider issues of the minority community. It rightly tried to dispel the myth of 'communal harmony' in Kashmir, a mask behind which great political and economic injustice was inflicted on the small religious community. Those who orchestrated the Kashmiriyat charade did so for their political aggrandisement, and they certainly extracted mileage out of it. The foremost among such stalwarts was a biased section of Indian print and electronic media.

Homeland demand of Panun Kashmir was essentially based not on the immediate happenings of 1990 but on a long and tortuous period of Kashmir history going back to the beginning of the 14th century. While during following seven centuries the Pandits as a community bore atrocities and oppression under the fiercest religious persecution, it was ironically under a "democratic and secular" dispensation that they were extirpated *en masse* from their place of birth. Ethnic cleansing of Hindu minority in the only Muslim dominated State of the Indian Union, and criminal inability of the "democratic and secular" regimes of the Indian Union, forced the Pandits to think beyond

the on-going crisis. In a world of today where identities had become the basis of national independence, he, by the same token, wanted freedom from Muslim majoritarianism and domination. Logic was on his side. This line of thought was intensely and relentlessly pursued by the Panun Kashmir delegates at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva with the result that its official Minority and IDP Group debated the entire spectrum of the issue and then came out with a new formula of "reverse minority" citing Kashmir Pandits as an example. Alas, the National Human Rights Commission of India failed to appreciate the understanding of the UN Human Rights Commission on the issue and chose to turn blind eye towards it, obviously under political pressures or government directives.

From the very beginning Panun Kashmir was fully aware of its weaknesses. The biggest weakness was that the Pandits were not a vote bank, a fatal drawback of a minority community in the context of Indian politics of democracy. Our second weakness was the lack of a strong media of our own. We had not a paper or a journal that would voice our grievances or suggestions. India's large dailies were loath to carry news and commentaries on Pandit case just because they were not a vote bank. The local government in the State, traditionally hostile to the Pandits, considered their Homeland demand tantamount to wrecking the Kashmir Muslim community through an "unnatural" division of the valley. While this was what they thought of Pandit Homeland, they were satisfied and comfortable with the division of India and the creation of a homeland for the Indian Muslims. Panun Kashmir could not help the Indian State come out of its slavish mentality.

With the passage of time, Panun Kashmir suffered a split. The reason is that the community was impatient with the agenda of the organisation. However, it became difficult to make the suffering community understand that their demand of Pandit Homeland was neither simplistic nor without far reaching consequences. It meant changing the entire geo-political strategy and structure of Asia. The pygmies of Indian political platform had neither the vision nor the will nor ability to understand what the implications of the Pandit demand were. The Hindu mind scarcely opens to ground realities and seldom pre-empts impending crisis. Nevertheless, even after the split, support to Homeland demand remains intact with all cadres of Panun Kashmir.

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## KASHMIRI SEWAK SAMAJ, FARIDABAD

—By *Puran Patwari & Arvind Shah, Faridabad*

Kashmiri Sewak Samaj, Faridabad represents the social, cultural and religious aspirations of the 1000 families of Kashmiries, 90% of whom have settled in this township after their displacement from the Valley in the early 90's.

Kashmiri Sewak Samaj was founded in the early 80's; the founding fathers created and inculcated a spirit of brotherhood, discipline and service among its members.

Shri D N Kaul, a teacher by profession, founded the Samaj in Faridabad. As the story goes, a Punjabi transporter in Faridabad had a KP employee, who had a sudden death. The Punjabi gentleman went around the town to locate a KP family so that the deceased KP could have his last rites as per Kashmiri tradition. The responsibility of collecting KPs in Faridabad for the last rites of the deceased fell on late D N Kaul Sahib.

After the event, Shri D N Kaul tirelessly worked to keep the community well knit and socially together.

In the mid eighties, Shri Shibanji Raina as the President and Shri K L Bakshi gave KSS a simple and workable Constitution, which created the foundation of the KSS body as a cohesive and disciplined team.

Shri M N Pandita, an entrepreneur by profession, led KSS as the President till 1993. His tenure was marked by spirit of selfless service and immediate help to the needy in a silent and obedient way. Besides addressing to the socio-cultural needs of its local community, KSS flung into action to help the distressed Kashmiri Pandits who had been displaced from Kashmir in 1990. The Faridabad Biradari approached Shri J N Kaul in 1993 to lead the Community keeping in view the turbulence that the Community was undergoing due to the trauma of Kashmiri Pandit exodus, resulting in their losing the hearth & home and homeland. Shri Kaul accepted the responsibility with missionary zeal. The first couple of years were very challenging as our boys and girls in the camps were facing a future without hope. Given the abysmal living conditions in one-room tenements, the boys and girls were growing into unemployed adults. Here Shri J N Kaul conceived the first bold step of social entrepreneurship. As a visionary, he propounded that, "Giving doles and showing pity and weeping is not going to help, instead it will make the community weak. We have to stand up, work hard

and improve ourselves by acquiring strengths & skills so that we are useful for the society at large. Our way of working must be dignified so that we become the most sought after community, all over this world." All India Kashmiri Samaj (of which he was also the President) Kashmiri Sewak Samaj and the SOS Children's Village of India, forged an alliance to recruit boys and girls from the camps and impart one year training to them in Computer Applications. Special Hostels were created for these boys and girls in Faridabad and well-equipped Computer Lab was built in the Hermann Gmeiner Institute of Vocational Studies in Faridabad. Undertaking an effort like this was not easy as the skeptics were at each stage offering counsel to follow the easy way out and "cut corners for convenience"! They wanted this education to be imparted to these boys and girls close to their homes in Nagrota and similar camps, in and around Jammu. But Shri J N Kaul would think further as a visionary. He wanted the boys and girls to be far from a life of virtual hell in these one-room tenements. When the program came to close, nearly 300 boys and girls became bread-earners for their families. The boys and girls would undergo a metamorphosis in their personalities after a first class boarding, provided with amenities. Most of these boys and girls are employed today in Companies of repute. *"Give a man a fish; you have fed him for today. Teach a man to fish; and you have fed him for a lifetime"*. Our Social organizations may use their energies, resources and the thought to emulate the example given here.

The last decade has been a decade of great accomplishment for the Samaj. The decade has given the Community two great Institutions: Sharika Bhawan and Hari Parbat in the Village Anangpur, thanks to the vision and leadership provided by Shri J.N. Kaul. Besides, the following were also achieved :

\* The institutions of, training in Stenography, English speaking courses and Cutting and tailoring centers for ladies were set up in the vicinity of migrant camps to enhance the skills of our young people. Community centers at various migrants camps have been established : Geeta Bhawan at Muthi, Community center at Nagrota and local organizations are also supported to make community facilities. Computer training is arranged at H.K.V.T.C Faridabad for migrant, youth, free of charges. Youth: boys and girls

facilities have been set up where deserving migrant students reading in various instructions are given free boarding and lodging.

\* K S S, with the support of many friends and SOS Children's Villages of India, has been giving yearly scholarships to needy students of Jammu province on merit cum means basis. The children study in government schools and their parents live in migrant camps. This year 300 children have been identified for a support of 1500/-

\* KSS has formulated a group of workers to identify the people who are in difficult situations and need a helping hand. A helping hand is extended to women led families, where the bread earner is dead or the person is incapacitated due to ill health. General financial assistance is also provided to the helpless by cash as well as kind as the situation may demand.

The contribution of KSS is remarkable for being instrumental in creating :

- a. Three Housing Societies at different places in Faridabad, which house more than 200 families in a serene atmosphere to help them groom and grow well.
- b. SHARIKA BHAWAN at Sector 17 Faridabad is a complex spread over 1600 sq. meters in the heart of the city of Faridabad. The lay out and the planning of the complex is perfect to address the different social needs. It is a building complex comprising a three storey building having a Basement, Ground Floor and a Prayer Hall, housing the image of Maa Sharika and other Incarnations of the Lord. There are appropriate utility rooms in the building for every social purpose. The complex also has a four storey hostel building for the needy students and others. We call it a cultural mall of Kashmiri Pandits in Faridabad.
- c. HARIPARBAT at Annangpur, Faridabad. It is stupendous, an unparalleled shrine created in recent times. Smt. Indra Kaul, wife of Shree J N Kaul once looking at the hillock of Annangpur got the visualization of Maa Sharika, as at Hari Parvat, Srinagar. Her visualization was put to practical shape to give rise to the most picturesque

structure, most beautiful landscape and most vibrant religious place of Kashmiri Pandits. It will not be incorrect to say the Hariparbat, Annangpur is the socio-spiritual center of the community outside the valley. Whole hillock has been developed lush green. A smooth stone staircase from one side reaches to **Gyan Peeth – Lord Ganesha's** temple, after some more steps is the **Shivala** and further some steps it is the grand temple of **Maa Sharika** : the **Chakrishwari**. On the round turn of the parikrama there is a memorial to **Lalishaweri** on one side and then the big garden for the excursion. HARIPARBAT at Annangpur, Faridabad is becoming the focal point of the community for the celebrations of **Navreh** – The New Year of Kashmiri Pandits. When we visited the place for the first time we could mark that, to distant distances all around in the whole city, nothing so green and lively existed. It is an environmental marvel. It is a spiritual place. It is the place for social integration. It is simple splendor in shape, for which the whole community shall be indebted to Smt. Indira Kaul, Shree J N Kaul, KSS and all other organisations and individuals who made it possible to fight the exodus with courage; not to collapse helplessly but to strive, stand up and win.

The major donors for SHARIKA BHAWAN have been :

Smt. Jaya and Dr. Maharaj Krishan Razdan; Smt. Pratibha & Shri Shiban Kishen Bhan; Shri J N Parimoo; Smt. Jaikishori & Shri Makhan Lal Bhat; Smt. Ratna & Shri Kanhaya Lal Raina; Smt. Leelawati And Shri Ram Chand Ganjoo; Smt. Indira and Shri J N Kaul.

Having completed 3 landmark projects, what next? KSS is working on plans to build a GOLDEN AGE home for our lonely elderly brethren and for institutionalizing the concept of "Mochifali-saet Athroat" a campaign to help the needy and the meritorious children of our Community. It is worthwhile to mention that for past many years KSS has been able, in collaboration with SOS Children's Villages of India, to reach out to our meritorious children in the camps by giving Scholarships. This effort needs to be strengthened many fold and here is where KSS intends to focus its energy in coming days ahead.

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*Mr. Puran Patwari is General Secretary of KSS, and Shri Arvind Shah is a colmmunist, writing under "Independent Impressions".*

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**Best Wishes From**

**A Well Wisher**

## A BETTER TOMORROW

— By **Deepak Ganju, USA**

It happens sometimes in the life of an individual, as well in the life of a community, that they feel a strong urge to have a new beginning because the struggles with survival and the struggles with intractable problems over-whelm them, making them apprehensive about losing the vision and values of life, which are invaluable to their existence. I feel that the worldwide Kashmiri Pandit (KP) community is at such a point at this time. KP's have gone through a lot in the seventeen years as pawns in the ongoing civil war in their homeland of Kashmir. We need a resurgence of faith in ourselves, re-immersion in our values, examination of our vision – a new beginning. The ushering in of the new year further invigorates us toward a fresh start.

We carry the burden of our exodus and till we get our rights to Kashmir, we also need to share this burden with our youth and next generations. Yet, very importantly, we all carry a lighter side. We want to meet, get together, celebrate and enjoy each other's company and our festivals. We want to keep those personal humanistic, fun loving and culturally sensitive traits alive, which make us want to be together and belong together.

As KP Diaspora has become a reality, networking KP's is the best way to maintain our identity and culture, the twin conditions of wholesome human group survival. As Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA) President, I will put enormous efforts to build this worldwide network. We need to create global cultural, artistic, recreational, and discussion areas allowing more interaction among the various KP groups in the world. We need to expand the KOAUSA website, creating a sub-site exclusively for the use of KP youth. The youth is our future, and cultivating its networking both in its quality

and quantity, will pave the way for KP ethos and survival. We have to give them more opportunities to know our history and heritage. And when it is safe, encourage them to visit our cradle, Kashmir.

We have to look toward the future for what we can achieve and not to beat our chests for what we have lost. Kashmiris are intelligent and quite hard working when motivated. We at KOA will never tire of exhorting and inspiring people, through our own efforts and conduct, to work hard. There is no doubt in my mind that in twenty-five years, KPs will become renowned world over for their special attributes and so become valued and respected. We are operating on our terms now compared to when in Kashmir, where for hundreds of years we suffered as a minority : being maligned, unfairly treated, and abused. I believe KOA has a role to play in the future of KP's – a future more resplendent than our recent pasts a life more wholesome than the life of indignities and injustice we lived for centuries.

KOA is a socio-cultural organisation with complete reliance on a volunteer workforce and hence it is crucial to understand that the KOA President is a community person and not merely an administrator. I believe that a leader should be a role model and possess strong family and community values and every community has a right to expect higher moral and ethical standards from its leaders.

Let us value, protect, and preserve what is good, sublime, and beautiful in our ethos and culture. Let KPs become a beacon of light and virtue in this world. Let us carry KOA to new heights and a new frontier. May our tomorrow be better than today.

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## SA'IN AAWAAZ

— By *Jaya Sib*, Miami, USA

Sa'in Aawaaz Dili Hund "**Koshur Samachar**"  
Bambayu Pethu Baigraawaan "**Milchar**"  
Bab Gopinathni Petthi Neraan "**Shuddha Vidya**"  
Banglor'u Petthu Diwaan "**Aalav**" Aawaaz

Dili Pethu Chhi Sozaan "**Naad**"  
Kar Maaji Ka'shiri Prath vizi yaad  
Yihai Ka'shir Zaan, Yihai Beyi Pehchaan

"Zaan Project", "Hechh'u Koshur"  
Dili Petthu Chhu Neraan "**Prakash**"  
"**Kh**ir **Bhawani Times**" Jemi Pethhitch Aawaaz  
"**Satisar**" Purwaan Kaishretik Saaz

Sholnaawan Chhi Kalkataa Petthu "**Vitasta**"  
Lolu Shrehi Hunz Yos'u Asmita  
"**Kasheer Magazine**" Tu Ami Allaw'u Ti Kenh  
Kota Chhu Asi Kashiri Hund Shreh

Shetch Khabar Peth'u Chandigarh Iwaan,  
Yas wannan Lobvun'i "**Sundarvani**"  
Panch Kula Petth Chhu Patrika Neran,  
Vanni Kyah Chhai Kaishir "**Panch Tirthi**"

Sairi Wanaan Da'idi Kangur T'u Vilazaar  
Praaran Kar Lagi BATAN Baan'u Hali Taar  
Lekhan Wa'ili Hadu-rost Beshumaar,

Karaan Koshur Drama Gevaan Taal  
Bol Bosh Tawai Maaraan Tchhal  
Ka'itsaah Website T'u Beyi Blog,  
Sairi Chhandaan Koshretuk Suraag

Kenh Vaakh Tu Vatsan Chhim Lekhin  
Itihas Navi-saru, Saru Karun  
Prenis Navis Paivand'u Karun  
Soyi Chhai Sa'in Aawaaz

Tsopai'rya "**Aalaw**" Tawai Dimaw  
"**Naad**" Saan "**Vetastayi**" Hund R'oaf Karav  
Samithh Karav Maaji Ka'shiri Prath vizi yaad

Yihai Kaishir Zaan, Yihai Beyi Pehchaan  
Samithh Karav Ath'u Waas  
Yehi Chaai Sa'in Pairi Zaan.

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## DISILLUSIONMENT AND FAITH THE FUTURE OF KASHMIRI PANDITS

— By *Maharaj Kaul, New York*

When a man is robbed of his belongings, kicked out of his home, and forced to leave his land where his ancestors had lived for thousands of years, it is very hard to imagine that he will continue to have faith in the human values of his tormentors and destroyers — even of his neighbors and countrymen at large, and even that of the people around the world.

Human life is a fragile phenomenon, where the support of the physical environment and the faith in the fellow human beings is a requisite for meaningful existence.

Kashmiri Pandits, the original inhabitants of Kashmir, have been kicked and destroyed before, but never have they been so grossly brutalised, victimised, and dehumanised as this time. This destruction of Kashmiri Pandits is the most profound in their history and it will have a significant impact on their survival and happiness.

The annihilation of Pandits happened while the central government of India was watching and well aware of the dimensions of the tragedy taking place but chose to play soft with its perpetrators, Muslims, in the hope of winning the civil war in Kashmir one day. Cries of help to the people of India and beyond evoked little effective sympathy and help. Ambushed in daylight, Pandits left Kashmir Valley in pain, misery, and utter revulsion toward Muslims and disgust toward their central government — but invisibly, deep beneath their day to day consciousness, many of them harbored hopes of justice and human treatment. It took many years after being kicked out of the valley before most of them started losing faith in the mankind's mythologised human values and civilisation's much vaunted democratic institutions.

Most of the KP's pass time in the dreary, pigeon-holed, futureless existence in Jammu. Thousands of men in mid-30's to mid-50's never go to work, as they have chosen to survive on government handouts given in lieu of the salary they would have earned, if they had proper conditions to work in Kashmir. This psychological-self-annihilation is the worst price KP community is paying at the hands of

the civil war. The lack of zeal, ambition, and a sense of honor to work has had devastating effect on the family happiness and the proper psychological health of KP children. Many young, professionally educated KP's have chosen to fight the mental illness and the consequent physical illness than attempt to carve a new future in places distant from Kashmir. This long immersion in slothfulness and hopelessness will cast a dark shadow on the development of the future Kashmiri culture. It will take generations before Kashmiri Pandits of Jammu and Kashmir will regain purposefulness, confidence, and cheerfulness in their lives. One has only to look at the volume of anti-depression, ulcer, and blood-pressure medications consumed by KP's in this region. Some time back there was a report that the average birth-weight of KP babies in the region was significantly deteriorating. The young KP boys and girls do not harbor big and many dreams.

One thing is clear in the present Kashmiri Pandit catastrophe, that they will never reoccupy Kashmir Valley in the same fervor, legitimacy, and bond as before. Although Kashmir will continue to remain under India, its past social and cultural atmosphere will never remerge, as it has been badly shattered. It is as if the spine of a human being has been broken in a violent collision and thereafter he can never reclaim his old poise, gait, and grace. Kashmiri Pandit's have to accept the *fait accompli* of the situation the events have thrown them into. Bleeding our hearts on the mammoth loss will not make us recover it. All the diplomacy, the political jostling and posturing going on in the world on Kashmir problem does not touch the plight of KP's. They are the side-show of the side-show in this insane and ancient drama played between Muslims and Hindus. All the intense and prolonged efforts by KP's, round the world, to draw attention to their injustice and pain have not produced any significant results. KP efforts have by now reached an apex, any further intensification and revision of strategy to win people to their cause will not be helpful. No energy should be expended to influence Govt. of India, as it has its own strategy and agenda, in

which KP's have a marginal weight. In such a situation KP's should give up on the hope of reclaiming Kashmir in the way it occupied it before. Kashmir can not become their home in the same way as it was before. The recent catastrophic experiences in Kashmir have alienated the dominant majority of Kashmiri, Muslims, and the Hindus for a long time to come. How can a KP return to a place where his fellow KP's have been murdered, many of their houses have been burnt, by a majority community who hates them. It would not be possible to have a normal emotional and psychological life there. And an attempt to raise KP children there would be a leap into insanity. Even though Kashmir will continue to remain a part of India, it is no longer a home of KP's.

With the above perspective, it would make a lot of sense for KP organisations like Panun Kashmir and KOA to withdraw from the cause of returning KP's to Kashmir and rechannelise their energies and financial resources to the placement of young KP's in jobs, helping in the education of the destitute children, and the creation of international networking for the sustenance of KP identity and ambition. KP's should be helped to run for local elections. They should stop beating their chests and look to future for the betterment of their children and community. There hang myths about Kashmiris that they have a sharp sense of survival and a keen mind. Although they are not accurate but Kashmiris do have some sense of survivability and some measure of mental keenness — both greatly needed in their present circumstances.

If KP's follow two things — and it seems that they eventually will — they will do quite well in future. One is to work hard and the other to not to tamper with their identity. KP's are into all kinds of technological and scientific fields. One area they are not good at is private entrepreneurship, no wonder not many KP's are in that. Working hard, though not natural for Kashmiris, is accommodated by them when circumstances demand. We have to see how KP's work when they are outside Kashmir. They being *permanently* exiled from Kashmir Valley is in a way a boon for them, as their mental keenness coupled with diligence may take them to hithero unrealised achievements. Kashmiris are very comparing, that is before embarking on important things they see whether fellow Kashmiris are also doing the same. In the universal climate of hard

work, engendered by cutthroat competition, KP's will follow the tide.

Identity is one of the basic structures of human psychology, any attempt to modify it is risking a lot. KP's have to keep nourishing their identity (but not necessarily continue with some bad things of the old culture). This should take form of the community cultural clubs, international gatherings on history, art, and literature of Kashmir, etc. The internet revolution is obviously a bonanza to the uprooted communities like KP's. As long as KP's consider themselves first as Kashmiris and then as Indians, they have a better chance of retaining their Kashmiri identity. Having been rendered refugees in the country of their citizenship, they can not do any better. Like Jews we have been rendered rootless and like them we will become cosmopolitan and mixable with other communities. But without losing our identity. Like them our history will become our destiny. Our greatest pitfall will be if we try to become Americans or British or French, etc. We have to live through our Kashmiri identity to live in peace, dignity, and happiness.

Contrary to popular opinion there will be people living in the world a hundred years from now, who will not only call themselves KP's but be KP's — though different from us, to account for the passage of time and the change of circumstances. They may not be speaking Kashmiri, same way as many Europeans in U.S.A. do not speak their ancestral languages. The whole world is changing in that the ethnicity of its groups is diluting as global village metaphor is hitting the ground. We will be a colored element in a vast kaleidoscope. From the high pedestal of Kashmiri Brahmin we have to descend gracefully to become a mere flower in a widespread garden. History has taught us that ethnicity does not disappear, though it may change its appearance. Also, Kashmiris, in spite of complex relationships they often have with each other, do not mix well with other ethnic groups. Networking will remain the backbone of the Kashmiri psychological survival. They are vastly more inclined to the psychological condition of "being", rather than of "becoming". Kashmiris seek their kind, even the one's they would have reservations about mixing with back home, outside Kashmir, in foreign lands, wherever they are spread thin. Kashmiris, history has shown us, have resistance to change.

Kashmiris will survive ethnically as Italians, Irish, Spanish, and other groups have, Identity and survival are in their genes.

Moving out of Jammu and Kashmir as refugees and restarting their lives has been traumatic for more than one reason. A refugee's resettlement is expectedly fraught with anguish and perspiration, but in a KP's case the added dimension of heart-break came from our central government's apathy and neglect — which has been so bad that it seems it was calculatedly done. Add to it the lack of sympathy and help from the non-Kashmiri Indian (the significant help from Bal Thackeray and others has only been a drop in the ocean), which has hurt the KP pride very badly. There are only about 800,000 KP's round the world, but they have a high estimation of their legacy, character, and personality, and therefore, they are understandably a proud people. Indian people are battling a universe of problems, the plight of KP's is only a small air current in a hurricane they live in. KP's can not find proper sympathy, help, and opportunity to transplant themselves in India outside Jammu and Kashmir after their destruction and desecration in land of their ancestors. They have to seek refuge outside India, if possible.

United States is a special place in the world at this time in history. It is not only the biggest nation of the immigrants but also a champion of democracy and is economically the strongest engine in the world. No wonder it has been a magnet to the world's disaffected, disfranchised, and deprived, KP's have a logical place to attempt to emigrate to in their circumstances. There are some one thousand KP families in U.S. eager to help them.

Given the ethnic multiplicity and tolerance in the country, U.S. is the most suitable place for KP diaspora to land at. Even though it is far from Kashmir, it is the most suitable garden in which the fragile KP plant has the best chance of transplantation. We can try, at a larger scale, to influence U.S. Govt. to give us refugee treatment in giving us land and financial support. This simple idea has unfortunately not been given a chance. Better than living in India, U.S.A. would best serve the long-time goals of many KP's.

Disillusionment is the present state of mind of the KP refugee, we could not expect any different from his circumstances. For thousands of years he clung to his mother Kashmir but now time has come for him to take a radical step, a step to make a clean break from the past illusions, and at last tread on the ground leading to liberation. We have been a target of religious hatred, a political bargaining chip, and a peripherally insignificant minority for a long time but now fate gives us a chance to escape the turmoil and a torture of hundreds of years — a chance we can not lose, an opportunity we can not spoil. Future beckons us. Faith has been simplistically described as belief without reason. But we need not abandon reason in having faith that KP's will transcend the present impasse and emerge as a more successful and happier community than before. All we have to do is work hard, retain our identity, and try to leave India. The subconscious religiosity of KP's, their non-conformist inclinations, their strong love for nature, and their disinclination toward a personal god are all ingredients for a people who can transplant themselves to different places and cultures in the world.

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## KASHMIRI HINDU SAMITHI KARNATAKA

— By *R. K. Mattoo, Bangalore*

During mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990s, a small chunk of this community migrated to Bangalore. The majority was from HMT and ITI, Srinagar which had to be shut down for some time owing to kidnapping and death of its General Manager Mr. Khera and other community members. A few of them were from nationalised banks, AG's office, telecommunications and Central Silk Board, mainly because their spouses were working either for ITI or HMT.

These employees were adjusted in various subsidiary units of HMT, most of them in Bangalore and Tumkur. Similarly ITI, had to be closed in Srinagar for some time and some employees adjusted in Bangalore. Accordingly, their spouses working in Banks and other Central Government Offices also got themselves adjusted in Bangalore and Tumkur.

After landing in Bangalore with their families, these employees were left in the lurch and many of them had to stay in Dharam-shallas and even open grounds without any shelter. The post migration brought a lot of problems. Initially these problems were looked after individually but later taken over by the Kashmiri Hindu Samithi Karnataka which took birth in 1990.

Like in many other states, Bangalore too had a registered association called Kashmiri Association in early 1980s. It had members from both the communities, i.e. Muslims and Pandits. The Association could not run on secular basis as it was dominated by the Muslim biradari. All the Kashmiri Pandits stopped attending the meetings convened by them. The Association still exists on paper and is being used by some old Muslims who have settled in Bangalore prior to 1990, in connection with their handicrafts business.

Meanwhile, the Pandits formed a separate group and had frequent get togethers on festival days. The activities were only restricted to meetings on happy occasions without any concrete agenda. The same group took initiative in drafting the byelaws and getting it registered in 1990. Among the prominent Kashmiris who have taken pains in giving the Samithi a formal shape and stamp are : Mr. S. Dharmarathi, a leading advocate in Srinagar, Mr. M. L. Kaul, Mr. G. L. Sapru, Dr. R. K. Kaw, Mr. P. N. Mattoo, Col. P. N. Kak and many more.

### **Emergence of Samithi**

I will not hesitate to say that the Samithi gained momentum under my leadership after I took over the reins as President in 1993, after serving as the Vice President for over a year. The Samithi geared up its activities in the service of community, looked after many problems and succeeded in achieving the results.

Getting a ration card or admission in a school were biggest problems then, leave alone generating employment for the jobless. Moving from pillar to post, the managing committee members worked day and night to mitigate the problems of the community.

### **Achievements And Activities of Samithi**

**School admissions, issue of ration cards, gas connections, priority travel tickets, professional guidance, medical and other support systems were organised and provided.**

**Salary issues, transfers, forced VRS in HMT and ITI were averted through bureaucratic interventions.**

**Reservations for the wards of Kashmiri Pandits in professional and non — professional colleges were got ensured through timely follow up and attention. At present, 116 seats in Engineering, seven in Medical & Dental and 2 in Management streams are allotted to KPs every year.**

**Migrant Identity cards have been issued by the Commissioner of Bangalore to all migrants who live in Bangalore, Tumkur and other districts of Karnataka.**

**Events** like Hur Ashtami, Zang Trai, and Navreh are performed every year in the Bhavan.

**Panchang, tele directories, bhajan cassettes, table caldnears** are being distributed to Beradari members.

**Navratra Havan** is undertaken in Bhavan every year during Navmi days.

**A minimum of Rs. 5000 provided as medical assistance to needy Kashmiri Pandits, residing anywhere in the country.**

**Annual General Body Meetings are held annually.** Monthly meetings are held to take stock of activities, their progress and accomplishments.

**Aalav magazine** in English/Hindi/Kashmiri was launched during January 2003 which has gained a wide publicity throughout the globe owing to its rich material text.

**Construction of Bhavan**, a kind of monument for KPs to preserve, protect identity and culture is under completion. Two phases have already been completed. Total land area of this Bhavan in the prime location is 16,200 sq. ft. and the built up area of approximately 15,000 sq feet will comprise of :

**Ground Floor : A dining hall, community kitchen, yoga and meditation hall, Samithi Office and washing areas**

**First Floor** : 17 Living rooms with bath attached and all ultra modern facilities like cable, internet, library, museum, Research room and a mini hall.

**Second Floor** : A multipurpose Auditorium with seating capacity of 500-800 people.

Provision has been kept for a temple—Neelakentashwara Temple – in front of the proposed Bhavan on a 1200 Sq ft of land.

The present market value of the land is Rs. 2.5 crore given by the Bangalore Development Authority through a special order of the then Chief Minister S M Krishna, now the Governor of Maharashtra. The cost of the project (construction alone) has been estimated at Rs. one crore. The project is halfway now and is expected to be completed by early 2008.

**Future plans of the Samithi :**

- a) to establish an old age accommodation on time sharing basis with all modern amenities, on the lines of guest house accommodation.

This is necessary in view of thousands of software engineers employed in Bangalore who have to go globe trotting leaving their parents alone back in Bangalore. Such people who have no dearth of money but need company will be largely benefited by this project.

- b) To start an education institution to cross subsidise the education of those who live in migrant camps and can not afford higher education for their children.
- c) To start a free dispensary at the Kashmir Bhavan for the benefit of the local people in the area. Doctors from the community will come for consultation on turns.
- d) To start a free kitchen for poor at the temple premises.

To achieve the above, we seek the entire community's support and encouragement without which nothing can be realised.

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*[The author is President, Kashmiri Hindu Samithi (Karnataka) Regd., President and managing Trustee of Kashmiri Hindu Cultural Welfare Trust, Chief Editor, "Aalav" and Vice President, All India Kashmiri Samaj, New Delhi.*

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## **KASHMIRI SAMITI, BANGALORE**

— By **T. N. Dhar "Kundan"**, Bangalore

I had visited Bangalore earlier also but only for a short period to attend some seminars or participate in some function. It was in 1999 that my son was posted here and I came to live here. The first thing that I did was to get in touch with Shri R. K. Mattoo, the President of the Bangalore Samiti, who in turn guided me to meet other office bearers. The first thing that struck me and pleased me was to find that Shri Sapru, a well-known transporter had made his office premises available to the Samiti to run its activities. The second thing was the unity and cohesiveness among the members of the executive committee. The third important thing that I came to know was the care and compassion shown by them towards any member of the community in need, difficulty or suffering.

The Samiti had been in existence for a decade and had always stood by the community whether living

permanently in Karnataka or forced to migrate from Kashmir due to the turmoil of 1989-90. A plot of land had been earmarked to build the Kashmir House for the activities of the community living in and around Bangalore. During my seven-months stay then, I observed that whenever unfortunately any Kashmiri was hospitalised the members of the Samiti were at hand to serve, help, and use their good offices to get sizeable cut in the hospital bill. Whatever the members of the Samiti needed, be it accommodation, a gas connection or admission in the schools, the Samiti was there to help. Apart from festivals like Navreh, Zangtraai etc. the Samiti observed the Martyr's Day and the Holocaust Day in a big way. They performed annual Havan and invited prominent people from other cities for interaction and deliberations on the problems caused by the forced migration. They also invited artists from Jammu and

other places and together with the local talent organised cultural programmes. I was honoured when a function was organised in a spacious hall where I recited my Kashmiri poems in the presence of nearly three hundred people. During my interaction with the executive I floated an idea that the Samiti could start bringing out a journal, which was well received. I was pleasantly surprised one fine morning when I received a telephone call from Shri Mattoo at Delhi to inform me that a monthly magazine had been started and that it was proposed to include my name as a Consulting Editor, which I gladly consented.

I have again come to live here in this city and have been here for more than a year now. It was fascinating to see the progress made by this Samiti in all the areas of its activities. Affiliated to the All India Kashmiri Samaj, as it is, it has served as a hub of activities and an important center in the southern part of the country. The Samiti has achieved tremendous success on many fronts. To describe a few of these let me start with the most important of them all. A piece of land has been obtained from the government of Karnataka in the heart of the city. Facing all odds and the litigation forced on the Samiti, an ambitious plan of constructing the Bhawan has been drawn. A building comprising a community hall, a library, some guesthouses, an auditorium and the office of the Samiti encompassing three massive storeys is at the moment at an advanced stage of construction. This is going to be a prestigious project and an achievement worthy of all praise.

Every year the Samiti has been using its good offices and the influence with the Government of the State and has been successful in getting a number of seats reserved for the wards of the displaced community in all technical and professional courses, medical, engineering etc. At the time of the interview, the parents of these prospective trainees are provided with all assistance needed by them. This is yet another significant achievement. Samiti is very thoughtful and practical in its working. It has maintained a close liaison not only with the government but also with the local population. This has been giving it a great advantage in times of need in seeking various facilities for the needy members of the community. It has been successful in creating a general awareness about the turmoil faced by us and has aroused a lot of sympathy among the authorities as also common masses.

Last year the world conference of the All India Kashmiri Samaj was organised by the Samiti at

Bangalore with a great success. The Chief Minister of the state, some other prominent Ministers and political bigwigs participated and promised all help for the cause of the displaced community. The Samiti deserves all credit for the sense of responsibility with which it has been conducting itself, carrying everyone along with it and maintaining close connection with the All India Kashmiri Samaj and its activities. The monthly journal 'Aalav' that the Samiti has been publishing in three languages, English, Hindi and Kashmiri has come of age. It is financially self-supporting, rich in content and quality and its circulation has increased leaps and bounds. Credit goes to Shri R. K. Mattoo, himself a senior journalist working as a Bureau Chief in the New Indian Express, for the English section and Shri M. K. Raina for the Kashmiri and Hindi section; Shri Raina edits and manages this section from Bombay, which is commendable to say the least.

The Samiti has been working in a very democratic manner. There are different Vice-Presidents with the responsibility for different aspects of the functions of the Samiti. Fund raising, Cultural functions, Liaison with others agencies, Construction work, Printing and Distribution of the magazine and obtaining advertisements for the 'Aalav' are the main activities shared by these selfless workers. Pending the completion of the Kashmir Bhawan, the entire office work of the Samiti and the magazine is being carried out from the office of Shri Sapru. Shri Zutshi has been the general Secretary of the Samiti for a long time and has been untiringly executing the duties. Lately there has been a healthy tie up with the organisation of Shri Shri Ravi Shankar Ji, who has adopted 32 Kashmiri children from the Purkhu camp of Jammu. These children are getting free education and board and lodging there and the Samiti has taken upon itself the responsibility of keeping in touch with them so that they do not miss the Kashmiri family atmosphere and Kashmiri dishes, which they are used to. There is an attempt to make this Samiti the southern headquarters of the Kashmiris and links have been maintained with the Kashmiris living in Chennai and other places.

The Samiti has ambitious programmes for the future including establishing a research center, a free medical assistance unit, a Kashmir centric library and organising Language courses in Kashmiri. We wish the Samiti, God speed in its noble task of serving the community as there is a sizeable presence of Kashmiris at HMT, ITI, at Tumkur, Mysore and other places.

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# KASHMIRI SAHAYAK SABHA, CHANDIGARH

—*Sqn. Ldr. B. L. Sadhu*

(*Inputs by Sh. G. L. Kaul, President K.S.S., Chd.*)

## Formation

Kashmiri Sahayak Sabha, Chandigarh, like any other organisation of its ilk, has a chequered history of its own. It has gone through and thankfully survived the vicissitudes of time. After the partition of the erstwhile Punjab in 1947, the Kashmiri Pandits serving in the state, opted for Indian Punjab with its capital at Shimla. It was in the year 1953 that, The City Beautiful of Chandigarh, was built and the capital of Punjab moved from Shimla to Chandigarh and with it moved the whole flock of serving Hindus of Kashmiri origin.

The year 1957-58 saw the stalwarts like late Dewan Somer Nath Madan, S/Shri N. N. Dhar, Arjan Nath Trakru, Brijender Kaul and the living legends like Shri Pyare Lal Kaul (Founder Editor – Sundervani) and Shri G. L. Kaul Former Secretary, Vidhan Sabha, Punjab, to name only a few, join together and form a Sabha named as "Northern India Kashmiri Pandit Sabha". Dewan Somer Nath Madan had the distinction of becoming the first President of the Sabha. In mid 60s, a controversy arose regarding the change of its name as the title suggested a parochial bias. So to make it more broad based & secular the name of the Sabha was later changed to Kashmiri Sahayak Sabha, Chandigarh, and was registered as such in the year 1964.

In the early years of its formation there was only a small number of K. P. families residing in Chandigarh. But with the passage of time the number of families kept on swelling and the community members slowly and steadily started inhabiting the contiguous areas of Chandigarh like Panchkula (Haryana) & Mohali (Punjab). Till 1989-90 the number of the families was about 200 but post-exodus, there was a sudden influx of the Kashmiri displaced Hindus who mainly comprised the serving employees of banks, Insurance, HMT, AG Branch and a few persons of business class. They got themselves settled nearer to their places of work all over Chandigarh, Panchkula, Mohali and its surrounding areas like Parwanoo, Pinjore, Zirakpur, Kharar, Ropar etc. And today the number of families including the floating population is estimated to be around one thousand.

When the number of Biradari members increased to large proportions at Panchkula and its surrounding areas, it became difficult for them to come all the way

to Chandigarh to participate in the functions of the Sabha. Moreover, during 90s, after the migration, when relief was granted by the Chandigarh Administration, they refused to entertain the applications from those who were residing in Panchkula and adjoining areas because these were falling in the state of Haryana. So a separate Sabha titled "Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, Panchkula" was formed in 1993 which, of course, is an off-shoot of the K.S.S. Chandigarh. Here one pertinent thing to note is that the relation between the two Sabhas is very amiable and many members of Panchkula Sabha are the Life Members of Chandigarh Sabha. We partake in each other's functions and whenever any rally or demonstrations are held, they are held together.

## Social Activities

The activities of the Sabha like any other Sabha in the country are mainly confined to the social and cultural aspects. Annual Havan on Durga Ashtami started by the *ab initio* group and carried on year after year till today and the Navreh celebrations are two most important events taking place in the Sabha in which there is optimum participation of the Biradari members. Again, besides frequent Executive meetings and minimum two general body meetings in the year, the Biradari members meet on occasions like Shivratri, Janam Ashtami, Hur Ashtami, Holocaust day etc. Blood Donation camps are held almost every year.

Not lagging behind in Sports, we have a cricket team titled Shehjar Cultural and Recreational Club, Chandigarh with Sh. Sanjay Kaul (Pinku) as its President, Shri Surinder Kaul as General Secretary and Ramesh Raina and Rajinder Kaul as Executive Committee members. There are about 20 players in the team who regularly practice on every Sunday and arrange tournaments and league matches with other teams in Chandigarh.

The Sabha has hosted one Executive committee and one general body meeting of All India Kashmiri Samaj in 1998 and another meeting this year in May.

## Sabha Constitution

Ever Since the formation of the Sabha & the Trust, the constitution of the Sabha was revised and modified on three occasions & the Trust Deed on one occasion. With the increase in the Sabha activities and the changing times, it was felt that frequent

amendments to the Constitution and the Trust Deed, for frivolous reasons, was not desirable. Therefore, on 2nd May 2004, the General body of the Sabha formed a Sub-committee of seven members namely S/Shri M. J. Zarabi, K. N. Dhar, I. K. Kaul, H. N. Raina, Rajinder Kaul, C. L. Raina headed by Dr. R. P. Sapru to revise the Constitution of the Sabha as well as the Trust Deed. This committee did a commendable job and gave us a revised draft constitution on 27th Feb. 2005. This was thoroughly debated and deliberated upon and ultimately adopted by the General body on 8th May, 2005 with some minor changes.

### **Sundervani**

An official organ and mouth piece of Kashmiri Sahayak Sabha, Chandigarh, Sundervani was first published in late 60s and its first editor was Sh. Pyare Lal Kaul. Like Chandigarh Sabha, Sundervani too had some hiccups. Between the date of its first publication and to-date, it was out of print during early 70s and mid 90s for a period of 3 to 4 years each but was revived each time for the benefit of the members of the Biradari for keeping them abreast of the happenings around. The editors who changed hands during the entire period were late Major P. N. Walie, Dr. J. L. Handoo & Sh. Subash Sapru. The present editor is Sh. Shibani Kachru and the co-editor is Sh. B. L. Dhar. Dr. J. L. Handoo is one of the members of the Advisory Board. The journal was previously being printed quarterly but has of late been made bi-monthly. It compares with any other prestigious journals of the community.

### **Kashmir Bhawan**

Way back in 1983, an article of mine appeared in the Sundervani under the caption "Kashmir Bhawan—A Dream". At that time, it certainly looked like a dream, because the coffers of the Sabha were empty, avenues for raising funds were very limited and the capacity and will to build the Bhawan, from voluntary donations collected from the Biradari, was something like asking for the moon.

All the same, a team of dedicated members of the Biradari like Late Mrs. Hem Madan, S/Shri R. K. Zutshi, H. K. Kaul, Late P. N. Kaul (Jan), S. N. Moti, Late Sh. B. L. Razdan, Late Maj. P. N. Walie, to name only a few, vowed to give a concrete shape to my slogan of 1978, of building the Kashmir Bhawan, which till then had remained only a pious wish.

### **Allotment of Land & Fund Raising Campaign**

It was due to the persistent effort of Sh. R. K. Zutshi that land for the Bhawan was allotted in 1985 and from then onwards the one-point aim of building the

Bhawan, goaded us ahead. By then we had raised a measly sum of Rs. 14000/- which went towards the cost of the land. Thus we overcame the first and the most vital hurdle in the achievement of our goal. It was, however, a moment of great rejoicing for all of us to see the land allotted. The Sabha took many a forward stride under the leadership of late Mrs. Hem Madan and she was always at the forefront of any activity related to the progress of the Sabha. At that time I happened to be the General Secretary of the Sabha, a post I held for many years.

We launched a door-to-door campaign for raising more funds, and by the time the Sabha changed its leadership, we had collected another modest sum of Rs. 30,000/- which, in those days, was considered substantial. The reins of the Sabha were taken over by Shri R. K. Bhan in 1985. It was he, who hit upon a novel idea of holding a star — night for collecting funds for the Bhawan. After deliberating on various propositions, it was decided to invite some of the leading stars of the then very popular T. V. Serial, 'Hum-log'.

Organising such kind of a programme was a new experience for us which called for dedication and discipline of a very high order. As far as I can remember, a team of workers was chosen which consisted of late Mrs. Hem Madan, S/Shri R. K. Bhan, Bansi Lal Dhar, M. L. Ambardar, A. K. Kak, Prof. K. B. Raina, myself and several others. This team worked hard day and night, to make "Hum-log night" a success. The programme was ultimately held on 23 March 86, which fetched us a respectable sum of Rs. 70,000/- I must acknowledge without hesitation the exemplary work done by this core group & other Sabha members in bringing this venture of "Hum-Log night" to resounding success. It will go down in the annals of KSS Chandigarh history as a marvelous feat in raising the funds. After this, there was no looking back.

### **Foundation Stone Laid**

Eventually, the foundation stone of the Bhawan was laid by Shri R. K. Bhan in October 1986, and the occasion was celebrated with enthusiasm and gaiety. One could see the jubilation & pride in the faces of the members of the Biradari who congratulated one another at the landmark achievement. The laying of the foundation stone sounded yet another challenge for the Biradari in general and the members of executive in particular and it seemed that every body had vowed to himself to work whole — heartedly for the construction of the Bhawan. The collection of funds and simultaneously the construction of the

Bhawan gained momentum and the ground floor was completed in 1988 under the able guidance of late B. L. Razdan, late M. L. Zutshi, Major H. N. Kaul, K. N. Bhatt and others.

### **Construction of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**

For the next 4 to 5 years, there was virtually a lull in the construction work because of some inexplicable reasons. The work, however, was resumed with great urgency by the new executive body headed by Shri P. N. Ambardar in 1996. This team worked with great zeal and enthusiasm to achieve the aim of completing the project of constructing two more storeys of the Bhawan. Again a door to door campaign was launched & Biradari members were exhorted to donate Rs. 1000 per family. It was heartening to note that the members of the Biradari responded with equal "josh" and zeal and together we went ahead in achieving the desired goal. In this exercise while appreciating and acknowledging the selfless and hard work put in by Shri P. N. Ambardar, Nancy Ganjoo, Phoola Mirza, K. L. Bhat, C. L. Pandita, Ramesh Madan and others the Chandigarh Biradari is particularly impressed and at the same time grateful to Sh. K. L. Bhat for his honest, upright and whole — hearted involvement in collecting the funds and maintaining the accounts thereof upto the last penny. It was not only within the Biradari that the funds were collected but hefty sums were also collected from outside the Biradari from non-Kashmiri brethren by this group. Thus it took almost four years to complete the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Bhawan.

### **Moorti Sthapna**

It was the ardent desire of late Shri B. L. Razdan, who had started the Sankirtan Group of the Sabha in eighties, to install an idol of Ma Durga in the Bhawan. Therefore, when the construction of the third floor was half way through, arrangements were made by the executive body to install the Moorti. Shri Ambardar made a dash to Jaipur and took pains to select the Moorti and bring it to Chandigarh. Ultimately, the Moorti "sthapna" was done on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1999 by Smt. Uma Devi Ambardar and Smt. Mohini Razdan amidst Havan celebrations where the joy and excitement among the biradari members reigned supreme. The occasion was solemnised by Swami Ved Swaroopanand Saraswati who had come from Faridabad along with Shri J. N. Kaul, the then President AIKS and other dignitaries from there. The temple is also adored by the idols of Maha Ganesh and Lord Shivji offered by Shri Mohan Lal Kaul (Sector 6.1) and installed in the year 2004.

### **Bhawan Facilities**

Today Kashmir Bhawan stands majestically tall among the one thousand displaced Pandit families, dispersed

over Chandigarh, Mohali, Panchkula and its surrounding areas fulfilling their aspirations and catering to their multi-faceted needs. It houses a retail outlet of Kashmiri Masala and a *Nanwai's* Shop. All the traditional celebration, on the occasions like Navreh, Shivratri and Annual Havan, take place in the precincts of the Bhawan in which almost the entire Biradari participates. It is boon to the members of the Biradari who have to pay a minimal rent when they perform marriages, Yagnopavit ceremony or any other "Bod-Doh" in Kashmir Bhawan.

More importantly, it is a God-send facility to the bereaved families coming from outside Chandigarh whose kith and kin are lost while undergoing treatment in P.G.I. and other medical institutions.

Above all, the all pervading deities of Ma Durga, Maha Ganesh and Lord Shiva installed in the top floor of the Bhawan oversees and at the same time bless the members of this fragmented but undaunted community who live in the fond hope of returning one day to their roots. In this temple the Biradari members assemble on every Shukla Paksh Ashtami or sometimes twice a month to sing Bhajan/Kirtan in praise of the lord and to satisfy their spiritual urge. In short, all these Kashmir-Bhawan-centric activities positively and ultimately subscribe to the unity, brotherhood, cohesion and solidarity among the members of the community which is an imperative need of the hour and so vital to keep the Biradari together.

### **K.S.S. Charitable Trust**

The General body of the Sabha created the K.S.S. Charitable Trust, Chandigarh on 10th Nov. 1985 to promote Public Charitable activities in consonance with the aims and objects of the Sabha. Six Trustees namely, Sqn. Ldr. B. L. Sadhu, Prof. K. B. Raina, Late Dr. C. M. Kaul, Late Smt. Hema Madan and Late Major P. N. Walie were manning the trust initially with Shri R. K. Zutshi as the Chairman, the post he held till June 2006 when he resigned due to the reasons of his indifferent health. This trust was registered with the competent authority on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1986 and with the approval of the Estate Officer, Chandigarh the property of Kashmir Bhawan was transferred to the Trust for proper administration and upkeep.

In 1995 S/Shi S. N. Kaul, B. L. Ganjoo, C. L. Kaul, O. N. Batt and Late Sh. S. N. Pandita were inducted in the trust as replacement for those who were either deceased or had left Chandigarh.

Towards the end of 1998, there was a general feeling in the Sabha that the trust should function in more democratic style rather than being a body of static members. An amendment to the trust deed was

brought out, which stipulated that every year two members of trust should retire yielding place to the other members to be on the trust. Accordingly Sh. Kuldeep Kaul, Sh. Vinod Bhan & Sh. P. N. Ambardar had a stint in the trust and later on resigned from the trust for their own reasons.

On resignation of Sh. R. K. Zutshi due to his ill health Sh. T. K. Magazine took over as an interim Chairman of the trust with the present trustees as Sqn. Ldr. B. L. Sadhu, Smt. Nancy Ganju, S/Shri D. N. Pandit, A. K. Kak, B. L. Dhar & C. L. Pandita.

### **Charitable Activities**

The Trust has been rendering services, though in a limited manner, to the extremely needy patients who come to P.G.I. or other Medical institutions for treatment from outside Chandigarh. Nevertheless, the trust has made it a regular feature for the last two years to finance about 20 poor young boys & girls residing in Muthi Camp at Jammu solely to meet their educational requirement. For this purpose we send out the request to our philanthropist brothers and sisters in and outside Chandigarh and I am happy to report that there has been a positive response from the worthy persons with a human heart and that is how this project is financed.

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*The writer is the former President of KSS, Chandigarh and Vice President (North Zone) All India Kashmiri Samaj.*

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## KASHMIRI HINDU SABHA – PUNE

— By *C. L. Razdan, Pune*

The history of Kashmiri Hindu Sabha in Pune dates back to early 1950, when many Kashmiris were transferred from Dehradun, along with the National Defence Academy. That time the total number of Kashmiris in Pune was not much. Because of close proximity, most of them knew each other well. Outside this academy; there were not many Kashmiri Hindus. With the result even the Muslims settlers from Kashmir in Pune would involve themselves with this Sabha. That time, as a common activity, they would go to picnic etc but there was no organisation as such.

It was some time in mid 1960 when many more Pandits shifted to Pune (because of transfer of many Kashmiri Hindus in Air Force to Pune) and need of forming a Sabha was felt. Many elders of the community like Mr. P. N. Kaul (Bujju), Mr. M. L. Ganju, Mr. B. K. Kotru, Mr. Sumbali Prof. T. N. Raina etc. took the lead and the working on the same started. That time many picnics and cinema shows were organised, and that is how our belongingness to each other was expressed.

Parmeshwari Handoo case in Kashmir created flutter all over the country and Pune could not remain unaffected, and we started assembling more often. However, after few months the activity remained at a low level only.

It was after the exodus of Kashmiri Hindus from the valley, the present shape of Sabha was germinated. This exodus of Kashmiri Hindus from the valley, though worst experience of our community, has proved to be a boon for us in many ways. It motivated most of those members of the community who had come out of the valley earlier, to come closer and work for the community cause. In the process many new Sabhas were formed all over the world, and many old Sabhas got rejuvenated. Pune Kashmiri Sabha is one of them. Mr. Jogesh Wali, Mr. Pran Nath Tikoo Mr. M. L. Ganju and many others got motivated to work for the Sabha.

Education of children is most important thing for our community, and Pune is the den of many professional colleges. To take care of the education of the childrens it was but natural that many community members would visit this city during this upheaval but they needed support from local community brothers in a big way. At this moment of time, Kashmiri Hindu Sabha – Pune rose to the occasion and did all that was possible for them. They helped these visitors by

accommodating them as best as they could and whenever required, accompanied them to the colleges for the admission of children, and most important, within a short span of time **arranged a special quota for these children in professional colleges of Maharashtra.**

While doing so, the need of a place where these visitors could be accommodated during the season of admission was felt. Accordingly a suitable "Bhavan" was built to meet this need as well. In short, to solve this problem, all that was possible and required was done by the Sabha.

However there were still many problems, which remained unsolved. Details of the same are well known to all of us and need not be elaborated.

On 26.01.2005 the new executive body of our Kashmiri Hindu Sabha – Pune was elected.

Because of the changed environment by this time, a need in change of agenda for the organisation was felt. After lot of deliberations, it was decided that the Sabha should work to make the community prosperous and flourishing one. In our community whenever a person takes the permission of elder to start any new job, the elders bless him with "Ad Sah Gachh Bajah. Chéfolun T Navun". Meaning 'May you be successful, May you always flourish'.

Considering these as the wishes and the blessing of our elders, the Sabha decided to work on these very lines. Accordingly it was decided to ***Work on making our community prosperous and flourishing one,*** and the same was made a goal for the organisation.

To make it effective and lasting the executive body tried to make their programs, system oriented rather than individual based.

To achieve this goal the executive decided on following three measures :

### **A) To make a community :**

The new body believed that the communication among the members is the most important aspect in making the community a cohesive group. Accordingly they collected the addresses, telephone/mobile numbers, and e-mail I.D. of all the known Kashmiri families staying in Pune. Further, requested these members to inform the Sabha details of any new Kashmiri family known to them, and

A.1) Started writing letter to the community members every month, apprising them of

the various activities the executive body plans to have and sought their comments on the same. This was an **attempt to involve most of the members in decision-making.**

- A.2) Have **created a web site and an email. I.D** for the community and informed the password of the same to complete Pune Baradai. This way an individual can go through the correspondence going on in the Sabha, and also communicate with their executive body and others. This is an attempt to make the Sabha activity transparent.

e-mail I.D of Sabha is kppune@gmail.com, website name is <http://www.kppune.com>

- A.3) Have prepared **a directory of Kashmiri Hindus families staying in Pune** and loaded the same on the above stated web site which in being updated easily.
- A.4) Have **distributed locality wise addresses of Kashmiris to our members.** It is an attempt to introduce the Kashmiri neighbors to each other to enable immediate contacts for obvious reasons of creating a closely knit community in Pune and a group of volunteers.
- A.5) Sabha wishes to utilise the services of these volunteers for many other activities as well.
- A.6) We intend to load many additional information about the original family background of our members on this web site.

***B) To make the community prosperous.***

Most of our community members, who are in service, are doing well, and are prospering. However there are many, who are unemployed, and need our assistance. To cater to this requirement :

- B.1) Sabha has **created a placement cell** for our young children. This activity is divided in two groups.
- a) For those children who can not go for higher education.
- b) For those children who can go for higher education.

The children who could not go for higher education are mainly from Jammu migration camps. We bring these children in small manageable batches; **take care of their each and every requirement right**

**from the time they land at Pune railway station till they get jobs and are in a position to take care of themselves.** This includes Lodging, Boarding, Training, Travel, Medical Treatment, etc. This being the need of the hour, many community members from Pune got involved in the same. This has not only served the desired cause, **but also motivated them to come closer and work for the welfare of community.**

The children who could go for higher education are from all over the country. We collect their resumes through Internet and **approach those members of our community, who we feel can help them.**

- B.2) To make this **activity system oriented** and automatic, we plan to load this information on our web site about which we have mentioned above (A.3.3)
- B.3) There are quite a few Kashmiri children studying in Pune. It was observed that because of the oppressive condition prevailing in Kashmir, quite a few children have lost their self-confidence. With the result at the time of interview they don't always succeed. We have created a **cell that trains these children in developing skills, personality development, and in art of appearing in interview etc.** Few very senior Kashmiri Management Consultants, from Pune are independently handling this activity.
- B.4) We **offer our services to the children who come to Pune for their admission** in colleges here in term of guidance as well as lodging in Bhavan.

***C) To make the community flourishing :***

We believe, the right way to flourish is by helping each other. Luckily most of our seniors, who are in service, are doing very well in their professional lives. To enable them to help our those members of the community, who are not so well placed, the following is the action plan :

- C.1) On our web we plan to put the details of our community members who are in services, (A.3.4) to enable **better jobs to potential employers** from our community.
- C.2) With the help of this list our community members can **take advantage of each other's position in his office.**

- C.3) We apprise every child during selection of their duty to help other children of our community when he attains a position to do so. This is an attempt to **develop an attitude of helping each other among our community members.**

**In addition to it, we have following activities in Pune**

- 1) **Havan on every first Sunday of the month.**
- 2) **Discussion for Involving Community members in Sabha activities.**
- 3) **Free medical check up** for our community members after the Havan is over.
- 4) **Library** with about 300 books in our bhavan of Kashmiri literature.
- 5) Collection of monthly contributions from members through Bank.
- 6) We have persuaded one of our members to hold his Child's **wedding in a way that all our traditional customs are followed, and at the same time no unnecessary expenditure is made.** In the process what ever is saved and the 'gulyimyuth' collected, **is donated to social cause.**
- 7) **We celebrate various important functions** of our community in Bhavan.
- 8) We try **to revive our old culture** during these celebrations by serving typical Kashmiri cuisine, having Kashmiri Music, having Antakhshari on Kashmiri items, playing old Kashmiri games, etc.

**Future Plans :**

- 1) To give the **ultimate shape to the Bhavan**, which is incomplete at present
- 2) **To buy the land** adjacent to the Bhavan
- 3) In order to preserve our language, we wish to cut few **C.Ds on Kashmiri lullaby, morning prayers, and nursery rhymes**, and distribute them among the members for them to play in front of their children. It will teach the language to the parent as well.
- 4) To have **Guru Ji and a Kashmiri Baker** in the town.

- 5) **Create a trust that will work as a share holder of professional business house** and take care of financial help needed by our community members.

There are many business opportunities in Jammu itself.

A) As per the Director, Tourist Deptt, J&K, last year 75 lakh visitors visited Jammu as pilgrims and tourists. Considering expenses made by an individual just Rs. 4000/- the total turn over under this activity works out Rs. 3000/- crores. By offering a service that is desired by these visitors, and is not available in Jammu, like locker rooms facility, dormitory, wash rooms etc, quite a sizable portion of this business can be achieved by us.

B) In each migrant camp there are about 1000 families. Considering each family spends just Rs. 4000/- per month on their daily needs, the yearly turn over works out to be Rs. 5 Crores. Multiplication of this figure with the number of migration camp should give the idea of business potential there. By giving a service like that of malls, where goods are sold at a discounted rate, we can harness most of this business. If we apprise the community of our intentions of offering this service, conducting the business will be still easier.

C) We can take advantage of our real strength, i.e. being a service class community. Our employed as well unemployed youth can work out to be a big source of income for the community. If we create a placement agency and offer the services of these children to potential employers through this agency, big money can be generated. **In the process our whole community will flourish day after day.**

For this **Kashmiri Hindu Sabha – Pune has already worked out an understanding with a B.P.O. company.** Project is in progress.

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# KASHIR SABHA, AMBALA

— By **A. K. Wattal**, Ambala

It is well said, "Necessity is the mother of invention". It was in 1990 that about 3.50 lakh Kashmiri Pandit souls had to migrate from the beautiful valley of Kashmir, not for pleasure, not for livelihood, not for an organised tour, not for economic rehabilitation, not for educational prospects; but to preserve their nationality and protect this minuscule minority from extinction on account of the persecution of the antinational elements, brought out within the valley and across the border.

The sudden, and unexpected displacement was chaotic, frustrating and devastating. However the KP community being vibrant, tolerant, flexible and alert, somehow survived the impacts, stresses and strains caused by this displacement. They are now spread over, across the length and breadth of the country and the globe.

Wherever they are, they have formed community organisations like **Sabhas** and **Samities** to preserve their community ethos, cultural identity and age old traditions. No doubt the external forces do have an impact on our social and cultural vibrance, yet these Sabhas and Samities are doing their bit to negate the same.

It was in the same context that **Kashir Sabha Ambala** has also got its birth.

## What Kashir Sabha Ambala is for?

The Sabha was founded on 28-03-2001 and first election of the office bearers and executive committee was held on 15-08-2001. The Kashir Sabha Ambala has been registered as a society (under societies registration Act 1880) with registration No : 3227 of 2001-02. The main aims and objects of the Sabha are :-

- (a) To organise and unite the residents/members, to regulate their friendly relations and to create cordial atmosphere with one another.
- (b) To redress the grievances & to settle disputes, if any, with one another amicably.
- (c) To cooperate with other organisations, having similar objects in India or abroad.
- (d) To arrange educational seminars, debates and cultural programmes for the Biradari members in particular and with other like minded organisations in general.
- (e) To arrange cultural tours, havans, and religious programmes like Tzangtrei, Janam Ashtami etc.
- (f) To provide financial aid as relief to the poor & deserving students of the Biradari for higher education, without any consideration of caste, creed & colour.
- (g) To operate the Accounts in Banks or to deal with the Banks in any manner what so ever for achieving the objects of the Sabha.
- (h) The management of the affairs of the Sabha has been entrusted to the duly constituted

Executive Committee as provided in the rules & regulations of the Sabha.

The Sabha during its period of existence has the following achievements to its credit :-

- (1) A plot of land admeasuring 1200 Sq Yards was purchased in the name of "KASHIR SABHA AMBALA" for construction of a community centre and an educational institution.
- (2) A one room dwelling unit with a kitchen and toilet has been constructed for Community Guru Ji.
- (3) One "Havan Kund" with a shed has been constructed, where Havans, Yagnas and Mekhlas could be organised.
- (4) The Sabha brings out a bimonthly cultural magazine, titled 'Parbatuk Thazar'.
- (5) A Directory of all the members living at Ambala has been published, four times so far.
- (6) The Sabha organises annual Mahayagna at Ambala, which is attended by almost all the biradari members.
- (7) Kashmiri cultural programmes are organised at intervals, for cultural benefit of the members.

## Our Future Plans :-

- (a) To form a co-operative Group Housing Society and make the dream of formation of "KASHUR ENCLAVE" come true.
- (b) To set up an "Educational Institution" on the pattern of minority educational institutions like Alameen Trust, Banasthali, SGPC, Muslim Auqaf Trust etc., with the active involvement of NRI Kashmiris.
- (c) To develop healthcare institutions for welfare of the masses.
- (d) To organise seminars/Symposia, throwing light on the present plight of Internally displaced Kashmiris and their future course of action.
- (e) To give scholarships to needy and deserving students as the financial health improves.
- (f) To work as an active affiliate of the All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS).

## United we stand, divided we fall :-

A population of 3.50 lakh people can not exist as a single community, if there is no federating organisation like the All India Kashmiri Samaj. The unitary Sabhas and Samities may be able to cater to their local issues and problems, but for our total and overall survival, the need of the hour is to amalgamate all our organisations under one banner, to make our voice more vibrant, meaningful, forceful and logical. We have to keep in mind that we shall be crying hoarse, if we still do not federate, leaving all our egos and hang overs.

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## MIGRANTS

—By *J. L. Langoo, Jammu*

Migrants, Kay Pees, became due to reign of terror and blood bath let loose by the militants  
Kay Pees, never deserved to have this state label as our main identification & mark of features  
We migrants curse our bad fate, mourn and hate existence while living like exiles  
Huddled like sheep in some dirty and dingy small migrant camps.

Militancy brought death, destruction and doom of all sorts at our doorsteps  
Forced us to fled our homes in the form of mass exodus  
Militants deprived and dispossessed us of all the assets and well set homes.  
Memory of motherland of our roots, culture, history, heritage haunts and lures us.

Most of us left empty-handed in naked and semi naked conditions  
Our home of hopes, ancestors, pleasing land of fore fathers  
Paradise of nature on this earth and universe  
Ran helter and skelter to save our honour and lives.

Insignificant is our life, living style and standards  
Service and sacrifice for the nation and importance of nationalistic characteristics  
In our great ancient county of composite culture and many faiths  
We are treated not at par with refugees but as aliens.

In hell like cell of one room set, our whole shocked family lives and languishes  
Using the same room in different positions on different occasions  
Like lobby, store, study, prayer, drawing and guest room for guests  
No privacy, feel suffocated in the congested space under all the circumstances.

In our country of feel good factor and India shining  
Our future is bleak, full of doubts, darkness and repenting  
We are microscopic minority community of few lakhs  
Remembered only at the time of elections for vote bank politics.

Guns of the militants kill and killed our near and dear ones before our eyes  
Of it is/was an unforgettable horrible and haunting experience of our lives.  
We have/had done no harm, but always taught and helped others  
Our policy was love thy neighbour, live and let live all others.

Government usually harps on rehabilitating us  
Draws funds, plans, schemes for resettling us  
Declares that Kashmir is incomplete without the presence of original aborigines  
Pleases and befools us merely with lip sympathy since past seventeen years.

General healing touch policy is for surrendering militants  
It is heating touch policy for us, migrants  
For we feel peeved with prickly heat of irritating sensation  
Unable to bear hot and humid climate of sizzling summer of acute perspiration.

Rarely history reminds that sons of soil became strangers in their own environs  
Rented accommodation has taken a heavy toll of our meagre finances and resources  
Ration and relief is like a drop in ocean to suffice our both ends meet and daily needs  
Riches to rags, is now our story of strife, hardships and many miseries.

Right to live with peace and honour is now a hallow slogan for us  
Right activists never thought of our community carnage and sufferings  
Racialism of the militants resulted in ethnic cleansing which reduced our numbers  
Round the clock, we eagerly look forward to return to our hearths and homes.

Right to equality and employment is since forgotten and forsaken by us  
Risky is our life like that of the running insurgents  
Reality is this, that we have lost rest of days and sleep of nights  
Respect and love for all, co-existence, cardinal principles, we practiced since ages.

All our temples, other religious places and houses  
Have been encroached, burnt, looted and desecrated  
Idols broken, stolen and denigrated  
Most of us sold properties under duress and distress sales.

Always greenery of lush green gardens  
Scenery of snow clad lofty mountains  
Fragrance of flowers, orchards and farms  
Refreshes us but now mostly dreams.

All our past and present great leaders  
Cheated and stabbed us in the name of our unity  
Built palatial bungalows and filled their coffers  
Floated money factions and fractured our shining society.

None of our cries, shrieks and voices  
Nor inhuman cruelties of foreign militants  
Have moved or touched hearts and ears of our politicians  
Neither reached parameters of the parliament and its members.

Now that, our homes are out of sight  
Out of sight is out of mind  
We should pray for divine miracle and light  
Lord alone can listen our prayers redeem our plight.

Nevertheless, let us hope, that sustains life  
Leave not its base and sight, for it takes time to bloom and ripe  
Hope that harsh winter will go, cold snow will melt  
Green spring and pleasant summer will come and bring us past glory and delight.

Terrorists have no ism, religion and sympathy  
They are brain washed with this ideology  
That to torture and kill one is an act of piety  
Terrorism is a black blot on our humanity.

Tens of thousands of our brethren were uprooted from their houses  
Many expired in prime of their youth of play and emotions  
Innocents became victims and scapegoats of militant's bullets  
For none of their faults, beloved and loved ones.

Torrent of rain during past summer seasons, on our tin and wooden house roofs  
Created a sweet tone and tune of rainy musical notes  
Which we enjoyed and children welcomed while dancing in balconies and courtyards  
Valley bathed and appeared refreshing with rainbow colours after rains.

Sometimes we seem loosing our senses  
Feel overwhelmed with profound passions  
Nostalgia ever teases us to tell, that sweet home, there is no place like our homes  
Brings tears and sighs in our eyes and on lips

Sickness, sadness and sorry state of crises  
Is now saga of our tragic tale of tales  
Its narration is beyond expression and words  
Defies ones mind imaginations and writing abilities

Salute, we salute forever all those beings  
Who expired and sacrificed their lives  
At the alter or militancy and the militants  
Pray Lord to bless peace to their departed souls.

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