

# Kashmir Sentinel

Margdarsha  
Special

Page No. 2

JKENG 00333/26/AL/TC/94 JK No. 1213/18  
Largest Circulated English Fortnightly of J&K

Vol 5  
No. 1

Regd. JM-32  
Dec. 16, 1998--Jan. 15, 1999

Pages 28  
Price Rs. 12/-



## LETTERS

**'But what can he do, If he looses his 'Mother Land'**

Sir,

I am giving hereunder are poem on the above subject which has been translated from Russian language

*"-If man loses his eyes even then he could hear the music himself*

*-on losing ears he could look at the rainbow on his own*

*-Even if he loses his arms he still can dance at all the carnivals*

*-on losing his legs he can hug dearly all his dear ones*

*-Even though at the loss of his belongings he can take shelter in his motherland*

*-But what can he do, if he loses his 'MOTHER LAND'*

**--Rajendra Razdan**

Tumkur  
Karnataka

Sir,

The recent air strikes by the United States and the United Kingdom on Iraq have created a chaos in the international arena and have thus disturbed the world peace. This America action can have fatal effects in the near future on the peace loving nations including India.

America's attitude is a clear threat to the sovereignty of the developing nations in particular. This action can by and large sow the seeds of unwanted catastrophe for the security of the world nations if its remedy is not sought in time. Unfortunately, the peace loving nations can only put their plea before the Security Council but that is in vain as at present juncture developing nations are at the mercy of the U.S. aid from the economic point of view.

Russian Prime Minister's proposal of a strategic triangle involving India, China and Russia is a thought provoking and welcome step. This proposal if implemented can counter the U.S. bid to unilaterally alter the strategic balance in the Persian Gulf. However, it is a flawed proposal as there are serious and sensitive problems like the border dispute between India and China. Moreover, the Washington-Beijing-Islamabad axis is a great hurdle.

Therefore, presently the solution lies in the fact that every nation should at least try to accumulate as much strength which is enough to forbid the U.S. to act against any particular nation.

It is noteworthy that the United States justified its attacks on the alleged bases and hide-outs of the Saudi billionaire, Osama-bin-Laden but forbade India to retaliate in the same fashion to the Pakistan's belligerent act of proxy war and cross-border terrorism in the State of Jammu and Kashmir and other nefarious activities of the ISI to

destabilise the harmony of the Indian people. This fact makes it vivid and clear that the United States is bent to impose its self-styled superiority on the Asian potentials especially India in disguise.

**--Mahesh Kaul**

C/o REC Camp Classes  
Canal Road, Jammu.

Sir,

Adab! I have been regularly getting the complimentary copy of your news paper for quite sometime. Needless of say, I remain obliged to you for your kind gesture. As an Indian Muslim, I am in agreement with most of your views. I also strongly feel that the Kashmiri Pandits must get justice and should return to the Valley-which of course is their land. They should be given their lost home (s).

Now, I will like to draw your kind attention to the interview of Mr Ashok Khajuria in your periodical of Nov 16-30, 1998, where in he says that the NC government is a total failure.

I feel that Mr Khajuria has only tried to defend the BJP, when he says that there is no alliance with NC. NC has failed in J&K and BJP elsewhere. This point has been proved in recent assembly elections/ The BJP stands isolated having failed on all fronts.

**Mr Zafar Jung,**

President Muslim

Mainstream Movement,  
New Delhi

Sir,

I have been receiving complimentary copies of your fortnightly during the last few months. I have just seen your last few issues on my return from abroad last month. May I congratulate you on giving the historical and factual background of the partition as well as the problems of India in Kashmir. I hope you will keep up this effort.

I enclose a cheque for Rs 100 as my annual subscription beginning from November 1, 1998.

**--T.N. Kaul**

7, Poorvi Marg, Vasant Vihar  
New Delhi.

**Condolence**

**Smt. Prabha Dhar**  
W/o Dr. Madhusudan  
Lal Dhar (Eye Specialist)  
R/o 96-Bal Garden  
Srinagar expired on 21/  
12/98 at Chandigarh

**A.K. Dhar**  
977/3, 27th A,  
Main  
9th Block  
Jayanagar,  
Bangalore-59

**THOSE WHO LEFT US**

(1-12-98--31-12-98)

*Kashmir Sentinel and Panun Kashmir Foundation mourn their sad demise and pray for the peace to the departed souls.*

1. **Sh. Nath Ji Pandita**, R/o Chandegam Lolab; presently at Migrant Camp Muthi, Jammu. 24/11/98
2. **Sh. Prem Nath Mattoo**, R/o Lal Ded Colony Chanapora; presently at Mehruli N.Delhi. 24/11/98
3. **Sh. Bushan Lal Raina**, R/o Reshi Mohalla, Sgr; presently at Jammu. 24/11/98.
4. **Sh. Bal Jee Kundu**, R/o Kralyar Rainawari; presently at H.No: 1238 Sector No: 14 Faridabad. 25/11/98
5. **Smt. Chandajigri Bakshi** R/o Batapora Sopore, presently at 117/1 Shivalik Puram Janipur, Jammu 27/11/98.
6. **Sh. Sham Lal Bhat (Gosani)**, R/o Lalmandir Sgr; presently at 150-Jawahar Nagar, Talab Tillo, Jammu. 28/11/98.
7. **Mrs. Vijay Pandita (Nichi)**, R/o Shivpora Sgr; presently at Lane No: 1, Basant Nagar, Janipur, Jammu. 30/11/98.
8. **Smt. Promila Raina** W/o Sh Piyree Lal Raina (HMT), Ro Sgr; presently at 5/217-A Indra Vihar, Old Janipur, Jammu. 30/11/98.
9. **Sh. Pritvhi Nath Tikoo**, R/o Shallakadal, Sgr; presently at 41-C Om Nagar, Udaiwala Road-Borhi, Jammu. 1/12/98.
10. **Sh. Mohan Lal Kariholu**, R/o Drabyar Sgr; presently at 51-Rampura Gandhi Nagar, Jammu. 2/12/98.
11. **Sh. Prithvi Nath Razdan**, R/o Kanyakadal Sgr, presently at Bakshi Naggar, Old Gurha Near Bailcha Factory, Jammu. 2/12/98.
12. **Smt. Kamlawati Zadoo**, R/o Purshiyar, Sgr; presently at Saraswati Lane Borhi Talab Tillo, Jammu. 2/12/98.
13. **Sh. Raj Nath Nehru**, R/o Kharyar Sgr; presently at Lane No: 2Surya Vihar Bohri, Jammu. 2/12/98.
14. **Sh. Moti Lal Chandra**, R/o Shalyar, Sgr; presently at Kashmiri Pandit Sabha Amphalla, Jammu. 2/12/98.
15. **Sh. Sardari Lal Shali**, R/o Subash Nagar, Jammu; presently at G-77, Sarojini Nagar, New Delhi. 3/12/98.
16. **Smt. Shobawati (Roopa) Sher**, R/o Mattan Ant; presently at H.No: 212-C Subash Nagar, Jammu. 3/12/98.
17. **Smt. Sona Batni Trakroo**, R/o Motiyar Rainwari; presently at Sahibabad (Ghaziabad U.P.). 3/12/98.
18. **Sh. Surinder Waza**, R/o Sheshyar, Sgr; presently at Opposite H.No: 351 Sector-4, Gangyal, Jammu. 4/12/98.
19. **Sh. Nand Lal Raina**, R/o Ganderbal, Sgr; presently at H.No: 31 Lakshmi Poram Sector A/2 Chinore Bantalab, Jammu. 4/12/98.
20. **Sh. Pushkar Nath Khazanchi**, R/o Sathu Barbarshah, Sgr; presently at B/318 Durga Nagar, Sector-1, Jammu. 5/12/98.
21. **Sh. Hira Lal Tikoo**, R/o Narbal; presently at G-108 Lower Toph Sherkhania, Jammu. 6/12/98.
22. **Smt. Soomawati Munshi** W/o Lt. Dwarka Nath Munshi; presently at Dhoke Ploura, Jammu. 6/12/98.
23. **Sh. Jia Lal Bhat**, R/o Domhal Hanjipora Kulgam; presently at Anand Nagar Bohri, Jammu. 7/12/98.
24. **Smt. Lakshmeshiri Warikoo**, R/o Drabiyar, Sgr; presently at 78, Ext-4, Sanjay Nagar, Jammu. 7/12/98.
25. **Sh. Pran Nath Tickoo**, R/o Rangteng Alikadal; presently at 18 Sector: 3, Roop Nagar, Jammu. 8/12/98.
26. **Dr. Maheshwar Nath Bhat**, R/o Parigam Tral; presently at C/o Tilak Raj Karan Nagar, Ward No: 4 Near Khajuria Kiryana Shop, Udhampur. 8/12/98.
27. **Sh. Soom Nath Dhar**, R/o Khankai Shokta Sgr; presently at Shivpora Srinagar. 18/12/98.
28. **Sh. Radha Krishan Bhat**, R/o Arihal Pulwama; presently at 152-F Doordarshan Lane Tali Morh, Jammu. 10/12/98.
29. **Smt. Dhanwati Zadoo (Changoo)**, R/o Karan Nagar, Sgr; presently at 155 Jawahar Nagar Lan Talab Tillo, Jammu. 10/12/98.
30. **Smt. Somawati Bhat**, R/o Murrin Pulwama; presently at C-100, Lane-11, Shiv Nagar, Jammu. 10/12/98.
31. **Sh. Gobind Ram Kadal Bajju**, R/o Gankhan Zainakadal; presently at 21-Chatr Singh Gardens Govindpura Old Satwari, Jammu. 11/12/98.
32. **Smt. Sonabati Bhan**, R/o Zero Bridge Raj Bagh; presently at 156 Wazir Bagh Surya Vihar Anand Nagar, Borhi, Jammu. 12/12/98.
33. **Sh. Niranjan Nath Bhat**, R/o Chandpora Harwan; presently at 54 Shyam Vihar Lane-11, Jammu. 14/12/98.
34. **Sh. Makhn Lal Kotru**, R/o Narsingarh, Sgr; presently at G-46-A, Rajnagar Part-II, Palam Colony, New Delhi. 14/12/98.
35. **Sh. K.L. Mantoo**, R/o Ranaghat Baramulla; presently at H.No: 18, Near Saraswati Lane Wine Factory, Talab Tillo, Jammu. 15/12/98.
36. **Sh. Zind Lal Mattoo**, R/o Sangrampora, Sopore; presently at H.No: 144-B Ram Vihar Old Janipur, Jammu. 15/12/98.
37. **Sh. Kanya Lal Talashi**, R/o Kunzgam, Anantag; presently at H.No: 30, Lane No: 1, Adarsb Nagar, Bantalab, Jammu. 16/12/98.
38. **Sh. Soom Nath Bhat**, R/o Mazahama, Budgam; presently at Sari Rakhwala Badh Road, Opp. Mahavir Mandir, Jammu. 16/12/98.
39. **Smt. Sampkuji** W/o Lt Sh. Govind Ram, R/o Sangus Kulgam; presently at Batal Balanyia camp Udhampur (J&K). 16/12/98.
40. **Smt. Leelawati Razdan**, R/o Vessu Anantnag; presently at Qtr. No: 264, Mishriwala Camp, Jammu. 16/12/98.
41. **Sh. Nand Lal Wattal**, R/o Chunkral Mohalla, Sgr; presently at Opp. Govt. Qtrs. Toph Sherkhania, Jammu. 17/12/98.
42. **Sh. Kashi Nath Mattoo**, R/o Anantnag; presently at EP-580, Pir Mitha, Jammu. 17/12/98.
43. **Sh. Girdhari Lal Misri**, R/o Zandar Mohalla, Sgr; presently at 30/2 Block-A, Roop Nagar Enclave, Jammu. 17/12/98.
44. **Smt. Neena Koul** W/o Sh Sh Chaman Koul (Dembil), R/o Sgr; presently at H.No: 620, Gill Road, Street No: 3, Dashmesh Nagar, Ludhiana. 17/12/98.
45. **Sh. Mohan Lal Koul**, R/o Motiyar Rainawari; presently at C/o Hemraf Mogotra H.No: 49, Near Anandpur Ashram, Patoli Mangotriar, Jammu. 18/12/98.
46. **Smt. Khemlata Razdan (Hakhu)**, R/o Malayar, Sgr; presently at 63 Samrat Apartments, Vasundra Enclave, Delhi. 18/12/98.
47. **Sh. Rughnath Dhar**, R/o Motiyar Ramawari; presently at 2/119, Indra Vihar, Old Janipur, Jammu. 18/12/98.
48. **Sh. Shamboo Nath Raina**, R/o Sirhama Anantnag; presently at H.No: 213, Tomal Jattan Bohri, Jammu. 20/12/98.
49. **Sh. Ganesh Das Jaikhan**, R/o Malchimar Alikadal; presently at 308/B, Mianwali Colony, Gurgaon, Haryana. 20/12/98.
50. **Smt. Shobawati Khah**, R/o Mattan, Anantnag; presently at Shiv Vihar Last Matador Stop Janipur Colony, Jammu. 21/12/98.
51. **Sh. Jawahir Lal Raina**, R/o Karan Nagar, Sgr. presently at E-410 Greate Kailash Part-II, New Delhi. 21/12/98.
52. **Sh. T.N. Kaul**, R/o Rainawari, Srinagar; presently at H.No: 239 Housing Colony, Janipur, Jammu./21/12/98.
53. **Sh. Shamboo Nath Pandita**, R/o Lolab Sogam; presently at Battal Balliyan Camp, Udhampur. 21/12/98.
54. **Sh. S.K. Kaul (ex-MLA)**, R/o Prakash Seed Farm, Sgr; presently at 200 A/D Gandhi Nagar, Jammu. 21/12/98.
55. **Smt. Shobawati Adalti**, R/o Batyar Alikadal; presently at Qtr. No: 575-X Block, Govt. Qtrs., Toph Sherkhania, Jammu. 22/12/98.
56. **Smt. Gunwati/Raj Rani**, R/o Gotangoo Kupwara; presently at Jammu. 22/12/98.
57. **Sh. Kashi Nath Bawnoo**, R/o Mattan Anantnag; presently at Badh Road near Bahie Chack via Gow Manasa Road, JHammu. 23/12/98.
58. **Smt. Dhanwati Raina**, R/o Madanyar Habbakadal; presently at DDA MIG Flats No: 365, Pocket-B, East of Loni Road, Shadra, Delhi. 23/12/98.
59. **Smt. Kamlawati Kachroo**, R/o Sheshyar Habakadal; presently at 'ANUGREH' Shanti Nagar Behind Shri Ram Shamam Ashram Top Sherkhania, Jammu. 24/12/98.
60. **Smt. Kamlawati Kak** W/o Lt. Sh. Balbadar Kak, R/o Alikadal Srinagar; presently at 1-16 HIG Sector-23, Ref Nagar, Ghaziabad (UP). 24/12/98.
61. **Smt. Jaikishan Tikoo**, R/o Jetty Road, Baramullah; presently at Sector-3, Durga Nagar, Bantalab, H.No: 159, Jammu. 25/12/98.
62. **Smt. Shamrani Koul**, R/o Bana Mohalla Habbakadal; presently at Plot No: 203, Near Shopping Centre, Bakshi Nagar, Jammu. 27/12/98.
63. **Smt. Leelawati Bhat** W/o Lt. Sh. Kishi Bhat, R/o Cadov Batapora; presently at Govt. Qtr. No: 187-K, Block Janipur, Jammu. 27/12/98.
64. **Smt. Sheelawati** W/o Lt. Sh. Kesbawnath Bhat, R/o Sirhama Anantnag; presently at H.No: 99/4, Near Gopi Nath Ashram, Udaiwala Borhi, Jammu. 28/12/98.
65. **Sh. Kanth Tikoo**, R/o Bag Wanpora. Verinag; presently at H.No: 41, Lane No: 3, Near Aman Provision Store, Preet Nagar, Jammu. 28/12/98.
66. **Smt. Leelawati (Kakni)**, R/o Jablipora, Bijbehara; presently at 189/A, Vinayak Nagar, Upper Muthi, Jammu. 29/12/98.
67. **Sh. Radha Krishan Handoo**, R/o Motiyar Rainawari; presently at H.No: 940/A Opposite T-Block Govt. Qtrs. Subash Nagar, Jammu. 30/12/98.

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## KASHMIR SENTINEL

*Wishes*  
*New Year Greetings*  
*To Its Readers*

### Kashmir Sentinel

Printer Publisher	B.N. KAUL for and on behalf of Panun Kashmir Foundation
Editor	SHAILENDRA AIMA
Printed at	The Kashmir Times Press, Gangyal Jammu
Owned by	PANUN KASHMIR FOUNDATION
Published from	PANUN KASHMIR FOUNDATION 149 - Ram Vihar, Old Janipur, Jammu - 18 0007

## KASHMIR SENTINEL

### *Incomprehension is the enemy*

**N**ation continues to be indifferent to the continued genocide of Kashmiri Pandits. They are the same people whose contribution in the ancient past and the contemporary present helped India earn the fame of an ancient civilisation and a modern nation. Unlike other ethnic groups Kashmiri Pandits never demanded special reservations or raised preferential autonomy demands. Pandits only expected that they will not be subjected to ethnic exclusion.

Kashmiri Pandits did and continue to do everything that will strengthen the country and its image. When a Congress leader like VN Gadgil feels that continued indifference of all political parties towards the plight of Kashmir Pandits has grave political ramifications for the country, it only implies that there is fundamentally something wrong in the handling of Kashmir by the Indian political establishment.

Why is it that Indian stakes in Kashmir are not being defined in clear terms? Is Kashmir important because it represents the strategic northern frontier of India? Is India fighting the larger battle for the refutation of two nation theory on the soil of Kashmir? The practices of Indian political establishment so far, firmly indicate that it is committed to neither of the two objectives. And in that lie the roots of the destabilisation and continued genocide of Pandits.

Symbolic presence of Pandits in the Valley devoid of any nation building role, has been employed at various times for the expediency of legitimising the slogans of the day. In 1947 Pandits' presence was required to declare Kashmir as the secular crown of India. In later years Pandits were described as 'our guards on borders'. Presently the beleaguered government at Delhi wants the symbolic return to refurbish its image. The national opinion has also linked Pandit return with political legitimacy of the National Conference government. And to the international opinion, a 'symbolic Pandit return' may show that normalcy has returned.

Neither the State nor the Central Government and the articulate National opinion is prepared to face the basic issues relating to security and ideology in Kashmir. And in the coming days the dangers of further destabilisation of Pandit seem imminent. Kashmiri Pandit community has to be on guard and sensitive to pre-empt the grave plans of forces of destabilisation and internal betrayal.

The continued political and religious persecution over the last six centuries, to quote a famous commentator has "unmanned the Kashmiri Hindus and left him with the most inadequate of spiritual resources". It has also lead to accepting the genocide and destabilisation as a fiat accompli by the community and the consequent defeatism or hedonism. The roots of incomprehension of genocide and insensitivity to betrayals lie in this attitude. The incomprehension is reflected in such understanding that mere 'unity of heads' of different organisations will lead the community to redemption from genocide.

Ironically this 'Unity of Heads' argument is put forth by those very adversaries of the community who are primarily responsible for its exclusion from the social polity in the state of J&K. What community needs is not a leader of stature but definite political opinion related to the full comprehension of genocide and the perspective for a long term struggle.

The displaced community would do well to remember the prophetic advice delivered by the great Palestinian Scholar Edward Said at Rajiv Memorial Lecture last year, Edward commented then, "incomprehension and betrayal are the worst enemies of a community battling against genocide".

## Wholesale destruction of Pandit orchards

# Even Trees were Skinned-off

Special Correspondent

JAMMU: He mustered some courage and went to his village in Zainpora. His brother was one of the few Pandits in the entire area who had stayed back. He stayed with him.

Next day he went to examine his properties. Outer frame of his home was intact, however inside the destruction was irreparable. When he walked over the land which once was his orchard, he could not believe his eyes. Only ten apple trees existed in his orchard which once contained 450 apple trees. Pt. Sarwanand Tickoo's orchard in Zainpra-Pulwama was reduced to an open barren space. He had the best quality apple trees and every year he would reap fruits to the extent of 1000 boxes and his yearly revenue from fruit selling was around 3 lakh rupees.

Sarwanand also owned the bank (Kul-Bhot) along the canal which flowed from Reshipora to Safa Nagar via Zainapora. He had around 100 full grown popular trees along this bank. All have been cut except a dozen which may also be cut any time.

The destruction wrought out on Pandit orchards along the entire area is almost the same. Sh Darshan Pandit of Zainpora had around 500 apple trees in his orchard. Not a single tree remains. Prominent communist leader of the area Sh Reshi Dev also owned a big orchard in the same area. It has around 1000 apple trees. Only 20 trees remain now.

The locals since centuries considered cutting of trees as a grave sin and there is a strong folk tradition to protect the trees. But the terrorists invented a novel way of wreaking destruction on the Pandit orchards in this area. They whole hog 'skinned-off' the trees i.e. removed the bark, an operation which must have been carried out for weeks and months. Consequently all these trees dried up and died. Then the trees were cut. It is no sin to cut a dead tree.

"Your brother has been living here in your absence. Why didn't he take care of your properties", we asked Sarwanand. He with a cryptic smile answered, "He was told to mind his own business".

Local religious leaders wanted to convert Sarwanand's house into a 'madrasah', but after inspecting its interior they found it in a hopeless condition. Then they selected another Pandit house of Sh Daya Ram Kher. But as is the case with almost all Pandit houses in the area, the tin roofing of this house had also been removed. So the locals went out to search for a Pandit

Project report of Kashmir Migrant Fruit growers in connection with compensation/damage etc.

Sl. No.	Total Area in possession of migrants	No. of Migrant Orchardis-	Kindwise break-up of area	Total area	Production per Hec. per Box (as per departmental norms)	Total No. of trees	Rate/ Boxes/ Kgs.	Total production boxes/kgs	Total Value of crops
1	3460 Hectars	9600 (Approx)	Apple	2000 Hec.	10 Mt/Hec	500000	Rs 200 Box	15000 Mt (1000000 Boxes)	20 crore
			Walnut	1300 Hec.	25 kgs/Tree	130000	Rs 60/- Kg.	3250 Mt.	14 crore
			Almond	100 Hec.	1.5 Kg/Tree	25000	Rs 80/- Kg.	375000 Kgs.	30.00 crore
			Others	60 Hec.	2 Boxes/Tree	15000	Rs 40/- Box	30000 Boxes	12 Lakh
								<b>Total</b>	<b>34.42 Crore</b>

Sd/-  
President  
Migrant Fruit Growers  
Association, Jammu

house with intact tin roofing. They found one, removed its tin, then used it in the designated 'madrasah'. Unfortunately the roofing was inadequate so they had to cover the rest with thatch. The 'madrasah' continues to run with half tin and half thatch roof.

Pandit orchardists and agriculture land owners around Kulgam area have been relatively fortunate. The trees in their orchards are still intact but due to lack of care and proper spraying they have been rendered almost useless. Most of the fruits from Pandit orchards are being looted either of terrorists or counter-insurgents depending upon their respective strength and sway.

While as under the existing horticulture policy of the State Government, liberal loans are being granted to those who develop new orchards, no relief is being given to the Pandit orchardists either to maintain their orchards or compensate for the losses suffered by them.

The plight of displaced fruit growers has not been at all addressed by the government so far. This section of Pandit community have suffered maximum loss. Constituting a relatively better section of Pandit society who predominantly earned their living by selling their fruits, had to live in despicable conditions in Jammu.

The leading fruit grower of Shopian, Sh Janki Nath Koul, used to sell around 15,000 boxes of fruits yearly and had a landed property of around a crore of rupees. After the displacement his family suffered many tragedies. In quick succession he lost his wife, son and sister in law. She ON Koul another fruit grower of the same area developed throat cancer, for the treatment which he had to spend lakhs of rupees. A person who sold fruits worth lakhs each year had to struggle hard to find money for his own treatment.

Fruit growers amongst the

Displaced Kashmiri Pandits were left to fend for themselves without any assistance from the government. For years they have been running from pillar to post for compensation but government is yet to heed their pleas.

The land, orchards, cattle were the main source of their income in which the whole life savings were contributed by every member of their family. Their properties presently stand either destroyed or encroached

upon. The Kashmir Migrant Fruit Growers Association has approached almost every concerned officer or minister in the state for redressal of their grievances. In an appeal to the former Prime Minister Sh IK Gujral they expressed their agony as, ".....we have approached..... personally to...ministers/officials for calling us in personally hearing grievances... but none of them has time to hear our grievances. We

Kashmiri Migrant Fruit Growers request your honour to intervene personally into the matter and save us from hardships and losses made to us and also request your goodself to direct the Chief Minister J&K State for considering the matter sympathetically and save us from the grave situation." There has been no intervention so far. With their losses running in crores the displaced orchardist continue to be shell-shocked hoping to retrieve their orchards. □



### 'Smt. Girja Razdan honoured with 'National Award'

Smt Girja Razdan W/o Sh Bansilal Zar resident of Anantnag, Kashmir passed her M.A. in Hindi in the year 1979. After this she did her B.Ed. from Vishwa Bharti College, Rainawari, Srinagar. She first joined as a teacher in Swami Hari Krishan Anand Niketan High School Anantnag owned by Kashmiri Pandits of Anantnag. It was an illustrious Education. Institution of District Anantnag. Girja was a disciplined teacher from the very beginning. It is because of her dedication and hardwork she proceeded on deputation to Navodaya Vidyalaya Samit, Govt. of India, Ministry of H.R.D. in the year 1987 and finally got absorbed in the Samiti in the year 1991. Due to forced migration she was posted in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Nud Samba, Jammu.

During this period Girja worked tirelessly for improving the qualities of head and heart of the students in the institution. She carved out a place for her in the Samiti. Recognition of her meritorious services rendered in the Samiti. Smt Girja Razdan was honoured with the "Best Teacher National Award" at a glittering function organised by N.V.S. at FICCI Auditorium New Delhi on 3/12/1998. National Award was presented to her by the Union Minister of Education Dr Murlidhar Joshi.

- 1) **Result performance:** She has produced 100% results in class 10th & 12th continuously for last three years (CBSE).
- 2) **She has been performing duties of house minstress for last four years with excellent performance.**
- 3) **She has participated in CCRT course at Kunshester and theatre work shop held in New Delhi in year 1997-1998.**
- 4) **She is also looking after mess management in the Vidyalaya in addition to other duties assigned.**
- 5) **She is very much liked by the Vidyalaya students because of her excellent teaching and a very good behaviour. She has in fact involved herself in every field to assist the administration of the Vidyalaya.**
- 6) **Being a godo singer herself, she is actively involved in cultural activities and is talented in preparing the students for various culture programme.**

# 'PK OBSERVES HOMELAND DAY'

## Create Homeland To Consolidate Internal Defence Of Northern Frontiers

KS Correspondent

JAMMU, 28 Dec: Kashmiri Pandits observed 28th December as the 'Homeland Day' along the length and breadth of the country. The main programme on the occasion was organised by Panun Kashmir at Jammu. In a public meeting organised at Ghandi Bhawan Jammu on the day, Panun Kashmir leaders and prominent intellectuals spoke. They reaffirmed the commitment and dedication of the entire community for a relentless struggle to carve out a homeland east and north of River Jhelum in Kashmir valley with a status of a UT for the rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits.

Among the main speakers who addressed the distinguished gathering of Kashmiri Pandits of all shades, were Prof M.L. Koul an eminent writer on Political History and Culture of Kashmir, Prof M.K. Teng (Retd) Head of Department of Political Science of Kashmir University, Dr Ajay Chrangoo Chairman of Political Affairs Committee of Panun Kashmir, Sh Raj Nath Raina spokesman of the Displaced Employees Forum, and Sh Shailendra Aima PK leader and Editor of Kashmir Sentinel.

In his eloquent presentation Prof M.L. Koul attributed the crisis of Kashmir to the failure of Indian state to respond to the rise of Muslim communalism in Kashmir valley. He said, "Indian state has failed to respond to the challenge posed by Muslim communalism in the state. It was this extreme communal ideology that gave rise to terrorism. Muslim communalism in the state continues to be left unattended and untackled". Prof Koul attributed this failure to the fear by the Indian Intelligentsia of a 'backlash' which they wanted to avoid at all costs. However, as per him the decisive reason for this failure was "not to force Muslims to make a choice between communalism and India as Muslim communalism was never presented as a central issue in the genesis of separatism in Kashmir". Mr Koul lambasted the efforts of some overseas Pandit organisations seeking a phased symbolic return of a few thousand displaced Pandit families to Valley. "The shelter as proposed by Indo Canadian Forum is a mere experimental rehabilitation model aiming to create nothing but one more segregated camp in the Valley. Such a camp will not allow normal chores of life, given the situation in the Valley." Prof Koul cautioned the community against the 'agency role' played by some Pandit organisation and warned that creation of some sanitised Pan-

dit location in Valley will only mean a 'ghettoised life' bereft of any freedom of movement, speech or protest.

Prof Koul concluded his speech by asserting that the only fool proof mechanism of reversing the genocide perpetrated on Kashmiri Hindus was to carve out a Homeland for them as envisaged in the 'Margdarshan Resolution'.

Prof M.L. Koul's presentation was followed by an erudite and eloquent speech by Prof M.L. Teng rendered in Kashmiris to the overwhelming applause of the entire gathering

leashing of a full-fledged subversive war in the Valley appears to be imminent".

Dr Teng also ridiculed the attempt of the organisations like Indo American Kashmir Forum and Indo Canadian Kashmir Forum to engineer a 'symbolic return' to Valley. 'Our return to Valley is only possible if Indian State rises and respond decisively to the Muslim crusade in Valley. Creation of a Union territory for the rehabilitation of Pandits East and North of river Jhelum is one of the most effective ways of doing it', he concluded.

patronising Muslim subnationalism with the hope of deterring the separatist politics the genocidal attrition against the minorities in the state will continue and the ambit of religious cleansing operations shall widen", he said and emphasised that this national consensus has become the breeding ground for the subversion which has crippled the entire state apparatus. Dr Ajay underlined the need to consolidate the social resistance against separatist politics in the state and said that it was imperative in view of the internal distabilisation along the criti-

relentlessly resisted communal and separatist politics in the state which ultimately, lead to their destabilisation of genocidal dimensions." Dr Ajay Chrangoo exhorted the audience to have faith in the political goals of Panun Kashmir and concluded by saying, "creation of Panun Kashmir has become a historical imperative for the community and the nation as never before. A union territory east and north of river Jhelum for rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits will be the decisive step to galvanise resistance against fundamentalist secessionism and stabilisation of internal situation along the Northern Frontiers of India".

Dr Chrangoo also warned the government of underplaying bothered about operative terrorists but the dormant terrorists also who number runs in thousands."

PK Leader Sh Shailendra Aima provided the vote of thanks and urged the community to "take cognisance of the underlying consensus and unity on all crucial issues facing the community" Sh Aima extolled to the audience not to succumb to a defeatist discourse in the name of disunity of community.

The entire gathering passed a unanimous resolution produced here. Sh Kuldeep Raina General Secretary of Panun Kashmir conducted the proceedings efficiently and with a degree of charm.

The proceeding of the function started with the recital of Bhajans by famous Kashmiri singer Vijay Malla. The audience was held in raptures with his sweet and masterly presentation □



Panun Kashmir leader addressing a function in Jammu on Monday.

"We have to understand that Kashmir problem is not at all a legacy of partition of India as most of the political scientists have tried to advocate for so many reasons other than the truth. Kashmir forms the central spur of the Himalayan Hinterland which is crucial for the control of the Indian peninsula. Kashmir crisis is the result of eastward extension of Muslim power which is seeking to establish its hegemony over this part of Himalayan Hinterland only to meet a decisive blow to the existence of India as a political and civilisational entity."

Dr Teng emphasised upon the gathering that it was imperative for Pandits to see their expulsion in this context and not in a very narrow reference frame in which government of India and most of political parties have been trying to address it so far. 'Pandits constituted the civilisational frontline in this critical part of Himalayan Hinterland and hence became the first target of the eastward thrust of Islamic power,' Dr Teng said. He also confided in the audience that contours of the existing situation in Kashmir valley have changed. "From an initial euphoric stage of terrorism into a highly technical variety and un-

Sh Raj Nath Raina speaking on behalf of the Displaced Employees Forum stressed that the mechinations to coerce Kashmiri Pandits to return are certainly directed primarily against the employees section of the community. He said, "employees who have been displaced have to bear the brunt of government pressure. We did not leave Kashmir of our sweet will. The situation in the Valley has not showed any improvement. In fact it has worsened". Sh Raina pooh-poohed the idea of a 'phased return' and said, "The decision about return will be taken by employees forum only after assessing the situation. No other organisation will be allowed to take this decision as the security and survival of displaced employees is primarily involved."

The concluding presentation was made by Dr Ajay Chrangoo the Chairman of Political Affairs Committee of Panun Kashmir. Dr Ajay questioned the very thinking of the mainstream political establishment on Kashmir. "There is a national consensus on Kashmir and this consensus ironically has undermined the national interests in a decisive way. So far Indian state and political establishment pursues the policy of owning and

cal northern frontiers of the country. "Our national leaders never had a perspective of stabilisation of Northern frontiers of the country. They conceded crucial territorial concession along the northern frontiers. They also derecognised the politics of those social groups who

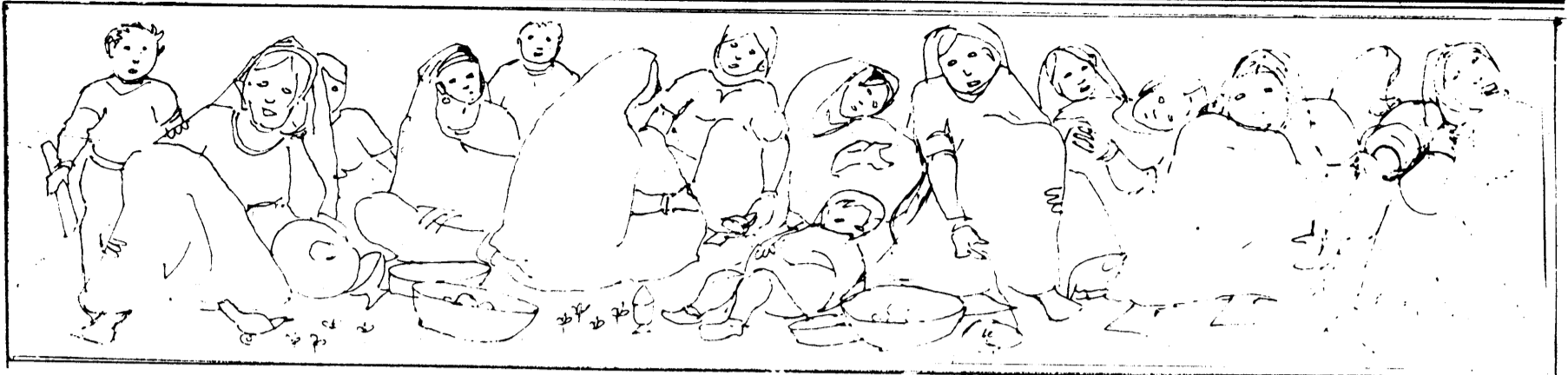
### RESOLUTION

28th Dec., 1998

The entire Kashmiri Pandit Community is fully aware and seized of the internal security environment within the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The community is alive not only to the immediate threat posed by 'active terrorists' in the state, but also the potential of damage by the 'Dormant terrorists' whose number runs in thousands. The entire community is also on guard against certain vested interests within, who in the name of 'return modules' or 'package programmes' are only trying to divert the attention from the core issues which are responsible for the continuing genocide of the Hindu minority in the state. The community unanimously rejects the proposal forwarded by some overseas organisations envisaging a phased return of Kashmiri Pandits.

At this critical juncture when the fundamentalist war unleashed on the minorities of the state to effect the secession of the state from the Indian Union has assumed new heights, we the Kashmiri Pandits once again affirm our commitment to the creation of 'Union territory' north and east of river Jhelum in Kashmir valley for the rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits. Creation of such a dispensation shall not only ensure the survival of Kashmiri Pandits but also act as a decisive step to consolidate the social resistance against communal and separatist politics in the state and go a long way in consolidating the internal defence of Northern Frontiers of India. We also unanimously demand

- i) **Delinking of issue of deprivation of displaced Pandits from the issue of return and rehabilitation.**
- ii) **Declaration of a socio-economic package for displaced Pandits to address the varied aspects of their deprivation in exile.**
- iii) **Comprehensive National Policy to meet the challenge of internal subversion, communalism and fundamentalism in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.**
- iv) **A national debate on the scope of 'Panun Kashmir' concept as a solution to the perpetual insecurity of Kashmiri Pandits as well as the Kashmir problem in relation to stabilisation of the Northern frontiers of the country.**



Destitutes

## PROFILE OF DEPRIVATIONS Displaced employees problems

# Kashmiri Hindus face gradual elimination from state services

The number of displaced employees in 1990 was just thirteen thousand out of the total state government employee strength of 2.73 lakh. Till date nearly three thousand employees have retired, and by 2000 AD the number would swell upto eight to nine thousand. Again at this just three hundred recruitments in lower cadre posts, have taken place. Of this recruitment, more than hundred have been cases of compassionate recruitment of the dependents of victims of terrorist killings. The Kashmiri Hindus thus face gradual elimination from state services.

Promotions continued to be denied to the displaced Pandits. As promotions are linked to the actual joining in the Valley, most of the Pandits had to forego promotion, lose seniority and the monetary benefits. The frustration of the displaced employees has been acute on this score. In many instances, where the government needs trained hands e.g. in higher school education, Pandit employees in advanced years have been posted to the farthest areas possible and even transfer norms are not strictly adhered. Many employees have thus to live away from their family for years together.

Pandit employee have been denied the many routine allowances e.g. HRA, CCA etc. available to a state government employee. The reasoning that these allowances are not admissible in leave-salary is unfair and discriminatory. If salary could be provided, why not other allowances. Pandits have not refused to work outside the Valley in secure conditions. If the government is unable to use their services, it is obviously not their fault.

Long stay from their professions and denial of in-service trainings has led to the erosion of skill among Pandit professionals.

Lastly the Displaced Pandit employees continue to be subjected to intimidation on threat of 'coerced return'. Central government and the public sector undertakings tackled the problems of displaced employees right in 1990 but the state government continues to sleep over the restoration of all benefit and adjustment of displaced Pandits outside the Valley till complete

normalcy.

### Camp life deteriorates

There are 29074 displaced Kashmiri families registered in Jammu, while 19338 families are registered in Delhi. In addition 2743 families are living in other states in the country. 240 migrant families are living in 14 camps in Delhi and 4674 families in 15 camps in Jammu.

The reasons for such a low percentage (10%) of displaced families living in camps are clear. Unless pushed to desperation, one would explore all the options before shifting to a camp. Camp families mostly include those whose dear ones have been killed by the terrorists, worst hit traders, those orchardists/agriculturists who have no other source of earning, those who have no one to look after them and lastly that group of rural Pandits who want to live close to their relatives. Not less than fifteen to twenty thousand Pandit families live in one-room rented accommodation, which is no better than camp tenements. The only advantage is that it helps them escape the degradation that accompanies the camp life.

Over the years camp life has not improved. It has, in fact, worsened. The only visible change has been that the torn tent has got replaced by a pigeon-hole. In camps like Battal Ballian, Transport Nagar people do not live a life better than animals. Even poorest among the human beings would prefer for better option. Memory loss, behavioural disorders, premature aging and social atrophy are the gifts of the camp life.

Camp people face many hardships. Surroundings are very unhealthy. Heaps of garbage and stagnated water lead to stinking and invite flies, mosquitoes etc. The foul smell from urinals/toilets have made life of people miserable. Safai Karamcharis are never seen. In Mishriwala brick-kilns are located inside the camp. People inhale the harmful smoke emanating from it. Despite repeated requests authorities continue to sleep over.

Another problem people face is that there is no proper timing for supply of drinking water. At times water supply is not clean.

Same is the story with supply of electricity. As street lights are wanting, movement becomes very difficult during dark or in wet weather, particularly, when there is emergency. Approach roads to the camps are also in very bad condition. Ditches are common on these roads. During Monsoons rainy water not only leaks but also gushes into the rooms from the ground.

Camp students do not have adequate educational facilities. There are no proper school buildings. More often number of classes are huddled in a single room, depriving proper teaching to the students. There is no good library or laboratory facility in these schools. Stray cattle and lumpen elements often trespass into the school premises, becoming a nuisance for the children.

Disease is rampant. Overcrowded housing, bad sanitation and low resistance predispose these displaced to diarrhoeas allergic disorders, skin diseases, respiratory problems etc. Health services are not properly organised. Medicines are also not sufficiently available. There is no ambulance in any of the camp. No specialised services are organised.

Relief department machinery makes its own contribution in making the life of these people more difficult. They harass camp inmates in many ways. Political vested interests also exploit these people.

Rampant unemployment and idleness have forced a section of camp youngsters to resort to unhealthy addictions and activity.

Out of five thousand families living in camps, it is about two thousand families who need main attention. In the absence of proper govt. interventions there is a need to develop institutions and infrastructure that can retrieve at least four hundred families a year from the camps.

### Displaced Pandits' property-pattern of dispossession

In early 1990 Pandit community was caught unawares. The insecure conditions consequent to the selective killings, threatening and harassment forced them to shift out of the Valley. When they left, they never imagined that the exile would be so prolonged and traumatising.

They could not extricate their lifetime belongings and left with whatever they could lay their hands on.

By the end of 1990, the criminalisation of the separatist movement became a dominating factor with no Pandits around, these criminal elements began preying upon Pandit property. While the movable property was looted, the immovable property became target of arson, forcible occupation and in many cases forged documents were contrived to grab the property. The communalised section of administration ensured that no FIRs against damage/loot of the property were registered. The displaced Pandits remained totally unaware about the fate of their property. It has been reported that in rural areas there is large-scale tempering of the horticulture/agriculture land in revenue records. The story of the eviction of Pandit traders through fraudulent means in absentia is equally a painful one.

The Governor's administration (1990-96) remained totally insensitive. Every Governor tried to escape the responsibility of tackling firmly this criminal vested interest engaged in dispossessing Pandits of their property.

They tried to shift the responsibility to the civilian government, which would succeed them.

Displaced Pandits believe that immediately after the separatist movement was defeated, the Centre would ensure that their lawful property was restored. Pandits' passivity further emboldened this vested interest.

Dispossession of Pandits' takes many forms:

i) Fire sufferers:- There is no prompt notification or details about the arson incident to the fire sufferer. Long delays in FIR registration, similar delays in assessment loss and ex-gratia sanction, under evaluation of the damage, withholding of the remainder ex-gratia etc put the victim to a great disadvantage. Withholding of remainder ex-gratia amount and fixation limit of one-lakh payment is a deliberate attempt to deprive the sufferer of the actual compensation. By linking payment of the remainder ex-gratia amount to return, the affected Pandit is frauded of the actual compensa-

tion.

As safe return remains elusive, many victims resort to distress sale of the gutted property and forgo the major amount of ex-gratia. For example, if ex-gratia sanctioned, in 1990 is five lakh rupees and the sufferer is paid rupees one lakh in 1992. Non payment of four lakh rupees since 1990 frauds the fire sufferer of sixty six percent of its actual compensations.

Forcible occupation of property:- The administration has not indicated any seriousness in tackling this issue. As displaced Pandits feel that their property could become the target of illegal grab and the chances of return receding, distress sale of property has assumed menacing proportions. In many instances old neighbours do not allow the sale to a third party and this further devalues the property. On an average, displaced Pandits get thirty to forty percent of the actual market value.

ii) Fraudulent occupation: There are multiple cases of illegal occupation of Pandits' houses pending for years in the courts without any results. The sufferers have been facing great mental and financial burden through litigation in retrieving what lawfully belongs to them. Contriving of fraudulent papers has been the main instrumentality in this illegal grab. The role of police in these cases has been patently discriminatory to the displaced people. There are many case relating to the active connivance of the police in forcible and fraudulent grab of the Pandits' property. Cases where a particular police officer has been upright are few and far between. Many representations were made to the NHRC, Central government, State government, including the Chief Minister to set up a special tribunal headed by a High Court judge for summary disposal of these cases. The authorities remain apathetic and indifferent.

### Kashmir University ruining career of displaced students

As if the dispossession was not enough, the displaced Kashmiri students continue to face the apartheid at the hands of the Kashmir University and the State government. The students

(Contd. on page 7)

# Tim Johnson responds to Kaul's plea, writes to A.B. Vajpayee

**Points raised in a brief by Dr. Jagan Kaul to the US Senator Tim Johnson on the state of Kashmiri Pandits.**

The eminent US based Kashmiri Pandit Dr. Jagan N.Kaul apprised the US senator Tim Johnson about the plight Displaced Kashmiri Pandits in India. Impressed by his present Johnson wrote to the Prime Minister of India Sh A.B. Vajpayee to intervene and give priority treatment to the task of resettling the Pandits in a newly created autonomous region. We produce here the brief of the points raised by Dr. Kaul with Mr Tim Johnson and the letter by the senator to the Prime Minister of India.

- the community of Pandits, all 500,000 of them, has been ousted from Kashmir and large numbers of them were languishing in temporary shelters for a decade now;

- it is alarming to note that now more of them are dying than are being born. The community seems to be at the verge of its demise and without the intervention by Premier AB Vajpayee it will be lost for ever;

- like every other community the Pandits deserve protection and security so that their uniqueness and historic culture could

be preserved;

- based on India's own experience, smaller and weaker ethnic communities with unique cultural characteristics, can be protected best, when they have freedom for designing their future in their native habitat and under their own administrative autonomy. On the basis of this principle numerous states and union territories have already been created in India. Even the BJP government in recognition of this principle and for providing self rule to under and unrepresented citizens, has established three additional states within the Republic;

- the American people, proponents of freedom, and believes in democracy all over the world will applaud any efforts by the Indian government for providing the Pandits a self governing territory where they could live in peace and tranquility. Where, free from communal strife, they could carve out their own destiny;

- after Tibet, the survival of the Pandit community is one of the most serious humanitarian issues facing South Asia. In view

of the value India places on cultural diversity, ethnic plurality, human rights, secularism and democracy, disregarding any political hurdles, India should rise to the occasion and play positive role in saving this community from imminent extinction;

- evidently no plans initiated by successive Indian governments have brought any relief to the worsening situation of Pandits and there are no plans to recover their homes, properties and livelihood;

- therefore, the community can be saved only by establishing for them a self governing union territory within India through a new political reorganisation of Kashmir;

- creation of an autonomous region within Kashmir for resettling the Pandits should receive a priority treatment. As the original inhabitants of the Valley they have as much right to live in Kashmir as any other community.

November 24, 1998

Dear Premier Vajpayee

I am writing to express my concern over the plight of the community of Kashmiri Pandits. This community, of the original inhabitants of Kashmir,

has been languishing in temporary shelters for a decade.

I am told by my friend, constituent and United Nations consultant, Dr Jagan Kaul, that the state of homelessness and abject poverty has imposed extremely harsh conditions upon the Kashmiri Pandits, and that the lack of proper shelter, food, nutrition, medical attention, sanitation, drinking water and clothing have further aggravated their situation. I am also told that thousands have died due to these conditions.

Dr Kaul tells me that numerous state and union territories have already been created in India, and under your own BJP government three additional states have been created within the Republic. Could a state not be created in India for the Kashmiri Pandits?

I am hopeful that, in view of the urgency of the matter and the critical juncture this community has reached, your government will give priority treatment to the task of resettling the Pandits in a newly created autonomous region.

Thank you, Mr Prime Minister, for your time and consideration.

Tim Johnson  
U.S. Senator

## QUOTABLE QUOTE

### Kashmiri Pandits' fight for survival

Not many of us are aware of the plight of Kashmiri Pandits who have fled from the Valley for fear of their lives leaving their homes and properties behind them. People who talk glibly of Kashmiris secular traditions turn a blind eye to the travails these refugees are undergoing for no other reason than that they are Hindus: They callously dismiss it as false propaganda for "playing the Pandit card". They should meet some of them now living in Jammu or Delhi to have their visions corrected.

I met a few in Jammu. They were very bitter about what had forced them to flee from their homes: they feared losing their lives at the hands of terrorists. Their Kashmiri Muslim friends and neighbours could not guarantee their safety. I met one of them who is trying to eke out a living as a cartoonist.

Anil Nakhasi was born in Srinagar. He was still at school when his family was compelled to seek refuge in a migrants' camp in Jammu. He completed his schooling in the camp school and his B.Sc. from a camp college. He had a penchant for drawing cartoons of politicians. He succeeded in placing some of them in provincial papers: *Daily Excelsior*, *Kashmir Sentinel*, *Kishtwar Times* and *Bharat Darshan*. These papers have very limited resources and could not adequately compensate contributors. Anil Nakhasi came to try his luck in Delhi. He joined the YMCA course in journalism and was able to place his cartoons in *Jansatta* and other papers. But so far he has failed to get a job in an Indian paper. Most of them have a cartoonist on their staff.

So he has to be content making a living as a freelancer. There is not much money in freelance cartooning. A cartoonist should first be able to produce a good likeness of his subject: exaggeration and caricature come second; satire, wit and humour come third. Anil has made excellent portraits of the Prime Minister and other celebrities. All he needs is political guidance and a dose of malice to make good. "

(Khushwant Singh in HT)

### Increase crimes against women in J&K

KS Correspondent

JAMMU: The statistics available with Union Home Ministry, reported by a local daily reveal that Jammu and Kashmir has become infamous for crimes against the women.

As per the report, as many as 163 incidents of rape, 505 kidnappings and abductions, 425 cases of molestation, 312 eve-teasing instances and 14 cases of cruelty against women have occurred in Jammu and Kashmir State in 1997. From January to June 1998, the number of incidents of crimes against women in Jammu and Kashmir has been 672.

## Kashmiri Hindus face gradual elimination from state services

(Contd. from page 6)

have been victims of constant harassment owing to irregular examination schedule without providing enough preparation time; sudden change in courses; inordinate delay in declaration of results; near impossible re-evaluation procedures all have added in making the normal three year degree courses stretch beyond four-six years.

The University during the last nine years of militancy has only produced two batches of migrant law graduates, while the six batches of law graduates were produced by the other Universities of the country in the same period. Migrant aspirants who sought admission in Law in 1995 have till date qualified only two-third of the total semesters while the 1993 batch students are still awaiting the final year results for no fault of theirs.

The students who have been admitted in the three year law course in 1996 have so far qualified one third of the total semesters and the students of batch 1990 who had already completed some semesters in Valley completed their degree in 1995, which otherwise should have been completed by 1992. The apathy of the University authorities can be gauged from the fact that the first batch of migrant law students who sought admission in 1991 qualified their degree only last year.

The students blame the University authorities for making

the displaced students deliberately the target of their wrath and apathy to destroy their career. Given this discriminatory attitude, maximum number of students face the threat of turning over age before the completion of their postgraduation degrees.

Another discrimination is in the conduct of examinations, declaration of results and the evaluation. The students allege that all the eight students in the Mathematics of M.Sc. final and 17 students of M.Sc. previous were declared fail this year. Also in commerce final year all the six students were declared fail, the results of which were declared recently.

Discrimination is also extended to admissions. The 1997 batch of migrant graduates are still awaiting admission in post graduate courses when the Jammu University in the same period has made two admissions in different the departments.

As per the students the completion of result process takes six to eight months when it is the job of only two months. To give benefit to the students in the Valley the examination and results of the migrant students are not linked with them.

The examinations for the Kashmir University are held in the month of November due to the particular climate of the Valley. Even in the Jammu similar provision is made for Baderwah, Kishtwar and Doda. But no such rationalisation has

been done for displaced Kashmiri students. These students have to enrol themselves at the end of August and appear for the exams within two and half months time. Those who do not appear in the examinations that year, have invariably to lose their session and one valuable year of their careers.

Even the change in the syllabi are not communicated to the displaced students and teachers. This year when 48 displaced students failed in their B.Com. Part I examinations, only then they were intimated about the change of syllabi and increase in the number of papers from six to seven.

Even the complaints of the displaced are not heard by Kashmir University sub-office at Jammu. In the light of its unsatisfactory handling, the displaced students describe it "a vestigial organ which is there but is defunct".

The biased and discriminatory attitude of the University authorities has generated lot of resentment among the migrant community. The attitude of the KU authorities has also put a question mark over the attitude of popular government towards the displaced Pandits. This has caused frustration and cynical attitude among the students. They harbour feelings of serious alienation and a vital human resource is being led astray.

The displaced students and teachers have started mobilising

public opinion against discrimination in education. They brought to the notice of NHRC chairman, Justice Venkatachalaiah their tale of woes, recently at a seminar in Jammu. In his presidential address, justice Venkatachalaiah, while appreciating the anxiety and concern of the displaced students said. "It is a tone of exasperation worn out of frustration". He added that their depression born out of the frustration due to academic problems was extremely dangerous.

In the seminar "education in exile", organised by the displaced students, Prof HN Parimoo and Prof BL Zutshi criticised state government and the Kashmir University authorities for ruining the career of the displaced students. They said the governments have not bothered to take steps to alleviate their problems and rather have done immense harm to them with their acts of omission and commission, which they said is unparalleled anywhere in the world. They demanded a thorough probe into the systematic and sinister designs of KU authorities to deprive the students of their basic fundamental right i.e. right to education.

Meanwhile, the displaced students and teachers demanded delinking from KU and attachment to the University of Jammu for timely conduct of their examinations.

# Indian Kurds and the year '98

By Dr. R.L. Bhat

If you did not know, who the Kurds of India are, you haven't heard of an exiled ethnic, called Kashmiri Pandits. Living within their country, they are refugees, with the history going back to the stone-age, they are without a land, with a culture which would easily be classed as one of the best in India if not the world, they are in the midst of a cultural chaos. With near a 100% literacy that whose base line is not just a knowledge of the three Rs but a high school diploma, they are a frustrated, rudderless community that sees every option closing upon it.

*Panini Wudi Chhuna Kanshi Mas Kosmut*-none has given himself a hair-cut, goes a famous Kashmiri saying. Kashmiri Pandits have a great astronomical tradition. Kashmiri Jyotishis are not only well versed in the astronomy but have developed astrology into a fine, very fine, and precise art. Even Alburni the 12th century Muslim traveller makes a respectful mention of Jantaris (Jyotish calanders) of Kashmir. Kashmiri Jyotishis have singularly failed to make any worthy prediction, regarding their future. Kashmiri Jyotishis are as much at a sea as are the thinkers, analysts, commentators and the plain folks among the Kashmiri Pandit community. At sea. Ship wrecked. All that the year 1998 did, was to deal a few more subtle blows to this well pounded people.

## Crisis of leadership:

With about a dozen and a half outfits, all ready, all eager, to stand at the head of the community, there shouldn't have been a leadership crisis in the community of Kashmiri Pandits. If leadership means a band, with a well chalked out "modus operandi," a fund of diplomatie, a penchant for limelights and arc-lights, a line ready for every event, a plan at hand to cash every opportunity, yes, if leadership implies all and any of these there is no dearth of it in the KP community. But leadership, which seeks to inspire and lead, must be sincere and earnest. That leadership is simply not there. The year 1998 saw the sincerity of those few, whose credentials had begun to concretise, exposed. In the bath-house called KP leadership all come through naked as nativity. Probably, it is a blessing to be able to see through the sheeply camouflage. But it is tragedy to know that all the roaring lions at the head are lowly animals, only wearing a lion's hide. Curse the year for that. Or curse your community. The choice is yours!

## Stale warts of community:

Probably KPs would not have suffered this hideous fate, had their community produced a single leader. It still may, but hasn't so far. There are two personages in the legislature, one of them a full-fledged cabinet minister. They are supposed to

represent the KPs in the ruling machinery. Do they? Handoo, with all reverence to his stature was never a leader, much less a leader of the Kashmiri Pandits. As for Bushan Lal Bhat not even the whole village of Bijbihara where from he hails knew him, not to speak of any sizable number of Pandits. Probably, the claim of Pakistan, to speak for Kashmiri Muslims that is has a sounder basis than thrusting the mantle of representing KPs upon this couple. To be truthful, the dozen and a half Sabhas and Samitis, that thrive as representatives of KPs have no popular mandate. Their charters, as much as their prospectus, are made and unmade in a dozen drawing rooms. Do the community concerns inform such outfits? Here, the 'outfit' is the concern and community an excuse. When the Amphala Sabha called for a free count, it reckoned just 2000 persons out of a 3 lac strong KP community as eligibility vote! The result is that nobody-neither the powerful virtually hostile government, nor the ill straited community-takes them seriously. And, it is left to sundry opportunist, sycophants to negotiate with the magistical powers on behalf of the luckless Pandits! Dozens, nay scores, of such self-appointed "representatives" parleyed the fate of KPs with the State and Central authorities, during the year 1998.

## Misleading claims; and distortions!

One such "representative" group claimed that "ten thousands migrants are ready to return to Kashmir". Apparently waiting for the green signal from these advance-guard. During the year their own families got settled in business and 'homes' at Jammu and Delhi! Another representative claimed to have covered the distance of 3 km to his ancestral village in 2 hours, so thick, apparently, were the crowds of local Kashmiri (i.e. Muslims) gathered to greet him. Another, spent a fortnight in his village being feasted by one family (of locals) in the morn and another at night. Yet, none thought it safe for him to sleep at one place for two nights in a row 2600 families, 10,000 people shifting sleeping places every night, to save themselves from being killed. A return, verily! From wild to wilderness! But for a people, whose homelessness has been made into a fact, these changes would make no difference. *Kahanka Ishq, Kahanki Wafa, Jab Sar Phodna Thehra To Phir Aiye Sang Dil Tera Hi, Sang-i-Astan Kyon Ho!* There are others, who initiated "symbolic constructions" in the Valley, at the behest of scheming politicians (to break the 'myth' of insecurity!) in lieu of more concrete benefits (to themselves) at Jammu!

## Sincere souls scared!

Other men, not with motives, not leaders, not emissaries of political patrons, also visited Kashmir. Some stayed for a few

weeks too (of course, under army protection, or shifting sleeping quarters daily), and attempted to save their properties from destruction and decay. They salvaged a bit, or sold it outright ridding themselves of their ancestral heritage. They always came back more unsettled, more hopeless of a return or settlement in the pre-1989 locales. Forgetting Wandhama, discounting a number of killing of non-migrant KPs in the last quarter of '98, it is said that the KP per se was not the target of militants this year. Actually the strategy has changed as the newly rising militants are avoiding contact with the populace in general. The reason being that the militants want to regain the confidence of people, which has been shattered by the large scale loot, rape, murder and other marauding activities of their predecessors during the last ten years. Secondly they know of the wide intelligence network established by the security forces. The new recruitments are hush-hush, the returned militants keep a low profile, and their accomplices in administration, media and in other opinion-making fora, are at pains to deny the new arrivals, consolidations of networks, or the ceaseless movement of youngmen (mislead?) across the border to Pak training camps. The year saw all this maneauing to good effect, so much so that the security agencies and administration is ready to swear by the non-presence of "Taliban" cadres in the state, even as hordes with of foreign mercenaries, replete with photos of Ladan were getting killed and caught, all over the state, all through the year.

## Taliban, who?

"Taliban", the personative from the root "talib", is a seeker. Till a year or so ago, "talib" meant a "talib-ilm" seeker after knowledge and "talib-i-haq" the seeker after the truth. Two years ago, Pakistan changed the meaning of this, almost sacred word, and turned the 'seekers' into marauders par excellence. This ruthless band of fanatics, today rules the most of Afghanistan, their most remarkable feat of the year being the cold-blooded massacre of thousands of Hazara Muslims in Northern Afghanistan.

If 'Taliban' is restricted, as the feel-good apologists want, to the regular battalions of these controllers of Afghanistan, marching if in full dress, their green-flag held high, then Taliban are not inside the state of Jammu and Kashmir. If Taliban refers, as it actually does, to the motley ranks of Afganis, Pakistanis, Sudanese and faithful men of other races, trained and turned in Pak school into ruthless fundamentalists, then their cadres have undeniably entered Kashmir, even Jammu division, and are actively pursuing their marauding objectives. They did indeed filter in large numbers into the state during the year, as

their "controllers" vowed. In Wandhama, in Prankot, in Chapnari, in Surankot, everywhere the attacking terrorists included Afgan, Pak, Sudanese and other foreign mercenary elements. It was these who in fact are now in command and control the ranks of militants in all parts of the state. All of them, their Kashmiri partners included, consider that they have achieved their first objective, viz. that of converting the Valley, and now the hilly areas of Jammu too, into Hindu-less areas. Those who stay, are at their mercy and command, helpless, emasculated, trapped, to be used as and when they wish. "There are no Taliban in Kashmir." Eh! Tell that to the spokesman who officially sums up the daily depredations of militants!

## Delusions shattered!

When the state was under Governors rule, and Farooq Abdullah with whole of his brigade exiled, the Kurds of India, migrants that is, had a vocal supporter in him. The day he assumed the power all resolutions, all protestations of sharing the pain of exile, vanished. That was the year 1996. The year 1998, broke some more delusions of the hapless migrant community. All along, their pain had been shared by the BJP. The cadres of the party from grass-root worker to LK Advani him self had evinced feeling empathy with the plight and cause of Kashmiri Pandits. The honeymoon of this understanding extend to the first quarter of the year. Then, BJP assumed power. First Doda people migrants as well the non-migrant ones got the divorce. Even as massacre followed massacre, the party which had been decrying the rising terrorism in the area, found that the situation there had suddenly "normalized." "Improvement" in Kashmir was to follow. It did, and from advocacy of full scale war to root out Kashmir terrorism, BJP discovered that the situation had drastically and dramatically "improved". The only "unfinished task" in Kashmir was pushing back, no-not the terrorists, but the migrants! The Muslim migrants who had left the Valley, on the breakdown of civic amenities returned much early. So did the politicians and political workers (Muslim ones, that is) in bullet-proof gypsies provided by the government. Only the Pandits remain, hounded by terrorists there, and suffering apathy outside. In 1998, the Kurds lost another friend to the exigency of power!

## Raging Friendlessness

Democracy thrives upon a balance of interests. The opposing aspirations are believed to mollify their more prickly extremes. But democracy is a virtual doom for the groups, sects, even peoples, who fail to garner a swayful number. When the minorities come to have a sizable number they get a veritable handle, and are able to ride over a fractious majority. But when

the minority is a miniscule one, its interests and concerns become so many prickly spikes. None wants to associate with a cause that does not fetch electoral returns, none wants to voice concerns that are not vote catchers, nor does anyone feel motivated to sympathise with the perceptions of this miniscule group. People, even passer by, would pay a lip service, but when the words need backing of concrete acts, they balk out. This is how as ethnic minority the aborigines of Kashmir, are living as refugees in a land they did everything to shape and have come to be a friendless people. That is how an MP from faraway Britain can, after a short visit, see very clearly that their return is an impossibility in the present situation, but neither the local authorities, nor the State government, not even the Central government, can see any 'threat', any 'danger', in their return. Of course, Eric Aveybury has no political blindfolds, hindering his vision. Political calculations, have made almost all classes of State and Central leadership apathetic to the dire straits in which the Kashmiri Pandits find themselves.

## Ah! The Kurds:

To be sure, the Kurds, that is original ones, find a mention even in the declaration of conditions, announced by Bill Clinton upon which the missile attacks upon Iraq have been called off. A couple of years ago USA came to the brink of invading Iraq when Saddam Hussain mounted an attack on the Kurd tribes. The Indian Kurds-Kashmiri Pandits-are mentioned first when the government of India has to counter Pakistani propaganda in International fora. They, the Indian Kurds, are valuable tools for the state authorities when they have to convince foreign mission about the heinousness of the militants. They are used when needed, either for political mileage, or to cleanse consciences once in a while. For the rest, they are ignored, nay positively schemed against. In 1991, when militants were in full tempo, one of the first things that was done was the burning down of the shanty structures at the Shamshan Ghat in Srinagar. That included a temple of Bairav Nath, and platform/shed for cremation. It is easy to guess, why they did so. When you are on a mission of ethnic cleansing, you efface the symbols of that ethnicity first. Right? Two years ago, the popular government enacted two acts to safe-guard minority property in Kashmir. These acts directed the local administration to "take charge of the properties of minorities." Probably, the Shamshan Ghat, was not included in these. In 1998, the Shamshan Ghat came to be used as a dumping ground for the city refuse. On its patches, vagrant boys would install wickets and play cricket on a leisurly day. A symbol of KPs future? Ah! there are many, many more, of these haunting symbols around! The year 1998 added, its own quota, to them! □



# Towards Kashmiri Pandit Strategy on Kashmir

*The displaced Kashmiri Pandits community has felt alarmed about the various moves of the government to initiate their return in a phased manner. Time and again through its leadership in Jammu and Delhi it has voiced the dangerous implications of such endeavours by the government. Already having borne the tragedies of Sangrampora, Gool and Wandhama massacres, the community views the 'phased returns' as an attempt to bring about its further destabilisation. However, what has caused more serious concern amongst the displaced Hindus, is the overt and covert support extended by some overseas Kashmiri Pandit groups like IAKF, ICKF and IEKF to such moves on return by the government. These groups for quite some time appear to have embarked on a concerted campaign to influence some functional Pandit organisations in India to make them endorse the proposals on 'Phased Return'. The document produced here will help our readers to understand the contours of the 'mind set' behind the proposals of 'Phased Return'. This document was circulated within the board of directors of IAKF some years back for their consideration. We also produce here the proposal mooted by ICKF and addressd to NHRC on the issue of return.*

## Background Discussion

--This paper is an attempt to assist the KP community to define its approach to these negotiations. Its purpose is not to give all the answers, but to help the community reach consensus on a strategy grounded in the realities of the current situation.

The Government of India's (GOI) current strategy involves meeting with selected Kashmiri Muslim leaders to start a dialogue on the Kashmir situation. Perhaps the GOI hope to reach an agreement with the more moderate militants and so improve its prospects for wiping out the isolated extremists. Of course, Pakistan (along with other Islamic countries and organisations) will try to torpedo this strategy by increasing its clandestine support of the die-hard radicals, while publicly proclaiming its innocence.

If India's negotiations with the moderate groups does not bring peace to the Valley, India may be forced to seek cooperation from Pakistan in order to rein in the militants. For this favour Pakistan will demand negotiations on the long term future of Kashmir. Based on past experience in other hotspots, it is likely that the United Nations and the major powers will be involved in these negotiations.

So, any strategy that the KPs develop must be based on the assumption that the long term destiny of Kashmir will be decided in negotiations between India and Pakistan, with the international community facilitating the discussions. This means that the national interests of the two countries will determine the long term future of Kashmir, not the preferences of KPs and KMs. On the other hand, KMs and KPs will have more say in the resolution of the short term issue, that is, on the establishment of normal conditions in the Valley. The KP community should, therefore, concentrate on finding ways to normalize the situation in the Kashmir valley.

Two options on the future of KPs in Kashmir are circulating in the community. These are: (1) the establishment of a Panun Kashmiri (PK) enclave and (2) Return to the Valley.

The KP community supports the establishment of a PK enclave for Kashmiri Pandits and secular Kashmiri Muslims. KPs would feel secure here and be able to protect their culture and their way of life. However, GOI would be unalterably opposed to this option, because it breaches the fundamental principles of secularism and would spur demands by other minority groups in Kashmir and the rest of India. The acceptance of secular Muslims in the enclave would not change situation because discrimination between two groups

with one religion would be involved. In addition, Pakistan as well as the KMs, would denounce this proposal. Finally, there are practical questions. What would the long term economic prospects of such an enclave be? Also, how would a secular Muslim be distinguished from a non-secular Muslim for the purposes of residency in the PK enclave?

The Return to the Valley option envisages the creation of conditions in the Valley which would encourage KPs to return to live with KMs as neighbours. This option would be favoured by India since it is compatible with secularism. Pakistan and the KM would not be able to oppose it without losing credibility. The international community would also favour this option since it is in line with international law. On the other hand, for the KPs the prospects of living next door to KMs, after their recent traumatic experiences, would be a dreadful fate. They would also be concerned that their cultural and religious institutions would be at risk in a Muslim dominated Kashmir.

Neither of the two options is appealing. Clearly, though, establishment of a PK enclave will be a herculean task because of the wide-ranging opposition to it and the intractable practical problems that are strewn in its path. This option will also be take longer to implement and therefore will result in prolonging the agony of the refugees.

The longer the refugees are uprooted from their homeland the greater is the danger to the Kashmiri Pandit way of life and lower are the prospects for its long term survival, KPs interested in the perpetuation of their culture should also work for an early and safe rehabilitation of the refugees in the Kashmir valley. For the GOI the return of the refugees is also essential. If they don't return soon, there is a possibility that the situation will become permanent, and the bargaining power of the GOI in its dealings with Pakistan could be weakened.

### Essential Elements Of A Strategy: Main Components:

- The main thrust of the KP strategy should be to ensure an early and safe return of the refugees to the Valley. The urgency of returning the KPs to the Valley should be emphasised on every occasion and in every forum, in India and abroad.

- The KP leadership should develop a policy concerning the conditions necessary for the safe return of KPs. This policy should be developed in consultation with the refugees and constitutional and human rights lawyers.

- The KP community abroad should welcome overtures from KMs and if necessary initiate

intercommunity dialogue. This dialogue will be of great benefit to the KMs as well as the KPs. But the discussions should focus on one issue: how to normalise the situation in Kashmir to enable KPs to return. Exchange of opinions on the roots of the Kashmir problem or the long term future of Kashmir should be avoided. Such exchanges tend to inflame tempers and serve little useful purpose.

- To enhance the usefulness and improve the prospects of success of these discussions, the temperature of the public rhetoric on both sides should be lowered considerably.

- The KP community should resist the temptation to use the Hindu card when campaigning on Kashmir. Such campaigns could strengthen fundamentalist militant organisations in Kashmir, weaken moderate forces, aggravate the political climate in the Valley, undermine the efforts to improve relations between KMs and KPs abroad and impede the early return of KP refugees.

### Need for early return of the refugees

Prolonging the agony of KPs in refugee camps will have serious consequences not only for camp dwellers themselves, but for the survival of KP culture. The refugee camp dwellers are the stewards and guardians of KP culture. As long as they are uprooted from their ancestral neighbourhoods and villages and towns, and are forced to live in conditions of extreme privation in artificial communities, they will not be able to practice their customs and traditions with the fullness of belief required to give them meaning. With each passing day, more and more educated men and women will leave the camps in search of work for places scattered across the sub-continent, many never to return, until at last only the unemployable and the old will be left behind. The longer children grow up in these conditions, the less they will cherish Kashmiri traditions. The Kashmiri way of life cannot survive these conditions for too long. Therefore, the goal of every red-blooded KP interested in the perpetuation of KP culture should be an early, safe and orderly rehabilitation of the refugees in the Kashmir valley.

For the Indian government, progress on the Kashmir problem, beginning with the return of KP to a pacified Kashmir, too is a matter of urgent necessity. The longer the KPs are successfully prevented from reoccupying their homes and properties, the greater are the chances of the situation becoming permanent. So, the government will bypass those within the KP community who try to hamper the return of KPs. Stubborn adherence to the establishment of an enclave

would be seen as an impediment to the fulfilment of the short term goal of the government. GOIs penchant for sowing discord among activist groups is not restricted to hostile organisations; it has not shown any aversion to employing the same tactics against friendly groups who are perceived to be obstructionist. Would the community stand steadfastly united against a covert campaign by GOI to discredit the supporters of PK enclave concept?

Focusing the resources of the community on the PK enclave option has another detrimental consequence: it diverts the energy of the people from developing a position on the solution that has a chance of being implemented—that is, Return to an Undivided Valley. It prevents them from framing a lobbying strategy to shape government policy in a way that protects the interest of KPs. As long as the KP community representatives publicly espouse the PK enclave option, there is a danger that the GOI will make decisions based on negotiations with KM groups and in consultation with KPs of their own choosing. These KPs may not represent the will of the majority of the KP population.

For all the reasons enunciated here, the KP leaders should reconcile themselves to the proposition that the only valid recourse open to the KPs for the foreseeable future is to return to the Valley and live with the KMs as neighbours. It is not a palatable option. But it is the only practical, feasible and viable option. The KP leaders, in spite of their misgivings, should give their blessing to this option in principle. Many in the community may find the option intolerable. After having nurtured the wonderful dream of a promised land of their own, many in the community will find the prospect of having to return to Muslim dominated Kashmir valley disappointing.

Perhaps it was necessary to create an inspiring vision of a PK enclave to lift people's spirits and boost their morale during the last few years of despondency and despair. It served as a shining light of hope at the end of a dark and frightening tunnel. But to prolong this vision now and make it the basis of a negotiating strategy would be utterly counterproductive. The KP leadership should slowly awaken people from this comforting dream and bring them firmly but gently back to the sober reality. Accomplishing this task without causing dissension and disillusionment will take all the skill, sensitivity and judgement the leadership can muster. But it is a mission from which they must not shrink and one which they must not postpone.

To soften the blow, the KP leadership could work out a system of phased return of

refugees. The arrangements for this would have to be discussed in detail with Indian security force and departments of GOI. As part of the phased return, groups of KPs could be sheltered in designated safe havens. Special protective measures would be in place in these areas and only people with a security clearance would be allowed to sojourn there. In time, as the security situation in surrounding areas improves, the area of the safe havens could be expanded and the pool of people allowed to venture into these areas enlarged. In essence these safe havens would be temporary PK enclaves discussed earlier in the paper.

It is difficult to foresee opposition to the establishment of these safe havens from any quarter as long as they are designed as temporary measures for ensuring the security of returning KPs during a short transition period.

### Essential elements of strategy

- 1) The KPs should agree to return to an undivided Kashmir valley provided GOI ensures that their safety, security and human rights will be protected.

- 2) The main effort of the KP leadership should be directed at developing a policy position to define the conditions which are required for the safe return of KPs.

- 3) This policy position should be prepared with the help of knowledgeable constitutional and human rights lawyers in India.

- 4) The KP leadership should consult extensively with the refugees during the preparation of its policy position in order to:

- 5) KPs should seriously consider a cautious phased return to designated safe havens which are fortified with special security measures and where only people meeting strict security criteria can reside. As the situation improves the sanctuaries can be expanded and eligibility rules can be relaxed. But these restrictions must be considered temporary and must be in force only for a short transitional period to ensure the safety of returning KPs.

- 6) The KP leadership should recognise that it is far more important to be armed with a well developed strategy, supported by the community, than it is to participate directly in the negotiations. Equipped with a community-supported strategy the KP leaders can influence the negotiations by:

- providing advice to with the GOI negotiating team;
- lobbying the GOI Ministers;
- discussing the issue with opposition parties;
- meeting with opinion leaders and politicians abroad; and
- briefing the press, both in In-

(Contd. on page 10)

## Towards Kashmiri Pandit Strategy on Kashmir

(Contd. from page 9)

dia and abroad.

On the other hand, KP negotiators devoid of a strategy, are very vulnerable to being swept away by experienced and professional negotiators representing the other parties. Also, if the KP negotiating team were to make concessions during the talks in the absence of an accepted strategy, the team would have no way of knowing whether the community would support their decisions.

7) The KP community abroad should generally support the Indian position on Kashmir. That does not mean that it has to act as the mouthpiece of the Indian government or agree to everything that the government says in foreign countries. But it should avoid public criticism of the government. It is important that the Indian community as a whole appear united, otherwise the foreign public will be confused and the Indian bargaining position will be weakened. Any disagreement with the Indian government must be an internal matter, a family quarrel to be resolved through discussions and debate behind closed doors rather in the public realm.

8) In every forum on Kashmir in India and abroad, in every human rights discussion, in every press briefing and in every meeting with Indian and foreign politicians, the urgency of returning the KPs to the Valley under conditions of safety and security must be vigorously emphasised. This must be the single-minded obsession of the KP community. It is no longer sufficient to persuade foreign opinion-leaders of the perfidy of the Pakistan government, of the human rights abuses suffered by the KP and of the brutality of KM militants. The KP community must take the next step and launch a sharply focussed cam-

aign to build the momentum necessary for the KP refugees to move back to the Valley, safely and soon.

9) The KP community abroad should respond positively to overtures from moderate KM groups and, if necessary, should initiate inter-community dialogue. This should not be done in the spirit of soft-hearted generosity but on the grounds of hard-headed self-interest. Not should it be done with a view to verbally humbling the KMs on scoring debating points against them. For the sad and awful truth is that the KP community needs continuing and productive dialogue with the KM as much, if more, than the KMs do. This interchange could be beneficial to the KP community for three reasons:

- it will enable the KPs to acquaint the KMs of the conditions necessary for the return of the refugees and in return gain some insight into the demands of the KMs;

- it will signal to the more moderate KMs in the Valley that violence is not the only way to deal with problems;

- it may lessen tensions in the Valley and may help in creating impetus for new understanding between the militants and the GOI.

The KP community abroad can serve a very important role in building bridges between the two communities. This is very difficult in India, since most of the rebel representatives would be persona non grata there. Abroad, the two groups can meet on neutral territory, neither threatened by the other.

10. KPs abroad should recognise that it is more difficult for genuine KMs to publicly present the militants for fear of reprisals against their relatives in the Valley. KPs do not have such fears since so few KPs still re-

main the Valley to be terrorised. KPs may have to make special efforts to contact KMs. Currently the most strident Muslim spokesman on Kashmir are Pakistanis or expatriates from the Pakistani-occupied Kashmir. While some of the more extremist KM groups may be using these non-Kashmiris as front men, it is unlikely that these front men represent the views of the rank-and-file of KMs abroad or of the more moderate KM militant groups. One way to weed them out is for KPs to insist on talking to genuine KMs and refuse to talk to self-styled sympathisers from Pakistan or other parts of the world.

11) Any ideas that emerge from discussions with genuine KM groups should be conveyed to the GOI, to the KP community in India and international KP organisations. Sharing the information with the GOI will serve two purposes. Firstly, this will improve the standing of the KP community in the eyes of the GOI and thereby increase the community's leverage with GOI. Secondly, the GOI will get a more comprehensive view of the position of responsible KM groups and will be able to negotiate on a more informed basis.

12) In any discussion with the representatives of the KM militants the KP community should strive to focus the discussions on improving the current situation to ensure the safe return of the KPs to the Valley and not let other issues muddy the waters. There will be an insinuating urge and emotional need for both KMs and KPs.

- to blame the other side for the current tragedy'

- to accuse the other side of brutality and human rights abuses; and

- to present their own solutions to the long term future of

Kashmir.

KPs should make a determined effort to steer the discussions away from these topics. The two groups are so far apart on these subjects, that any debate about them at this stage will only serve to inflame tempers and turn each meeting into a futile round of accusations and denunciations. From the point of view of the KPs, heated exchanges on these issues will distract attention from their most urgent and crucial goal: to ensure the early, safe and secure return of the refugees to the Valley.

13) KPs should recognise that if they persuade the KMs to focus on improving the current situation, unsuspected areas of common interest may emerge. For instance, many moderate KMs long for the return of law and order in the Valley, so that people can again live normal lives. No doubt the terms and conditions required for normalcy will vary for the two communities. The KM community will emphasize curbing the Indian army and the Indian administration and returning power to a locally elected State government; the KP community will seek assurances that the State government will respect its rights and ensure its security. It is not difficult to imagine that given this convergence of interests, despite deep differences on broader issues, some modus vivendi between the two groups can be found. But agreement will be impossible, however, if either party insists on regurgitating the past or trying to resolve the long term future of Kashmir.

To assist in putting the discussions on a constructive footing, it may be worthwhile to hire an uninvolved objective outsider, such as a dispute resolution specialist or a mediator to chair the first meetings. Such experts are invaluable for help-

ing to define common ground between seemingly intransigent adversaries. The mediator can help the two parties to frame an agenda for meetings, to help build consensus and to keep procedural wrangling from scuttling the discussions.

14) To enhance the quality and usefulness of the discussions and improve the prospects for their success, the temperature of the public rhetoric (in speeches, newspaper advertisements, newsletters, publications and the like) on both sides will have to be lowered. The KP community should work with KM groups on this issue.

15) In India the KP community should resist the temptation to use the Hindu card when campaigning on Kashmir. At best this is a double-edged sword. While it may help to gain the attention of the government, it could be quite damaging in the long term. It could strengthen Muslim fundamentalist militant organisations, weaken the moderate forces in the Valley, aggravate the political climate there, undermine the efforts to improve relations between the KM and KP communities abroad and impede the early return of the KP refugees.

16) Before launching any new initiative, KPs must ask themselves one fundamental and pointed question: does the initiative assist in the early, safe and secure return of the KPs to the Valley? For the time being, the early return of the refugees must be the main objective of all the strategies employed by KPs. Pursuing this objective is important not just to end the unbearable hardships of the KPs in the camps, but also to prevent the disintegration of KP culture and to strengthen the hand of the Indian government in any negotiations on the term future of Kashmir. □

## Indo-Canadian Kashmir Forum

December 7

Justice Sh. M.N. Venkatachaliah  
Hon'ble Chairperson  
National Human Rights Commission  
Sardar Patel Bhavan, New Delhi

Dear Sir,

The Indo-Canadian Kashmir Forum is desirous of highlighting before the Commission the immediate and urgent need for the National Human Rights Commission to take up the issue of rehabilitation of the displaced Kashmiri Pandits back in their homeland so that continued

existence of the Kashmiri Pandits in exile from their homeland in other parts of the country and elsewhere does not operate to eliminate and extinguish the very identity of the Kashmiri Pandits as a notable group with its sense of identity and obligation in building up Kashmir's own special composite culture. It is important, if by a flex of time the very sense of identity of the Kashmiri Pandits is not extinguished, that urgent steps be taken to place them back in

Kashmir valley which is their ancestral homeland by a collaborative effort by the State and Union Government under the aegis of the National Human Rights Commission. As a first step in this experiment, which is important as much to the Government of India and the State Government as it is for the preservation of the identity of the Kashmiri Pandits, that a prototype or a model for such rehabilitative experiment be tried initially with a group of 3000-

5000 families which could be persuaded to settle in a selected location in the Kashmir valley with adequate security and resources for livelihood so that the model can be replicated progressively in other areas. The Indo-Canadian Kashmir Forum would equally be of assistance to the National Human Rights Commission in regard to this project and the Forum is confident that several other Kashmiri Pandit Organisations would contribute to the success of such an

experiment in developing any proto-type or a model which would furnish a vital beginning for the solution of the long pending and vexed problems of the Kashmiri Pandits and their saga of suffering.

The Indo-Canadian Kashmir Forum shall be glad to have the response of the National Human Rights Commission for an initiative of this kind.

### QUOTABLE QUOTE

Dear Sir,

The recent seminar on Kashmiriyat was certainly an educative exercise in the cultural history of the Valley. I am neither a Kashmiri nor do I understand that language, but have interacted extensively with a cross-section of Kashmiris (I mean Muslims) in the last three years. What I could gather from them is that just as there was never in Kashmir a word like Kashmiriyat (it has been coined

## Kashmiriat: Past & Present

in recent years in imitation of Punjabiya) there is practically no future for that spirit which that expression seeks to convey. For centuries the Kashmiris nourished a composite culture and even now cherish it with pride, but its connotation has changed beyond recognition in the last four years.

Now the bed-rock of the so called Kashmiriyat consists of a collective assertion of their identity and honour against vir-

tually everything Indian and those associated with it. They lament the fact (and I cannot probe their sincerity) that their Hindu brethren, in their hour of struggle, had left them for greener pastures in the south, defamed them at home and abroad as communalists engaged in ethnic cleansing and have chosen to discard their Kashmiriyat by claiming to be Hindustanis. As is the fashion, every one says that he is willing

to welcome his Hindu brethren back but adds, what about others, will they tolerate those traitors? Parodying a Latin American poet, one of them asked the imagined Kashmiri Pandit audience, "Where were you when we defied the curfew and faced the bullet, while our houses were torched and sisters dishonoured"?

Some form of liberalism may survive, but the old inter-communal harmony (in the absence

of one community) is dead for ever. No Zainal Abedin, in future, will invite the Pandits back to the Valley. They have cast their lots with India and will remain here as Indians like millions of Punjabis, Sindhis and Bengalis who in the late forties had to make a similar choice. India is large enough to be the home of all those who opt for her (including the Tibetan refugees); none needs a separate homeland. □

--Prof A.C. Bose,

Jammu

(Kashmir Times-11/9/94)

# Displaced Kashmiris--the challenges ahead



Dr. Shakti Bhan

On this day seven years back Kashmiri Hindus declared their resolve to struggle for the creation of a Homeland for 700,000 Kashmiri Pandits East and North of river Jehlum in the Kashmir valley. Prof S.Rimpoche, President of the Tibetan Parliament in exile was one of the key speakers, who addressed the historic gathering at the Marg-Darshan conference. Speaking to the displaced Pandits, he remarked that the first ten years of exile were critical to the survival of a group undergoing genocide.

Where we are and where are we heading for assumes importance as we enter the tenth year of exile? Given the tired mindset of the Indian leadership and subtleties of Muslim communalism, a grim scenario stares us in our face.

Where did we go wrong? what are the priorities for our struggle? Short-term priorities and the long-term issues, critical to our survival, need to be crystallised. Why did the community fail to throw sustainable institutions for survival? How does the community intelligentsia respond to genocide? Why do we fail to sustain organisations that engage in mass politics and articulate basic issues of survival? Is incomprehension on the part of the community the main culprit in prolonging the agony of our genocide? All this needs debate and a purposeful dialogue must take place.

We have short-term problems of survival and long-term issues of rehabilitation and identity. Short-term problems include; redressal of deprivations, building physical resistance to genocide, developing the human resources potential of the community and countering moves on destabilisation and disinformation on return. Long term goals include protecting our identity and retrieval of our homeland.

### Destabilisation and Disinformation:

No other Kashmiri loves his homeland more than the average Kashmiri Pandit, and Kashmiri Pandits tempered with their lived experience have made their choice. The underlying consensus in the community is that it will no longer allow itself to be experimented with to legitimise a flawed perception of nation

building in Kashmir whose essence has been communal and divisive Kashmir has proved to be the graveyard of all ideologies, viz. secularism, civilisational and nation-state building. There is nothing that justifies the return of the Kashmiri Pandits in the present circumstances. Entrenched forces of communalism and fundamentalism and the all pervasive weak central leadership has helped Pandits' make the choice.

But the Pandit's choice does not end the compulsions of the different political parties involved in the drama. Congress, BJP, left and National Conference have indicated that they do not have any vision or political will to effect the return of the entire displaced community. None of these parties is willing to address the basic issues of exodus and survival, that hold the key to the reversal of the genocide. All these parties want to break the exodus through a tokenist return to refurbish their respective legitimacy. Phased return now being talked about is part of this grand plan to destabilise Pandits in Jammu. This destabilisation will only gladden the hearts of India's enemies as it will have a disastrous effect and the Pandits will not be able to survive it.

As the displaced Pandits have rejected this destabilisation process, new forms of defection and betrayal have emerged. Some overseas Pandits' are now being imposed as leaders. Camp-dwellers are being pitted against the non-camp ones. Rural Pandits are being played against the urbanities. Dangerous argumentation is also being talked about in favour of mandalisation and destabilisation. It is also said that the Pandits cannot wait till "the last gun is silenced in the Valley" and "should not be rigid", otherwise "our identity is gone for ever". Those very people who in the past opposed raising mundane issues, describing these as 'non-political ones,' are now talking about "urgency in restoring dignity to camp dwellers and immediate but orderly phase out of KP refugees camps".

The community has to be sensitive to understand the games of destabilisation and be prepared to resist any stand that seeks dilution on basic issues linked to exodus and genocide.

Our refusal to return without politico-economic rehabilitation is also being played against us. Disinformation by the vested interests that Pandits are not willing to return is aimed at diluting national sympathy for us. It is being said that Kashmiri Pandits are settling down and the problem relates only to a section

of camp dwellers and ruralities. The challenge ahead lies in reaching the nation and explaining our perspective on return and rehabilitation.

### Delinking deprivations:

In a genocide the 'problem' of a victimised group does not end with its mere expulsion. It has to be subjected to such processes, which bring it to the brink of physical extinction. Non-redressal of Pandits' deprivations and linking the addressal of these deprivations to return is simply aimed at pushing community to 'passive desperation'.

Handling the issues of fraudulent/forcible occupation of Pandit property, employment, education, ex-gratia compensation to victims of arson and loot, compensation to the agriculturists and the traders besides the day to day problems of employees-all reflect on the insensitivity on the part of the 'popular government'.

In a situation, where return seems elusive, linking of addressal of deprivations with return is a sinister design. Inability of the Pandit leadership in forging a relationship between short-term problems and long-term issues imposed massive litigation on the community. The failure of the community organisations in playing an interventionist role compelled each displaced Pandit to fight his own individual battle. This undermined faith in the collective struggle and the stage was set for the emergence of numerous group regimes in the Pandit leadership. It also facilitated the task of some traditional power brokers among the community's elite to infiltrate the popular functional organisations and hijack the agendas. It is a test for Pandit leadership how it shapes itself for interventionist role and rebuild the faith in the collective struggle.

### Physical and Social stress:

Alien environment, cumulative effect of deprivations, continuous insecurity and uncertainty resulting in chronic stress, have started having its impact on the physical and social health of the community, pre-mature aging, disease and negative growth of the community population is having devastating effect, that threatens to push us towards physical extinction. High divorce rate, neglect of old, infirm and the deprived sections, acceptance of the ethic of social Darwinism-all these are indicators of high level of social stress. The massive litigation forced on us by the total policy of squeeze adopted by the government, has put great financial and mental strain on us. We need to develop institutions and evolve mechanisms that will relieve the physi-

cal and mental and social stress.

### Preserving identity:

Given the ground realities, the community has to be prepared for a protracted exile. There is a tangible threat to our identity, both as a distinct socio-historical group and to our culture, in 'unwieldy diasporas and remaining long away from our homeland.

The spectre of cultural effacement also haunts the victimised group. The aggressor group makes attempts to destroy any link of the victimised group with its homeland. There is another danger that makes sections of displaced people neutral to struggle for identity and political rights. The extreme conditions in which a victimised group hold on, generates "catch and snatch" (hedonism) culture among sections of refugees. This danger lurks more in those exiled groups, which have incomprehension of their genocide.

How do we protect and reinvigorate our culture? we need to address the requirements that will sustain our identity and culture in exile.

### Retrieving the Homeland:

Homeland will not be given on a platter. The struggle for it has to be a long-drawn one. Its creation is linked with the defeat of international intrigues in the region and the development of such bureaucratic-political culture that is sensitive to the national interests. Our tasks thus relate to contributing to the defeat of the destabilisation forces and shaping the new bureaucratic-political culture. We have to convince the nation, its civil

society and the political leadership about how reversal of genocide and the long-term consolidation of the nationalist forces in Kashmir, contributes to the national interests. There is also the desirability of identifying allies in the state and the country.

There has to be a strong vanguard organisation, that is rooted in mass politics. The social and political awareness in the community regarding the scope of the struggle is not high. The community intelligentsia, both traditional and the creative, has to be more sensitive.

Presently, our struggle faces a new challenge from within. Position of surrender is being sold out as the strength by a section of elite, which in the past also cornered substantial concessions for its role model. This group has been indulging in maximum defeatist discourse. Its priority is not what is necessary for community survival, but what is acceptable to 'Muslim communalism'.

This group has been indulging in slanders aimed at damaging the functional organisations and institutions, while at the same time keeping itself out of the institutional accountability. This elitist section also misrepresents Pandits' aspirations. It uses space in functional organisation for diluting and distorting the basic agenda.

By raising its level of social and political awareness, the community will be able to sharpen its power of discrimination. Only then will our struggle for homeland move ahead.

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# The tent and the third generation



By Shyam Kaul

A chirpy little girl sat next to me with her father in the bus as I travelled back from Udhampur to Jammu.

"What is your name?" I asked the child. "Madhumati", she replied promptly. Her father interjected, "she was born at Udhampur and I named her Madhumati after the small river that flowed through my village back home in Kashmir."

"Where is your home?" I asked the little girl. Quick came the reply, "it is in my tent".

I looked at her father, who had introduced himself as Rattan Lal, a young man in his early thirties. There was a touch of a wry smile on his lips over his child's reply to me. I couldn't make out whether there was amusement or pathos in that look of his.

"Yes, we live in a tent in the camp", said Rattan Lal. "She was born there; learned to crawl, walk and talk there. Her whole existence is confined to the tent where I have lived all these years with my old parents and my own family. She has never lived within the four walls of a home. Don't know when she will."

Perhaps to find some comfort, he asked me, "What do you think is our future, our chances of going back home?"

I did not answer his question. I didn't have an answer.

When the exodus of Pandits began with the eruption of terrorist violence in Kashmir, especially against their community members, all fleeing Pandits had believed that the phenomenon of terror and murder and mayhem was a fleeting nightmare. They had hoped that sanity would return, life would again settle down to peace and normalcy, and they would be back in their homes within some months. A whole decade has passed and all the hopes of the displaced community stand shattered.

Rattan Lal's aged parents have resigned themselves to their fate in exile as have others of their generation. Rattan Lal is caught in a struggle for survival, tossed between the hope of making it to his home one day, and despair of the existing plight. And the child, oblivious of the tragedy of her progenitors, is moving towards a future where uncertainty is the only certain thing.

The question posed by Rat-

tan Lal is on the lips of every displaced Pandit, but who has the answer? Normally Government of India should have had it, but it hasn't either. One gets answers when one looks for them. Has GOI looked for one during the past eight years?

Exiled Pandits remember that when they fled the Valley under the murderous shadow of the terrorist's gun, GOI looked the other way. It adopted an ostrich-like attitude because it did not want to admit to itself and to the world at large that with the rise of fundamentalist forces, together with the arrival of Pakistan-trained terrorists, the government-brand of secularism was falling apart in Kashmir.

The government condescended to see the truth only after its lobbyists in the west told it that the exodus of terror-stricken Pandits could be its strongest weapon to counter the high-intensity Pakistani propaganda on human rights issue in the international fora, like UN Human Rights Commission. Thereafter tented camps became the show-windows of terrorist atrocities and it became a practice to take visiting dignitaries to these camps. Even then the attitude of the government continued to be lukewarm on vital issues concerning the displaced community. Even the BJP leadership which was most vociferous in support of the cause of the Pandits, before the party came to power, changed its stance to suit its political expediency after taking over the reins of the government.

The petty cash dole to the Pandits is about the only concrete thing that the government has done for them over these past eight or nine years. All other basic issues remain unresolved.

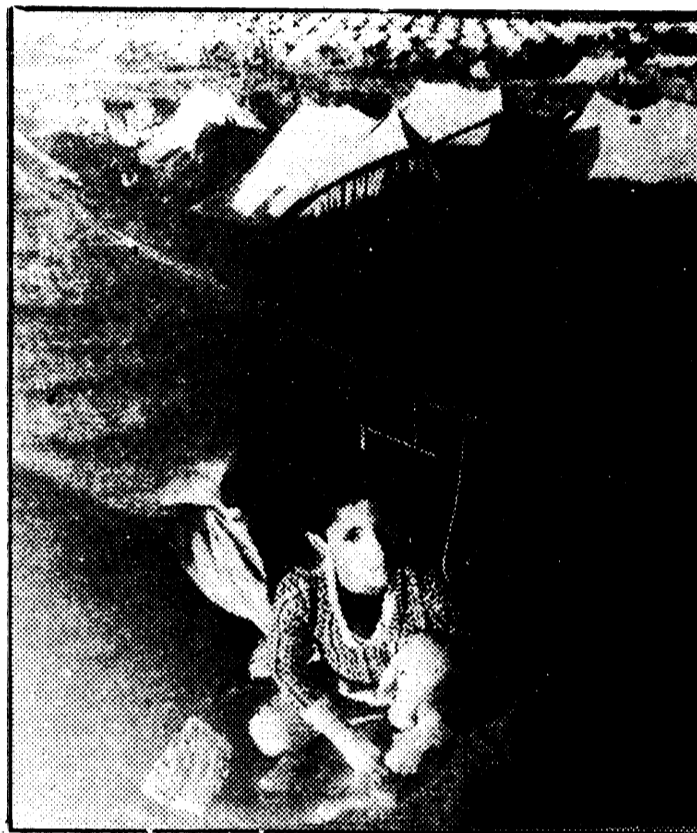
During these years announcements have been made every now and then from Delhi, Srinagar and Jammu that the displaced people will be sent back. Sometimes threats have also been issued asking Pandits to pack up and go back. But the governments in Delhi and Srinagar have till this day not come out with any viable and practicable proposition or plan. For some time now the Centre and State Government have been tossing the issue from one to another without either of them taking or owning the responsibility. Dr Farooq Abdullah says he needs huge funds from the Centre for return and rehabilitation of Pandits and Centre says that State Government is seized of the matter and working out plans for Pandits' return. Meanwhile the homes and other properties of Pandits in Kashmir have gone to dogs. They are either destroyed or ravaged or forcibly grabbed. The ones that stand in-

tact are changing hands under an organised plan of distress sales.

It is also being trumpeted about that people in Kashmir are fed up and disillusioned with militancy, and that normalcy is fast returning. But one hardly finds any let-up in killings and other militancy-related incidents, and foreign mercenaries are freely roaming the streets, meadows and mountains of vil-

ity in this regard, so why bother?

Indian nation's insensitivity is appalling too. It can bring down government for the sake of an onion, but it appears to be helpless in the case of a three-lakh strong community, hounded out from its land of ancestors, rendered homeless and made to live as refugees in this great democracy of the world.



lages and cities, in fairly sizeable numbers. It is being said there is a genuine feeling of remorse in Kashmir for what has happened during these past years. If it is true, it is a belated remorse, because by now the political, economic, social and moral fabric of Kashmir has been torn to shreds, making it difficult, among other things, for Pandits to go back and live in peace and security.

We in Kashmir often repent belatedly over what we do. Kashmiris invited Mughals, then Afghans and then Sikhs to rule them and then repented. In 1947 they thronged Lal Chowk in hundreds of thousands to applaud when Sheikh Abdullah took the hand of Jawaharlal Nehru and declared "man tu shudam, to man shudi; man tan shudam tu jan shudhi". Then they repented and, in late eighties, showered flowers and 'shirini' on Pak-trained militants who had just descended down on the Valley. Then after some years they again repented.

The attitude of the general lot of politicians and political parties on the national scene, with an odd exception or two, has been marked by insensitivity, bordering on sheer callousness, to the crisis of the Pandit. Indian politicians view people only in the shape of ballot-papers which they want in their pockets. Kashmiri Pandit hardly has any util-

ity in this regard, so why bother? As if the holy mess of the displaced community were not enough there are some non-displaced members comfortably settled in foreign lands who are making the confusion worse confounded. One of the "experiments" floated by some of them is that a group of "three to five thousand families" be persuaded to settle in a "selected location" in Kashmir with the idea that this model be "replicated" later in other areas. This idea has not come up for the first time but no proposer has ever bothered to work out the practicability, advisability and acceptability of the idea. In practice it means that Pandits do not go back to their homes but are herded into a "selected location" like cattle in a guarded enclosure or like a ghetto of unwanted people for the gun-crazy militants to prey upon.

It takes a Lord Eric Avebury, Vice Chairman of UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group, to sound caution that at the present time it would not be safe for Pandits to go back because "they cannot feel secure".

After his recent visit to Jammu and Kashmir and after looking at what he called "utterly appalling conditions of Pandit camps, Lord Avebury said, "you cannot be certain that outsiders (foreign mercenaries) won't single them out."

But who cares for the "feelings" of the community in distress. The men at the helm of affairs in Delhi and Srinagar may not look at Pandits as mere ballot papers, but they do look upon them as pawns in Delhi's quest for its brand of normalcy in Kashmir. Unfortunately they are joined in by some members of the community too.

Rattan Lal's parents are in the twilight of their lives. He himself symbolises the today of Pandits in exile and this "today" is wholly taken up by the community's struggle for honourable and dignified survival. What happens to "tomorrow" of the community? What happens to Madhumati? □

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# Return of the Hindu Refugees



Prof. M.K. Teng

The worst that could befall the beleaguered community of Hindus of Kashmir, smouldering in exile, is that its future should be pawned to political interests of small men whose 'errands at night' have never served the nation, but have decidedly served its enemies. If there are people in India and there are people among the Kashmiri Pandits, who take pride in closing their eyes to the uglier aspects of the reality in Jammu and Kashmir, it would need another Mahabarta not only to pull them out of darkness, but also to weed them out of the Indian political culture.

No people must be ashamed of their past, howsoever gory it is, and the past of the Hindu community of Kashmir is smeared with 'blood and tears'. It is a past which has left a memory of remorse for its posterity to bear. The burden of the usurpation and the long persecution which followed along the centuries, after the ascent of the Muslims to power in Kashmir, has always been far too heavy for the community of Hindus in Kashmir to bear.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who wrested Kashmir from the Durrani Pathans in 1819, and ordered a census of the local population, found to his dismay, that the community of Hindus, which constituted a population of around eight lakhs at the time of the Muslim conquest, had been reduced to less than twenty eight thousand souls. The few hundred Muslims who had invested the Hindu-Kingdom had added six lakhs of Hindus to their strength by conversion.

That the terror and high turmoil that defaced the social culture of the Hindus of Kashmir, should have been applauded as the heritage of tolerance and communal harmony is a tragedy, which is bound to evoke retribution, for all who have been responsible to white-wash lies who among the Hindus in Kashmir would take pride in the religious aggrandisement which destroyed them and which is now legitimised as a liberal theology that sought to spread peace and save people from hatred.

Throughout the history of the Indian National struggle, the Indian leaders refused to comprehend the character of Muslim communalism and its subconti-

mental expressions. In the end in spite of their intentions to save the unity of India, not only Gandhi but Patel and Nehru, were driven to accept the partition of the British India and the Balkanisation of the India states. If Indians leadership failed to learn any lessons from the holocaust that followed the 'Direct Action' campaign no one would come to their rescue to rectify the wrong which eventually followed.

Nehru handed over almost half of the State to the Muslims of Pakistan and the half that remained, to the Muslims of Kashmir in perpetual possession. That he and the other Indian leaders should have agreed to the exclusion of Jammu and Kashmir from the Indian constitutional organisation, when they knew that the new rulers of Kashmir were waiting for a chance to Muslimise the State and claim a separate identity, reveals that the Indian leaders refused to open their eyes even after the nation was divided. The four decades of Indian freedom witnessed the total Islamisation of the State, fundamentalisation of its society and the consolidation of the Muslim commitment to unite it with Pakistan.

The theoretical precepts, that the composite culture of Kashmir, inherently harmonious and characterised by a traditional commitment to inter-community coexistence, which was used as a frame of reference to legitimise the political process of Islamising that State and which came to be used as a frame of reference to conceal the communal, fundamentalist and secessionist content of the Muslim crusade in Kashmir, is now sought to be used as a frame of reference to rationalise the return of the Hindu refugees in a situation of crisis worse than that which overtook the State in 1990.

There is a measure of pathos in the helplessness of the Indian nation, which believes that it would not survive except by recognising the right of the Muslims to a place of precedence wherever they are in a numerical majority. That the Indian State should have learnt that diplomacy is not the art of the crooked and the world could not be hoodwinked into accepting that all was well with secularism in Kashmir by pushing back a few thousand Kashmiri Pandits broken by poverty, destitution, disease and squalour into concentration camps, proposed to be laid out somewhere near the Indian Army cantonment in Srinagar, evokes surprise.

For eight years, the Hindu refugees were left uncared for, in the refugee camps, to smoulder in sub-human life. Why should these unfortunate, miserable and forgotten people be condemned as the scapegoats for

another experiment to prove the veracity and substance of the Indian secularism as well as the content of the traditional tolerance of the Muslim society in Kashmir? Why should they be used as a surrogate population to prepare the ground for another unholy accord to buy peace in Kashmir?

There are several fundamental questions which require to be answered, before the return of the Hindu refugees, is taken up for a serious consideration. Why was the first offensive of the Muslim crusade in Kashmir aimed at the genocide of the Hindus and their ethnic extermination? Has the political motivation to eliminate the Hindus of Kashmir and the communal animosity, which accompanied the Muslim offensive against the Hindus, reached its end? What purpose would symbolic return of the Hindu refugees to the Valley achieve and for whom?

Apparently the return of a few thousand Hindu refugees would not yield any reprieve for the Government of India and enable it to build a new offensive against the Muslim militants, unless the Indian government plans to arm the Hindus, who go back. However, if the Indian government believes that the symbolic return of the Hindus would de-communalise the Muslim society or provide the Indian leaders a new platform to woo the Muslims, its optimism is misplaced. For the Government of India should realise that Muslim communalism is far formidable a menace, which could neither be camouflaged nor be tamed by accepting Islamisation as a part of Indian secularism.

Neither the political motivation for genocide of Hindus and their ethnic extermination, nor the animosity against it has ended. In the security zone the refugees would be completely exposed to the enemy attack, for the terrorist regimes would make no mistake about the motives of the Government of India in achieving the symbolic return of the Hindu refugees to Kashmir. No one would believe that the symbolic return of the Hindu refugees was not aimed to yield diplomatic and tactical advantage for India.

Who in the state Government; the Governor or the Chief Minister or their errandsmen in the administration, would convince the militant regimes that the concentration camps, inhabited by Kashmiri Pandits, were neutralised territory in the war zone and excluded from it? or would the Indian Foreign Office instruct its Foreign Secretary to convey to his counterpart in the next round of Indo-Pakistan talks that the Kashmiri Pandit enclaves should be immunised from attack? Is the symbolic return of the Kashmiri Pandits, another surreptitious attempt to use

them as cannon fodder in the war of attrition going on in the State? To believe that the militant regimes would spare them, tantamounts to seek clemency from the hangman. That they would not attack the refugees for the simple reason that the latter were hostages to secularism herded in concentration camps, is to put too much a premium on their credulity. The militant regimes do not need the support of secularism to fight the war for the victory of Islam in Kashmir.

Why would the Kashmiri Pandits allow themselves to be used as scapegoats to legitimise the rickety Indian stand on the State? Agreed that with the sense of patriotism they have, the Kashmiri Pandits would stick out their neck, as they always did, to provide overt and covert support to resistance against Muslim secessionism as well as the Islamisation of the State, what measure of political advantage would India derive from their symbolic return. If accords and agreements or the gimmicks like the symbolic return of the Kashmiri Pandits, could retrieve the situation in Kashmir, then Indira-Abdullah accord should not have been followed by the rise of Muslim fundamentalism in the State and Rajiv-Feroz accord should not have led to the militarisation of Muslim secessionism. The token return of the Hindu refugees will not save anybody's face, at least not the face of the Muslim separatist forces in Kashmir and if there is a belief in any quarter of the Government of India, that the token return of the Kashmiri Pandits would bail out the Muslim separatist of their responsibility for the Muslim crusade, the belief is misplaced.

The tragic part of the sordid drama which is being enacted, is the role played in it by a section of the Kashmiri Pandit leadership. Perhaps, prompted by the interest, exhibited in the symbolic return of the Hindus by a section of the Indian leadership, the Muslim lobbies in the Indian politics, the State Government with a number of mercenaries in the Home Department as well as the Foreign Office of the Government of India, all committed to uphold the Muslim factor in the Indian political culture, a few Kashmiri Pandit organizations have, openly or clandestinely lent their support to the move.

Among these organisations are included the overseas Kashmiri Pandit organisations, and some of their supporters in India. Indeed the ball rolled so fast, that the National Human Rights Commission, set aside its rightful work of investigating and adjudicating for justice and universal human rights in the numerous entreaties filed with it by the refugees, shifted its work to help in the return of the refugees. The petitions of the refugees pertain-

ing to genocide of Hindus, destruction of their property and demolition of their temples, forced exodus and their exclusion from the economic organisation of the State and its political processes, all violations of human rights, are pending with the Commission for last several years. Why does not the Commission make public the Sanker Sen report on Sangrampora massacre, which could possibly provide a backdrop, for any deliberations on the feasibility of the return of the Hindu refugees. The Kashmiri Pandit organisations, overseas or here in India, must make public the reasons for having lent support and participated in the formulation of any plans for a symbolic return of the Hindu refugees to Kashmir. A recent statement of a responsible Kashmiri Pandit functionary of IAKF, in a local newspaper, that the refugees who came from rural Kashmir, were eager to go home but the refugees with he urban, background were reluctant, is a travesty of history. Which homes would the Hindu refugees go to in their villages, and who would protect them against the widespread violence, which prevails in the cities as much it does in the villages? Such a sweeping generalisation should not have been risked without an empirical investigation into and relevant data, about the situation in Kashmir. If the attempt was to make a judgement, on the basis of the reports, circulated by the many moles in the Indian foreign missions abroad, commissioned by various intelligence agencies, to spread disinformation, the overseas Kashmiri Pandit organisations need to put themselves on guard. A mispronouncement, leading to a wrong decision may be the greatest betrayal the Kashmiri Pandit community may face in history.

The basic issue is that neither the approval of the Muslims of Kashmir, the so-called "confidence-building measures" underline, nor the protection of the concentration camps, can prepare the ground for the return of the Hindu refugees to their homes. The minorities do not live in India, with the approval of the Hindu majority. They live in India in their own right. The Hindus' return to Kashmir should not therefore, be hinged to the approval of the Muslims. The Hindu refugees, it must be understood, will not allow themselves to be used as cannon fodder for the terrorist regimes. Secondly, the Hindu refugees will not go back to the servitude of a Muslim state, which they have borne for more than three decades of India freedom. Thirdly they will not accept to orchestrate the Islamisation of the state.



# The Hidden Story 0

Reproduced here below is the paper presented by Dr. Saradindu Dasgupta from Delhi (India) at the Annual meeting of the Oral History Association, USA, in 1995.

**T**ragedies and follies of human society are best grasped only if the social scientists take up serious issues and also realise the inherent limitations of the conventional source-materials used. Rectification of mistakes in course of such an enquiry may help us in identifying the discordant strands of our mundane existence and perhaps contribute to the emergence of a better world.

The discourse on the current turmoil in one of the constituent states of Indian Union—Jammu and Kashmir has generally overlooked the plight of about three lakhs of people—who had to abandon their home and hearth in the Kashmir (1989-90) and seek shelter elsewhere in India. Despite India's long history of hosting the victims of forced migration, the subject has not received the attention it deserved. Since the issue is primarily humanitarian, the biggest casualty is the humanity. This unprecedented exodus besides physical, psychological effects has larger political, economic, religious, social, international and environmental implications.

The objective of this paper is to present a realistic account of some of the experiences and perceptions of these uprooted people with their own hitherto unutilised memories. Certain issues like inadequacy of ration, insufficient living space, psychosomatic diseases, question of privacy, especially for female members, and the all important matter of family prestige-izzat, socio-cultural stress have been skipped so that the focus falls on certain other important dimensions of this unprecedented forced migration scenario as it has evolved since 1989-90. But before probing this issue, it is imperative to have some clarity on the status of these uprooted people.

## Definition of Status

Generally known as 'migrants' or 'displaced persons' the victims themselves have so far resisted from calling themselves as refugees for 'patriotic' reasons, though a growing section of them have often desired so. Taking shelter behind the international law, it has been said that after all, the forced migrants from Kashmir have not crossed the international boundary and they have been merely made to leave one area—their ancestral home since times immemorial, to another part of the Indian territory. So, it has been argued that the use of the label of refugee in the specific case of the 'internally displaced' (Zetter, 1991) persons from Kashmir is problematic, in terms of the strict letter of the international law as enshrined in the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the Protocol of 1967. Keeping the complexity of the issues involved, a definitional exercise becomes imperative to understand this problem of unprecedented nature. One possible key to the understanding is to go into the causation of refugee movement. As Olson says:

*Refugees differ from other spontaneous or sponsored migrants, largely in the circumstances of their movement out of one area to another—Refugees are forced to leave their homes because of a change in their environment which makes it impossible to continue life as they have known it. They are coerced by an external force to leave their homes and go elsewhere.*

Thus 'coercive conditions' at the place of normal residence is another definitional clue. The Hindus of the Kashmir Valley had been pushed to the brink and were faced with the Hobbesian nightmare of a life 'nasty, brutish and short'. Recent researches in the domain of refugee studies in the west have shown that any definition of refugees is essen-

tially hinged to cause of their migration. Hence Zollberg's concept that those people who are forced to leave their countries of origin due to violent conflict or 'insupportable living conditions' comes handy in finding a suitable label for the Kashmiri refugees, once the technicality of international boundary or country of origin factors are taken in the correct spirit. Again by virtue of living in 'refugee like situations' and moving about in 'refugee like circumstances' the forced migrants from Kashmir are automatically invested with the 'de facto refugee status' as defined by Jolly et al. There is also the definition, as provided by the pioneer of refugee studies, Barbara Harell Bond, who has described the refugees as those who have 'lost the protection of their own state and must rely on the willingness of others to observe humanitarian norms...'. The government in Srinagar had failed miserably in safeguarding the life and honour of the Hindus of the Valley, so did the authorities in New Delhi. The 'willingness of others' is not a special favour but very much a fundamental duty of the state at the national level.

In light of the aforesaid factors, the 'internally displaced' persons from Kashmir valley, almost the entire Hindu and Sikh population may be called the refugees. They are a three lakh strong community who have been impelled by inimical forces—terrorist-fundamentalists to leave their ancestral homes and seek shelter elsewhere, where a more hospital environment prevails. In this case it meant the Hindu majority areas elsewhere in India.

## Background

To understand the roots of the problem one has to keep in mind the following facts. After India secured independence from the British colonial rule in 1947, Jammu and Kashmir (hereafter

J&K) along with about six hundred princely states of the Indian sub-continent (held so far in subordinate partnership with the imperial government in India) merged with the Indian Union. The state of J&K then ruled by the Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh signed the instrument of accession. It is to be remembered that India has a quasi-federal constitution. In fact the state was given special status through the Article 371 which prevented Indians from other parts of country to settle down and buy property there. Certain other privileges were also granted. This was taken by some as preparing the state for either maximum autonomy and by some as precursor to total independence. Still some others thought this will pave the way for its merger with theocratic Pakistan.

Certain elements of the Kashmiri society were continuously manipulated by the orthodox religious elements to create communal tension and perpetual discord between the state and subjects. They had external support from across the borders—Pakistan, in their nefarious designs. It may be noted that the state of J&K has an overwhelmingly Muslim majority with Hindus, Buddhist, Sikhs and Christians forming a small minority. The then leader of the premier political party of the state—The National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah who also became the head of the new administration had refused to join Pakistan. The separatist-secessionist elements however backed up Pakistan to continued grow in strength. This was a serious threat to Gandhi-Nehru vision of secularism and pluralism.

Having been reduced to a small minority in six centuries of Muslim rule, the Hindus of Kashmir also called Pandits, a vibrant and dynamic community started feeling insecure and uncertain of Future. As Gerald Studdert Kennedy, has pointed out, '—long oppression had unmanned the Kashmiri Hindus and left him with the most inadequate of spiritual resources'. Growing discrimination and frequent intimidation made their lot increasingly miserable. Taking advantage of growing political uncertainty and instability of local Governments, the militant-fundamentalists felt more and more assertive. The refugee victims recounted that the militants took full advantage of the deteriorating situation compounded by a lax state machinery. Long before the mass exodus of 1989-90 began, a slow and continu-

ous trickle of the minorities had been going on for years.

In April 1981, even Mrs Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India admitted before the Hindus of Jammu the problem of their insecurity in a Muslim majority state. In early 1985 the local Governor, Jagmohan informed the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of the growing strength of anti-national forces, objectionable preaching of Islamic fundamentalism and the sudden release of Syed Gilani, the Jamat-i-Islami leader by the Chief Minister in December in 1984. He further warned, 'Once these forces become part of the Kashmiri ethos, permanent damage will be done. The northern Command of the Indian army is reported to have conveyed to the civilian authorities as early as 1985 of a Pakistani plans of massive subversion. Mark Tully, the BBC correspondent in India also noted during 1980s the very obvious presence of Islamic fundamentalism in Kashmir. He also found fundamentalist parties which openly supported Pakistan in its dispute with India over the status of Kashmir to have forged an alliance to fight the elections there. Despite all such developments and growth of anti-Indian feelings and Islamisation, the Hindu minorities somehow carried on, much as the Coptic Christians still do in Egypt. The minorities had been getting out of the Valley all throughout. According to some estimates, more than 50 per cent of the members of the community had migrated to various parts of India and abroad due to educational, economic and political discrimination and communal policies of the local leaders. An undercurrent of fear in the minds of Hindus had always loomed large. Factors such as these have been adduced to explain as to why the population of the minority communities did not increase appreciably between 1941-1960; the net increase was a mere 4,000.

## Riots of 1986 and the Exodus of Hindus

A big exodus took place following the riots of 1986, in which the Hindu community, was subjected to all sorts of atrocities and humiliation, including burning of their houses, shops and temples. The Union Home Minister noted, 'The damage done to individual property—houses, shops and temples is substantial. But much greater damage has been done to the psyche of the Kashmiri Pandits.' The riots terribly unnerved the Hindus, and more so,

because the local police was not prepared to offer any protection; the Central Government of India in New Delhi did nothing to stop the Hindus who were scared to number of their homes. In Bahadurgarh-on-Border near Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir What was lame, was the 'migration process'. This was noted by Jagmohan, Minister of Government of Jammu and Kashmir. He found that the, 'fear-stricken'. The Samiti sent a five-pointed committee to find out the areas in which the Hindus were not prepared to settle. They had not prepared to settle there. They had experienced that they be shifted to safety outside the Valley. T



'an air of despondence among the Hindu community also came to no surprise in the nationalist and anti-threatening the 'dire' consequence 'preaching' by the minority community. The committee came to the conclusion that the elements in the were actively patronising such the Pandits, they expressed their out of the Valley. It was convinced that their design to squeeze the minority out of the Valley was 'preaching' by the minority community.

Besides physical attacks on property, there were frequent destruction of churches and temples. The community was not able to function. The during the Pakistani raids in 1948, it was a time in between the two worlds. This has been described as 'a time in between the two worlds. This has been described as'

## Method

This paper is based on the research carried out in Jammu and Kashmir and the material collected has been passed on to 89

# f Kashmiri Refugees

Mukerjee of the Deptt. of History, Hansraj College, University of Pennsylvania (USA) at Philadelphia (Penn Sylvania) in Oct. 1996.

al police kept living in camps or on their own, representing all the districts of Kashmir valley. There were people from both from the rural and urban areas. Interviewees included both educated and uneducated, professionals and ordinary, farmers, unskilled workers, atheists and religious, political and nonpolitical men, and women. The questionnaire contained queries on their actual experiences-from the most horrifying encounter-nature of rumour, initial attacks, confrontation, forced conversion, abduction, forced marriage, arson, murder etc. This paper, however, contains their perception of certain broader aspects, like their understanding of the causes of their ouster, collective psychology, philosophy and sociology of administration, present suffer-

ing. But some scared that a n migrated to the outskirts of and Udampur. ntable was that went un-nohen the Govern-dismitted the Shah. He had ninorities were The Kashmir e-member facttee to the af-March. The vic-hat, 'they were go through an-of the sort they and demanded ted to places of the State and they also found

## Collective Psychology

The nature and extent of the exodus of the vastly outnumbered, unarmed civilian population may be explained by what the psychologists call the 'will to war' mentality of their neighbours, known or unknown. They found it difficult to believe, much less accept that the familiar ambience had undergone such a horrendous transformation. The marauders had rapidly assumed what Ellul calls a 'psychological crystallization,' that left many of their victims very little opportunity to organise. The flaunting of a communal consciousness/identity, is not always 'made' or 'imagined' as Anderson had argued. The orchestrated terrorism of the hapless are the inevitable consequences of a mindset, and not sudden irrational aggressiveness, as fashionable history or literature would try to convince.

The accentuation of communal solidarity and the uniformity of behaviour over far-flung areas is explained by the historical memories of past domination of defeated people by the 'master race'. The autonomy of action forcefully displayed by one segment of the population was brought about in anticipation of the breakdown of the law and order machinery. The message was clear, as it was in West Pakistan during 1946-48 or East Pakistan/Bangladesh throughout. This was part of a tradition of intolerance. Some societies always refuse to learn from their past and hence they always tend to suffer. The victims admitted as much.

## Philosophy and Sociology and Administration

People did raise their accusing fingers at the administration. Except for brief periods, no one cared for the common man. But then, this is a grievance true of common man everywhere. Some people did blame specific problems like corruption at all levels of administration and half hearted measure of land reform. Much of the latter is also corroborated by the findings of scholars.

Land reform in Kashmir has clearly done away with the jagirs, and has weakened the position of all the great landlords. It has distinctly benefited those individuals who, at the village level, were already the more important and substantial people. It has done the least for petty tenants and landless labourers, these two categories being the largest in the countryside. Mere statistics of so and so many hundred thousand acres taken away from the big land-

lords can be quite misleading. It's most-publicised land reforms cannot be said to have succeeded in improving the economic lot of the Kashmiri peasant.

Discrimination, on the basis of religion, frequent intimidation was a common complaint. Much of this, they held could have been curtailed and controlled. But that was seldom done. It is this failure which emboldened the militants to assert more and demand a larger slice. It is the subservience of the administrative machinery to every unreasonable fiat which they found too galling: in fact, it was deviation from secularism that spelled disaster.

Questions were asked on the role of the security forces too. A near unanimous finding was the respect in which they are held by the refugees. Of all the institution of the state, the Indian armed forces, (including the BSF and the CRPF) are seen as the symbol of the majesty of the Indian state, non-partisan and yet very patriotic. People are not ready to accept and believe any complaint against them. And it is the armed forces which is given the credit for keeping Kashmir within India, and keeping in check all the inimical forces. This is generally seen as one of the most remarkable achievements of the political administrative culture in India, which had succeeded in keeping the armed forces immune from the unhealthy influences of the external world. Oral testimony on this score would thus neutralize the offensive launched by the so called civil-rights' activists who are known to be very sympathetic to the militants.

The oral testimony also suggested insufficiency and inadequacies of the public relations job being undertaken by the government machinery. On the contrary most of them felt that it was the publicity given on the state controlled television network (Door Darshan) to the intifida movement of the Palestinians which greatly inspired the Kashmiri militants to raise the banner of revolt and indulge in hate mongering.

Besides this, the government also failed to highlight its impartiality, and publicise its tolerant attitude to genuine democratic and liberal movements, not withstanding occasional deviations. As against this, the militants used every fora including the religious laws, educational system, state patronage, frequent demonstrations and slogan-shouting to spread their messages and recruit more supporters. This suggests effective use of symbols and past memories. Some people felt that a modern state with its tremendous resources could have done better.

## Present sufferings

Since the existing literature on the subject is inadequate to the extent of being non-existent,

it was considered necessary to record their perceptions of the sufferings undergone.

All of them, without exception can never forget the beautiful land, comfortable homes, and prosperous times left behind in the Kashmir valley. This is typical of most of the refugees. Even after fifty years, refugees who fled East Pakistan or West Pakistan can not brush off the sweet memories of their ancestral homeland. But the refugees from Kashmir differ from the latter in one crucial respect. They long to go back to the Valley and are still full of hope. How strong are their feelings can not be quantified, but it is remarkable and very natural.

Oral testimony revealed two more disturbing developments in this grim refugee scenario which have been blacked out by the media. One relates to the falling birth rate in the refugee households. Since death rate has increased manifold because of the trauma of expulsion and miserable living conditions, the dwindling birth-rate is seen by most as another disaster for the community.

Another cause of worry is the widespread rumour regarding the sale of the landed properties/commercial establishments by the Pandits, which they had abandoned at the time of their flight outside the Kashmir valley. Not much information could be gleaned but the process-distress sale' had certainly started as my independent inquiry also confirmed.

## The Sense of Past

Their sense of the sorrowful past also comes out when they mention as how ethnic cleansing is not something totally new to them. They narrate the story of the first great exodus of the Pandit community during the rule of Sultan Sikandar Butshikan (1394-1417), when according to tradition, the entire Hindu community was forced to leave Kashmir, leaving only eleven Hindu families behind. Even in agony, they found history repeating itself!

Periods of long exile experienced by India's divine/mythical figures as portrayed in the Ramayana and Mahabharata are an abiding source of inspiration for them. Some of them, in a lighter mood, visualise themselves as similar figures which mitigates their manifold miseries. Some of them, uninitiated in the discipline of history, thus show a rare insight, much of which they are believed to have imbibed from the oral traditions of the family and the community, where traditions of *shruti* and *smriti* happen to be the rule.

## Repatriation

Even though they do not feel like aliens yet, they feel, they are a burden on the resources of the state, even if it is their own. As Zetter has shown in his study of the Greek Cypriot Refugees-- 'Leverage on the government

has served to maintain the continuity of their temporary status.' The label of dependency which sticks to them hurt their sense of honour and citizenship. Their tragedy lies in their desire to recapture the past through return.

Their impulse to return is also shaped by the way non-refugees look upon them. As Zetter has shown their attitude also a part of the culture of assistance which refugees experience. The refugees from the Valley are no exception except the microscopic minority who are well settled and would like to stay on. This also explains their trauma-that bonafide citizens have been turned dole-dependent refugees.

Yet what makes them bitter is the general apathy of country's fellow citizens. Some of them feel that their return is possible only if they have a separate homeland carved out from within the Valley and a firmer military action against the militants. They also made it clear that their repatriation can be only voluntary and nothing else.

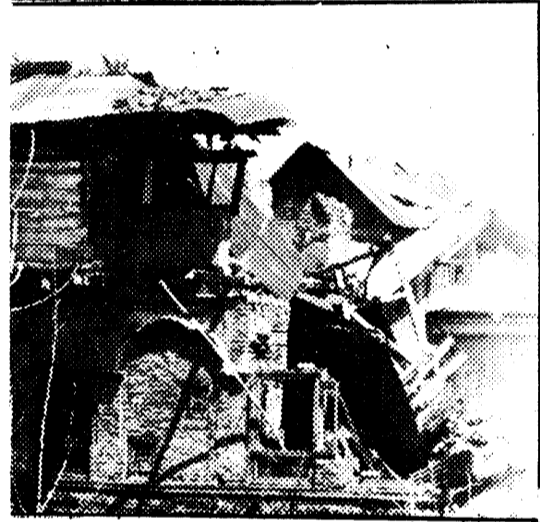
## Towards a conclusion

This heart-breaking litany of man's inhumanity against fellow human beings reveals how certain ideologies work. Any attempt to explain this in terms of the breakdown of the centre-state relations, quantum of autonomy and purely socio-economic grievances would be meaningless. It also shows the state apparatus collapses and a quasi state emerges without legitimacy. For the safety of its citizens, the state has to remain ever vigilant. Failure to exercise sovereign authority can never be rationalised.

What all of them agreed about was the apathy of the bulk of the media and the political class in India to their sufferings. In fact, they firmly held that the Indian media have done much more to publicise the activities of one Pakistani cricket player and his *nikah* (marriage) with a converted British woman than the tragic story of Kashmiri refugees.

Moreover, there is an urgent need for the international community, especially humanitarian organisation to take greater care of the victims of forced migration; this is best achieved by a close monitoring of the socio-political developments in disturbed societies to prevent such man made disasters. It is important to create and nurture an ambience which smothers the permodial tendencies and encourages the finer qualities of human behaviour.

It is suggested that, the time has come to heal the wounds of the refugees and ensure that the homeless people get back to their homes. They felt that it was high time that the irrelevant notions of political correctness was discarded. After all the State was created to serve the needs of the humanity and no otherwise



dependency and deep 'irrity and fear' plus. That team of justice posters issued of fundamental forces: Pandits with 'vices' and 'red against the unity'. The common know that some administration encouraging or forces. Most of by came across desire to move ley, being con-e was a 'definite ze this tiny mi-

ings, sense of past and their thoughts on repatriation etc.

## Causes of Ouster

Most of the victims confided that they would put the blame on Jamat-e-Islami, which was founded by Sayyid Abdul Maududi in 1938, which developed the concept of Nizam-e-Mustafa, i.e. the Islamic system and polity. Post merger politico-administrative developments also had contributed to the emergence of such an atmosphere. The younger elements were gradually indoctrinated. Catering to the less affluent classes, petty officials it gradually succeeded 'in sending its followers in every rung of the administration, the educational institutions and the professions'. Thus even without any representation in the legislature, Jamaat could influence both action and policy.

Bulk of them blamed the Urdu press of the Valley (since 1984) for their virulent anti-India and hate Hindu propaganda. They held the national media greatly responsible for ignoring them; coverage of their problem was at best a tokenism and not substantial. They felt marginalised and neglected from then onwards.

view: pecifically de- of questions refugee families

# Sarada pilgrimage-its socio-historicity-I

By Dr. Ramesh Kumar

Since early times Kashmir has remained a holy land for people belonging to the Hindu and the Buddhist faiths. It has also claimed to be the land beloved by Saraswati-Sarada. Such designations as Saradapitha, Saradamandala etc., have been in common use for it. Kashmir has served as the home of scholarship and refuge of learning. Much fame that India earned as an ancient civilisation has been attributed to the high learning that evolved here.

Is it mere coincidence that the only temple dedicated to goddess Sarada in the entire subcontinent should be housed in Kashmir. And even the script of Kashmir be called Sarada script. Sarada *tirtha* is one among the three famous *tirthas* of Kashmir that has subcontinental importance; the other two being Martand and the holy cave of Lord Amarnath.

## Sarada-Saraswati tradition:-

Kashmir is the home of SAKTI worship. The entire Valley is dotted with shrines dedicated to *Sakti Puja* and the cult of the mother goddess. Here even Sarada, the goddess of learning is worshipped as Durga, the goddess of power. In a unique instance of mingling of the two different goddesses, Sarada in Kashmir has been described as "Sakti embodying three separate manifestations i.e. Sarda (goddess of learning), Narada or Saraswati (goddess of knowledge) and Vagdevi" (goddess of speech which articulates power).

Nilmatpurana, an ancient Kashmiri classic, with a status somewhere between a Purana and Mahatmya, even while referring to the worship of books in Sarada shrine, describes it as the temple of Durga. Precisely for this precedence, Sarada Mahatmya prescribes the offering of a *pasuhoma* (animal sacrifice) at Sarada as obligatory even for *vaisnavas*.

Goddess Sarada is the most celebrated deity for Kashmiri Hindus. In a popular prayer to Jagat Amba, Pandits bow to goddess Sarada with a recitation.

*Sarada Wardha Devi Mukhdata Saraswati Namastse Namastse Namastse Namastse Nama*

Translation: Goddess Sarada, one who grants boons of learning, scholarship and liberation from the woes of the worldly life, I bow to her.

For Saraswat Brahmin community who trace their ancestry from Kashmir, invocations to Sarada are part of the popular ritual. The evening *sandhya* prayer of the Chitrapur and some Vaishnava Saraswats of Kanara contain the verse:

*Namastse Sharada Devi Kashmirapuravasini* (we bow to Sharada Devi, resident of Kashmir) The evening *sandhya* of the Shenvis contains the verse:

*Saraswati Mahamaya Kasmirapuravasini Satadres- amantat tam Saraswata Mahamunium* (We bow to Saraswati who is the great Maya and the resident of Kashmir and also to the great sage Saraswata residing in the neighbourhood of Satadri).

Also during Yagnopavit ceremony, some Saraswats in Karnataka move seven steps towards north (Kashmir) and then retrace.

Sarada is also the home to nyaya school of Hindu philosophy. Tehjan (ancient Tejavana) a place in the vicinity of Sarada, on the bank of Kishanganga has been described in Mahatmya tradition as the residence of Gautama, the founder of nyaya school. It was at Gautma's request, that Sarada was titled Durga.

The other places associated with Saraswati in Kashmir include the once famous *tirtha* of Bheda and the river Saraswati. This river, known in its earlier part as Kankatori, has its origin in the hills of Chilas. It enters into the Krnaganga near the village of Sarada. At Bheda (Bhedagiri) the goddess Saraswati is believed to have shown herself as a swan in a lake (Gangobheda spring) situated on the summit of a hill.

Outside Kashmir, the 3rd Magha (*Magha-tritya* or *Gauri tritya*) is a feast for the women and sacred to Gauri (*Parvati*). In Kashmir this day is celebrated as the day of initiation in learning. The priest writes hymns of the goddess Saraswati on elaborately illumined paper, which he gives to the youngsters. In return, he is offered presents of money. The fifth day of the dark fortnight of Baisakh (Shri Panchami) is also observed as sacred to the goddess Saraswati by the Pandits of Kashmir.

## Sarada shrine:

The shrine of Sarada is situated in the Keran-Krsnaganga valley at a hillock across the Krsnaganga river on the bank of Madhumati, which joins it near the shrine. Surrounded by the snow-capped mountains and dense forests, it commands a panoramic view.

The gateway to shrine is through an imposing staircase with two flanking walls of massive construction. It has 64 big steps and three hundred small, now faded steps. Each big step is twelve feet long, two feet wide and 1½ ft thick. From the height of the staircase an extensive view opens.

The shrine occupies roughly four kanals of land, out of which two kanals is stone-floored. In the centre of this floored portion is the stone temple. Around it is

a dharamshala. The roof of the temple is made of wood. In medieval times, Rajas of Kanara used to store gunpowder at the shrine. Its explosion blew off the original stone roof. The name of the village housing the shrine is derived from the presiding de-

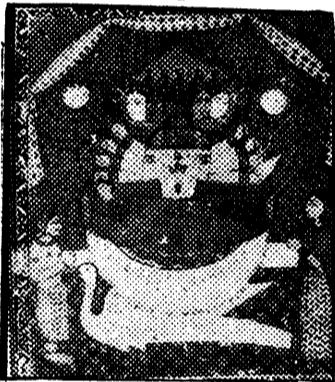
ity itself. From ancient Saradavana, it is presently called Sardi.

The backside of the temple opens on to the terraces on the hillside. Some what higher up here is a spring called **Amar Kunda**. It was from this spring that the legendary Buffalo eared King (**Mutsakund Raza**) regained his life with riddance of Buffalo ears.

## Shila Worship:

The object of veneration at the shrine is shila, a stone slab, square in shape with a rough surface. It is 8x8 ft, one and a half feet thick. The shila has a broken surface. In the last century Raja Mansur of Karnaha had damaged it in an attempt to extricate jewels and diamonds from it. It is said that lot of diamonds and jewels were used in the preparation of the shila.

The shila covers what could have been a spring. Since as per tradition Kashmiri Hindus do not look at the springs believed to be the abode of the Sakta goddesses, the shila serves as a cover. Elsewhere, for instance at Tripura asthapan (Karfali mohalla, Srinagar) and Kali



Mandir (Fateh Kadal), it is said that a person who looks at the springs will turn blind.

The shila has a Sri Chakra and a few other figures marked on it. It is smeared from time to time with saffron mixed with ghee and shines deep red, evoking reverence.

Kamdev and Ganesh worship also seems to have been prevalent here. About a mile from Sarada along the bank of Krsnaganga is a cave made of granite stone. In its configuration and internal carvings it closely resembles the caves of Hrishwar (Khomoh, Srinagar) and Dahneeshwar (Bandipore). All these caves at the blind end on the roof have rocks shaped into the teats of the cow. In the sarada cave water drops ooze out from "the nipples of Kamdev". Not more than six people can enter the cave at a time. Short distance away from Sarada on the opposite bank of Krshnaganga is Ganes Ghati (Ganesagiri) or the hill of Ganesa'. This hill has cliffs shaped like an elephant nose. Ganesa hill is also the place, where once used to stand the famous castle of Sirahsila.

Another attraction near the shrine is an old fort and some barracks constructed by Gulab Singh. It now houses a police station.

**Pilgrimage though ages:**  
Famous chroniclers

e.g. Alberuni, Bilhana, Kalhana, Jonaraja, Abdul Fazl etc. have recorded the pilgrimage. In early eleventh century, Alberuni, writes "In inner Kashmir, about two or three days' journey from the capital in the direction towards the mountains of Bolor there is a wooden idol called Sarada, which is much venerated and frequented by pilgrims". He says Thaneshwar, Varanasi and Kashmir were high schools of Hindu learning. Alberuni mentions that the importance of Sarada pilgrimage increased further after the destruction of the wooden idol of Aditya (Sun-God) housed in the sun-temple at Multan. Incidentally the ancient name of Multan is also Kashyapura (abode of Kashyap Rishi).

Bilhana, Kashmir's celebrated poet ascribes the patronage of learning that gave fame to Kashmir to the favour of Sarada. says Bilhana, the goddess is said to "resemble a swan, carrying as her diadem *The glittering gold washed from the sand of the Madhumati stream which is bent on rivalling Ganga. Spreading lustre by her fame, brilliant like crystal, she makes even mount Himalaya, the preceptor of Gauri, raise higher his head (his peaks) in pride of her residence there*".

Kalhana refers to Saradasthana in connection with a memorable siege of Sirahsila castle, which took place in his own time. In connection with Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin's visit to Sarada, Jonaraja writes: "The goddess (Sarada) broke her own image making king an instrument".

Prof Srikanth Koul of our times writes about this: "with a view to having a *darsana* 'vision' of the goddess in a dream, the royal pilgrim slept in the court of the temple. The *Brahmanas*' misfortune, the goddess did not appear to the king in vision; so he broke the idol."

Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin visited Sarada in 1422, a year after being crowned as the Sultan of Kashmir. He had learned from his Hindu subjects the miraculous powers of the goddess. These related to the appearance of sweat on the face of the image of the goddess, the shaking of the arm, and a sensation of heat on touching the feet.

Even in the sixteenth century the temple of Sarada continued to attract considerable attention. Abul Fazl writes "At two days' distance from Haehamun (Hayhom) is the river named Padmati (Madhumati), which flows from the Dardu (Dard) country. Gold is also found in the river, on its banks is a stone temple called Sharada dedicated to Durga and regarded with great veneration. On every eighth *tithi* of the bright half of the month it begins to shake and produces the most extraordinary effect".

**The Kashmiri Hindu Tradition:**

Sarada pilgrimage takes

place in the bright half of the month of Bhadrapada. Pilgrims start from Gush (ancient Ghosa) on the 4th *sudi* and perform *shraddhas* by the bank of Madhumati on 8th-*Ganga-ashtami*. These dates correspond to Gangabal (Mt. Harmukh) and Gangajatan (Pratapsinghpura) yatras also. In years when at these dates the sun does to stand in the Zodiacal sign of Leo, Kashmiri Pandits do not go to Gangabal or Gangajattan. They instead go to Sarada. It happens every three to four years and *Ganga-ashtmi* in that year is called *Sarada-ashtami*.

Political turbulence and the hard terrain did not deter the local Hindus from performing Sarada yatra. They created a series of substitutes within mainland Valley. About this Sir Aurel Stein says "notwithstanding all tenacity of religious tradition the local cults in Kashmir do not fail to adapt themselves to the changing conditions of time and place".

Saradakunda, at the village of Tsatsa, close to Harvan (Srinagar) has remained a popular centre for "Sarada" yatra for those who were unable to go to Sarada shrine. In Khuyhom (Bandipore) near the village of Kulyanda-Horil is another substitute for Sarada. At Gush there are a few fragments of old idols worshipped in a groove (Rangvor). This place is locally considered as parental home of the mother of the goddess Sarada.

During the Mughal and Pathan rule, the pilgrimage lost its importance. It was only after Gulab Singh suppressed restless Bombas in 1846 that the pilgrimage attained regularity. He repaired the temple and also settled a small bounty of seven rupees "*chilki*" per mensem on the family of Gotheng Brahmans, who claim the hereditary guardianship of the temple.

## Routes:

The shrine can be approached by two routes. Pilgrims go from Gushi to Hayhom via Tikr. They take bath in Krsnaga spring (Batanag) above the village of Drang. Passing through the Rangvati forest and Rangvor meadow, they reach Guthamman Marg. From Guthamman they go to Tehjvan. Here also there is a spring Batanag. From here they pass via Ganes Gatti and reach Saradavana. This is the orthodox route followed by Sandilya, the mythical *rishi* associated with the shrine.

The other route does not pass via Hayhom. Common pilgrims follow this route. From Gush they go to Dudiyaal after passing through the villages of Aura, Zirhoma and Sitalvan pass. From Dudiyaal there are again two routes to Tehjan; one the traditional one and the other via Sheikh-Bala. At Gush pilgrims take bath in a small rivulet and offer prayers at Rangvoor Part-II-Sarada University and Temple Legends. □



# II-Sarda University and Legends

**Dr. Ramesh Kumar**  
Sarada University:

Did Sarada University really exist? There are no ruins extant which attest to its existence. Close to the temple i.e. 10 jaribs, to quote the local idiom, one comes across big square bricks 1½ ft x ½ ft size. This perhaps is the only archeological evidence of what could once have been that great centre of learning and scholastic activity, called 'Sarada University'.

However, tradition and the literary evidence establish beyond doubt the existence of the 'grand' University of Sarada. It is believed that Adi Sankara visited Sarada temple also, during his stay in Kashmir. Sarada used to be the abode of scholars and Pandits of high vedic learning. Disciples of Adi Sankara claim that he 'vanquished many learned disputants and seated himself triumphantly on the throne of the omniscience'.

An interesting story is narrated by Alberuni in relation to a grammar classic, SISHYAHITAVRITTI, composed by Ugrabhuti. The author used to teach classics to Shah Anandpala, son of King Jayapala. Ugrabhuti after composing his magnum opus SISHYAHITAVRITTI, sent a copy of it, as per established convention, to the Kashmiri scholars at Sarada University for their approval. To his bad luck, they refused to approve it. He, then complained to the King Jayapala. It is said, Shah Anandapala, in accordance with the duty of a pupil towards his master, then promised Ugrabhuti to make him attain his wish. Orders were given to

send 200,000 dirham and presents of a similar value to Kashmir, to be distributed among those who studied the book of his master. This did the trick. The book was approved. Such was the prestige of scholars at Sarada that the book became the fashion and highly prized.

During Sultan Zainul-Abdin's reign in the fourteenth century, Ramananda Sanyasi, a renowned Vaishnava reformer (of Ramavat Sect) and author of Bhasya-Vyakhya came to visit Sarada. He belonged to Kerala. A manuscript of Rajatarangini in Persian, records his visit in these words:

*"Ramanand Sanyasi dar zamani paidashud, ba'd azan ki Sultan ba wai mulaqat kard zahir shud ki danishi bisyar darad wa kitabi mahabhash ra ki dar ilmi bayakaran ast khubmi-danist. Juni Pandit gufta ki sharada devi dar peshi o dar fani bayakaran ajiz wa hairan bud"*.

Translation: In his (Zainul-Abdin's) age there appeared Ramanand Sanyasi. After he had audience of the King, it was found that he was endowed with much learning, and that he was an adept in the Mahabhash, which treats of Bayakaran (grammar). Juni Pandit (Jonaraja) says that even Sarada Devi, 'the goddess of learning', was perplexed to cope with him in the intricacies of Bayakaran.

It is also said that Ramananda smuggled a manuscript from the library attached to the shrine. He was caught near the Kohala bridge and the manuscript was recovered from him.

PRABHAVAKA CARITA, composed in the middle of thirteenth century narrates an interesting story related to the well-known Jaina scholar Hema Candra. He composed the great grammatical work, SIDDHAHEMACANDRA. The author was commissioned by King Jayasimha of Gujrat to compose a new grammar. He requested to be supplied with the necessary materials in the shape of the eight older grammars, which could be found only in the library of the goddess Saraswati in Kashmir.

Jayasimha's envoys came to Sarada and offered prayer at the temple. The goddess was pleased and commanded her own attendants to transmit the desired works to her favourite Hema Candra. The manuscripts were thereupon delivered to the King's envoys and brought by them to Hema Candra. After perusing them he composed his own work.

## Sarada Temple the Legends:

When and who built the grand temple at Sarada remains a mystery. It is also not known, whether the present structure was a new construction or a structure built on the ruins of an old one. In style the cella of Sarada temple has some resemblance to the ruined cellas at KAPATESVAR: KOTHER (Acchabal). There is an indirect evidence, which indicates that probably the builder of the two shrines was common.

The Hindu temple architecture developed during the period between the sixth and the thirteenth century A.D. It was facilitated by the close contacts with

the Gandhara Kingdom in the preceding centuries. The high prosperity and the political stability that Kashmir witnessed during the rule of Karkota Kings, particularly Lalitaditya, came to the aid of Kashmir architect.

The name of King MUTSKUND is associated with the foundation of the temple of Sarada. This King was cursed with a pair of buffalo's-ears'. Anxious to rid himself of this curse, he could not achieve his purpose by any means at his disposal. King MUTSAKUND wore a turban that covered his 'abnormal ears'. He would kill every barber after getting a haircut, lest the barber leaks out this secret. Many barbers met death this way. Ultimately one barber begged mercy and requested to employ him as his permanent barber. He promised not to divulge the secret.

One day, this barber fell acutely ill. For nearly four months there was no relief. Some priests were summoned to suggest a remedy. They attributed his illness to the withholding of some secret. It was suggested to the King that the barber be sent to a forest, away from the watchful eyes of his army. The barber was advised to speak out the secret he was withholding. He fashioned a sarangi from the twig of a tree. Then the barber pulled through it a hair of horse and shouted "Mutsakund raazas manshihandi kan" (King Mutsakund has buffalo's ears). Meanwhile, the priests suggested to the disturbed King that if he tries a bath in Amarkunda (near Sarada temple), he would get normal ears.

King Mutsakund decided to visit Sarada. On the way, he had an encounter with Raja of Nagri. Ancient town of Nagri stands about seven kilometres from the present tehsil headquarter, Handwara. King Mutsakund gets killed. His faithful cousin puts his dead body in a coir basket, YETTI and proceeds to Sarada.

He makes the first stop at Gus. Next day he camps at Batanag spring in Hayhom. Till 1989 a Pandit family of Keshav Ram Khaibri lived in Hayhom. Covering nine miles on the third day and crossing the Sonapindi gali, King's cousin reaches SINJALI. From Sinjali it is just five kilometres to Sarada.

Feeling tired and hungry at Sarada, he longs for a good rest. He camps near the Amarkunda and supports yetti against a tree. The yetti loses the balance and the corpse of King Mutsakund falls into the spring. He regains life, with normal ears. His cousin cries in happiness. Having his hearts' desire, King Mutsakund prays at the temple. During the night he stayed at the shrine, the goddess appears to him in a dream. She asks him to construct a temple for her and close the other spring (now covered by the shila). King Mutsakund returns to his country. He mobilises his resources and comes again with army and masons. He avenges the defeat suffered at the hands of Raja of Nagri and destroys the shehr of Nagri. Then, as per his orders, stones for the temple are dressed at narada. From narada to Sarada it is a dangerous track. How such huge stones were lifted over five kilometres distance, looks a superhuman feat.

(Contd. on page 18)

# 'The Saffron Saga'

By Ikbal Haq.

The whole saffron belt of Kashmir is presently a riot of colour, flaunted by the purple petals and red stigmas. The sweet smelling saffron flowers are lending an alluring charm and ethereal enchantment to the environment. However, this very charm has been despoiled by the fundamentalist dons of the Kashmir University who are falsifying recorded history.

After having got its Vice Chancellor, Dr Mashur-ul-Haq, murdered in March 1990, the hands of the terrorists, the university's notorious fundamentalist crusaders have begun a systematic campaign of ethnic cultural purge in a big way. Its fundamentalist are deliberately falsifying history and culture of the state. By producing the lavish documentary, The Saffron

Saga, in all conscience, it has pulled a fast one on all Indians, indicating the brazen brief of the producer/director. Base disinformation is dished out in its script. "The present day saffron cultivation in Kashmir," it gloats, "owes its origin to Iran" But the narrator gives gratuitously additional information. He says that a Muslim dervish brought the saffron corns from Iran and planted them in Kashmir, and his shrine is at Zewan!

The film, produced in 1992, was telecast three times on the UGC net-May 18, 1992, April 16, 1996 and January 1, 1997. It is unfortunate that the UGC have become a willing medium of falsification of the state's history and culture. The only option for the UGC is to broadcast an apology, at least three times, and withdraw the film. Of

course, it is in tandem with the Goebblesian propaganda line unleashed by vested interests and fundamentalists. The buzz word is that all and sundry things of life in Kashmir are exotic and have originated from Iran or Arabia! After ethnic cleansing, it is high time for cultural cleansing.

There are references galore to the sweet smelling herb from Kashmir, in the Sanskrit and Pali literature. The Brahmins and Buddhists have woven legends around it. Amarsinha, Kalidasa, Sri Harsa, Bilhana, Kshemendra and Kalhana are some of the famed literateurs who have extensively mentioned it. However, during the Mughal times, the Kishtwar variety had the top rating. A ser (about 600 gm) of it fetched Rs (Akbari) 28 to 32. On the contrary, the Pampur

species was valued at Rs 20 to 124, as recorded by Francisco Pelsaert, the Dutch Factor at Agra.

The Kashmir University premise is hoist on its own petard! The Iranian saffron is the most inferior in the world. Even in ancient times, the low quality of the Iranian variety was known.

The Kashmir saffron, says the royal dramatist, Sri Harsha (606-48), in a telling comment in the Ratnavali, is preferred to the herb from Iran, which he calls the land of the Pasisikas and Bahilikas. The Valley variety is top-grade, parallel with the Spanish product. In the middle ages, it was rather difficult to clone a better variety from an inferior species. In times of need, Pampur, the centre of the saffron belt of Kashmir, could

have imported the seed from Kishtwar, as happened in 1857, during the reign of Maharaja Rambir Singh. The Kishtwar specimen was sold at a premium, as is attested by the foreign travellers and Mughal documents.

The don's assertion that the so-called shrine at Zewan belongs to the Muslim divine is a total travesty of the truth. The Rajatarangini mentions that the spring of Zewan, besides which the shrine is standing, was the abode of Takshaka Naga, the patron deity of the saffron fields. An annual festival, in honour of the Serpent King, was celebrated here at the start of the saffron season. Kalhana says it was held on the 12th day of the dark fortnight of Jaishta, which fell this year on May 23. The festival, Abul Fazl mentions, continued right up to Akbar's time.

## Tales of Travesty

## Politicking over KP migrants' return

Dr. Jetinder Singh

One decade of trial and tribulation is a period long enough to bring out the best or the worst in any community struggling to come to terms with the physical and mental pangs of homelessness. The same also holds true for the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community. While the physical toll has been taken by the summer heat of plains coupled with a sudden upsurge in hitherto unfamiliar afflictions like Diabetes, the mental well-being stands shaken by the ruthless severing of links from the native Kashmiri ethos. Bodily drained out and psychologically confused, the displaced community members are confronted by an unenviable identity crisis cum persecution complex which may also be to an extent responsible for their contradictory responses to any proposal mooted for their return to the Valley. And, upon this, as if morbidly infected by Jammu's characteristic market place opportunism, some of the migrant KP leaders living in Jammu have developed strong personal interests which far outweigh the KP community's collective interest.

So, this, in a nutshell, today is the unfortunate bane of a highly enlightened, awakened and literate KP community whose cerebral skills had always remained either absolutely unmatched throughout the country or were sparingly compared with only two other exception-

ally intelligent communities--the Malayalis from the South coast and the Bengalis from the East coast.

Over the last eight to ten years, a number of diverse sections of opinion have emerged among the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community. This is not very unusual considering the long years of exile compounded by the stress of homelessness and uncertainty through which the uprooted KPs have had to go through. From time to time, it is also alleged in certain quarters that the affluent among the displaced KPs have developed a vested interest in delaying the migrants' return to Kashmir. Although this charge has never been convincingly refuted, it is reasonable to believe that even those of the displaced KPs who have managed for themselves sufficiently good accommodations in Jammu or elsewhere feel suffocated living away from the natural environs in the Vale of Paradise.

What is saddening however is that, of late, some of the KP migrant organisations and their leaders themselves have started hurling charges against certain members of their own community accusing each other of allegedly harbouring a vested interest in resisting any such move which is aimed at bringing about the return of the KP migrants to the Valley. To any sincere sympathiser of the displaced KP plight, such public utterances would sound

disheartening..first, because these hit right at the bottom of the KP migrant cause and second, because these are quite avoidable if only the different KP migrant spokesmen refrain from working at cross-purposes and instead sit down to jointly work out a mutually common strategy for securing mutually common dividends.

Equally disappointing is the needless public expression of misconceived apprehension that local populace of Jammu may rise against the KP migrants who have settled here. Such statements amount to abusing the traditional hospitality and sense of accommodation demonstrated by the people of Jammu who did not react even during those tumultuous years of 1989-90 when they were loaded with sudden unexpected influx of KP migrants. Moreover, if the people of Jammu are complacent enough to tolerate the presence of blatantly anti-India elements in their midst, will they not tolerate the presence of committedly pro-India KP migrants in their midst?

Be that as it may, this is not a game of scoring points nor a match of populist rhetoric. The issue is much more serious than it appears to be. And, there is much more to it than meets the eye.

The displaced KPs, by and large, certainly wish to return to their homes albeit honourably and viably. Economic resettlement is as important to attract

them back to the Valley as a sense of security both physical as well as psychological. When such conducive conditions return, the displaced KPs would themselves start trickling back as is evident from the periodic trips to the Valley undertaken lately by many a KP migrant to check the status of their houses and other property back home.

Meanwhile, it is ridiculous to suggest that the displaced KPs have a dubious interest in staying away from their ancestral

homes and hearths in the Valley. More than the well-guarded men at the helm, the predicament of the displaced KPs can be better appreciated by the unguarded common man. Umpathy understands this most of all and the cue comes from the poetic expression: "Besabab Log Badalte Nahin Mansak Apna! Tumne Dekha Hai Jalta Hua Nasheman Apan?□"

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## II-Sarda University and Legends

(Contd. from page 17)

Who was this King Mutsakund? In his account of Lalitaditya's reign, Ka'hana refers to certain followers of a King of Ganda or Bengal, who had come to Kashmir under the pretence of visiting the shrine of Sarada, but in reality to avenge the murder of their King by Lalitaditya. He writes:

"They having secured entry into Kashmir, under the pretext of visiting the goddess Sarada, mustered and surrounded the abode of the god, who had been the surety".

The legend of King Mutsakund is also associated with Kapatesvara temple. It is interesting that the legendary King Mutsakund is associated with the

foundation of those temples in Kashmir, where the builder remains unknown.

**Sandilya-the devotee of goddess:**

This legend is narrated in *Sarada Mahatmya*. It says Muni Sandilya, son of Matanga was a great devotee of the goddess Sarada. He yearned to have her sight. It was as per 'Divine' advice that he proceeds to SYAMALA MAHARASTRA, present SAMALA, adjoining Saradi, to have darsana.

At Gus, which is also the starting point of yatra, he gets darsana of Mahadevi. The devi tells him that he can see her in true form (as Sakti) only in *Saradavana* and vanishes from his sight at Hayhom. Next, Muni takes bath at *Krsnaga*, the source of origin of *Krsnaganga*. There his half body turns golden. Since Drang is the village, where this spring is located it has been named Sun-Drang, the 'Gold-Drang' (Suvarnadrangaka).

Sandilya then ascends the mountain and sees the dance of goddess in a forest called *Rangavati*. The muni Next proceeds to Tehjan via Guthamman Marg. Crossing the Ganes Gatti he reaches Sarada. The Goddess reveals herself and invites him to her residence on *Sri Saila*.

Pitrs (the dead) approach Sandilya for performing their

Sraddhas. On his taking water from the Mahsindhu for the purpose of the tarpana rite, half of its water turns into honey and forms the stream known as Madhumati. The Bath and Sraddhas at Sangam of *Krsnaganga* and Madhumati help, it is believed, in complete remission of sins □

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# Sonalal -- A witness to Sarada Yatras

**S**onalal Thusu is perhaps among the few living Kashmiri Pandits, who have been witness to Sarada yatras. Originally a resident of Lidderwan, a border village in the Kishanganga valley of Kashmir, Sonalal is living as a displaced person in Sangrampur village (Marh Block) of Jammu. Age has not betrayed Sonalal. At 85, he is physically fit and retains sharp memory. Sonalal and his family had been running provision store business in Saradi and the adjoining village of Dunial since 1901, till this part of the state came under Pakistan occupation in 1947. This summer I had an opportunity to record his impressions about Sarada yatras. Excerpts of the interview are reproduced below.

**RK: You had been running provision store business at Sarada Shrine. How did it all start?**

**Sonalal:** We originally hail from Karihama village, District Kupwara. It was my grandfather, Thokur Pandit who shifted to Lidderwan. His brother and the father of Swami Aftab Joo (d. 1960), Mahanand Pandit moved to Gushi. My father was a well-to-do agriculturist. In 1901 he started provision store business at Dunial, 16 miles away from Lidderwan. Ours was the only shop in Dunial. In 1922 we opened another shop at Saradi, the village housing the shrine of goddess Sarada. Pandit Diva Ram Razdan of Goetheng also ran a shop there. From the age of eight years I have been looking after the shop at Sarada and Dunial. In 1944 we constructed a new shop building, close to the staircase of the shrine. Our old shop was rented out from the Pujari building.

**RK: There are many traditions which relate this region to Vaishnava culture, Nag and Sakti worship. What are your impressions?**

**SL:** Lidderwan and the adjoining villages abound in nags i.e. natural springs. There are as many as sixty springs in Lidderwan. Villages like Zirhama (40), Mirhama (20), Avura (15) have also many springs. There are also ruins of old temples in Lidderwan. Maharudra's nag and Mukhsar are other springs of veneration here. On Saptmi Babashi day, water comes out in the form of pearls from the Mukhsar (ancient Mukhtsar). This spring is 8x8 ft and 3 feet deep. It has a stone embankment on all sides and the face of a stone has an old inscription of Lord Rama is believed to have taken a bath here. At Avura there is a groove, having great sanctity, *Rishivar*. Many Nags here

have old stone idols. Similarly close to Dunial there is a place called Rishinakh. Many Rishis in olden times offered penance in this jungle. Near the hill we would often come across old pottery and Havan items.

**RK: How big were Dunial and Sarada villages?**

**SL:** Dunial was a bigger village, having four hundred families. In Sarada there were just a hundred families. Ethnically, they belonged to Afridi tribe with fair sprinkling of Kashmiri speaking Muslims. Besides them, there was a small garrison stationed in the

**RK: What were the arrangements made by the state government?**

**SL:** The state government did not make any special arrangements for the yatra. Maharaja Pratap Singh had kept two *Pujaris* Nandlal and Ganesh Das for helping pilgrims in conducting *Pujas*. They belonged to Seer Nandkeshwar. A building was constructed for them. Some land had also been granted to them and they received monthly grant. These *Pujaris* also made some money from the *Puja Divas* sold by them.



Sonalal and his wife in a displaced camp in Jammu

fort and some Pandit employees of J&K government posted here.

**RK: You have been witness to Sarada yatra since 1922. How was the yatra conducted?**

**SL:** Regular yatra took place on *Gangaashtami* day. Except for winter months, there was a regular trickle of *sadhus* to the shrine. Majority of the pilgrims would be Khatri traders of Tithwal and Muzaffarabad.

Kashmiri pilgrims included mostly Pandits from the adjoining region. Their number did not exceed two to four hundred. The number of yatris would be around two thousand. About fifty to sixty *sadhus* also joined yatra. Lidderwan was the first halt for yatris. Ours was the only Pandit family in Lidderwan. We looked after the yatris at Lidderwan and Dunial, the next halt. Third day the pilgrims reached Sarada, by walking along the bank of Kishanganga. Sarada was 10 miles distance away from Dunial.

During yatra, yatris stayed for minimum of three nights at Sarada. They stayed in the Dharmashala, around the temple. It had 7-8 rooms and about 5-10 tents would also be pitched to house the pilgrims. The yatris did their own cooking; occasionally a *halwai* would set up a temporary shop.

**RK: Did the pilgrims perform any special Puja?**

**SL:** Yatris performed havan. The havan performed by Punjabi Khatri was a treat to see. Twenty to thirty people would participate at the same time, doing *swaha swaha*. Khatri, as per Sarada pilgrimage custom, also offered *Bakras*. Nearly hundred *bakras* would be offered to the goddess on the Ashtami day. This practice was opposed by famous saintess Mathra Devi of Durga Nag and then day of offering was changed to Navmi day. Shridhar Dhar, of Habbakadal, who was posted here as chief conservator forests stayed for four years. Deeply religious, he performed mini-havans every two-three months. Our family performed havan every year.

**RK: When did Mathra Devi visit Sarada shrine?**

**SL:** She visited Sarada shrine in 1933. Once she met my father, Tika Lal in Srinagar and told him, "I have to perform many yatras". He told her "first you should go to Sarada". My father volunteered to take her on this pilgrimage. Mathra Devi, who had earned fame for conducting long meditations ranging twelve hours lived only on milk and singhara. One month prior to *Gangaashtmi*, my father got her in bus from Srinagar to Sopore. From Zeenpur-Bomai to Saadmalinu I arranged palanquin for her. The first halt was at Zeenpur and the next day we stayed at Saadmalinu. On the third day we reached Lidderwan. The track from Zeenpur to Saadmalinu along the Kishanganga river was not good.

On way to Lidderwan, Mathra Devi visited Ram Takht. There are two springs of Ram and Sita here and at the foot of the mountain is Ram Takht. It is believed that in olden times there used to be a big lake here and the boats would be tied to a pole on the bank of the lake. The spring is 10x6 ft and three feet deep. There is kitchen-*chulha* of Sita here.

When we reached Lidderwan, Ramjoo Kissu, a renowned *purohit* from Habbakadal was already there. He was the family priest to many Pandits in Watterkhani, Bomai and Lidderwan. At Sarada two tents were pitched for the stay of Mathra Devi and Ramjoo Kissu. During her stay with us, my wife, Dhanwati daily bathed Mathra Devi in milk. She stayed at Lidderwan for one month.

Mathra Devi strongly objected to the animal sacrifice on Ashtami day. She got red cloth, tied it around her body and held a trident (*shamsher*) in her hand. Dressed like *Kali*, she stood at the gateway to the shrine. Mathra Devi rebuked pilgrims engaged in animal sacrifice on the day of Ashtami and later retired to her tent. Soon hundreds of wasps surrounded her tent. Pilgrims believed it was a curse sent to Mathra Devi by the goddess Sarada. Everybody thought she won't survive the attack of wasps. Ramjoo Kissu said, "I had told her not to take cudgels. She always takes cudgels." Half an hour passed and all the wasps had disappeared. Mathra Devi emerged unscathed. She again came to the gateway and told Punjabi pilgrims that they could continue the practice but on the Navmi day.

**RK: Which important dignitaries visited Sarada shrine during your stay?**

**SL:** Pandit RC Kak, former Prime Minister, his brother Amarnath Kak and their father, Kish Kak stayed with us at Lidderwan. Aga Syed Hussain, Wazir-e-Wazarat also stayed at Lidderwan with us. Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, former Chief Ministers visited Dunial in 1932. Disturbances in the city of Srinagar had no impact at Dunial. Dr Balkrishan Koul (head of the department of Materia Medica Medical College, Lahore) visited Sarada in 1934-35. He went upto Narda, and went there into *samadhi*. He remained standing on one leg for half an hour. When he returned to Lidderwan, he told my father, "I will take *rice* and *saag* (Hak) at your house". We were surprised. Earlier he had refused even water. Dr Koul told my father that during *Samadhi* he had his *darshan*. Swami Nandlal also stayed in Sarada and had his own Dharmashala, close to the fort. He left Sarada only in 1947.

**RK: Where is Narda located. Does every pilgrim go there during pilgrimage?**

**SL:** Narda is just five miles away. Nobody can reach its top i.e. Kailsheri. It is said there used to be a spring here. Since the path from Sarada to Narda is very dangerous, not many pilgrims venture to visit Narda. Tradition says that the huge stones, which even three hundred people cannot lift, for the Sarada shrine were specially carved here.

**RK: People say goddess Sarada has miraculous powers. What have you to say about it?**

**SL:** In 1940, a lady *sadhu* lost her way while going from Dunial to Sarada via Tejan. It was already dusk and she was frightened as the road ahead lay through gorges and cliffs. Goddess Sarada appeared, dressed as a Gujjar lady and guided her right up to the fort. Then she suddenly disappeared. Not only Hindus but also Muslims venerated the goddess. In the sixty kilometre belt from Karna to Kailsheri along Kishanganga, Muslims, swore by the goddess, '*Mata Ki Kasam*'. They would offer *Chadavas* or *Halwa*.

**RK: Do you miss the old days of Sarada?**

**SL:** Yes, very much. Even today people of *Dunial* and Sarada will give me the same love and respect. I can go to Sarada but not Lidderwan. People of *Dunial* still remember me. They talk about our *Chakki* and the four houses. As per reports till 1988, the shrine of Sarada was safe. □

## Ali Mohammed Lone

## Recreating memorable moments from Kashmir's past



Ali Mohammad Lone

Many years back I came upon an interesting episode in a book about *Tipu Sultan*. It was a graphic description of how *Tipu*, who had accompanied his father, Hyder Ali, to a battle, protected the life and honour of the womenfolk and children of his father's adversary, who were camping some distance away rear of the battlefield. I suggested to late Ali Mohammed Lone, known as "poor Kashmiri's Shakespeare", to dramatise the episode in Kashmiri language for a radio play. He dismissed the suggestion summarily telling me that Kashmir's own past history abounded in episodes and anecdotes that could be dramatised, both for entertaining Kashmiris and educating them about their own past.

Lone took immense pride in Kashmir's history and heritage and delved deep into it to produce memorable radio plays like *Suyya*, *Vaital Pachisi* and one episode of *Veth Rooz Pakan*.

Before *Suyya* was broadcast, not many among common Kashmiris had heard about this engineering genius of the ninth century. He was among the earliest engineers of Kashmir, in the modern sense of the term. It was he who rid Kashmir valley of the recurring calamity of floods in river Vitasta that often caused massive damage and destroyed crops driving people to starvation.

A man of humble origin. *Suyya* had a natural genius for engineering which attracted the attention of the then ruler, the great Avantivarman. The king put his treasure at the disposal of *Suyya* to enable him to end the menace of floods. *Suyya* did the miracle but through a queer method. He started by throwing pots of coins into the river at a particular place where "the rocks which had rolled down from the mountains, lining both river

banks, and had compressed the Vitasta and made its waters turn backwards (in whirls), the famine-stricken villagers then searched for the money, dragged out the rocks from the river, and (thus) cleared the (bed of the) Vitasta". He followed it up by building a dam and laying an irrigation system, whose vestiges one still finds in the Valley, especially in the vicinity of Mahapadma (Wular).

Lone brought this unique event from Kashmir history to life in the shape of a Kashmiri play in his own inimitable style under the title of "*Suyya*". It was broadcast from Radio Kashmir and became instantly popular with millions of its listeners all over Jammu and Kashmir, winning Lone the praise of commoners and elite alike. Critics raved over it describing it as a path-finder in the newly-explored field of drama in Kashmiri language.

"*Suyya*" fetched Lone the coveted Sahitya Academy award and along with it national recognition as a playwright in Kashmiri language. He had suggested at one time that an award to be named *Suyya Award* be instituted for excellence in flood prevention in the State in the memory of the great son of Kashmiri who had also founded *Suyyapur*, modern Sopore.

Lone's *Vaital Pachisi*, a serial of several episodes broadcast by Radio Kashmir, made waves and earned him the acclaim of people in every corner of Jammu and Kashmir as also those beyond the boundaries of the State. It was evident from his Kashmiri rendering of *Vaital* that he had read, translated and adapted the play with the same feeling and understanding with which Somadeva, the celebrated Kashmiri author of *Kathasaritsagara* had created *Vaital Pachisi*, which is one of the episodes of the "ocean of Stories". One got a feeling that Lone was sitting next to Somadeva as he penned down his epic.

*Vaital Pachisi* went into several record breaking repeat broadcasts from Radio Kashmir, in response to repeated requests from the listeners. The resounding success of the serial, apart from its story value, was a tribute to Lone's sensitive pen, artistry and craftsmanship as a writer of plays.

In the words of Kashmir's reputed theatre and film personality, Pran Kishore, who played *Vaital* in the play, "Somadeva had not created *Vaital* as a phantom, as is projected in some modern renderings, but the character had been conceived as a storehouse of knowledge". Lone knew this too well and kept it in

his mind while shaping his character of *Vaital*.

I had interviewed Lone a few weeks before his death, especially against the background of his *Vaital*'s phenomenal success. He gave the credit to "ancestor" Somadeva and Radio Kashmir, which, he said, had done "wonderful things" to him by providing a channel for his works. He was also all praise for Pran Kishore whose portrayal of *Vaital*, he said, had lent authenticity to the character.

Lone did not conceal his pride over having reproduced *Vaital* in Kashmiri for the listeners of Radio Kashmir. He said, "I am happy for reproducing the work of a great ancestor in the language of the day".

Lone always wielded his pen with pride as well as deep understanding whenever he picked his subjects from the long history of Kashmir. He had done so in case of *Suyya* and did it again when he took up *Vaital*. In his episode of the three part serial "*Veth Rooz Pakan*", Lone again dealt with a historical subject, that of forced labour. He created the atmosphere and the characters to bring to life the tyranny and agony of the abominable practice of "begar" (forced labour), which reached its nadir during the Dogra rule. One recalls the understanding and sympathy which Lone put in while creating the character of a young Dogra officer who had to drive Kashmiris like cattle but who himself was as much a victim of the oppressive system as the poor Kashmiri peasants dragged out of their homes to do the "begar". Another noted theatre figure, Bihari Kak, made Lone's *Veth Rooz Pakan* into a telefilm which was highly appreciated.

Apart from *Suyya*, *Vaital Pachisi* and *Veth Rooz Pakan*, Lone gave us several other fine plays like *Lalajoo and Sons*, *Adamzad and Jheel Bula Rahi Hai* (Urdu). Each one of his works stands out, both in quality and popularity and each one is a prized addition to literature in Kashmir. Lone wrote profusely in Kashmiri but he had equal command over Urdu language as well. His novel *Sahid Hai Teri Arzoo*, and Urdu telefilms, *Mahan* and *Vanraj*, brought out his talent as a writer of class in Urdu language. His novels in *Kashmiri*, *Asi Ti Chi Insaan*, and *Maej*, (translation of Gorky's *Mother*), had won him acclaim as an outstanding writer of Kashmiri prose and fiction. Due to his long association with Radio Kashmir, Lone became an inseparable part of broadcasting culture in Jammu and Kashmir. People would sit glued to their radio sets to listen to his plays and, in this regard, one has only

to recall the reach and magnitude of the popularity of such of his plays as *Vaital Pachisi*, *Veth Rooz Pakan*, *Jheel Bula Rahi Hai* and *Lalajoo and Sons*. One could not find a comparison in Kashmir.

Ali Mohammed Lone came from a humble background and in his own words he hardly had any ambitions. "Yes, I had dreams," he once said. He ruminated. "One day as I had joined the higher school (S.P. High School) after completing the primary school. I entered the class wearing a common Kashmiri cap. The teacher called me over, removed the cap and tore it apart. Then he told me with a note of sympathy that non-Kashmiri boys would make fun of me if I continued wearing that cap". Imagine that little poor boy growing up to see the day when he stood before the President of India and received one of the highest literary awards in the country for what he had written.

Back in late sixties I had interviewed Lone after he got an award from Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy for one of his books. I had written then that "*Lone is a lonely man*". Yes he was lonely till the end of his life, in the sense that he always lived the way he liked and never made any compromises on his views, beliefs, and writings. He expressed himself through his writings and always wrote spontaneously without any inhibitions. Irrespective of the fact that it sometimes earned him the displeasure of some of his contemporaries.

Lone did not live to see the dark days that engulfed Kashmir in early nineties. A dark era descended down on the hapless valley as the rest of the world sat poised to step into 21st century. Ugly forces of terrorism, religious obscurantism and fanaticism raised their head, with open foreign connivance and backing, to obliterate Kashmir's past, its culture, heritage, traditions and its way of life, and to destroy its civilisational foundations dating back to thousands of years.

Ali Mohammed Lone prided himself on being the inheritor of Kashmir's civilisational past. It is not difficult to think of the agony he would have suffered under the new cult of the gun that put shackles on minds, tongues and pens of intellectuals, writers, poets and others. One wonders how much he would have suffered to see the entire Pandit community, the most powerful symbol of Kashmir's ethos, being hounded out of its land of ancestors. Most of his close friends and colleagues came from this community.

Lone died in a road mishap in 1987 when the auto rickshaw he was travelling in met with an accident, some distance away from his home in Srinagar. That fateful evening he left the cafeteria at Regal Chowk telling his friends that he wanted to rush home to listen to a radio play of Hriday Kaul Bharati. He never reached home; his dead body did instead. By that time Bharati's play had ended □

## Kashmiri Samiti demands white paper on relief

NEW DELHI, Dec 25: Pandit groups at a meet convened by Delhi Kashmiri Samiti urged the government to come out with a white paper on the money the government claims to have spent under the "relief fund" on displaced migrants. They also alleged that some government agencies had even siphoned off relief funds. The groups assembled also warned the Centre government from releasing any funds to the State government in the name of migrants. They said the State government was "befooling" the Centre about the law and order situation in the Valley.

The meet called for Rs 1000 crore special fund for rehabilitation of displaced Kashmiris in viable townships around major cities. The demands listed include. Rs 5 lac as compensation to traders for reestablishing their businesses, raising of relief to Rs

five thousand per month, reservation quota for admissions and jobs, compensation for damaged property at prevailing market rates, restoration of religious shrines and cultural institutions of religious shrines and cultural institutions etc.

It also urged for revoking all the distress sales and demanded setting up of a special statutory body directly under the Ministry of Home Affairs to ensure safe custody of Pandits' property. The demand was also raised for immediate restoration of property to rightful owners within one month.

ITBP Director General Gautam Kaul also spoke at the meet. He said the community should set up "Panchayats" at the local level to solve its small civil disputes. "This will help the community to save money in contesting cases in civil courts", he suggested □

## FALSIFYING HISTORY

## KASHMIR WAS NEVER INDEPENDENT



By Prof. M.L. Koul

Prior to its incorporation into Mughal empire Kashmir as per historical evidence had a history of being a part and parcel of the empires built by various indigenous dynasties and foreign aggressors. The Buddhist work titled as Anugata Nikaya contain a catalogue of sixteen Mahajanpadas in the sixth and seventh century B.C. The fifteenth on the catalogue is Gandhara, which included Kashmir and was known as Kashmir-Gandhara.

According to Kalhana, Gonanda I was a relation of Jarasanda, the king of Magadha. During the battle that he fought with Krishna, Gonanda at the head of an army besieged Krishna in a fortress. Though he and his men put up a valiant fight, he got killed and his son Damodara was enthroned and burning with revenge, he launched an attack on Krishna and in the process got killed. His pregnant wife Yashovati was made the queen of Kashmir at the behest and advice of Krishna as it was the land of Sati, sacred to the memory of Shiva.

Achaemenian monarchy under the stewardship of Cyrus (558-30 BC) subjugated Gandhara and Kashmir was an integral part of the territory. Gandhara has found mention as one of the provinces of the empire built up by Darius and the same is by supported and evidenced by the Behustan inscription of Darius. Herodotus, a colossus of Greek history, has made an explicit mention of Kaspapyros (Kashmir) as a city of the Gandharians. All the available notices and evidences go a long way to firmly establish that Kashmir formed a part and parcel of the huge and sprawling empire built and framed by the Achaemenids.

As per Cunningham, Indo-Greeks had their hegemony over Gandhara which among other territories included Kashmir too. The same has found corroboration and concurrence by the hoard of coins that has been recovered from various find places in Kashmir. Again under the Mauryan emperor, Ashok, Kashmir grew and flourished as a principal and vital centre of the Buddhist Church and Buddhist thought and learning. Kalhan in his Rajtarangini credits him with the foundation of Srinagari as the capital city of Kashmir with 'ninety-six thousand dwelling houses resplendent with prosperity'. Asoka built not only viharas and stupas through the

length and breadth of Kashmir, but also built a Shiva temple at Bijbehara, a centre of Hindu learning. A lion pillar recovered from the site is a standing testimony to his exemplary sense of tolerance, and liberality. Majjantika heading an evangelical mission was, deputed and sent to Kashmir and Gandhara and Heun-Tsiang and Ou-Kong, two Chinese travellers, testify to the fact that Asoka had settled not fewer than 5,000 monks in Kashmir, thus turning it into a great Buddhist centre.

There are ample and varied archeological evidences available that firmly establish Kashmir as a dominion of the Sungas, who ruled over Northern India for more than a period of 100 years. The patterns of architecture especially the railings of Bharhut stupa that evolved during the Sunga period had a great imprint and impact on the architectural style of Kashmir. Panini, Katyayana and Patanjali were the eminent literateurs, who enriched various modes of literature of the Sunga period and all the names were immensely popular with the people of Kashmir, not only drawing inspiration from them, but also contributing to and enriching the literary genres they had pioneered and were affiliated with.

That Kashmir formed a part and parcel of the vast empire built by the Kushans is established by the fact of the fourth Buddhist council having been held at Kundalwan in Kashmir. Five hundred Buddhist theologians harbouring various shades of Buddhist thought and learning converged at the site of the conference and discussed the theological and philosophical issues with a view to investing the Buddhist thought with a new look and orientation, thus giving rise to Mahayana Buddhism. Heun-Tsiang, who visited Kashmir in 631-32 A.D., has mentioned about the significant and vital decisions of religious and theological importance taken at the conference, which were inscribed on copper-plates deposited in a stone-chest.

As is well known, the mighty Guptas ruled over a vast-kingdom, which had its boundaries touching distant corners of India. Matrigupta was virtually sent by the Gupta rulers to rule over Kashmir and the same as a historical fact is established by the poem, Hayagrivavada, written by the poet Menha. The Gupta age highly remarkable for religious and intellectual attainments had its abiding and indelible impact on architecture, sculpture, painting and literature of Kashmir. The sculpted images of 'Chaturanan Vishnu' recovered from various sites in Kashmir reveal a deep-set impact of the Mathuran school of sculpture. It is unfortunate that the Muslim crusaders vandalised

and destroyed most of the temples and images that could bear a testimony to the fertilising influences on Kashmir, from the Gupta developments in the domains of art and literature, music and other segments of creative aesthetics.

Harshavardan made waves in history by laying out the foundations and contours of a vast empire, which included the Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. The rulers of Assam, Nepal, Kashmir, Sind and Kathiawar were his vassals who acknowledged his vassalage and hegemony. According to Pannikar, Harsha's empire stretched from Kamrupa to Kashmir and Himalayas to Vindhya. There was an immense commerce of ideas between Kashmir and Nalanda, as two pivotal centres of learning, which was not averse to other religious creeds during Harsha's reign. Though a devout Shaivite, he patronised Buddhism and Jainism and contributed his mite and means to the strengthening of the catholicity of Indian culture and its civilisational features. The reign of Harsha is pre-eminently celebrated for the convocation of religious assemblies at Prayag, which were regularly attended by the religious scholars of Kashmir, highly respected and venerated for their scholarship and erudition.

The political history of the Northern India became blurred when the dense clouds of chaos and disintegration from 647 AD onwards started looming large on its horizon. Despite perennial snows guarding its frontiers, the external dangers threatening the security scenario of Kashmir were sensed and assiduous efforts made to stem the tide of Arab expansion in Central Asian countries. As is sufficiently evidenced by the annals of Tang Dynasty, Candrapida, a ruler of Kashmir, sent an embassy to the Chinese court to build and organise a united resistance against the Arabas, who through their expansion were deemed to pose a threat to Kashmir as well.

Lalitaditya, a scion of Karkota dynasty, built a gargantuan empire by conquering territories beyond the borders of Kashmir including Tibet, Badkshan, Punjab and Kanauj, thus materialising Kashmir's dream of 'tryst with imperialism'. He also defeated yashoverman, conqueror, valiant and invested with immense military abilities. Though initially his ally Lalitaditya established his sway over his sprawling kingdom, thus making the kingdom of Kashmir 'the most powerful empire that India had seen since the days of the Guptas'.

The incredible expansion of the kingdom of Kashmir led to

an inter-face between Kashmir and other components of the massive empire, thus generating a renaissance in arts and crafts, trade and commerce, economics and politics. Lalitaditya invited scholars and thinkers from various segments of his dominion to settle in Kashmir. The ancestors of Abhinavagupta migrated to Kashmir from Central India at his persuasion. Kashmir flowered as an abode of creative arts and massive buildings, temples and viharas, and also as a centre of knowledge and learning. Steeped in an era of peace, prosperity and glory, Kashmir came up as a melting pot of variegated thought and culture patterns.

The architectural style with the temple of Martand as its epitome imbibing deep-seated influences from Graeco-Buddhist art set the trend for the Hindu architecture for a series of generations to come. "The ravaged ruins at Parihaspora are a testimony to the splendour and massiveness with which the age moved". The Muslim vandals, true to their form, destroyed the temples and viharas at Parihaspora reducing it to a pile of ruins.

Even after the subjugation of Kashmir by the Muslim conquerors it never remained shrunk into its own shell and had trade and commerce with belts of territories outside the mountain-girt Valley. The rulers motivated by vaulting ambitions led their armies for conquests into new territories thereby extending the sphere of their influence rather than annexing the conquered territories to their kingdoms. As a matter of fact, the territories that were conquered were allowed to maintain their separate and distinctive entity and the rulers reduced as vassals were obligated to pay tributes to the conquerors as a mark of their subjugation and servility.

Disinterested probing of the Indian annals reveals that an amorphous form of federalism existed in India that defined and guide-lined the mutual links and relations among the rules of various territories. Discomfiture of a ruler would seldom end up in the loss of his kingdom and its subsequent annexation to the domain of the Conqueror. The concept of a chakravartin morach as a popular political concept prevalent in India embodied implicitly the same political practice and the horse as a symbol of his might and power traversing through the territories without let or hindrance established the sphere of his influence, not the direct annexation of the territories to his domain.

At various stages of its chequered history, Kashmir as such presented the same saga of extension and contraction of its borders. There were rulers who extended the sphere of their influence and sway beyond the

borders of Kashmir and again there were many weak-kneed kings, who lacking in guts and resources remained shrunk within the recognised frontiers of their land. As is known to history, Lalitaditya was a formidable conqueror and the territories he led his armies into were not annexed to his well defined domain, but were allowed to be held by the subjugated rulers acknowledging their vassalage to the conqueror by paying him tributes and offering him gifts. It never implies that he did not enjoy full sway over the territories he had conquered and subjugated.

It is very important to note that despite a land of vast diversities, India had the uniqueness to stand out as one entity, not because of political linkages as might be the case elsewhere, but because of the spirit of Indianness which invested it with a unified form and pattern. As is well understood by the clear-headed orientalisists, Kashmir all through its history has been a vital strand of the broad and variegated mosaic of Indian culture and civilisation and despite intense political changes and upheavals its roots though embedded in the indigenous soil never lost touch and contact with the total cultural ambience pervading the country. In fact the cultural knots and linkage that existed between the two, formed through ages, have proven too strong and tenacious for any political barrier to sunder the twain for a permanent rupture. Even the Muslim crusaders given to the destruction of the native cultural and civilisational developments of great dimensions acknowledge both despair and defeat in snapping the ties of Kashmir with the mainstream culture and civilisation that has a continuous and coherent history of evolution and graded development.

As it is, independence of Kashmir prior to the Mughal annexation is a myth and falsification, contrived to strengthen and provide a rationale to the separatist movement launched by the Muslim secessionists aided and abetted by the enemies of India. The Shah-Miri and Chak periods of Kashmir history were dominated by the Sultans, who held their sway over Kashmir for only 200 years. The separatist ideologues try to view the entire spectrum of Kashmir history through the blurred lens of Sultanate period. But the undenyng fact remains that Kashmir has a continuous history of 5000 years of which the Sultanate period constitutes only a small fragment. Sheikh Abdullah in his autobiography, Aatish-e-Chinar, has also chosen to uphold the same fallacious and untenable theory of independence of Kashmir prior to its Mughal occupation □

## Displaced Hindu Fire Sufferers

## Perseverance &amp; Persuasion has been the key



Firemen controlling fire which gutted more than 40 Pandit houses in Habbakadal, Srinagar

## Special Correspondent

JAMMU: 'Helplessness' was the only response of the victims when the armed terrorists in the Kashmir valley started their 'residential cleansing' operations by torching and plundering the Hindu properties. As the exodus of fleeing Hindus reached its climax by the middle of 1990, news about burning of Hindu properties in the Valley started pouring out. The burning spree gained momentum in 1991 and by the end of that year thousands of Hindu houses had been burnt.

The displaced Pandits in Jammu and elsewhere could only watch in stunned silence as the local newspapers poured out news about the destruction of their homes and hearths. The exact confirmation was provided by the Police Control Room Jammu relying mostly on sketchy and even biased first information reports filed by the local police stations in the Valley. The only recourse left to the victims was to claim some ex-gratia relief from the government or the insurance from the insurance companies. Both were denied in the initial phases. Political bias in the state administration worked decisively against provisions of any ex-gratia relief. Lack of necessary documents and procedural formalities rendered settling of insurance claims extremely difficult. The displaced Pandit, whose house in the Valley had been burnt, was asked to submit title deed of his property, FIR, the Fire Brigade Report, copy of the Municipality or Notified Area Committee certifying his being a genuine claimant etc. Ninety per cent of the victims could not produce these documents. They had fled Valley to save their lives and had invariably left the necessary documents of their properties back

home. As the 'cleansing operations' in the form of targeted killings of Kashmiri Pandits were going on with impunity there was no question of their going to Valley and procuring FIR's or Fire Brigade Reports from the local stations.

With all these procedural wrangles not more than 2% insurance claims were settled by the end of 1991 even after paying hefty bribes. The situation within the insurance companies dealing with such cases was quite conducive to be a breeding ground for corruption.

Sh J.L. Bhan's house was burnt in Barzullah Bagat. After lot of efforts he had been able to furnish all documents. He also reportedly paid a hefty bribe of Rs 50,000 to the concerned officers in the insurance company. His file was complete and had to be sent from branch office at Town Hall to Divisional office in Ghandi Nagar, Jammu. In the transit, the whole file was lost along with all the original papers.

Sh Saki of Drabiyaar, Habbakadal used to move from office to office to settle his insurance claims. He could not persevere the rigors of this struggle in extreme hot weather and died of shock.

A displaced Pandit lady, her husband on death bed, daughters about to be married, would shuttle from department to department in extreme weather to complete her case for insurance claims. Her house in Anantnag had been burnt and she desperately needed the relief from the insurance company.

In this atmosphere of abject apathy a few displaced Pandits formed an association, determined to get the justice for their community. The Kashmiri Hindu Fire Sufferer's Forum thus area of deprivations of displaced Pandits. Intense persuasion and proper presentation

helped the forum to get the ear of the highest concerned officers and ministers. The then Finance Minister of Government of India Sh Manmohan Singh was the first to rise to the situation and respond with compassion and sensitivity. The intervention at his level changed the tide. The highest officers in the insurance companies started appreciating the gravity of the situation, particularly the chairman and CMD of Oriental Insurance Company Sh K.C. Mital. Mr Mittal was made the nodal officers for all insurance companies on behalf of the Finance Ministry to settle insurance claims of the displaced Pandits. Another officer Sh U.S. Chaturvedi also played a decisive role.

The intervention by Home Ministry, Finance Ministry and Insurance Companies at the highest paved the way for some relief to the victims. The claimant now had to produce only an affidavit about the age of the burnt house and an indensity bond in place of revenue records, fire brigade reports, or certificate from municipality and notified area committee, to process his case. Insurance companies now working in coordination speedily settled the cases on the patronage of Lok Adalats. The surveyors from Valley who invariably played a blackmailing role were also replaced by surveyors who were Jammu based and with whom the displaced victims could interact freely.

Active and sustained intervention by Kashmiri Hindu Fire Sufferer Forum transformed the situation of 'helplessness' to that of some succour. By Aug-Sep., 1992 all crucial decisions were taken by the government and since then almost 98% of the insurance claims have been settled of those whose properties have been burnt in the Valley.

The relief has been of immense help to uprooted people. Sh J.L. Bhan whose file was lost could reconstruct his file from photocopied records and settle his case with the only remorse that he had to pay Rs 50,000 as a bribe initially. The Hindu lady of Anantnag got her insurance claim which ultimately turned out to be very crucial for the marriage of her daughters.

The story of struggle of Hindu fire sufferers only underlines that a proper and sustained intervention can go a long way in mitigating the misery. It also underscores that when the entire state apparatus appears to legitimise the policy of exclusion of displaced Pandits a few upright ministers or officers can still help in a decisive way if they approach the problem with some compassion and regard for Human Rights.

man Rights.

The experience, however, no way rationalises the gross discrimination meted out to displaced Pandits. Settling of the insurance claims for damaged properties continues to be an extremely laborious procedure for the displaced persons. Muslim victims living in Valley have got ex-gratia relief through proper intervention by the government and also because they are living in the Valley and can expedite their claims easily by approaching the concerned officers in-charge of the areas.

Displaced Pandits have been provided half of the assessed amount to the maximum of one lakh rupees as the ex-gratia of

relief. Setting such a criteria has been highly discriminatory and only points out a communal bias. In case of fire-victims of Char-e-Sharief tragedy, the State government paid the victims, all of whom are Muslims one lakh rupees for each family, on a war footing. These Muslim Fire victims also got an additional amount of one lakh rupees from Prime Minister's relief fund, besides free tin and subsidised construction material for the construction of their new houses. For settling their claims special committees were constituted who made payments within days. Hindu fire sufferers had to wait for years to see their claims settled □

## Interview

Sh. P.N. Tufchi's house was burnt in Habbakadal Srinagar in March April 1992. When he approached the

concerned authorities, he experienced an atmosphere of apathy and blackmail. Such an atmosphere was only adding to the miseries of his uprooted fellow community members. He alongwith some other victims constituted a Kashmiri Hindu Fire Sufferers Forum and intervened on behalf of Hindu fire victims to get relief for them. He is the Gen. Secretary of the Forum and continues to pursue the case of fire victims with same zeal and sincerity. We produce some of the excerpts of the interview with him □

**Q: What has been your experience since the making of Fire Sufferers Forum?**

**A:** I have a sense of satisfaction that our organisation has been able to decisively intervene on behalf of displaced Hindus and bring some relief to them □

**Q: What made you to constitute the Forum when already there were other community organisations working?**

**A:** The cases of Hindu fire victims had remained totally unattended. A focussed effort was needed in view of total apathy by the administration and the rampant corrupt practices employed in settling of insurance claims of displaced Hindus. By the end of 1991 only 2% of the cases were settled and that too after paying huge bribes □

**Q: How did you approach the problem of fire victims?**

**A:** We needed to present our case properly. There was a need to impress upon authorities to simplify the procedural wrangles which had led to widespread corruption in the department. A displaced victim whose property had been burnt had to produce documents which after his getting uprooted were left back in his home. He also could not go to Valley to get certificates from fire brigade or municipality □

**Q: How did your efforts bear fruits?**

**A:** Then Finance Minister played a crucial role. He demonstrated both proper understanding and sensitivity. Top echelons of Insurance Companies have also played a very healthy role. I can safely say that 98% of the insurance claims of Hindu fire victims have been already settled □

**Q: What is your estimate of the no. of houses burnt in Valley which belonged to Kashmiri Hindus?**

**A:** I can safely say from the reports which our organisation has received that around 20,000 Hindu Houses have been burnt so far in the Valley. The process still continues even though not with the same intensity □

**Q: What about the total attitude of the government?**

**A:** It has been blatantly discriminatory. Settling of cases of Muslims fire victims of Char-i-Sharief is the most appropriate example to explain this discriminatory attitude □

**Q: What about the future plans or your organisation?**

**A:** We will continue with our non-governmental effort to help fire victims □

**Q: What about the present status of handling of the problem of fire victims by the Insurance Companies?**

**A:** Present-status is generally of some satisfaction. However the efforts are on to corrupt the system. Reports that assessing authorities from Valley frequently come to Jammu and approach the fire victims offering them better assessment in lieu of hefty bribes are disturbing □

# Mountbatten & Kashmir



By Mohan Kishen Tikku

As it was, during the reign of the Dogra rulers, almost every Viceroy-of-India visited the Vale at the invitation of the Ruler. It is but natural that Lord Mountbatten would also have been eager to see for himself the beautiful Vale. Thus one can easily imagine with what rapture Mountbatten must have received the invitation of Maharaja Hari Singh. Lord Mountbatten knew Maharaja Hari Singh, who was on the Prince-of-Wales, staff with him during his Royal Highness' tour in 1921-22. The Viceroy now accepted a long standing invitation from the Maharaja of Kashmir to pay an early visit.

At the Viceroy's House in New Delhi, a great hustle and bustle was going on. The Viceroy was discussing the Policy of the Government of India with regard to the accession of the Indian States to one Dominion or the other. While the discussions were going on in the Viceroy's House, Mountbatten became particularly concerned about the Maharaja of Kashmir and his State. Subsequently a thought came to his mind to kill two birds with one stone. He announced his intention to pay a private visit to Kashmiri in the third week of June 1947. The Maharaja was intimated about the programme.

'Gulab-Mahal'-Palace, Srinagar was to be the Guest House for the August visitors. The Palace was immediately renovated. The rooms were tastefully decorated with fine walnut furniture, silken-tapestry and soft woolen Kashmiri carpets of the craftsmanship. Maharani Ji herself supervised the arrangements which were going on day and night.

D.N. Dhar, the then Chief Architect of the State (assisted by the Palace-works-Manager, V.N. Tikku), under the orders of the Maharaja, was to find a proper place on the roof of the Gulab-Mahal Palace, for hoisting the Union-Jack Flag of the Viceroy. He was instructed by the Maharaja personally to do the job without making a hole or so on the roof of the Palace. The job was done well to the entire satisfaction of the Maharaja. Finally, the Viceroy along with Viscountess-Mountbatten, their daughter Pamela with some members of the Staff arrived at Srinagar airfield on 18th June 1947. They were received by His-Highness and high officials at a simple and impressive ceremony.

Accompanied by His High-

ness the party drove straight to Gulab-Mahal Palace. There Her Highness, and Yuvraj Karan Singh Ji received the Viceroy and the party. A fine lunch was served. Taking some rest, the party visited the famous Moghul-Gardens Shalimar and Nishat on the same day in the afternoon. Mountbatten had some car drives with Maharaja Hari Singh and during this course some conversations took place. It is understood that he gave some advice to the Maharaja with regard to the new set-up of the Indian Union and the States. The Viceroy wanted to repeat the same in presence of Prime Minister Kak with George Abell and Resident in Kashmir Col. Webb in attendance at a meeting. The Maharaja avoided this meeting by informing the Viceroy that he was in bed due to colic pain.

Their excellencies viewed the famous Kashmir arts and crafts at the exhibition grounds on 21st June. Prime Minister Kak and some high officials received the party at the exhibition grounds. Viscountess Mountbatten took a keen interest in the arts and crafts of Kashmir while going round the stalls.

Her-Excellency also paid a visit to Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital on the same day. She was received there by Wazir Ganga Ram the then Home Minister of the State. She was very much impressed by the service of the hospital. In the course of a letter to the Home Minister, she paid a tribute to the efficient medical and nursing facilities provided in the hospital. Her excellency said, "The hospital is indeed a very fine one, and I was most impressed by the efficient running of it by the excellent medical and nursing-staff. I know fully well the difficulties experienced in obtaining supplies and you have my sincere admiration and congratulations for the fine work which is being done despite these obstacles." The opening of the hospital had been done by Lord Wavell during his short private visit to the State on October 11, 1945. The foundation stone had been laid by Lord Linlithgow earlier in 1940. On the same day i.e. 21st June, an 'Afternoon Reception' was held in their honour at Rajgarh. The Viceroy invested their Highness with G.C.V.O. and C.I.I. decorations. After four days stay, on the fine morning of 23rd June, their excellencies and the party left Srinagar for New Delhi. Her Highness and high officials of the State bade

farewell.

Alan Campbell Johnson of Lord Mountbatten's staff records that Viceroy left Srinagar in a very disappointed manner due to the Maharaja's reluctance to meet him before his departure.

Sardar Patel got very anxious about the affairs of the Jammu and Kashmir state. On 3rd July 1947, he wrote a letter to Maharaja from New Delhi... "I fully appreciate the difficult and delicate situation in which your State has been placed. I was greatly disappointed when his excellency the Viceroy returned without having full and frank discussion with you on that fatal (fateful) Sunday when you had given an appointment which could not be kept because of an odd exception or two, has been marked by insensitivity, bordering on sheer callousness, to the crisis of the Pandit. Indian politicians view people only in the shape of ballot-papers which they want in their pockets. Kashmiri Pandit hardly has any utility in this regard, so why bother?"

Indian nation's insensitivity is appalling too. It can bring down government for the sake of an onion, but it appears to be helpless in the case of a three-lakh strong community, hounded out from its land of ancestors, rendered homeless and made to live as refugees in this great democracy of the world.

What adds insult to injury is the state of the community itself. A people who cannot think and act unitedly in adversity, can never do so, and a people who cannot help themselves, will not be helped by God either. All these years the so-called leadership has been pulling in different directions, and often pulling one another's legs. The result is that as far as its own initiatives and action are concerned, the community stands precisely and pathetically where it did eight years ago. No genuine leadership has emerged during this time and there isn't hope of any emerging now. Even during their halcyon days, it was said of Pandits that each one of them is equal to "two and a half Congress parties". It continues to be so today.

As if the holy mess of the displaced community were not enough there are some non-displaced members comfortably settled in foreign lands who are making the confusion worse confounded. One of the "experiments" floated by some of them is that a group of "three to five

thousand families" be persuaded to settle in a "selected location" in Kashmir with the idea that this model be "replicated" later in other areas. This idea has not come up for the first time but no proposer has ever bothered to work out the practicability, advisability and acceptability of the idea. In practice it means that Pandits do not go back to their homes but are herded into a "selected location" like cattle in a guarded enclosure or like a ghetto of unwanted people for the gun-crazy militants to prey upon.

It takes a Lord Eric Avebury, Vice Chairman of UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group, to sound caution that at the present time it would not be safe for Pandits to go back because "they cannot feel secure".

After his recent visit to Jammu and Kashmir and after looking at what he called "ut-

terly appalling conditions of Pandit camps, Lord Avebury said, "you cannot be certain that outsiders (foreign mercenaries) won't single them out."

But who cares for the "feelings" of the community in distress. The men at the helm of affairs in Delhi and Srinagar may not look at Pandits as mere ballot papers, but they do look upon them as pawns in Delhi's quest for its brand of normalcy in Kashmir. Unfortunately they are joined in by some members of the community too.

Rattan Lal's parents are in the twilight of their lives. He himself symbolises the today of Pandits in exile and this "today" is wholly taken up by the community's struggle for honourable and dignified survival. What happens to "tomorrow" of the community? What happens to Madhumati? □

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## Reshuffle for the worse

# Corruption Soars high in relief organisation

KS Correspondent

JAMMU: The eviction drive by the Relief Commissioner's Office at Purkhoo camp and sealing of 32 one room tenements has once again raised many questions about the murky business going on in the organisation. On Dec 22, 1998 officials of Relief Commissioner's department accompanied by a contingent of police swooped on the Purkhoo camp and started forcefully evicting the displaced families from one room tenements (ORT's) constructed recently. The occupants who claimed to be genuine claimants for the ORT's alleged that, "recently issued list of 346 allottees by the Relief Commissioner are either not genuine claimants or have been living in the rented accommodations."

The agitated Kashmiri Pandits putting up at Purkhoo camp Phase-II resisted the police attempts to carry out the eviction. Facing a general public outcry, as more and more Pandit organisations came down heavily on the authorities of Relief department, the eviction drive has been temporarily called off.

The entire episode once again brought to focus the corrupt

practices going on in the Relief department.

As per the criteria set up by the Relief Commissioner's Office, for the allotment of one room tenements, the displaced families still living in tented accommodation form the top priority. However, talking to the many residents of the camps, there is a general impression that the officials of Relief department have been indulging in corrupt practices while allotting the tenements. "Quarters are being allotted by demanding a bribe of Rs 3000 per quarter", said one of the camp dweller. While the din over the issue is just settling, the worst sufferers are those displaced families who have been putting up in tented accommodation or open spaces in half constructed buildings around Railway Station. The makeshift rooms in labour *sarai* or GSI building, constructed by use of curtain walls made of rags, even though giving an impression of an enclosed compartment, are as worse in the chilly winter as the open space. "We have been officially allotted the rooms, but because of the mishandling by Relief department we may have to wait for an indefinite period", says Mr Sapru in living labour *sarai* (camp). "Relief depart-

ment by favouring a few are creating a situation to put one section of displaced Pandits against the other", said a displaced Pandit who till recently was working with the Relief department.

The Relief Commissioner's office had undertaken a major reshuffle last year under sustained public pressure. General public at that time was demanding disciplining of the department amidst widespread allegations of rampant corruption. However, this reshuffle to eliminate the vested interests in the relief organisation, appears to have only strengthened it. The reshuffle was supposed to relieve all employees working with the Relief department who were deputed to the same till March 1992. However, the government very subtly continued with the services of a nucleus which many thought was the fountain-head of corruption in the department. Surprisingly most of the officers belonging to majority community working with the Relief Commissioner's office were left untouched even though there were corruption charges against some of them.

The new minister in charge of relief and rehabilitation ap-

pears to have brought new compulsions to the relief organisations. A large section of employees (around 300 persons) working with relief organisation belong to his native place Tral-Pulwama

Posting to the relief organisations has become a lucrative proposition and if general public impressions are to be believed, Rs 30,000 are being paid nowadays as bribe to be posted as a zonal officer in the Relief department while as for the post of a clerk the rate is Rs 10,000. "Previously they used to charge Rs 100 as a bribe for issuing a state subject. Now the rate is Rs 250", said one of victims at a relief counter.

As per reports Rs 6 crores were released for developmental works in the displaced camps from the Prime Minister's package. Half of it was to be spent on construction of new buildings and rest on the renovation works in the camps.

The residents of Muthi Phase-I and II confirmed that the 'renovation was only on paper'. In fact no 'while washing' of the tenements has been carried out so far and the change of electric fitting which the govt claims has

also been done only symbolically.

The most potential area of corruption in the Relief department is that of 'Political Migrants'. 649 political migrants were registered in 1997 as per the inner sources. In 1998 there are reports that even more registrations of political migrants have taken place. Some of these political migrants, most of them invariably belonging to the majority community, are also given a rent allowance of Rs 1500 per month family. As per preliminary enquiries many of such beneficiaries actually spend their most of the time in Srinagar. The cheque system for the cash reimbursement of the 'migrants' appears to have been introduced to conceal the identity of these political migrants.

As the corruption has assumed new heights in the relief department, the stranglehold of vested interest has only tightened. The packing up of the relief organisation with persons who only serve a political vested interest and most of whom are not at all qualified to serve in the department, the miseries of displaced persons may have to wait a little longer to be properly addressed.

## Wanchoo's killing

# You fought for them but got killed in the end

Special Correspondent

JAMMU: The would conduct symbolic visits to Hari Parbat Temple and Kheer Bhawani at the peak of terrorism and subsequent to forced exodus of Kashmiri Pandits-only to demonstrate that Kashmiri Pandits were living a peaceful life devoid of any coercion. He went to the extent of attributing ethnic cleansing of Pandits to the 'Jagmohan' factor, demanded dismissal of displaced employees and stoppage of their leave salary-only to tell the world that Kashmiri Muslim society continued to cherish secularism and their struggle was a genuine liberation movement devoid of any communal bias.

Sh H.N. Wanchoo was kidnapped from his Jawahar Nagar residence on Dec 1, 1992 and killed the same day on the roadside at Karan Nagar. His assassin was a dismissed police constable who was the 'intelligence chief' of Jamat-ul-Mujahideen. Funny it may seem the chargesheet of Jamat-ul-Mujahideen against Wanchoo was 'introducing of secular

ethos into the Islamic movement' at the behest of the government.

Hriday Nath Wanchoo was a very prominent Trade Unions leader of Kashmir. During 'Quit Kashmir Movement' he came into contact with the left, joined it, and became perhaps one of the few grass-root trade unionist of the state. At a time when it was very difficult to associate with sweeper class, he organised them into a Union and till his assassination continued to serve their cause. When extremism overtook the left movement in Jammu and Kashmir, H.N. Wanchoo played a pivotal role in establishing the state unit of C.P.I. to counter pro-naxalite Democratic National Conference.

His association with the sweeper class in Valley was total. He established a school at Batmaloo Srinagar and a cooperative for the welfare of sweeper class in the Valley. Because of his association with grass root Trade Union work and left orientation he became focus of attack by Jamaat-ul-Tulba. In 1983 his school at Batmaloo,

along with the book stall where he sold Soviet books was burnt down by students owing allegiance to Jamaat.

Despite using his all influence, he could not persuade the then state government to act against the fundamentalists involved in this arson and loot. Nikhil Laxman in his special coverage in Illustrated Weekly of India described, vividly the targeting of Wanchoo by fundamentalists.

Even after the mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, Sh Wanchoo chose to stay in the Valley. He appeared to have struck some sort of compromise with the terrorists for his safety. The then prominent JKLF terrorist Hamid Sheikh was said to be very close to Wanchoo and had assured him of safety and Wanchoo in return obliged the terrorists in what they wanted. Communist Wanchoo floated a Kashmiri Hindu Forum, the brief of which appeared defamation and denigration of security forces on the Human Rights issues and systematic slander against displaced Kashmiri Pandits. Wanchoo actively tried to

help terrorists to get their arrested colleagues released. He had filed numerous writ petitions in the courts for the same.

As per observers Sh H.N. Wanchoo, Dr Ab. Ahad Gooru and Shahban Wakil were targeted because they were trying to initiate a dialogue with the government and break the deadlock. Only a few days after Shahban Wakil returned from Delhi he was killed. Dr Gooru also met the same fate. The fragmentation of terrorist movement and marginalisation of JKLF had created a situation where a section of Kashmiri leadership was fearing that terrorism might now

start to consume its own children.

After the assassination of Sh H.N. Wanchoo many separatist leaders particularly belonging to JKLF streak tried to own Wanchoo by organising homages in his honour. The poignant reply to these pseudo-homages was the placement of an Ad. in the prominent local dailies of the state- Daily Excelsior and Kashmir Times, by the Wanchoo family. This advertisement on the sixth anniversary of Wanchoo's assassination speaks for itself the feeling of his family. We reproduced the same here, in our columns.

### SIXTH DEATH ANNIVERSARY



**Sh. H.N. Wanchoo**

(25-5-1925 to 5-12-1992)

YOU TRUSTED EVERYONE, BUT THEY TRUSTED NONE!  
YOU FOUGHT FOR THEM, BUT GOT KILLED IN THE END!  
THOSE WHO KILLED YOU, WILL SURELY SUFFER,  
SOMEDAY, SOMEWHERE

(AMIT WANCHOO)

YOU ARE NOT HERE, BUT YOUR THOUGHTS ARE HERE.

MRS. PRABHA WANCHOO  
& OTHERS' FAMILY MEMBERS.



# KPs: Victims of History

*The grim tragedy of Kashmiri Pandits is compounded by the equally grim irony that one of the most intelligent, subtle, versatile, and proud community of the country is being virtually reduced to extinction in free India*



By Jagmohan Ex. Governor  
(J&K)

seen tears from the eyes of these hapless migrants and also perceived the imprints of terror permanently etched on their minds. I have no doubt that had these great sons of the Valley taken in trouble of flying even for a few hours to Jammu and seen the true face Kashmir in the camps, they would not have remained mute spectators of the tragedy or contented themselves with sterile discussions at seminars sponsored by the interested parties. If nothing else, they could have helped in countering the disinformation spread by them. And if, during the course of this endeavour, they could assuage the sufferings of these unfortunate people, they would have earned something for the life to come.

## Perversion

The deep crisis through which the Kashmiri migrant, or for that matter the entire Kashmir, is passing is really the crisis of Indian values--the perversion, in practice, of its constitutional, political, social and moral norms. If you visit the camps of the refugees and try to extend the hand of justice to a community in distress, if you instruct that, instead of cash doles, the migrant government servants should be given leave salary, and if you concede the demand of the widow of a person brutally killed by the terrorists for allotment of a house on payment, you become communal, a 'known anti-Muslim', about whom concocted stories would be published in the press, and who would, even when an opportunity comes to expose the blatant falsehood in Parliament, not be allowed to speak, and would be obstructed by members from different corners of the House. If, on the other hand, you falsely accuse the Indian Army and Governor's administration of inventing stories as in the case of the school bus incident narrated above, if you assail the Administration and 'Jagmohan in particular' for giving inducements through provision of plots and trucks, without giving particulars, either of the plots or of the trucks, your accusations get published in the press, your reports are flaunted in national and international forums and are copiously quoted in Parliament, and you are labelled as secular and progressive and a champion of human rights and what not.

A few other basic questions in regard to the plight of Kashmiri Pandits have often cropped up in my mind. How are these unfortunate victims of avoidable tragedy connected with the commissions and omissions pointed out by me in my book in the chapters titled 'Roots', 'Nature and Pattern of Subversion and Terrorism', and 'Warning Signals'? Why do they have to suffer the consequences of the treacherous sabotage of my 'Operation Rescue' as detailed in the chapters titled 'Approach, Attack and Counterattack' and 'Acquiring an Upper Hand'? The only answer that I can find to these questions in that, perhaps, it is another quirk of the Kashmiri Pandits' destiny that they have to suffer for the sins committed by others.

Ever since I saw the plight of the Kashmiri Pandit community from close quarters in February 1986, I have been pondering over its curious fate. It is a community whose history generates envy at their achievements as well as sorrow at their plight. In one way, its members have played a dominant role in ruling India after August 1947. In another way, it has been hounded by a deep sense of insecurity in the Valley. In one way, again, it has been a well knit community, and in another way hopelessly divided and leaderless. Its long history has been one of triumphs and tragedies--steady and silent triumphs and tumultuous and terrible tragedies. Like Kashmir's weather, its bright, sunny, cool and crisp days have been punctuated by those of floods and famines and of grey and depressing clouds.

The antiquity of the Kashmiri Pandit community and its Aryan origin are well established except during Haras's times, when the Kashmiri 'purohitas' were persecuted, they constituted a powerful elite group during the reigns of Hindu kings. Their material needs were mostly met by the royal families and establishments. Such was their influence on society that, by resorting to collective fasting, they could virtually force the monarch to concede their demands, reasonable or unreasonable.

After the establishment of the Muslim Sultanate, the community underwent its most tragic phase during the regime of Sultan Sikander (1389-1413) and his fanatic Chief Minister, Sufi Bhatta who, ironically, was himself a Kashmiri Brahmin before his conversion. Persecution and forcible conversions knew no limits. As Ferishta recorded, "Many Brahmins, rather than abandon their religion or their country, poisoned themselves; some emigrated from their native homes, while a few escaped the evil of banishment by becoming Mohammedans".

Rajtarangini of Jonaraja portrayed the same tragic reality in these words; "The Brahmins fled to foreign countries, the son left the father and the father the son. The difficult terrains through which they passed, the scanty food they ate, the painful illness and the torments they suffered during their lifetime removed the fear of hell from their minds. Only eleven Pandit families were left."

Maybe the number of eleven is only symbolically true; but the fact remains that at the end of Sultan Sikander's rule, the Kashmiri Brahmins were reduced to a microscopic minority largely through conversion, persecution and consequent migration.

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-1471) reversed the policy of religious persecution and allowed the migrants to return and the local converts to reconvert. In the end of the fifteenth century, however, under the influence of Shams-ud-Din Ibraj, the Kashmiri Brahmins were once again persecuted.

The fifteenth century, thus, turned out to be one of the most fateful periods in the history of Kashmiri Pandits. Before this century, the community was intact and divided into 199 exogamous 'gotras', the members of which claimed descent bore. Through these 'gotras' from the 'rishi' whose name in the 'gotras' were now added, the distinction between the Kashmiri Pandits who withstood the persecution and stayed in the Valley and those who migrated and later on returned. The former were known as 'Malmasis' and the latter 'Bhanamasis'. In popular parlance, those who stuck to their faith were known as 'Suchihaddi' (pure bone) and those who reconverted as 'Jhuti-Haddi' (already tasted bone).

By the time the Mughal rule commenced in Kashmir, the Pandits had regained their poise and position. They identified themselves with Mughal manners and modes of administration. Their proficiency in Persian, the court language, proved a great asset. The Pandits became the backbone of the structure of governance at the middle level. Their prestige in society was also enhanced by Emperor Akbar's visit to the Martand Temple and offering a cow, with garlands of gold and jewels, as a gift. From the insignificant figure of 11, their number also increased. Their number was estimated by Abdul Fazal, during Akbar's regime, at 2,000.

With the decline of the Mughal Empire, misfortune once again visited the Kashmiri Pandits. Some of the Mughal Governors were fanatics and resorted to forcible conversion. The story of Kashmiri Pandits approaching Guru Tegh Bahadur, is revealing in this regard. The Afghan rule occasioned another period of terror for them, as it was for other Kashmiris.

Over the years, Kashmiri Pan-

dit migrants to different parts of Northern India. This was largely due to the combined effect of occasional persecution at home and opportunities available in the Mughal Court at Delhi, the Sikh Darbar at Lahore, the kingdom of the Nawab of Avadh, and the native States of Central India and Rajputana. Destitution, consequent upon the famine of 1831, which resulted in reduction of the population from 800,000 to 200,000 in the Valley and the famine of 1878, in which three-fifths of the population perished, played not an insignificant part in their migration. The tradition of going on pilgrimage was another factor, though the pilgrims moved from the Mandir to the Darbar at the first available opportunity. Pandit Kishen Das, the great grandfather of Raja Narendra Nath, for example, went from the temple along the Ganges to the fort along the Jamuna and ended at the Mughal Court.

In respect of Kashmiri migration, Dhanavanti Rama Rau, in her memoirs. An Inheritance, observes: "They (Pandits) arrived and learned to live in what was almost a different country to them. They were obliged to alter their dress from the loose robes and distinctive head covering of Kashmiris to the Hindu saris for women and pajamas and long coats for men, or to the trousers and tunics dictated by the Muslim Mughal Court.

They had to learn a new language, adopt a new cuisine and get used to the flat, dry landscape of the North Indian plains. However, they continued to cling to their names and the customs, rites, and ceremonies that belonged particularly to their community".

The Kashmiri Pandits who migrated had little in common with the Brahmins of Northern India. While the latter were highly conservative, strictly vegetarian, and, with a few exceptions, deficient in learning and true knowledge of religion, the Kashmiri Pandits were meat-eaters, scholarly, well versed in Persian, and both adaptive and traditional. They were also liberal in their thoughts and beliefs. While the menfolk took to social norms of the rulers, composed Persian and Urdu poems, and participated in and attended court 'mushairas' poetry symposia, the womenfolk strictly observed all the rituals of religion and sang 'bhajans' (devotional songs) at home. The migrants also developed a tendency to be somewhat

self-centred. They kept few contacts with friends and relations at home. They developed a hybrid culture which had some invisible roots in the Valley and some fresh ones in the new soil of their settlement.

## Forsaken by All on a Rough Sea

Whatever be the vicissitudes of their history and whatever unkind quirks their fate might have brought to them in the past, these all pale into insignificance when we reflect on what is happening to them at present.

When viewed in all its dimensions, the current phase of Kashmiri Pandits' misfortune is the most calamitous. The grim tragedy is compounded by the equally grim irony that one of the most intelligent, subtle, versatile, and proud community of the country is being virtually reduced to extinction in free India. It is suffering not under the fanatic zeal of mediaeval Sultans like Sikandar or under the tyrannical regime of the Afghan Governors, but under the supposedly secular rule of Rajiv Gandhi, VP Singh and the like whose unabashed search for personal and political power is symbolised by the callous and calculated disregard of the Kashmiri migrants' current miserable plight and the terrible future that stares them in the face. And to fill their cup of sorrow, there are bodies like the 'Committee for Initiative on Kashmir' which are over anxious and overactive to rub salt into their wounds.

In a soft, superficial, permissive and, in many ways, cruel India which has the tragic distinction of creating over one lakh refugees from its own flesh and blood and then casting them aside like masterless cattle to fend for themselves on the busy and heartless avenues of soulless cities, the chances for Kashmiri Pandits to survive as a distinct community are next to nothing. Split, scattered, and deserted practically by all, though for different reasons, they stand today all alone, looking hopelessly at a leaking, rudderless boat at their feet and an extremely rough and tumultuous sea to face before they can reach a safe shore across to plant their feet firmly on an assured future.

Tragically the migrants' own kith and kin, their own high-placed stalwarts, too, have forsaken them. Where are those influential Kauls, Sukhdars, Nehrus and Dhars? Why have they not come forward and provided solace and meaningful leadership to the indigent and resourceless migrants? I have

## Quotable quotes

"To counter the pressure of the security forces, the JKLF turned its ire against the 200,000 strong Hindu community. Living in isolated pockets and forming less than 3% of the population, the Hindus or Kashmiri Pandits were vulnerable to terrorists. The ethnic cleansing of the Kashmir valley by the JKLF began by selective murders of prominent people. On December 27, 1989, a social worker of Anantnag, Prem Nath Bhat was shot dead in broad daylight. The victim lay bleeding on the road and no one dared to come to his rescue. Journalists, teachers and political workers were targets of this violence. Newspapers carried messages from terrorist outfits giving lists and addresses of Hindus to be targeted the next day. The commonly heard cry in the Valley was, "leave your women and property and get out." As a result, a massive exodus of the Hindus began on January 21, 1990. Many went to Delhi and stayed with their kith and kin. The poor Hindus who had nowhere else to go came to Jammu and began life as refugees in their own country.

This massive tragedy, comparable with the human rights violations in former Yugoslavia and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, was largely ignored by the India media possibly under pressure from the government. The government's logic was that the news of the exodus of Hindus may provoke reaction against Muslims in other parts of India. Indian media, though largely independent, has a tradition of cooperating with the government on sensitive security issues. Even in 1971, the best kept Indian secret was the identity of a majority of the nearly 9 million refugees driven away from the erstwhile East Pakistan. Since these refugees were Hindus, this fact was kept carefully hidden from the Indian masses to prevent communal rioting. The same feat was repeated in the case of the Kashmiri refugees. While the rationale behind this was laudable and even logical, its effect at regional and global levels were disastrous.

The terrorists who perpetrated one of the biggest post cold war ethnic cleansing and their supporter Pakistan, were left free instead to blame India for the violation of human rights. The West, cynically exploited this faux pass on the part of India and cornered its inept and naive diplomats on various world fora. It was only in 1995 that the Indian government woke up to the folly of this approach and began highlighting the plight of Hindu refugees from Kashmir. It is note worthy that despite all the propaganda against the Indian security forces and their alleged atrocities, there has been no influx of refugees into Pakistan from Kashmir".

*Anil A. Athale in Let The Jhelum Smile Again*

## Chronology of Events

Dec. 1st to Dec. 31st

**1/12/98:** Army and Police gunned down seven hardcore militants including two foreign mercenaries in Banihal and Gandoh areas of Doda Distt. Army Jawan also lost his life in encounter. Army drives out 8-10 militants from local houses in Rajouri district. One Pakistani spy who materminded the escape of 5 fellow prisoners from high security Jammu interrogation centre apprehended.

Meanwhile, militants killed a counter insurgent source of Army in Pattan. In Anantnag militants kidnapped, raped and later on killed a 17 year old girl. One civilian killed and two injured in IED blast at district headquarter, Anantnag. BSF gunned down a hardcore militant who was responsible for beheading a number of civilians, in Udhampur district. Army gunned down two foreign mercenaries in Surankote area, one Army jawan killed by militants in an ambush in Mendhar.

**2/12/98:** Militants gunned down three members of a family from majority community in Mendhar area of Poonch. Security forces eliminated a militant in an encounter in Anantnag district. Unidentified gunmen shot dead a released militant and militants gunned down an CRPF jawan at Kakasarai Sgr. BSF arrested two militant harbours in Gool area of Udhampur district and an SPO killed in Kishtwari tehsil of Doda district.

**3/12/98:** Security forces eliminated four top wanted militants including a district commander of Hizbul Mujahideen near Pahalgam and apprehended three very important militants of same outfit. Security forces killed a hardcore militant in Baderwah and destroyed two hideouts in Marmat Doda where militants had dumped a huge of quantity of ration items. An explosion triggered by an IED in Surankote, Poonch by militant

**4/12/98:** A school teacher shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Kulga. Anantnag and a dead body recovered from Soura Sgr. Two militants one each from HM and Al-Umer arrested with ammunition in Srinagar. Security forces unearthed three militant hideouts in Kupwara. A powerful blast rocked a BSF camp in Manjakote Rajouri. Security forces foil an infiltration attempt by militants an LoC.

**5/12/98:** Militants fired five rockets on a Army patrol party killing one jawan and injuring another, in Surankote area of Poonch district. Militants gunned down six persons including a school teacher and a constable in Anantnag district. Security forces arrested eighty militants including a group commander of HUA and Platoon commander of HM, from Srinagar and Baramullah districts.

**6/12/98:** Militants gunned down an SPO and set ablaze one house in Thanamandi area of Rajouri. Militants kidnapped a youth from Sunderbani area. Army foiled an infiltration attempt on the LoC from Poonch area.

**7/12/98:** A 15 year old boy was killed in an explosion at Surankot. Army gunned down seven hardcore militants including six foreign mercenaries in a gun battle in Rajouri district, a civilian was also killed in the encounter. There was a powerful explosion just 3 km away from the **Guest House in Srinagar where Prime Minister Sh Atal Behari Vajpayee was staying during his 2 days visit to J&K. The explosion was heard up to a distance of 10 km around and shook almost the entire Srinagar city.** 4 militants including a battalion commander of HM were killed and seven other arrested by security forces in Kashmir.

**8/12/98:** Security forces eliminated six foreign militants in separate operations in Kupwara district. Unidentified gunmen shot a militant turned teacher and a labourer of BRO in Pattan and Bandipora. Security forces defused an IED at Sopore and militants launched several grenade attacks on forces at Khanyar, Hawal and Kawdera Srinagar. Police apprehended a battalion commander of HM from Shaheed Gunj Srinagar and Platoon commander of same outfit from Shalakadal Srinagar. Police arrested main accused of last month explosion at RS Pura Jammu alongwith four other accused all ISI agents. Militants gunned down a civilian in Doda district.

**9/12/98:** More than 1000 foreign militants killed by security forces during last nine years in J&K till date says IGP Kashmir zone. A shopkeeper in a powerful explosion in Surankote and Army defused an IED in the same area. Army guns down four hardcore militants including a tehsil commander of HM in Rajouri district. Special Operations Group (SOG) have seized a sophisticated electronic printing machine in Srinagar and apprehended the top wanted accused in counterfact currency racket fake currency worth 50 lakh have been already printed and circulated in J&K. One BSF official got killed and four injured by militants in Bandipora, 4 civilians got killed and others injured by grenade explosion caused by militants in Bandipora.

**10/12/98:** Army eliminated 5 hardcore militants (4-HUA & 1 HM) and injured 2 others in Rajouri district and seized 22 Nos of 82mm mortar bombs. Militants gunned down a constable and took away his AK-47 in broad day light near police station at Pattan. Security forces killed an HM militant in Shopian, 4 more civilian scammed to injuries in yesterdays Bandipora explosion. Militants kill wife of a surrendered militant and attempted to blow up a bridge in Surankote tehsil of Poonch district. SOG have apprehended a Kashmiri Pandit describing is him as harbourer of KM militants, from Srinagar.

**11/12/98:** Security forces eliminate 2 militants in Gulgam area of Kupwara district and one Army jawan got killed near Sopore. Unidentified gunmen injured a released militant in Batmaloo and one civilian in Anantnag, 2 hardcore HM militants killed by Army in Udhampur district. Militants killed a civilian and Special Task Force gundown a dreaded militant in Doda district.

**12/12/98:** Security forces eliminated a militant in Kashmir. Militants killed block president of National Conference a Jammal activists and a trader community leader in Kanipora, Pattan and Anantnag respectively and a unidentified body was recovered from Pahalgam. Militants killed a BSF jawan in Anantnag, militants kidnapped two youths and shot another in Doda district.

**13/12/98:** Security forces eliminated 8 HM militants and lost one jawan in Anantnag and Bandipora Kashmir. Unidentified gunmen shot dead a businessman in Kulgam and a bullet ridden body was recovered in Pahalgam. Major tragedy was averted in Poonch city with the recovery of 8 kg RDX fitted in a Patromax Gas Cylinder, one civilian was killed near LoC due to Pakistan firing. A woman was killed and a 2 jawan injured in exchange of fire between militants and security forces in Doda district. Top HM militant was arrested by security forces in Doda district.

**14/12/98:** A major setback for security forces and all counter insurgent agencies in Kashmir when militants launched heavy attacks with rockets, fire and grenades on Kuka Parry's house and a major camp of pro-India guerrilla outfit Ikhwan at Anantnag, besides the house of SP operations Pulwama at Baramulla. Special Task Forces eliminated two top HM militant in Doda district. A group of about 20 militants including foreigners attacked SOG picket in Doda district. Army gunned down 2 hardcore HM militants both Pak nationals in Rajouri district.

**15/12/98:** The border police arrested an ISI agent with 6 kg RDX from RS Pura, Jammu.

**16/12/98:** Army gunned down nine hardcore militants mostly foreigners in Thanna Mandi area of Poonch. Three militants were apprehended in North of Rajouri area. Pakistani troops launched artillery offence in Karnah sector. Militants attack a BSF picket in Srinagar. An IED planted near a bridge in Handwara was defused. A huge insignment of 15 kg RDX seized from Samba area in Jammu.

**17/12/98:** Army smashed a militant hideout and a civilian was killed in an encounter between Army and militants in Poonch and Rajouri areas. A NC leader survived a bid to his life and his PSO was injured in a militant attack in Doda. 3 civilians have been kidnapped and subsequently gunned down in Anantnag. An apprehended militant got wounded in a bid to escape in Bandipora. Militants damaged the residence of an electric engineer in Sopore. A bomb blast occurred at a civilian's house near Kulgam and 2 civilians got injured in explosion near Sopore. Security forces apprehended a HM militant at Bandipora.

**18/12/98:** Army killed a notorious militant Major Gul district commander HM Rajouri and Poonch area. Militants made an attempt to blow up a private school with an IED in Surankote. Unidentified gunmen killed a civilian & injured one in Srinagar

**19/12/98:** Militants mowed down an NC leader in broad day light in Rajouri. A area group of three persons killed an SPO in Pattan, an pro-India militant from Ikhwan looted some cash from a family at gun point in Anantnag.

**20/12/98:** Security forces eliminated 2 HM militants near Kokernag, militants shot dead 2 members of pro-India Ikhwan cadre in Anantnag district, police recovered a dead body in Pulwama, Army gunned down 4 hardcore foreign mercenaries in Rajouri area. Two civilians were shot dead by militants at two different places in Poonch and Rajouri areas. Jammu police arrested 3 suspected militants in Channi Rama area of Jammu.

**21/12/98:** Militants gunned down 2 special police officials alongwith their fathers in Kulgam area of Anantnag district. security forces eliminated a Pakistani militant in Anantnag area and militant shot down a counter insurgent in Sumbal, Sopore area. Army killed 2 hardcore militants in Ghoru Gundob area of Doda district, police recovered arms consignment in Hiranagar tehsil of Jammu.

**22/12/98:** SOG of Jammu and Kashmir killed 2 militants of HM in an encounter in Baramulla district, Army & SOG gunned down a hardcore foreign militant in Rajouri area.

**23/12/98:** Militants of HM massacred one member and 4 other relatives of pro-India counter insurgent cadres in Kulgam area. 3 militants and a CRPF driver got killed in a operation at Qamarwari Srinagar and three militants believed to be foreigners were fighting the force till midnight in this operation.

An IED explosion blew up a Tata-Sumo Taxi injures four persons critically on National Highway near Qazigund, 3 hardcore militants including 2 foreign mercenaries, an Army hawaldar and a jawan of STF and a minor girl were killed in Poonch and Rajouri districts, 2 civilian gunned down a militant at village Dalori in Rajouri district and RDX bomb seized in RS Pura tehsil by BSF.

**24/12/98:** Total of 5 militants including 4 Pakistani guerrillas of Harkatul-Ansar killed in overnight operation by security forces at Qamarwari Srinagar. One more militant a foreign mercenary was gunned down by Army in Poonch district Army gunned down 2 more foreign mercenaries in Surankote and a civilian was injured in powerful explosion at Nowshera. Two Army jawans were injured in Surankote encounter. A 60 year old Saint was gunned down by militants, 2 detained militants of HM were killed during their abortive attempt to escape in Bandipora and one militant of HM was killed in encounter with security forces at Kupwara, one militant and one civilian was killed in Pulwama, for the first time Russian flame-throwers were seized from militants.

Militants shot dead a woman in Reasi area and troops gunned down a hardcore militant in Solar of Doda district. Army seized a live bomb planted by militants in Akhnoor tehsil.

**25/12/98:** Newly inducted Army division eliminated 4 more dreaded foreign mercenaries and captured one alive and lost one Army Subedar in two encounter in Poonch and Rajouri districts, 3 militants killed on 24th Dec in Surankote included on dreaded militant Lt. General Musa of Hizbul Mujahideen. Two HM militants were killed and one civilian injured in 36 hour long encounter between militants and security forces in Pulwama district.

Meanwhile, one militant was killed in an encounter in Kupwara and body of a surrendered militant recovered in Dooru Anantnag, 3 young children sustained injuries while taking home and unexploded shell which went off.

**26/12/98:** 3 militants of Harkatul-Mujahideen including two foreigner were killed by SOG of J&K police and security forces in Anantnag district, militants blewup an electric tower near Qazigund and conducted firing and rocket attacks on security forces in Kupwara district.

**27/12/98:** 5 militants of HM and 2 Army jawan got killed in Kangan encounter heavy exchange of fire stoked a fierce blaze also in dense fire area. Army seized a huge stock of ration including 300 kgs rice, 200 kg atta, 20 kg sugar, 15 packet salt 10 kg rape seed, besides onion, blanket etc from militants hideout in Rajouri district. the sources didn't rule out the possibility of some Food and Supplies department involvement. Police detected 2 live IED planted in Bus Stand area of Rajouri town.

**28/12/98:** Militants attacked a bullet proof vehicle of SPO Baramulla near Pattan and killed a prominent counter insurgent and injured 5 special police officials in a powerful landmine blast, 1 militants fired as many as 6 rifle grenades and volley of automatic fire on police division in Sobog. Militants fired rockets aiming vital police and Army location in Surankote. Army and STF gunned down a dreaded militant of HM in Gundoh area of Doda district, one militants gunned down a SPO and a surrendered militant in two separate incidents in Udhampur-Doda Range.

**29/12/98:** Militants fire pistol shots on a employee of Border Road Organisation at Amirakadal and unidentified gunmen kidnapped and later killed one released militant in Kokernag area. one girl got injured in a shoot out at Hajan and militants attacked a BSF patrol in Sopore town. Militants shot dead a civilian in Anantnag area, militants hurled a hand grenade and also fired some AK-56 shots on a BSF vehicle near Sopore. Militants hurled grenades towards security forces at Heller, Arhama in Anantnag district security forces apprehended a HM militant at Goshbug. SOG Srinagar apprehended the "launching commander" of Lashker-e-Toiba and a harbourer of same militant outfit from Srinagar, police apprehended a Pak trained militant of HM from Kishtwar tehsil of Doda district.

**30/12/98:** A top Khalistan Zindabad force, militant was apprehended by Jammu police from Digiana hide out. Army recovered a huge quantity of explosive including 30 kg of deadly RDX from Rajouri district. Militants attacked the Tatoo Ground Army formation near Chhatabal Srinagar, causing injuries to two Army jawans and unidentified gunmen kidnapped and later slaughtered two civilians at Bandipora.

**31/12/98:** Two soldiers of Rashtriya Rifles and 2 militants including launching chief of HM got killed in two different encounter between security forces and militants in Kashmir valley. Militants fired upon an in-patient at SMHS hospital and caused an IED explosion in Ganderbal Sumbal and also hurled a grenade a police division Lal Bazar Srinagar, 11 houses were destroyed in Beerwah and Kupwara encounters, militants killed 2 civilian in jungle area of Kalakote and Army gunned down 2 dreaded militants in Thanamandi area of Rajouri district, 12 hardcore Pak trained militants of different outfits surrendered before Delta Force of Army in Doda.

## NEWS BRIEF

## 10% increase in security expenditure in J&amp;K

KS Correspondent

JAMMU: In spite of the persistent claims by the State that the terrorism is on the decline, the security related expenditure has gone an increase of 10.44 percent. In 1997, sum of Rs 376.02 crores was spent on security related expenditure while as in 1998-99, the expenditure on the same has been 415.29 crores.

The budgetary deficit of the state has been Rs 1130 crores (1998-99), while as the state has incurred Rs 1884.06 crore on security related expenditure in last eight years up to March 1998. This is almost 66.04 percent of Rs 2550 crores of the central debts of Rs 2,550 crore.

However, while the State government maintains that the Union Government has re-imposed only 887.30 crore of the SRE, the Union Home Ministry asserts that Rs 1045.71 cr have been already released. A controversy has developed as to where Rs 158.41 crores, which the Centre claims has not been shown by the State Government in its SRE, have gone.

## JKLF (Amman) moots International Kashmir Committee

KS Correspondent

The JKLF (Amman) group has proposed a new formula for the settlement of Kashmir conflict. As per the formula JKLF has demanded setting up of International Kashmir Committee constituting of members from UN Security Council permanent five member countries, OIC, Germany, Japan and NAM, under which both the parts of J&K will be governed for 15 years, after eviction of armed forces of India and Pakistan.

## Janki Nath Koul's bood released

KS Correspondent

JAMMU: A book of Kashmiri poems written by Saint Scholar Late Janki Nath Koul was released on his first Death Anniversary. The book is entitled 'Shradha Posh', and is written in Devnagri script. The poems are of esoteric and spiritual importance and would provide rich insights to the seekers of truth. The foreword of the book is written by Sh S.N. Bhat (Haleem) and P.N. Koul (Sajid) in which they have paid rich tributes to Janki Nath Koul-Kamal.



## Vajpayee Disappoints at Jammu

JAMMU, Dec 7: The high hopes which Vajpayee visit had raised amongst the residents of the border town of Hiranagar, were drowned in the 13 minutes of eloquent oratory by the Prime Minister interspersed with political rhetoric.

Prime Minister declared that there will be no compromise on Kashmir and said the areas of PoK and those handed over to China by Pakistan are also a part of India. Mr Vajpayee declared that his government stands by the resolution of Parliament

which declares the nations resolve to liberate areas occupied Kashmir.

Hiranagar witnessed the biggest ever rally to be ever held in the town and addressed by the Prime Minister. Prime Minister Vajpayee reached 4 hrs late to the venue of the rally. However, the packed stadium waited till the last to listen to his speech. The Chief Minister of the State Dr Farooq Abdullah and BJP leaders of the State Chaman Lal Gupta and Daya Krishen Kotwal

shared the dias with the Prime Minister. The gallery meant for the mediemen was occupied by BJP and NC leaders including MLAs and office bearers. The mediemen who had to stand on their feet and cover the rally were sore about the undiscipline by the state political parties.

Even though the oratory of Vajpayee drew repeated applause from the audience, his inability to declare a package for the people of Hiranagar who had witnessed worst damage during

the intensified firing by Pakistan recently, created lot of disappointment.

Mr Vajpayees assurance to the people of Valley with regard to the commitment of the Central government to Article 370 had already raised many an eyebrow amongst the intellectuals in Jammu Vajpayee's subtle hints towards strengthening the autonomy of the state and promise to consider favourably the demand of ST status for Paharis is seen as major shift in the BJP's policy on Jammu and Kashmir.

## Thus spoke Vajpayee in Srinagar

SRINAGAR: Following is the text of Prime Minister's statement released at a press conference in Srinagar on Dec. 6, 1998:-

"This is my first visit to Jammu and Kashmir after assuming the office of the Prime Minister of India. On this occasion, I convey my sincerest wishes to all the people of the state, belonging to all the communities and regions, for their happiness, progress and prosperity in an atmosphere of lasting peace. This is the wish which I share with all the hundred crore people of India, my government has been doing everything, and will continue to do everything, for the translation of this wish into a reality.

"The people of Jammu and Kashmir have suffered immensely for the past many years. The state has been converted into a theatre for a proxy war by those who have hatched an evil design to take Jammu and Kashmir away from India. Their conspiracy will never succeed. Nevertheless, the people of this state have had to bear the brunt of this war of subversion and secessionism, sponsored from across the border and conducted by militant and extremist groups within the state. Mothers have lost their sons, wives have lost

their husbands, children have lost their parents and a large number of families have been uprooted from their homes and hearths. Thousands of them, belonging to both Hindu and Muslim communities in Kashmir, have been forced to leave the state and seek shelter in other parts of India.

"I wish to tell my brothers and sisters in Jammu and Kashmir, I share your pain and grief and sense of loss. Your suffering is my suffering and the suffering of all our fellow Indians. Together let us resolve to create a new tomorrow for the people of Jammu and Kashmir".

"I Congratulate the people of Jammu and Kashmir for already achieving considerable success in bringing the state on the path of peace, normalcy and democratisation. After a long time, a popularly elected government is in place in Srinagar. Against all odds, the developmental process and administrative functioning are being restored. The Central government has been working in closest cooperation with the State government to broaden, deepen and hasten this process.

"Our first priority is to consolidate the return of peace, normalcy and development to the state in recent months. The

youth of Jammu and Kashmir want opportunities for employment. Students want their schools and colleges to run undisturbed. The villagers want roads, transport and power situation to improve. Businessmen and traders want to see their business grow, my government shall spare no efforts to work together with the State Government to fulfill these genuine needs and aspirations of the people of Jammu-Kashmir.

"Our jawans and member of other security forces have done a commendable job in countering the activities of subversive and secessionist forces. Many of them have laid down their lives in defence of the unity and security of India. I place my deep appreciation for patriotism and dedication to duty.

"From the soil of Kashmir, I have a message today for the rulers of Pakistan and the people of the world. Kashmir is not merely a piece of land for us in India. Nor is it important to us from only a strategic point of view. Rather, Kashmir is one of the best symbols of India's nationhood. It is the strongest refutation of the communal basis for the two-nation theory. Kashmir proclaims the multi-faith and secular character of India

which, irrespective of whichever community has a numerical majority in whichever part of the country, they all belong equally to India.

"For fifty long years the rulers of Pakistan have failed in their design to break Jammu and Kashmir away from India. They have not succeeded. Yet, the fact of the matter is that Pakistan has allowed this issue to cloud our bilateral relations and multilateral cooperation in South Asia as a whole. Even today, although we have resumed bilateral talks on a range of issues, Pakistan has been creating tension and provocations along the border. This must stop, for this is a futile exercise. Equally futile are the attempts to bring in a third party to intermediate between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. The Kashmir issue can and must be resolved only within the framework of Shimla agreement.

"My government is prepared to engage Pakistan in a constructive dialogue on the entire gamut of issues of peace, confidence-building, cooperation and development. Today I express the hope that, together, India and Pakistan can create a new chapter of peace, good-neighbourliness and collective prosperity in the next century" □

# Reiterate Margdarshan and dilute the demand



By Ajay Chrangoo

When the 'Margdarshan' Resolution was framed it was kept in mind that the resolution as a whole encompasses not only the perspective of political vision but also the general principles of the struggle to be waged for it. Such a resolve by Kashmiri Pandits was also a statement of fact, of the extent of exclusion and intensity of genocide to which Kashmiri Pandits were subjected. Precisely for these reasons it was made very clear, during the hectic deliberations which lead to the formation of the draft resolution of Margdarshan, that the resolution has to be read and adopted in totality.

The operative part of the resolution, which envisaged creation of a Union Territory in Kashmir valley east and north of river Jhelum for the rehabilitation of 700,000 Kashmiri Pandits, could not be visualised divorced from the context laid out for the demand. The unambiguous declarations made by Kashmiri Pandits in this resolutions are as critically important as the demand itself. The attempts at undermining the Margdarshan resolve are aimed at both modifying the operative part of the resolution as well tearing it apart from the context laid out for it.

The Margdarshan resolution stated, "The secular facade, which Kashmir has worn all through the last forty three years, has been provided mainly by Kashmiri Hindus. They have not reacted to Muslim communalism, instead they have faced the rigours of Muslim dominance with the fervent hope that the thrust on universal education and scientific progress in the state would pave way for the free flow of democratic thought, recognition of the human rights, the genuine urges and aspirations of Kashmiri Hindu minorities, religious tolerance, equity and justice..... This hope is now shattered. Neither his Muslim brethren in Kashmir nor the Indian government which swears by secularism came to the rescue of Kashmiri Hindus....." And then the resolution makes an unequivocal declaration as, "with their deep and firm commitment to social unity, religious co-existence, democracy and secularism they will not accept a society which is communalised, obscurantist, intolerant and medi-

eval. They will not submit to any authority in the State which does not recognise their right to life, equality, faith and protection against discrimination...."

The resolve of Pandits' now known as 'Margdarshan', was and continues to be the unanimous view of Pandits about the existential reality in Kashmir valley. And through the above quoted declaration Kashmiri Pandits very clearly stated that they will no longer become, wittingly or unwittingly instruments of providing a facade to the Muslim communalism in Jammu and Kashmir States. The declaration of Pandits also bears out, that, their struggle for survival will be aimed at creating a genuine secular and democratic space in the state for their survival and not a space within Muslim communalism.

The recent efforts at return of Pandits not only attempt at wishing away the existential reality of continuing genocidal attrition on the beleaguered community but also decisively aim at some compromise with Muslim communalism. Ironically such efforts are being legitimised through the persons who were party to the deliberations during which Margdarshan resolution was finalised.

"We cannot wait for the last gun to silence," said the political affairs head of Agnishekhar group sometime back in a TV interview while advocating a formula for the participation of Pandits in the elections. The same argument is now being quoted quite often by the government to shirk its responsibilities vis a vis ensuring the right to live of the displaced community. Accepting of this postulate does not imply only the accepting of the continued genocide as a fiat accompli but also very subtly hints at a complete surrender to Muslim communalism. In simpler words it means taking Sangrampura and Wandhama massacres, as not abnormal happenings in the future, because such tragedies can be enacted even by a solitary terrorist with a gun in his hand and commitment to kill.

Kashmir Pandit global summit at London in June 1997 not only undermined the political resolve of Margdarshan in the name of pragmatic politics and unity but also tried to pave way for surrender of Pandits to Muslim communalism on the pretext of 'unfreezing the situation'.

The main focus for the Pandit struggle, which the Margdarshan had crystallised, was subjected to a subtle process of dissolution, in this summit. The primary aim of the political agenda adopted in London, now was only to make a bid to 'return to Kashmir with honour, dignity and safety'. These same

cliches are being used not only by the leaders of main political parties in the state and the country but also by fundamentalist Muslim leaders of Kashmir valley, when confronted with the issue of rehabilitation of displaced Kashmiri Pandits.

Trampling with the spirit of Margdarshan resolution became more obvious when the director of Political Affairs of Kashmiri Pandit Political Steering Committee, publicly welcomed the dialogue with the ruling National Conference. All the Pandit organisation, since the forced exodus in 1989, through numerous resolutions and press statements, have made their views amply clear about the role of National Conference in growth or communal separatist politics in the state as well as the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits. Margdarshan resolution had declared, that Pandits..... will not be a party to the present struggle launched against secular and democratic India..... with the history of having lived and died for freedom and their open espousal of the cause of tolerance, peace, amity and brotherhood between various ethnic, social and religious groups, they cannot accept the pre-eminence and predominance of any single religious community at their cost." This unanimous community view was flouted with impunity, when a section of Pandits chose to negotiate with a party which they held largely responsible for the growth of communal separatism in the state as well their exclusion and genocide. The Steering Committee thus chose to accord legitimacy to Muslim subnationalism.

The course of events which has now lead to some overseas organisations openly approaching NHRC and the Government for a 'phased return' of a few thousand displaced families, was set in 1997 at London and subsequently ratified in the so called, "World Conference of Kashmiri Pandits", organised by Agnishekhar group. In this conference, for the first time the operative part of the Margdarshan resolution was tampered. The original resolution enunciate the operative portion as--"The Kashmiri Hindus, therefore demand.

a) The establishment of a homeland for Kashmiri Hindus in the Valley, comprising the regions of the Valley to the east and north of river Jhelum.

b) that the constitution of India be made applicable in letter and spirit in this homeland in order to ensure right to life, liberty, freedom of expression, faith, equality and rule of law;

c) that their homeland be placed under Central administration with a union territory so that it evolves its own economic and

political infrastructure

d) that all the seven lakh Kashmiri Hindus, which includes those who have been driven out of Kashmir in the past and yearn to return to their homeland and those who were forced to leave on account of the terrorist violence in Kashmir, be settled in the homeland on equitable basis with dignity and honour." The new resolution adopted by the group very subtly tried to change and dilute the geographical contours of Margdarshan resolution. While symbolically reiterating the Margdarshan, 1991, this resolution said, "Pandits have already identified this location in Southern Kashmir along the national highway". The original resolution endeavoured for the establishment of a homeland 'East' and 'North' of Kashmir valley. The new formulation enunciated some 'area' of Southern Kashmir along the national highway.

The proposal by Indo-Canadian Forum to NHRC for creating of a security zone has to be seen in the context of a continuing process, of which the attempt to dilute and distort the Margdarshan resolution appears to be only a part. The actual mind set behind it has been enunciated as, ".....the KP leaders should reconcile themselves to the proposition that the only valid recourse open to KPs for the foreseeable future is to return to the Valley and with the Kashmiri Muslims as neighbours....-KP leadership should work out a system of phased return of refugees." This mindset also underlines that the dialogue between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits should focus on one issue i.e., "how to normalise the situation in Kashmir to enable KPs to return. Exchange of opinion on the roots of the Kashmir problem for the long term future of Kash-

mir should be avoided".

The Panun Kashmir has support of an the overwhelming majority of Kashmiri Pandits not because it generates a 'false hope', which had a soothing impact in a situation of despair. Pandits support Panun because it has for the first time concretised not only their problem but also taken a decisive step towards shaping their vision of survival. Creation of Panun Kashmir is not a bargaining chip. But an imperative necessity if the situation in Kashmir is to be salvaged. Panun Kashmir concept has given political stature to the community because it has brought the community from a position of non-opinion to a position of opinion.

The Indian nation, over the years has nurtured and legitimised its biggest contradiction. It continues to present Kashmir as a symbol of refutation of two nation theory. In Kashmir, Indian Nation has in fact accepted the principal of two nation theory. Kashmiri Pandits are no longer prepared to provide a cover to this contradiction which has become a festering sore on the body politic of India by accepting the slavery of a de-facto Muslim state and genocide as their fiat accompli.

Attempts to modify the 'Margdarshan' to undermine it are mainly aimed at pushing Pandits again to a position of non-opinion, so that they can be used as a pawn to provide a facade of normalcy to the problem ridden Kashmir. That some sections who claim to hold 'Margdarshan' as sacrosanct are fiddling with the essence of the resolve by either modifying its context or the operative part is a matter of serious concern.

Author is the chairman of Political Affairs Committee of Panun Kashmir

## Appeal to Readers

KASHMIR SENTINEL is the largest circulated English fortnightly of J&K State. It is circulated in India and Abroad and has a readership of above twenty thousand. It has now become the only genuine voice of Kashmiri Pandits in exile.

KASHMIR SENTINEL covers wide range of topics from people to politics, despair to hope, history, culture, identity, aspirations as well as opportunities for survival. Undiluted news, views and analysis is brought to you by its dedicated team of political analysts and area specialists in the editorial board.

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