

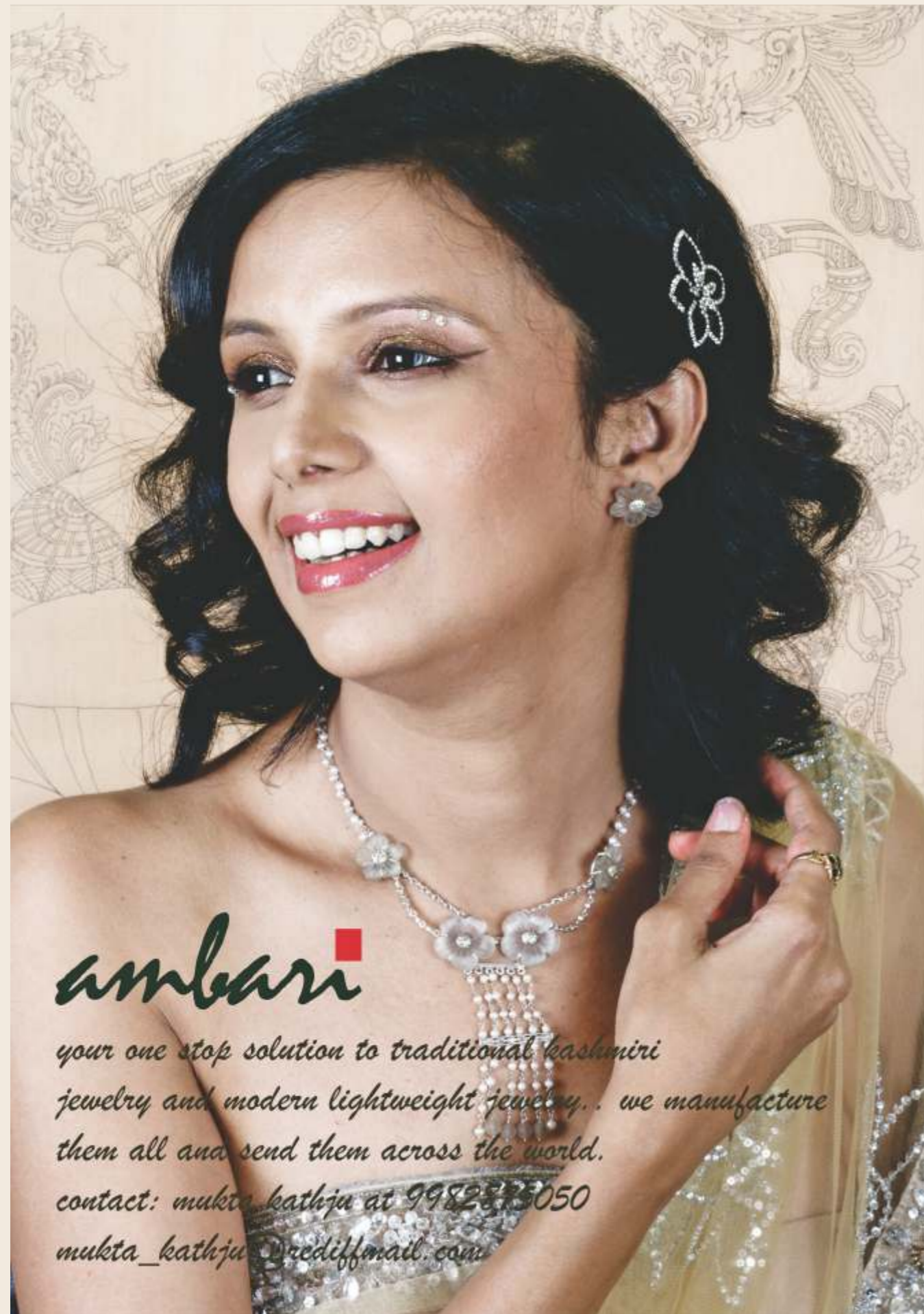
# BIRADARI



Issue: A Six-monthly Newsletter

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APRIL 2017



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**Nauroz  
Mubarak!**

# Nazraaneh Naurozee Kashmeeree Panditaan-e Hindostaan Maidaanee

## The Traditional New Year Offerings of the Kashmiri Pandits of the North Indian Plain

We welcomed the 5093rd year of the Saptarshi Calendar and the 2074th year of the Vikram Calendar on 28 March 2017. This is a beautiful replication of the Nauroz *nazraaneh* (offering) of a typical late-18th-century aristocratic Kashmiri Pandit household in Mughal or Nawabi North India. Vaibhav Kaul's elaborate offering to the New Year includes twenty articles.

### My Nauroz Platter

*Khwaannah*: sprouts. For vitality.

*Roath*: bread. For nourishment.

*Tsoonth*: apple. For vigour.

*Doon*: walnuts. For fertility.

*Sikkah*: silver coin. For prosperity.

*Gulsurkh*: red rose petals. For love.

*Shekker*: sugar. For harmony.

*Lataafat*: rosewater in a jar. For compassion.

*Zarda*: cooked saffron rice. For bounteousness.

*Biranjdaana*: uncooked rice grains. For liberality.

*Zaamut Dodh*: yogurt in a bowl. For poise.

*Noon*: salt. For patience.

*Davaat*: inkwell. For deep wisdom.

*Qalam*: pen. For the power of knowledge.

*Qalamdaani*: penholder. For restraint in the use of that power.

*Prakaasha*: lighted candles. For righteousness.

*Sudarshana*: image of Uma. For auspiciousness.

*Darpana*: mirror. For purity.

*Panchaanga*: new calendar and almanac. For renewal.

*Thaal*: round platter made of silver or bronze. For unity.



Cover Photograph: Nazraaneh Naurozee artistically assembled, styled and photographed by Vaibhav Kaul



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### Disclaimer

The views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily that of the KPA or the Editorial Board



### From the Desk of the Editor-in-chief

Our get-together in December 2016 was a grand success. The weather was just perfect and Shri Neeraj Kishan Kaul's official residence in Lutyens' Delhi was an ideal setting. The charged political atmosphere and slight inconvenience emanating from the so-called 'notebandi' did not deter our bretheren from coming out in large numbers for the winter function. The main entertainment was Tambola and the *biradari* members joined in wholeheartedly. As in the past we had a number of prizes, by the kind courtesy of Sarvashri Rajeev Kaul, Deepak Haksar and KN Channa.



Once again our chef Shri Suraj Bhan came out with flying colours and the members had nothing else but to say that the food was delicious and well-prepared. On the menu was *kofta*, *kabarga*, *khoya matar*, *methi chaman*, *dum aloo*, *haak*, *nadru kurkuri* besides dal and *chawal*. This was followed by *phirni* and *gulab jamun*. There were drinks on payment along with snacks like mini *samosas*, all types of *pakoris* (including the dynamite mirch *pakoris* for the daredevils).

Our dynamic President Shri Vivek Kaul arranged for members to visit the Keoladeo Bird Sanctuary at Bharatpur on Saturday, 4 February 2017, and on Sunday, 12 February 2017, a Heritage Walk was organized through the *galis* of Chandni Chowk and Bazar Sita Ram. Of course it included enjoying street food like *chaat* and the famous *parathas* of Parathe Wali Gali, and some non-vegetarian cuisine at Karim's. It is sincerely hoped that in future more members join in such outings – and the more the merrier.

– Col Valmiki Katju



### KASHMIRI PANDIT ASSOCIATION DELHI (REGD) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE : 2015-17

Row-1(L - R) Sitting : Mr Ajay Dar (Asst Secretary), Gp Capt Ajit Gurtu (Treasurer), Mr Surinder Zutshi(Sr Advisor), Mr Jagdish Taimni (Sr Advisor), Col Valmiki Katju(Vice President), Mr Kailash Baqaya (Sr Advisor), Dr V.N Reu (Secretary), Mr Vivek Kaul (President)

Row-2(L - R) Sitting : Mrs Vineeta Dar, Mrs Vatsala Kaul Banerjee (Editor), Mrs Gurtu, Mrs Zutshi, Mrs Taimni, Mrs Asha Katju, Mrs Gita Baqaya, Mrs Vandita Kaul



## THE GOOD DOCTOR: Rai Bahadur Dr Bal Kishan Kaul

By Shrimati Vilas Handoo, Shrimati Rashmani Sheopuri and Shri Sushant Kaul

**D**r Bal Kishan Kaul (fondly called Bhai Lala) was born in 1866 in his family's haveli in Vachchuwali, in the old city of Lahore. Vachchuwali was adjacent to Mohalla Sareen on the northern side of the old police lines, where mostly Kashmiri Pandits resided at that time. It was similar to Bazar Sita Ram of Delhi and prominent Kashmiri Pandits such as Pandit Bhawani Das, Raja Dina Nath Madan and Raja Gyan Nath Raina had their mansions there.

Dr Bal Kishan grew up in the house of his father Raja Suraj Kaul. He had an impressive lineage. His grandfather was Pandit Lal Kaul, the legendary commander of the Rawalpindi Brigade, the strike force of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He had his initial education at Government College, Lahore. He then did his M.B.B.S. from King Edward Medical College, Lahore, and became the first Kashmiri Pandit to have that qualification. He was a very popular medical doctor of Lahore with a roaring practice. He also taught as a professor of Medicine for some time at King Edward Medical College. He was considered to be an authority on the *Materia Medica*. Dr Bal Kishan moved his family to a house on Montgomery Road, which was then the locality of the elite of Lahore.

Due to his generosity he fell on hard times; he could not maintain his haveli and had to sell it and move to a smaller house in Model Town.

There is some mystery about his first wife who was from the Haksar family. Rumour has it that she was not liked by Raja Suraj Kaul and his wife, and was sent back to Kashmir and never heard of again. His second wife, Dhanrani, was from the Bhat family. They had four children, Autar Kishan; Khima (adopted from his



brother Daya Kishan), married into the Tankha family of Rewa; Uma, married to the elder brother of Late General Tapishwer Narain Raina; and a son who died young.

Dr Bal Kishan Kaul was a very active member of the Theosophical Society of India and was very close to Dr Annie Besant and Col Henry Steel Olcott who referred to him as 'My dear friend Dr Bal Kishan Kaul' in his five-volume treatise on theosophy and the Theosophical Society titled *Old Diary Leaves*. Perhaps he learnt the art of mesmerism from him as Col Olcott was known to heal people with this power.

Dr Bal Kishan was on the Board of Trustees of Central Hindu College, which later on became Benares Hindu University. He gave large donations to the Theosophical Society and also donated money for the construction of the Jwalamukhi Mandir in Himachal Pradesh and a plaque in his name can still be seen on the staircase leading to the temple.

He had a man Friday by the name of Ram Sudh who used to narrate many anecdotes about 'Panditji' (Dr Bal Kishan). He mentioned that although Panditji was good at heart and very caring, he had a fiery temper and could not suffer fools, hypocrites and boastful ignoramuses. One day a self-proclaimed 'mauni baba' came to stay at his residence. Panditji caught him red-handed peeping into the zenana section of the house. He took up his cane and beat the imposter black and blue. The beating was so severe that the fraud broke his silence and cried out for divine mercy.

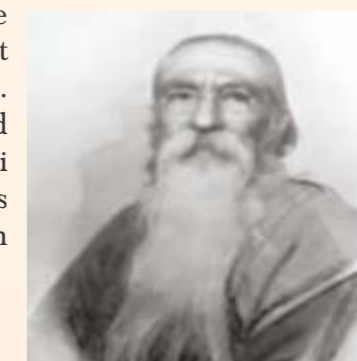
Another anecdote was about his barber Nathu Nai. In those days every big household had a barber who used to be called for haircuts and shaves. On one visit this barber complained of severe toothache and begged Dr Bal Kishan for some remedy. Panditji told him to see a dentist for which he would pay. After a few days Nathu returned, complaining that his pain was continuing as he had not heeded the dentist's advice to get the tooth extracted. He implored Panditji to relieve him of his pain as he could not sleep at night. After a few days the barber came back and refused to budge until he was treated. Panditji finally relented and went to the gate post of his clinic, made a few "passes" (moved his hand over it without touching it), and told Nathu to put his cheek on the specific area for relief. This was to be repeated for a few minutes for a week. The barber faithfully carried out this peculiar treatment. According to Dr Bal Kishan's junior Dr Hans Raj, after a few days Nathu came back grinning to Panditji, pronouncing he was completely cured. Whether it was mesmerism or some other occult power is anybody's guess.

In later years Dr Bal Kishan became a true ascetic. He handed over his large estates to his younger brother

Daya Kishan to administer and started practising homeopathy without charging his patients. He also successfully carried out faith healing. Didda Pyari, one of his nieces, had severe arthritis and could not even get up. Initially he spoke to her in a reassuring voice and then suddenly boomed, "Get up and start walking". And the lady quietly obeyed and was fine thereafter. He also started drinking only Ganga jal, which used to be brought all the way from Gangotri.

Due to his lucrative practice Panditji acquired enormous wealth. Besides philanthropy, he bought half of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's library and decided to donate a number of valuable Sanskrit manuscripts to the Benares Hindu University. But Partition prevented this and all was lost. He had over fifty 18 ft by 20 ft Persian carpets unused in the house. Immediately after Partition his grandson Swarup Kishan (Shukki) went to Lahore, but all of them had disappeared. It is also believed that the Kaul Haveli was demolished and the land acquired by the family of Nawaz Sharif. In the satellite map of Model Town area at its eastern periphery is the Nawaz Sharif Garden. Whether that is the area Dr Bal Kishan's house occupied cannot be authenticated.

Dr Bal Kishan Kaul's position and status in Lahore was the same as that of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru or Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru at Allahabad. He was also an active member of the Dharam Sabha of Lahore and was more conservative and traditional unlike Pandit Moti Lal Nehru who was more liberal and modern in his views. Dr Bal Kishan always worked for the unity and prosperity of the community and tried his best to save it from disintegration. He died in Lahore in 1937 at the age of about 71 years. The British conferred upon him the title of Rai Bahadur for his outstanding contribution in the medical field.



Dr Bal Kishan Kaul, the ascetic





## How to Survive Chandni Chowk... and How I Almost Didn't

By Devina Taimni

**I** come from the hub of insanity. Nothing in Delhi is fully functioning, working for the general good, or moving as a cohesive unit; yet, somehow, Delhi is still one of the most lively, culturally diverse and lovable cities in the world. Unique among the malls, fast cars and fancy parties is Chandni Chowk, a maze of bubbling excitement, filled with colours, people, sounds, and all sorts of absurdities that should never be put together.

A few years back, my parents, aunt and I decided that we would take my uncle, Sanjay Mamu, as a tour guide in the *galis* of this street market. Going to Chandni Chawk is a traumatic experience for anyone who doesn't know his or her way around. It's kind of like being given one sock and told to find the matching one at Macy's department store in New York on Black Friday. It is hard to even imagine a place as mad and chaotic as Chandni Chowk without understanding the complex, circuitous, maze-like alleyways and the vivaciousness that flows and ebbs through them, carrying along the hundreds of thousands of people, motorbikes, rickshaws, animals, street vendors, tourists, and most of all, Bollywood music that gives life to this bubble of energy. So as a gift to all you touristy-vacation-loving people of the world, I've compiled a list of rules that would help you survive Chandni Chowk. You're welcome.

**Rule #1:** Put down your camera. The small but sturdy red Nano cars and the bright flowers decorating the walls and the sea of multicoloured saris and the eye-catching stalls of the street vendors and the contented but busy atmosphere of the market and the elephant riders calling down to their beasts while navigating the cramped roads and the look on your face when you see the madness in action are too

hard to capture on the little 4.5-inch screen. There's no way to capture the energy and life and cram it into just one dimension when it's begging to be out in the world.

Since my parents are the ultimate tourists even in their own hometown, I didn't have to worry about looking through the lens at any time, and because of this, I could open my eyes to the colour and the life surrounding me. The energy of this place filled me with a new exuberance and I think that's what I loved the most about being there. There is something about going along with the massive hordes of people as one cohesive unit that makes you feel invincible. There's something about the way everyone smiles at you with such kindness and affection, and welcomes you into their small store that makes you feel as if you're the only person they want to sell to, as if the light has been gone for hours and you're the single candle in the nighttime, as if they're Aladdin and you're their last wish, as if you're their Beyonce in a sea of Lady Gagas. Of course, that's mostly because they can tell you're a tourist by the big-ol' camera you've been lugging around all day. Nice.

**Rule #2:** If you actually pay the first price the vendor offers you, you might as well just feed your winning lottery ticket to your pet goldfish because you're not going to have any money left by the end of the day. If there's one thing my parents have taught me to be proud of as an Indian, besides of our cricket team, it's our unparalleled ability to haggle. I'm an amateur

haggler, a source of much despair in my life, but lucky me, my parents are pros. My mom wanted to buy these ethnic-looking key chains with a bedazzled centre and tassels hanging from the bottom — purple, green, pink, blue and red. The scene played out just as my parents have been enacting it their whole lives. First my mom says how much she likes them, the vendor then tells her the amazing quality and how she won't find them anywhere else in the market, my mom then calls my dad, who's busy looking elsewhere, and they both agree on the items' beauty, my dad then casually asks, eh boss, *kitna hai?* And the man quotes an exorbitant price and as if on cue, both my parents gasp and take a step back before motioning with their hands that it's too much, everyone then dances the little haggle dance before my mom finally puts down the key chains and says well, if he's not going to lower the price, then we can buy this somewhere else. Five steps later, the man is calling her back with the price she wanted. Deal.

I remember my mom was so excited when she turned around to show me the key chains and she was telling me the names of all of her friends whom she was going to gift them to. My mom's adorable, in case anyone's wondering. Hagglng is just how it worked around here, nothing was going for full price because nothing was truly worth it. No material goods are worth as much money as the vendors were trying to get for it, but the smile on your face after? Priceless. Anyways, you can't really stand around long to admire things when there are hundreds of people trying to get past you.

**Rule #3:** Never try to go against the crowd. If there are hundreds of people moving in one direction, don't be that idiot who turns around and decides to cause near-death experiences. I'm warning you from experience. There are cars, motorbikes, rickshaws, horses, people, bikes and scooters all trying to go through the same 10-foot wide road as you are, so if you try to fight them, you'll lose miserably. Trying to take everything in, the smells, the sounds, the people, the outfits, the colours, I didn't even realize when I lost control of my own body. The crowd moved me

forward in the general direction I wanted to go and I felt a part of something so much bigger than just myself that I didn't mind not knowing where I was going or which restaurant I would be going to or what things I would be seeing. People shoved me from the left, crashed into me from the right, and stepped on the back of my heels until I realized that I needed to channel my inner-Indian and start shoving, crashing and stepping on others to stand my ground. It's actually much harder to stand your ground and go with the flow at the same time; but it's a definite way to survive the ruthless streets.

**Rule #4:** Stay out of the "splash zone". Everything was coated with a shine of dust. The people, the stained and peeling walls, the rusting pipes crawling up the sides of the alleyways, the heavily littered and trampled floors. All were dusty. These jaded practicalities added to the rustic and bohemian vibe of Chandni Chowk, but never caught the eye unless looked for. The off-the-beaten-path vibe was embodied in the earthenware pots that we drank lassi from. The cold, dusty and plain-brown-paper-bag-coloured little clay pot was the exact opposite of the refreshing, bright orange, sweet mango lassi inside, but we would never have found this hidden luxury if we hadn't explored the alleys to this particular shack. It was the perfect reward and I remember drinking it, thinking that this was what happiness tasted like. Until I realized... I was in the splash zone. I was standing next to a skinny and bare tree upon which a stupid pigeon decided to perch. And shit from. Directly on me. Urgh. He didn't even try to be subtle about it. He pooped right on my arm while I was in my little bubble of bliss, completely shattering it with his unwelcome crap. Literally.

My dad loves photography and his professional-level Canon camera was dying to take pictures as well. He's such a tourist. Looking back on it, the experience was pretty gross, but I was instead laughing with my head thrown back and so were my parents and Nayan Masi! We were laughing about how in a sea of people, the bird picked me as



CARTOON BY JAYANTO BANERJEE



its target. And how that day was the most special day we'd had during our vacation.

So after dousing my arm with water and cleaning up, we set down our bags, fell into the gypsy-type couches of the café, and under that single tree, we laughed and enjoyed our small spot of sun. From the sunlight, I could see the small wrinkles that formed on the side of my mom's eyes when she smiled and how she punctuated her story with animated hand gestures. She slowly inched herself forward on the chair to emphasize her point and would flap her arms wildly while laughing to shush others for interrupting. My dad would throw his bald head back, shining with a sheen of sweat, switching between Hindi and English, pulling my mom's leg for her ridiculous stories and overexaggeration, while my aunt, Nayan, would listen engrossed, buying every word.

I don't remember her story, I was too busy stretching out my legs after a long day of walking around, but I remember the feeling of comfort, happiness and the smiles surrounding me. We were in a little bubble of bliss in the centre of the chaotic market, but unfortunately we had to burst our own bubble and return to the ruthless streets to get to the underground metro and home. Learning from experience, I pushed, shoved and crashed my way through the crowd, my hand wrapped tightly within my dad's to not get lost, towards the trains.

**Rule #5:** Pay attention to your surroundings. It's easy to get distracted by the overwhelming hordes of people walking up and down the stairs to the Metro, by the graffitied walls with distorted images on either sides, or by the curved edges of the stairs worn down with use, but nothing turned out to be more dangerous for me than my own curiosity. Firstly, public transport in India doesn't seem like a traumatizing experience when you think of the London Underground or the Metro, but when you think of the Delhi Metro, it's diving into the ocean and then seeing a shark fin on the water before landing. Splash!

Everything happened in such quick succession that I didn't really have time to process it. Time seemed to slow down, my hair whipping around me in slow motion, all the nerves in my cheeks jumping alert when each individual hair touched them. The train crawled away from me, each wheel turning slowly against the rails, labouring to move inches forward, as if the burden of taking my family away from me was slowing it down.

Backing up a few minutes, Sanjay Mamu, my parents, Nayan Masi and I were waiting at the platform for our train to come to take us from Chandni Chowk back to central New Delhi.

The heavily accented voice on the loud speaker announced that the train was arriving. I see the flashy

lights in the alley next to me. Mamu said something about how the train was probably going to be really packed. I see lights are coming from a music CD store. The train arrived. I see the lights are in sync with loud dance music and shooting different colours around the small store. Everyone got on the train. I realize I'm not holding my dad's hand any more. The train door closed. I whip back around. I see my parent's faces turn for a second in horror before the train surges forward.

**Rule #6:** Don't panic. I panicked. I stood in one place, a rock in the middle of the sea of people pushing past me to get in and out of the station. I wasn't thinking about looking for the next train to South Ex. I wasn't thinking about the fact that I had no money to get a ticket because mine was with my dad. I wasn't thinking that my parents might be waiting at the next stop for me. I wasn't thinking about the pickpockets, kidnappers and rapists infiltrating populated and dense places like this. I wasn't thinking about the lecherous men who came up to me asking me if I was lost. I was just thinking about those cursed bright lights. I had to turn around to see those damned lights one more time. They weren't all that bright anymore, they'd lost their appeal. They weren't throwing lights on to anything particular in the shop either, they were just spotlighting old boxes with sub-quality speakers and headphones. The guys running the store weren't exciting DJs like they show in the movies either, they were bored with their feet up on the counter, eating samosas.

I turned back around and stayed completely still. I put myself back in my bubble in the sun even though I was cold. I wished my parents would find me even though I knew I was lost. And I told myself everything was going to be OK even though I was very scared. The whole scene probably lasted ten minutes, but I don't remember them at all. I don't know what happened after I looked away from the music store. I just remember two large hands grabbing me from the back and forcing me to turn around. I looked directly into my dad's face and started to cry. My parents hugged me and made sure I was all right and told me how scared they were that I was lost and that they were so worried and then I got into trouble.

**Rule #7:** Don't ever get left behind like that again! Held close by my parents, we got back onto the train, together this time, and made it back home safe. It was all an educational experience at the end of the day. I learnt that Chandni Chowk holds adventure, diversity, excitement, danger, and most of all, a uniqueness that makes it almost magical. Whoever named that place "Chandni Chowk", literally meaning "Moonlight Square", was obviously as enamoured of its charm and appeal as I was. I also learned another lesson that makes it to the list of rules for you readers:

**Rule #8:** Beware of flashy lights.

*Devina Taimni studies in the 12th grade in London, UK, and visited Delhi a few years ago.*



**Procession of the Emperor Bahadur Shah II in Chandni Chowk in 1843; from the collections of Sir Thomas Theophilus Metcalfe, 4th Baronet**



## Birding

Seventeen members and their families of our biradari decided to the visit to Keoladeo Ghana National Park in Bharatpur and the date was fixed for Saturday, 4 February 2017. A minibus was arranged and Hotel Sun Bird, 200 yards from the entrance to the sanctuary was booked for a one-night stay. The party included Vivek and Vandita Kaul, Col Valmiki and Asha Katju, Harsh and Sadhana Tankha, Ajay and Vinita Dar, Ajay and Manju Gurtu, Niti Mubayi and her grandchildren Amartya, Shireen and Noor, Utsav and Swaroop Dar, and Veenita Sinha Dar.

## AN AVIAN ADVENTURE: Our Birding Trip to Bharatpur

By Shireen Saudamini Mubayi

The wait was finally over. At last, we were there. On a rickshaw. Wheeling through Keoladeo Ghana National Park. Officially birding! My cousin and I were in a turquoise rickshaw named “121: Pheasant-Tailed Jacana”. An impressive wader, the jacana, but we did not spot it sadly. What we did spot were as many as 50 other birds. Now that’s impressive!

Laughing doves, yellow-footed green pigeons, jungle babblers, sunbirds, prinias, collared doves... Chirps, whistles, squeals, caws...And there, perched in the highest fork of a tall, spindly tree was a mass of brown feathers among sporadic bunches of parrot green. The mass shuffled about slowly, jerking its head from side to side. “Dusky Eagle Owl *hai*,” said our guide. I have a keen interest in the owl, as it is the symbol of Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom. I trained my binoculars on it... A giant golden eye stared right back. In a blink, it was gone. Finally, I’d seen an eagle owl up close!

We oohed and aahed, clicked photographs, took notes. Apart from the birds, we also gazed at cheetal deer with majestic antlers, jumpy jackals and wild boars. We gawked at a juvenile Indian Rock Python, marvelling at its beautiful, scaly camouflage patterns.

The second day was absolutely out of this world. A day full of feathers and twitters, ripe with the essence of Bharatpur. This time, my sister and I were seated in “69: Purple Heron”. I was delighted to sit in anything to do with the colour purple. I am quite a purple geek.

A grey hornbill swooped past our rickshaw, cackling. I jumped off and scampered on to the trail to capture a shot of the regal Egyptian vulture. Soon the Asian openbill, purple heron, glossy ibis, pond heron, sarus crane, whistling teal and many more were added to our



ALL PHOTOS: VIVEK KAUL



list. The birds we had been waiting for finally made an appearance. The bar-headed geese, which fly as high as 23,000 feet over the lofty Himalayas when migrating from Central Asia (highest recorded flight), sat preening themselves. Unruffled, as if the long and arduous migration was no big deal! The lesser flamingos, white ones with hints of pink, sat at a safe distance, visible only through binoculars or a telescope. Next to them, I could spot a great white pelican. It’s not a very pretty bird, but it looked calm. It beat its wings, sending out little gusts of air. Its large bill opened up as it sunk its head into the water. It emerged, empty-billed. I hoped it would have a fruitful (or fishful?) next plunge!

Inside, still on rickshaws, we found themselves surrounded by lush flora. And then we spotted the fauna. Laughing doves, Eurasian collared doves, yellow-footed green pigeons... Chirps and tweets and shrieks and whistles and squeals and caws...Suddenly all the rickshaws came to a halt. A cheetal deer was in sight. A beautiful pair of antlers faced us. How gorgeous, and yet how gentle! Everyone clicked photographs. And then, moved on. We saw lakes with enormous amounts of green algae, and like patchwork on it, there were pin-tailed ducks, common teals, white-breasted waterhens. Cormorants flocked together, weighing down the never-ending branches of the trees. Jamun trees. Kadamb trees. Babool trees. Purple swamphens dotted the green moor. Egrets, with their stilt-like legs perched on cows. Rose-ringed parakeets flew across the skyline, adding a blaze of gorgeous green to the pale blue. Painted storks nested in wide, lakeside trees. Darters craned their necks and dived in for an evening snack. Yum!

On the way back, we stopped to gaze at jackals and wild boars. But what really fascinated the children as well as the adults was a juvenile Indian Rock Python. We gawked at it, marvelling at its beautiful, scaly back, with patterns that helped camouflage it. We even saw a few bones scattered along the trail, some belonging to antelopes or deer and some to birds. As we exited the park, I saw a black-headed ibis. I was thrilled to finally spot one. It fed my obsession with Egyptian mythology, in which Thoth, the god of wisdom, has the head of an ibis! I smiled, satisfied. It had been a super trip.



Each and every person definitely had fun. Learnt something. Saw new things. Lots of fun.

### Local Wisdom

The *rickshawalas* at the sanctuary may be unlettered, but over a period of time they have virtually become guides, rattling off names of all the birds that come within their sight. Of course their pronunciation may be a bit jarring to the Anglophile, but their knowledge cannot be faulted. My *rickshawala* wanted to emphasize the colouration of feathers in his broken Hinglish and said, “*Aap dekhenge ki male has more butiful feathers than the pheemale.*” I responded, “*Magar humans mein females zyada beautiful hoti hain.*” His response was “*Nahin, sahib, aapko ghalatfahmi hai. Butiful nahin, buti parlour.*” We all had a hearty laugh at his worldly wisdom.

– Col Valmiki Katju



## BIRDS OF A FEATHER...

**Visit to Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur (4-5 February 2017)**  
**By Veenita Sinha Dar**

The dynamic president of KPA, Mr Vivek Kaul, organized an excursion to the famed Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary, a World Heritage Site near Bharatpur, Rajasthan. Seventeen nature enthusiasts (including three children) boarded the chartered Tempo Traveller from Delhi /Gurgaon for this very exciting trip on a cold Saturday morning in February.

The bird sanctuary is man-made, a natural depression that remained flooded after the building of Ajan Bund in the eighteenth century by a former Maharaja of Bharatpur. It embraces diverse habitats that include a lake, marshland and grassland, and is home to more than 230 species of birds. Every year during winter thousands of waterbirds migrate from overseas and other parts of the country for nesting and wintering. While November to March are the months to see migratory birds in India, February is said to be the ideal month.

After checking into the Sunbird Hotel (conveniently situated just a kilometre from the bird sanctuary) and a quick lunch, at about 3 p.m. the group headed to the bird sanctuary to make the most of the first day as the afternoon sun shone bright. Cycle rickshaws, the most favoured mode of transport, were hired along with a knowledgeable guide to take us to into the sanctuary. To our delight, as soon as we reached the lake we saw hundreds of geese, ducks, cormorants, herons and egrets; not to mention the parakeets, doves and pigeons of various kinds. Reluctantly, we had to head back by 5.30 p.m., the closing time for the sanctuary.

Having seen a trailer of what was to come, we were looking forward to the next day with great anticipation. An early start was planned. This time along with the guide, a telescope was hired too, to make the viewing of far-off birds easier. To the great wonder and joy of all, through the telescope was soon spotted on a far-away tree, a spectacular



An elegant pair of sarus cranes

Veenita Sinha Dar



A lone pelican on the waters

Valmiki Katju

Through the telescope were also spotted a row of flamingos standing far away, each on one leg. In hushed tones, the appearance of rare sarus crane pair was discussed, as we headed to an offshoot of the birding trail to catch a glimpse. We were awestruck to see this graceful pair, more than 5 ft tall with bright red heads. Just then a majestic pelican swam across, giving rise to a discussion regarding the differences between a swan and a pelican. Some of the other birds spotted were moorhens (common and purple), ibises (glossy and black-headed), darters, snake birds, bar-headed geese, a spotted owlet, kingfishers (white-throated and pied), a green pigeon, a veritable compendium of ducks (such as common coots, pochards, northern shovellers, whistling ducks, pintail, common teals and mallards), spoonbills and egrets, rose-ringed parakeets and a laughing dove.

A very satisfied group, by now visibly oozing with knowledge about our plumed friends, and beating each other at the identification of bird species, reluctantly left the National Park to return home. There was much 'hip-hip-hurray' for the KPA President and his wife, Mrs Vandita Kaul, the first lady, if I may say so, for their wonderful arrangements. Kudos was also due for the indefatigable energy of the three children accompanying the group, and that of Mrs Kaul, as was evidenced by their enthusiastic and exuberant *antakshari* all the way to and back on the trip, keeping all entertained.



Purple moorhens or 'Lipstick Birds' of Kashmir

Valmiki Katju



A picture postcard view

Vivek Kaul

### Royal Ravage

A sad sight was the noticeboards with the details of the shikars of Maharajas, British rulers like Lord Linlithgow, Lord Curzon and several bigwigs who swooped down to the sanctuary to take part in the royal massacre. It was painful to read how in a span of 11 years (17 Dec 1927 to 04 Dec 1938) on 18 organized shoots the Maharaja of Alwar, leaving his *shikargah* at Sariska, came with his entourage of royal guests and shot 25,358 birds, full of pride in such a destruction of these Wings of Glory. It is a pity that such shikars continued till 1963.

– Col Valmiki Katju



Vivek Kaul





## HERITAGE WALK: Sitaram Bazar and Around

February 12, 2017

By Vandita Kaul

**Kasra zindagi shad bashad ki dar Shah-e-jahan abad bashad (The man who fortunately finds residence in the city of Shahjahanabad leads a happy life.) – Sir Syed Ahmed Khan**

On a pleasant Sunday afternoon in February, our band of seven, appropriately clad and shod, took the Delhi Metro from various stations—HUDA City Centre, NOIDA, Saket and Patel Chowk—to reach the Chawri Bazar Metro Station at Hauz Qazi Chowk. Chawri Bazar is the hardware market of the walled city of Old Delhi which was founded as Shahjahanabad.

By the time Mr Sohail Hashmi, historian and our guide for the day arrived, the group had already helped itself to some *daulat ki chaat (nimish)*! As we strolled down Sitaram Bazaar Road, we learnt that Sitaram (Zutshi) was a Kashmiri Pandit who lived there and that Prem Narain Road, which branches off from Sitaram Bazaar Road, is named after his brother. Kucha Pati Ram, an offshoot of Sitaram Bazar, houses the Kuremal Mohanlal Kulfiwale shop that serves the best *kulfi* in Old Delhi – and perhaps in all of Delhi. Early into the heritage walk, we feasted on this authentic *kulfi*, ranging from the regular *kesar* and *pista* milk varieties to real fruit ices. There was even *kulfi* inside whole mangoes, but the hands-down winner was *phalsa kulfi* with a sprinkling of masala. It really brought out the child in some of us!



ALL PHOTOS: VIVEK KAUL



Energized, we started looking for Gali Kashmiriyan, which was the main residential area for Kashmiris who started coming into Shahjahanabad from the 17th century. We walked past numerous havelis of Sitaram Bazaar. These havelis have common features like arched gateways, the *aangan* or *daalan* (the courtyard), and the *roshandans* (the ventilators), though they are of different periods. The façades bear testimony to melting pot of cultures that Sitaram Bazaar was, as they show the influence of Mughal, Victorian, Greek and Roman architecture, with some Italian tiles thrown in for good measure. We also discovered the Chaurasi Ghanta Mandir, which is about 200-300 years old. The 84 bells here are said to represent the 84 lakh cycles of birth that one has to go through to attain rebirth as a human being.



We found Gali Kashmiriyan off Sitaram Bazar, with its name displayed on an old plaque. In Gali Kashmiriyan stand the ruins of the Haksar haveli, where Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's *baraat* stayed when he came to marry Kamala Kaul. A local gentleman led us to another *gali* also known by the same name. Sadly, we did not find any Kashmiris actually living in any old haveli. Having completed the walk, we bade goodbye to our erudite and interesting guide, with promises to stay in touch. Finding ourselves rather famished after our afternoon ramble, we flagged down rickshaws and made our way to the famous Karim Hotel on Matia Mahal Road. Though none of us were first-timers in the area, the ambience of the area, with the imposing Jama Masjid and the smell of food wafting around, was exciting. Like all good members of our *biradari*, we were fully satisfied only after we had partaken of our fill of several heritage *goshthi* dishes (*seekh kabab, burra, korma* and *stew*) and wiped off all the gravy with the *khamiri rotis* and *baqarkhanis*.



Our return journey by tempo through Chawri Bazar to the metro station was made more interesting by the traffic jam. We hopped off our tempos, weaved our way through the heady chaos to the station and returned home to our staid lives, but the nostalgia still lingers.

### FELICITATIONS!

**\* To Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul:** Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul has been appointed a judge of the Supreme Court of India. Justice Kaul joined the Bar in 1982 and practised in Delhi High Court before being elevated to the Bench in 2001. He became Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court in June 2013 before being transferred to Madras High Court in July 2014. The *Deccan Chronicle* acclaimed him as 'the judge with a golden heart and a brilliant head'.

**\* To Mr Dipak Haksar, Chief Executive, ITC Hotels:** ITC Hotels were among the top three in the Earth Changers category of the National Geographic World Legacy Awards announced on 8 March, which honour the companies, organizations and destinations that are leading the way in sustainable tourism best practices.

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## AN AFTERNOON IN DECEMBER

A recap in pictures of the KPA Winter Lunch on 18 December 2016.



# Jamavar

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