

BIRADARI

Kashmiri Pandit Association DELHI



April
2016

A SIX MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

Email: info@kpadelhi.org

Inside Preview

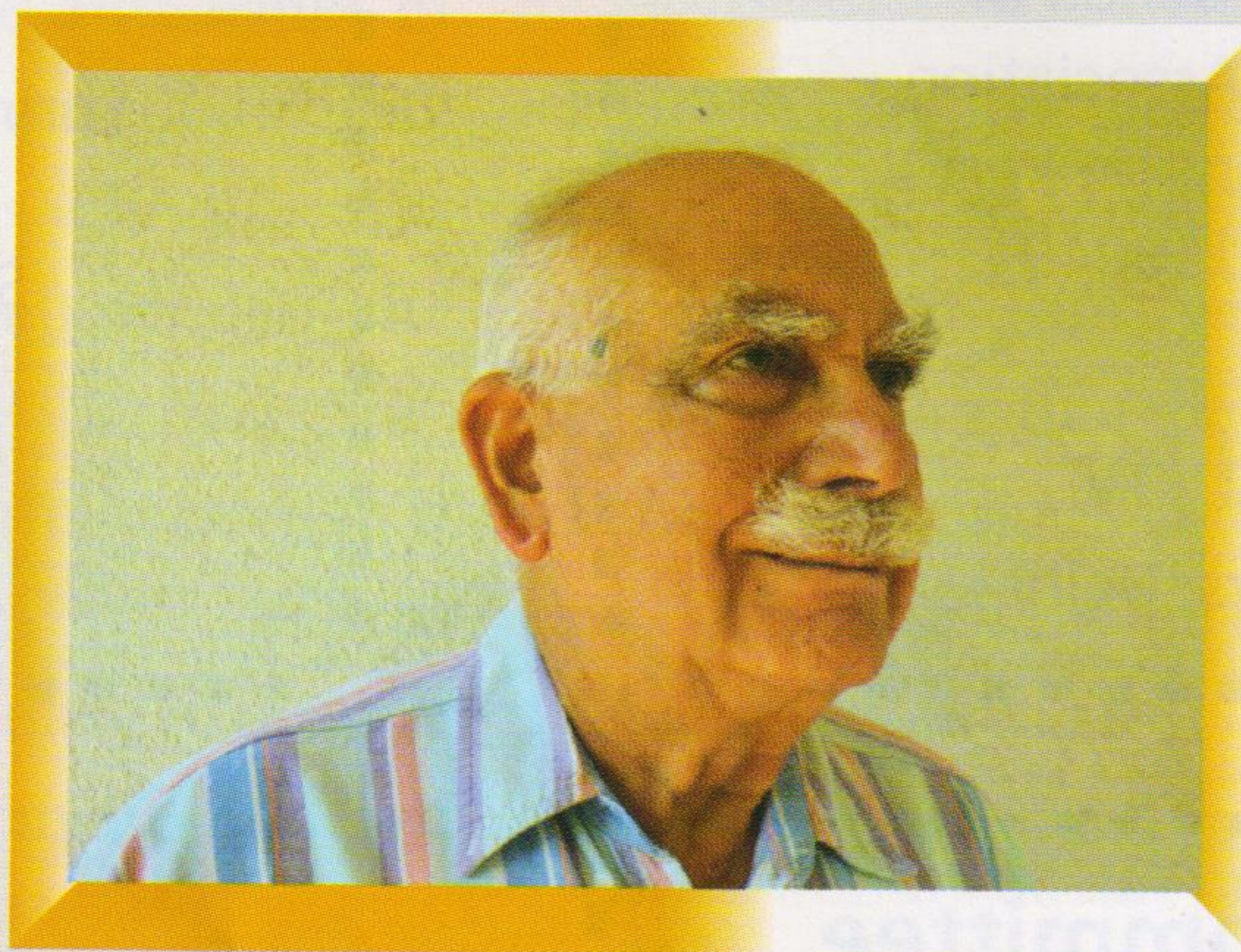
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From the

Editor-in-Chief's Desk

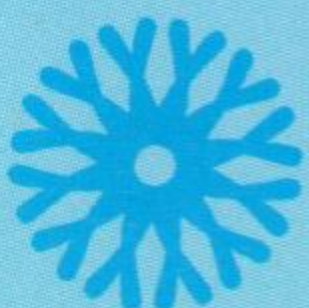


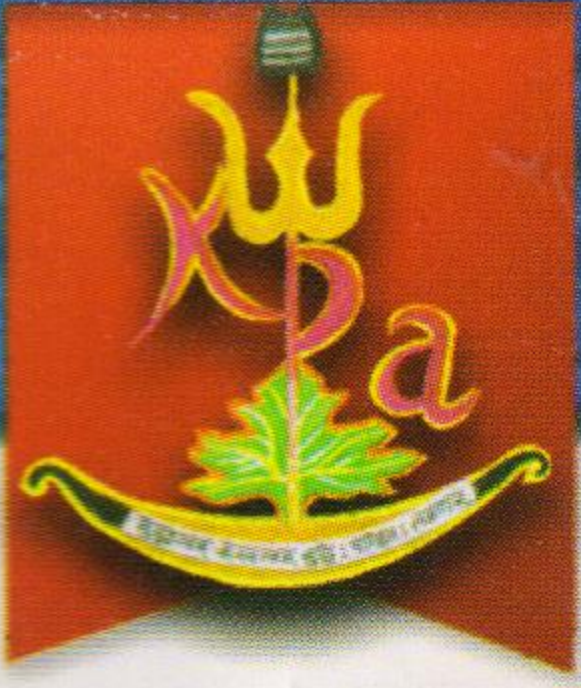
Dar, Mr Arun Kaul, Mr Sanjay Kaul and Ms Vatsala (Kaul) Banerjee. The team did excellent work in getting new members on board and securing funds for the Association by way of advertisements and prizes both in kind and by way of meal coupons in luxury hotels.

A change of guard is always welcome and the next generation has to don the mantle to bring in fresh ideas and give new direction for the way forward. The Association is fortunate that a smooth transition took place. In the Annual General Meeting held in September 2015, Mr Vivek Kaul was unanimously elected the next President.

It was prudent to keep the elders involved and guide the new team. Others who are associated with the Executive Committee are Mr Ajay

Efforts bore fruit and now the Association has a website that promises to be a linking medium as well as very informative. It was very generous of the new team to have decided to honour the past presidents and our very able Secretary Pandit Vishnu Reu. We were indeed fortunate that after the retirement of Mr Rajiv Takru, whose official residence was used for the winter function, we were able to avail of the offer of Mr Neeraj Kishan Kaul for opening to us his official residence at 22 Mother Teresa Crescent for the winter function on 20 December 2015. It was a perfect setting with





the well-manicured lawn, a passage for laying the food tables, - a room for the bar (this was the first time in the history of the Association that a bar for liquor was set up) and adequate washroom facilities.

The past Presidents, Sarvashri SN Zutshi, JP Taimni, KN Baqaya, Valmiki Katju and Vishnu Reu, were honoured for their exemplary services with shawls, silver plaques and special postage stamps with their photographs.

After many trials and tastings with several cooks, Pt. Suraj Bhan was selected to prepare the luncheon spread. There were *kabargas*, *koftas*, *dum aloo*, *methi chaman*, *khatte baingan*, *gobhi matar*, dal, rice and *puris*. For dessert there were *phirni* and *gulab jamun*. Preceding this, samosas and *hara bhara* kebab were served. Everybody enjoyed the food. Attendance was good, too, with around 200 members/families.

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KPA, DELHI, IS ONLINE!

We are delighted to inform you that the KPA website is up and running now. It's still at an initial stage and we will be adding more features as we go. Please send your suggestions to info@kpadelhi.org

Visit:
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The Forgotten Community

By K.N. Pandita

W Why the Indian State declined to give the displaced Pandits their proper nomenclature of Internally Displaced Person remains unexplained. India is a signatory to the Human Rights Charter. Very seldom, she violates the resolve of an international body.

After their exodus from Kashmir in 1990, State authorities in general and Revenue authorities in particular, tried a number of epithets to de-identify the Pandits. The commonly used soubriquet was Urdu “mufroor”, literally meaning absconder. The State administration finally settled for “migrant” and the then Union Government accepted it without blinking. I think the Revenue records compiled after 1990 in the State continue to use that term. Do not overlook the subtle element of hatred in the term “mufroor”.

At the UN Human Rights Commission, we campaigned for the precise nomenclature of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). After overcoming many odds, mostly from the home chapter, we succeeded in the effort. In UN Human Rights documents, especially the Working Group on Minorities, we invariably carry the term IDPs.

However, this had no impact on either the Union or the State government.

More recently new and factual dimensions of the Pandit issue have surfaced, first with Narendra

Modi forming the NDA government 14 months ago and, later on, the PDP-BJP coalition government in the State. During its parliamentary election campaign, the issue of return and rehabilitation of the Pandit IDPs was BJP's oft-repeated memo. For first four months of his government, PM Modi hardly missed alluding to the Pandit issue in his public speeches. Then there happened the slow-down; now it is outdated, hence forgettable.

Four months ago, after a meeting between the J&K Chief Minister Mufti Sayeed and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, both went to the press to declare that the return and rehabilitation of Pandits, very much in their Agreement of Alliance, was agreed to be along the formula of concentrated rehabilitation.

With 24 hours of this public announcement, all hell broke loose in Kashmir. Separatists supported by all regional parties gave a call for total strike to protest against the return and concentrated rehabilitation of the Pandits in the Valley. The Assembly then in session witnessed pandemonium in which members of all parties, treasury as well as the opposition, delivered threats, coercing the Government to distance itself from the commitment. The Chief Minister began retracing his steps and mincing words. The 25-member strong BJP MLAs group just sealed their lips; they did not even have the courage to walk out of the assembly hall as a show of protest. I do not know what brief they had from



their party echelons.

Thereafter, Modi forgot the Pandits, Mufti forgot the Pandits, separatists won the day and the message went around the world that Kashmir Valley Muslims would not allow Pandit IDPs to be a nuisance in their exclusive rights over the fiefdom of Kashmir.

This is a moment of introspection for the Pandits. It puts a big question mark on their 25-year-old slogan of “homeland” or “Kashyap Land”, or “cluster rehabilitation” or “twin-city” concept, among other slogans. It also extends a serious challenge to the wishful refrain of the Pandits that they will return to Kashmir. I myself am one of such daydreamers.

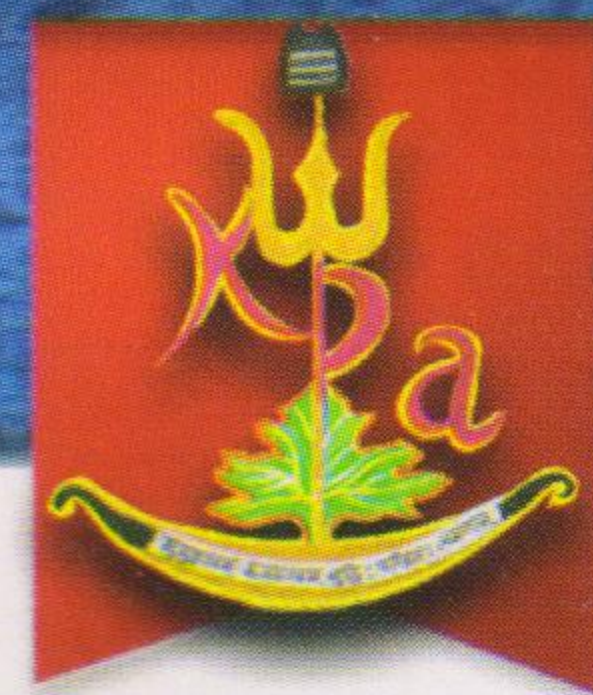
In these circumstances, I find that the issue of return and rehabilitation of the Pandit IDPs is the shrewd antic of those who want to draw political mileage out of it. To me, return and rehabilitation is neither the main nor the only issue of Pandit IDPs. It is political contrivance of political performers with a stake. They want to put the core issues of the IDPs under carpet and take up only the peripheral issue of return and rehabilitation, as it is a handy one. In addition, they know that the Pandit IDPs will not be able to build consensus on return and rehabilitation. Therefore, it suits their political ambitions to keep the Pandits busy with their in-house struggle on this issue. I, for myself, may henceforth stop thinking or asking about return and rehabilitation of the community. I do so after testing two major mainstream political parties of the country and various regional governments of J&K State. Let us, therefore, resolve this issue without external intervention and give no chance to the policy

planners to catch us on the wrong foot.

The Pandits want the rulers of the land to address two of their main issues, forgetting return and rehabilitation. The first issue is of determining the status of the community in the social structure of the State and the country. The issue, which the Governments in Srinagar and Delhi have to decide, is whether the Pandits are a religious minority or not.

The State Constitution does not recognize any community as minority on any count, religion, language, culture or ethnicity. Nevertheless, the State Constitution does not debar the Muslims majority of the State to be determined as part of the national minority. This dichotomy needs to be removed once for all. The partition of India was based on the two-nation theory. Insertion of Article 370 and special status for J&K is a corollary of two-nation theory. The ongoing armed insurgency in Kashmir is the fallout of two-nation theory. If the justification of Article 370 and Special Status for Kashmir underscores the need of protecting the interests of J&K's Muslim majority vis -a-vis Hindu-dominated India, the same logic has to be applied to the status of the Pandits. This is the core issue and not return and rehabilitation. Even the UN Human Rights Working Group has recognized the Pandits of Kashmir as a “reverse minority”.

The second core issue is the nomenclature of the community in exile. Application of “migrant” as the determining term for the extirpated community bruises and mutilates its identity and sends immensely misleading message across the board. We want our proper nomenclature of Internally



Displaced Persons, which, according to international law, entitles us to same privileges as the international refugees including seeking asylum in other countries like the Syrian and Iraqi refugees in European countries.

The J&K Chief Minister has been repeatedly saying

that Kashmir is a dispute between India and Pakistan. He entreats the Indian government to talk to Pakistan. Well, as Kashmir is a disputed matter, as the CM pronounces, we the Pandit IDPs are the people of a disputed territory and, therefore, by simple logic we are IDPs, not migrants, and have the right to seek asylum.

PAN

Pan (literally meaning thread) is a festival originally associated with the spinning of newly produced cotton and worshipping the twin agricultural goddesses, obviously local – Vibha and Garbha – to whom *roths* or sweet bread cakes were offered. For making *roth* the bread is sweetened and rolled in thick cakes and deep fried. It is eaten with *bichhua* (sweet mango *achaar*, peculiar to Pandits who migrated earlier). Though Kashmir is not said to have a climate suitable for growing cotton, there is a strong tradition suggesting that it actually did grow there.

The festival falls on the Ganesh Chaturthi (Vinayaka Tsoram) day and the worship of Lakshmi on this occasion seems to have been inducted later. Not that the worship dedicated to the local goddesses was appropriated wilfully by followers of

the cult of Lakshmi, but there appears to have been a mix-up at some point of time. The twin goddesses themselves seem to have merged into one another assuming the identity of the folk deity Beeb Garabh Maj, whose very name – obviously a distortion – points to such a possibility. Beeb Garabh Maj is represented by a *lota* or a water pot which is placed in the centre of the place where the *puja* is to be performed, a cotton thread being tied to its neck and handful of *dramun* or runner grass kept inside it, pointing again to its agricultural origin. A story is told at the Pan Puja, which is quite similar to the Satyanarayana Katha, showing some sort of confusion between two different *pujas*. Preparation of the *roths* and their distribution for ushering in prosperity and auspiciousness has, however, become an important part of Kashmiri Pandit religious life.



The Kashmiri Lawrence of Central Asia

by Col Valmiki Katju

Mirza Mohan Lal Kashmiri (Zutshi)

1812 – 1877

For me it was both intriguing and fascinating to do research on a Kashmiri Pandit who combined intelligence, diplomacy and intrigue in his chequered career to further his own ambitions and that of his masters. Sifting through various documentary information to enable me to emerge with an unbiased, authentic and interesting narrative, I was impressed by such a colourful individual. A mix of astuteness, ingenuity and a sense of adventure, he was a handsome personality, a licentious scoundrel in matters of women and a manipulator who could get his way in difficult and trying situations by his wit and presence of mind. He was outrageous indeed, but in the end became a pitiful and shunned human being who died lamenting for a little consideration from at least his own community, the Kashmiri Pandits.

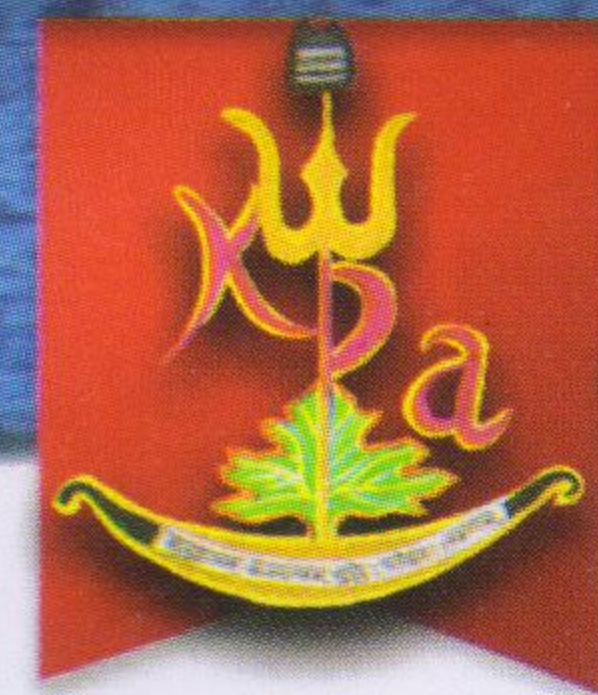
To the Afghans he was known as Mirza Quli Kashmiri and to the Persians he was known as Agha Hassan Jan Kashmiri. That was how Pandit Mohan Lal Zutshi from Bazaar Sita Ram, Delhi, accompanied Sir Alexander Burnes in his travels from India to the Caspian. His ancestor, Pandit Lachchi Ram Zutshi migrated from Kashmir to live at Delhi during the reign of Emperor Shah Jahan (1627-1658). His great-grandfather, Pandit Mani



Mirza Mohan Lal Kashmiri (Zutshi)

Ram, alias Pandit Shiv Nath held a high rank at the Mughal Court during the reign of Shah Alam (1759-1806). His only brother, Kedar Nath, who was a Deputy Collector in Ambala, died in 1855 and after that there was no trace of his family. Mohan Lal Zutshi (1812-1877) knew many languages, such as French, English, Farsi, Urdu, Pashto and Kashmiri, and was brought up in a cosmopolitan atmosphere.

The exact date when Mohan Lal's ancestors migrated to Delhi is not known, but it is certain that the family's fortune was at its height during the time of his great-grandfather Pandit Mani Ram. He was

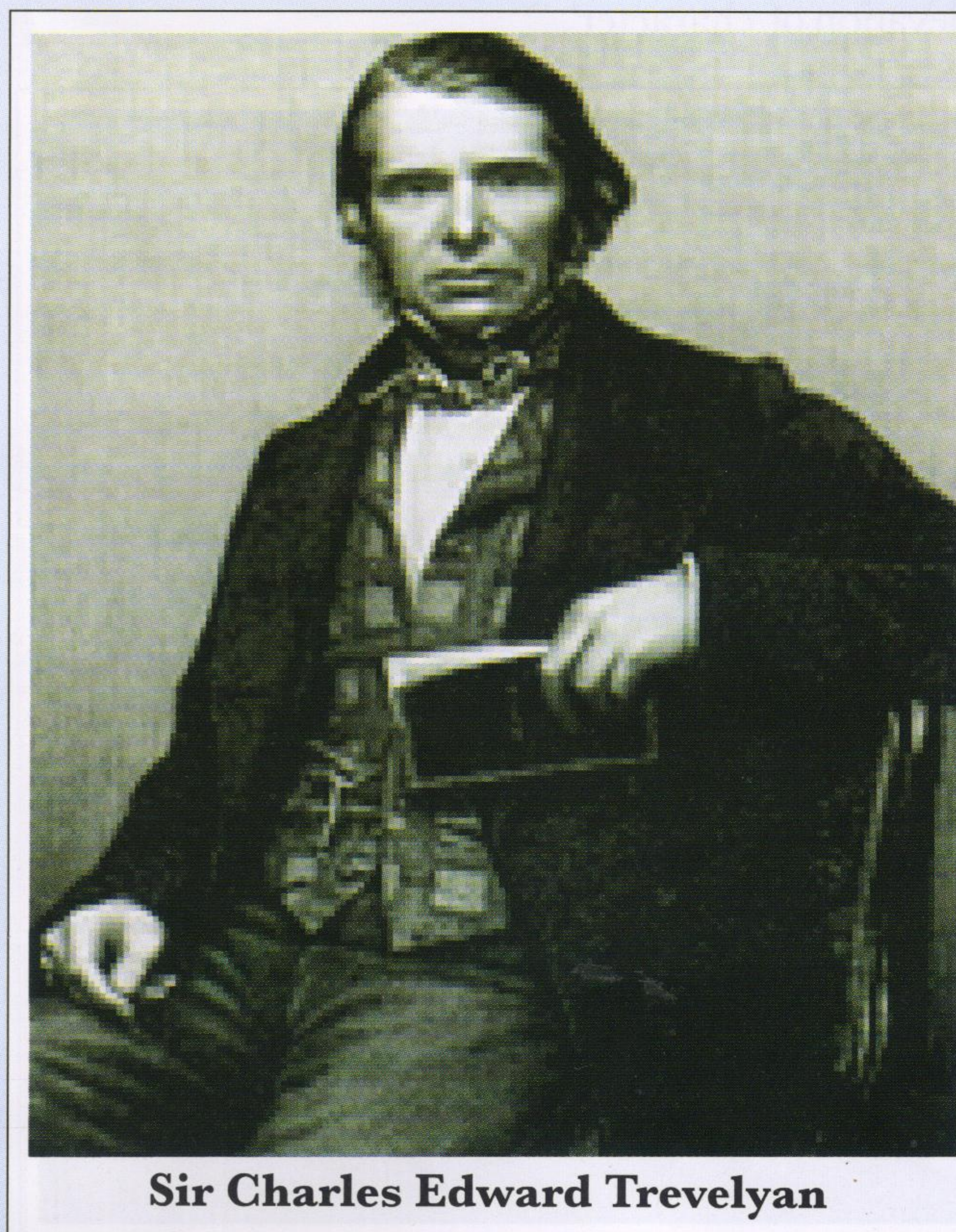


Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone

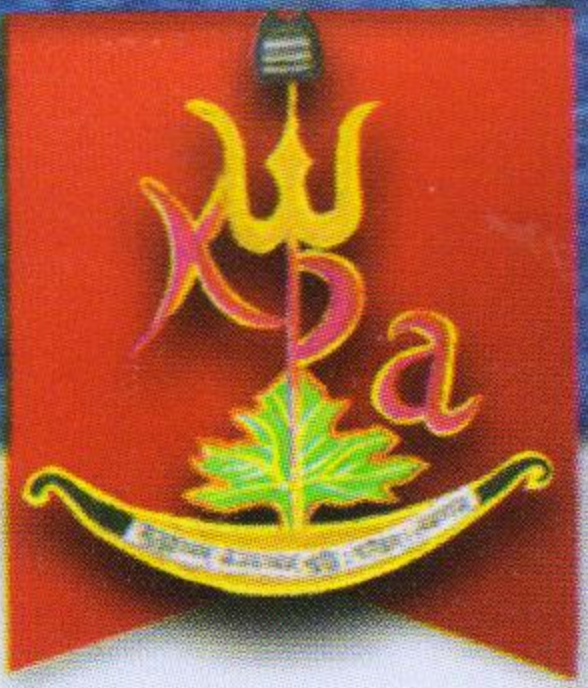
given a *jagir* worth rupees 20 lakhs by Emperor Shah Alam II. It was suddenly confiscated by the East India Company during the tenure of Lord Hastings, an act which drove his grandson Pandit Brahma Nath Zutshi into heavy debt. Pandit Brahma Nath Zutshi was affectionately called Budh Singh as he was born on Wednesday. It is said that some enmity existed between Rai Budh Singh and the Nawab of Ferozepur. The Nawab seized some of his villages. The creditors sued Budh Singh and all the family lands were lost. Mohan Lal, recalling his family fortunes mentions with a heavy heart having “fallen into poverty with no place to reside in, and no money to live upon”. With this predicament Budh Singh sought temporary service under Mountstuart Elphinstone. He accompanied him in the capacity of Persian Secretary to Peshawar. He retired from this position in the close of 1809, and his financial condition soon relapsed.

Pandit Mohan Lal was taught Urdu and Persian by local Muslim Maulvis in Delhi. Besides studying the *Boostan* and the *Gulistan* of Saadi Shirazi, he learnt poetic compositions of Rumi and Omar Khayyam. The Maulvis also taught him elementary Arabic and some verses of the Holy Quran. He joined the English class in 1829 at the Persian College at Delhi that was founded in 1792 during Mughal rule. The English class later developed into the Delhi English College (presently Delhi University). He studied there for three years, and was possibly the first Kashmiri Pandit to have studied English, standing first in his class.

Mohan Lal, after graduating from Delhi College in English (among the first six students taking this course), joined the British Secret Service in 1831 at



Sir Charles Edward Trevelyan



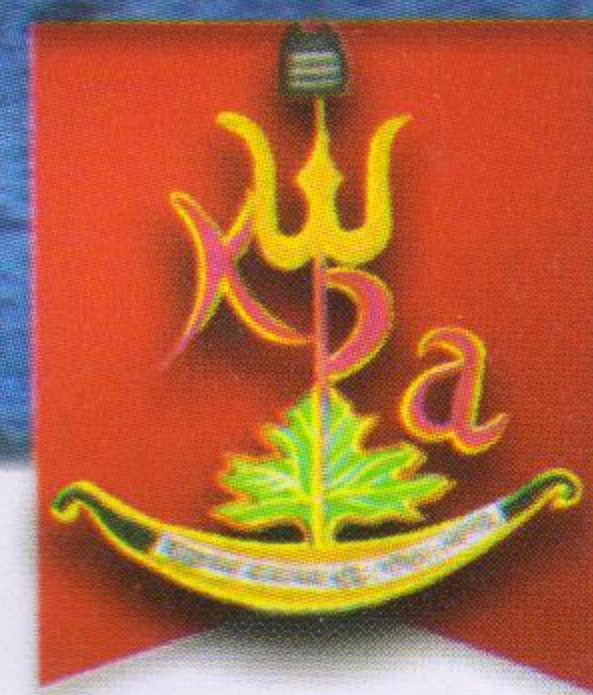
the age of nineteen. Clever, ambitious and fluent in English and many oriental languages, he was found to be an ideal aide in British exploits in Afghanistan and Persia. Henny Sender in her book "The Kashmiri Pandit" quotes Sir Charles Edward Trevelyan, a British Civil Servant with the East India Company in a report on "The Organisation of the Permanent Civil Service: "He was on the lookout for young Indians who could be recruited to help in furthering their colonial interests. He came in contact with Mohan Lal in Delhi and wrote: 'In the person of Mohan Lal we prove our qualification for the great mission of regenerating India....What has gained for him the acknowledgement of personal superiority by the princes of Asia and enabled him to enjoy on terms of equality the society of English gentleman? Simply, knowledge of English. This is the cause of elevation of character'."



Sir Alexander Burnes in Afghan Dress

Sir Alexander Burnes was appointed as chief of espionage to gather information in the countries lying between India and the Caspian by the British East India Company in 1831. His deputation was a part of 'The Great Design' of the British to penetrate into Afghanistan, Central Asian Sultanates and Tibet with the dual purpose of "introducing its costly products of looms as well as the preaching of the Gospel of Christ among the dense population". The final aim was to subjugate these Muslim countries under the British Raj. Trevelyan suggested the name of Mohan Lal to Alexander Burnes. Mohan Lal, it seems, joined wholeheartedly in this game where stakes were high – even life and death. He had to mingle with local royalty, gain their confidence and provide real-time information to his British masters.

Mohan Lal assumed the name of Mirza Quli Kashmiri as the Persian interpreter to Sir Alexander Burnes on a salary of Rs 1,000 per annum. Both he and Burnes explored Central Asia in 1832-34 for procuring political and military intelligence. He played a major role in securing the release of British prisoners held hostage in Bamiyan and tried to bring peace between the British and the Afghans. In the British Secret Service dealing with Afghanistan it was reputed that the brilliant assistant and intelligence chief of Alexander Burnes understood Afghanistan better than anyone else and as long they followed his advice, all would be well. But Mohan Lal, after assuming the name of Mirza Quli Khan, would seek a wife from an influential family so that the matrimonial alliance would protect him from orthodox Muslims. With his new adopted creed, he led a life of pleasure with several wives



who were from different clans. He also took a maiden from the royal family of Iran.

The first task of Pandit Mohan Lal was to recruit his agents to bring about defections among the Afghan resistance movement. He accomplished this difficult task with tact and intelligence. Posing himself as belonging to a noble Kashmiri Muslim family, he married a girl from the royal house. Now he was free from all dangers by entering into intrigues with the people among whom he was going to spy with the assumed name of Mirza Quli Kashmiri. After his Central Asian tour, Pandit Mohan Lal Kashmiri alias Mirza Quli Kashmiri was promoted as the Commercial Agent for the British on the Indus and Political Assistant to Sir Alexander Burnes in Kabul. According to HR Gupta's book, *The Life and works of Mirza Mohan Lal Kashmiri*, on his short visit to Delhi he was denied residence in Bazar Sita Ram. While visiting the Governor General in Calcutta, he applied for free grant of land to build a house in Jani Khan ka Katra near Kali Masjid. On arriving in Delhi in February 1835, he found that the land was not entirely free from encumbrances. Consequently, he petitioned for another place at Ismail Khan ka Katra in Churiwala or Chori-wala-Bazar (present-day Chawri Bazar).

During the Afghan sojourn, Burnes, Mohan Lal and other Britishers became very unpopular with the local chiefs for their licentious behaviour and affairs with Afghan women. It was a popular saying, as mentioned in William Dalrymple's book *Return of a King* about relations of the British with Afghan women:

A Kabul wife under burkha cover

Was never known without a lover

On 2 November 1841, the residence of Sir Alexander Burnes in Kabul was stormed by a mob and both he and his brother Charles were hacked to death. Pandit Mohan Lal jumped out of a window and escaped but was apprehended soon thereafter. He saved his life by reciting the Kalima as Mirza Quli Kashmiri. Surviving the massacres he continued to keep Calcutta informed of events in the Afghan capital from the house of a merchant where he had taken refuge. His reports contained many strong and cogent criticisms of the behaviour of British officers in Kabul.

In the struggle between the Sadozai and Barakzai clans, the British were on the side of the former. When the powerful Barakzai Akbar Khan took



Amir Akbar Khan, The Barakzai Chief



control, Mohan Lal was in for rough treatment. Akbar Khan had gathered intelligence that Mohan Lal was in touch with Fattah Jung, the Sadozai enemy, and was involved in procuring arms for him. Mohan Lal was arrested, thrown into solitary confinement, beaten and tortured. He smuggled out a message saying "I have been unmercifully beaten with sticks on my soles and buttocks. I am held down under a heavy stone, red pepper is burnt before my eyes and nose. Akbar Khan wants Rs 30,000 from me and I do not have any money". An acquaintance in Delhi, Shahamat Ali, arranged a loan from some Hindu bankers from Kabul. However, Mohan Lal was released only when he converted to Islam.

During the first Anglo-Afghan War, he was instrumental in setting up and expanding the British intelligence network in Afghanistan. He found out and handed over to the British secret letters written by the rulers of Kandahar to Merab Khan, the ruler of Baluchistan, exhorting him not to allow passage to the invading British army. He managed to obtain the services of very important functionaries for spying, like Mohammad Tahir, Haji Khan Kakari, Abdul Majeed Khan, Akhundzada Ghulam and Mullah Nasooh in Kandahar.

Mohan Lal was a great traveler, brilliant diplomat, reputed author, the first Kashmiri to learn English and probably the first Indian to educate his daughter in England. Later on, he visited Egypt, England, Scotland, Ireland, Belgium and Germany. King Frederick William IX of Prussia entertained him at a dinner in 1845. Through all his wanderings he won the approbation of all his companions for 'displaying everywhere a rare union of zeal, tact and fidelity. Wherever he went, a warm welcome

awaited him by high and low, and rich and poor. Dr Gerard, one of his companions, wrote about him from Kabul: "Shah Kamran of Herat was delighted with his accomplished Persian and unobtrusive address. At Kandahar he was much respected by Sirdar Raheem Dil Khan, who praised his acquisitions, and regretted that his sons could not partake of them. Here he is a favourite with the rulers. In truth, I know not of an exception in our long journey, to the uniform civility he has commanded."

Based on his services to the Raj, Mohan Lal was promoted as a commercial agent and honoured by Queen Victoria. In 1845, the Queen invited Mirza Quli Kashmiri to a royal ball in London. He then declared for the first time, that his birth name was Pandit Mohan Lal Kashmiri. This declaration makes this Kashmiri a fascinating personality. The Queen awarded him with the Order of the British Empire. The ruler of Persia made him a Knight of the Persian Lion. The King of Afghanistan granted him the Order of the Durrani Empire. Maharaja Ranjit Singh presented him with Rs 500 and a robe of honour. The Mughal Emperor Mohammad Akbar Shah conferred upon him a Khilat with some jewels on a turban which His Majesty tied with his own hands.

It is interesting to note the revolutionary zeal of Mohan Lal, firstly by accepting a position in government service – this entailed travel to foreign lands, which violated the caste rules of the pandit community. Secondly, his radicalism was in a way inspired by his critical financial condition at the time when the family was reduced from an extravagant



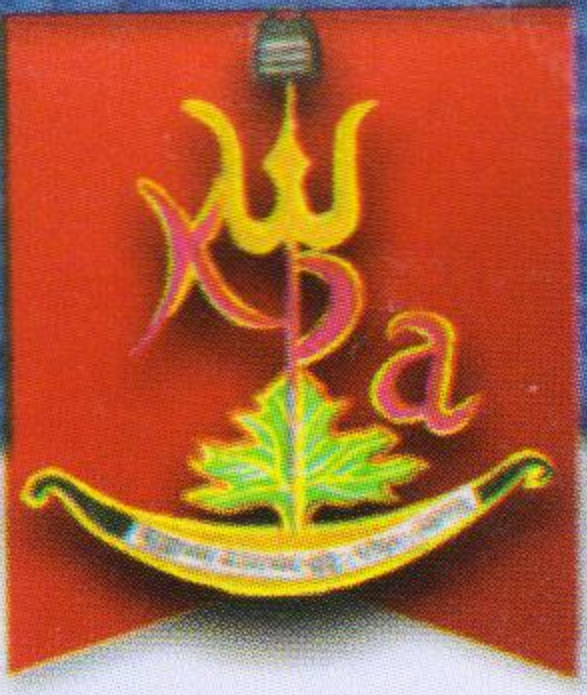
lifestyle to poverty. He could have found an alternative means of livelihood that did not violate caste rules. But his unconventionality was a result of an English education, an adventurous excitement and brazen recklessness to break rules. This exposure to western influence must have curbed all fears regarding the possible consequences of his act of defiance. He was received by Trevelyan at Calcutta who honoured him by introducing him to Lady Bentinck and Lord Metcalfe. But in the eyes of Kashmiri Pandits he became a pariah who had polluted himself by wandering through Muslim lands and consorting with Muslim females without any consideration for his Hindu wives. According to Kusum Pant, Mohan Lal wrote to the government of India expressing his anguish: "Since my return to India I have been very coolly treated by my countrymen, who have discarded me from their society as I have been travelling in Mohammedan countries, so I am left without friends and without place to reside in my native city of Delhi."

Mohan Lal also made the cardinal mistake of sharing his thoughts with the British in trying to impress them. As quoted by Henny Sender, Mohan Lal In his journal said: "I have no patience with the irrational and superstitious trappings of religion and distaste for Hindu proclivity to worship pictures of deities and monkeys. I am surprised at the foolish prejudices of the Hindus". He ate freely with Muslims, slept in mosques and felt annoyed at the communal intolerance between people. But such indiscretions led to his alienation from his community; he tried to get his British masters to intercede in this.

It has to be accepted that his assignment involved a close interaction with the Afghans and Persians. To protect himself from annihilation, he not only changed names but also fraternized with the royalty by taking several Muslim wives. On two recorded occasions he saved himself from certain death, once posing as a Muslim and reciting the Kalima. The second instance was during 1857 when Muslim rebels thought he had converted to Christianity and his house was the first to be plundered. He would have been executed but for the prompt intervention of some influential Muslims who gave testimony that he was not a Christian.

After his tours Mohan Lal finally retired in 1843 on a handsome pension from the Raj. He wrote some books on his travels with Burnes. He led a lavish lifestyle. During his interaction with Shia Muslims of Iran, he was highly impressed with Persian history and culture. He embraced Islam at the hands of a Mujtahid, who gave him a new name, Agha Hassan Jan Kashmiri. As he undertook long journeys to Arabian countries in connection with his job much against the wishes of the highly orthodox Pandit community, he was excommunicated from the Shiva cult in 1834.

After he retired he felt bitterness at having been used by the British. He made a telling observation about British imperialism: "You all tell yourselves all sorts of fairy stories – you are here to sell us your wonderful British goods, you want to set us free, you want us to grow up, you want to educate us and make us worship three gods instead of forty thousand.... But when you are old and tired, you will start to realize that you were here and you took possession of what was not yours for one reason. To



surrender it up. That is the only reason”.

During the insurrection in 1857 he manipulated and obtained his seventeenth wife, Haidari Begum from the highly aristocratic and cultured family of Nawab Mirza Sher Mohammad Khan of Delhi. She was a Shia and a scholar. She maintained a diary describing the atrocities committed by the British on the last Mughal emperor and his family.

Agha Hassan Jan Kashmiri's later years were spent in obscurity and financial troubles. He lived his last years in seclusion cut off from his relatives and friends. But in spite of his high status and fame he became a highly frustrated and isolated person because of a total boycott by his own community members. Even his close Pandit blood relations disowned him. He felt extremely depressed and dejected.

Agha Hasan Jan Kashmiri died in 1877 at the age of sixty-five, and was buried in Delhi in his garden called Lal Bagh (named after him), near Azadpur on the Delhi-Panipat Road. There is no tomb, but only a platform in a dilapidated condition, said to contain the bodies of Agha Hassan Jan Kashmiri and Haidari Begum. He also built an Imambara for the Shias of Ludhiana known as Agha Hasan Jan's Imambara. At the time of his death he left behind five widows, four married daughters and three sons. He kept a diary of his life from 1831 to his death in 1877. This diary has disappeared.

Dr. Hari Ram Gupta says that a grandson of Pandit Mohan Lal is Agha Hyder Hasan of Hyderabad.

He had remained neutral during the revolt in 1857. Upon his death the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana recommended that his widows, sons and even his married daughters be given government pensions.

From his first Kashmiri Pandit wife, who belonged to the Kouls of Gwalior, he had two sons Pandit Mohan Lal and Pandit Kedar Nath. Late Dina Nath Zutshi, artist from AIR and grandfather of actor Raj Zutshi (married to actor Aamir Khan's sister but later divorced) is also a descendant from the Zutshi clan of Bazaar Sita Ram.

Mohan Lal was a typical Kashmiri Pandit. HR Gupta, in his book writes “He was an adept in the art of pleasing, capable of both thought and action. In the time of political crisis he alone could display his great talents to the full. He was therefore at his best when he was required to persuade people, not ordinary persons, but leaders of men. He was endowed with a genius for traitor-making, which helped the British in securing Afghanistan for Shuja-ul-Mulk. In a word he was a born diplomat and the real field of his work was politics. Only when Mohan Lal became a figure of historical interest rather than immediate significance did the community begin to resurrect him. But in doing so, it suppressed the fact of his conversion. Thus what occurred was more in the nature of reconstruction than resurrection. What was done showed that there were definite limits to the tolerance of Kashmiri Pandits.



Past Presidents of Kashmiri Pandit Association Executive Committee with their wives

KASHMIRI PANDIT ASSOCIATION DELHI (REGD)
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: 2015-2017



Row-1 (L-R) Sitting

**Mr Ajay Dar (Asst. Secretary), Gp Capt. Ajit Gurtu (Treasurer), Mr Surindar Zutshi (Sr. Advisor),
Mr Jagdish Taimni (Sr. Advisor), Col Valmiki Katju (Vice President),
Mr Kailash Baqaya (Sr. Advisor), Dr V. N. Rau (Secretary), Mr Vivek Kaul (President)**

Row-2 (L-R) Standing

**Mrs Vineeta Dar, Mrs Vatsala Kaul Banerjee (Editor), Mrs Rita Gurtu,
Mrs Leela Zutshi, Mrs Asha Taimni, Mrs Asha Katju, Mrs Gita Baqaya, Mrs Vandita Kaul**



Pandit Anand Narain Tankha, O.B.I.

By BK (Baboo) Tankha and Uttam Tankha

Pandit Anand Narain Tankha's ancestor Pt. Shankar Das Chowdhary was a Mansabdar during the rule of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707) in Kashmir and hailed from Chowdhary Park in Rainawari, a district of Srinagar in Kashmir. He earned a handsome fortune and built a number of houses in Rainawari. His son Pt. Mahesh Das Chowdhary became a great builder when Saif Khan (1668-1671) was the governor of Kashmir. A branch of the Chowdhary clan left Kashmir during the rule of



Pandit Anand Narain Tankha, O.B.I.

Aurangzeb around 1670. They settled down first at Bareilly, which was the capital of Rohilkhand at that time, and lived there for four generations.

Pt. Anand Narain Tankha's great grandfather, Pt. Zind Ram Chowdhary came to Lucknow from Bareilly to join the court of Nawab Asaf-Ud-Daula when he shifted his court to Lucknow after annexing Rohilkhand. Pt. Zind Ram got the temple known as Bada Shivala in Rani Katra constructed. The temple still exists and is visited by a number of devotees every day. He established himself as an important builder in Nawab's reign, securing an eminent position in the Nawab's court and was in charge of distributing salaries (*tankha*) to the court employees. His descendents, subsequently adopted Tankha as their surname.

Father of Pt. Anand Narain Tankha, Pt. Kedar Narain shifted to Dehradun somewhere around 1841. Anand Narain, after completing his legal degree, started as pleader in the Sessions Court at Dehradun and by sheer dint of hard work, he soon acquired a large practice. It was widely acclaimed that he was the uncrowned king of the Dehradun Bar.

Pandit Anand Narain soon assumed the role of a *buzurg* in the Kashmiri community of Dehradun.. The *buzurg* at that time had to be financially well off, had to have a huge house, a number of Kashmiri Pandit cooks and enough space for his daily durbars. Panditji insisted that any Kashmiri lawyer coming from outstation was to stay in the Tankha household and those who did not follow this tradition were suitably rebuked. It was customary for all Kashmiri and other lawyers known to him while visiting



Dehradun for their cases to come and pay their respects to Panditji. If needed, they would also be provided with accommodation and board facilities. Other members of the *biradari* were also welcome. He would mingle with his guests in the evenings and such gatherings were both entertaining and intellectually stimulating.

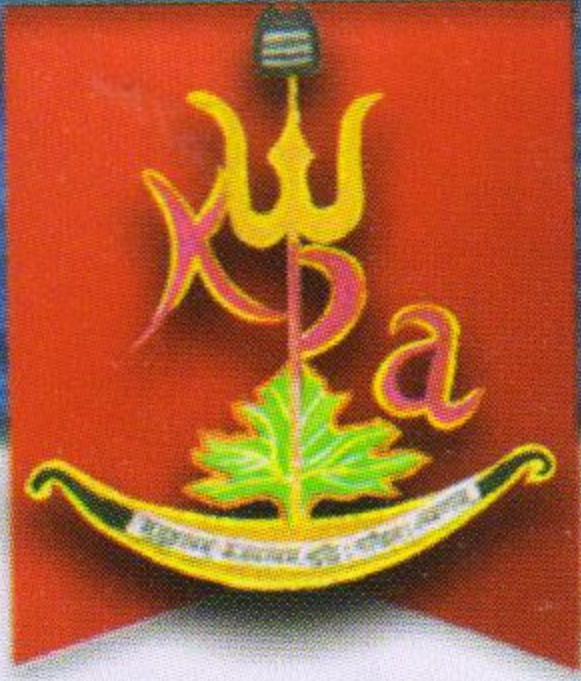
He was instrumental in establishing the Mahant of Dun Dera and became his main advisor from thereon. He was the first non-English chairman of the Municipal Corporation of Dehradun. Pt. Anand Narain was greatly respected in the region of the Doon Valley, extending from Meerut to Mussoorie, and had the reputation of being a philanthropist who did yeoman service to the needy incognito. Apart from anything, he was first and foremost, a great noble soul who was ready to unconditionally help the needy as a duty to mankind.

During Swami Vivekanand's wanderings in the foothills of the Himalayas, one of his Gurubhais got gravely ill and he had to go to Dehradun to show him to the civil surgeon. He and his Gurubhais were lost when they reached the railway station in the

morning. No one came to help them. But this opportunity was given by providence to Pt. Anand Narain when he came to the *subzi mandi* near the railway station to buy his vegetables as his daily custom. Seeing the Swami in distress, he immediately provided shelter and all arrangements for taking care of the sick Swami.

It is said that the vegetable and fruit markets did not open to the public until Panditji came along in his horse-driven carriage and made his purchases. The area starting from Ghanta Ghar towards the Bindal Bridge was named Anand Chowk after him.

He contributed significantly towards education development. Those were the days when Gurukul Kangri University was the only and main centre for Ayurvedic knowledge. He was instrumental in developing its important subset, Rishikul, and was its active trustee. His contribution towards social development in the region was well known and hailed, and in recognition of his services he was made a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire on the first Day of January 1919 by King George V.



Kailas (Kailash) Nath Kaul

(1905-1983)

By Vaibhav Kaul

A man of nature, Professor Kailas Nath Kaul was an Indian botanist, agronomist, agricultural scientist, horticulturist, herbalist and naturalist, and a world authority on Arecaceae in the 1950s. Professor Kaul established the National Botanical Gardens, now the National Botanical Research Institute at Lucknow, India, in 1948, after working in the Herbarium of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, at the Natural History Museum, formerly the British Museum (Natural History), London, and lecturing at several universities in the UK, including the University of Cambridge, in the period 1939-1944. He remained Director of the National Botanical Gardens till 1965. In this period, the National Botanical Gardens, Lucknow, became one of the world's five best botanical gardens, along with the botanical gardens at Kew (England), Java (Indonesia), Paris (France) and New York (USA). From 1953 to 1965, Professor Kaul surveyed botanically the whole of India, from the Karakoram Mountains in the north to Kanyakumari at the southern tip of the country, and from the North East Frontier Agency and Assam in the east to the Rann of Kutch in the west. During the same period, he contributed to the development of the botanical gardens at Peradeniya (Sri Lanka), Singapore, Bogor (Indonesia), Bangkok (Thailand), Hong Kong, Tokyo (Japan), and Manila (Philippines). He represented India at the International Botanical Congresses in Paris (1954), Montreal (1959) and Edinburgh (1964). In 1968, he was elected as the

President of the Palaeobotanical Society, India. In 1975, he was appointed as the first Vice Chancellor of the Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture and Technology, Kanpur, India.

Kaul's 1929 work on the medicinal plant, *Artemisia brevifolia*, in the Kashmir Valley caused yields of



Pandit Kailas Nath Kaul

Santonin, an anthelmintic, from the plant to increase six times. This made the production of Santonin economically viable in India. In 1947 Professor Kaul discovered fresh water aquifers in the princely state of Jodhpur in the Thar Desert



India, mainly by studying the spatial patterns of vegetation and depths of wells in the region. A small aircraft owned by Maharaja Umaid Singh of Jodhpur was used by him to conduct aerial surveys for this purpose. He then prepared a Desert Reclamation Scheme to solve the enigma of Jodhpur's water shortage. In 1949-50, he organised the 'Underground Water Board for Rajasthan', Jaipur. In 1969, Professor Kaul, a native of the Jhelum Valley in Kashmir, was appointed the Director, Gardens, Parks and Floriculture in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. He worked for several years on the conservation and management of floral biodiversity and the rejuvenation of the Mogul-era gardens in the state, as the advisor to the Chief Minister on the subject.

Professor Kaul was responsible for the reclamation of several thousand acres of alkaline land in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. His work has been named 'The Banthra Formula' after Banthra, the place where it was initiated in 1953. The project involved organic amendments and biological methods, including the cultivation of alkali-tolerant herbaceous, shrub and tree species. It had a decentralized community-based development approach, and benefited subsistence and small-scale commercial farmers, through intensification and diversification of biomass production for purposes such as food, fuel, fodder, fertilizer, medicare, timber, animal husbandry, aquaculture, soil amelioration and bioaesthetics.

As the architect of the Vigyan Mandir (School of Science) Scheme (1948), which was later adopted by the Government of India, Kaul encouraged science education and research in the country. He also worked for the promotion of traditional sculpture,

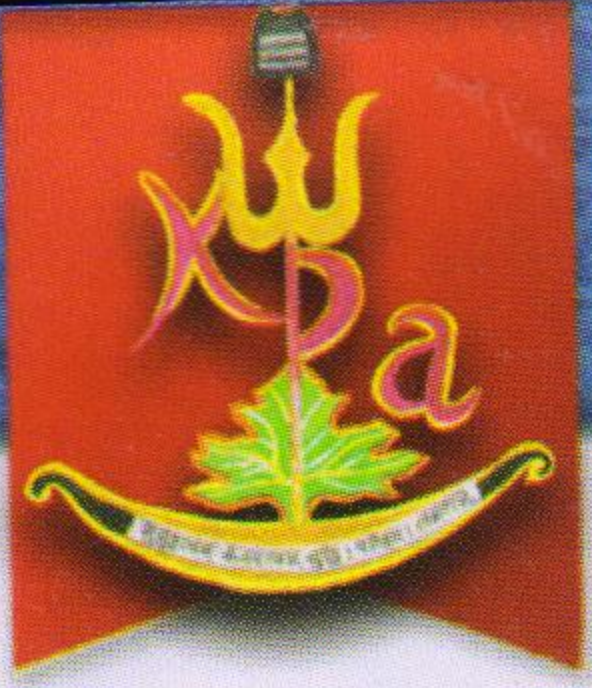
painting and applied arts, and was elected as the President of the Lalit Kala Akademi of Uttar Pradesh in 1965.

Contribution to the Indian Freedom Movement

Kaul joined the Indian Freedom Movement led by Gandhi in 1930, when he was sent by the All India Congress Committee to assist Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in organising rural uplift work in the Kohat, Bannu and Peshawar districts. He also worked in villages adjoining Delhi under the guidance of Asaf Ali during the Civil Disobedience Movement. In 1931, Kaul was arrested and charged with planting the flag of Independence and was sentenced to six months in jail. While in jail, he ran a school for 'C Class' prisoners. His thesis on alkaline (*usar*) soils was confiscated by the British Government for his active participation in the Indian Freedom Movement. Kaul also worked against untouchability and gave free education to Dalit children in Lucknow. His mother Rajpati Kaul, and his sister Kamala Nehru were among the first few women to have participated in the Indian freedom movement. Rajpati and Jawahar Mull Atal-Kaul were his parents and Kamala Nehru, Chand Bahadur Kaul, and Swaroop Kathju were his siblings. He was married to Sheila Kaul, an educationist, social worker, and politician. Gautam Kaul, Deepa Kaul, and Vikram Kaul are their children.

Family and friends

Kaul's paternal great grandfather, Moti Lal Atal (originally Thullal in Kashmiri), was the finance minister of the princely state of Jaipur, his brother-in-law, Jawaharlal Nehru ('Jawahar Bhai'), was the first prime minister of independent India, and his

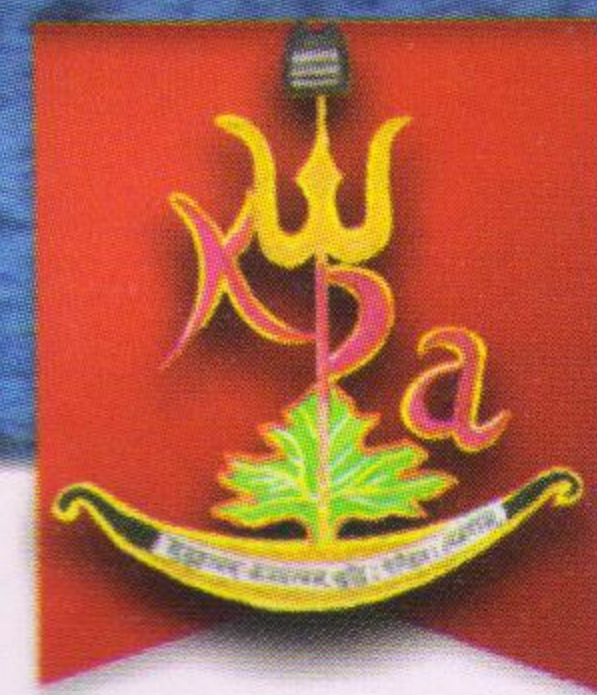


niece, Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi ('Indu'), was the third prime minister of India. Indira was deeply influenced by his love for nature and spent much time with him in the Himalayas. Among Kaul's natural scientist friends were Frank Hawking, a British biologist and physician and Stephen Hawking's father; Sir Edward James Salisbury, a British botanist and ecologist; Ronald Melville, a British botanist; Arthur John Cronquist, an American botanist; Birbal Sahni, an Indian palaeobotanist; GC Mitra, an Indian botanist; Alexandr Innokentevich Tolmatchew, a Soviet botanist; Kiril Bratanov, a Bulgarian biologist; Ronald Pearson Tripp, a British palaeontologist; and René Dumont, a French agronomist. His other friends included Todor Zhivkov, former President

of Bulgaria; Alfred Jules Ayer, a British philosopher, Herbert V. Günther, a German philosopher and linguist, and Margaret Mee, a British botanical artist.

Awards and honours

- * Padma Bhushan, Indian civilian honour (1977)
- * K.N. Kaul Institute of Life Sciences, India
- * K.N. Kaul Block, named for him at the National Botanical Research Institute, India
- * Kaulinia, a genus of ferns named in his honour.
- * *Withania ashwagandha* Kaul, a nightshade subspecies named in his honour.
- * *Cocos sahnii* Kaul, a fossil palm subspecies named in his honour.



Kashmiri Pandit Shairs and Scholars

By Late Dr. B.N. Sharga

The Nawabi era (1775-1856) was a period when Persian and Urdu culture reached its zenith. There was hardly any Kashmiri Pandit family which did not have one or two poets. Since many wrote compositions anonymously, their names have not carried down to us.

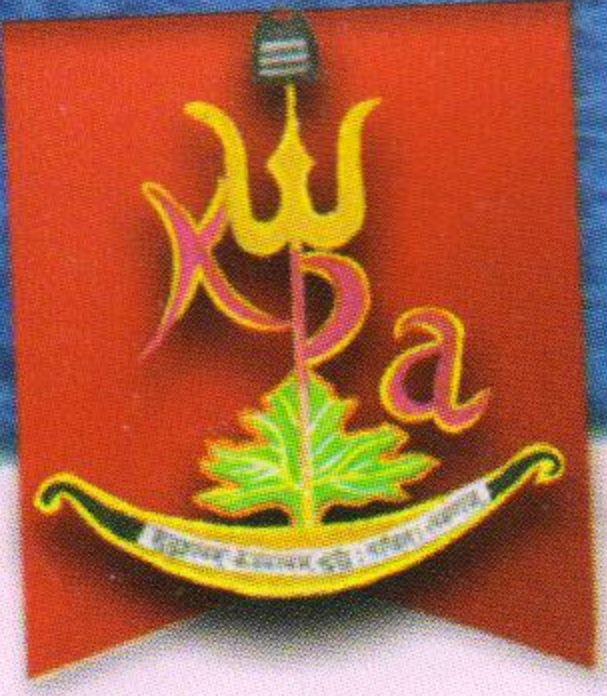
Prominent among the poets of this period were Pt. Daya Shankar Kaul 'Naseem'. He was trained by the greatest poet of the time – Kh. Haider Ali 'Atish'. During Asaf-ud-Daula's reign, Firangi Mahal emerged as a centre of Islamic and Persian-Arabic learning. Pt. Beni Ram Mubai, a scholar of repute in Persian and Arabic, taught languages in this centre. In the field of culture Pt. Shiv Narain Bahar took lead by establishing the first club 'Jalsa-e-Tehzeeb'. He also launched the journal *Mursala-e-Kashmir*. Kashmiri Pandits in Lucknow produced outstanding poets/men of literature – Ratan Nath Sarshar, Daya Shankar Kaul Naseem, Brij Narain Chakbast, Tribhuvan Nath Hijr, among others. They attained global fame. Brij Krishan Kaul Bekhabar brought out two-volume anthology on Kashmiri Pandit poets in Persian – titled *Bahar-i-Gulshan Kashmir*, which was published by Jagmohan Nath Raina Shauk and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. *Kashmir Darpan* of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, *Morasala-i-Kashmir* and *Subeh-i-Umed* of Brij Narain 'Chakbast' and *Bahar-i-Kashmir* could again well be mentioned in this connection as specimens from UP and Lahore.

Brij Narain Chakbast, a great poet who died young,

touched the very heights of poetic genius. His *Khak-i-Hind* anti poems of the same genre should be read with Iqbal's *Mera Wattan Wohi Hai* and *Naya Shawab* written very much later. His mastery of Urdu prose was equally superb. The diction, repartee and thrust of *Maarika-i-Chakbast-o-Sharar* are a delight.

The first and foremost Kashmiri to win recognition as a literary giant in Urdu was Pandit Daya Shankar Kaul 'Nasim' of Lucknow. He was born in Lucknow in 1811 and died in 1845 at the young age of thirty-four. He was a disciple of the great Urdu poet, Atish. Nasim's "Gul Bakawali", a versified version of the famed love story, made him immortal. His fame caused envy in many Urdu novelists. Sharar came out with a fantastic story that Nasim was not the real author of the book but Atish; however, Chakbast wrote a spirited defence of Nasim and silenced Sharar and his supporters. This controversy, which has now been settled once for all, was an event of great literary confrontation in the early part of this century.

Among the best-known faces in Urdu and Persian poetry, Pandit Anand Mohan Zutshi Gulzar Nizami Dehlvi has just turned ninety, and is still going strong. "Just to seek light and serve the nation through pen and Urdu poetry" is the philosophy of life for Dehlvi, whose forefathers taught the Mughal princes and in the process won the title 'Rai Raiyan'. Gulzar's father Qadir-ul-Kalam Allama (Pandit) Tribhuvan Nath Zar Dehlvi imparted education in



Urdu and Persian in Delhi University for 39 long years. Mehboob-e-Zari Zarbakhsh, Khwaja-e-Rasteen, Mehboob-e-Khuda, Abul Wafa, Akkas-e-Sunnat-o-Fitrat, Aqrab-e-Khaleeq, Fana Fillah Baqibullah – these are only a few of the 101 titles given to Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia by Dehlvi. Mohammed Atiq Siddiqui, convenor of Jashn-e-Gulzar Committee and editor of *Al-Yaum* Urdu newspaper, says Dehlvi has no match when it comes to Urdu Qasidagoi and Masnavi, both genres of appreciating people and ideas.

Gopi Chand Narang, president of the Sahitya Akademi, says Dehlvi is the national poet of India besides being an orator extraordinaire, owing to his qualities as a secular nationalist championing the cause of Urdu. He fasts during every Ramzan. He hobnobbed with political leaders from 1937 to 1947. But politics was not his cup of tea. Nevertheless, he rubbed shoulders with the likes of Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Humayun Kabir, Aruna Asif Ali, Saifuddin Kitchlew, Maulana Hifz-ur-Rehman, Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani, Lala Sham Nath and Indira Gandhi. Also popularly known in

the Urdu circles as Bulbul-e-Hind, Imam-e-Urdu, Gulzar-e-Khusro, Shair-e-Qaum, Mujahid-e-Urdu and Tooti-e-Nizami, Dehlvi is credited with having arranged and attended about 40,000 *mushairas* around the world. Since 1936, he has been on the panel of the Ramlila committee started by Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last of the Mughal emperors. The emperor had earlier granted the place for the Ramlila at the Bela Road grounds. Ramlila later shifted to the Tis Hazari and Boulevard areas before finally settling at the present Ramlila Ground in 1936. A highly qualified individual with postgraduate degrees in law and business administration and a doctorate in Urdu, Dehlvi edited *Science ki Duniya*, the first Urdu magazine devoted totally to science. Dehlvi has been conferred the World Peace Poetry Award (Berlin), and honoured in places such as Cleveland, Ohio, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Chicago, Columbus and Toronto, Lahore and Karachi. At present Dehlvi is busy compiling his own *ghazals*, *nazms*, *rubayees* and *qatas* – all forms of Urdu poetry portraying romance, mysticism, spiritualism, humanism and rebellious poetry – into an autobiographical book.



Virtues of Buzurgi

by Col Valmiki Katju

Whenever a community moves out from their native home to distant places there is a natural tendency to regroup and bond with each other and form a *biradari*. After moving out from their locations in Kashmir, most of the groups of Kashmiri Pandits collected together in Delhi's Sita Ram Bazar. Some went direct to nearby places in the undivided Punjab where the ancestors had got opportunities in government, administration, military and other professions. From Sita Ram Bazar they moved further south and west to princely states or where other professional openings in law, administration, medicine, among others, were available.

Once a head of the family settled down and made a name for himself, he would invite his other close relations to join him. This resulted in a unique and desirable tradition where the elder was given due respect and in turn, his advice was sought. It was a certain bonding within a family and the local community at large. Not only the patriarch or Panditji Sahib but the matriarch, the Rani Sahiba, held sway in domestic matters. Thus started the system of Buzurgi Tehzeeb where the *buzurgs* held sway.

Being followers of Shaivism, Kashmiri Pandits clearly understood that Shiva was a zero without Parvati at his side, the actual Shakti he wielded. During rituals the matriarch sat side by side with her

husband for *havans* and pouring oblations at the sacrificial fire. Strict boundary lines were drawn, especially in matrimonial alliances and once the matriarch gave her assent to a boy or a girl, the Panditji conveyed the final decision. Marriages were the domain of the Rani Sahiba and the head of the family was responsible for funds and administration.

Most of the elderly ladies were vegetarian. Hence, the Kashmiri cook was instructed to keep away food that was banned – garlic, onions, chicken, eggs, beef and pork. However, the ladies supervised the cooking of *saalan*, *keema* and fish. They may have abstained from eating themselves but could cook mouth-watering non-vegetarian dishes without having a taste of them. All this for the sake of Panditji.

Those *buzurgs* who had reached the pinnacle of their professions took special care that relatives and even *biradari* members were given a helping hand in starting their careers. Poor cousins were never looked down upon and there were several examples where younger relations were provided board and lodging, especially in towns with good facilities and institutions like courts, universities and schools. Nothing was asked in return. An important part of the function of the *buzurg* was to be accessible and be in a position to extend hospitality and favours. When a newcomer to the town arrived, it was customary to call on the local *buzurg* and it was to



him that an appeal for advice, employment or funds was traditionally directed.

An incident in this regard is worth mentioning. A young man from a far-away State, who had just completed his LLB from Allahabad University, was desperate to learn the legal skills under a senior lawyer. He contacted the person at Kanpur and prompt came a three-word telegram from the *buzurg* stating “Do come over”. The youngster not only became his junior but also stayed in the benefactor's house for six months before moving out to his own accommodation. After practising in Kanpur the concerned *buzurg* felt that his ward had been fully trained but could not realize his full potential in a district court. So he sent off a letter to his *samdhi*, one of the *buzurgs* in Allahabad, informing him that he was sending the fully trained advocate to him for taking under his wings. Learning from legal luminaries, this young lawyer himself became one of the most celebrated criminal lawyers of the country. Henny Sender in her book writes “As the main architect of local communal unity was the *buzurg*; his position rested both on internal consideration and in status within the larger social environment. Position within the community involved several factors, which were:

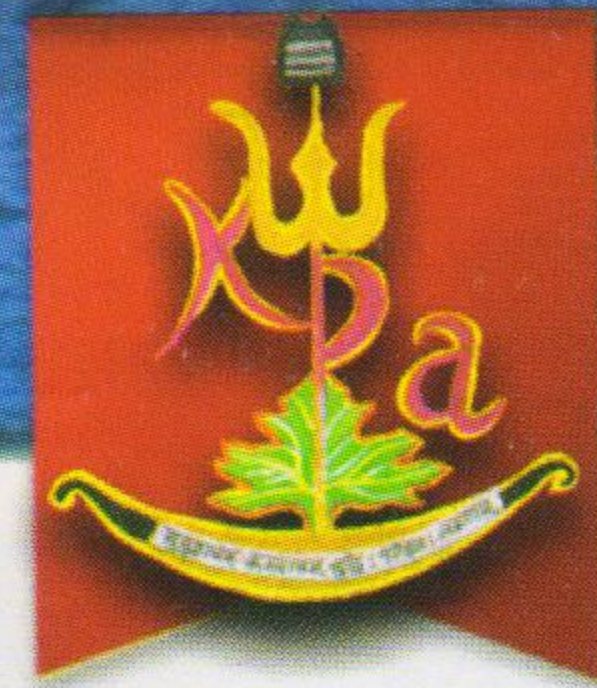
- ◆ The Panditji had to hold a respectable and prominent post.
- ◆ Ancestral achievement.
- ◆ Attainments in cultural as well as political domain.
- ◆ Mastery in Urdu and Persian was an added consideration.
- ◆ A large residence reflected his leadership.
- ◆ The residence had to have a large assembly

hall and well- manicured lawns with fountains, for members to gather for discussions and cultural functions.

- ◆ Large kitchen with Kashmiri cooks to cater for guests and extended family members”.

During festivities such as Nauroz, Soth, Pan and *pujas*, the community united together under the auspices of the *buzurg* and came away with a heightened sense of solidarity. In Allahabad the triumvirate of *buzurgs* – Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Pandit Moti Lal Nehru and Pandit Jagat Narain Mulla – was well known. Later, Dr Kailas Nath Katju performed the role admirably. As Sir Tej's wife died early, the task of looking after the household fell on Janak Rani, wife of the eldest son, Pandit PN Sapru. And she carried out her onerous task with distinction. It was normal that as a daily routine meals for at least 50 relatives and friends/guests were prepared and on occasions the number would increase.

In Lucknow large *havelis* were built and the famous *buzurg* households were in Rani Katra, Dilaram, Chaupatia and Baradari in present-day Chowk area. Leaders rose in the service of the Nawabs of Avadh and acquired huge properties in the rural areas and were called Talukdars. Among the prominent *buzurgs* who held sway were Raja Dila Ram Madan, the Mullas, the Shargas, the Taimnis and Raja Shyam Sunder Nath Kaul. Lahore was another centre where the descendents of Raja Suraj Kaul had their *haveli* called Vachchuwali, in Model Town on Montgomery Road. It was the hub of all Kashmiri activities.



Obituary

Lt Col MMK Baqaya

Lt Col Baqaya joined the Rajputana Rifles and was the commanding officer of 3 Rajputana Rifles. He is survived by his widow, two daughters and a son.

Air Vice Marshal (Retd) Vishnu Murti Raina, AVSM

He passed away on 01 Feb 2016 at the age of 79 years. He was a graduate of Joint Services Wing (now NDA) and Defence Services Staff College. During his 35 years career he flew a number of aircrafts – Toofanis, Mysteres, MiGs 21 and 23. He took part in active operations during Goa liberation (1961), Indo-China Conflict (1962), and Indo-Pak Wars of 1965 and 1971. He is survived by his wife Rajlakshmi, daughters Priya Tikku and Vatsala Kaul and son Kailas Nath.

Shrimati Saraswati Wattal

Satyawati (Satto) Wattal as she was known by her family and friends, wife of Shri Nikku Wattal, IAS passed away peacefully on 3 February, 2016 at the age of 92.

Shri Chandra Mohan Ganju

Shri Chandra Mohan Ganju was born on 14 August 1936 and was employed with State Trading Corporation. From there he shifted to Mineral and Metals Trading Corporation and rose to become its General Manager. After a brief illness he passed away on 11 January 2016. He is survived by his wife Shrimati Prabha Ganju, daughters Arti and Alka, sons-in-law Viney Takru and Jaideep Kaul, grand children Aditi Dar and Avnee Kaul and grandson-in-law Rishi Dar.

Lt Col K N Channa

Lt col (Retd) KN Channa, loving husband of Shrimati Saraswati (Vibha) Channa left for his heavenly abode on 7 January 2016 at the age of 98 years at Chandigarh. Born in Gujranwala, he studied in Government College, Lahore and Aligarh Muslim University. He joined the Frontier Force Rifles of the Indian Army and saw action in Burma during World War II, Chinese Aggression in 1962 and Indo-Pak Wars (1965 and 1971). He later joined the BSF. He was also the ADC to Pandit Nehru. He successfully ran the CSD Canteen in South Block. He is survived by his son Atul, daughter-in-law Sumati, daughter Ranjana, son-in-law Ram Kunzru, and four grandchildren



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