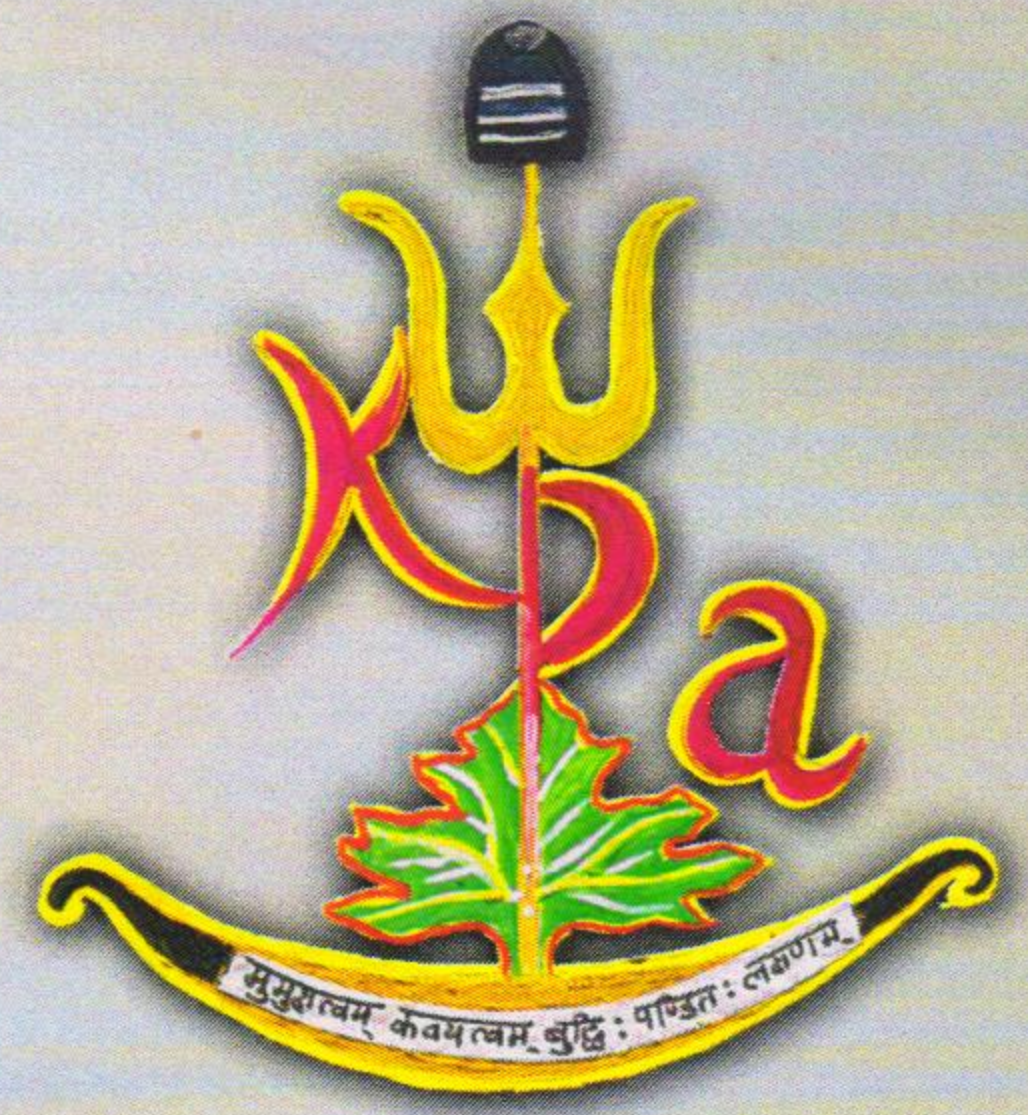


BIRADARI

Kashmiri Pandit Association DELHI



December
2016

A SIX MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Inside Preview

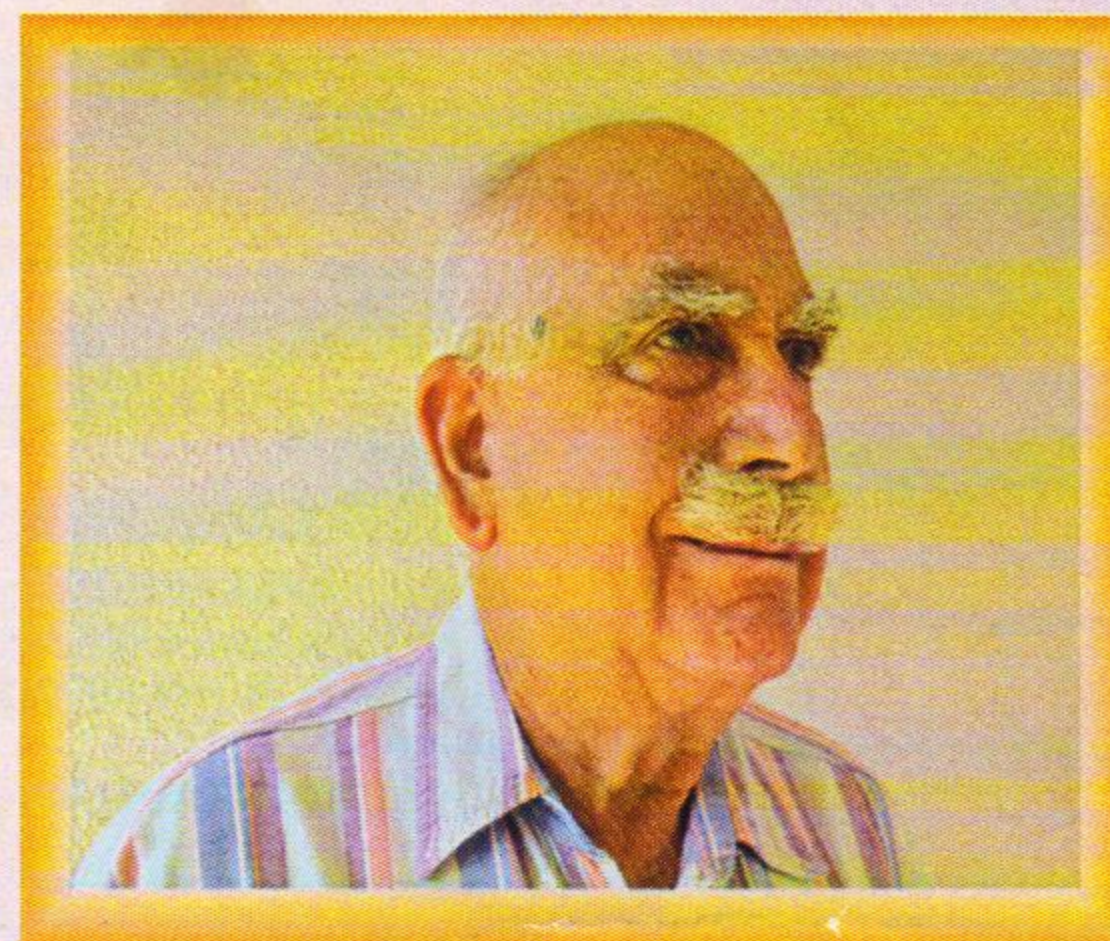
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Disclaimer

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

The article "Kailas (Kailash) Nath Kaul", published in the April 2016 issue of Biradari, was incorrectly attributed to Vaibhav Kaul, who neither wrote nor sent it to us. The article is in fact based on Internet sources such as Wikipedia. We regret any inconvenience caused by the inadvertent error

From the Editor-in-chief's Desk



On behalf of the Association, I would like to specially thank members and their children who participated in the Nauroz festivities on 2nd April. The event would not have been possible, but for the advice of all our elders and the able support of our team of volunteers. The Association would like to thank Mr Neeraj & Mrs Vatsala Kaul, Mr. Rajiv Kaul, President Leela Hotels, Mr Deepak Haksar, Executive Director, IT Hotels, Mr Kapil Channa, Mr Subbu and Meenaksh Behera.

The cultural programme began with the lighting of the diya in the Nauroz thal, by the children who participated. Vaibhav Kaul (25) began by singing a stuti - verses 72 to 87 of the 700 verse Devi Mahatmyam or the Durga Shaptashati. Shireen Saudamini (12) presented a melodious flute

recital in Raga Tilak Kamod. Then everyone tapped their feet to a rhythmic Kathak dance recital by Mahika Raina (8) and Noor Vasundhara (7). Amartya (11) came up with an impeccable recitation of Pt Sohan Lal Dwivedi's Hindi poem. This was followed by an Urdu nazm "Vaadi-e-Ummeed" and a rhyme "Nauroz Mubarak" by Vaibhav. Shireen also came up again, lending her lilting voice to Kishore Kumar's evergreen song "Aa chal ke tujhe...".

The rendition by Dr. Yamini Mubayi Pandey enthralled the audience. A musical medley was presented by Mrs. Ashima Munshi and her talented son Palash on the guitar, ably supported by Mr. Malan, who is a professional musician and a music teacher. Ashima's hypnotic voice as she sang in English and Hindi, had everyone singing along. Palash also dexterously presented some tunes solo on the guitar, including a French tune.

The last musical performance by Mr. Amitabh Reu, who has an unparalleled rich and mellifluous voice, was superb and it got the guests swinging.





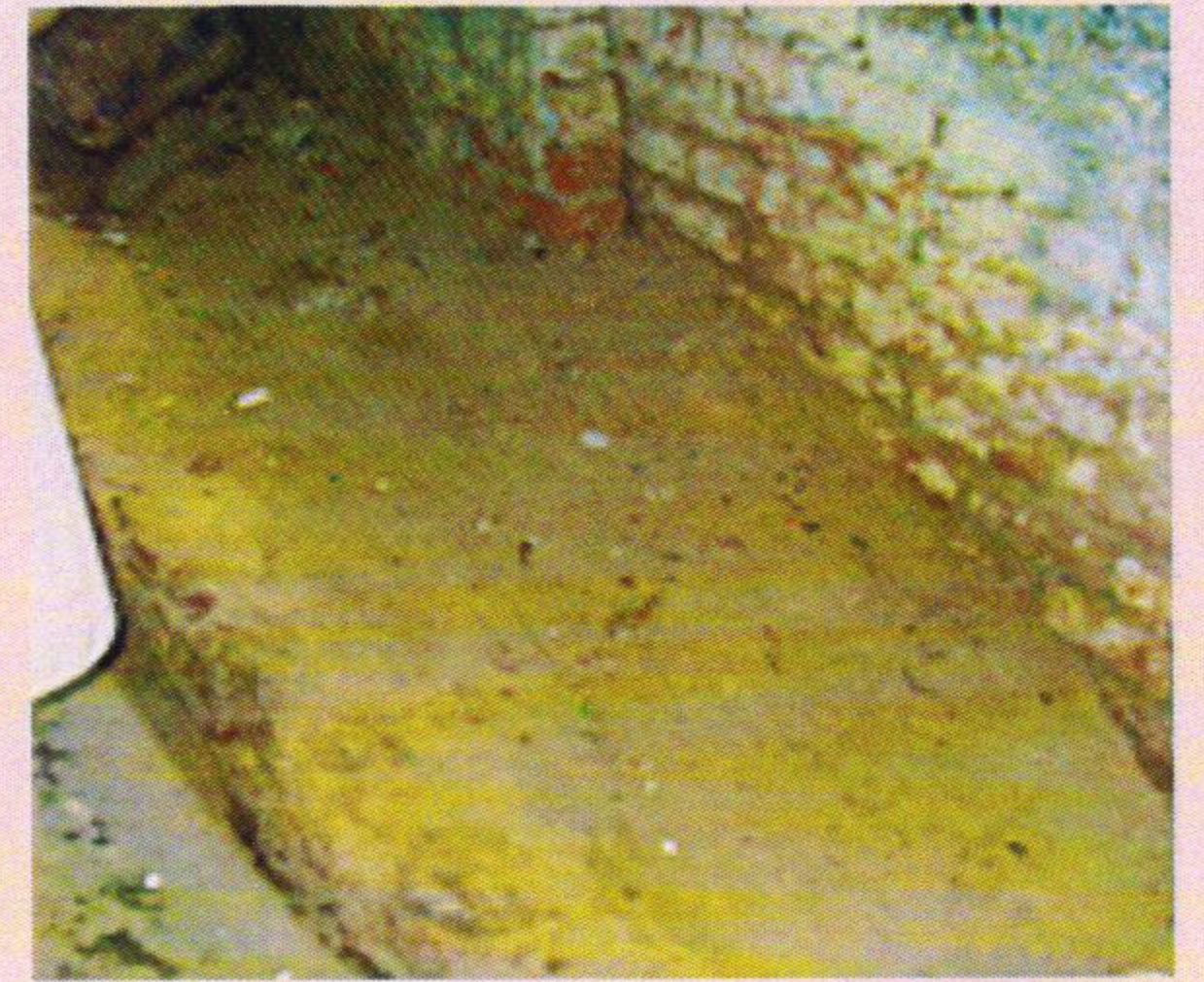
In quest of Mirza Mohan Lal Kashmiri

By Pandit Kailash Nath Baqaya and Col. Valmiki Katju

Research is a laborious, exciting and an exacting process. It is, however, exhilarating when one is able to get results. It is similar to searching for a needle in a haystack. After going through the literature on Mirza Mohan Lal Kashmiri (Zutshi) from various sources we were able to get a faint idea of the final resting place of this astounding Lawrence of Central Asia (not Arabia) or one may call him the Scarlet Pimpernel of the mid 19th Century. With a highly educated mind he took full advantage of associating himself with the British Secret Service under Alexander Burnes. A thorough knowledge of the local languages of the region made him eminently placed in his task of assisting the British government in furthering their influence in the difficult and hostile environment of Afghanistan and Persia. With a fair complexion and a handsome visage he could easily pass off as a British or a princely Afghan.

As time passed by he also created enemies with the Mughals, then the British and finally his own community of orthodox Kashmiri Pandits. It finally took its toll and he became a virtual pariah, divested of all his jagirs, inheritance and financial gains. But the most devastating situation for him was his total excommunication from his own community. In his later years Mohan Lal would lament "My community made me an outcaste, forbidding me to drink out of the same cup, discarding me from their society. Now during my twilight years I am left without my friends and without a place of shelter in my locality, Bazar Sita Ram and in my beloved city

of Delhi". He suffered the same fate as that of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar in not getting a decent place for his burial although he was interned in Delhi.



Unkept grave of the Mirza in slum cluster of Lal Bagh which was his private bagicha

The question for us was to find out the location of his grave along with his favourite seventeenth wife Haidari Begum. The literature available was that he was interned in a garden called Lal Bagh near the now famous Azadpur Mandi on the Delhi-Panipat Road. Due to massive development taking place in the city and land converted for the metro rail, one had to go in a systematic manner to find the exact spot.

We took help of the methods used by the famed Sherlock Holmes to sift out what may be possible from what would be most probable. We had to keep in mind the following crucial information acquired from various texts on the subject:

- Location of his resting place was near the present day Azadpur Mandi on one side of Delhi Panipat Road.
- It could not be a kabristan.
- It had to be in the general area of Lal Bagh, a garden at those times.
- Due to massive urbanization, Lal Bagh would be nonexistent and in its place there had to be some resettlement colony.
- It had to be an unkept grave without any



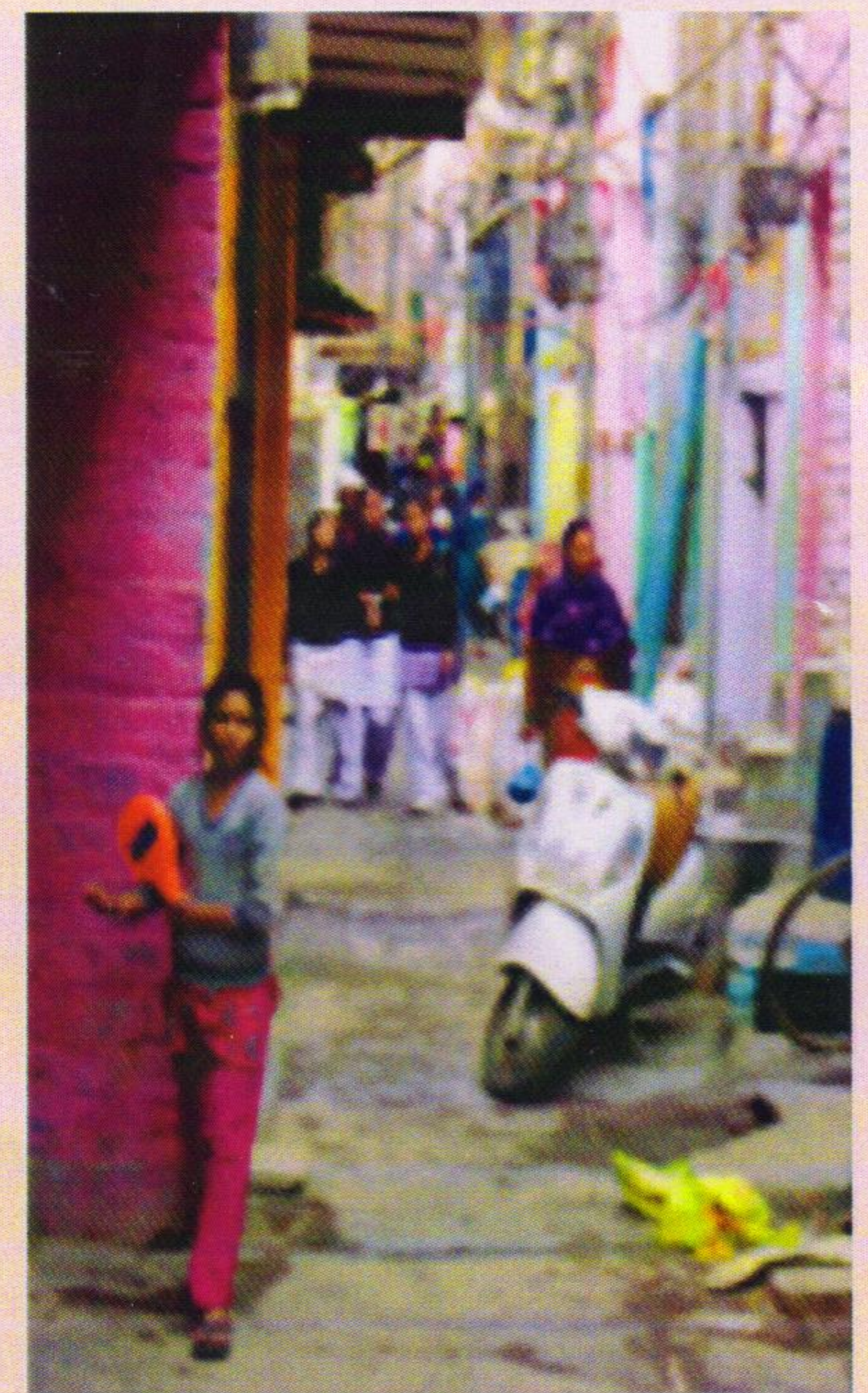
inscription.

- Only the local residents of the area especially elders, and that too Muslims, would be having knowledge of the grave.
- Somebody who was a regular visitor of mazaars or stayed near the grave would have knowledge of the place.

The search began by first requesting Kailash Bhai Baqaya to join in as he has tremendous knowledge of the area. On 27 December 2015 I took the metro rail for Civil Lines and was picked up by Kailash Bhai. He told me from his personal experience that the two places from where useful information can be obtained are the police station and the post office. On his suggestion, as a reference point we drove to the Police Station of Azadpur and a police officer told us that there was a kabristan nearby where we went. I was certain that this was not the place but we could get some clues. The saying goes that to reach the truth one meanders from place to place just missing the target, so close but not yet there and not losing heart. The kabristan had graves like mud mounts except one which was of stone slabs. The inscription was of some muslim peer baba. This was definitely not our destination. On enquiry from the caretaker we were told that on the Panipat road there was a **mazaar** from where we may get some further information. Off we went but once again we did not find any unkept grave. But a local electrician informed that there is another mazaar across the road. Azadpur being one of the most congested intersections, we had to go ahead and make a U-turn to reach it. At the mazaar of the peer three persons were lying on sheets, soaking the winter sun. On enquiry, an elderly person said that there was a semblance of a grave in the slum cluster at Lal Bagh. I noticed a tuft of hair on the gentleman's scalp and on enquiry he turned out to be a Hindu, a Dube Brahmin. It was an example of camaraderie of religions, enjoying an afternoon siesta under the feet of the peer's grave. He agreed to come along with us and help. We got into the car and once again took

the arduous journey of crossing the road and entered a lane leading to the actual Lal Bagh. Dubeji went off to get a local, a young man named Iroz Khan who led us through a lane a little over 2 feet wide with a bath drain running under it. After leaving Kailash Bhai, skipping and hopping for about thirty yards we turned left and, eureka, there was an 8 feet by 4 feet earthen flat mound looking like an unkept grave. The people who stayed in the near vicinity could only say that their elders had told them that it was a grave of some Kashmiri Baba and they ensured that it was not encroached upon. We had finally reached our destination and I was convinced that it was the grave of Mirza Mohan Lal Kashmiri alias Agha Hasan Jan Kashmiri, alias Mirza Quli Khan.

But our task was not complete. We had to be doubly sure that we were on target and needed more information to establish the authenticity of the grave of the Mirza. So on 10 January 2016 I decided to make another visit alone as Kailash Bhai was having problems with his legs. After reaching Azadpur by metro rail I had to try and recollect the location. Here my scout training at school came in handy. We were trained to be observant and to ensure this, all scouts had to pass what is called **Kim's Game**. About thirty small objects were kept on the table and a scout was given 10 to 15 seconds to memorize them and then write them down.



One of the lanes of Lal Bagh leading to the grave



I jogged my memory to find the road, then tried to remember the landmarks, the main lane which took off at a right angle, the tea shop of the person who gave us directions, the specific lane which led to the grave and the sharp left turn to one foot broad lane where the grave existed. When I reached the grave five six men collected together and enquired about my presence. When I told them of my intention to put a marble engraved grave stone and try to do some upkeep of the the place, all of them said that they live in close vicinity and are in agreement with my suggestion. They were even prepared to contribute to spruce up the place. On enquiry as to whose jhuggi was next to the grave they said it belongs to a person who runs a tea shop and does not agree to their proposal. I decided to try my luck and asked one of them to take me to the tea shop. Off we went and I came face to face with the jhuggi-cum-tea vendor Shri Raja Ram. At first he was guarded and after enquiring about my antecedents he said that he feels insecure that his jhuggi might get demolished. I assured him that we were interested to improve the place and had no intentions to acquire any part of his property. He

also mentioned that his elders had mentioned that it was a grave of a Kashmiri Baba. I took out the book authored by Kusum Pant and showed him the photograph of Mirza Mohan Lal Kashmiri in his regalia with various awards pinned to his chest. I also impressed upon him that Lal Bagh was the property of Mohan Lal but was confiscated by the British. At least it must be ensured that he rests in peace in his favourite bageecha. He was impressed, offered me tea, gave his contact number and then I was off.

Mohan Lal was shunned by one and all but he did find a resting place in his beloved city. It would be appropriate if a proper grave stone in marble is put on the grave and some arrangement is made for its upkeep. Mohan Lal Zutshi led an adventurous life and was an example of diligence and duty towards his keepers. He may have transgressed the boundaries of decency in the prevailing society but he certainly deserves a better resting place after his death.

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Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru

by Col. Valmiki Katju
with inputs from Justice Rajiv Narain (Gopi) Raina

"The Allahabad Bar does not still realise the immensity of its obligations to the personality of Dr. Sapru. Not only numerous beginners have sat at his feet, but his chamber has been the nursery of Judges. He is the soul of honour, and his uprightness of conduct and his professional rectitude have been a beacon light to lawyers throughout the United Provinces all these years."

Dr. Kailas Nath Katju

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's family migrated from Kashmir to Delhi in the early 18th Century and their ancestor Gulab Rai prospered under the service of the Mughals. His grandson Pandit Radha Krishna joined the East India Company and rose to the position of Superintendent of the Doon District. His son Ambika Prasad proved to be a spoilt child and led a carefree life of a zamindar. Radha Krishna's son, Tej Bahadur was born at Aligarh on 08 December 1875. After completing his Masters degree in English Literature he joined Law and pursued his studies till he completed his LLD from Allahabad University.

Though Sir Tej joined the Allahabad High Court Bar in 1898, he never took law practice seriously till his studies were complete, saying that he could not do justice to his clients till he had completely mastered the law. His wife Durga Devi was from the Madan family of Srinagar. She passed away during her sixth child birth which left Sir Tej disconsolate and heartbroken. He never married again and did not show any interest in women after his bereavement when in those times most of the Kashmiri Pandits in that predicament married again.



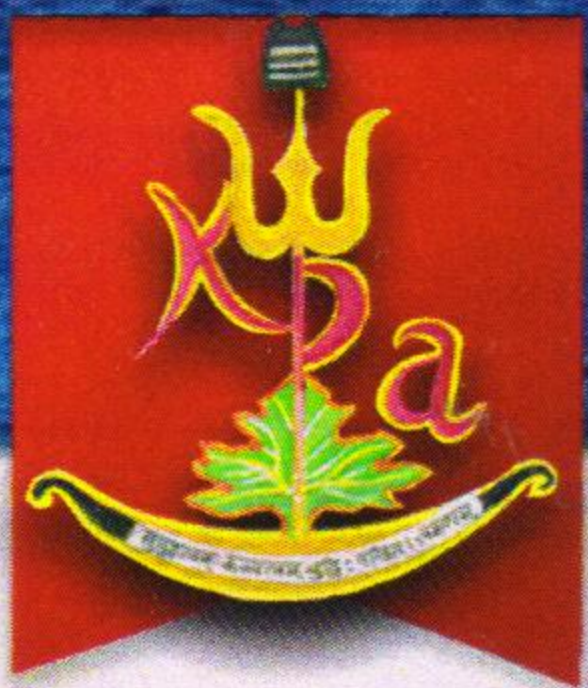
Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru



Durga Rani Sapru (Madan)

Soon after starting his practice he got a chance of opposing India's topmost lawyers. Sir Ras Behari Ghosh, on a matter of Hindu Law remarked, "He argued so brilliantly that in a day he found his feet in the profession". His fame spread all over India when he fought successfully a Taluka case in Oudh Chief Court and a Waqf case in the Allahabad High Court. Thus, he quickly built up an enormous practice. His vast legal learning and the meticulous care he took to prepare his cases made him one of the greatest advocates of his time.

A contemporary had this to say "His outstanding qualities were an unfailing memory, thoroughness and a complete mastery of the case and the law bearing on it. His command of English was superb. This, with his faultless pronunciation and perfect intonation, he invested his arguments with a charm



all its own. Add to it an immaculately dressed gentleman of charismatic personality, and the picture of Sir Tej is complete”.

Justice SN Katju gives a glimpse of Sapru’s daily routine, of his habits, tastes, likes and dislikes. “The day began at 4.30 AM in summers and 5.30 in winters when he would have his shave and bath. Breakfast would be at 7 AM. By 7.30 he was busy at work till 6 PM, in his chamber and the High Court. On return he would change for the evening and sit for his evening darbar till the dinner was served at 8.30 PM. He rarely dined alone. From 10 PM he would sit in his private study, reclining on a divan with a number of thick soft pillows. Sometimes a few intimate friends joined him at a darbar-e-khas. Sapru was a brilliant conversationalist and was quite comfortable with elders, contemporaries and the younger lot of budding lawyers.

V.S. Srinivas Sastri presents a vivid and graphic account of his evening darbars. “There he sat in the verandah, imbibing scented smoke through the hubble bubble, where you could hear a raconteur of the first quality entertaining a fair-sized audience of visitors of all ages with anecdotes sparkling with wit, humour and repartees, matters of professional etiquette and honour, and tales of legal lore and laughing and shouting with them”. It can be said that Sir Tej was a true heir to three cultures – Hindu, Muslim and Western. He combined in him the tenacity of a Brahmin, the refinement and urbanity of a Mughal, and the deep understanding of wide sympathies of a Victorian Englishman”.

In those times it was considered a correct behaviour to help members of the biradari gain their footing in

professions which they chose. This was especially so for young budding lawyers to learn the finer points of jurisprudence from their elders who had done well for themselves – a true guru shishya parampara. Dr Kailas Nath Katju writes “Our family was totally a stranger to Allahabad and we had no connections or family there. But as a fellow member of the Kashmiri Pandit community, father had written for advice to Sir Tej and Sapru had suggested Allahabad, being the seat of the High Court and the university as the most suitable and kindly offered to look after me if I went there.” He further writes to Sapru “It is now 42 years that I put up in your house and all these years I have received nothing but kindness from you. Professionally, what I am today is due to what I learned in your chambers”.

In 1920, Sir Tej was appointed Law Member to the Viceroy’s Executive Council during the period of Gandhiji’s Non-Cooperation Movement. The Government wanted to bring the promotion of Hartals within the Criminal Amendment Act, making them unlawful and amounting to criminal conspiracy. Sapru’s note to the Viceroy showed that he opposed the government’s interference with the normal political activity of the people. However, this proposal was unacceptable to the government as they feared repercussions if the Hartal became violent and if its aim was cessation from the British empire.

Sir Tej loved rich and spicy Kashmiri food and could not do without meat even for a day. He never drank but entertained his guests with the choicest drinks. He had a failing of irritability, lost his temper easily but was quick in regaining his composure. An interesting anecdote proves the point. When he was



a Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, he heard that the UP Governor, Sir Harcourt Butler was accusing him of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru's arrest. Sir Tej grew wild and wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Reading suggesting that Sir Harcourt should apologize. "Otherwise let Sir Harcourt know that seven generations of the Butler family will not be able to pay the damages".

Sapru was considered a peace maker. In 1918 a National Liberal Federation was formed with Sapru as its chairman. The Liberals were men of the highest caliber, probity and unquestioned patriotism. Gandhiji recognized their ability and worth and respected their advice.

At the First Round Table Conference in November 1930, Sapru forcefully articulated India's national demand. He said the Dominion Status was an unpleasant word and India wanted and was determined to achieve a status of equality with the other three members of the Commonwealth. Sapru was also a great believer in the federal form of government. He invited the Indian princely states to join this proposed federation. As regards the Indian Army, Sapru was convinced about the Indianization of the army. He wanted an opportunity to train its men in the army and demanded freedom to establish indigenous institutions. He agreed that questions like law and order, British interests, commerce and finance presented some difficulties in the way of granting responsibility at the centre. But he argued that these difficulties should not be made excuses for not granting India a responsible government.

In the second session of the Round Table Conference Sapru showed his mettle as a true

democrat. Some of his landmark suggestions which have bearing to this day were:

- Sapru opposed all insidious efforts to dilute the democratic element in the proposed Constitution.
- Conveyed to the Princes that the march of democracy is irresistible.
- In a bicameral legislature system the tendency of the upper house to become stronghold of reaction and checking progress, should be curbed. Hence, the powers and functions of the Upper House have to be defined carefully.
- In case of a deadlock a joint session should be called and the issue be decided by a simple majority.
- The British Indian Army was an army of occupation. Unless this was transferred to Indian hands, he would rather have it disbanded.

Sapru could never get any time to write a law book. But his "Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms" is a monumental, intellectual treatise. However, he was a voracious reader. Shri Purushottam Das Tandon has narrated two interesting incidents in this connection. Once he found Sir Tej reading a book on Changhez Khan. This was because the Muslim League had threatened the Hindus with the repetition of the deeds of the Khan, if Pakistan was not acceded to. At another time he found Sapru reading a book on the Roman Empire. Sapru explained that he wanted to know how great empires collapse and if the British were following the same pattern of self liquidation.

Urdu was Sapru's mother tongue. He had started learning the language at the age of five and soon



became conversant both in classical and modern Urdu styles. He was also a consummate scholar of Persian. So great was his mastery in Persian that when an Iranian delegation came to India in 1943 they were wonderstruck at his knowledge of the language. But his Hindi, the pure Sanskritized type, was appalling.

Although Sir Tej was a liberal with regard to eating habits he did not impose his sensibilities on his wife. She was a strict vegetarian, and like many Kashmiris, refused to dine at Moti Lal Nehru's house because standards of preparation and company were considered questionable. After her death Sir Tej's eldest daughter-in-law, Janak Rani (daughter of Pandit Prithi Nath Chak) took charge of the household and administered the daily affairs of 19 Albert Road to Sir Tej's entire satisfaction

Besides being an erudite and an asute statesman, Dr. Sapru was a great gentleman. His conversation was full of anecdotes, which had a touch of humorous exaggeration, but were utterly devoid of malice. He loved to speak of the great ones of the land, of the lions of the law, of striking things said and done in his time, but when he narrated them with evident gusto, one half suspected that they were not nearly so Homeric as he made them out. He had the income of a prince but he also gave and spent like a prince, saving almost nothing.

He possessed a robust constitution and a phenomenal digestion. Doctors had a puzzle in him, for he took absolutely no exercise, slept soundly, smoked incessantly, and ate three, square meals a day, could not do without meat even once, and 'loved chillies as few Andhras do. Although of an ascetic temperament in his attitude towards women, he was an Epicurean in diet and loved rich and

delicious food. After relinquishing his office as a Law Member he brought with him a Goanese cook and chef, and he also employed Muslim cooks. Thus, there used to be three different varieties of food in his kitchen-the Kashmiri, the Muslim and the European. He was a splendid host and entertained sumptuously. He also dressed immaculately and went in for the most expensive garments.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru breathed an atmosphere of opulence and magnanimity. There was a grandeur about him, which seemed to scoff at anything which savoured of pettiness or triviality. Such was the effect of his dominating personality that when he entered the scene no one else seemed to exist. His evening 'darbars' have become legendary, where the 'elite' of the town used to be present, exchanging repartees, delightful anecdotes, choicest Urdu and Persian poetry and comments on current, political and social topics.

Mr Justice MN Shukla writes "Sapru's famous house, 19 Albert Road, Allahabad became a place of pilgrimage for all foreign visitors as well as celebrities of this country. Round him gathered princes and plebians, lawyers and judges, professors and politicians, scientists and men of letters and a myriad satellites that circled round and took warmth from that radiant luminary, until envious death quenched his fire on 20th January, 1949. He passed away after a full, active and singularly versatile life. Where shall we see the like of him again - such, a virile and magnetic personality, of such moral grandeur and integrity, so anxious to preserve the purity and prestige of the profession, so learned and lovable, the acme of honour and the pink of courtesy".



A Story about Shivratri

by K.N. Pandita

This is the story behind the doon mubarak custom amongst Kashmiri Pandits, as illustrated in the accompanying picture circulated by the Kashmiri Samiti, Indore.

Ramnika and Bhattarika are the names of two bhairavas. In the Shivratri puja, in which women have the primary role, the five bhairavas are symbolically represented by five bedecked earthen pots, besides the two main urns representing Shiva and Parvati for the marriage of Shiva and Shakti as per the tradition and legends of our community. This assemblage is called in vatak in Kashmiri, which I will explain here later. The puja is an enactment of the wedding ritual. The bhairavas are protectors as well as witnesses and guests.

Ramnika of Sanskrit becomes Ram in Kashmiri dropping the +nika. We have many examples of dropping k suffix sound of a Sanskrit word when spoken in Kashmiri. Rajanaka = Rayanak = Raina. Similarly, Bhattaraka of Sanskrit (meaning godly/saintly) became Bhatta and then Bhatt/Bhat/Bateh in Kashmiri. Bhattarika also evolved to become bror in Kashmiri, with the suffix ika being dropped and the hard consonant tt softened by replacing it with ror, thus bhattarika = bhatta = bror.

It is another matter that, after Muslims came to power in Kashmir around 1339, and mass conversion was completed by Sultan Sikandar the Iconoclast around 1380, the Hindus now in minority were called Bhatta(s) by the newly-converted Muslims. This name has stuck, and even today we are not called Pandits by Kashmiri Muslims but Bhatta(s). Actually, the term was `dayalu Bhatta' meaning a kind-hearted Bhatta (dayalu in Sanskrit means kind-hearted) which degenerated into the

mocking `dali Bhatta' or dal-eating Bhatta (i.e., the cowardly Bhatta) used by Kashmiri Muslims for Pandits.

Bhattarika or corrupted form bror is akin to ishvara in meaning. Let me explain the import. We have Vijaya-ishvara as a famous place-name in the vicinity of which King Lalitaditya of Kashmir raised the famous Martand or Sun Temple around the closing years of 8th century after he had made conquest of Central Asia. Vijayaishvara became Vijebror in Kashmiri and Bijbehara in Punjabi.

Now, another interesting example. Legend has it that Sharika Bhagwati assumed the form of a myna (haer in Kashmiri), picked up the Sumeer Parvat in her beak and dropped it on Jalodbhava, the water demon in the Dal Lake and killed him. The hillock now standing by the water of the Dal is known to Kashmiri Pandits as Hari Parvat (Punjabi, Hari Parbat). Here Kashmiri Hari is the Kashmiri form of Sharika Devi whom we worship, the ending k sound being dropped to leave shari. As a phonetic rule, sha in Sanskrit becomes ha in Kashmiri like shauna in Sanskrit becomes hauna or huna in Kashmiri meaning dog. And we see the reverse in heem (snow) in Sanskrit becoming sheem = sheen in Kashmiri. Therefore, Sharika became Hari or Haeri and we call the hill Hari Parvat even today (whereas Muslims have given it the name of Koh-i-Maran, which is another story). Now we have Kashmiri leela-s or hymns which were abundantly prevalent in each Pandit house in earlier times. I remember my own home and those of my maternal uncles which, after nightfall, would resound with



loud and sonorous recitation of the leelas. It was part of our culture, especially during the long winter nights, that we all family members would sit in one room, cover ourselves with a big quilt, and sing the leela with the elderly one amongst the family giving the lead. One leela or hymn began with this opening verse in Kashmiri: Rajaren rani breri padan lagaye peri meaning 'Oh Rajrani (Sharika mata), Oh Divine Queen (ranih = rani, breri = bhatarika) let me devote myself to your feet....'


So, reverting to our main subject, the two bhairavas namely Ramnika becomes Ram and Bhatarika becomes Bror in Kashmiri (Caution: bror in Kashmiri also means cat. That too is of Sanskrit derivation and has nothing to do with the theme we are dealing with here)

Now vatuk is drawn from Bhatarika meaning something like 'divine ritual'. On the third (tritya, or trei in Kashmiri) night after Shivratri puja, we have a ritual called in Kashmiri vatuk parmuzun meaning consigning the urns and the pots to water or saying goodbye to the deities.

The tradition is that late in the night on tritya, one or two members of the family carried the bedecked urns and pots to the river or a nearby stream and consigned these to the water and offered prayers. After they had left, the people at home shut the door for fear of wild animals prowling outside. After the person or persons had performed the ritual on the river bank, they returned home. They knocked on the door (thuk thuk). Then the following conversation ensued between those inside and those outside, before the latter could enter:

Knock knock. Who is there? It is Ram Bror here. What have you brought?

Thuk Thuk.....
Kus Chhuv ?
Ram Broor.
Kiya Hyath ?
Aan Hyath,
Dhan Hyath,
Sokh Hyath,
Putra Gaash ta
Dushman Nash
Herath Mubark



DOON MAVAS MUBARAK
from : Kashmiri Samiti Indore

I am with food. I am with wealth. I am with comfort for you.

*May you have the light (happiness) of your children.
May your enemies be destroyed.*

Herath felicitations. Let the amavasi (15th day of dark moon) of walnuts be auspicious to you.

(Shivratri: Shiv = He, ratri = raath, so shivratri becomes herath in Kashmiri. Shivratri falls in winter and there are no fruits in winter in Kashmir)

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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

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kpadelhi.org



except walnuts. A handful of walnuts are put in the urns and pots by way of a fruit offering. In a separate pitcher, a large quantity of walnuts and water are put as prashad to be distributed amongst relatives and friends in the days after the puja. By that time the walnut kernel has softened and you can remove the skin before eating. Thus, in common idiom, it is called doon herath meaning the shivratri of walnuts. It may be said that the practice with elderly Pandits in olden days in Kashmir was that on the day of Salam, meaning the morning following the night of prayer, they would sit outside in the courtyard and distribute nuts to the children of the locality

(muslims) who would come and say doon herath mubarak, or may the shivratri of walnuts be auspicious to you.)



The writer is the former Director of the Centre of Central Asian Studies, Kashmir University

The American Dream by Devina Taimni

*The fire stays alive, It still burns inside,
but the rights we've been denied, just keep piling up too high.
Starting as a child, I saw my dreams planned out.
Be a doctor, be a actor, be what ever I want.
America taught me to believe, to start seeing a future.
To dream of a me where I could be, anything I could think or see.
Now I'm older and the world shrunk, a bit closer to earth
the cloud world collapsed, and reality took over.
The education I'm provided is my ticket to success
there's no chauffeur holding my name waiting to collect
everything I've brought along with me up to this point,
there's more baggage to hold up then to what I look up.
The dream still shines bright, but I've narrowed it down.
Maybe not an astronaut, and more of a desk job.
Is that really that dream? No, probably not.
But we see people in their new Rolls Royce,
rolling in paper, controlling their future,
and we realize thats what everyone wants.
But if everyone's successful, what's success at all?
So we decide we have to be better, be stronger, be sharper.
But sorry son, it takes money for that.*

*So lucky you and lucky me, we might get into college for free,
because good thing Daddy already worked so hard to provide us
with what we take today for granted.
The struggles some people have overcome
just to have the one chance that we've had since we begun,
yet we all have the same big dream. Make it big. Make it bigger.
Make it the biggest anyone's ever seen.
Our different backgrounds provide backdrops
for how our lives are going to pan out,
we all start from our own places,
but the dream makes us climb up.
So eventually, we work for eternity,
to make millions for our salary,
avoid unemployment anarchy,
and graduate with new and improved mastery.
And we understand that there's an allergy to flattery*



A Homestay under the Snow-capped Peaks

by Col. Valmiki Katju
with inputs from Vaibhav Kaul

Dev Bhoomi – Abode of the Gods is a virtual paradise both for the devout and the trekker. Every peak is sacred and the mighty snow-covered Himalayas stand as guardian angels for the hill people and the pilgrims. Its peaks – Nanda Devi, Nanda Devi East, Nanda Kot, Trishul, Panch Chauli, Dunagiri, etc are a feast for the eyes of the beholder. In the autumn season when visibility is clear, against the blue sky it is a scene to behold. Colours of the peaks change during the day from sunrise to sunset - spotless white to crimson red, to golden and as the sun sets a pinkish hue settles on the peaks.

For the faithful besides the Char Dhams of Badri Nath, Kedar Nath, Gangotri and Yamnotri, Dev Bhoomi is also the source of two most sacred rivers, Ganga and Yamuna, roaring down the glaciers with clear blue waters from the melting snow. The rivers provide thrill to the adventurous in the form of white-water rafting and canoeing.

At the foothills of these mighty mountains live hardy hill folks, tending to their *terraced agricultural fields*, small patches of vegetable gardens and fruit trees, their herds of sheep and goats and involved in small businesses like shops for daily needs. They also



Meeting of the Maati Sangathan

Sunset on the Panch Chuli Range



have ponies, the small but sturdy variety for carrying loads to remote villages where motorized transport cannot reach.

In this scenic setting along the Kumaon Himalayas, the road passes through sacred places of Someshwar, Baijnath, Bageshwar, Jageshwar leading to Chaukori, a scenic tehsil HQ and having a well-maintained guest house of Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam. Along with our experienced grand-nephew Vaibhav Kaul and his friend Judith from UK we started off from Ranikhet. There is a shorter route to Munsiyari via Bhowali-Khairna-Almora-Berinag-Chaukori-Munsiyari. On reaching Chaukori we got rooms in Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam Guest House and the rooms on the second floor were quite comfortable and reasonably priced. Even the food was well-prepared.

From Chaukori the road climbs up to the sub-divisional town of Munsiyari in Pithorqagarh District, nestled under the five peaks of Panch Chuli (five peaks) or Panch Chauli (five chulhas of the Pandavas). Starting from the left is a lower peak and echeloned to the rear which is dedicated to the



eldest of the Pandavas – Yudhishtir. On its right is the tallest of the five- naturally the huge and mighty Bhim (height 6904 metres). And to its right are the three peaks dedicated to Arjun, Nakul and Sahdev. To the naked eye the peaks seem to be rather close but in reality they are neither far, approximately 30 kms as the crow flies. We started the next day at a leisurely hour of 9 A.M. and reached Munsiyari at 3 P.M., and going 2 kms further from the bazaar to the village of Shankhdhura where our hosts Bina Nitwal and Basanti Rawat had their hamlets.



Fresh vegetables being plucked for the day's menu

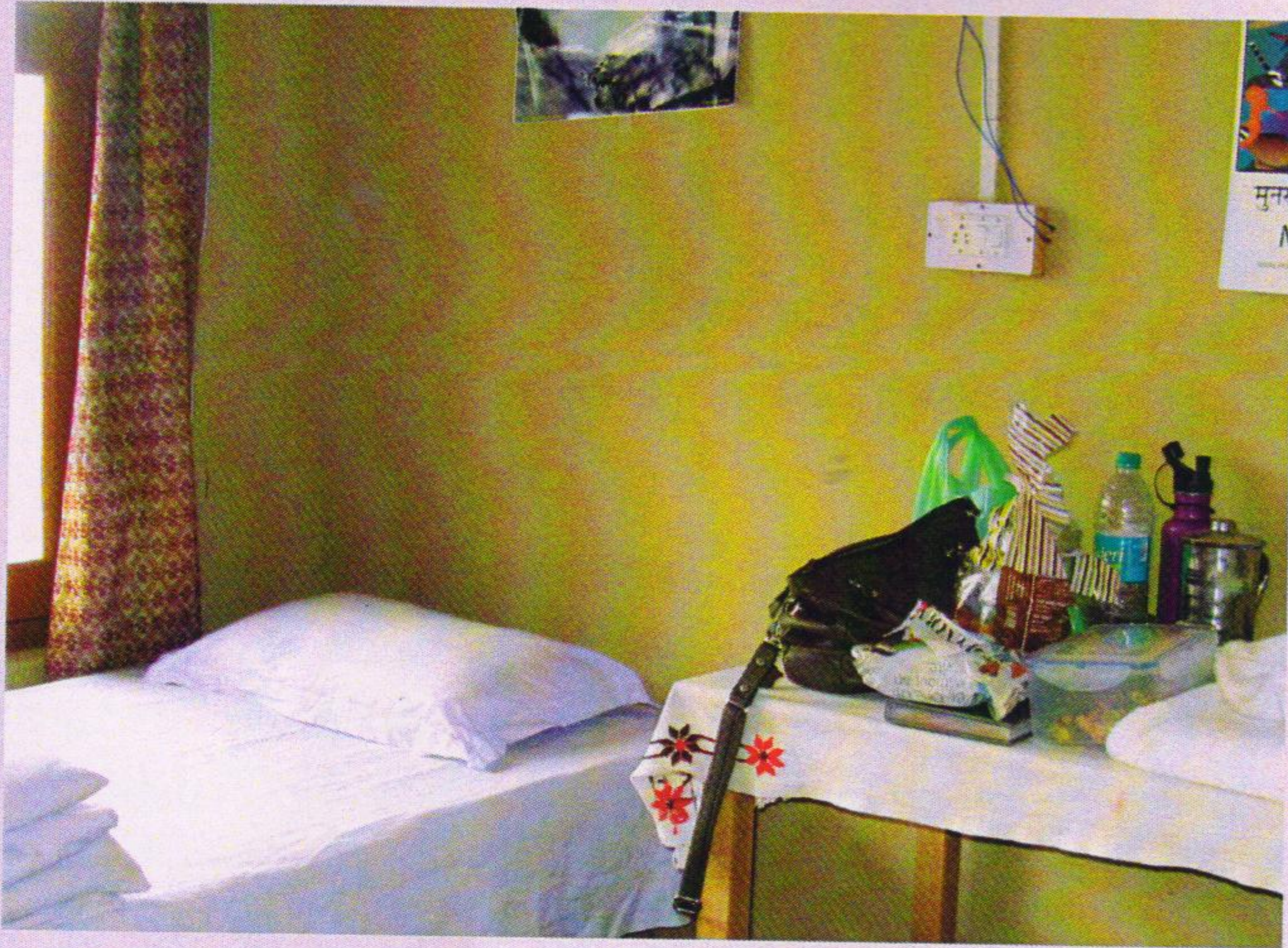
Munsiyari is mostly inhabited by the Bhutia tribal community and there is a well-maintained museum displaying the culture and art of the tribals. A little distance from the Munsiyari Bazaar is Sarmoli village and its pretty constituent hamlet Shankhdhura, where the majority inhabitants are of the Bhutia descent. Except for the slight giveaway of mongoloid features, they are Hindus with Kumaoni names like Kushal Singh Nitwal, Rajendra Singh Rawat, Rekha Rautela, Basanti, Bina, etc. A trekker-mountaineering couple, Malika Viridi, a Sikh and Theophilus a South Indian, have made Sarmoli their home and live in a beautiful double-storey cottage built according to their taste and requirements. It is inaccessible by motor transport. A 20 minutes walk along a track through dense cedar and deodhar forest, crossing streams of gurgling cold water, leads to an opening to a panorama of patches of vegetable gardens, sheds for dairy, fruit trees, hay stacks and terraced fields, a

virtual Shangri-la. Along with Malika, Theo, their son Zanskar and dedicated colleague Ram, the Sangathan produces all their daily requirements themselves – chicken, milk, fresh vegetables like potatoes, beans, cauliflower, cabbage, rajma, radish, carrots, meetha karela, etc.

Malika is the founding member of Maati Sangathan, a women's collective that is two decades old and runs **Himalayan Ark**, a community owned tourism enterprise. She is the Managing Trustee of Himal Prakriti, a Trust for nature that works on environment issues of the Himalaya. There is also the Jungli School, with members from the village children to the older members- learners in perpetuity. While there are different institutional forms to address specific needs of this mountain region, the approach of the people of Sarmoli is to work as a community. Besides educating the children (and adults) in English and other subjects, the Sangathan assists the members in acquiring loans at easy interest rates for improving, renovating and making additions to their houses, simple but comfortable cane furniture or building attached toilets, bringing in solar home lighting systems and improving their lives. Malika says "The aim of the Sangathan, besides education is to empower women who wanted to be equal earning members, independent of their husbands, who sometimes used to spend their meager earnings to drink in order to beat the cold and mistreat their womenfolk. In 2004, while she was Sarpanch of the Sarmoli-

Hostess serving guests in her Rasoi





Bedroom with a study table

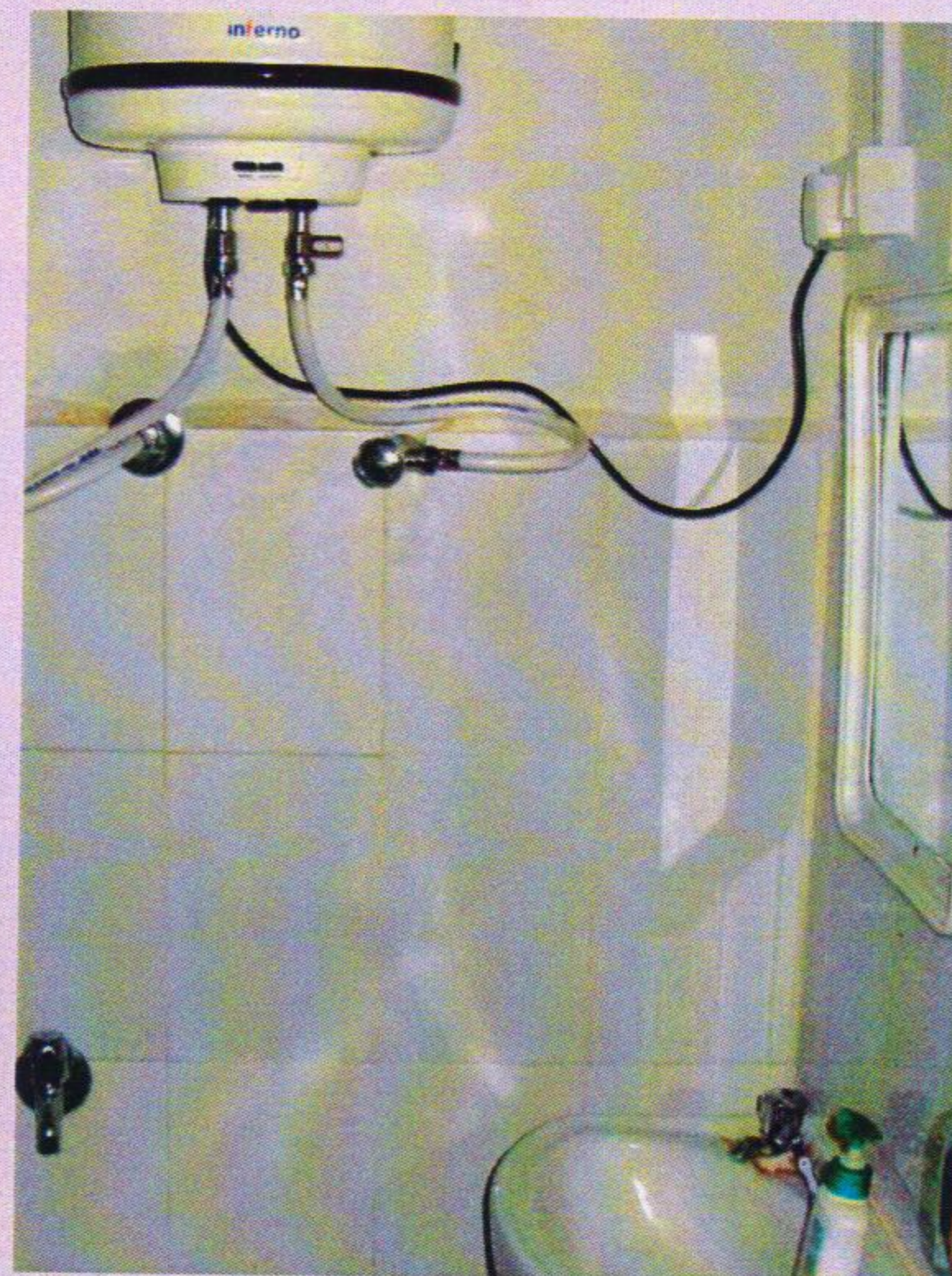
Jainti Van Panchayat, Malika came out with another idea, to start homestay facilities for tourists called Himalayan Ark. Thirteen families mostly from village Sarmoli took up the challenge. Each homestay has built two double bedded rooms with attached bathrooms. The rooms are cozy, beds have good mattresses, clean white sheets, covered quilts and additional blankets. The bathrooms have geysers for hot water bath. Rekha Rautela says "Initially the guests were mainly from Garhwal and Kumaon but the word went around swiftly and tourists from foreign countries started enjoying the facilities. In the beginning we had some difficulty in communicating but the Sangathan taught us a smattering of English and now we are able to manage. We have even got familiar with their tastes and provide the meals to their liking". Bina Nitwal pipes in "We know the tourists are mostly nature lovers and trekkers and our young lads act as guides to take them to nearby peaks, of course at a price". To ensure every family gets its turn in hosting the guests, bookings are done centrally and every family has contacts with the guests and interact with them.

After the day's outing we would sit on the terrace and our host brought a **sigri** of lighted fire and ample wood and we would sit round the fire eating peanuts the Indian way – shelling them and eating them with rock salt to taste, After an hour of fireside talk we were ushered in to the **rasoi** (the

appropriate word for cookhouses) which was nice and warm. The hot food (mostly two dishes, dal, rice and chapattis) was served by Kushal Nitwal and Rajendra Singh Rawat, our hosts, and our hostesses Bina and Basanti served hot, puffed up rotis. There was no restriction on helpings as the hosts knew very well that after a long trek the food consumption would be substantial. And, of course, hot tea was always there for the asking.

29 November was the fourth birthday of Jungli School. It was celebrated on a grand scale at Malika's and Theo's cottage. All the Sangathan ladies with their children were present. Malika asked all those present to introduce themselves. It was a pleasant surprise to see the children, in their turn, introduce themselves with confidence and stated the class in which they were studying. The girls mostly wanted to be doctors and teachers while the boys wanted to be engineers and bureaucrats. What lofty ideals and confidence on their faces. The Sangathan had prepared a fabulous meal - puris and alu sabzi, halwa, pakoras and solar cooker baked cakes followed by piping hot tea. It was a truly democratic display with young children being addressed as Sathiyon (comrades) and asked their views. The Sangathan and Himalayan Ark Homestay has really changed the lives of these mountain folk and they have learnt to fend for themselves and improve their lifestyles.

Contact malika.virdi@gmail.com



View of the attached bathroom



Tantra and Tantriks

Tantra has been one of the most neglected branches of Indian spiritual studies despite the considerable number of texts devoted to this practice, which dates back to the 5th-9th century AD. Many people still consider tantra to be full of obscenities and unfit for people of good taste. It is also often accused of being a kind of black magic. However, in reality, tantra is one of the most important Indian traditions, representing the practical aspect of the Vedic tradition. The religious attitude of the tantriks is fundamentally the same as that of the Vedic followers. It is believed that the tantra tradition is a part of the main Vedic tree.

The word "tantra" is derived from the root tan meaning to spread. In a special sense it means the scripture by which knowledge is spread. It is a combination of two words "tattva" and "mantra". "Tattva" means the science of cosmic principles, while "mantra" refers to the science of mystic sound and vibrations. Tantra therefore is the application of cosmic sciences with a view to attain spiritual ascendancy. In another sense, tantra also means the scripture by which the light of knowledge is spread: **Tanyate vistaryate jnanam anemna iti tantram.** The word also means that which rules or governs.

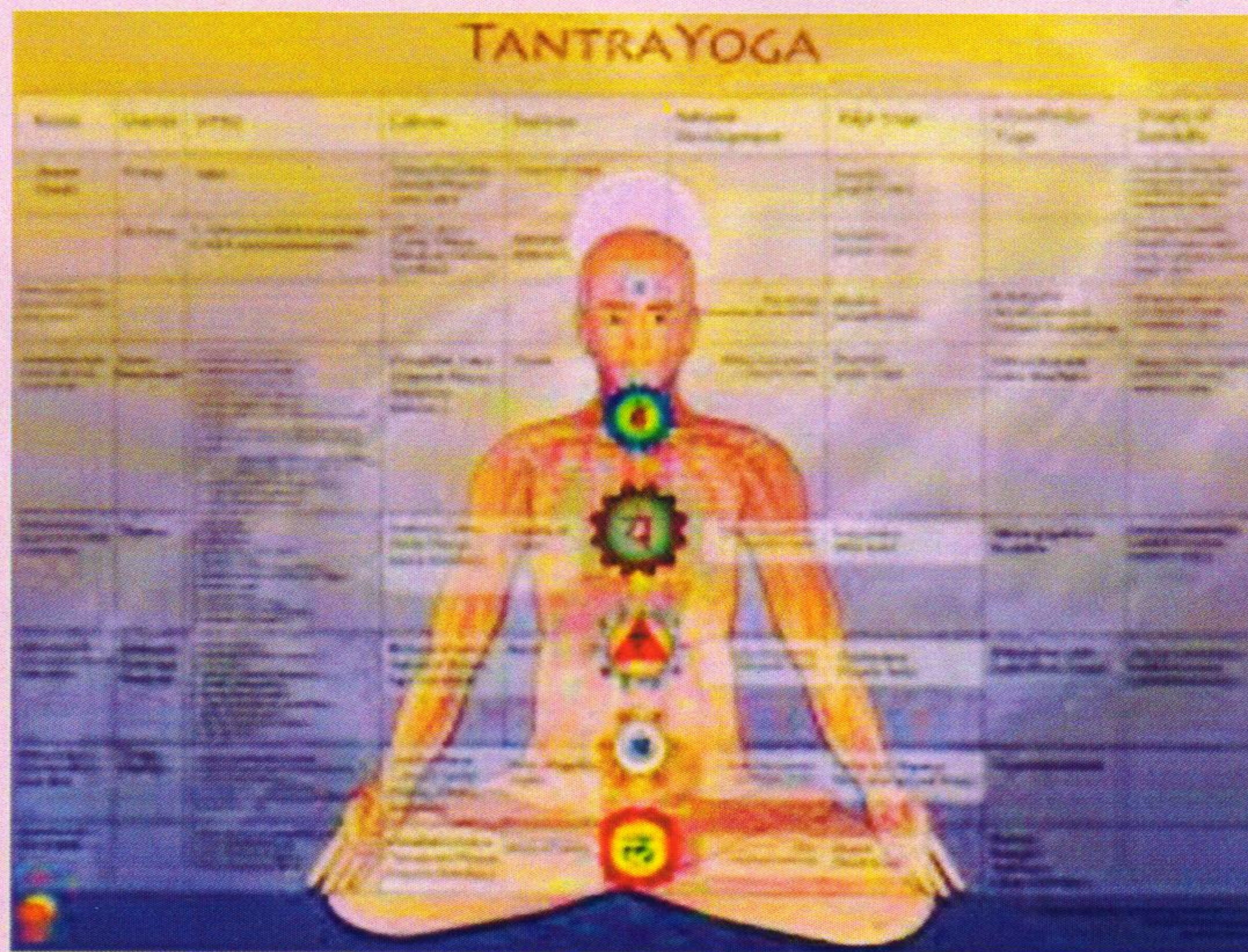
It is the science of living a way of life that leads to the desired goal. It is characterized by practice combined with esoteric knowledge. The tantras lay down different forms of practices by one living the ordinary life of a householder. There are essentially two schools of Indian scriptures - "Agama" and "Nigama".

Agamas are those revelations as spoken by Shiva to his consort Parvati (Shakti) on the knowledge of spiritual, transcendental and aphoristic knowledge.

Nigamas are the responses of Shakti to her lord which translate to the traditions. These are highly secret and only the followers are in the know of it, as the misuse of these mantras can be devastating. Tantra is an Agama and hence it is called "srutishakhavisesah", which means it is a branch of the Vedas.

The main deities worshipped are Shiva and Shakti. In tantra there is a great significance of "bali" or animal sacrifices. The most vigorous aspects of Vedic traditions evolved as an esoteric system of knowledge in the Tantras. The Atharva Veda is

considered to be one of the prime tantrik scriptures. There are 18 "Agamas", which are also referred to as Shiva tantras, and they are ritualistic in character. There are three distinct tantrik traditions - Dakshina, Vama and Madhyama. They represent the three "shaktis" or powers of Shiva.



Tantra is different from other traditions because it takes the whole person, and his/her worldly desires into account. Other spiritual traditions ordinarily



teach that desire for material pleasures and spiritual aspirations are mutually exclusive, setting the stage for an endless internal struggle. Although most people are drawn into spiritual beliefs and practices, they have a natural urge to fulfill their desires. With no way to reconcile these two impulses, they fall prey to guilt and self-condemnation or become hypocritical. Tantra offers an alternative path.

In Kashmir, the practice of tantra was dominated by its philosophical aspect. The seven stages of development are :

- Cleanliness of the body and mind.
- Devotion
- Knowledge
- Consolidation of the above three stages
- Renunciation
- Merits of enjoyment and renunciation
- and Kaula or essence, the highest stage.

There are three currents of tradition: dakshina, madhyama, and vama. These are characterized by the predominance of each of the three gunas; sattva, rajas, and tamas. According to this text, dakshina is characterized by sattva, and is pure, madhyama, characterized by rajas, is mixed, and vama, characterized by tamas, is impure. The Tantras of each class follow a particular line of spiritual practice.

Early Indian **tantric yogis** were known as kapalikas or 'skull-bearers'. The kapalikas were originally miscreants who had been sentenced to a twelve-year term of penance for the crime of inadvertently killing a Brahmin. The penitent was prescribed to dwell in a forest hut, at a desolate crossroads, in a charnel ground, or under a tree; to live by begging; to practice austerities; and to wear a loin-cloth of hemp, dog, or donkey-skin. They also had to carry the emblems of a human skull as an

alms-bowl, and the skull of the Brahmin they had slain mounted upon a wooden staff as a banner. These Hindu kapalika ascetics soon evolved into an extreme outcaste sect of the 'left-hand' tantric path of shakti or goddess worship.

The tantrik approach to life avoids this pitfall. Tantra itself means "to weave, to expand, and to spread", and according to tantrik masters, the fabric of life can provide true and ever-lasting fulfillment only when all the threads are woven according to the pattern designated by nature. When we are born, life naturally forms itself around that pattern. But as we grow, our ignorance, desire, attachment, fear, and false images of others and ourselves tangle and tear the threads, disfiguring the fabric. Tantra "sadhana" or practice reweaves the fabric, and restores the original pattern. This path is systematic and comprehensive. The profound science and practices pertaining to hatha yoga, pranayama, mudras, rituals, kundalini yoga, nada yoga, mantra, mandala, visualization of dieties, alchemy, ayurveda, astrology, and hundreds of esoteric practices for generating worldly and spiritual prosperity blend perfectly in the tantrik disciplines.

Defined as a technique-rich style of spiritual practice, Tantra has no single coherent doctrine; instead, it developed a variety of teachings in connection with the religions adopting the Tantric method. These practices are oriented to the married householder rather than the monastic or solitary renunciant, exhibiting a world-embracing (as opposed to a world-denying) character. Tantra, particularly its non-dual forms, rejected the values of Patañjalian yoga; instead, it offered a vision of reality as self-expression of a single, free and blissful divine consciousness under Siva. The consequence of this view was that householders could aspire to spiritual liberation, where the lay practitioner addressed this



goal by consulting Tantric manuals and undertaking various Tantric rituals.

One aspect of tantric discipline is the practice with five **M**'s – madya, wine; mamsa, meat; matsya, fish; mudra, signs; and maithna, ritual and sexual union.

In the tantric system, mantra plays an important role. Mantra means that, a repeated remembrance of which releases the soul. The guru adds one's own vital strength into the mantra with intense aspiration by repeating it and meditating on its meaning. In this way the spiritual power of the mantra is transmitted from the guru to the shishya. This process is called diksha. The word literally means a process by which the guru transmits the mantra and attenuates or destroys the sins of the disciple.

Since Tantra dissolved the dichotomy between spiritual and mundane, practitioners could integrate their daily lives into their spiritual growth, seeking to realize the divine which is transcendent and immanent. Tantric practices and rituals aim to bring about a realization of the truth that "nothing exists that is not divine" (n iva vidyate kvacit), bringing freedom from ignorance and the cycle of suffering (sa s ra).

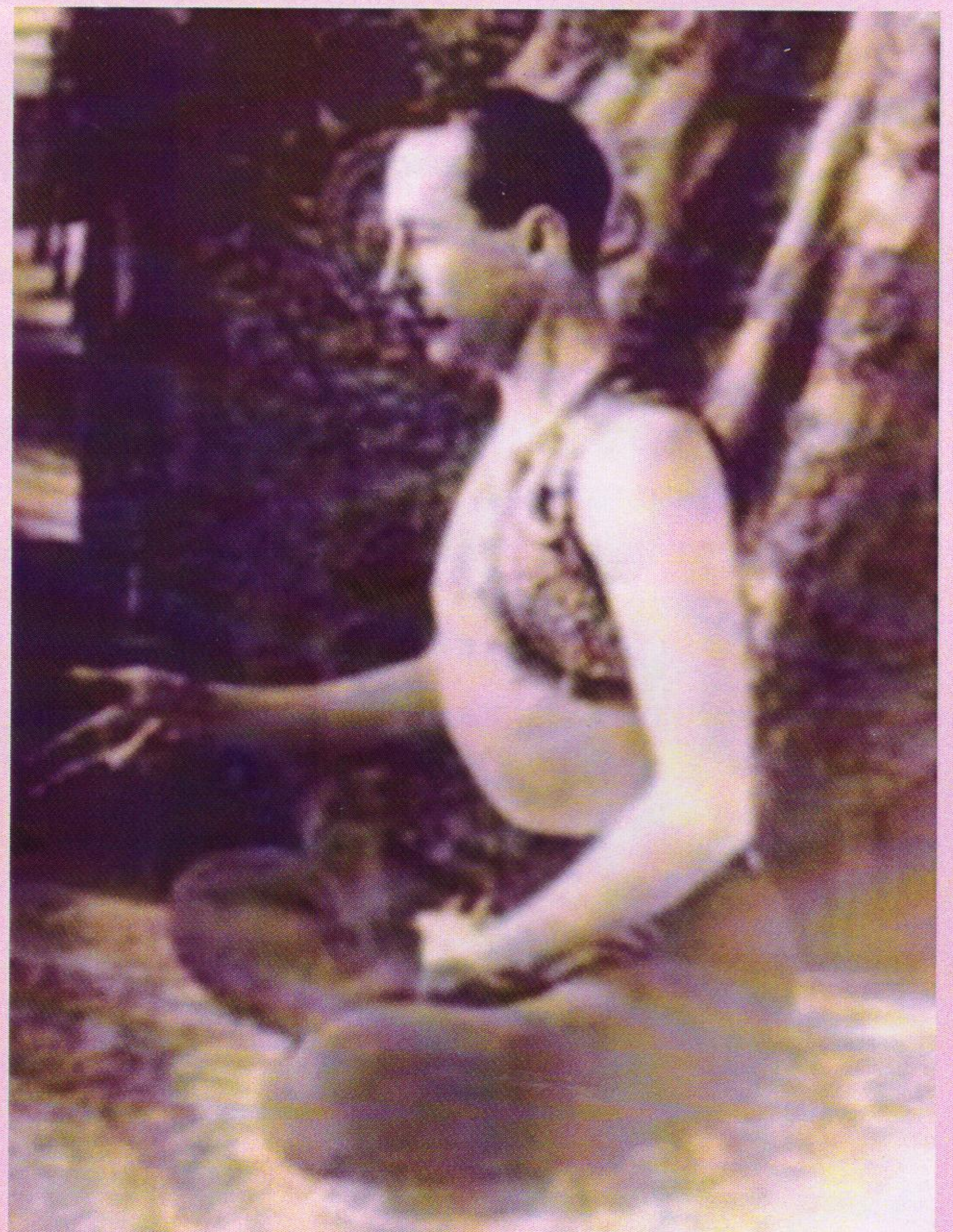
While tantrism is a complex and controversial subject, one of its most definitive characteristics for contemporary classifications—if not its most definitive one—is the pursuit of power. Tantric traditions are thus those that aim at increasing the power of the practitioner. The theological designation for the essence of such power is Shakti (the female counterpart to the male divine principle, whose essence is power). The manifestations of Shakti that the practitioner of tantra aspires after, vary greatly, from relatively limited magical proficiencies (siddhis or vibh tis), through royal power, to the de-individualized and liberated saint's

omnipotence to the performance of God's cosmic acts.

A sect called **Aghoris** a practice which they believe will free them of terror. Hence they :

- Do meditation in cremation grounds.
- Practice eating of corpses of the dead to overcome sense of disgust.
- Have begging bowls as human skulls.
- Achieving magical powers to exercise control over others.
- Becoming powerful for worldly reasons.

Hence serious tantric teachers are not willing to pass on their knowledge to those lacking in spiritual maturity. Those who curse or harm others can call themselves as tantriks but they really are charlatans.



*Dr Pierre de Vries Bernard, professor,
Yoga Guru and one of the most famous American Tantrics of his time*



Kashmiri Pandits-Children of a Lesser God

by Ramesh Pandita

The distressed discussion in the state assembly over the proposed move of the central government to rehabilitate Kashmiri Pandits back in the valley in different townships, on the pattern of Jaggti township, raises several questions. Although nothing more than pigeon holes, this proposal is still being opposed vociferously in a manner reminiscent of the Kashmir of 1990's. Not for the fact that the 1990s witnessed mass exodus of the Kashmiri Pandit community from the valley, but for the fact that the abject break down in Trust between the Kashmiri Pandit and the rest of the Valley as they failed to judge, to whom they should trust and whom not to Trust.

It is quite interesting to see the militants, the separatists, the mainstream politicians from the valley and the general public of the Kashmir coming together to oppose the move of rehabilitating the Kashmiri Pandits back in the Kashmir valley on the pattern conceived by the central government. This is exactly what the KPs witnessed 25 years back, when the community was forced to leave behind everything to move to other parts of the country. The same group of people in a similar fashion came together to hound out Kashmiri Pandits from the valley with one voice. Nobody till date from valley protested or came to the streets to oppose the genocide of KPs.

To thus hear hollow claims of Kashmir being an abode of fraternal love & brotherhood between the two communities sounds disgusting.

Where was this fraternal love and brotherhood when the KPs left the valley between January-April 1990 in broad daylight? The only favour which the

majority community at that time did to KPs was, putting a blind eye to the mass migration, and giving them safe passage. This situation in 1990's was so confusing that the militants, the separatists, the mainstream politicians and the general public of the valley, all appeared to be singing in chorus to hound out the Kashmiri Pandits from the valley. After a quarter of the century, the wheel of time has turned a full cycle it seems as the community is again being subjected to the same treatment, where the militants, the separatists, the mainstream politicians of the valley and the general public of Kashmir are again singing in the same chorus. In 1990's it was in support of hounding out Kashmiri Pandits from the valley and now it is against the move to rehabilitate the KPs in valley irrespective of the fact, whether the KPs live in a township or at their native places. What does the majority community have to fear from a handful of KPs who constitute less than 2% population of the valley? Bizarre and unfortunate arguments are being presented by the leadership of Kashmir about the settlement of KPs in the valley with meaningless parallels being drawn on the creation of one more Israel on earth and KPs as Jews, with whom fortunately or unfortunately all the Kashmiris share the lineage, irrespective of the religious affiliation they have.

The opposed move by various stakeholders of Kashmir clearly reflects the intentions of the majority community of Kashmir towards the handful Kashmiri Pandits. One just fails to understand whether the voice is against the return of KPs or against the rehabilitation of KPs. Either way the fact remains, if Kashmiri Pandits have to return to Kashmir valley, it has to be purely on the terms and conditions of the majority community, whereby the individual wishes and the aspiration of KPs by no means hold any relevance. And the bigger question



is, if this is what is there in the offing for KPs and if this is what the majority community of Kashmir thinks of Kashmiri Pandits, then what point is there in the return formula, which I fear is nothing more than pushing the community to the same hell, where from it could come out with great difficulty. The Kashmiri Pandits keen to return to their roots need to understand the fact that political parties, be they national or the local, are simply pushing their political agenda. Any forced move towards rehabilitating KPs in the valley against their wishes will leave a deep imprint on the psyche of the community, the consequences of which will be borne by the coming generations for the years to come. There is no need for the community to get carried away by any such political moves, loaded with bundles of promises & range of offers. *The honorable and the dignified return of the Kashmiri*

Pandits is possible only, when the return formula will be worked out and executed on the terms and conditions of the Pandits and not on the terms of the majority community of Kashmir.

The majority community, despite constituting 97% of the total valley population, is raising baseless apprehensions and excuses only to halt the rehabilitation of KPs back in the valley. One should not be having even an iota of doubt in the fact that even if the government, will initiate a move towards rehabilitating of KPs on the pre 1990 pattern, the majority community of the valley will still stand unified and oppose the move on various other similar baseless grounds.

Under the prevailing conditions, it will be suicidal to push KPs back to the valley, especially when the circumstances by no means appear welcoming, where the fraternal love and communal harmony between the two communities has gone from bad to worse. The policy makers if on one hand are proposing something for the community the executors on the other hand, are hell bent to dispose such moves, reminding us once again that the Kashmiri Pandits by all means are the children of a lesser God.

Obituary

- Shrimati Rati Dar wife of Shri Asoka Dar
- Shrimati Rita Bakshi wife of late Justice PN Bakshi
- Shri Jagat Narain Bamru
- Shri Brijendra Kumar husband of Shrimati Radha Raina
- Shri Diwakar Muttoo husband of Shrimati Geeta Muttoo