

BIRADARI



Issue: A Six-monthly Newsletter

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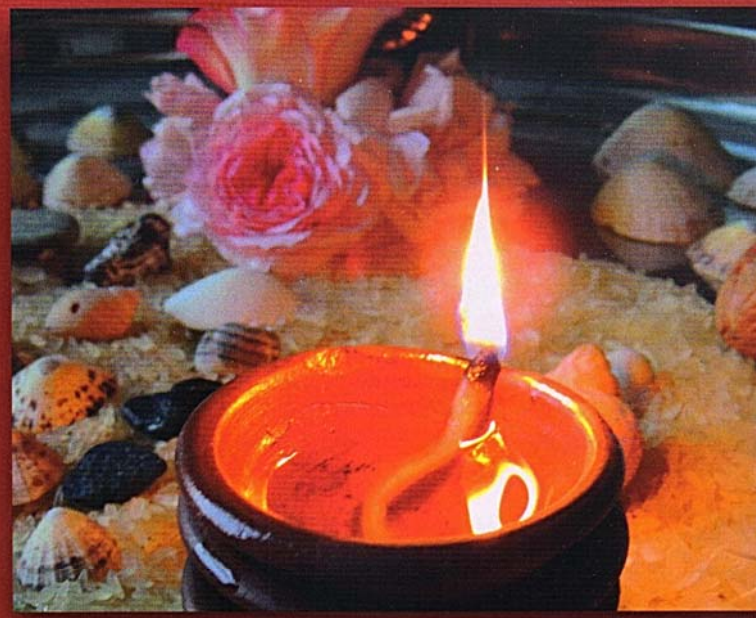
| MARCH 2018

Nauroz Mubarak



KPA's Day Out at Pratapgarh ● Shaivism

Portraits: Krishna Prasad Dar & Justice Shiva Nath Katju



Nazrāneh Naurózī Kashmīrī Panditān-é Hindóstān Maidānī

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

BY VAIBHAV KAUL

We will welcome the 5094th year of the Saptarshi Calendar and the 2075th year of the Vikram calendar on 18 March 2018. My elaborate medieval-style (revivalist) Nauróz *nazrāneh* (offering) to the New Year includes twenty articles:

Khvāneh (P): sprouts. For vitality.

Roath (K): bread. For nourishment.

Tsūñth (K): apple. For vigour.

Dūn (K): walnuts. For fertility.

Sikkeh (P, H): coin. For prosperity.

Gulsurkh (P): red flowers. For love.

Shekker (P, H): sugar. For harmony.

Latāfat (P): rosewater in a jar. For compassion.

Zarda (P, H): cooked saffron rice. For bounteousness.

Biranjāna (P): uncooked rice grains. For liberality.

Zāmut Dódh (K): yogurt. For poise.

Nūn (K): salt. For patience.

Davāt (P, H): inkwell. For deep wisdom.

Qalam (P, H): pen. For the power of knowledge.

Qalamdān (P, H): penholder. For restraint in the use of that power.

Prakāsha (S): lighted candles. For righteousness.

Sudarshana (S): images of the Beloved (goddesses, ancestors, etc.). For auspiciousness.

Darpana (S): mirror. For purity.

Panchānga (S): new calendar and almanac. For renewal.

Thāl (H): round platter made of silver or bronze. For unity.

The letters in parentheses indicate the linguistic origins of the names of the articles included in my Nauróz arrangement, which is an attempt at replicating the Nauróz *nazrāneh* (offering) of a typical late 18th-century aristocratic Kashmiri Pandit household in Mughal or Nawabi North India. H = Hindavi, K = Kashmiri, P = Persian, S = Sanskrit.

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FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR EMERITUS

A very successful get-together of the Association was held, for the first time at the official residence of Mr Justice Sanjay Kishan and Shrimati Shivani Kaul. With a wonderful setting and the expansive back lawn, it was an ideal venue for the winter function. We also take this opportunity to thank Pandit Neeraj Kishan and Shrimati Vatsala Kaul for hosting the previous functions at their official residence at Mother Teresa Crescent.

This time we had the good fortune of a mesmerising show by magician and illusionist Tushar, who delighted us with his skills.

Nature enthusiasts joined the picnic, arranged by the KPA, to Pratapgarh Farms near Jhajjar in Haryana. It was simply wonderful and everyone enjoyed it.

— Col Valmiki Katju

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A Man of Many Talents

Padma Shri Pandit Krishna Prasad Dar

BY HARSH DAR

Krishna Prasad Dar was a man way ahead of his times, a man who shone among the many luminaries of his era. Pandit Har Prasad Dar's fourth child, Krishna Prasad Dar was born on 30 January 1893. Pandit Har Prasad had joined the Oudh-Rohilkhand Railway in Lucknow in the 1870s and was transferred to several different places during his career with the Railway Account Services, from Chittagong and Calcutta (now Kolkata) in eastern India to Rawalpindi and Lahore in north-western India. This was something rare and almost unheard of during the 19th century. It was during Pandit Har Prasad's service in the Railways in Calcutta, the then capital of undivided India, that Krishna Prasad came into this world.

Kishan Bhai, as he would be later known in Allahabad, studied at the St Xavier's High School in Calcutta and later at the Church Mission College in Lucknow where his father was posted as chief examiner of accounts just before retirement. Pandit Har Prasad was awarded the title of Rai Bahadur in 1904 for his distinguished service to the British Indian Railways, and after retirement from the Railways he moved to Allahabad.

In 1917, Kishan Bhai and his younger brother Ramji Bhai both joined the Allahabad Law Journal Press, a printing and publishing house that brought out legal journals for

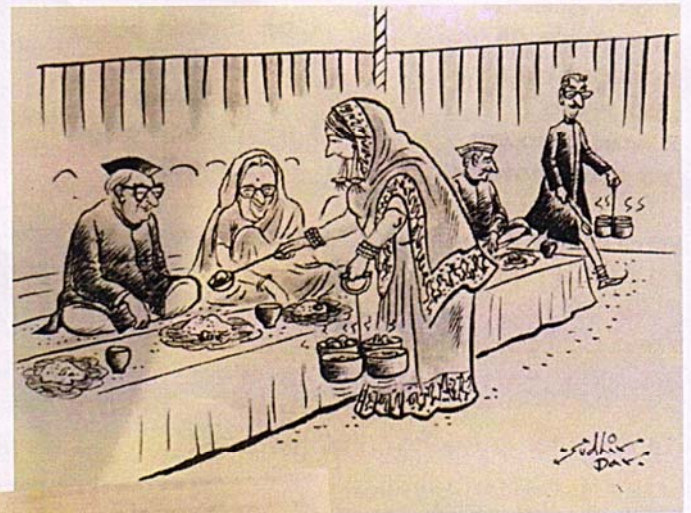
Right from childhood, Kishan Bhai had a keen sense of design and an eye for new technology.

the newly set up High Court of Allahabad of British India's United Provinces. This publishing house was set up by Pandit Mohan Lal Nehru, the eldest son-in-law of Rai Bahadur Har Prasad Dar, at his premises at Hamilton Road, George Town, not very far from the famous Swaraj Bhawan, the ancestral home of Motilal Nehru's family in Allahabad.

Right from childhood, Kishan Bhai had a keen sense of design and an eye for new technology. He also acquired project and event management skills, which helped him set up and manage this large and technologically complex printing press. The press grew to become one of the leading printing presses in India in the 1930s and 1940s, with famous authors and publishers getting their works printed here during the pre-offset printing era. Notably, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's seminal works – *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* and *Glimpses of World History* – were entrusted for printing to Krishna Prasad Dar. The *Nehru Abhinandan Granth*, edited by eminent men such as Dr Rajendra Prasad, Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and

Purushottamdas Tandon, as the sixtieth birthday book for Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, also bore the imprint of Krishna Prasad Dar as did Congress session reports and a few works of Mahatma Gandhi.

Kishan Bhai himself authored pioneering books on printing, among them the iconic one in English titled *Copy and Proof*, and another in Hindi called *Adhunik Chhapayi*, both considered printing manuals of the time. In the 1950s, he was invited by the Government of India as a technical advisor to improve the quality and productivity of government printing presses. In 1975, he was fittingly awarded the Padma Shri for his contribution to the Indian printing and publishing industry.



INTRODUCTION

My father was a gourmet of gourmets, having acquired the traditional art of Kashmiri Pandit cooking from his mother and the professional cooks employed in their home during his years of adolescence and youth. But for several decades the recipes remained closetted in his mind until he was persuaded by family and friends to reveal the magic of the age-old culinary skills of one of the world's finest cuisines.

Those were the days.

In the early years of this century, every other Kashmiri Pandit home in the plains had a professional Kashmiri cook in residence, whose mastery of his art was demonstrated twice a day, at lunch and dinner. Cooks came for as little as Rs 10 per month, with food, shelter and clothing. Pure ghee, then, was less than a rupee a seer, mustard oil—four seers for a rupee, so one can



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . .

My warmest thanks to all my near and dear ones who provided invaluable assistance in making this book possible.

To my wife Daya, a devoted companion and my severest critic—in the best sense of the word—I owe many debts. Her sincere, honest criticism over the years has urged me to 'try and try again' to attain perfection.

To Ashok and Sudhir, my sons, who persuaded me to embark on a project so close to my heart. Sudhir has enlivened the book with his illustrations.

To my elder daughter-in-law Rati, who did commendable work in revising and editing the entire text and offering valuable suggestions along the way.

To my younger daughter-in-law Rummy, for taking great pains in scrutinizing and correcting the typescript and the final proofs.

To my grand-daughters Gita, Sunil and Anita, who spent many hours of their spare time taking dictation over several months.

Allahabad, 1977

KRISHNA PRASAD DAR

A few pages from Krishna Prasad Dar's classic Kashmiri cookbook, illustrated by his younger son and famed cartoonist Sudhir Dar



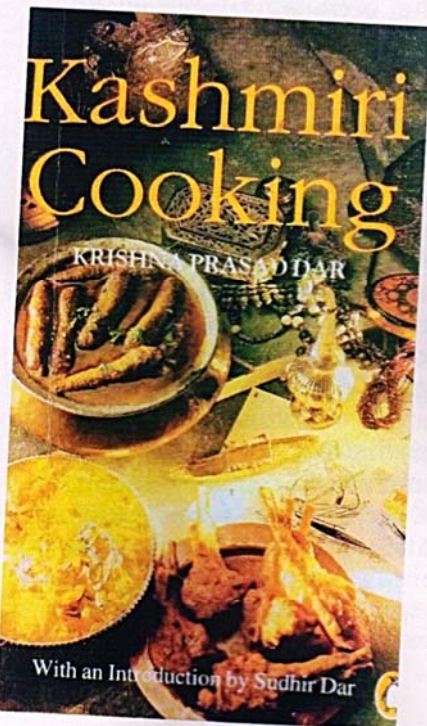
Above: Fittingly decorated with the Padma Shri; right: As a handsome young man

Kishan Bhai was married to Daya Shuri (née Atal), the daughter of Diwan Jai Nath Atal of Jaipur, and they had four children. Their elder daughter was married to the inspector general and head of Madhya Pradesh Police R.N. Nagu and the younger daughter was married to Commander I.B. Hukku of the Indian Navy. The elder son Asoka furthered his father's legacy of printing and went on to become director of printing and stationery with the UP Government, and Chairman, Northern Regional Institute of Printing Technology, and his younger son is the renowned cartoonist Sudhir Dar, whose pocket cartoons illumined publications such as *The Hindustan Times*, *The Pioneer* and *The Statesman* for years.

A connoisseur of Kashmiri Pandit cuisine, Kishan Bhai found joy in cooking delicacies and went on to author a book on Kashmiri cuisine, *Kashmiri Cooking*. This collection of more than a hundred Kashmiri recipes, published by Penguin India in the 1970s and wonderfully illustrated by Sudhir Dar, became an instant classic of its time.

And that's not the entirety of the talents and skills of this printing pioneer and masterchef. Krishna Prasad Dar was also an accomplished homoeopath, a skilled photographer as well as a prize-winning gardener. Any tribute to such a man is bound to fall short of words.

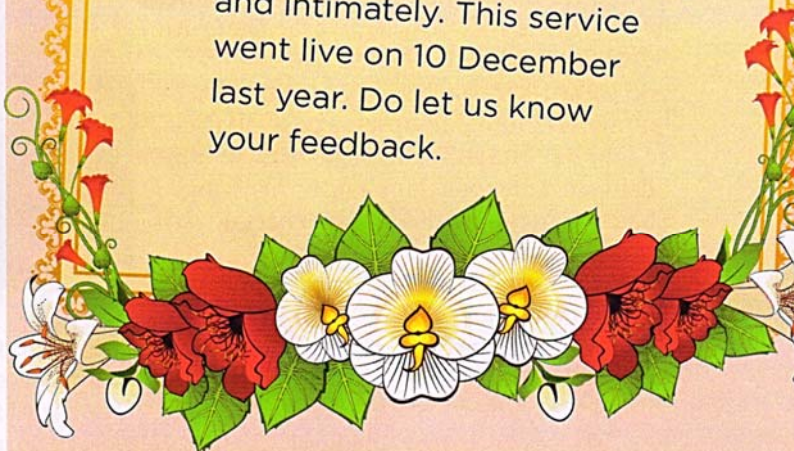
Harsh Dar is the grandson of Pandit Krishna Prasad Dar; he is the son of Asoka Dar. Having worked earlier with ITC Limited in Kolkata and with Surya Nepal, an ITC JV in Kathmandu, he now works as a management consultant and lives in Noida.



PERFECT MATCH!

Matrimonial alliances are waiting to be forged on the KPA website!

This year has rung in new things! The KPA has introduced matrimonial ads on the website *kpadelhi.org*. You can upload the details of the to-be bride and groom, and be able to reach members of the community comfortably and intimately. This service went live on 10 December last year. Do let us know your feedback.



Classified Ads

Classified advertisements, to publicise goods and services by members of the community, for members of the community or of specific interest and relevance to the community, will also be launched on the KPA website: *kpadelhi.org*. You are all invited to use this facility.

Tariff (for six months) for matrimonials/ classifieds:

- * For KPA Members: Rs 1,500
- * For KP Non-members: Rs 2,500

Kashmir Shaivism

The Histories and Mysteries

BY COL VALMIKI KATJU

An eight-year-old boy from Kerala decided to move to the Himalayas in search of knowledge about Brahmana, Self and Eternal Truth. He chanced to meet a sage who asked who he was. The young lad replied in eight shlokas, which are known as Nirvana Shatakam.

The boy's responses to the question 'who are you?' were full of *gyan*. In the first three lines of each shloka he responds with a negative of all qualities, for example, he is not the mind, intellect, ego, thought; nor the organs of perception like eyes, ears, and so on. And the last line says that he is 'pure consciousness, supreme bliss', the Self and Shiva himself. The sage named him Shankara and took him under his wings. Shankara became Adi Shankaracharya, who set up the four *peeths* in the country.

Why did Adi Shankaracharya choose Shiva for all *gunas*?

It was because Shiva of the Holy Trinity has so many facets in various manifestations.

To some, he is Bhole Shankar, full of blissful innocence. He is the Lord who melts before his devotees even if they happen to be

undeserving to the extent of having serious ramifications – a case in point is Ravana the Brahmin-turned-*rakshasa*, who performed *tapasya* and was granted a boon of immortality.

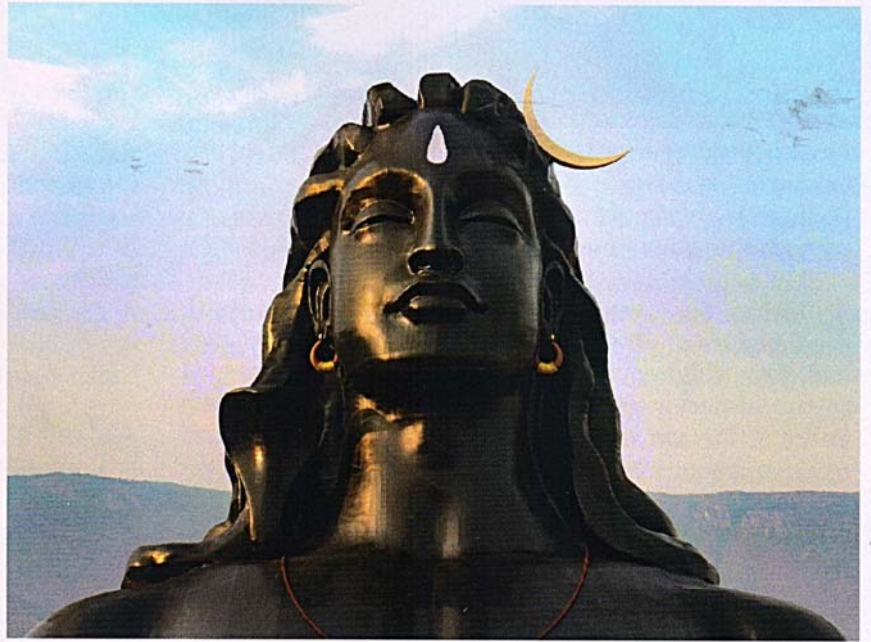
Shiva is shown in all his fury and frenzy when agitated and his anger knows no bounds when he starts his Tandava Nritya. He comes to the rescue of the Devas when, as Nilkantha and Somnath, he contains in his throat the poison churned out of the ocean.

He is Mahakala, the timeless one, under whose spell everything in the universe moves in perfect harmony, and who decides life and death. He is also Pashupatinath, seated in the jungle in a meditative pose, looking after all the animals.

He is Adiyogi, with all the *gunas*.

However, he is the only lord in the Hindu pantheon who is a naught without his consort Parvati, because she is his real *shakti*, his *ardhangini*, his confidante and adviser. He is Kailas Nath, who sits in a yoga *mudra* on Mount Kailas. As the heat of his penance created all the vegetation, he is called Vrikshanath. On the question of what these plants, trees and shrubs will survive on, the Adiyogi spoke about the five elements, the five Bhutas. That is why he is also called Bhuteshwara or Bhutanath.

Although Brahma started the process of creation, the



The Adiyogi Shiva statue is 112-foot tall (34 m) and located at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Designed by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, founder of the Isha Foundation, it was built by the foundation and weighs around 500 tonnes. All photos: Wikicommons/Wikipedia

Adiyogi stabilized it and ensured its perpetuation. That is why he is also called Kalpeshwara or Kalpanath.

When he turned south from the Himalayas to shower his blessings, he became Dakshinmurthi. He is also called Mukteshwara or the gateway to liberation; Swayambhu – self-created (the hilltop temple of Swayambhu is located in Kathmandu, Nepal); Nataraj the dynamic dancer; Kala Bhairava, destroyer of ignorance; Somasundara, the enchanting seducer; Achaleshwar, the absolutely still ascetic. To amalgamate completely with his consort he became Ardhanareeshwar – half-man and half-woman. And above all, he is Mahadeva, the great *devata*, and Maheshwara, the great Ishwara. No other god in the Hindu pantheon has received such accolades.

In the words of Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, 'Shi-va' is 'that which is not', a primordial emptiness; Shiva is also the first-ever yogi, Adiyogi, the one who perceived this emptiness. Adiyogi is symbol and myth, historic figure and living presence, creator and destroyer, outlaw and ascetic, cosmic dancer and passionate lover all at once, a progenitor of mysticism, a symbol for the dance of life and death, distilling concepts of time, space, motion and velocity into stupendous iconography.'

Ordinary mortals get flabbergasted by such a description of this difficult-to-explain enigma that is Lord Shiva. However, the Kashmiri Pandits of yore recognized such qualities and it was but natural for them to surrender unconditionally to Him and practise what is called Kashmir Shaivism.

Besides the above attributes Shiva, in our Vedic yogic culture is the recognized Adiyogi, the first who implanted the seed of yoga in the enlightened few. They turned out to be the *saptarishis*, who showed the deserving mind to imbibe true knowledge of the Supreme Brahman. Once Shiva found his disciples he was overjoyed with ecstasy and danced in gay abandon, and thus started imparting true knowledge, which took 84 years of *sadhana*. On the next full moon, on Guru Poornima, the Adiyogi became the Adi Guru, and the full moon after the change from the summer to the winter solstice is celebrated as Guru Poornima.

It was but natural for the Kashmiri Pandits to take on Lord Shankara as their *isht devata* and begin a form of Hindu religion known as 'Kashmir Shaivism'. This is a group of several monistic, mystic and tantric religious traditions that flourished in Kashmir from the latter centuries of the first millennium CE through the early centuries of the second. These traditions have survived only in a moderated form among the Pandits of Kashmir, but there have recently been efforts to revive them in India and globally. These traditions must be distinguished from the dualistic Shaiva Siddhanta tradition that flourished in medieval Kashmir.

Kashmir Shaivism also involves Shaiva Tantra, the confidential and very potent discourse between Shiva and his consort Parvati. Tantra means technology. So, as a consequence, a Tantrik is one who has ample knowledge of a particular type of technology. People who do not understand this particular philosophy are bound to have dangerous misconceptions about Tantra. Many associate it with unbridled promiscuity. However, Tantra has the essential pre-requisites of self-discipline, will power, and regulated habits and lifestyles. As it is all-pervading, it is about being in conscious proximity with sexuality, food and intoxicants without getting bogged down in them. If it is not practised initially under the guidance of a guru, one may get trapped in the above compulsions and not be able to get out of them. Tantra's principal premise is that if something tries to trap one compulsively, one should approach it consciously and evolve beyond it.

What happened between Shiva and Parvati was a spirited conversation, conducted in the deepest intimacy between husband and wife. Sadhguru compares this with the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. One happened in a situation of intimacy, the other on the brink of extreme violence and bloodshed. The common factor was the presence of a divine entity which gave tremendous opportunity to ask questions of ultimate import. Once Parvati became one with him, Shiva expounded the path of self-realization in various beautiful and intimate ways. This came to be known as Tantra.

This discourse is divided into Agama or the spoken word of Shiva, and Nigama or the response of Shakti Parvati. Shiva's pronouncements, Agama, consist of four

parts. The first part includes the philosophical and spiritual knowledge. The second part covers yoga and mental discipline. The third specifies rules for the construction of temples and for sculpting and carving the figures of deities for worship in temples. The last part of the Agama includes rules pertaining to the observances of religious rites, rituals, and festivals. Nigama is Vedic *upasana* or *karmakanda*, which concentrates mainly on Japa, Jaga and Yagnya (fire sacrifice).

A lot has been said about the necessity of a guru in the path of yoga. Initiation is passed down with the practice of *diksha*, a ceremonial invitation in which divinely received mantras are given to the initiate by a Guru (one etymological theory says that the word 'guru' is the combination of two Sanskrit root words 'gu' meaning darkness or ignorance and 'ru' meaning to remove). In Tantric *sadhana* the guru is the first and most indispensable element. This selection of the guru for Tantric initiation is a very difficult job for the simple reason that such gurus do not make themselves known at all. Therefore, initiation into Tantra depends on the guru, while the disciple has only to prepare himself. When the guru feels that the disciple is ready, then he initiates him into the Tantric tradition. As such, the problem of finding a proper guru for Tantric *sadhana* should not arise at all; when the disciple is ready, the guru will be revealed.

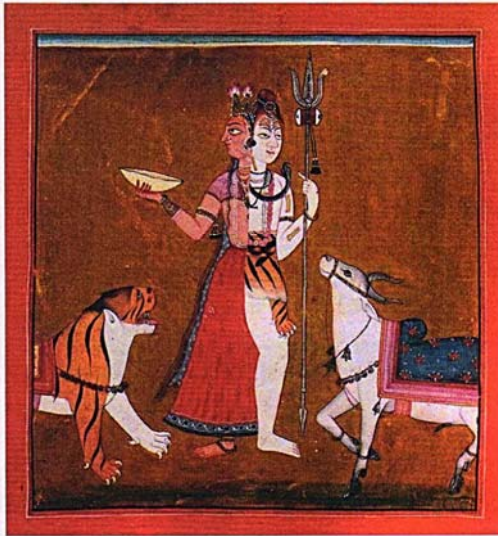
Shaivism is intrinsically related to Shaktism, the reverence for the divine female (Devi) as an equal and essential partner of the divine masculine (Shiva).

The Tantric guru may be a sannyasin or a householder, but what is important is that he is proficient in his art and does not use the power for evil purposes. Although a householder guru can have the authority to impart the knowledge, yet it should not mean that one can become a guru just because he is a householder. Since the householder is accepted as a responsible member of society and has a great understanding of the average person, he is also allowed to act as a guru provided he knows the science.

It is also devoted to the pursuit of supernatural abilities (*siddhis*) and powers (*bala*) such as averting danger (*santih*) and the ability to harm enemies (*abhicharah*). Powerful female deities called *yoginis* were worshipped as Shakti, the female aspects of the divine. Kashmir Shaivism also devoted its energy to study the power of *anima* (awareness that one is present in everything), *laghima* (lightness of freedom from presumed diversity or differences), *prakamyā* (forbearance, grasp and acceptance of cosmic diversity), *vasita* (control, realization of one's power to do whatever one wants) and *isitva* (self-lordship or feeling of complete freedom). All these were acquired through *yuktih* (reasoning), *shastras* (scriptures) and the initiating guru. One of the principal features was that the approach to Lord Shiva was only through Goddess Shakti, his consort.

Shaivism is intrinsically related to Shaktism, the reverence for the divine female (Devi) as an equal and essential partner of the divine masculine (Shiva), and the two are hard to separate.

Shakti is the dynamic aspect or energy of Shiva. She has an infinity of aspects such as *chit-shakti* (the power of intelligence), *ananda-shakti* (the power of freedom), *ichchha-shakti* (the power of will), *gnana-shakti* (the power of knowledge) and *kriya-shakti* (the power of creative action). The objective world or universe that we perceive as ours, with all its constituent and disparate objects, is an expansion of Shakti. Since Shiva is the ultimate reality, Shakti should not be mistaken as something different from him. There is no difference between Shiva and Shakti. Shakti is an indistinguishable aspect of Shiva performing a specific set of tasks with no distinction of her own. Whatever distinction we perceive exists because we cannot understand Shiva otherwise. The duality is an illusion created by our own ignorance and limitations. In the



(top) Ardhanareeshwar: Oneness of Shiva and Shakti.

(left) Shiva with his consort Parvati.

highest absolute self, all is one without a second and without any movement.

In Shākta Tantrism, Shakti as a Goddess is herself the ultimate deity. In monistic Kashmiri Shaivism she is incorporated into the metaphysical essence of the God, Shiva. Shiva is the *Shaktiman* (the 'possessor of Shakti') encompassing her within his androgynous nature as his integral power and consort. According to the predominant monistic Shaiva myth, Shiva out of a kind of play divides himself from Shakti and then in sexual union emanates and controls the universe through them.

Where is Shakti? It is in everything. It is the left half of Shiva. Shiva is consciousness; Shakti is energy. Shiva is the tongue; Shakti is the power of speech. Shiva and Shakti live together, but Shiva cannot materialize and become active without the co-operation of Shakti. Therefore, Shakti is the subject matter of Tantra Shastra, whether Shakti Tantra or Shaiva Tantra. Although Shakti is depicted by a feminine

frame, termed as a goddess, described as a beautiful lady, the Tantras unanimously declare that Shakti is the all-pervading and all-embracing existence in a saint and in a sinner, in a man and a woman, a believer and a nonbeliever.

This Advaita school of spiritual philosophy was founded by Sage Vasugupta of Kashmir in the last quarter of the 8th century CE. It is believed that as he could not find a suitable guru, his desire was fulfilled by Lord Shiva himself. This secret esoteric teaching was passed on in turns to Somananda (c. 850 CE), Utpaladeva (c. 970 CE) and Abhinavagupta (950–1020 CE).

The concept of free will plays a central role in Kashmir Shaivism. Known technically as *svatantraya*, it is the cause of the creation of the universe – a primordial force that stirs up the absolute and manifests the world inside the supreme consciousness of Shiva.

In *svatantraya* all conscious subjects are co-participants in various degrees to the divine sovereignty. Humans have a degree of free will limited by their level of consciousness.

Ultimately, Kashmir Shaivism as a monistic idealist philosophical system views all subjects to be identical – 'all are one' – and that one is Shiva, the supreme consciousness. Thus, all subjects have free will and are god/divine but can be ignorant of this. Ignorance too is a force projected by *svatantraya* itself upon the creation and can be removed by *svatantraya* and also by self-knowledge.

One function of *svatantraya* is granting divine grace – *shaktipat*. In this philosophical system, spiritual liberation is accessible by mere effort, but can be guided by the will or grace of god (i.e., the liberated, the masters). Thus, if the disciple finds such a master, he need only to surrender himself and await divine grace to

eliminate the limitations that imprison his consciousness.

Causality in Kashmir Shaivism is considered to be created by *svatantraya* along with the universe. Thus, there can be no contradiction, limitation or rule to force Shiva to act one way or the other. *Svatantraya* always exists beyond the limiting shield of cosmic illusion, Maya.

Anuttara is the ultimate principle in Kashmir Shaivism, and as such, it is the fundamental reality underlying the whole universe. Among the multiple interpretations of *anuttara* are: 'supreme, 'above all' and 'unsurpassed reality'. As the ultimate Universe principle, *anuttara* is identified with Shiva/Shakti, the supreme consciousness, uncreated light (*prakasha*), supreme subject (*aham*) and a temporal vibration (*spanda*). The practitioner who realizes *anuttara* through any means, whether by his own efforts or by direct transmission through the grace of Shiva/Shakti, is liberated and perceives absolutely no difference between himself and

the body of the Universe. *Anuttara* is different from the notion of transcendence in that, even though it is above all, it does not imply a state of separation from the Universe.

Spanda is not a physical movement that can be seen. Rather, it is a mental or physical pulsation or motion, a sort of vibration, for example, between a guru and his disciple. The best way to imagine *spanda* is to think of a wave in the ocean, surrounded by others and emanating from all different places at once. Abinavagupta called *spanda* the 'pulsation of the ecstasy of the Divine Consciousness.' This word forms an important part of Kashmir Shaivism philosophy, which believes that the Ultimate Reality throbs with *spanda* at all times. Through yoga practice and deep meditation, it is possible to feel the energy behind *spanda* and how it affects every experience in one's life. Thus, *spanda* is defined as the dynamics of consciousness, being not a physical movement, not a psychological activity (like pleasure) and not even a movement of energy (*prana*), such as hunger and thirst, but being the subtle vibration which is the source and foundation of all these. When we sense this pulsation inside us, we sense our own personal spark of that huge, primordial life force. It is the energy behind the breath, the heartbeat, and the movement of our thoughts and feelings. It is also the source of all our inner experiences.

Non-dual Kashmir Shaivism was influenced by, and took over doctrines from, several orthodox and heterodox Indian religious and philosophical traditions. These include Vedanta, Samkhya, Patanjali Yoga and Nyayas, and various Buddhist schools, including Yogachara and Madhyamika, and also Tantra tradition. Non-dual Kashmir Shaivism went underground for a number of centuries. While there may have been yogis and practitioners quietly following the teachings, there were no major writers or publications after, perhaps, the 14th century. In the 20th century, Swami Lakshman Joo, a Kashmiri Pandit, helped revive both the scholarly and yogic streams of Kashmir Shaivism. His contribution is enormous. He inspired a generation of scholars who made Kashmir Shaivism a legitimate field of inquiry within the academy.

Kashmir Shaivism describes the contraction (*mala*) of Consciousness into phenomenal existence. Liberation (*moksha*) from *mala* can be achieved by *sadhana* for which Kashmir Shaivism gives four methods (*upaya*):

1. **Universal Consciousness** is the fundamental stuff of the universe. This Consciousness is one and includes the whole. It could also be called God or Shiva.
2. **Mala:** Consciousness contracts itself. The one becomes many. Shiva



Sri Yantra diagram with ten Mahavidyas. The triangles represent Shiva and Shakti, the snake represents *spanda* and *kundalini*.

becomes the individual (*jiva*). This contraction is called *mala* (impurity). There are three *malas*, the *mala* of individuation (*anava mala*), the *mala* of the limited mind (*mayiya mala*), and the *mala* of the body (*karma mala*).

3. **Upaya:** An individual caught in the suffering of embodied existence, afflicted by the three *malas*, eventually yearns to return to his or her primordial state of Universal Consciousness. To attain this, he or she undertakes *sadhana* or spiritual practice. Kashmir Shaivism describes four methods (*upayas*): *anavopaya*, the method of the body, *shaktopaya*, the method of the mind, *sambhavopaya*, the method of Consciousness, and *anupaya* the 'method-less' method.
4. **Moksha:** The fruit of the individual's *sadhana* is the attainment of self-realisation (*moksha*). In Kashmir Shaivism, the state of liberation (*mukti*) is called *sahaja samadhi* and is characterised by the attainment of unwavering bliss-consciousness while living one's ordinary life.

Somananda takes a less polemical approach towards Shaktism. He argues that there is ultimately no difference between Shakti and Shiva, who is the possessor of Shakti. He supports this contention with the analogy of the inseparability of heat from fire, which is the possessor of heat. Nevertheless, he asserts that it is more proper to refer to the ultimate reality as Shiva rather than Shakti. As a matter of fact Kashmir Shaivism believes that Shiva without Shakti is powerless, a virtual zero, as was Samson without his hair. For this reason when a Kashmiri Pandit sits for his *sadhana* and performs religious rituals, besides him sits his wife as the Devi Shakti.

The basic pattern of spiritual practice, which also reflects the appropriation of Goddess worship (Shaktism) by Shaivism is the *approach to Shiva through Shakti*. As the Shaiva scripture *Vijnana-Bhairava* proclaims, Shakti is the door. The adept pursues the realisation of identity with the omnipotent Shiva by assuming his mythic agency in emanating and controlling the Universe through Shakti.

'Om Namah Shivaya'

Bibliography: Wikipedia; 'Adiyogi - The Source of Yoga by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev'; *International Journal of Tantric Studies*; Spanda Foundation; *Tirumala News for Pilgrims*; 'An Introduction to Tantra Shastra' by Swami Satyananda Saraswati in *Yoga* magazine, March 2017.

Remembering Father

BY RAJ GOPAL KATJU

Triveni Sangam,
Allahabad

My father Justice Shiva Nath Katju was a true karmayogi. Versatile is one word that aptly describes him. So let me start from the beginning.

Born as the eldest child of Dr Kailas Nath Katju in January 1910, by the time he came of age his father was one of the leading lawyers of Allahabad High Court. Naturally, he followed in his footsteps. However, before this, he rose to become Sergeant Major in the University Training Corps (UTC) – the forerunner of the NCC – the highest rank achievable by a university student. He also captained the Allahabad University cricket team in 1932.

Being the eldest among the six children, he was pampered, and as soon as he joined university, his father presented him with a brand-new Morris Minor car. He also started smoking and routinely kept a tin (50 cigarettes) of Carlton cigarettes. Our grandmother came to know about it and kept quiet for a few days. But then she could not resist herself and one day she entered his room unannounced and said, 'Shivaji, if you have to, then at least smoke a decent brand.' She took out a tin of 555 State Express cigarettes (in those days it was the ultimate brand), kept it on the table and walked out!

Marriage in 1933 made Father take up his responsibilities seriously and from then on he progressed in his profession. Our mother passed away in 1937 due to tuberculosis, a dreaded incurable disease in those days, and he married for the second time.

Papaji, as we used to call him, lived a life somewhat aloof from us six children, as was the custom in those days, tended by his faithful but eccentric man Friday Daulat Singh, a Kumaoni, whose melodious strains on the flute during the rains would charm all of us in the house. We would see Father every evening during dinner, as he was too busy in his various kinds of work during the day. Mother looked after all our needs, such as homework and meals.

All eight of us used to sit on mats for dinner and Sunday lunch with a low stool (a *chowki*) in front with the thali placed on it. The cook Ganga used to serve us all most efficiently. Father was a quick eater and I was the slowest of the lot. No wonder, at times, I used to get admonished for this shortcoming!

Our studies were looked after by Mother, and Father never interfered. His guidance, however, was always there. When I desired to not take the Class XII examinations because of being too young, he agreed at once. He also advised me to complete my graduation in science at the university before taking the entrance examinations for the Indian Institute of Technology. My success in it was also thanks to him. He sincerely believed that the best form of education was to see the country and learn first-hand about its geography, history, climate and people.

We were allowed to watch one film a month – enthralling movies showing the exploits of, say, Tarzan of the Apes, Superman, Roy Rogers or Gene Autry. Whenever

any of us requested Mother for a second one in a month, her answer invariably was, 'Ask Papa'. She knew full well that we did not have the guts to ask Papa. One day we got around our mother to see a second movie in a month. In those days English movies were only screened at Palace Theatre, owned by Dossa Gandhi, a cousin of Feroze Gandhi's. The film was most probably either *Sabrina* or *Roman Holiday*. Father was not interested in movies, but this one he thought was based on the life of Princess Margaret. During intermission, we came out and, to our horror, we found Father at the foyer, talking to the proprietor. He gave a smile and asked how we were liking the movie. We breathed a sigh of relief.

Sometime in the early 1950s, during our summer vacations, one day father announced that he would be going to Nainital and he asked if we two elder boys would like to accompany him. We jumped at this grand offer. At that time the United Provinces government was at its

summer capital. We stayed at Metropole Hotel, which was one of the best in town. On reaching we were given enough money to go riding on the flats, skating, seeing movies and enjoying ourselves – eating roasted *bhutta*, ice cream et al. One day we were invited for lunch by the chief minister – Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant. Pantji was very cordial and enquired about our studies, the games we played and so on, and we dutifully responded to his queries. At lunchtime, we entered the dining room and sat at the dining table. The story goes that Pantji, during the freedom struggle, tried to save Nehruji from a lathi charge and got a blow on his neck, which resulted in his hands and head shaking as if he was suffering from Parkinson's disease. To facilitate eating, he would be given all the food in a big silver bowl. We did not know

this. So when Pantji put his spoon in the bowl, it started clanging like a bell. It was a sudden shock to us and our innocent reaction was to put our hands on our mouths and start to giggle. Father gave us a ferocious glare. That was enough. On our way back, we got a harsh dressing-down for our misbehaviour.

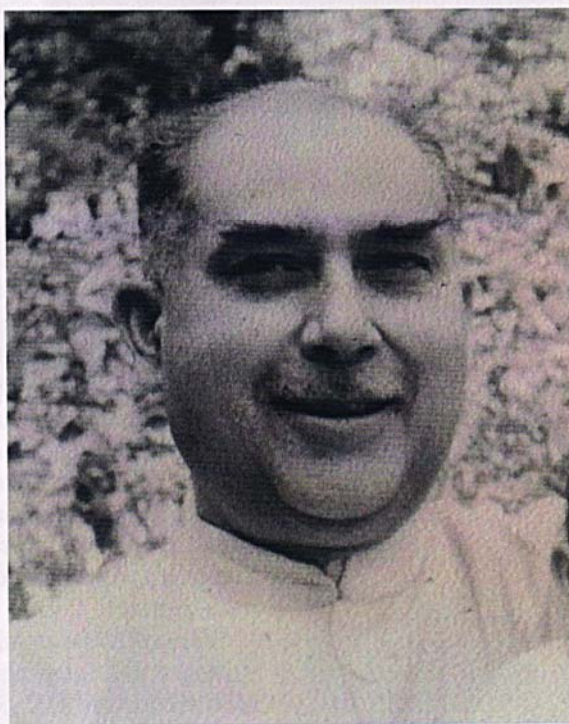
Our grandfather – Father's father – a freedom fighter and follower of Mahatma Gandhi – was jailed several times and was finally persuaded by Lord Mountbatten and Pandit Nehru (who called him Kailas Bhai) to join politics. Grandfather ended up occupying many important posts, firstly, in the provisional government of the United Provinces from 1937 to 1939 and again from April 1946 to



August 1947 as minister of law and justice. After Independence, he was governor of Orissa (now Odisha), governor of West Bengal, Union home minister, Union defence minister, and finally, chief minister of the reorganized Madhya Pradesh.

Papaji also delved in politics and became an MLA in 1952 and then an MLC in 1957 in Uttar Pradesh. But later-day politics was not his cup of tea (besides, it was straining the family's budget) and Mother was delighted when he was elevated to the Bench of Allahabad High Court in 1962.

He occupied the chair till 1972 and was then appointed head of the industrial tribunal at Jabalpur till 1975. During his law practice, he was also a part-time lecturer in law at Allahabad University. He used to get hundreds of copies of the LLB examination answer sheets, which he would pass on to us after checking and marking the answers. We had to add up the total in pencil and would get a rupee per copy, a substantial amount in those days.



Justice Shiva Nath Katju, a multifaceted man

After he completed his assignment at the tribunal, Father joined the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, rising to become its president for two terms. We would see Late Shri Ashok Singhal, then general secretary, come to our place for consultation. Shrimati Indira Gandhi, who addressed him as Shivaji Bhai, wanted him to rejoin the party and offered him a gubernatorial post. Makhan Lal Fotedar, who had been his student at Allahabad University, was assigned the task of wooing him back. But this allurements did not have any effect.

Father was an outdoors person and, apart from cricket, he learnt wrestling. He was also fond of riding. During his legal practice, our grandfather, Dr Katju, acquired a horse-drawn carriage and a thoroughbred Australian stallion. Grandmother, who was a TB patient, used to go on

the buggy to our country house, called Salori Bagiya, on the banks of the River Ganga. When Grandfather joined the freedom movement, he dispensed with this show of extravagance. However, Father thought it a good idea to use the horse for riding. A proper saddle was procured and Father went for his equestrian outing in the mornings. One day, while he was on his way back, a car from behind blew its horn and the horse baulked, bolting out of control. Near a bungalow, Father's right leg crashed into the iron gate and he was thrown off, resulting in a compound fracture. In those days, medical facilities in Allahabad were not that good, and he had to be evacuated to Lucknow for treatment.

Papaji was fluent in Hindi, English and Urdu, and well

versed in Sanskrit and Persian. Religion came naturally to him, and in many religious functions I saw him correct the priest in his reading of shlokas and mantras. Papaji revered Bhagwan Gopinathji, a yogi of Kashmir, and got his memoirs translated into Hindi and published during the Kumbh Mela at Prayag, where an ashram had been established for Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley. He also revered Pandit Devi Datta Shukul, his guru and revered master (who was visually challenged), and spent many a pleasant hour in his company, discussing the Vedas, Tantra, Upanishads and other issues of Hinduism. Whenever Shukulji Maharaj came over to our place (the driver was sent to pick him up from his residence), he was treated with due reverence. We brothers were called in and paid our obeisance by touching his feet. With his eyes closed and a serene, contented smile lighting his visage, he would touch our face, ask about our welfare and give words of advice. Mother dutifully served him and his wife dinner with her own hands. In his presence one could feel the divinity and aura of holiness.

Father was also very hospitable to one self-styled Nawab Sahib, a Shia, who used to come frequently in the evenings to discuss topics of interest to Muslims in Allahabad. Going by his clothes, he hardly looked like royalty, wearing an unironed pyjama, a stained achkan and a worn-out *topi*. He was always served tea and snacks. When we asked Mother why he was given tea and snacks nearly every day, she replied, 'You must understand that he entertains your father for a couple of hours, gives him all the news of the

Maharana Bhupal Singh, one of Father's many royal acquaintances



shahar, and this meagre hospitality is nothing before the good time your father passes in his company.'

Father was a proud Freemason, but he kept it a close secret from all of us except our mother. Being a Shiva *bhakta*, he was very much involved in Tantrik Shastra and was in communication with the legendary head of the US Tantrik Society, Dr Pierre Bernard, who was also a professor of mathematics at New York University and an expert in Hatha Yoga. Father used to tell us that at the age of 70, Dr Bernard used to take a standing-back somersault and land straight on his feet. After Dr Bernard's death, father corresponded with his wife, Blanche de Vries Bernard, who herself was an expert in Hatha Yoga.

Father's interest in *pitra puja* was a later development. He got in touch with Blanche de Vries Bernard and was very keen to have a copy of *The Book of the Pitris*. He said it was a rare book and he was very keen to know its contents. He had come across another paper on *pitris* by Louis Jacolliot, chief justice, Chandra Nagar. This added to his knowledge about *pitris*. The result was that *tarpan* became a daily part of his puja.

In this context he told me an interesting story. We had a big *takhat* in the lawn duly covered to sit on or lie down under the open sky. Father had returned after a cool and refreshing dip in the Ganga and lay down on the *takhat* to relax on the pleasant summer evening. In a state of twilight sleep he felt he was surrounded by a small crowd. Their expressions showed concern. He asked the cause of their seeming displeasure. He was told that he had annoyed a particular lady ancestor by not doing *tarpan* in her name while bathing in the river. He felt he had remembered all of them. Anyway, it was a slip-up on his part. He spoke to his guru about this strange experience and the latter's advice was that during his daily puja Father must keep an *aasan* for this ancestor as a mark of respect. Perhaps our ancestors watch over us! I asked him once whether he had any unusual experience as a result of his daily ancestor worship. He said he felt their presence around him all the time. It is said that the sudden joys of life are due to the blessings of our ancestors.

Father mentioned an incident that triggered his curiosity and later his deep attachment towards Tantrik *sadhana*. It was Late Raja Sir Daya Kishan Kaul who gave him a book on Malini Vijyotar Tantra. This was the first step towards Devi *sadhana*. He was lucky to have Pt. Devi Dutt Shukul in Allahabad, who initiated him. He carried on this *sadhana* throughout his life.

Father had an interesting experience in ras (now Chennai) when he visited the Theosophical Society along with our sister Vilas. Father was in search of a book, which he thought he would find in their library or in its original form in their archives. Unfortunately, the library was closed on Monday. They sat in their main hall facing the marble statues of the founders Madame Blavatsky and Col Alcott. Father told me that the gurus of the founders were of Indian origin, and one of them a Kashmiri Brahmin. We saw a painting, 'The Messenger', in front of the entrance to their museum. It was by Nicholas Roerich who had presented it to the Society. Vilas recounted, 'Little did I know that one

day I would meet his son Dr Svetoslav Roerich himself.'

The holy river Ganga had a special attachment for Father. In his spare time, during special festive days he would go to the *sangam* (the confluence of the Rivers Ganga and Yamuna), sit with religious leaders and discuss matters of Hindu philosophy. During Magh Mela (every year), Ardh



(left) Louis Jacolliot (right) Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant



Kumbh (every six years) and Maha Kumbh (every 12 years), the family used to move to the *mela* site where Father set up a few tents for the immediate and extended family. It was normal for us to visit *pandaals* where the Gita, Ramayana and other holy scriptures were expounded by religious saints who had set up camps. Some of the family members who felt like doing the *kalpavas* would stay near the *sangam* for a full one month of the holy season. We enjoyed the simple menu of puris, *alu rasdar*, *khatte kaddu ki tarkari* and *halwa* – the usual *satvik* diet at the camp.

Father was a history buff. He was interested in searching for the ancient *akshayvat*, the legendary banyan tree that survives for hundreds of years. In the Bhagvadgita, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that among the trees he is the banyan, hence its religious importance. Father had heard that one of the species was located in the fort built by Emperor Akbar on the banks close to the *sangam*. At that time it was a restricted area as it was a military garrison, and housed an ammunition depot. Father was able to get permission, visit the place and trace the exact location of the tree, which he found still standing in all its splendour.

Father dabbled in literary activities too. He authored a collection of essays and anecdotes titled *Bikhre Phool* and followed it up by editing the *Allahabad Law Journal* and a religious magazine, *Chandi*, for many years. His essays

in his eyes, he would narrate the story about the Zutshis. Janki Didda herself and her children (Jeevan, Togo, Maharaj (Nanni) Takru, Mohini Wanchoo and Vidya Razdan, all had loud guttural voices and whenever they were together, sound decibels were on the higher side. From outside the room it seemed as if a slinging match was going on.

Someone remarked that the sound used to be so deafening that if a ghost was inside the room it would scamper out in a hurry, shouting '*tauba, tauba*'. Another remarked, '*lagta hai chhat deh jayega*'.

Father could never forget the affection of his *mamu*, Dr Sarweshwar Nath Kaul, a bachelor who would always be available if anyone needed medical attention. Called Mamuji, he moved to our household on Father's insistence, and was looked after by him and Mother till his last days. Our grand-uncle Amar Nath Katju, affectionately called Ambuji, was a frequent visitor from Jaora and he was also made comfortable by our parents in his old age. Close friends such as Justice D.P. Uniyal, Pandit Rama Dutt Shukla, Pandit Shitla Prasad, Justice Jawahar Takru, Justice Ramji Gurtoo and lawyer Shishu Mulla were always welcome at our home, and we children were taught to respect them. Kashmiri students such as Shri Makhan Lal Fotedar, Shri Duda, and nephews Ajay Narain Mushran and Sheel Haksar often came home during weekends for lunch or dinner and for advice on their studies and future jobs.

A well respected man, Father had many acquaintances among the princely royalty – the maharaja of Rewa, Maharana Bhupal Singh of Udaipur, Rajmata and her son Karni Singh of Bikaner, the raja of Sitamau, the nawab of Jaora, the raja of Sailana, the raja of Shankargarh, the

Father was a history buff. He was interested in searching for the ancient *akshayvat*, the legendary banyan tree that survives for hundreds of years.

used to appear in magazines and newspapers from time to time. He introduced me to the *Reader's Digest*, which I still subscribe to, and also have a collection of about 20 Reader's Digest Condensed Books, all thanks to him.

However, Father never forced his religious, political or literary beliefs on any of us children. The customs and rituals were there for us to see and participate in – during festivals such as Holi, Diwali, Krishna Janmashtmi and Dussehra, but we were free in our adult life to follow them as we pleased.

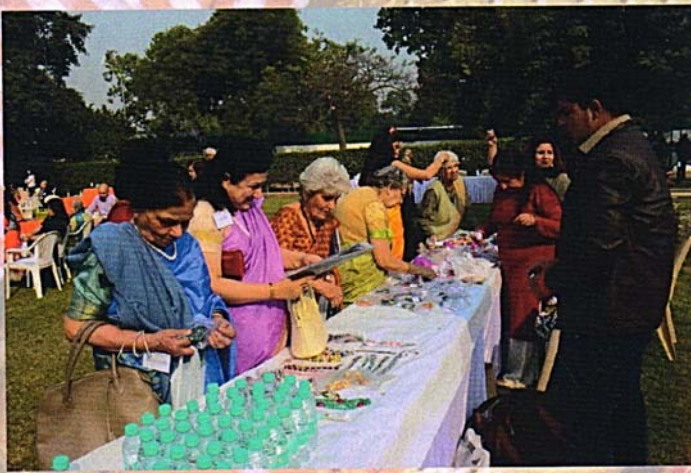
Papaji was particularly fond of some of our relatives – cousins Vidya Mushran, Jeevan Zutshi (son of Janki Zutshi), Kunjan Tankha and Amar Nath (Jyoti) Kaul. With a twinkle

raja of Vallabhipur (Saurashtra), Dr Karan Singh, the Rana royal family of Nepal, Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia, among others. This made Father a natural matchmaker for matrimonial alliances.

By the 1980s, Papaji was tired of his life's work and gradually became a recluse, remaining at the Allahabad home all the time. He left word for all that they may visit him at home, but should not expect him to come out.

After a slight fever for three days, without giving anyone trouble, he passed away in his sleep, three months short of 87 years. I am very grateful to the Almighty and consider myself very fortunate to have had a father like our Father.

—with inputs from Col Valmiki Katju



A Wonderful Winter Lunch

The December Afternoon Get-together in Pictures



Two Slices of Wonder

BY DEVINA TAIMNI

Devina Taimni is a 17-year-old national award-winning poet, who studies and lives in California, USA. Having lived in six countries, she has experienced many different cultures that have inspired her vibrant, strong and lyrical writing style. A passionate human rights activist, Devina hopes, through her writing, to raise awareness about the violations and inequalities around the world. These two poems are from Devina's self-published first book *Wonder: A Collection of Poems*.

About 'It's All Better Now'

This poem is a written hug. It brings out all the warm, fuzzy feelings that you get when you listen to your favourite song. It's reminiscent of the feeling you get when the windows are down, you're driving 85mbp on the highway, and singing with your best friends.

These songs remind of specific times I danced to them with my friends in our high-school parking lot or sang them on the beach in Mykonos. They just make me happy because I associate them with the best moments in my life. So even when I'm in my darkest days, I know I can turn on my playlist, put on my favourite songs, dance it out in my pajamas, and instantly feel better. So this poem is dedicated to uplifting melodies, beautiful harmonies and amazing rhythms that comfort me and always lift my mood.

I hope this song reminds you of that song whatever it is – dance EDM, jazz, R&B, or even country rap – and makes you feel better now.



It's All Better Now

We all have that song that brings back a feeling,
It leaves you dreaming and believing,
Squealing and screaming
because it's just that freeing.

It takes you back to when you first felt it,
the warm, comforting, exhilarating joy.
It makes the world turn in slow motion,
It's a commotion and devotion,
frozen in your own ocean.

It's the long drive you took
when it was just drizzling outside,
keys to start, hands up,
eyes up, laughs up.

It's the night that we stayed up dancing
till morning.
There was a warning that this charming and
rewarding,
adoring and soaring light was
ours for the exploring.

I put my soul into the song,
And the song held on fast.
So now when I'm asked how I'm doing these days
I think of the song and say,

'It's all better now.'



About 'No. I'd Like to Stand'

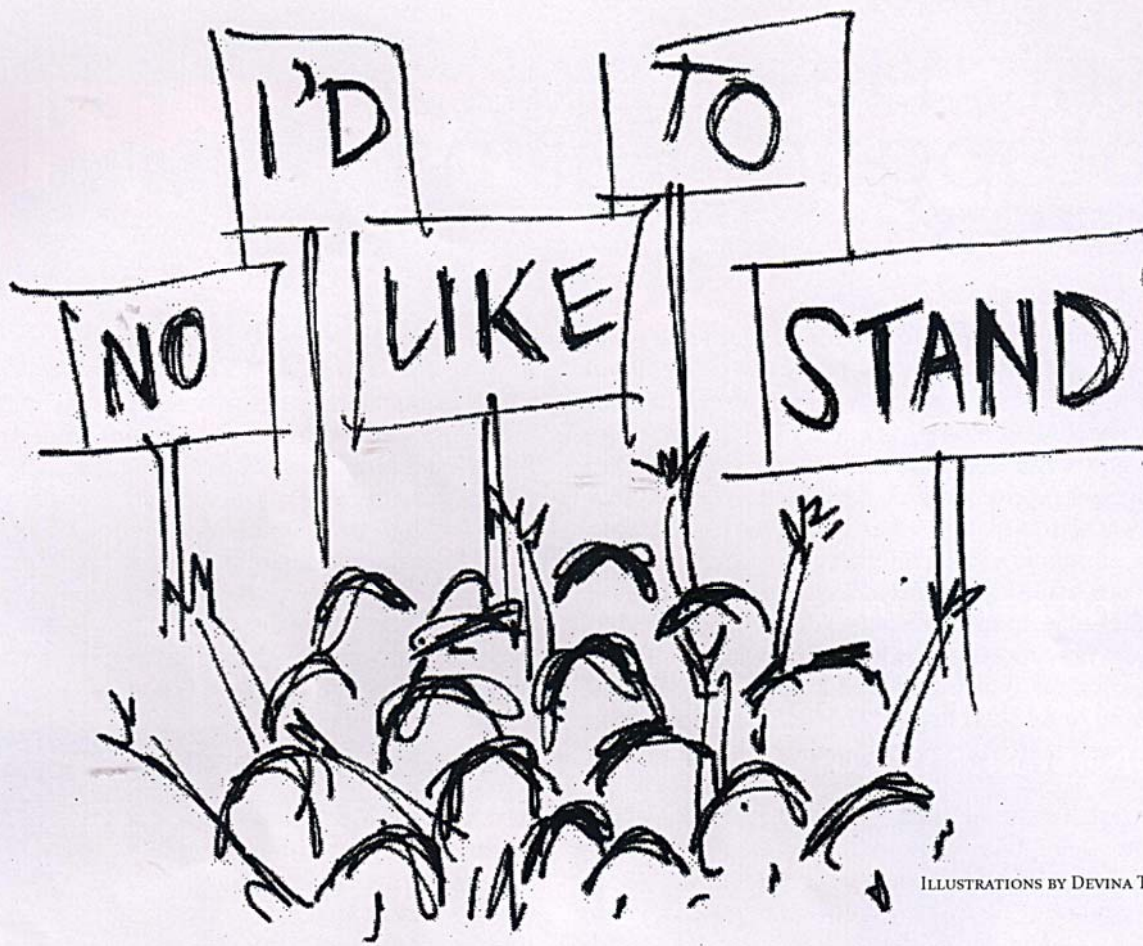
This is a reply to all the stereotypical comments people make to make girls feel inferior, slutty, aggressive or insecure. Many times, when a girl asserts herself or speaks her mind, she gets shut down by closed-minded, regressive people. But as Canadian Prime Minister (and swoon-worthy feminist) Justin Trudeau responded 'It's 2017' and girls deserve equality.

This poem is extremely important in our current world where one of the most powerful world leaders does not give women the respect they deserve but instead demeans them into sexual objects at the beck and call of a man's desires. The Women's March around the world on 19 March 2017 was a huge influence in my writing and in the accompanying illustration. The protest march for women's rights reminded me that the power of the people is more powerful than the people in power because if we unite and stand together, we can be unstoppable.

So this poem is standing up to all the bullies, shaking off the haters and telling people where to stick it when they tell girls to sit down in a world where we'd like to stand.



'Wonder is a collection of rhythmic performance art poetry pieces. By diving into the ugly truths of society and the beauties of imagination, her poems will help you explore a world where anything is possible, as long as you wonder.'



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DEVINA TAIMNI

No. I'd Like to Stand

“Girls shouldn't talk that way.”
 Well, why not?
 Opinion matter, facts matter,
 voices matter, our lives matter.

Tearing at our respects
 and shredding our last decencies.
 There's no slut shaming here, no mockery,
 and no belittling.

Sorry if my undertone was more of a firestone,
 Didn't mean to throw acetone at your
 over-righteous future tombstone,
 But I'm not sorry for my actions,
 I'm sorry for yours,
 My makeup is only a cover up,
 because if you come close up,
 I might just blow up,
 we're about to round up, and start up.

Girls shouldn't be taught to be scared,
 Boys should be taught to be respectful.
 It's a newer concept,
 but one that should take root.

So every time I have an opinion,
 A loud, proud, feminism-promoting,
 body-positive, equality-believing opinion,
 And society tells me sit down,
 I say, “No, I'd like to stand.”

“Girls shouldn't walk around in those types of
 outfits.”
 Is it disturbing you? Then stop staring.
 It's overbearing and despairing to have
 you baring fangs



Picnic Day at Pratapgarh Farms

BY VANDITA KAUL

We woke up early that Sunday morning, literally with the lark, not for a walk in the park but a picnic! It was a bitterly cold and overcast day in January and it didn't look like picnic weather. Chattering excitedly, holding on to our little bags and water bottles, we clambered on to the bus at the Dilli Haat petrol pump. As I grabbed a window-seat, nostalgia washed over me. A heady excitement surfaced, with a blur of memories of school picnics.

As the bus made its way out of Delhi towards Gurgaon, where we picked up more picnickers, a dense fog descended. The bus was now moving slowly into oblivion. Lulled by the cosiness of the bus and resounding laughter, we lost track of time. Antakshari began. The *agaari* and *pichhaari* teams were well matched, creating some melody and quite a cacophony.

Pratapgarh Farms lie near Jhajjar in Haryana, about 85 km from Delhi (via Gurgaon). The group on the bus was joined at the farms by others who drove down. As we entered, a genuinely rustic lady welcomed us with a warm smile and *tilak*. Our entry tickets listed activities, with locations and a map. The aroma of a delicious breakfast greeted us as we entered. To the left were little mud alcoves with handmade paintings, where women were cooking on wood fires in *mitti ke choolhe*. Rotis and *khichdi* could be had right there. There were tables serving food in the open area. We could sit there, or in cave-like nooks to save ourselves from the cold, with low tables and *modhas*. There was no restriction on helpings. Stuffed with *poori bhaji*, parathas with farm-fresh white butter and *dahi*, *bajre ki roti* and *khichri* with desi ghee and *gur*, pakoras, jalebis and *rabri*, downed with *kadak* chai, resolutely chewing on fresh *mooli*, we rolled out to look for the activities.

The camels were dressed in beautiful multicoloured fabric and tassels. I went on a camel cart and a camel ride. A bit dizzy, I wobbled across a hanging bridge to reach the ethnic games area. We challenged a large family group to *pithoo*. They were ethical and loaned us some players to even out the numbers. They were no match for our deadly accuracy in hitting the seven tiles and nimbleness in putting them back. I felt like a victorious ten-year-old when I got the pile of stones down! Others, naughtier than me, were busy with *gilli-danda* and *gulel*. The staid ones played cricket, badminton and table tennis.

I decided against the sack race as the sacks were too small. The lemon race was rejected too, since the hygiene of the spoons was questionable. I tried walking with a *matka* on my head. After hitting my nose and toe, I walked a few steps. To get my revenge I moved to the *matka phodo* game. Blindfolded and armed with a stick, aided by misleading instructions shouted out (and a bit of cheating to see the

matka's shadow), I hit it! Later I tried my hand at archery and hit the board several times – not bullseye, though! Once sparks literally flew when my arrow hit a metal rod. Had Guru Dronacharya been around, I, not Arjuna, would have been his favourite disciple.

As the sun came out, I was game for the tubewell and mud baths to work up an appetite for lunch, but I didn't want to make too big a splash, so I decided against it. I couldn't find the bullock-cart ride, so I settled for the tractor trailer ride instead. Sadly, there was no bareback bullock ride available. Many of us went by the tractor trailer to the vegetable-farming and flowers area, where there was a larger-than-life *putla* of a veiled woman in a *ghaghra*, winnowing next to hay and harvested wheat. We spent some time studying a giant turnip, admiring the flowers, posing for group photographs and lounging around on the charpoys. I couldn't resist dressing up in a red *ghaghra-choli* and getting photographed while winnowing with the *putla* lady.

We were enthralled by a woman singing in a booming yet melodious voice, next to the head-massage chap, who was a favourite with the men. In the meal area, the dhol was being played along with local dance performances, later replaced by a DJ and youngsters dancing deliriously. 'Dopahar ka shahi khana' was a feast with pulao, *rajma-chawal*, *missi roti* with butter and *gur*, *sarson ka saag*, *shahi paneer*, raita and *gajar ka halwa* too!

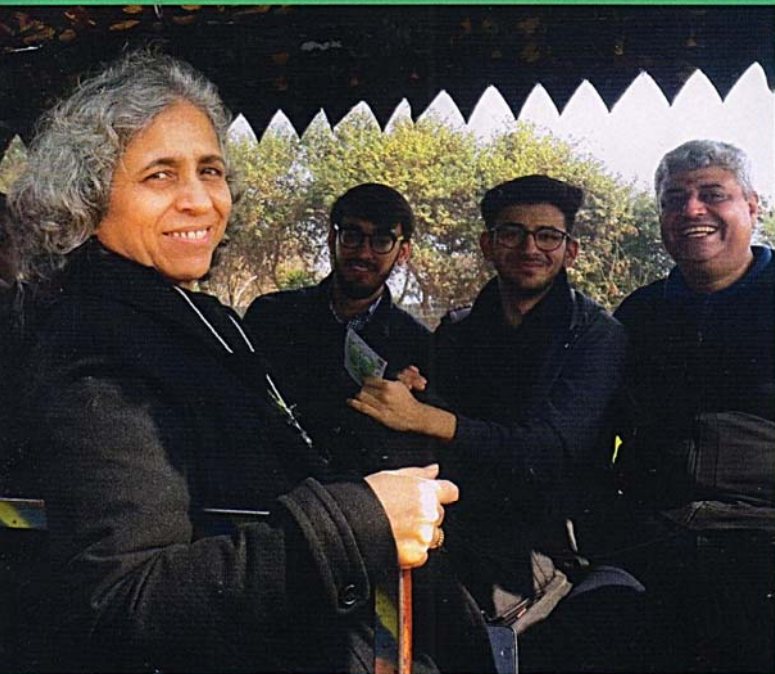
Group photos were dutifully clicked under a tree that delivered a sticky fruit on my head. Warmth and a feeling of bliss enveloped us. Some snoozed in chairs, while others tried their hand at pottery, basket- and *nivar*-weaving and shooting. Tea, with pakoras for good measure, followed. We returned to the bus sword-fighting with juicy *moolis*. We were regaled with a few funny songs and some hymns, and got rather drowsy on the way back.

I could well be a guide for another trip to the farms – those interested, raise your hands!





We spent some time studying a giant turnip, admiring the flowers, posing for group photographs and lounging around on the charpoys.



Plateful of world flavours. Perfected by our Master Chefs.

SPECTRA

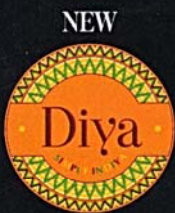


The stars of Spectra, Japanese Master Chef Vladimir and Thai Master Chef Kanya enthrall the guests with their culinary masterpieces. The restaurant offers the finest of Indian, Asian, Japanese, Italian, Continental, Grills and Desserts on live counters and interactive culinary islands.

Zanotta
Cucina Italiana



Spearheaded by our Italian Master Chef Leidy, Zanotta is an unforgettable destination to explore authentic Italian flavours; with an open display kitchen, private dining rooms surrounded by a see through wine cellar.



Our Indian Master Chef Ajay and his team has given a modern twist to a wide range of traditional Indian dishes at the NEW Diya. The vibrant culture of this great country is beautifully showcased through the warm and rich tones of the décor.

RUBICON
BAR & CIGAR LOUNGE



Rubicon Bar & Cigar Lounge houses a staggering collection of malt Whiskies, top shelf Champagnes, spirits and cigars. The cozy seating arena divided into private enclaves makes for a perfect seating arrangement. The spacious humidor cabinet offers the guests a perfect destination to unwind and relax.



THE LEELA
AMBIENCE GURUGRAM
HOTEL & RESIDENCES

For more information and table reservation, please call 0124 4771255 or e-mail at fnb.marketing@theleela.com

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