

Vitasta Annual Number

The Publication of Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta

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Editor's Page

On the auspicious occasion of Bhoomi Puja and annual Havan at the site for the proposed KASHMIR BHAVAN, I present Vitasta Annual Number 1988.

In the middle of December gone by, I was entrusted to bring out the annual number. Hence, this annual number has been produced at a very short notice. Secondly, in order to generate enough funds for the construction of 'Kashmir Bhavan', a second issue of bigger size is slated for June '89. I would request members of the Baradari to send their contributions well in time for the June '89 number of "VITASTA" which shall be dedicated to 'Secularism and Communal Harmony.'

In the year of birth centenary of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, it is just befitting that we pay our tributes to the builder of modern India. It is equally important that our Baradari members recall the message received by Sh. C. N. Kashkari, Editor, Kashmir Sabha Annual dedicated to National Integration brought out by Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta, in 1962.

Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru wrote to Sh. Kashkari, from Pahalgam on 7th July, 1962.

"I have received your letter of 4th July while I am staying in Pahalgam in Kashmir.

For any attempt to encourage literary and cultural activities, you have my good wishes. But I must confess that such activities confined to separate states or community groups, tend to keep our divisions and

are, perhaps, a slight barrier towards the integration of all peoples in India. Kashmir undoubtedly has something to give to India in the way of culture and literature. While this should be encouraged, I hope that any narrowness of approach will not take place. Our principal aim must be to develop a common culture all over India which will include the separate states cultures and will thus help in the process of integration”.

‘VITASTA’ pays tribute to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru while recalling his association with Kashmir in ‘Jawahar Lal Nehru and Kashmir’ written by Shri Daya Kishen Kachru.

All other articles presented in this issue, however, revolve around our community affairs. Sh. M. K. Ogra and Shri B. N. Qanungo have looked back to recall their youth and share their experience. Sh. Udai Kaul too has dwelt on ‘Kashmiriat’. Three members of the younger generations, S/Shri Surendra Munshi, Ashok Kumar Dhar and Vivek Kaul have addressed themselves to answering three important questions pertaining to our identity as Kashmiris / Kashmiri Pandits. Shri Vivek Kaul has tried to analyse the dilemma of youth in a thought provoking article, “Something must be done”.

While reading old Issues of “VITASTA”, I found an article entitled “Haro Batta Chuyi” written by Shri S. S. Raina in the annual number of 1961. I am sure Baradari members would go down memory lane while reading this article once again. Whereas, problems of Congo, Laos, Vietnam, Korea and Sheikh Abdullah’s trial etc. as mentioned in the article are not correct in to-day’s context, the description of ‘Kashmiri Battas’, many readers would agree, is correct even today.

I thank Sh. D. K. Kachru, Sh. M. K. Ogra, Sh. B. N. Qanungo, Sh. Udai Kaul, Sh. S. S. Raina, Sh. Surendra Munshi and Sh. Vivek Kaul for their articles for this Annual Number.

I now present the annual number to you. Errors, if any, may be excused.

—ASHOK DHAR

President's Message

Another eventful year has passed. Our balance sheet is neither very rosy, nor too dismal. We have had some satisfaction in certain areas, particularly in the area of utmost importance to us, but the satisfaction is not overwhelming. The area of utmost importance is construction of our building. Drawings for the building have been prepared and submitted to Salt Lake Authorities for approval, following which the construction can start. Simultaneously, structural drawings will also be prepared by the same architect who prepared the municipal drawings for us and these will be released to suit various stages of construction. Fund is a constraint and I am making appeal for it elsewhere in this issue.

Another area of satisfaction is that we have held our functions in time, committee meetings of Kashmir Sabha and Kashmir Sabha Trust have taken place regularly.

The disappointment is lack of participation by many Baradari members. As it is, our population in Calcutta is hardly anything to talk about. Even from such meagre number if all do not participate by word or deed, it is a bit frustrating. There is no doubt that most of us do not have time of our own, but considering how much time we devote to organisations we serve and how much attention we give to professional bodies we are on, one feels that a small part of this time can justifiably be devoted to Sabha's

affairs and baradari matters if one has the will for it. I would particularly address this to our youth and ask them to make the Sabha as their own platform and help bring the cohesiveness we so ardently require.

I hope you will like this Issue. It has been produced in a very short time. Our Editor Mr. Ashok Dhar has done excellent work. I offer him hearty congratulations. We hope to come out with another Issue of this size in June '89.

Once again, Mr. Daya Kishen Kachru responded with concord speed to my request for an article for this Issue. Mr. M. M. Dhar was equally enthusiastic and encouraging. May God grant them both good health and long life.

To conclude, I wish all Baradari members a very happy and prosperous 1989.

—P. L. DHAR

KASHMIR SABHA, CALCUTTA

1988—89

Executive Committee

<i>President :</i>	Sri P. L. Dhar
<i>Vice-President :</i>	Sri P. K. Bhan
<i>Secretary :</i>	Sri B. N. Qanungo
<i>Jt. Secretary :</i>	Sri B. M. Misri
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Committee Members

Sri B. L. Razdan

Sri Udai Koul

Sri M. K. Ogra

Sri P. L. Saproo

Sri P. N. Tickoo

Sri C. L. Kaul

Sri Ashok Dhar

Sri Vivek Kaul

Sri V. R. Moza

APPEAL

Plans to build the Kashmir Sabha Bhavan are taking concrete shape. Municipal drawings have been prepared and submitted to Salt Lake Authorities for approval. The approval is expected shortly, following which the construction can start provided we have enough funds to start and complete phase I atleast, viz., ground floor. This phase entails an expenditure of roughly Rs. 4 lakhs. We have little less than the half, and balance has to be raised.

My appeal for contributions/donations made in July last evoked sufficient response. Shri Man Mohan Nath Hakku was the first to remit his contribution.

Many had to think to readjust their priorities and earmark a suitable portion for the proposed building.

We cannot and should not delay the issue any longer. We are performing Bhoomi Puja on 22-1-89 and as far as possible we must start the construction shortly after that.

I, therefore, make this second appeal to Baradari members to please allot a sufficiently high priority to this project and come out with substantial contributions/donations at the earliest, so that the deficit for phase I is made up and the work started. Cheques/drafts are to be made in the name of KASHMIR SABHA TRUST. All payments are exempted under section 80G of Income Tax Act, and Trust will issue a suitable Receipt to that effect.

May I hope that these words, though simple and perhaps not forcefully put, will have the desired effect and will be taken as the humblest appeal from the bottom of the heart of a man who wishes our Sabha to have a place of its own in Calcutta for the benefit of the community to help preserve its identity and cultural heritage for now and the future, and may I please expect a generous response immediately.

P. L. DHAR

*President,
Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta.*

Vitasta

Annual Number '88

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND KASHMIR

By

Daya Kishen Kachru

Jawaharlal was born in Allahabad on November 14, 1889. The first wife of his father Pandit Motilal had died young. Jawaharlal was born of his second wife, Swarup Rani. She was from a Kashmiri family—the Thussoos—from Lahore. Her people had left Kashmir only two generations back. She, therefore, brought a fresher flow of Kashmiri blood into the old Nehru veins : migrants from the valley in 1716.

Unlike his father, Jawaharlal was born in the lap of luxury. Kashmiris in Allahabad, as elsewhere then, stuck to each other, and were proud of their composite culture and their place in the order of things. The Nehru household was a fine example of this composite culture.

Jawaharlal was initially admitted to a local convent school. Later, British governesses and a British tutor looked after his education and up-bringing at home. His father took him to England in 1905, at the age of 15. Here he was admitted to the famous Harward School. Later, he joined Cambridge. He left Cambridge in 1910 with an Honours Degree and was called to the Bar in 1912. He returned to India after a stay abroad of seven years.

His father selected a Kashmiri girl from a

Kaul family in Delhi as his son's bride. Kamla was her name. She was about ten years younger than Jawaharlal. The marriage was celebrated with great eclat in Delhi in the spring of 1916. The following summer both Jawaharlal and his wife spent in Kashmir—their first visit to the "old homeland". In November 1917, their first and only child, Indira Priyadarshani, was born to them.

Jawaharlal's was a sensitive soul. He was offered Judgeship and even a Ministership by the British. He spurned these. Instead, he decided to join the freedom movement and face all the resultant privations and sacrifices. Not all his father's wealth and position could keep him back. Soon after, Pandit Motilal also joined his son ; such was the intimate interaction of the thinking of the two on their lives and living. Under the magic spell of Gandhiji, father and son soon became two of the principal torchbearers of the great war of India's independence.

The first imprisonment of Jawaharlal in 1921 was only a prelude to many more incarcerations later ; to lathi blows at the hands of the police ; to repeated confiscations of valued property. Father and son and the other members of the family gave their all for the country and lived

only to serve the nation and help break its shackles of serfdom. The nation honoured their great sacrifice and dedication. Pandit Motilal was elected the President of the Indian National Congress twice, son succeeding father in 1929, at the Lahore Congress. Jawaharlal was the third Kashmiri to be chosen as the President of the Indian National Congress, the youngest ever. Pandit Bishen Narain Dhar and Pandit Motilal had preceded him.

Jawaharlal was the hero of us all in the beautiful but then be-nighted State of Kashmir. His father's name and his, and the stories linked with them both, had become a legend. All of us—young school and college students then—took a vicarious pride in the great achievements and sacrifices of father and son for these brought reflected glory on the down trodden Kashmiri and showed him what pinnacles Kashmiris could rise to.

In December 1931, I was deputed from S. P. College, Srinagar, with Pandit Hriday Nath Dhar, later a leading member of the Kashmir bar, to take part in the All India Inter-University Debate in Allahabad University. On arrival at Allahabad, we almost rushed to Anand Bhawan to have Jawaharlal's darshan. The spacious

garden and the verandas were crowded, Jawaharlal, we were told, was very busy in a meeting inside. We sent in a slip—'Two Kashmiri students from Srinagar come for your darshan'. To our great joy and excitement, he was with us in a couple of minutes, leaving his meeting in the middle as he told us. A dream had come true for the two of us. Our great hero stood there before us in flesh and blood; a most winsome, charming and handsome young man. He spent nearly ten to fifteen minutes with us; enquired also about the subject of the debate we had come for; and repeatedly exhorted us to keep the flag of "us Kashmiris" high in the contest. This memorable meeting was for us a thrilling personal experience of Jawaharlal's interest in Kashmir and Kashmiris.

It was in 1936 that the autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru was published with its poignant dedication. It provided exciting reading for us. The explanation given for the surname Nehru in the opening chapter of the book is well-known. In Kashmir, Narooos now Nehrus—did not, however, have the self-same explanation to offer for their surname. I immediately wrote a letter to Jawaharlal explaining all this and requesting him to reconcile the discrepancy. Pat came his reply as reproduced below :—

Anand Bhawan
Allahabad
July 12, 1936.

Pandit Dayakishen Kachru
Sheshiyar, Second Bridge,
Srinagar (Kashmir)
Dear Dayakishenji,

Thank you for your letter. I am interested to learn of the Nehrus in Kashmir. I do not know if there was any connection between them and us. But there is no doubt that we used to be called Kaul. What I have written on the subject in my book is from my father's account of it. Unfortunately our family papers were destroyed during the revolt of 1857.

Yours sincerely,
J. Nehru

The autobiography ended with events upto February 14, 1935. It was a soul-stirring narrative. Only twelve years, later Jawaharlal was sworn in, amidst scenes of wild rejoicing and jublations, as the first Prime Minister of a free and independent India. With its characteristic grim humour history had fulfilled the wishful prophecy of Ramsay Macdonald with a twist; the son, not the father, became the first Prime Minister of a free and independent India, alas a divided one.

He continued as such from 1947 till 1964—seventeen long and crucial years—dedicated to the building of a modern state and a modern nation. It was a herculean task, for the partition had left the country prostrate and bleeding. He battled like a Colossus to build a modern, democratic, and secular India. On May 26, 1964, at the age of 74, Jawaharlal, the beloved of a nation and the champion of the down-trodden and the suppressed the world over, finally passed away from the terrestrial scene of his noble activities. A whole nation, and many countries in the world besides, went into mourning, and millions shed tears of grief.

The Kashmiris felt particularly widowed, for he had a special niche for his 'old homeland' in his great heart, and for all that pertained to the welfare of Kashmir and Kashmiris. This was so in no parochial sense of the term, but born of Jawaharlal's romantic love for that lovely land of lakes and mountains, that ancient seat of India's culture, and exemplary composite living.

Jawaharlal closely studied the Rajtarangini and whatever books he could get on Kashmir. In his foreword to the Rajtarangini by R. S. Pandit—his scholarly and erudite brother-in-law, published in 1935, he says "I have read the story of olden times with interest because I am a lover of Kashmir and all its entrancing beauty,

because, perhaps, deep down within me and almost forgotten by me there is something that stirs at the call of the old homeland from where came long-long ago...". He has repeated this sentiment often in his letters to various Kashmir leaders—Shiekh Muhammad Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad, Wazir Ganga Ram and others. In a short but beautiful message to the Daily Hamdard of Srinagar, dated July 30, 1939, he says: "...As a child of Kashmir the fate of that beautiful land is dear to me and I send my greetings". Again in a message, dated October 4, 1939, to the All J & K National Conference, he says "...I am continually drawn to Kashmir and as soon as I am able to do so, I shall visit that beautiful country which it is a privilege for me to call especially my own...".

Notwithstanding all his longing to visit his 'old homeland' Jawaharlal could go to Kashmir just for twelve days, after a lapse of almost twenty three years, only in May/June 1940. He had a hectic time. He attended innumerable parties including one given by Pandit Shiv Narain Fotedar in the Pratap Gardens. I happened to be present. I still recall the animated interest that Jawaharlal evinced in those of us who were introduced to him.

On the conclusion of his 1940 Kashmir visit, Jawaharlal sent a farewell message to Kashmir in a press statement issued at Lahore on June 12, 1940. It was published in 'The National Herald' in six parts between July 24-31, 1940. It was in this article that he said of Kashmir: "Like some supremely beautiful woman, whose beauty is almost impersonal and above human desire, such was Kashmir in all its feminine beauty of river, and valley and lake and graceful trees...". Again, "The Hindus of Kashmir proper, chiefly Kashmiri Pandits, though only about 5%, are an essential and integrated part

of the country and many of their families have played a prominent part in Kashmir's history for a thousand years or more. Even today, they play a significant part in the States Services and Administration. Essentially these Kashmiri Pandits are the middle class intelligentsia. Intellectually they compare favourably with any other similar group in India. They do well in examinations and in the professions. A handful of them who migrated to other parts of Northern India during the last two hundred years or so, have played an important part in public life and in the professions and services in India, out of all proportions to their small numbers". Again, he says "...I spoke frankly and freely (to the Kashmiri Pandits at the meeting) for having been born in a Kashmiri Pandit family I could take liberties with my own people".

Kashmiris showered their love on him in unstinted measure. They were proud of their Jawaharlal and took him to their hearts. In a letter, dated June 3, 1940, from Srinagar to "Indu Darling", Jawaharlal says, "I have had a wonderful time during these few days that I have been here. Kashmir is surprisingly lovely and when you add to that the gift of a peoples' love the result is apt to be intoxicating".

India became independent on August 15, 1947, with Jawaharlal as its first Prime Minister. The Kashmir issue became one of international import. Jawaharlal stood by it like a rock. Accusations of partiality towards Kashmir were hurled at him. He stood unmoved. In a speech in Parliament, on August 7, 1952, he said, "I am called a Kashmiri in the sense that ten generations ago my people came down from Kashmir to India. That is not the bond that I have in mind when I think of Kashmir, but other bonds which have tied us much closer. These bonds have grown more and more in the last five years or so. Our history and our circum-

stances have made Kashmir so closely associated with our feelings, emotions, thoughts and passions that it is a part of our being".

Jawaharlal and his great father Pandit Motilal valued and cherished their Kashmir bonds and took pride in them and in their composite culture. The thought of it does good to our Kashmiri hearts, but one cannot be blind to the fact that it is altogether unfair and incorrect to crib and confine that great son of India only to the mountain valley and its people. Jawaharlal was a great Indian—one of the greatest and also a great citizen of the world in which he lived and which he wanted to re-shape and remould. He was accused of riding the clouds. But that accusation itself was a compliment.

I cannot do better than quote from the National Declaration on Nehru's vision of peace and Security in the Nuclear Age, issued on November 16, 1986, by Sh. P. N. Haksar, in his capacity as Chairman, Indian Centre for Regional Affairs :—

"As we look at the world today, threaten with extinction through nuclear warfare, beset with serious conflicts between states, big or small, and unable to eradicate the poverty of hundreds upon millions, the vision of Jawaharlal Nehru—for a new moral and material ordering of the world community; for sanity and tolerance in relations between states and within states; for an end to exploitation in all its forms; and last but not the least, for an awakening of the creative capacities of the common man—acquires a new relevance for our times.

This vision needs to be restated over and over again in its essentials.

Jawaharlal Nehru's outlook was shaped by the aspirations of the people of India in the course of their epic struggle for freedom. It combined all that was noble and true in the culture of India—as expressed by Mahatma Gandhi—with the compassion and humanism of the 20th century. Within India, Jawaharlal Nehru sought to transform a civilisation of antiquity into a modern industrial state, secular in outlook, democratic in its political character, and with the vision of a new social order. Beyond the frontiers of India, Jawaharlal Nehru

sought to promote peace between nations, big or small, and impart a new voice to the newly liberated countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America'.

The special message that Jawaharlal addressed to Kashmiri Pandits in 1940 is as relevant today, after forty years, as it was then. The modern, democratic, secular India of Nehru's dreams has to be built fully : brick by brick by you and by me and by every son and daughter of India, and of Kashmir in particular, a task that we dare not delay or defer. Long live Jawaharlal and all that he stood and strived for !



LOOKING BACK

By

M. K. Ogra

Thought provoking process for involvement of youth in our community in the affairs of the Kashmir Sabha has been set in motion by our young editor Shri Ashokji. When we look back to our existence of past 32 years, quite a number of us amongst the founders were in mid twenties. Enthusiasm was very high, all looking forward eagerly to the next Sabha meet or the next issue of News & Views. What intrigues my mind is why our present youth who are in their twenties and thirties do not take some interest or show some initiative as at our time way back in 1956. Something is wrong somewhere. Has Sabha served its purpose or does it really cater to the needs of the present youth ?

Well, the necessity for the Sabha is as important today as it was then, to maintain the social and cultural link and identity. Then do we really involve them ? During my own interaction with some of them who are born and brought up here as second generation following the founders, I gather they feel neglected as lack of will on our part to make room for them. These youngsters have had better upbringing and opportunities, and obviously their own social circles cater to their needs. Our need for the Sabha may have been greater for we had just migrated and being away from our roots it was all the more necessary to look for own people with common customs, language etc.,

to join together, thus bridging the gap or absence of what we had cherished in the valley earlier. Most of us who came here in 50's had not known each other in the valley ; the Sabha brought us together, closer than to our own kith and kin in the valley. This need does exist today as always, I feel, to a larger extent because the closer link and affinity amongst this young generation today will provide the continuity, the strength, to carry on and on and keep the 'VITASTA' flowing.

So what is going to be the meeting point and how do we proceed to get them interested in the affairs of the Sabha ? One process could be by just having more social get-togethers, a community outing, a community lunch or a dinner, formation of a youth forum which could offer suggestions and new ideas, regular children's meets—some activities which could be interesting to this generation of youths to bring them closer to know each other more intimately and to develop a team spirit amongst them.

Thirtytwo years of our existence have been full of activities which involved all of us and thus we have carried on and one does look back with pride and nostalgia. Those of us amongst the founders would recollect how the process of knowing each other intimately developed. The enthusiastic interest at the Sabha elections,

children's functions, luncheon meets at Botany followed by lot of interesting fun and games and plays, Hawan & Navroz functions, interesting memorable essays in the 'VITASTA' like 'Zetha Atham', 'It is nice to be a husband', followed by yet another one 'It is nice to be a wife', 'Nehru Number', 'Martand Number' and Pdt. Nehru's letter to us advising us to maintain our traditions and at the same time be part of the other traditions wherever we may be to make the national link for all communities stronger and lasting some memories still lingering looked back with happiness.

Scattered as we are all over in small fragments, a vital role is expected to be played by the All India Kashmiri Samaj, though its record over the last 8 years of its existence has not been upto expectations. Now that its newly elected President Brigadier Madan and the Secretary are centrally, located at Delhi, we look forward to a more constructive rôle to bring the community closer and take concerted action plans in social, economic and cultural area as a long felt need. Solid, constructive and meaningful programmes must be chalked out involving all centres and associated bodies all over the country and abroad. Some say we lack leadership ; but my considered view is that within our community there is no dearth of well meaning selfless people. All of us have a role to play. What we need is to rise above petty differences, if any, or personal egos and play our due role in the process of bringing in closer cohesion and understanding. Being a highly educated and well placed community, what we need is intellectual integrity leaving all hypocracies and diplomacies when it comes to dealing with each other for community brotherhood and advancement to take our rightful place in the Indian Political, Social, Cultural

and Scientific fields. It occurs to me that a national Seminar of our leading personalities in various fields here and abroad would be yet another step for working out and adopting a national programme to achieve our broad objectives to maintain and advance our social and cultural values and thus keep ourselves closely knit.

Calcutta has always been a forefront in political thinking and we Kashmiris in this part also take pride in being in the forefront for our Biradari issues. 'News & Views' (VITASTA) and Annual Number publications were our innovations for others to follow. Similarly, involvement of younger generation in Sabha affairs amongst the new additions has been a constant endeavour so well fulfilled and that is how the Sabha is marching on. I do not suggest thus far and stop here-No-No complacency-our task is a hard one and we do need to have a second look to chalk out our future programme and also contribute to the national unity and upliftment and involvement of all the Biradari members particularly the youth.

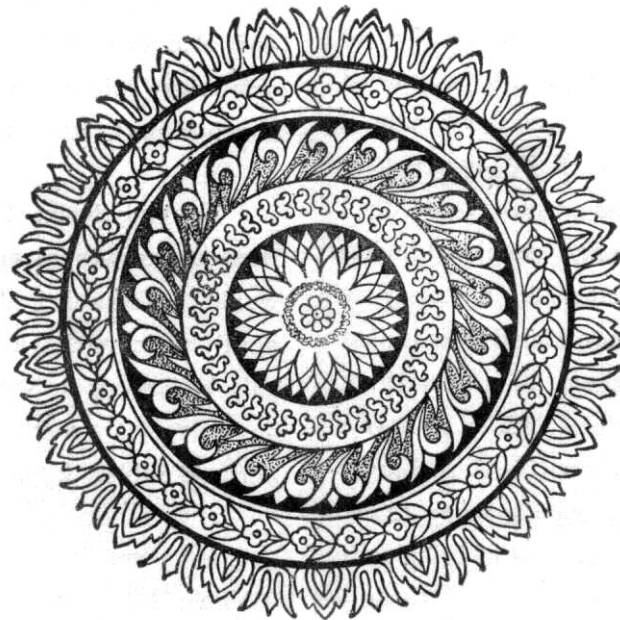
Looking back, I have posed problems and tried to answer them. More useful purpose would be served if all our community members apply their minds and come forward to join in this endeavour to create a new awareness for involving our youth in the community work through Sabhas & Samajs.

In a recent casual meeting with a Union Cabinet Minister and a famous film producer and Director, while I was travelling from Madras to Calcutta, Ramanand Sagar's "Ramayana" telecast programme for the last 1½ years now, featured and occupied most of our 2½ hours flight time. Looking back, during this discussion what featured most primarily was necessity

for rediscovering our old values-moral and social and to provide the right guidelines for all to emulate to take the society forward economically, socially and morally. There could be better guidelines and golden paths for us than to discover our past pertaining to the life and role of our various leaders from Raj Taringni days, be it in literal, social, political, economical, legal, educational and scientific and commercial fields where our people have shown

extraordinary brilliance and leadership.

Let me close it here and I hope some thought provoking process would start and the day may not be far off when we will be all working and thinking together more vigorously and meaningfully to choose our future path for a better social order and more closeness to continue to occupy a position of honour in the national scenario.



SOMETHING MUST BE DONE

By
VIVEK KAUL

Sincerity seemed to ooze out of every sentence, reminding me of cotton flecks of oozing out of a mattress before it is beaten into shapes conducive to public consumption. Ogra Sahib's article was all of that, and I could not stem the tide of feelings that were stirred within, of wanting to share what had lain dormant till now inside me. Perhaps I had been unable, or simply unwilling to, but there is now a strong undercurrent of "I simply must!"

To put forward my personal point of view, let me take the world view of someone who had left Kashmir around the time of Partition—and of the immediate generation that followed.

Earlier families were joint and society was close-knit, rituals and customs were elaborate, and followed to the last detail. Marrying someone whom one had seen earlier was rare, marrying outside the community unheard of. Though members of the majority community in Kashmir were looked down upon, as some kind of renegades since conversion had been comparatively recent, and they were economically and socially not as well-off as they are today, there was still a lot of camaraderie and kinship between members of the two communities.

In the backdrop of this pattern of society came the trauma of Partition. Many young Kashmiris simply had to leave to find the means and the wherewithal for survival. Armed with very little money in their pockets, but rich in determination and generously endowed with grey matter, the instinct for survival brought out the best in them. Kashmiris by and large, succeeded and prospered, and rose to the highest levels in politics, bureaucracy and business.

In a land that was basically foreign to them shining like a lighted torch amongst his dark skinned countrymen from the plains, whenever one Kashmiri met another, it is not difficult to understand why this became a matter of celebration. The powerful bond of growing and drawing sustenance in one's formative years from the same roots, and then meeting years later hundreds of miles away, given the background of strong cultural links nurtured through centuries hitherto gave the young Kashmiris then a sense of camaraderie and kinship. And hence the enthusiasm that was evident in public and religious functions—at children's functions, Hawans and Navroz functions, social outings, and the like.

Enter the next generation.

Born in the plains, with at best an annual visit for a fortnight to the land of his origins, the Kashmiri youth of today did not face the problem of having to struggle hard to find money to pay the milkman at the end of the week. But in an economic sense, his struggle was both different and in many ways more difficult. Whereas in the good old days, passing your matriculation examination was the achievement that crowned the first stage in a man's life, the world of today does not consider a second class graduate to be worth a job. The burgeoning population of today and the continually rising cost of living puts its own special competitive pressure on every youth taking its toll on every ounce of his time and his energy. The struggle to stay a cut above the rest has become a rat-race that becomes more and more intense with every passing year. Under the onslaught of struggle for survival, morals, joint families and cultural links are bound to weaken and disintegrate. Add to that the lure and glitter of a world of changing fast paced technology and cultural values—comprising video games, outdoor sports, entertainment options, and forbidden fruit of so many different varieties, it is not difficult to see why the old-world culture is likely to enjoy a low priority on the impressionable, intelligent minds of young Kashmiris.

With all the success of the first generation in making ends meet, and later on in prospering in adverse circumstances, it was certainly a failure in making the next generation or even itself linguistically and culturally aware of, and strongly related to its origins. To that extent, while the economic backbone of the community had been built, the cultural spine for the new generation was virtually non-existent outside the valley. For instance, it has become fashionable for the present young generation to

speak in English, for the excellent reason that many of our first generation did not teach the basics, let alone the nuances of the Kashmiri language to their children. Kashmiri Chakris are as incomprehensible to them as Russian folk music. The non-use of one's mother tongue is far more than one language less in our lives. It implies the virtual sea-change from the relationship between two members of one particular community to one between two members of the universe.

Apart from language, many other aspects of our culture are quite foreign to the Kashmiri youth of today. To many of us, Kashmiri culture does not really exist in any substantive manner. The truth is that it does exist, and it is quite rich and varied, but most of us are simply unaware of it. Nobody has made an effort here away from the valley of Kashmir to tell us about it. So one simply assumed that it did not exist, or if it did it is not very significant. Not relevant to us in today's world.

To my mind, a further confusion was added to the minds of the youth and children. Kashmiri culture was mixed with religion and it was given as a package to be swallowed whole. Anybody who was not interested in religion, did without any exposure to culture, since somehow in all functions, religion and culture were mixed. The exposure to both being so limited—usually a biannual get-together at Navreh and Janamashtami that it could hardly be otherwise.

It is not important that our lives have not followed the precise course outlined above. But there are familiar shades of meaning that are congruent in their essence with what many of us may have experienced in our lives and in the

lives of our parents or children. It is this sensing of a lost identity that I am addressing myself to, in this article—in myself and those of you who share this feeling.

I feel that the problem is far more deep-rooted than that of a few enthusiastic young boys or girls coming forward to take interest in Sabha activities, having a forum for themselves or taking part in social get-togethers. There is a sense of cultural, social and linguistic alienation that cannot be resolved on the surface level.

SOMETHING MUST BE DONE.

Diagnosing the problem may be a difficult exercise, but finding a remedy is much, much more so. I want to invite all of us who pride themselves in calling themselves Kashmiri to join in the search for solutions and share their answer to that all important question—

WHAT MUST BE DONE ?



ON SEEKING AND WASHING OFF "KASHMIRIAT"

By

UDAI KAUL

Elders grieve that youngsters do not attach much importance to their culture – whatever that much abused word means—and their rites, social customs, festivals, their "Kashmiriat".

Youngsters, having been brought up in altogether different atmosphere, cannot but have different interests and even norms than their elders. वासुदेव कुटुम्बकम् The whole world, rather than the Kashmiri world is their family. Is it correct to put "Kashmiriat" down the gullets of youngsters ?

The way-out is straight and simple, but by no means easy. Make your society, your clan, your small world endearing and useful for members born to it. Give them a feeling of belonging, a sense of pride in being Kashmiris. Let all currents and cross currents brush against our own by all means and in the process let us get enriched by these. But let our foundations be strong enough not to get uprooted.

Human beings by and large have an inborn tendency to pride themselves and rejuvenate themselves from the past. Alex Hailey's *Roots* is a watershed, so to say, in the thought process of the subject. What a tremendous influence of this book (and the film) has had on millions of

negroes, the Israelis and others settled away from their ancestral places of birth.

But look at the practical problems, Mr Qasba, my neighbour in Karannagar, Srinagar but long settled in the USA, put it simple and loud to me in Washington. He had taken a cue from his boss, an Armenian who wished his Armenia to be projected in his Washington household. His children wouldn't care less for Armenia and the Armenians, their customs and culture. They were at home with the environs they were brought up in. This Armenian boss of Mr. Qasba was understandably in misery, Mr. Qasba therefore felt that it was better that his own children should grow like native Americans and not get tossed between American and Kashmiri ways of life. I know of some of my friends settled abroad whose children simply hate to come to India, during their brief holidays – they would rather holiday elsewhere in the world or stay put where they live and not miss their Base Ball, Swims, Squash Games or climbing rocks with kids 'back home'.

And yet how much of India and the places their ancestors came from is missed by those Indians settled abroad for generations is illustrated by my following experiences :

We arrived in Port-of-Spain(West-Indies)one late evening tired from a long flight from New York. I was warned that we had better be careful with West Indians who would take advantage of our being new comers to their country. At the airport I had checked that taxi fare of my hotel, Holiday Inn would be T. T. (Tobago Trinidad) \$ 30. When we came out of the airport, a taxi driver offered to take us to our destination at T. T. \$ 20 only which we accepted. On way to our destination this taxi driver told us that since the dinner which we would take in a short while in our hotel would cost much more than outside the hotel, he would take us to a good restaurant, without any obligation, where the rates would be but only half, and food equally good if not better than the hotel food. Alternatively we could take a packed dinner We opted for the latter option, saved some precious dollars. Next day was fixed for sightseeing trip of a full day the places to be visited were all printed in a hand-out of the Tourism Department whose printed rate was T. T. \$ 150. This taxi driver offered to charge us only T. T. \$ 100 and again we availed of this offer.

While taking us around next day on the sightseeing tour, he was extra courteous and helpful and at a Bird Sanctuary, courtesy this taxi driver, his friend offered us the hospitality of coffee and snacks.

By now we were fairly uncomfortable with his kindness and I asked why was he so kind and generous.

'Simple', he said, "my great grand-father had migrated from India from Kashi, U. P. The dresses of your daughter and wife (who was wearing Saris) indicated that you were from India. The least I felt like doing was to do what I have done". This gentleman's name was Mr. Kumar. For a couple of years we exchanged New Year cards, but then the cards stopped coming and I suspect he may be no more.

Again in this trip, in our flight to Los Angeles from Port of Spain we met an Indian family. The respective great grand fathers of the couple had migrated from India to Uganda and thanks to Adi Amin, were driven out from Uganda and had settled in Los Angeles. Their two generations had not come to India. Nevertheless, they insisted that we stay with them, accept their hospitality in Los Angeles and be their guests for the two days we would be in their city. They also offered to take us around in Los Angeles. It is different that we were unable to avail of their kind offer. But the point I want to put across is : what made this Indian family they were Gujaratis and Shahs—what made them so warm and hospitable to us, particularly when their grand-father had not come to India even ?

Or what made Mr. Kumar (the taxi driver) so generous and solicitous towards us.

Looks like roots are after all roots and cannot be so easily washed away, our youngsters beware !

MY WORLD DIED YOUNG

By

B. N. Qanungo

The cool and fragrant December breeze on the slopes of the hillock numbed me into a slumber and I floated back into time few decades into a world I had known but lost. Vivid scenes floated before my eyes one after another.

It was the world of my childhood spent in the narrow lanes of a bustling neighbourhood of Srinagar.

Every neighbourhood house was a home to be walked into and out at will. The time of 'Uncles' and 'Aunties' was yet to come but every home was full of affection and love. The sharing of each other's joys, trials and tribulations was a routine and not something to be planned and talked about.

It was a World without any barriers of status, religion, caste and creed. Muslim friends as dear as anyone else.

The scenes kept floating by and in this blissful slumber I kept on feasting on the same.

The morning rounds of the Hari Paravat or the evening walks to Ganpat Yar with friends and elders driven by neither religious zeal nor health consciousness but for just the pleasure of it.

The excursions and picnics with family and friends to Mugal Gardens and Badam Vari when flowers bloomed and blossomed everywhere in their multi-coloured scintillating regal beauty.

The evening family get togethers in the cosy homes, interspersed with singing of Kashmiri Bhajans & Aartis,

Boat rides down the ever present, ever flowing river Jhelam with bustling banks or the serene Dal Lake with its floating gardens. It was all pleasure without any pain.

Standing on the Habbakadal by the side of railing with friends as we watched the fishing boats or the flower shikaras pass under and we talked and laughed about school and teachers.

The sounds of Horse's hoofs and chatter of wheels, as the tongas passed by, now lost for ever to the smoking growling autos.

The onset of autumn and the yellowing and falling of leaves and the chirping of swarms of crows in the evenings.

The visits to the villages to see the willows, populars and the chinars without their leaves, nature's beautiful way of shedding its clothes to

be able to embrace the winter chill and snow with abandon and gay.

Watching the starry skies through naked branches of the trees and getting a feel of the expanse of the universe.

The carefree walks to the schools with friends through lanes and by-lanes.

Sitting at the windows, wearing a Pheran with a kangri and watching snow flakes float by and cover everything with a sparkling layer of white snow like a beautiful lady clothed in white.

The morning excitement on a chilly winter day on seeing the icicles along the eaves of the roofs, and marvelling at nature as a sculptor.

Participation in the festivals and marriages—a feast for eyes, ears and the stomach with music, fraternity and excellent cuisines.

The games played with the Kodis (Har) before the Sivaratri together with friends, relatives, neighbours and particularly with the new brides for sharing the joy of love and togetherness.

Early morning fragrance of the roses and jasmines and the joy of plucking the same.

As the scenes floated by, I gradually became conscious of my present world, entirely removed from the one that had just passed before my eyes.

I have grown, we have progressed. Have we? But has it lead to pursuit of happiness. Change is the essence of life, it means dynamism, moving with times and adopting to environments and changes around us and within us. But does it mean becoming rootless. In the new world of science and technology, small things, gestures, words have lost their meaning and nothing seems to matter except every effort towards a greater material fulfilment. We have lost the pleasure of sheer joy and excitements of love, togetherness and language. Our children are perhaps brought up in greater luxury and material comfort than

us but their childhood is never as full of innocent joy, merriment and interaction with nature as ours.

In the competitive World of professionalism, competence and growth, we do have to interact with the environment and adapt ourselves for survival. But does that mean necessarily to forget our values, our language and our customs. If so, why to have a separate identity. Why should we form Kashmir Sabha and Associations? It is the common thread of language, values, historical and cultural background, social set up, that should bind us. Just being called Kashmiris is not enough. How far our children born and brought up outside can claim to be Kashmiris, if they can't speak the language and don't know the socio-cultural mores of Kashmiris. If one could forget his mother-land and get settled anywhere on the globe and adopt completely to the local situations, there would be no need for national boundaries. The Palestinians would not keep on fighting for a motherland, a piece of earth they can call their own. Without roots no tree can grow and growth can only be assured, if the leaves and branches, no matter where and in which direction they be, are properly nourished with sunlight.

Kashmiris may get settled anywhere, they ought to be conscious of their roots and let their children grow in an environment of Kashmiri ethos, language and culture. That only can assure flowering of our community. Saying so does not mean being parochial. Diversity gives greater meaning to life and the world surrounding us.

As I look at the present state of affairs, my interaction with young Kashmiris in Kashmir and outside, the future does not appear to fit my dreams. The nostalgic memories of my childhood haunt me, and I wonder if my world hasn't died young.

'HARO BATTA CHUYI'

By

S. S. RAINA

A Professor at the University once gave a very enlightened discourse on 'the sociology of laughter'. His concluding remarks were "It is very easy to laugh at others, but very difficult to laugh at ourselves. It will do us good if we cultivate a little of this Art."

It requires a lot of grit and confidence to follow his advice and laugh at oneself. This applies to us Kashmiris also, as individuals. But as a community or a group, we are a different proposition. We take easily to self-criticism, to comparing ourselves unfavourably with others and to finding fault with ourselves. We almost relish this pastime. As some body once remarked, it is almost an obsession with us.

I am not sure that it speaks of our boldness or selfconfidence. Perhaps we are making virtue of a habit long ingrained in us—from which we cannot get out. We discuss with gusto all our failings and then laugh them away, as something that some body else suffers from and not "WE".

There are many occasions when half in jest and half in self-praise, we acknowledge that "Batta Chu dai Congress" i.e. one Batta is equal to two half times the Indian National Congress. This epithet refers to those times of the Congress history when weeks could be spent on deliberations without any concrete steps for action.

Whenever anybody's overcleverness, his dislike of the others' rise materially or otherwise, or unnecessary fault finding (Neshkam Nendya) is discussed, a Batta comes close to your attention. When an outsider, a non-Batta comes into contact with a Batta, he, of course admires his keenness of intellect, his shrewdness in judgment, and capacity of adjustment, but he also gets apprehensive of his cleverness and craftiness.

I remember an occasion when travelling from Srinagar to Rawalpindi via the Jehlum Valley Road, a Punjabi fellow-passenger, fresh from his holiday trip, was on his way back to Lahore. We started a little of 'who's who' and some formal courtesies. After a while thinking that no harm could come from me he exclaimed "God save me from a Kashmiri Pandit and a Kayastha of U. P., both are too clever for simple folks like us". I laughed it away; I did not want to be uncivil to him while he was still in Kashmir territory (once he entered Punjab, I could not afford to, as it was his native land). Or, perhaps I did not merely disagree with him. Soon we reached the Customs post at 'Domel' where the customs search was always as ordeal. Now my friend had about twenty walnuts in a small basket and he was munching them one after the other. The Customs official objected to his taking with

him the 'forbidden fruit', what if, they were only a few and obviously not meant for any business or trade. "You may, if you can, eat them up before you cross the customs post, but you cannot take them away". The entreaties of about 12 passengers in the Bus, that he should not tease a visitor unnecessary, proved of no avail with the almighty custom official and with an authoritarian note, he remarked, "Law is Law, let common sense go to dogs; may be law is an ass, but there it is". This all looked so stupid to the Punjabi friend that he threw down the Jhelum meandering nearby, all the nuts plus the basket. Unfortunately for me, the customs official was a K. P. and my friend, with a grin, reminded me of his general remark a little while earlier.

The outsiders, however are not as a rule, so unkind to us as we are to ourselves.

And here I remember another anecdote :

Three of us, Battas, met in June last in a holiday resort. And as is usual with these 'Batta conferences' (any two Battas will do for a conference) we started discussing everything under the sun—what with the Geneva conference on Laos, the possibility of the two Ks meeting at Geneva, the Assam troubles and all that. We did not of course ignore Sheikh Abdulla and his trial, or the talk about Kashmirs' industrialisation. As would be expected we also discussed—rather stoically—the pros and cons of the KP's large scale migration in post independence era from Kashmir to the plains. One thing led to the other and then leaving the air of unconcern, one of the 'three musketeers' informed the other two about the impending sale of his property in Kashmir, having made up his mind to settle outside. And, surprisingly, he was expressing his deep gratitude to a friend of his who had arranged the buyer for his house and had gone out of his

way to help him, and so on..... While, true to my habit, I listened patiently to his expression of gratitude for his friend, our other friend could stand it no longer. 'Haro, Batta Chuyi' he uttered with a gusto. 'Don't take things at their face value? He said, and then gave a long discourse which I wish I could reproduce in original Kashmiri "Take care, Bhat Sahib" he went on, 'don't rely too much on your friend. Don't be naive enough to think that he is doing all this favour without any ulterior motive. After all he is a Batta.....'. He implied—he didn't say so—you didn't seem to be a Batta, otherwise how could you trust a Batta like this.

And long after, I just mused over this incident. This 'Haro Batta Chuyi' interjection had appeared so natural that neither the 'sellerfriend' nor I felt surprised about our friend's sermon.

I do not know anything very authentic about the 'Haro Batta Chuyi' saying. It literally means 'Hari, Beware he is a Batta'. The other half of the 'sermon' is Khaivzen, Chavzen, Pachzes na', or "entertain him with eatables and drinks (soft ones, of course), but do not trust him". It is said that a well to do K. P. money lender had made it a point to treat all his Baradari people with courtesy and decorum, but where his profession was concerned, he would keep them at an arm's length. Hari was his Munshi who presumably, needed occasional reminding of 'Hari, beware, he is a Batta'.

While that money lender and his Hari belong to history, our attitude has not changed, our thought pattern continues to be the same. Perhaps, it is not all that bad. Perhaps, people endowed with a little thinking power cannot always think straight or take things at their face value. There are always two sides to an argument and may be we often tend, to turn to the

wrong side. This reminds me of our akinness to the Bengalees who also, being quite intellectual, are not all that straight. We find in them many bad things which we detect but which, we must admit, we ourselves suffer from. We even take heart that we are pertraps not as bad as they are, possibly because we are not intellectually so advanced as they.

A fool, it is said will no longer be one, if he could realise that he was one. Similarly, realising that we suffer from some faults means that we have won half the battle against such weakness. This gives us encouragement. You can argue that this realisation is as old as the week-ness itself and therefore it is problematic whether the other half of the battle can be won. But then why get discouraged, who in this sputnik age thinks of winning the battle completely.

No War, neither the first one in 1914—18, nor the second one in 1939—45 was a complete victory even for the victorious. You witness something in Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cango, even in Kashmir. We have to live with half-won battles and inborn virtues and vices. A friend of mine often says that whatever he does or says, he always tries to argue it out within himself, to try to trace the motives behind his actions and to try to get at the bekground and, and all that. But that does not make him all good, only he tries to be a complete man as he visualises it. And so a Batta too is made of Virtues and vices, may be a little too much of one and not of the other. And if you try to take off from him something of which he is made of, he may be a better man, but he would not be a Batta. And so, "Batta Kakas Namaskar".



SOME THOUGHTS

(In a small restaurant in Calcutta, three people had a meeting while the Sao Paulo Professionals were battling it out for the first time with the Indian XI at Delhi on 8th Jan., 1989. They came from widely different backgrounds. Prof. Surinder Munshi, a social scientist who teaches at I.I.M. Calcutta ; Ashok Kumar Dhar, a chemical Engineer who works with INDIANOIL ; and Vivek Kaul, a management graduate from I.I.M. Bangalore who is self employed and also works as a consultant.

What brought them together was the yearning to examine their core identity as Kashmiris/Kashmiri Pandits and how it could be restored to its fulness. They addressed themselves to the task of answering some searching questions about themselves, the Sabhas and what should be done to remedy the situation. Given below are their reactions on three important questions addressed to them.)

—EDITOR

Q. 1. To what extent has our identity as Kashmiri Pandits/Kashmiris been developed ?

S.M. Centuries ago, Kashmiri Pandits migrated out of the valley and progressed to occupy high positions in judicial, political and administrative fields. They were successful in retaining their identity even while displaying flexibility absorbing in the cultural influences of environment of the areas they migrated to.

To me, it is more important to have an identity as a Kashmiri. This identity for me basically means a secular, cultural identity as a Kashmiri. We tend to be the quickest in forgetting our language and have practically no contact with our rich literature. Rituals are important

but they can't form bridges which can best be formed by language or literature.

AKD In retrospect, History has contributed much more to the development of a Kashmiri identity. Kashmir has been the haunt for scholars from time immemorial and Kashmiri missionaries went out to preach.

Kashmir occupies a special place in the Indian History as it has been a symbol of secularism over hundreds of years. It is a gift of nature to be born in the Paradise on earth but of late the only identity we seem to be left with is that we hail from the vale of Kashmir, whatever identity was built up over the years by Kashmiris or Kashmir Pandits is getting lost.

To me it is important that we make efforts in retaining our identity as Kashmiri Pandits while accepting the better points of the environment we wish to settle in. Otherwise, our grand children may fly back from America to write yet another 'Roots'.

VK

"Batta Chu Wangun". This truism says it all. We have always prided ourselves in adopting to changing circumstances. So much so that we are in the process of changing so hastily as to lose our identity in the process of change.

I am tempted to recapitulate an article which I had written over a decade back entitled, "Pebbles on the shore" in the Vitasta. The bedrock of our culture in the vast seas of the world had disintegrated into pebbles on the shore, and unless we take urgent remedial steps, we will completely submerge our identity and become a part of the vast sea of humanity with no semblance of a separate identity I think that still holds, and we have continued to erode further as a distinct ethnic and cultural entity.

Q. 2. Do you feel Kashmir Sabhas/Samajs have served the purpose for which they have been formed ?

SM

Any Sabha has to perform three types of roles—religious, social and cultural. In my opinion, the Sabhas have been playing a constructive role on the religious front by organising annual Havans and other religious functions. On the social front, the programmes for children, though organised from time to time, have not met much success. Where

Sabhas have failed miserably till now, is on the cultural front.

We or our children have had no opportunity of being exposed to Kashmiri culture songs, dance, drama, folklores and hence have no idea of the richness of our very rich culture. Our culture is comparable with any other culture in India or abroad but it is unfortunate we are not aware of it.

AKD

To a limited extent, Sabhas have been successful on all fronts. But, by and large, they have failed to generate en-masse enthusiasm for community affairs which gives an indication of their overall success. A recent annual general meeting of a Sabha was attended by one hundred persons out of five hundred members but the population of Baradari members must be surely over ten thousands or more at that place. Talk to relatives in Srinagar about community affairs or the Sabhas and you will find that an ordinary member of the Baradari is hardly enthusiastic. Have a look at the Executive committees of the Sabhas over past two decades and you will find only a handful of people managing affairs.

V.K.

We have existed as a social organisation for the few decades of our existence, and I think we have a network of people who know each other and who come to each others' assistance—sometimes—in times of need, or to meet annually but more than that nothing can be said.

The social aspect of each one's being flows from two sources—that individual's membership of a particular comm-

unity and as part of the entire universe of human beings. Our present generation now gets together as members of the human race, not really as members of a particular community.

The immediate prospect is now of our seeing our Kashmiri friends just as we do all our non-kashmiri friends and this is a frightening possibility. It means that culturally we have erased our distinctiveness.

Implicit in what I have said is that culturally we have not begun as an organisation, let alone got any place. And in terms of religious conviction, that is facing an assault in everybody's lives anyway. I don't think we got anywhere there beyond good intentions.

Q. 3. What in your opinion, can be done to remedy the situation ?

S.M. Our parents did an excellent work by setting up Sabhas and Samajs. They have been very successful on the religious front. They, never, actually undertook the role of Sabha on the cultural front which alone can enable us to maintain and preserve Kashmiri identity. We must concentrate on this aspect which was left out by our elders. Even when so called cultural programmes were organised for children, participants were encouraged to recite a Rhyme or a poem or anything else for the sake of participation. No attempt was made to encourage kashmiri folk lore, dance, drama etc.

As I have said earlier, Kashmir has rich culture but unfortunately we are

not aware of it. I suggest local units of Kashmiri Sabhas can play a leading role on the cultural front. These Sabhas can act as Patrons for leading artists from Kashmir. Govt. of J & K can be requested to promote such tours outside Kashmir as it is necessary to expose Kashmiri culture outside Kashmir to develop and maintain the Kashmiri identity. An annual cultural programme, if not biannual to start with, should be organised as regularly as the annual Havans.

AKD I have seen the involvement of the Baradari members in learning about Kashmiri culture in the valley and in the plains. Those who are settled outside often complain that opportunity has not been provided to them to know Kashmiri culture but they do not know that their counterparts in the valley are no better in their knowledge of Kashmiri culture. Yes, people can converse in Kashmiri at present in the valley but slowly it is becoming fashionable for younger generation to talk to their children in Hindi or English. The day is not far off when Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir may not speak the language of their land.

In Kashmir, an average person is becoming aware of kashmiri culture courtesy Doordarshan Kendra in Srinagar. I find lot of people are taking interest in promoting Kashmiri culture now —like N. Delhi based Kashmir Education Society and the Deptt. of culture, J. K. A troupe from Kashmir performed in Calcutta a year back.

It may not be exaggerating to say that we perhaps lack the necessary invol-

vement to know about ourselves. We donot, have that 'en-masse enthusiasm' which I mentioned earlier. I think we should concentrate on building up exactly that. Our elders should look back to share their experience with younger members for planning a better future for the Baradari.

I think, All India Kashmir Samaj and other Associations abroad should draw out an action plan for generating 'mass enthusiasm' for community affairs and maintaining identity as Kashmiri Pandits.

VK I think that a important bridge between ourselves as Kashmiris is that of language. While I agree that Kashmiris in

Kashmir may not be conversent with their culture, they do at least talk to each other in Kashmiri.

For me as a Kashmiri to talk to a fellow Kashmiri in a language which is not ours is absurd.

A baby has to learn to sit before he can crawl and crawl before he walks. We must establish this very important linkage of our language with utmost urgency. It is no exaggeration to state that the survival of our community as a distinct entity is at stake. The cultural aspect of Kashmiris can be developed only on the basis of development of our language.
