

Vitasta Annual Number

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Vitasta Annual Number
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Theme : Homeland Pilgrim Centres (Asthapans) of Kashmiri Pandits
- A Perspective for their Preservation.

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- Symbolic Models of Identity Preservation in Exile

Dedicated to :

- The Homeland Shrines of Kashmiri Pandits in exile, the Pilgrim-Centres of far and wide belief and reverence, presently in abnormal conditions, requiring maintenance — a Heritage to be preserved.
- The Shrines of Kashmiri Pandits, where the great Saints, Sages and Savants experienced unique moments of trans-ascendance and exhilaration — a Legacy to be preserved.
- The Shrines that are the Sanctum Sanctorum of Presiding Deities, "Ishta Devis" of globally scattered Kashmiri Pandits — a Tradition to be preserved.
- The Shrines that have been the recognised Centres of Learning and Excellence and Repositories of Vedas, Upnishads, Mahayanas and Kashmiri Shaivism — a Privilege to be preserved.
- The memory of Kashmiri Pandit Saint-Poet-Philosopher, Mahatma Krishen Joo Razdan, on his 75th Nirvan Jayanti, being observed the whole year 2002, by various Kashmiri Pandit Institutions.

Preface

It is a pleasure and privilege to present this 35th annual number of the Vitasta, dedicated to Kashmiri Pandit Shrines in their Homeland, Kashmir. Many in our Biradari, within our country and across the shores, look forward to the Vitasta Annuals with great expectations. And I wish this presentation also accordingly came up to the mark. Whilst a dear baby to me, the constraints of age and related circumstances, now do stand in my way of performing on such a responsibility as the Editor-in-Chief of this prestigious publication. However, despite my initial hesitation, the persuasion of Kashmir Sabha members and its perseverant President, Brij Mohan Ji Misri, was unrelenting and therefore, I had to girdle up my loins again and fall in line for carrying out this literary Pilgrimage. But, as the saying goes, howsoever one may desire, the "Darshan" is granted only when there is a call from the Shrine itself. Exactly this is what followed. This Pilgrimage was really a peculiar one, late at the start and with all impediments and inclement incidents on the way, making the journey very tedious and tiresome, fraught with frequent breakdowns caused by episodes of helplessness and unpredictability; so it got prolonged, with due apologies, for much longer a time than what could be scheduled for it. All along during the preparatory period, my mind remained in doubt as to whether it was at all destined to have this pilgrimage accomplished. Such were the circumstances that took place one after the other during this period, all very depressing and disheartening. It is gratifying, however, to realise that, the "Darshan" after all having already been granted by now and the ray of hope having become visible at the end of the dark tunnel, the journey back will now be timely to reach you, the *nectar* and "*Prashad*" of this Pilgrimage. That is this volume of difficultly acquired and meaningful information, toiled up to the objectives that were laid for this literary Pilgrimage.

It was after a great thought that the theme for this publication was evolved as : Homeland Pilgrim Centres (Asthapans) of Kashmiri Pandits — A Perspective for their preservation. It is almost thirteen years back that our exodus from our motherland was thrust upon us and since then we are uprooted from our ancient hearths and homes. Our exile is getting protracted and our cultural identity is at crossroads of survival and extinction. It is high time that we collectively strive hard to preserve our cultural identity and ensure that at not too longer a date from now we also return to our roots, as far as possible, in our Homeland with dignity and honour, safety and security, with rights and privileges that our Constitution provides us as Indian citizens and with freedom from discrimination and prejudice that have caused our internal displacement. The awakening and awareness about our Pilgrim Centres is therefore a natural prelude to this aspiration. The Vitasta, Kolkata, has been considered as a trendsetter in initiating, from a distance, some remarkable movements in our community. Accordingly, it is in the fitness of this consideration and very much timely to bring about the needed momentum towards the cause of preserving our ancient shrines in our Homeland. For a community with ancient roots, its culture has to be evolved from certain beliefs and faith of antiquity all of which may not find a mathematical proof. But these are engraved in our culture and tradition and that is our heritage. This heritage requires to be preserved not only in words but also by well-planned actions and efforts. Our Pilgrim Centers and Shrines are closely linked to our Cultural heritage. History reveals that our kings and queens did not pride in building great palaces or memorials for themselves but they were remarkably particular in having great temples built, which reflected the course of history and the attainments of our progress at that particular period of time. As such, our cultural development, intellectual attainment and history from ancient times is associated with the temples and shrines of past in our Homeland. Naturally, these temples were, besides centers of worship, the temples of our knowledge, literary pursuits and spiritual progress also. It becomes essential, therefore, to know as much as possible about these foundation pillars on which our Cultural Identity Structure rests. This knowledge and awareness can be rightly assumed as a requisite for the awareness and awakening about our Homeland Shrines and about their preservation. It does not require to be emphasized that our Shrines are in our Homeland, Kashmir. There is a specific Mahatmaya behind these which as well as details their location and surroundings, mountains, rivers, springs, the flora particularly **Chinar** and Mulberry trees. Our worship to these shrines is, in essence, an acknowledgment to our thankfulness to the totality that a shrine means to us; its spiritual

significance, the belief and the particular location our "Devis" and "Devtas" have accordingly determined for these. There can, therefore, be no alternatives to our shrines in our Homeland, Kashmir.

As such, very thoughtfully, this vitasta Number has been so designed as to prove very valuable in achieving the above objectives. There are no two opinions that for such documentation the essential ingredients are the collection of authentic information and correct database. The preamble to the theme of this publication was so designed as to achieve historical background about our shrines and their origin and about their religious and spiritual significance based on recognised studies and researches. Each shrine has associated with it certain appropriate ritualistic observances meaningful to those times and these provide it a special identity. It is this identity to which our sentiments and feelings find an attachment. Though these are matters of faith and belief, all efforts have been made to provide and incorporate an acceptable logic, as far as possible, with our present knowledge. No one has written the last word of science. As our underlined scientific understanding improves, our beliefs and faith find enough relevance for their continuity and preservation or for their absolute discontinuation. Therefore, this Vitasta Number has initiated, as far as possible, emphasis on scientific understanding of the various aspects of our shrines; their origin, architecture and related specialties. All efforts were made to gather whatever possible information about their present plight; this being so very necessary for providing a realistic picture for any meaningful future action. Further, Kashmiri Pandits have got internally displaced historically and an effort has also been made to collect the available information as to how this identity has been preserved in our Diasporas at different historical periods. All these topics by themselves are matters of extensive research and therefore subjects for many more publications for detailed treatment. It suffices to mention that this publication is providing a very necessary beginning for further investigations that our other community centers and their publications will have to carry forward to enable a detailed insight into our rich heritage and for its preservation.

As was considered necessary, I approached personally various authorities on related subjects at Delhi, Jammu and various Camps where our uprooted Biradari members are scattered. All possible efforts were made to source detailed and authentic information on our Shrines in the vale of Kashmir; its capital Srinagar, its metropolitan towns and its districts to provide a total scenario. Various meetings and discourses were held at Delhi and Jammu for organising access to all available sources of information. Various Ashrams and temples that have been created as symbolic models of our shrines at Jammu, Delhi and Faridabad were visited by the undersigned to have on the spot information. It by itself became a process of bringing about awareness and awakening about our shrines and for creating a movement for their preservation. For this I am thankful to the Editors of Koshur Samachar, Delhi and Kshir Bhawani Times Jammu, Milchar Bombay and KOA, USA who extended all help and cooperation in this connection. It is unfortunate, due to inclement weather then, I could not reach Srinagar for personal assessment. But all efforts were made to have reliable information on this subject from there also. As a result valuable information became available from some of those who were approached though our expectations were pitched still much high and many promises have remained reserved for future efforts. Appeals for articles were made through the columns of the Koshur Samachar, the Kshir Bhawani times and the KOA websites and these had a good, though delayed, response. Our gratitude and gratefulness is due to these sister organisations for their cooperation and help.

The total matter received from others and collected personally has been classified under various Sections though it is not accurate; many contributors have as expected approached our theme in totality and as such they have catered to many aspects. However, based on the major emphasis in a particular article, it has been placed accordingly under a particular Section. Further, some repetition here and there was inevitable, which in such a thematic publication as this may not be avoidable. But each contributor has provided some additional valuable information and views and these have helped in making this publication broad based. Repetition is providing more emphasis particularly for our younger generations who are not aware of these shrines and their names.

Personal approach was made in procuring contributions from original residents of such places about shrines in different parts of the valley. These details have been given important place in this publication since these are arising from their hearts and reveal their feelings and sentiments. Almost in all the articles the pain of being in exile and the nostalgia about our roots is abundantly evident. Based on the available material the contents have been divided in the following Sections.

Section I : Homeland Pilgrim Centres of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile — Pertinent Origin : Gleanings from Legend, Tradition, Practice, History, Travelogues, Arts and Science

Section II : Homeland Pilgrim Centres of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile — A Kaleidascope View: Our Shrines in General, Their Past and Present Perspectives

Section III : Homeland Pilgrim Centres of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile — Our "Ishta Devis" & The Like: Hari Parbat, Kheer Bhawani, Khrew Amarnath and Sharda

Section IV : Homeland Pilgrim Centres of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile — Some Memorable Shrines in Districts: A Walk in Memoriam, Lest we forget these and consign these to Processes of Natural & Human Destruction

Section V : Homeland Pilgrim Centres of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile Symbolic Models in Diaspora: Creating Alternative symbols of Hope in Exile, Preserving their Identity in Memoriam and Pouring out Rhymes in Nostalgia

Swami Vivekananda Ji had visited Kashmir twice and had experienced inspiring moments at these Shrines particularly Kheer Bhawani at Tulla Mulla. His memorable expressions and experiences are vibrating through all the Sections of this publication. Keeping his observations and utterances in view, perhaps Gods and Goddesses themselves ordained the present neglect and dilapidation of our millennia old Shrines and that of our community for a particular divine cause not known to us. This could be our sins or may be a sort of *tapasiya* at *tempering* us with shock, sacrifice, trauma and lesson so that we reform and rectify ourselves in exile and deserve inhabiting again in that abode of Gods and Paradise on Earth — our Homeland Kashmir, to follow the footprints of the *Rishis* and *Munis* who had made our Homeland an abode of excellence. Swami Ji's words do provide us solace and also inspire us to dream of glorious times to come, in very near future. Ashrams in the valley, associated with the Rama Krishna Institution have stood the brunt of these thirteen years and considerable expansion is being given in the valley as also at Udeyawala, Jammu which is again a heartening development; pointing to good times coming.

It is gratifying to note that the publication of this Annual number of the Vitasta has coincided with the 75th Nirvan Jayanti of Pt. Krishen Joo Razdan, a great Saint-poet-philosopher that our Homeland has produced. His Bhajjans and Leelas and commentaries on our shrines in verse have made Pt. Krishen Joo Razdan immortal. We pay our respectful homage to this great son of Kashmir and dedicate this Number on Shrines of Kashmir to his memory also and as a proceeding of his 75th Nirvan Jayanti celebrations, on our own behalf.

The Shrine of Sharada has been our very important Pilgrim center of excellence and pride. Since 1947, it is in POK and has remained out of reach for us and is in neglect so far as our attention is concerned. The personal reports from those who managed to reach this shrine recently reveal that it is still being held in high esteem by the locals and is well protected as a sacred place. I had expected to receive a number of photographs of this shrine as were shown to me at Jammu but due to some communication gap these did not become available for being reproduced in this publication. However, deservingly, this Shrine has been given due emphasis as our "*Ishta Devi*"

and it is expected that this publication brings about awakening towards a very important agenda of enabling more facilitation for regular visits and *Yatras* by the devotees to this Pilgrim Centre through Governmental measures and necessary arrangements. A thought requires to be given to this and public opinion mobilised for the same.

It does not require any special elaboration or further evidence to reveal that our Pilgrim Centres and *Asthapans* in our Homeland are in bad condition because of militancy and because, on this account, there are not enough devotees over there to take care of these. This publication has provided reasonably good knowledge on our Shrines and that is an achievement. Preservation of these Shrines is linked with our return to our Homeland; awakening has been aroused about their protection, maintenance and preservation in the interim period. At this juncture no list of concrete measures or suggestions has emerged for obvious reasons. Government action in forming a "Mandir Prabandhak Board" is a welcome step but nine months have passed that this Board was formed but no reports have yet become available about its performance, if any. We can only hope that it will look into the property matters of the land and premises that our *Asthapans* possessed particularly in districts. Our local Organisations in Jammu are duly representing our community as members of this Board and we expect that they will provide leadership in handling these complex issues of property matters caused by militancy and our exodus from the valley or those hanging for quite sometime with *Aukaaf*. A requisite infrastructure to follow these matters will be necessary for which considerable personnel and financial support will be needed. So the first step as envisaged at this stage is to have in near future, after the elections in the valley are over, a status report on such cases, based on authentic information and what it would require to build the desired infrastructure for handling such cases. The local units will do a yeoman's service to the community by highlighting these issues amongst all the units of Kashmiri Pandits spread globally, so that all become aware about the issues authentically and about the steps and finances that will be necessary for handling these matters.

Conclusively, it may be proposed that Governmental protection and support are very necessary in safeguarding our Shrines and the property these possessed in the valley. But for taking care of our such community assets we have to depend upon ourselves and the resources we possess. Logically, it is the agenda for our Federating Organisation (AIKS) which alone could organise action globally in developing the necessary infrastructure for preserving our Shrines in Kashmir and looking after the assets that are associated with these. But unfortunately AIKS is not appropriately functional at present to attend to such priorities. Lot has been written, with best intentions, about AIKS' take off, in the columns of the *Vitasta* and other community journals but no concrete steps have been taken by its leadership to shape it as a Federating Organisation. It has taken no organised steps for building the Organisation that is required for coordinating effectively the activities of its forty six affiliates for the minimum common agenda of the community, spread globally. Unless and until the concept of a Federating Apex Organisation is given desired shape and duly respected, one cannot think of a joint action plan for any of our community problem. AIKS was developed for this purpose, twenty-two years back, but it has yet to perform unto these objectives. So, any other appropriate Organisation in Jammu or Delhi can provide leadership to the issue of our homeland Shrines, their safety and preservation. It is a proper selection of a group of dedicated and sincere persons who can provide leadership on such matters as our Shrine preservation. It is with this in view that an article "Kheer Bhawani Construction Committee" has been included in this Number as a model of Coordinated dedicated Action. It is a model developed in the past, around fifty years back up to the conditions prevailing then. Circumstances have changed radically since then, but it holds good even under presently changed conditions. A community leadership is the answer and we have to look for this. I am hopeful that some solution will be soon found to our Coordination functions so that we have an Organisation and a leadership dedicated to the minimum agenda of the community. I again repeat that only AIKS can play this role and for this if need be it has to be so structured as to play the desired role effectively. It's functioning as one amongst the other affiliated units, with the same objectives, is not what can give it the desired identity of the Apex Unit. It has to determine

its priorities and accordingly formulate its minimum agenda of coordination amongst its affiliates and for their implementation.

It is my great pleasure to acknowledge the overwhelming cooperation I received in having the thoughtful matter for this publication. I am especially indebted to Shri Sunil Fotedar at Texas, USA, Prof. C. L. Saproo, Delhi, Prof. R. L. Shant, Jammu, Shri Arjan Dev, Majboor, Jammu, Dr. M. K. Raina, Mumbai for enabling receiving articles and photographs. Thanks are due to Pt. A. N. Kaul Sahib, Ex-Editor-in-Chief, Koshur Samachar and Pt. T. N. Khosa, Editor-in-Chief of Kshir Bhawani Times for organising very useful meetings in this connection at Delhi and Jammu during the early preparatory stages of this publication. Copies of this publication have been printed for wider circulation as publicly requested as a community publication. These will be available at its cost price, from Kashmir Bhawan, Kolkata. I have no words to express my gratitude to all the authors who have contributed to this publication and made it come up to the objectives that were laid for it. I am thankful to Kashmir Sabha, Kolkata for necessary encouragement and financial support. A word of apologies is due to my valued contributors and admirers of the Vitasta for the delay that has taken place in bringing out this publication. I am also soliciting indulgence for any omissions or commissions that might have crept, in bringing out this publication. It requires to be emphasised that the views expressed herein are entirely those of the contributors and the Vitasta or Kashmir Sabha, Kolkata does not hold any responsibility for the same. The success of a publication can be measured by the purposeful impact it makes. Whilst hoping that this publication will arouse the desired awareness and awakening towards our Shrines in our motherland, Kashmir, and towards their preservation, I stand with prayers and best wishes for this sacred cause.

15th August, 2002
Dr. B. K. Moza

From the President's Desk

It is an occasion of pride and pleasure to present this 35th Annual Number of the `vitasta', '2002 - the official organ of our Kashmir Sabha Kolkata. For all these years it has appeared in the best form and charm, at regular intervals; soothing and refreshing us all, through its lofty thoughts, useful suggestions and ideas. This prestigious annual publication of ours is very much loved and cherished by our Kashmiri fraternity all over. All the scholarly and intellectual members of our community look forward to the `Vitasta' Annuals with great expectations, because of its rich contents, knowledge, indepth studies and extensive research work. Supported by authentic records and references, well written articles by authors of eminence and literary excellence, highlighting hard facts of life pertaining to overall aspects of our community, Vitasta Annuals have endeared themselves to the members of our Biradari; rightly being considered as "collectors' items". Thanks to our Dr. B. K. Moza, the Editor-in-chief of this publication, who leaves no stone un-turned in ensuring that his pains taking and honest efforts do bring us credit in achieving the objectives that are set for this publication.

As per the established practice, every volume of this publication bears a particular theme which is very much pertinent and vital to our community's cause and interest. The theme of this particular issue, as proposed by Dr. B. K. Moza, and appreciated by us all, is : "Home land Pilgrim Centres (Asthapans) of Kashmiri Pandits — A Perspective for their Preservation". As all of us are aware that our shrines are places of worship, hallowed by sacred memories and sentiments. These sanctuaries of faith do offer us unique opportunities to come out from the depths of darkness and ignorance to the heights of zenith pervaded by divine radiance and enlightenment; knowledge and bliss.

As it is, the world of today has come to its extremes, mankind in general continues to suffer tremendously and that too at random and end lessly. Over centuries various political, economical, industrial and scientific revolutions have taken place. Regardless of how external factors are ever changing our day to day existence, the world has come to realise and recognise the ultimate fact that society will not improve fundamentally as long as the people themselves fail to transform the negative and destructive tendencies inherent in them. Therefore, the inner change for the better in a person is the first essential step in the process of making the Human race wiser, more reasonable and rational. Hence human (inner) revolution is the most basic of all revolutions and is the prime need of the hour. In recent past all renowned world bodies have started to come together to contemplate seriously on this basic topic.

India has always remained in the fore front, in advocating this noble cause strongly from the time immemorial. Indians inherit spiritual wisdom from Vedas and Upnishads and are exposed to this spiritually charged unique atmosphere from their very birth. The entire intelligientia of west are very much keen to know the Eastern spiritualism and its uniqueness to unravel the ultimate Truth and Reality. How old is the universe? where have we come from? where are we going to? All these questions have baffled all the leading thinkers across the world. "Every technological leap into space brings to us a greater understanding of the cosmos of space that stretches into eternal infinity." The more we tune our vision and probe deeper into eternal questions the more our limitations in relation to the vastness and mysteries of space, become apparent. Hindu faith, however, believes that even the cosmos is not exempt from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. This external mystery of cosmos is brought out in a verse from Rigveda : "who truly knows and who can declare whence it cometh and wither it vanishth?" All these mysterious questions and queries lead us to believe firmly that there is some super-natural force with infinite Power and energy which kindles and controls the vast universe to maintain the overall balance of the entire existence lest it degenerates to such an extent that its very sanctity is at stake. From times immemorial we have been tackling all problems confronting our community with a touch of spiritual awareness. We have survived all through not on our material strength and wealth but on our spiritual strength that has energised us all through. It is very much unfortunate that now-a-days saintly atmosphere is getting polluted all over. This being so, it is wise to take to spirituality

which alone can come to the rescue of Humanity. Revival of the spirituality is the prime need of the hour, since spirituality is man's realisation of the spirit. According to the philosophy of Vedanta the spirit, which is also called the Brahman, created this entire universe through matter and energy. All objects are the outcome of one primal matter. All natural forces like gravitation and thoughts and feelings at the consciousness level are the outcome of a primal energy, called "prana". The universe is a manifested or projected form of God; the Brahman created through the combination of absolute reality of all creations' is the same, Brahman. He is the 'Real Me' and the 'Real You', dissolving all differences between us. Out of the three elements of a being, the Atma, the Mind and the Body, the Atma is pure Brahman. However a person's mind is made up of negative and positive traits. Based on the development of these traits under the interactive influence of a particular social environment a person imbibes a way of living that is his *sanskaras*. These *sanskaras* guide all his mental processes and physical activities in life, co-existence of both negative and positive elements in the mind causes intellectual and emotional contradictions, creating conflicts within us making us experience fear, insecurity, hurt, hatred and jealousy, driving us to inflict pain on one another and develop prejudiced vision. This distortion of vision causes illusions/ignorance. The world of pain and pleasure created by the human mind appears as the ultimate reality. To become one with the real core of our existence, the pure Brahman, we have to see through this illusion, by climbing the ladder of spiritual awareness, step-by-step; we can minimise and eventually eradicate pain and conflicting tendencies from our being and experience lasting peace and happiness. Let us constantly strive to find our centre of equilibrium to be able to fill ourselves and this world with a sense of oneness, boundless love and compassion for all.

Ours has been the land of Holy persons and Holy places. It can be well visualised by the very writing, Lawrence put in the year 1899 which says "The valley of Kashmir is the holy land of the Hindus. I have rarely been in any village which can not show some relic of antiquity, curious stone miniatures of old Kashmir temples, huge stone seat of Mahadeo (*Badrapith*) inverted by 'pious' Musalmans, lingams innumerable and carved images heaped in grotesque confusion by some in clear spring have met me at every turn." These have been the sacred places where people and persons of genuine nature and normal frame of mind have derived and drawn spiritual solace and strength from time to time and conveyed it down the line from generation to generation for the general good and benefit of mankind. So to retain and preserve these Asthapanas in their proper shape and form becomes all the more important in order to bring in spiritual awareness and awakening.

Being situated at secluded places away from the maddening crowds, enjoying seclusion, calm and quiet and serene and sober environment all around, these areas act as ideal and beautiful spots and places for offering Prayers with full faith and devotion to God Almighty, the omnipotent and omnipresent, the Lord of Lords, the Supreme. Prayer benefits us in many ways. It puts us in a positive and peaceful frame of mind. It fortifies our self confidence and generates new energy and in the process equips us mentally and emotionally to face the daily ordeals of life. It fills our mind with soothing, moral and spiritual thoughts, which in turn make us self purifying and self-improving.

Dr. Alexisearel writes "whenever we address God in fervent prayer we change both soul and body for better". Prayer puts us in a positive frame of mind, revives hope and saves us from slipping into depression. It gives us courage and develops in us the ability and the right temperament to face the vicissitudes of life. Prayer has immense therapeutic value. People who have faith and who pray are less prone to stress. Prayer does not affect the entire moral environment in our lives. The thoughts of peace, good-will and contentment emanating from the mind send out waves of positive vibrations all around and purify the environs. Our Devasthanas have been the earthly abodes of God and Goddesses, frequently haunted by our Saints and Sages of all times, to draw inspiration from the divine presence pervading, doing all the needful required for the overall benefit and general good and wellbeing of our society and mankind. Hence to make sure that all the heavenly choicest blessings do keep on showering, we are required to up

keep these pious monuments which remain largely neglected owing to lack of proper attention and due care these deserve; particularly now-a-days after community's Mass Exodus from the valey. We were bestowed with a large number of such Holy-Huts and Sacred Shrines with a brilliant record of rich heritage and history of pious past; we all should feel very much proud of these.

For regular maintenance and up-keep of these Holy Pilgrim centres of our Homeland both cultivable and non cultivable lands and other immovable property were attached to these just to ensure regular flow of funds required for the development works and other preventive measures necessary from time to time. These places were largely under the control of Dharmarth Trust. These having huge offerings all the year round. Now recently some new other cheritable Trusts are operating to oversee all its management affairs etc. This being a potential source of income some sort of central administrative arrangements and services are required which would ensure proper representation from all quarters, transparency and accountability at all levels. I hope some light will be thrown on this aspect in this Number and ways and means suggested to improve upon the existing sad situation.

The year 2001-2002 has passed by. For our Sabha it was an year of brisk activities, almost on all fronts. I am very much thankful to the present Executive Committee members and the Biradari members for their active participation, valuable Co-operation and full support all through. On the AGM day all the activities and performances of the Sabha under review, were appreciated and the existing office bearers were re-elected for the second term unanimously. Holding of monthly executive meetings as per schedule was strictly adhered to and decisions taken there-in were promptly carried out. The 'Vitasta' News and Views, continued to be issued as Bimouhly only covering the various activities of the Sabha. The attempt at culturing and promoting our own Mother-Tongue in our younger generation was continued also by way of introducing children cross-word puzzle in Kashmiri language. The **credit** goes to Shrimati Anjali Razdan for this novel idea.

Apart from Annual Hawan and Picnic the number of cultural get togethers and festivities has risen to an all time high. The response was over-whelming and enthusiastic. This was done with the objective of creating awareness of being at Home, away from our unique Home in our native land, Kashmir. Apart from one-to-one contact and close intimacy, it helps in bringing members socially and culturally together and keeps our rich tradition and religious sentiment all alive. The finance resource generation was given due attention to improve Sabha's financial base. As has been the practice, we have extended our solidarity to frontal organisations and financial help to the needy and displaced persons of our community related to medical relief and rehabilitation etc. from time to time. I am highly grateful to Shrimati Prabha Tankha, our Secretary and Shrimati Anjali Razdan (Editor, Vitasta Bimonthly News Letter) Shrimati Bharati Kaul (Jt. Secretary) Shri L. N. Koul (Vice President) and Shri Rakesh Koul (Treasurer) for discharging their responsibilities pretty well. Financial wing has been managed by Shree Mohan Kishen Ogra and Shri Pyaray Lal Sapru for raising necessary funds enabling Sabha to bring forth this 35th Annual Number. I also Express my deep gratitude to Dr. Brij Krishen Moza (Editor-in-Chief, Vitasta Annual) and Shrimati Niva Rani Koul (Editor Hindi and Kashmiri Sec.) for bringing out the Vitasta Annual Number. It is a little belated on account of sad and unforeseen circumstances that our Dr. B. K. Moza has faced during its preparation and due to unforeseen reasons. However, we undoubtedly feel proud of Dr. Moza for his unparalleled dedication and selfless service for attending to this noble cause, despite his constraints.

For last two years we have been bringing out the yearly calender_a new idea_carrying the broad view of our Mata Dashbuja Sharika Bawani's picture in Kashmiri dress (original *Batani* dress; *Phiran*, *Taranga*, *Longa* etc. in the year 2001) and that of our Mata Khir Bhawani's picture (year 2002) at the top and important list of the auspicious days and festivities in the body. This was done with the objective of inculcating in our younger generation the sense of blongingness to our

great tradition and rich cultural heritage. May the flag of our community keep on flying high for all ages to come.

Finally I would conclude with an appeal, that nothing is impossible; even the word impossible conveys "I M POSSIBLE". So by courage, conviction and action we can achieve our objectives of preserving our identity. So what is required is to be united and, let us work together with vigour and courage, and not confront each other.

As per Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna has said that, "One who is not envious but who is a kind friend to all living entities, who does not think himself a proprietor, who is free from false ego and is same both in happiness and distress, who is always satisfied and engaged in devotional services, with determination and whose mind and intelligence are in agreement with me, he is very dear to Me".

Therefore without being attached to its fruits and credits, let us act as a matter of duty to attain the supreme.

With best wishes, and greetings

14.07.02

B. M. Misri

Reviews on the 34th Vitasta Annual Number, 2000-2001

Last year Kashmir Sabha, Kolkata brought out the 34th annual Number of its official publication, the Vitasta, on the theme : "Mother Tongue of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile — Origin, Advances, Threats and Thrusts".

It is gratifying to note that the response to this publication has been overwhelming. It is revealed by the very large number of letters that we have received in appreciation of this publication from members of our community within our country and from abroad and from the experts of Kashmir Language. We take this opportunity to thank admirers of our this publication for their profuse appreciation and useful criticism, kind words and encouragement. It is not possible to reproduce these individual letters for obvious reasons. It suffices to record that we treasure these valuable mementoes with love, respect and gratefulness. However, we are reproducing the reviews that have appeared in our community journals, as detailed below, which do by and large represent the views that we have received from individuals separately. The purpose is to : i) acknowledge our gratitude to individuals and our community publications for their interest and confirm our continuing involvement, contribution and commitment to this community cause, ii) review salient achievements of this publication and the action areas it has opened and iii) remind ourselves, our experts and litterateurs of Kashmiri language that we have still to walk miles in preserving our mother tongue in exile, and implement the suggestions and aspirations that have emerged out of this publication. The pertinent reviews, as appeared in our community journals, written by their expert commentators are reproduced below : Editor-in-Chief.

The Kashur Gazette, New Delhi, 28th July — 3rd August, 2001; review by Shri Kamlaish Vakil : "The journal under review is the official organ of Kashmir Sabha, Kolkata which was founded as far back as in 1956. Previously in the News Letter form, it took the present form in 1961. It was named the Vitasta after the river "Veth" which is symbolic of Pandit's hoary culture and also its deep connection with ups and downs in the history of India's highly talented Pandit community. So the title of the journal is appropriate and in tune with the changing times. The Journal is the 34th Annual Number of the Vitasta which, I suppose, is a very good attempt at awakening the dormant sensibilities in the realm of our "Linguistic Culture". It is not a hapazard attempt which is characterstic of the "magazines and glitzy Annual Numbers" published by plethora of Sabhas and Samitees from time to time. **The journal under review is thematic in subject-matter and the treatment is purely intellectual. On these grounds, the articles inserted in the magazine lend it the hues and contours of A-grade Research Journal dealing with a topic of Seminal importance.** The running theme of the journal is : "Mother Tongue of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile _ Origin advances, threats and thrusts". Broadly speaking it is dilvided into VIII sections. They deal with the origin (of Kashmiri language), development, emerging threats & emergent thrusts respectively. Section V, in Hindi Script, is devoted to the subject Hindi and Kashmiri.

In section I erudite scholars and historians like late Prof. S. K. Toshakhani, P. N. K. Bamzai, Prof. Braj B. Kachru, Prof. B. K. Koul Dembi and Dr. B. K. Moza have contributed their write-ups (research papers). As regards the Development of Kashmiri language, articles contributed by late Prof. Sunit Kumar Chatterjee and late Prof. P. N. Pushp touch new facets of the subject. Prof. Jia Lal Kaul's and Prof. Hajni's write-ups open up new vistas of thought with regard to the origin and development of the language. Kashmiri language-the mother tongue of Kashmiri Pandits diaspora-is basically one of the Aryan languages. As a language it is the offshoot of the Dardic language which is discounted by Prof. S. K. Toshkhani. Historian P. N. K. Bamzai says that all the languages spoken all over the mountainous tract between the Hindukush and the northern frontier of India are called Dardic. They include "Kafir, Chitrals, Shina, Kashmiri and Kohistani (page 9). Kashmiri language has been greatly influenced by Sanskrit language. The history of Kashmiri language is divided into three periods : Old Kashmiri from 1200 to 1500 A.D., Middle

Kashmiri from 1500 to 1800 A.D., New or Modern Kashmiri, after 1800 A.D., (Prof. S. K. Chatterjee). Mahayana Prakasa by Sitikantha Acharya is the earliest composition in Kashmiri. The language was greatly influenced by Persian language, because it had become the court-language during the reign of Muslim Kings. There is a controversy about the script of the language. Sharda script is said to be the original script of Kashmiri language. Says Prof. B. K. Koul Deambi, "Sharda remained an alphabet par excellence of Kashmiri till the present century and owed its name to the valley which from ancient times bore the alternative name of "Sharada-dasha" owing to its tutelary deity Sharda, the Goddess of Learning. (Page 26) Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee regards the Sharda script "an archaic tradition in its orthography which could not be adopted to modern times in spite of scientific endeavours of modern scholars like George Grierson". (Page 35) Under political pressure Persian-script, with a little modification has been chosen "as an appropriate script" for this language. Because of some inherent phonetic drawbacks within its fold, Persian-script fails to meet the requirements of Kashmiri language which abounds in a plethora of vowel sounds. **On all counts Devnagri script is the most suitable script for the language.** Kashmiri language, like any other language, is endowed with rich, racy and juicy literature which can be divided into two water tight compartments : Spiritual literature and non-spiritual (mundane) literature. The mystic poetry of Lal Ded and Nund-Rishi "has an indiscribable charm of its own, which gives a wonderful feeling of joy and almost exhilaration to reader."

The poetic compositions (Shruk) of Nund-Rishi break new grounds elevating reader's mind to a higher realm of spiritualism. The Vaks of Lal Ded and Rupa Bhawani reveal intricate `Kashmiri Shiva philosophy. In fact Kashmiri poetry starts systematically with these two mystic poets. The under-current of Buddhist thought and themes also influenced the mystic-poetry of some of Kashmiri poets. Kashmiri mystic poetry will be incomplete without making any reference to the works of Whab Khar, Shah Gafoor, Shamas Faqir, Nyam Saab, Shah Qalander Pt. Krishan Joo Razdan, Pt. Permanand and Master Zinda Koul. Late Moti Lal Saqi's article captioned "Buddhist themes in Kashmiri literature" deals with this subject in a comprehensive manner. Kashmiri romantic poetry forms warp and woof of Kashmiri literature. Habba Khatoon, Aranimal and Russul Mir brought about what he called the romantic movement in Kashmiri literature. Commenting upon the works of some of these poets, Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee says, "In Kashmiri literature, there are three eminent poetesses who are the glory not only of Kashmiri literature, but of Indian literature as well : they are Lal Ded of the 14th Century, Habba Khatoon of the 16th Century and finally Aranimal of the second half of the 18th Century" (page 33)

Whereas late Dina Nath Nadim's write-up traces the growth of opera in Kashmiri with special reference to *Banda Jeshan*, Prof. Mohiud Din Hajini's highly illuminating and informative article gives a critical analysis and development of Kashmiri Lyric, Folk-lore, Devotional-Poetry, Novel, Drama etc. This write-up is highly valuable from the research point of view.

Apart from the scholastic view-point, **the articles given in the Annual Number of Vitasta, are eye-opener for the Kashmiri Pandit community which is losing fast its cultural identity.** Kashmiri language alone can prove helpful in retaining our identity. Kashmiri language is our mother-tongue. It is said that "to forget one's mother-tongue is to lose one's individuality." Language is interlinked with culture which gives "a distinct character" to the community. It serve as bonds of fraternity. We can take cue from the Jews who after hundreds of years of their displacement and migration resettled in their homeland. It was due to the fact that they never compromised or gave up their Hebrew language. Language is basically a medium of communicating our thoughts. Our culture flows through language. It is, so to say, "lone carrier of our cultural heritage". How can Kashmiri Pandit community part with this rich cultural heritage? It will be the tragedy of the worst magnitude if the community sheds off its distinct cultural identity. Dr. B. K. Moza, the editor of the magazine, has done a commendable job. His **message is loud and clear : "Cultural identity, however, remains incomplete if the younger generations of our Diaspara cannot preserve their mother-tongue".**

We need to dismantle taboos of "puerile class-formation and revive our heritage" through our mother-tongue-*Kashur Basha*. **The Magazine is a trend-setter for those who wish to rejuvenate the dormant community through print-media."**

The KSHIR BHAWANI TIMES, Jammu, August, 2001 review by Shri Arjan Dev Majboor : Kashmir Sabha, Kolkata has done a great service to Kashmiri Pandit community in exile, by publishing a special number on : Mother Tongue of Kashmir Pandits in Exile — Origin, Advances, Threats and Thrusts. This 168-page special number has been well thought of and contains very important articles on the origin and problems of Kashmiri Language. Kashmiri is a National Language as it is included in the 8th schedule of our constitution, but it is neglected at home. This Language ought to have been the Medium of Instruction in the Schools of Kashmir valley. The tragedy is that the inheritors of this language have not given it the importance it deserves. The Government of JK is introducing this language from next session.

Kashmiri is a language older than Urdu and Hindi. Its literature is rich and after Independence, it has shown remarkable progress in all genres of literature. But its readership is not increasing. After the migration, when about three lac Kashmiri Pandits left the valley, the language got a big jolt. The children of the community had to take up other languages for their expression, these include Hindi, English, Dogri etc. The language is the main source of retaining a culture. Kashmiri culture being very old has come to us through this language.

Kashmir has remained a cradle of religions, thoughts, movements, cultures and languages. Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu and English flourished in the valley and produced works in History, Philosophy, poetry, Drama, Poetics, Astronomy and Scriptures.

But Kashmiri remained the language of the common Kashmiri. After migration, a great threat to Kashmiri culture and language is being faced by all Kashmiris. What are these threats and how these are to be faced has been discussed through the articles of various eminent writers, thinkers and linguists in this Number.

The Number contains Five sections —

1. The Origin. 2. Development and Advances. 3. Emerging threats. 4. Emergent thrusts and the section. 5. deals with these problems in Hindi language.

The eminent writers who have contributed to this issue include Prof. S. K. Toshkhani, Prof. T. N. Ganju (still living in Kashmir), Eminent Historian P. N. K. Bamzai, Prof. B. B. Karchru, Prof. Omkar N. Koul (Linguist of International repute) famous historian — Suniti Kr. Chatterji, Prof. V. N. Draboo, Prof. Muhiddin Hajni, Dina Nath Nadim, Moti Lal Saqi and Dr. K. L. Choudhary. The galaxy of writers has worked very hard to put up their viewpoint about the subject they have taken to elucidate.

Dr. B. K. Moza Editor-in-Chief, though not keeping good health for some last months has worked laboriously to bring out this special number with a fine get up. He and his team of co-editors deserve praise and thanks as well, for working selflessly on this document since December, 2000. In this way **this issue is a gift to Kashmiri speaking people for the new (millennium).**

The articles of late personalities have been collected by Dr. Moza from the National Library of Kolkata and this too is not an easy job. The personalities like Suniti Kumar Chattarji, Prof. Pushp, Prof. J. L. Koul, Prof. Hajni and D. N. Nadim figure on very important issues of our beloved mother tongue. The issue of origin has been fully discussed by Prof. Braj B. Kachroo. He says that the new research on the language shows that Dardic can not be taken as a separate group

as proposed by George Grierson. He according to scholars like Jules Block, George Morgenstierne & Relph L. Turner maintained that Kashmiri has originated from Indo_Aryan or Sanskrit language. Prof. Kachru has also said that about three thousand languages out of six thousand of the languages of the whole world are dying or going towards decay. These included about 318 languages of our country i.e. India and Kashmiri is one of these languages. This should be a matter of challenge for all the Kashmiri speaking people. If they want to keep this language alive they should struggle for the following :

1. Making its script very easy to be read by its readers.
2. Making Hindi script (optional) for those who know Hindi only.
3. Enhancing its readership by making it a medium of Instruction in the valley of Kashmir.
4. By making it an earning language and introducing it in offices, courts, business.
5. Speaking in and introducing this language to youngsters.

This special number deals with the problems of script also. Mr. S. N. Bhat Haleem, Dr. Agni Shaikhar, Professor R. L. Shant, Mr. M. L. Kimu and other writers give a detailed study of their practical experience in this field.

There are some poems in English and Hindi also. The price has not been given. The number is worth reading and preserving. This special number has come up on the Internet as indicated by Mr. Sunil Fotedar (computer Engineer). I would request all writers who are affiliated to this language in any way to purchase this valuable number from Kashmir Bhavan Kolkata, CK-35, Karunamoyee, Salt lake, Kolkata-700 091.

The Koshur Samachar, New Delhi, September, 2001 review by Prof. S. N. Bhat : The Vitasta Annual Number for 2000-2001 has the theme of "Mother-Tongue of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile-Origin, Advances, Threats and Thrusts". The Editor of the English section is Dr. B. K. Moza who is mainly responsible for this well-researched number. The Hindi/Kashmiri section is edited by Mrs. Niva Kaul. The English section has four sections, namely, the origin development and advances, emerging threats, emergent thrusts. The Hindi/Kashmiri section is contained in Section 5. The executive committee of the Kashmiri Sabha, Kolkata, that has shared the overall responsibility for the annual number include Mr. Udainath Kaul (former President), Mr. P. L. Sapru, Mrs. Indu Kaul, Mr. L. N. Kaul, Dr. B. K. Moza, Mr. B. L. Tickoo, Mr. A. K. Dhar and Mr. M. K. Ogra.

In Section I prominent scholars whose articles on the origin of Kashmiri language find place include late Prof. S. K. Toshkhani, P. N. K. Bamezai, Prof. O. N. Kaul, Arjun Dev Majboor and Dr. B. K. Moza. Dr. Moza has referred to **the present-day research on the origin of the language which he says leaves no doubt about its Indo-Aryan origin and its roots being in Vedic Sanskrit**. This view has been convincingly proved by the researches of Prof. S. K. Toshkhani, the legendary scholar from Kashmir. He feels that Kashmiri language has its first home in Sanskrit and second in Persian. He had gone to Gilgit in 1940 only to investigate and refute Grierson's conclusion about relationship of Kashmiri to Shina or Dardic. Prof. O.N. Kaul also says that Grierson must have been wrong when he separated Kashmiri from the Indo-Aryan language stock. Section II has some illuminating articles on the Kashmiri literature by some most gifted scholars of the community. These include late Prof. P. N. Pushp, T. N. Dhar 'Kundan', late Dina Nath Nadim, Moti Lal Saqi and late Prof. J. L. Kaul. Prof. Pushp writes on Kashmirology as an important part of Indian literature, which includes such well-known contributions as Shaivism and Sufism. He refers to the folklore of Kashmir and the classics like Rajatarangini and classic books by Jonaraja, Srivara and Suka. He points out the need to bring out a biographical dictionary of distinguished Kashmiri scholars, writers and thinkers. The KECSS, with Mr. M. K. Kaw as President, is currently engaged in such an academic exercise.

In Section III, we find contributions of writers who are concerned about the preservation of Kashmiri language and culture. They also discuss how to meet the threat of extinction of Kashmiri

and its cultural heritage. They include Mr. A. N. Kaul Sahib, Dr. R. L. Shant, Mr. V. N. Drabu, Dr. Roop Krishan Bhat, Mrs. Kiran Dhar, Dr. K. L. Chowdhury, Dr. B. N. Sharga, *et. al.* Dr. Bhat, Principal of Languages School at Patiala, writes on the imperative of language and culture for the survival of the community.

In Section IV, on emergent thrusts, there are several writers projecting the efforts of Kashmiri Pandits the world over for the preservation of Kashmiri language and culture. Dr. S. N. Ganjoo, a distinguished scholar and head of Kashmiri Overseas Association based in London, has donated a Cultural Centre (Bhawan) in London where an attempt is made to hold seminars on Kashmiri Pandit heritage. He has been coordinating his efforts to hold classes in London and the USA on this language. In Kolkata too, the Kashmiri Sabha holds classes on the language to preserve our identity. In this section, writers like Mr. Manmohan Dhar, Mr. P. L. Zutshi and J. L. Manwati have written on Kashmiri language as part of our motherland. Prof. S. Bhatt has referred to the contribution of Kashmiri Pandit heritage to the intellectual and social harmony of our global civilization.

The efforts made by AKS to develop the language and culture has been brought out by Dr. Moza who needs to be congratulated for this very successful volume on Kashmiri language and K. P. cultural heritage. By including the opinions of writers from the past history like Dina Nath Nadim, Prof. J. L. Kaul, Prof. Toshkhani and Prof. Pushp, he has set a new trend, very much required, to revive the essence and excellence of this heritage. **Research is after all an exercise in reinterpretation of the past facts in the light of present circumstances. Combining old and new literature and knowledge should be a very illuminating and creative work therefore. It provides a fresh breeze to our cultural life. I am sure KP scholars world over will give some thought to this process of resurgence of our cultural and intellectual heritage, useful for KP society and for the global society as well. In a new world where knowledge is growing fast, KP heritage has much to offer for human enlightenment.**

We offer our warm appreciation to Mrs. Niva Kaul for her superb handling of the Hindi/Kashmiri section as Editor which includes articles from eminent scholars like Mr. S. N. Bhat Haleem, Mr. Arjan Dev Majboor, Dr. Agnishekhar, Mr. R. L. Shant, Ms. Shyama Kaul, Mr. K. Santoshi, Mr. P. N. Dhar and Dr. B. K. Moza.

The Milchar, Mumbai, July _ September 2001 review by Shri J. L. Manwati : "Almost all Kashmiri Pandit Associations, Samitis or Sabhas in the country publish their News letters, periodicals, tabloids or magazines and all these publications have been given names which bear some semblance with the land of their origin — Kashmir. But the very name "Vitasta" — the publication of the Kashmiri Sabha — Kolkata reminds one of the sublimity of genetic flow of the sacred river which runs through our beloved motherland in whose adoration our ancestors have sung :

<verses>

"You pass through the country of Kashmir — the abode of blessings, free from all calamities. Through this country of Kashmir Thou, O! Vitasta, flowest befitting the people, and, I offer unto you my salutations."

The Annual Number of Vitasta is always eagerly looked forward to because like the flow of `Vitasta', its contents benefit us all. The 34th Annual Number — 2001 was dedicated to those who have contributed to the development and growth of Kashmiri language and towards its preservation as mother-tongue.

The Editorial Board having decided upon the theme of mother tongue, has taken upon itself the most important issue which prospectively concerns the very identity of Kashmiri Pandits. It is sad that our Mother-Tongue is fast relapsing into oblivion from our homes. With clear perception, the Board for this purpose has divided the `Theme' into four relevant segments viz; Origin, Advances, Threats and Thrusts.

It must have been taxing task for the Board to identify the contemporary writers who could contribute to the Annual Number; determine the works of scholars who have in their life times enriched our literary stock and finally to call out extracts from their works making it a **compendium publication worthy of a place on the book shelves of every Kashmiri Pandit. Kudos to Dr. B. K. Moza and his Team.**

The Annual Number has many comprehensive articles on the origin of our language; valuable articles of our celebrated writers, who are no longer with us now, and elaborate essays of the present day renowned scholars who are concerned about the preservation of our mother tongue. But, sadly, no writer has come out with concrete suggestions to preserve our language, particularly in the present day diaspora of our community.

It should have been the duty of the AIKS — the apex body of our community to realise the exigency of the problem facing the community and the Samaj should have convened meetings and seminars on All India level and devised a charter for the preservation of our mother tongue, before even the residual spoken language is snuffed out from our Homes and Hearths."

kpandit@yahoo.com of 30th August, 2002 Shri Sunil Fotedar (Texas, U.S.A.) informs, "I have kept the past 3 issues of VITASTA ANNUAL NUMBER — a publication of Kashmir Sabha, Kolkata in *pdf* format that may be downloaded at : <http://ikashmir.org/pdf/index.html> under, "**the Kashmir Series**" section. You need Acrobat reader to view these documents. It can be downloaded free of charge.

FYI, the HTML version at : <http://vitasta.org>

Thanks,
Sunil Fotedar."

*Aami pana sodras naavi chhas
lamaan,
Kati bozi myon dai meti diya taar.
Aamaen taakaen pony zan
shamaan,
Zuv chhum bramaan ghare
gatsahaa.*

With a rope of loose-spun thread
I am towing my boat upon the sea.
Would that God heard my prayer
and brought me safely across!
Like water in cups of unbaked clay
I run to waste.
Would God I were to reach my
home!

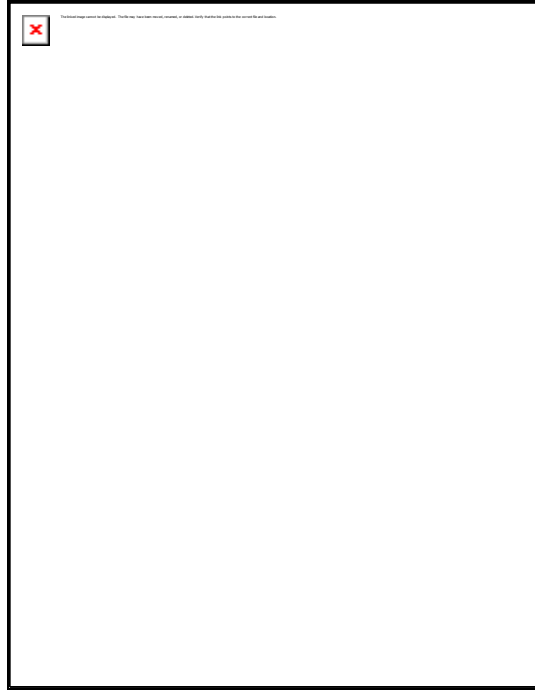
*Kyaah kara paantsan dahan ta kaahan,
Wokhshu 'n yeth legi karith yim gayi;
Saeri samahan yeth ra 'zi lamahan,
Ada kyaazi raavihey kaahan gaav.*

Ah me! The Five (bhuta-s), the Ten
(indriya-s),
and the Eleventh, their Lord the mind,
scraped this pot* and went away.
Had all together pulled on the rope,
Why should the Eleven have lost the
cow?
(Why should the soul have gone astray?)

* The living body.

(Lal Vakya translated into Kashmiri by Prof. J. L. Kaul)

Swami Vivekananda in Kashmir
Compiled by **Swami Bodhasarananda, Kolkata**



*Swami Vivekananda
(Parliament of World's Religions; Chicago, U.S.A., Photograph)*

This article has been compiled from authentic life of Swami Vivekananda. It gives a day to day record of his stay in Kashmir more than one hundred years ago. He visited many shrines. From the visions and experiences he had, we find these shrines surcharged with God's presence. Only we have to open our hearts to allow the God's grace flow inside us.

Swami Vivekananda visited Srinagar twice. The first time he reached Srinagar was on 10th September 1897. At Srinagar he was the guest of Justice Rishibar Mukhopadhyaya. On the third day after his arrival he paid an informal visit to the place of the Maharaja. Since the Maharaja was then at Jammu, his brother Raja Rama Singh received the Swami with marked cordiality and honour, seating him on a chair, and himself sitting with officials on the floor. The Raja was deeply impressed by Swamiji's thoughts on religion and his eagerness to improve the condition of the poor. He voiced his desire to help the Swami in carrying out his plan of work.

Early in the first week of October the Swami was busy filling many engagements, private and public, and visiting the places of historic interest with which Kashmir abounds. Sadhus, Pandits, students, officials of high rank went to meet him.

The Swami left Srinagar for Baramulla and reached Murree on October 8 and from there to Rawalpindi on October 16, 1897.

The second time also Swami Vivekananda had to go to Srinagar via Rawalpindi, Murree and Baramulla. The distance had to be covered partly by *tonga* and partly by boat. Sister Nivedita, Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss MacLeod accompanied him.

Swami Vivekananda had great fascination for Lord Shiva during his childhood. As he grew older his love for Shiva, the Lord of monks and yogis deepened. And now in the Himalayas, the abode

of the Great God, the thought of Him was uppermost in the Swami's mind. To his disciples he spoke of the Puranic conception of the oneness of Shiva and His consort, Uma, under the guise of half-man and half-woman. It represented the junction of two great streams of thought, Monasticism and Mother-worship; or it represented the vision of truth where renunciation through philosophy and supreme love become inseparable. And "he understood, he said, for the first time the meaning of the nature-story that made the Ganga fall on the head of the Great God, and wander in and out amongst His matted locks, before she found an outlet on the plains below. He had searched long, he said, for the words that the rivers and waterfalls uttered, among the mountains, before he had realized that it was the eternal cry `Vyom! Vyom! Hara!' `Yes!' he said of Shiva one day, `He is the Great God, calm, beautiful and silent; and I am His great worshipper'."

While coming from Baramulla when he entered further into Kashmir, the Swami's mind was filled with the legends of the Kashmiris. The Vale of Kashmir had once been a lake; and it is related that at this point where the Swami was entering the Vale, the Divine Boar pierced the mountains with his tusks, and let the Jhelum go through.

The period from June 22 to July 15, 1898 was spent in houseboats (*dungas*) on the Jhelum, in and about Srinagar. He told his Western disciples many things about Kashmir, for instance, the different religious periods through which Kashmir had passed, with special attention given to the period under Kanishka; the morality of Buddhism and the religious imperialism of Ashoka; and again the history of Shiva-worship.

On June 26, the Swami suddenly felt a longing to leave the party and go to a quiet place. But not knowing that this was his intention, the party followed him to **Kshir Bhavani**. It was said to be the first time that Christian or Muslim had set foot there. The irony of the occasion was that the Muslim boatman would not allow the Swami and his Christian disciples to land with shoes on, "so thoroughly Hinduistic," says Nivedita, "is the Mohammedanism of Kashmir with its forty Rishis, and pilgrimages made fasting, to their (i.e. the Hindus') shrines."

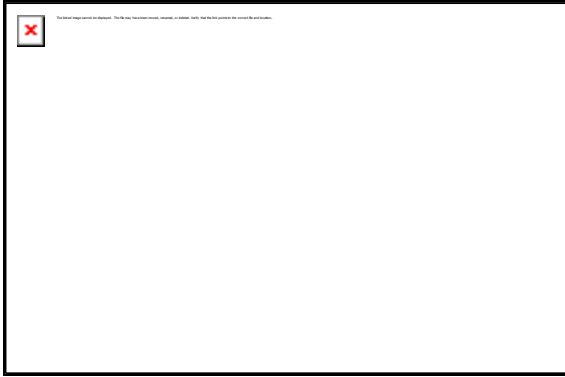
Among the local excursions that the Swami made with his disciples was that on July 29 to the small, massively built Shiva temple that stands atop the Shankaracharya Hill. This hill is also known as Takt-i-Suleiman, and rises a thousand feet above the surrounding terrain. The famous floating gardens can be seen below, for miles around. The beauty and extensive sweep of the scene drew from the Swami the exclamation : "Look, what genius the Hindu shows in placing his temples! He always chooses a grand scenic effect! See, the *Takt* commands the whole of Kashmir. The rock of **Hari Parvat** rises red out of blue water, like a lion couchant, crowned. And the temple of **Martand** has the valley at its feet!"

On July 4, the day of American Independence, he wrote a poem entitled "To the Fourth of July" which can be interpreted as a passionate utterance of his own longing for the Final Freedom in the Infinite. Time was to prove that it had been penned in a prophetic vein; for, four years later, on that very day, his shackles of work broken, he entered in "springing joy" into the Final Freedom, concerning which he had written.

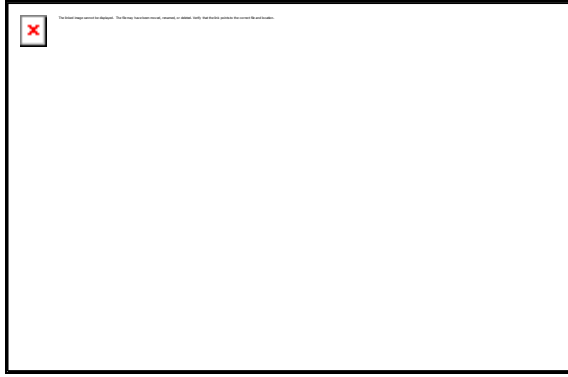
A desire for quiet and peace seemed to grow more and more upon Swami Vivekananda in these days. On July 10 he left alone for a pilgrimage to **Amarnath ji** by way of Sonamarg. On the 15th he returned, having found that route impracticable because the summer heat had melted some of the glaciers.

On July 19 the whole party started for Anantnag by boat. On the first afternoon they sought out and found the quaint old Temple of **Pandrethan** (derived from Puran-adhishthana meaning "old capital"), sunken in a scum-covered pond within a wood, by the side of the Jhelum. This is four and a half miles to the southeast of Srinagar. The temple is a small cell, with four doorways

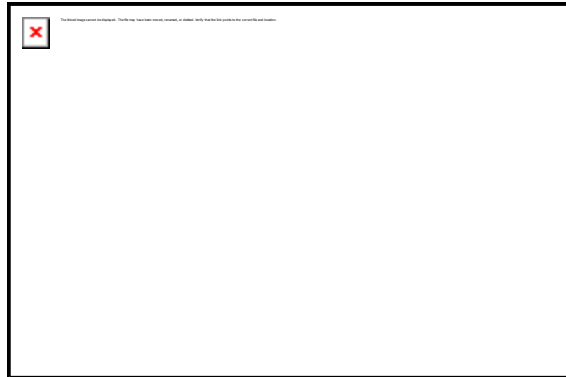
opening to the cardinal points. He drew their attention to the interior decorations, with their sun-medallion, and to the fine sculpture, in low relief, of male and female figures intertwined with serpents. Among the outside sculptures is a fine one of the Buddha standing with hands uplifted. And there is a much-defaced frieze, showing a seated woman and a tree. This evidently represents Maya Devi, the Buddha's mother. The temple is built of grey lime-stone, and dated from the tenth century A.D. "To the Swami," writes Sister Nivedita, "the place was delightfully suggestive," and she adds :



Kashmir, 1897. Sitting on chairs, left to right: Swamis Sadananda, Vivekananda, Niranjana, and Dhirananda.



Kashmir, 1898. Left to right : Jesophine McLeod, Mrs. Ole Bull, Vivekananda, and Sister Nivedita.



On a houseboat in Kashmir, 1898. Left to right : Jesophine MacLeod, Vivekananda, Mrs. Ole Bull, and Sister Nivedita.

"It was a direct memorial of Buddhism, representing one of the four religious periods into which he had already divided the history of Kashmir : 1) Tree and snake worship, from which dated all the names of the springs ending in Nag, as Veernag and so on; 2) Buddhism; 3) Hinduism in the form of sun-worship; and 4) Mohammedanism. Sculpture he told us, was the characteristic art of Buddhism. The figures with the serpents referred to pre-Buddhism."

Moving up the river, the party came next day (July 20) to the ruins of the two great temples of **Avantipur**; legend of which relates to Pandava times. Its sculptures drew his admiration. In his view the temples were more than two thousand years old. Swamiji said in the course of conversation : "In order to strengthen the national life, we must reinforce the current of that life itself along the line of its own culture of ideals. For instance, Budha preached renunciation, and India heard. Yet within a thousand years, she had reached her highest point of national prosperity. The national life in India has renunciation as its source. Its highest ideals are service and Mukti."

On July 21 when the party landed at the temple of **Bijbehara**, then already thronged with Amarnath pilgrims, he was able to join them for a little while. After visiting the temple, they left for Anantnag which was reached on the afternoon of July 22. He sat on the grass of an apple orchard and he started talking about the rarest of rare personal experiences. Picking up two pebbles, he said, "Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as that" - and the stones struck one another in his hand - "for I have touched the feet of God!"

On the 23rd morning the party went to see the ruins of **Martand**. "It had been a wonderful old building - evidently more abbey than temple - in a wonderful position," writes Nivedita, "and its great interest lay in the obvious agglomeration of styles and periods in which it had grown up."

On July 25 the party went on to **Achabal** and in the afternoon came back to Anantnag. It was at Achabal that the Swami announced his intention of going to **Amarnath** with the two or three thousand pilgrims then en *route* to that shrine. As a special privilege, Sister Nivedita was allowed to join him as a pilgrim. It was settled that his other Western disciples would accompany the party as far as Pahalgam and there wait for the Swami's return.

On July 27 they halted for a night at **Bhavan (Martand, also called Matan)** and reached Pahalgam on July 28. Throughout the rest of the journey Swami Vivekananda would bathe in the holy waters, offer flowers, fruits and sweets to the object of worship before breaking his fast, make obeisance by prostrating himself on the ground, tell his beads, make ritual circumambulation, and the rest. At every halt, the Swami's tent was besieged by scores of monks seeking knowledge from him. Many of them could not understand his broad and liberal views on religious matters. The Muslim Tehsildar, the state official in charge of the pilgrimage, and his subordinates, were so attracted to the Swami that they attended his talks daily and afterwards entreated him to initiate them.

On July 30 the Swami left for **Chandanwari**. Next day a steep climb towards **Pishu** top followed and then a long walk on the narrow path that twisted round the mountain-side. At last they camped (July 31) at **Wavjan** at a height of 12,500 ft.

Next day (August 1), after crossing the **Mahagunus** Top, a pass at 14,500 ft., they reached **Panchtarani**, the "place of five streams".

On August 2, the day of **Amarnath** itself, there was first a steep climb followed by a descent, where a false step would have meant death. They walked across a glacier till they reached a flowing stream. When Swami Vivekananda reached the cave, his whole frame was shaking with emotion. The cave itself, says Nivedita, was "large enough to hold a cathedral, and the great ice-Shiva in a niche of depressed shadow, seemed as if throned on its own base." His body covered with ashes, his face aflame with devotion to Shiva, the Swami entered the shrine itself, nude except for a loin-cloth, and prostrated in adoration before the Lord. A song of praise from a hundred throats resounded in the cave, and the shining purity of the great ice-linga over-powered him. He almost swooned with emotion. A profound mystical experience came to him, of which he never spoke, beyond saying that Shiva Himself had appeared before him, and that he (the Swami) had been granted the grace of Amarnath, the Lord of Immortality, namely not to die until he himself should choose to do so. Shri Ramkrishna had prophesied regarding this disciple of his : "When he realizes who and what he is, he will no longer remain in the body!"

Never had the Swami, in visiting a holy place, felt such spiritual exaltation. Afterwards he said to his European disciple, "The image was the Lord Himself. It was all worship there. I never have been to anything so beautiful, so inspiring!" Later on, in the circle of his brother disciples and his own disciples, he said dreamily : "I can well imagine how this cave was first discovered. A party of shepherds, one summer day, must have lost their flocks and wandered in here in search of them."

What must have been their feeling as they found themselves unexpectedly before this unmelting ice-Linga, white like camphor, with the vault itself dripping offerings of water over it for centuries, unseen of mortal eyes! Then when they came home, they whispered to the other shepherds in the valleys how they had suddenly come upon Mahadeva!" Be that as it may, for the Swami this was truly so : he entered the cave and came face to face with the Lord!

On the journey back the Swami and party returned to **Anantnag**, and from there by boat to **Srinagar** which they reached on August 8.

In Kashmir the Swami and his party were treated with great respect by the Maharaja; and during his stay various high officials visited the Swami's houseboat to receive religious instruction and converse with him on general topics. The Swami had come at the invitation of the Maharaja, to choose a piece of land for the establishment of a monastery and a Sanskrit college. It was a disappointment to the Swami when, about the middle of September, he heard that official discussion of the site that he had chosen, had been twice vetoed by the British Resident.

Following the pilgrimage to **Amarnath**, the Swami's devotion became concentrated on the Mother. It was touching to see him worship, as Uma, the four-year old daughter of his Muslim boatman. He once told his disciples, during these days, that "wherever he turned, he was conscious of the Presence of the Mother, as if she were a person in the room."

His meditation on Kali became intense, and one day he had a vision of Her, the mighty Destructress lurking behind the veil of life, the terrible one, hidden by the dust of the living who pass by, all the appearances raised by their feet. In a fever he groped in the dark for pencil and paper and wrote his famous poem "Kali the Mother"; then he dropped to the floor, losing consciousness, while his soul soared into Bhava-samadhi.

On September 30, the Swami abruptly went to **Kshir Bhavani**, leaving strict instructions that no one was to follow him. It was not until October 6 that he returned. Before this famous shrine of the Mother he daily performed Homa (*Havan*), and worshipped Her with offerings of Kheer (thickened milk) made from one maund of milk, rice, and almonds. He told his beads like any humble pilgrim. Every morning he worshipped a Brahmin Pandit's little daughter as Uma Kumari, the Divine Virgin. He practised severe austerities. He became like a child before the Divine Mother. All thought of Leader, Worker, or Teacher was gone. He was now only the monk, in all the nakedness of pure Sannyasa.

One day at **Kshir Bhavani** he had been pondering over the ruination and desecration of the temple by the Muslim invaders. Distressed at heart, he thought : "How could the people have permitted such sacrilege without offering strenuous resistance! If I had been here then, I would never have allowed such a thing. I would have laid down my life to protect the Mother." Thereupon he heard the voice of the Goddess saying : "What if unbelievers should enter My temple and defile My image? What is that to you? Do you protect Me, or do I protect you?" Referring to this experience after his return, he said to his disciples : "All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it is only Mother! Mother! I have been very wrong. I am only a little child."

Another day, in course of his worship, the thought flashed through the Swami's mind that he should try to build a new temple in the place of a present dilapidated one, just as he had built a monastery and temple at Belur to Shri Ramkrishna. He even thought of trying to raise funds from his wealthy American disciples and friends. At once the Mother said to him : "My child! If I so wish I can have innumerable temples and monastic centres. I can even this moment raise a seven-storied golden temple on this very spot."

"Since I heard that divine voice," the Swami later said, "I have ceased making any more plans. Let these things be as Mother wishes."

Thus we see during his stay in Kashmir, Swami Vivekananda was in a different world altogether. Visions of **Shri Amarnath**, **Mother Kali** and **Kshir Bhavani** remained always with him. Later at Belur Math he said : "Since visiting Amarnath, I feel as though Shiva were sitting on my head for twenty-four hours a day and will not come down."

The party left Kashmir on October 11 and came down to Lahore. Swamiji reached Belur Math on October 18, 1898.

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Kashmiri Pandit Shrines, The Centres of Pilgrimage
by T. N. Dhar `Kundan`* New Delhi

The Pilgrimage

When I was a smallboy, my mother described to me a pilgrimage that she had undertaken along with her father who had been a devout religious man. They had gone to a place called `Swayam` meaning `by itself` or `Automatically`. She told me that there was a small hillock of clay at that place in addition to a temple. The pilgrims would assemble there on a specified day, offer pooja and then dig a hearth on the hillock. A pot full of rice and water would be placed on the top and the rice would get cooked without any fire being lit in the fireplace. Because the rice got cooked by itself the place was aptly called `Swayam`. This cooked rice would be distributed as `Prashada` and consumed with reverence. This narration often raised a query in my mind as to **why we should undertake pilgrimage to a shrine**. As I grew I came to know of innumerable sacred places in my homeland Kashmir where people went for pilgrimage on specific dates of the year; On Jyeshtha Ashtami to Maharajna Temple at Tula Mula, On Ashada Navami to Shri Sharika Bhagavati at Hari Parbat in Srinagar, on Ashada Chaturdashi to Jwala ji at Village Khrew, on Ananata Chaturdashi to Nagabal at Anantnag, on Vyetha Truvah to Verinag, on Surya Saptami to martand and so on and so forth. In due course of time I also got to know about many a shrine and sacred place throughout the length and breadth of the country where pilgrims go to offer prayers or take a dip in holy waters on different days of the Hindu calendar; Kumbha at Haridwara and other places, Sangam at Allahabad, Sabrimala and Guruvayur in Kerala, Tirumala at Tirupati, Natha Dwara in Rajasthan, Twelve Jyotirlingas at Varanasi, Ujjain and other cities, Jagannath at Puri, Gaya in Bihar, Maha Kali at Kolkata, Kamakhya in Assam, Golden Temple at Amritsar, Badrinath & Kedarnath at Uttaranchal, Kalka ji in Himachal, Hardwar and Prayag in Uttar Pradesh, Vaishno Devi in Jammu & Kashmir state, Siddhi Vinayak at Mumbai, Dwarka in Gujarat, Rameshwaram in Tamilnadu, different sacred rivers, various age-old shrines and countless spots of faith and belief. The question about the rationale and efficacy of these pilgrimages continued to haunt me and I was prompted to ponder over these aspects.

The Meaning and the Purport

Pilgrim Centres are called `Teertha` in Sanskrit. It literally means a holy shrine on the bank of a river, spring or any other water resource. No wonder, therefore, that most of the shrines are situated on the banks of the important rivers, springs and on the seashore in addition to mountain-peaks, caves and hilltops. Incidentally the holy water referred to by us as `Tsarnamret` or nectar from the sacred feet of the Lord` is called `Teertha` in Tamil. The importance of `Teertha` as holy water can be gauged by the fact that during the daily `Sandhya` as a part of `Snanaviddhi` we are required to take handful of water and chant this mantra : `Ganga, Prayaga, Gaya, Naimish, Pushkara-adi teerthani yani Bhuvi santi Hare-prasadat aayaantu tani kar-padma-pute madeeye prakshalayantu vadanasya nisha kalankam - may the holy waters of Ganga, Prayaga, Gaya, Naimish and Pushkar etc. come into my palm by the grace of God and wash off the impurities of my face got overnight`.

Pilgrimage in Sanskrit is called `Teerthayatra` or simply `Yatra`. It can be defined on the pattern of the definition of education given in the scriptures. Education is defined thus : `Sa vidya ya vimuktaye-education is that which liberates us (from ignorance)`. Likewise pilgrimage may be defined as `Sa yatra ya trayate - **pilgrimage is that which saves and protects us (from vice and sin)**`. **Swami Vivekananda desired that every one of us should rise from animality to divinity so that divinity is manifest in all our thoughts, words and deeds**. It is precisely this that the pilgrimages help us to achieve. We approach these places of worship with humility and surrender before the Divine. We return with a resolve to shun the path of vice and tread the path of virtue. Millions of people pious, virtuous and noble have had visited these pilgrim spots before. The vibrations of their noble thoughts have rendered these places celestial and sacred. That lends added sanctity to these sacred spots and justifies our pilgrimage to these places. The

atmosphere at these places is rendered celestial and serene and it affects our thinking, our intentions, our resolve and our actions. It is not said for nothing that *'Sataam sadbhiv sanghah katham-api hi punyena bhavati* - It is the result of one's good deeds that one has association with good and noble persons'. The same is true of the pilgrimages. It is the result of our good deeds that we get an opportunity to visit such pilgrimage centres. There is a saying that we are able to undertake these pilgrimages only if and when the presiding deity of the shrine concerned so wills. I have a vivid experience of this myself. I was working in an organisation where visit to Tirupati was within the sphere of my duties. Soon on my taking over charge there I made tour programmes three or four times to visit the institution at Tirupati. Every time the tour had to be cancelled due to the exigencies of the services and the need for me to be present at the headquarters for some more important engagements. Eventually when the tour did materialize I was, by some strange coincidence, able to remain at the feet of Balaji Venkateshwara for more than thirty five minutes from 7 p.m. onwards, which by any standards is very uncommon as even V.I.P.s are able to spend a few minutes only at that place. I felt more than compensated for the earlier cancellations of the trips.

Tradition in Kashmir

I was born and brought up in Srinagar. I know from my own experience that it was a daily routine for most of the Kashmiris to get up early in the morning and after usual cleaning go to Hari Parbat for circumambulation. This was a daily pilgrimage to the shrine of Sharika Bhagavati, the presiding deity of Kashmir. Many of them would spend the Saturday night every week at *'Tsakrishwar'* in singing hymns, Bhajans and Leelas in praise of the Goddess fondly called *'Maej Haer'*. People would also undertake pilgrimage to *'Maha Rajna'* shrine at Tulamula on the eight day of the bright fortnight of every lunar month. Then there were pilgrimages to various holy places scattered all over the valley on the days specified by custom and tradition. These included Khrew, Mattan, Gupta Ganga, Vicharnag, Zeethyaer, Sumbal, Varamul and umpteen other places. Every ten or twelve years there would be an important pilgrimage to Prayag at Shadipur. This is called *'Dahi vahaer dashahar* - or the pilgrimage that takes place after ten long years. There is a saying in Kashmiri, which goes thus : *'Trisandhya, Rudrasandhya, Pawanasandhya kaerze adai maerze toti kentshah. Haersshwar, Tsaersshwar, Mahadeev kaerze adai maerze toti kentshah* - It would be wonderful if one were to die after undertaking pilgrimage to the three sacred springs of Trisandhya, Rudrasandhya and Pawansandhya or to the three holy mountain-peaks of Haersshwar, Tsaersshwar and Mahadev'.

This popular saying indicates the importance that we attach to these shrines and to the pilgrimage to these holy places. Blessed is this land of ours where every spring is pious, every river is holy and every mountain peak is sacred. There is hardly a village that does not have a shrine held sacred from hoary past. A date is fixed for the annual pilgrimage to every such shrine. Having a glimpse of the deity in the temple, cave or atop a hill is the prime motive of these pilgrimages but at many places having a dip in the holy water is also included in the tradition. Surprisingly at many pilgrim-centres water oozes in the springs only on these specified dates and there is dry sand on the remaining days of the year. There is an anecdote that once the great saint of Kashmir, Reshi Peer happened to visit Trisandhya on a date different from the one specified for the pilgrimage. There was no water in the holy spring for him and his disciples to take a dip. Reshi Peer wrote a complaint in Persian on a piece of paper and asked his disciple to drop it at the site of spring, *'Chi kudrat Sonda Braeri ra na ayad ba istiqbal-e-Shahahshahi Reshi* - What a surprise that the beautiful damsel Sandhya has not come to greet the King of sages, Reshi Peer' and lo and behold the water came gushing and the sage and his companions had a dip in the holy shrine. That the Kashmiris were used to undertake pilgrimages very often is corroborated by another anecdote from the life of the great Reshi Peer. It is said that someone in his neighbourhood was planning to go on a pilgrimage to Gangaji. When his mother heard it she expressed a desire to undertake the pilgrimage herself and visit the holy river. Peer Pandit Padshah, as he was fondly called, was aware that it was not possible because of her old age and failing health. He promised her that he would make necessary arrangements. He asked her to

remove her gold bangle and hand over the same to the person going on the pilgrimage with instructions to drop the bangle in the holy water of the Ganges on the appointed day. The days passed and the appointed day, viz; 'Ganga ashtami' arrived. Early morning the sage escorted his mother to the bank of the river Vitasta and asked her to take a dip. As the old lady entered the water her gold bangle came floating down the river, proving beyond any doubt that the holy water of the Ganges had flown down the river Vitasta and the sacred wish of the mother had been fulfilled.

There is another important aspect to be noted about the holy places in Kashmir. The 'Sangam' at Allahabad may be a popular pilgrimage spot. We have our own Prayag where the two rivers Sindhu and Vitasta converge. There is a small island in the middle there with a mahogany Chinar tree and a temple. We are told that this island never gets drowned even when the rivers inundate and overflow their banks. We have our own Ganga starting from 'Ganga Jatan', another pilgrim's paradise. There is the Sun Temple Martand at Muttan, MahaKali shrine in Srinagar on the bank of the Vitasta, Jwalaji at village Khrew. All these are, in a way, parallel shrines to their counterparts in other parts of the country, Konarka, Kolkata and Himachal. Probably the Kashmiris had to establish these in order to avoid undertaking arduous journeys to the plains because the valley is surrounded by high mountains, which were difficult to cross during those days with no means of transportation. Above all we have Swami Amarnath, serene in His cave, up in the mountains, pilgrimage to which is an annual feature on Shravana Purnima. This is no less important than the twelve 'Jyoti-lingas' at Varanasi and other places. We have separate shrines for the eight Bhairavas. Apart from these we have also sacred places. We have separate shrines for the eight Bhairavas. Apart from these we have also sacred places where our great saints and sages lived like Vaskur, Manigam, Lalatrag, Ishabaer etc. We have the great Sharada shrine on the banks of the Krishna Ganga, but alas! it is now in the Pak occupied Kashmir.

These pilgrim centres are an important component of our five millennia old culture. They form an essential part of our rich and varied heritage and a symbol of our distinct identity. They lend meaning to our existence as a community of magnificent and glorious past. They are eloquent landmarks of our history, our spiritual inclinations, our faith and belief and a pointer to the heights and attainments of our ancestors as also their contribution to our distinct way of living. They have, therefore, enormous socio-religious importance for our community as Kashmiris.

Administration of the Shrines

These shrines were looked after, managed and administered in the past either by the Dharmarth Trust or by the locally constituted management bodies. Offerings of the devotees were the main source of income. Some shrines had landed property attached to them, the yield from which earned some revenue as well. From this income was met the expenditure on their maintenance and salary of the priests, wherever required. Some shrines had commercial premises let out and the rentals so obtained also supplemented the income. May be in the past during Dogra rule some grant was given by the government also. The situation changed after 1947, when the so-called popular rule was established. Most of the shrines remained under threat from the majority community. The Bhairav Temple at Chhattabal is a classic case as it has remained closed since 1975, the main door nailed down with wooden planks. There were large-scale encroachments on the premises of the shrines including those of the important cremation grounds. The year 1986 was a turning point in that the shrines in South Kashmir in almost all the villages were attacked, desecrated and partially destroyed. The Governments at the state level and at the centre were moot witnesses to this vandalism. No tear was shed and no concern was shown. After 1990 the situation has worsened because of the forced exile of the Hindu community. No body knows in what condition these shrines are, particularly those in remote places. There is none to care or look after them. We have made replicas of Tulamula at Jammu, of Hari Parbat at Faridabad and established Ashrams of saints and savants at different places, where their sacred relics have been preserved, but the state of the original shrines and holy places back home is very much a

matter of anxiety and concern for the entire community. We are told that some prominent persons in the state government employ, who move to Srinagar during the summer and a few who are still in the valley having providentially escaped the wrath of zealots, have been taking care of some prominent shrines to the extent possible. While their effort is laudable, much more is required to be done for the maintenance and upkeep of these shrines and to safeguard their sanctity.

Problems and the Prospects

The problem is enormous, the task stupendous and the solutions are arduous. Yet the need of the hour is that we assess the situation, chalk out a programme and plan our actions. All this needs to be done before it is too late lest these places of religious and cultural importance should be lost to our progeny. Now that we are scattered all over and there is no prospect of our immediate return to our homes, we must address this problem in all the seriousness that it deserves. The following actions are suggested for the consideration of our community and various nodal organizations concerned about this grave problem.

There is a large-scale encroachment on important shrines like the one at Hari Parbat. This shrine has mythological, historical and cultural importance for us. This hillock is said to be the magnified form of the pebble brought by the Goddess in the form of a myna (Sarika in Sanskrit) in its beak to shut in the demon Jalodbhava in his cave so that he is not a source of nuisance to the sages engaged in their penance. This and such other shrines must be declared monuments of national importance and brought under the control of the Archaeological Survey of India. This question needs to be taken up with the Government of India so that necessary orders are issued in this regard. This will ensure that the encroachment is vacated and regular maintenance is undertaken to restore their pristine glory.

We need to constitute a body '*Teertha Prabhandha Samiti*' (Committee for the management of shrines). This body should have dedicated and committed representatives from the Kashmiris living in Kashmir and outside Kashmir. They should plan a visit to all the major centres of pilgrimage, examine their present status and then assess the expenditure needed to restore them to their original position. This has to be a three tier organisation having village level committees, area level committees and a central committee.

An endowment will have to be formed with the help of liberal donations from the members of the community, business houses and NRIs to create a Corpus Fund so that the interest earned from this is spent on the repairs and maintenance of the important shrines. In the villages and townships where some Hindu families still live, local sub-committees can be formed to oversee management of the local shrines. The shrines situated in such places where there are no Hindus at present can be entrusted to the care of the Area Committees.

In order to initiate these actions to begin with a Review Committee will have to be formed to organize an overall inspection of at least major and prominent shrines to make an assessment of the task involved. Other actions suggested above can be planned on the basis of their report with due regard to their recommendations.

Annual pilgrimages should be organised to important shrines. These pilgrimages should be undertaken collectively by groups of Kashmiri Pandits and can start from important cities where Kashmiris are at present in large numbers, like Jammu, Delhi, Bombay, Kolkata, Lucknow etc. This programme can continue till we are not in a position to go back to our homeland with safety and honour.

We need to bring out small pamphlets about prominent pilgrim spots. These pamphlets will carry pictures of the shrines, their brief historical and mythological description and their religious

significance. They can be published in Hindi and English and can contain the most famous 'Stotras' or hymns sung at those shrines on the auspicious occasions and annual pilgrimage.

With the help of the members of our community in the film sector, we may also bring out documentaries on important pilgrim spots of Kashmir with commentaries in Hindi and/or English. These documentaties can eventually be transferred on to Video cassettes and CD's for a wide circulation.

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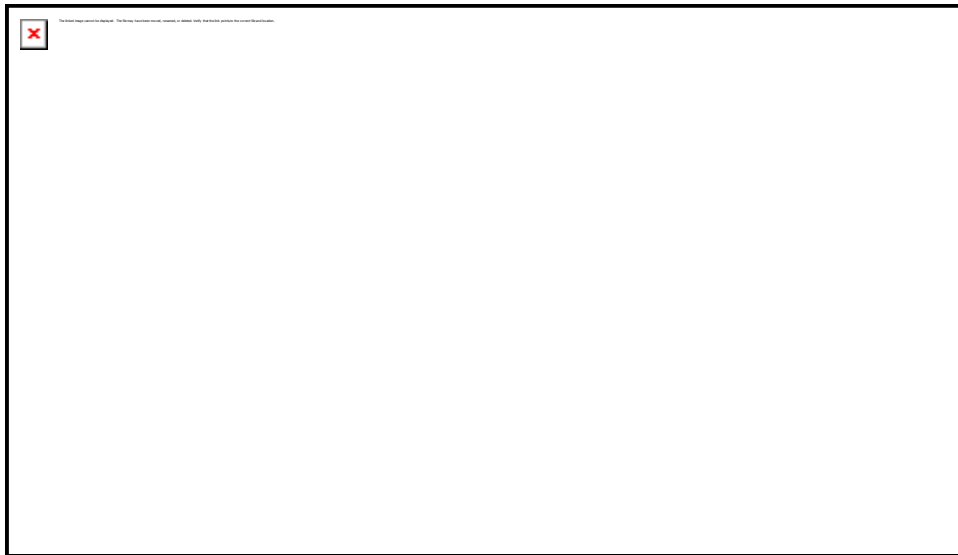
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Kashmir : The Legend and Scientific Facts

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The valley of Kashmir, forming the temperate zone of Jammu and Kashmir state of India, lies between 32°-30' and 34°-30' North latitude and 74° to 75°-30' East longitude between the two branches of the crystalline axis of the Himalaya-Zaskar in the north and the Pir Panjal in the south. It is a slopy trough some 135 kms long (about 84 miles) and 40 kms (about 25 miles) broad in its middle with an area of about 5400 sq.kms (2100 sq miles). Its mean level (asl) is about 1580 meters (about 5200 ft). It is girdled on all sides by the Himalayan and the Pir Panjal mountain ranges. Its surface features, amply testify to the extensive operations of the mutually complimentary processes of deposition and erosion. The river Jhellum (*Vitasta*), originating in the Vernag spring (*Nilnag*) in the south-east of the valley, runs throughout its length and forms its sole drainage. Before emerging out as a mountain river at Khadanyar, near Baramulla (*Varahmula*) it passes through one of the largest fresh water-body, the Wullar lake (*Mahapadmas*), in the Indian sub-continent. It finally joins the Chenab (*Chandrabaga*) in Pakistan quite some distance away.

Over the centuries, Kashmir has attracted the attention of scholars in various disciplines for its literature, history, culture, philosophy, geology, vegetation, and other fields. A number of works have been published for centuries now, including an exhaustive and voluminous account by Kalhana in 1148-49 AD, entitled *Rajatarangni*. This was followed by updated editions by scholars like Jonaraja, Srivara, Prajyabhatta and Suka. These later works cover the period from 1155 to 1587 AD. In addition to the above treatises there are also erudite philosophical works of Somananda (who wrote *Agamas*), Utpaladeva, Khemaraja, Abhinava Gupta and others covering subjects such as *Shaiva* philosophy and its *Kashmir* recension. Many celebrated scholars, travelers like Hiuen Tsiang (631-33 AD), Royle, Haider Malik (*Tarikhe Rashidi*), Buhler, Aural Stein, Seven Hedin, Drew (1875), Lydekar, Lawrence (1895), Stewart and others have given excellent accounts of many aspects of Kashmir. Mulla Tahir Gani composed his famous *Divan* in mid 17th century. More recently, attention has been focused on subjects such as linguistics, palaeontology including pollen analytical study of the past vegetation etc. Even a cursory knowledge of some of the basic works stimulates interest in everything relating to the land its myths and legends and what to speak of the philosophical works.



Most of us of the older vintage in Kashmir, are aware of the legend - some might call it a myth regarding the evolution of the valley. The source books of these legends are the **Nilmat**

Purana**, perhaps the oldest extant literary work of Kashmir (*circa 500-600 AD*, some put it at 400 BC) and the Rajataranginis. These tell us that the valley remained uninhabited by man for six *Manvantaras (Manu)* because there was a body of water called *Satisara*. According to the Nilmat Purana each *Manvantar (Manu)* is said to comprise 122,688,000 years. It was only in the later part of the last and seventh *Manvantar* that the mountains near *Varahmula* (literally pig's snout), the present day Baramulla and still called Varamull in Kashmiri, was broken open by the plough of Ananta to let out the water and the valley was reclaimed by man. The latest geological estimate state that this phenomenon of the geological fault opening out at Baramulla - Khadanyar, sector occurred about 85,000 years ago; yet again a remarkable coincidence between the legend and the scientific facts!

The legend further has it that earlier the valley was peopled by the Nagas who, perhaps for some time came under the sway of the *Daitayas*. Subsequently *Samgraha* was killed by *Indra*, the Aryan warlord. Former's son, *Jalodabhava*, (literally indestructible so long as it remains in water) in revenge devastated the adjacent territories and caused untold miseries to the inhabitants who had come to stay. Elimination of this tyrant, *Jalodabhava* was accomplished by invoking the deities by sage Kashayapa, father of Nila who had sought his help. The former came and took his position atop the Naubandana Tiratha above the lake of *Kramsaras (Konsarnag or Vishnupad)*, in south Kashmir, the source of the *Veshav (Vishoka) river*, which comes out of the mountain range at Ahrabal (*Akhurbil*, the mouse hole). The legend further has it that the demon was killed by the two Gods, *Vishnu* and *Shiva* of the Hindu Trinity, viz; *Bhrama, Vishnu, Maheshwara* representing the three aspects of the supreme Being or *Paramatma*. This in essence is the legend relating to the origin of the land which came to be called Kashmir after the name of the sage (*Rishi*) Kashayapa who was instrumental in draining the water and reclaiming it. The Greek scholar Ptolemy called it *Kaspeiria* situated below the source of *Bidaspes (Vitasta)*. Whatever be the basis of this legend, be it even the intuition of the seers or the *Rishis*, in essence it indicates the course of events which have found strong basis in various disciplines of science.

Now coming to the generally accepted scientific theory that over millions of years a great revolution in the physical geography of India occurred. There has been a series of earth movements, which proceeded from outside India. The origin of the Himalayan chain is a result of the lateral thrusts acting from the north or Tibetan direction towards the peninsula of India. In the process several plications, fractures and overthrusts have resulted. These show very clearly in outer Himalaya and are prominent from Kashmir Himalaya all through to eastern Assam including north eastern states. This great fault or fracture is known as the Main Boundary Fault. This Himalayan mountain range is estimated to have sprung sixty million years ago. Among other phenomenon associated with this drift and the collusion has been the movement of the southern landmass (Gondwana) to the northern landmass (Angaraland) which were separated by the Tethys Sea. The two are characterized by their floras respectively. It is for this reason that the range of Himalaya is taken to be the youngest in the world. Further, as the force of the resultant collision has not been fully neutralized, this mountain range is still rising.

A look at the map of India will show that Kashmir in the north-west and Assam, including the North Eastern states in the east, are the two promontories which have been the first points of contact for these colluding landmasses and, therefore, assume importance for providing necessary scientific evidence to prove the validity or otherwise of the phenomenon indicated above. Restricting our remarks to the valley of Kashmir alone, all indisputable evidence has come to light in support of it.

Remains of a large number of sea animals, sea fishes and skeletons of fossilized form in various old rock formations, clearly suggest that these came from a marine habitat. Similarly a variety of plant and animal fossils present an intermingling of the characteristic ancient floras of the southern and northern landmass, respectively. The best and widely known exposure is found at Risin spur, Vihi valley near Zewan, Srinagar. Subsequent to the formation of the continental landmass and upliftment of the Himalayan mountain range, there have been further occurrences

which have resulted in the uplift of the Pir Panjal range in the south of the valley. It impounded the Himalayan drainage in early Pliocene times, giving rise to a vast lake in the Kashmir valley called the *Karewa* lake (*Satisar of the Nilamat Purana*). This lake was finally drained out by opening of a geological fault as mentioned earlier, when it emerged as the Jhellum river (*Vitasta*) after which there remained only clay deposits in the exposed lake sediments in the valley.

During this process several upheavals have resulted in the ancient *Karewa* (*Satisar*) lake bed having been thrown up the rising Pir Panjal. Proof of this phenomenon is provided, among other things, by the occurrence of the fossilized fruits of waternut (*Trapa bispinosa*) at Botapathri near Gulmarg and other places at an altitude of over 3000 meters. Most importantly, this plant does not grow outside a fresh water body and that too not above an altitude of 1700 meters. The upliftment of Pir Panjal range to its present mean height of about 4,270 meters (the highest peaks in the range being Tatakuti and Brahma Sakal about 4,727 meters) has occurred in stages over a long period of time. The resultant vegetation following such climatic oscillations have left adequate evidence in the form of fossils and clear impressions on the sedimentary deposits, called the *Karewas* (*Uddaras* in Kashmiri). In addition this range has been an effective barrier to the warmth and moisture of south-western monsoons having their full play in the valley. Enough evidence is now available regarding the gradual and progressive evolution of the present valley flora having occurred before the advent of man. As a consequence of the climatic changes, broadly speaking the vegetation has also progressed from sub tropical to the present temperate and alpine. This change has occurred over a considerable period of time. Subsequently the valley vegetation was greatly affected by the extension of agriculture and domestication of cattle sheep and goats by the early man. With reclamation of marshes and small waterbodies, settlement and extension of agriculture, the natural tree vegetation got firmly established by the time and after the advent of man about 6,000 years ago.

The five fresh waterbodies, the Dal (*Mahasarit*) which was 23.4 sq. kms. in 1856 and shrunk to 10.56 sq. kms in 1977, Nagin, Anchar, Manasbal and the Wullar (*Mahapadmas*) the biggest such fresh water lake in Asia, with an area of 153 sq kms, have been subject of detailed studies. These lakes of the valley are considered to have formed mainly during the recent geological period and are not the remnants of the *Karewa* lake (*Satisaras*). These lakes carry the usual mix of rooted and free floating species mainly rushes and reeds, lotus (*Nelumbium speciosum*), *Salvinia*, green algae, etc. In shallow waters large quantities of the floating and also the rooted plants are brought together and tied up to form thick floating beds covered with layers of lake mud. These are firmly anchored with wooden poles to the lake bottom and are used to grow vegetables, watermelons and a large number of other vegetables. These constitute the famous "Floating Gardens" (locally called *Raad*) of Kashmir. Large areas around these lakes were covered with willow mainly *Salix wallichiana* and poplar (*Populus ciliata*). However the latter species has completely disappeared now and has been replaced by a number of exotic species, leaving only a few well grown specimens in the low lying pine forest.

Adequate data strongly suggest that the valley excluding the mountain ranges carried a broad-leaved mix of vegetation comprising mainly elm, horse chestnut, walnut, Crab apple, Mulberry and many other broad-leaved tree species. Extensive forest associations of *Pinus wallichiana* are found on plain and gently sloping *Karewas*. In addition there has been an extensive shrub growth. **Large-sized relics of elm, mulberry and also exotic trees like Plane (*Platanus orientalis* L) called "Buin" in Kashmiri, are still found in Muslim and Hindu shrines as objects of veneration.** In addition to the indigenous species, in recent centuries many exotic tree species have taken firm roots in the valley.

On the basis of accumulated data in various fields of science like geology, palaeobotany, palynology and archaeology, first human settlers of Kashmir valley were of the Neolithic period who were not familiar with the use and manufacture of pottery. These suggest that the earlier man lived only summers in the valley and shifted to warmer climes in lower altitudes during the harsh winters. No human remains have been found in earlier such climatic changes at around

18000 years ago. The first site where systematic excavations were conducted is Burzahom (lat 34° 10' North and long 73° 54' East) located on a high table land under the shadow of the Mahadev peak, about 16 kms north-east of Srinagar, Kashmir. Even though the site was first located long time back, the early workers like R.C.Kak and De Terra and Patterson, 1939, who collected some bone and stone tools in a short excavation, designated it as a Megalithic site because of the occurrence of large menhirs to indicate common burial grounds. However during 1960-71, the Archaeological Survey of India carried out extensive excavations and discovered a series of human cultural levels. These were divided into four periods out of which the first two belong to Neolithic culture the third to Megalithic and the last being the early historical. The ¹⁴C levels of the Neolithic age are from 1535±110BC to 2375±210 BC. The earliest period was marked by two types of dwellings viz; the large circular pits broad at the base and narrow at the top, like truncated cones. In some cases a hearth at the bottom floor was found and in others the walls were plastered with clay. Above ground around the margins of the mouth of such pits, post holes were found suggesting the existence of wooden superstructures supporting roof of thatch or leaves. In one case adjacent pits were connected by an opening for intercommunication. The second type of dwellings were square or rectangular chambers cut into the ground (Loess) to a depth of 50 cms to 1 m. There are indications that such dwellings were surrounded with mud walls reinforced with timber. These also yielded some artifacts, such as crude forms of house hold goods and tools like scrappers of bone, antlers, and polished axes, adzes, borers, scrappers, chisels, etc made of stone.

Other excavation sites studied in some detail have been at Semthan and Gufkral. The excavation site at Gufkral (Lat 35° 54' N.Long 75° 60'E) is located on an extensive upper *Karewa* deposit 45 kms from Srinagar near the township of Tral. These have revealed three main periods of occupation similar to the one at Burzahom. These range from Aceramic Neolithic, characterized by a total absence of pottery with settlement pattern consisting of large and small dwelling pits cut into loessic deposits circular and oval in plan with narrow mouth and wide bottom. Occurrence of post holes indicates a superstructure of grass and reeds. The artifacts recovered include stone and bone tools. The inhabitants depended for their food predominantly on wild game. The dwellings were further improved with a sudden spurt in domestication of animals like sheep, goats and cattle and some early crop husbandry. The excavation site at Semthan in Anantnag district has revealed five periods characterized by successive floor levels. The artifacts recovered range from terracotta and bone beads and a piece of copper. In addition the pottery is represented by a sturdy red ware to hand made, ill-fired and crude ware made of clay containing stone grits. There is no evidence of painting. Wheat barley and rice, appear to have been cultivated on a small scale. The timbers used were mostly blue pine. The latter periods have given red ware pottery and included cast copper coins from the upper levels. In later periods the wares and their types continued with the addition of large number of terracotta figurines, clay seal depicting an Indo-Greek deity. **The last period belongs to the time of "prolific temple building and flourishing sculptural art"**. In addition to the above mentioned sites about a dozen more similar sites, have been located throughout the valley which have confirmed the findings at the earlier three sites. Some of the well known new sites are at Begagund, Brah, Hariparigom, Jayadevi- Udar, Thajwor, Waztal, Olichibag, Pampur, Panzgom and Sombur. All these sites are located on the *Karewas*, especially in the S.E. parts of the Kashmir valley.

From the data collected at various sites of excavations it is firmly established that in the Neolithic aceramic period the early man took up agriculture on a limited scale but he depended mostly on fishing and hunting. The data on this subject is still insufficient but domestication of animals and agriculture developed step by step out of food gathering and hunting. It appears to have been an outcome of the continuing increase in the extent and manipulation of natural ecosystem by the Neolithic man. In early agricultural activity, crops like buckwheat, barley, wheat, etc. were cultivated on a limited scale. It remains still to be sorted out as to who they were and where from these early settlers came to Kashmir. Some earlier workers had suggested a correlation of Neolithic cultural level with that of south Tadjikistan and some other central Asia locations. But the skeletal and other human remains found in Kashmir have not shown any similarity to the

Mongoloid or central Asian. It has, however, been shown that they resemble the adjoining Punjab in India and Pakistan.

The earliest level of Burzahoma is dated to 2400 to 1800 BC. The lower age aceramic period has been pushed back at Gufkral to 2400 BC. obviously at this stage man had not come up in cultural evolution to reach the stage of settled economy. It appears that there followed a long Dark Age of 10-15 centuries till the appearance of the historical Kushans in the latter half of first century AD or in early second or first century B.C. The legend given in the **Nilamat Purana** mentions strong rivalry and fighting between *Daitayas, Nagas, Picacas* and *Manus (Aryans)* till the last race prevailed. Not much is known about these early people, as to who they were and what their ethnical affiliations were. However enough evidence has been found of the incursions by the Indo-Greek and Indo-Parthians, who ruled over north-western India and Pakistan. Similarly the association of the Mauryan emperor Ashok with Kashmir is notable. Still there remains a gap of one millennium and more between the terminal phase of the menhir Neolithic at Burzahom and the early Iron age of Semthan and there after, which is still under investigation.

Even though the archaeological site at Gufkral has given enough evidence of human culture going up to the stage of "**Prolific temple building and flourishing sculptural art**", yet no structure going to 1300 BC has so far been discovered archaeologically. The earliest such structure at Harwan near Srinagar, has been assigned to the Kushan and later periods about fourth and fifth century AD. Similarly the Buddhist establishment at Ushkur (*Huviskapura*) near Baramulla is of the Gandhara period again of 4th to 5th century AD. Kalhan in his *Rajatarangni* states that a large settlement or a city was located around Gopadari, the present day Shankaracharya hill in Srinagar. Kalhan also mentions a large city (*Chandra Pura*) submerged under the Wullar (*Mahapadmas*). Since this lake has been assigned to the Holocene period, this statement requires further confirmation. The only old structures near the latter hill are the four sided temple atop it and an ancient structure near about the present day Chashmashahi, now called Parimahahal. **The temple with its square plan with recessed sites and circular garbhagrha would seem to indicate that it is the oldest surviving Hindu shrine in Kashmir, representing a very early stage of development.** But no date or period has been assigned to it. It is not known what image or statue it housed. The present *Linga* has been installed in the late 19th century. Another small old temple is still extant near Pandrethan (*Puranadishthan*) which is of 8th or 9th century the exquisite images and statues of the temple are now kept in the Srinagar Museum and are considered to cover several centuries. There are many more exquisite temple sites now only at ground level, like Awantipur, Parihaspur, Sun temple at Martand and others. All these are dated from 4th to about 11th century. The earliest exquisite Kashmiri bronze is the 6th century image of *Vishnu* now in Berlin. The latest Kashmiri crafted image of *Lokeswara* was dedicated during the reign of Queen Didda (c 980-1003 AD), large number of exquisite bronze and other images of *Vishnu, Shiva, Bodhisatvas* and others made during the Gupta and Karkota periods are now in many museums in U.S.A., England and with many private collectors mainly from Europe and the U.S.A. The most prolific periods of temple building and artistic images and statue making have been during the reigns of Laltaditaya Mukhtapida and Avantiverman. From 14th to 19th centuries, Iconoclasts and vandals destroyed many monuments and fine statues and other pieces of art. These are all lost to the posterity.

Historicity assumes *terra firma* with the Kushan king, Kanishka, who ruled Kashmir in first century AD. It is quite possible that he was preceded by other Kushans, Hushka and Jushka, who occupied Gandhara in about 177 BC. They all had embraced Buddhism. It would appear that from about 1300 BC to about 100 BC so far no evidences of any large scale human settlements have been found archaeologically. Even the Kushan period, especially that of Kanishka, has not left any credible archaeological evidence. Kalhan mentions a number of cities and settlements of his own time (12th century AD) and of earlier periods also. Apart from the monumental stone temples and structures still existing at ground level at many places in the valley and also in Srinagar and its surrounds, are just represented by very large square or rectangular building stones, now strewn all over the places where they once stood. One such piece has been found to

be 4.4 x 4.3 x 1.7 m weighing approximately 65 tonnes. In certain places these have been used as foundations for new shrines.

We now come to yet another interesting subject to close this paper. Appearance of the Neolithic man and later, starting with about 5000 to 6000 years ago, bears an extraordinary correlation with the *Laukika* or *Saptarishi* era according to which the current year is 5077-78. This almanac is followed even today in Kashmir, for purposes of horoscopes, religious functions and ceremonies of the original inhabitant Hindus of the valley. This calendar, according to the great oriental scholar, Buhler commences from *Caitra Sudhi 1 of Kali Samvat 25 (expired)* or the year 3,076-75 BC. According to a recent study of Vedic cosmology, the present *Kali-Yuga* is said to have begun on Friday, February 18th, 3102 BC. This correlation appears to be extraordinary and cannot easily be brushed aside. How and why this calendar was evolved and used even today will remain a mystery to be unfolded. Kalhana has used this calendar in his *Rajatarangini* and so have Jonaraj, Srivara, Prajyabhat and Suka. Similarly all the other ancient manuscripts and books written in Sanskrit have followed it. However, further research and discoveries may relegate the era of social man's appearance, on the scene still further back. **Advances in science and discovery of new, better and more accurate methodologies, would surely throw further light on this interesting subject. One is struck with awe and admiration for the seers and the intellectuals of the bygone age who gave the sequence of the events leading to the emergence and evolution of the Kashmir valley including the appearance of early human settlers, in such works as the Nilmat Purana and the Rajatarangnis, and which have broadly been found to correspond with the facts established by the present scientific investigations.**

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****According to the great modern Indian philosopher S. RadhaKrishnan, "Puranas contain the truth dressed up in myths and stories to suit the weak understanding of the majority" Indian philosophy, Vol. 1, p 25.**

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The Kashmir Order Of The Architecture
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The subject that I am dealing with is based on, and chiefly subservient to the *Tattvas* of materiality, as termed according to the Kashmir *Shaivic* concept. Architecture, in expression, being chiefly involved with the elements of these *Tattvas* which are termed as *Mohabhutas*, finds its expression only through these elements.

Parmashiva :

The basic reason for Is-ness, or all that is or exists in whatever form - experienced or inexperienced - is the flowering and projection of *Parmashiva*, the Ultimate Reality. This reality, in its ultimate aspect, is termed *Cit* or *Parasamvit*. This term is untranslatable in any other language, but in ordinary terminology it is translated as 'consciousness'. According to great *Shaiva* author *Jaidev Singh* the term 'consciousness' connotes subject - object relation; or knower - known duality. But '*Chit*' is not relational. It is just the changeless of all changing experience. It is *Parasamvit*.

Parasamvit :

It is the Self, sciring itself, or in *Pratibignya* terms, it is Self-sciring

Shaktitattva :

The moment His inherent nature vibrates as per its nature, it gives rise to pulsation. This aspect of His manifestation is termed as *Cidrupini Shakti*, the pulsating aspect of *Shivatattva*. Thus it is in the nature of Ultimate Reality to manifest through its *Shaktitattva*, which through its pulsation polarizes consciousness into I and This, or into aspect of subject and object relationship. These two *Tattvas* - *Shivatattva* and *Shaktitattva* can never be distinguished between and disjointed. They remain forever united whether in creation or in dissolution. Strictly speaking *Shiva - Shakti Tattva* is not an emanation or *Abhasa* but the seed of all emanation.

The subject - object relationship, yet predominant with I-hood, generates the Will; and this experience of the essence of to Be is termed *Sadashivatattva*.

The 'this' aspect of divine experience, when becoming more defined is symbolized as *Ishwara-Tattva*. In essence it is *Unmesh* or distinct blossoming, though still in non existencial state, of the universe. At this stage knowledge becomes predominant. There is clear idea of what is to be created. So far, the experience of *Sadashiva* is 'I am this', and the experience of *Ishwara* is 'This am I'. Here the equilibrium state of 'I' and 'This' experience is called *Sadvidyatattva*, or aspect of Shiva where 'I' and 'This' experience are equally and evenly held in balance. Upto this stage all the experience is ideal or in pure order. It is a manifestation in which real nature of the divine is without the coverings of limitation and distinction.

The experience of coverings and distinction ensues with the appearance of *Mayatattva* along with its five coverings, followed by the two *tattvas* (subject - object) of the limited individual - *Purusha* and *Prakrati*, *Budhuddi*, *Ahmamkar* and *Manas* are followed by fifteen elements of *Gyanindriyas*, *Karminidriyas* and *Tanmatras*, which herein are just skipped over without any elucidation and explanation, as the title of this subject - Kashmir Architecture - is directly based on the last five *Tattvas* of Materiality (*Bhutas*). These *Mahabhutas* or *Panchmahabhutas* are, *Akash* (Space), *Vayu* (Air), *Agni* (Fire), *Apas* (Water) and *Prithvi* (Earth).

Architecture being a symbolical expression through these five *Mahabhutas*, the creative artist shaped and formed these elements through the following creative expressions. These are geometric in character. The ancient Neolithic culture, especially that of the *Megalithic* society has predominantly expressed and symbolized its thought through geometric patterns. Thus we find the first interpretation of material existence, the *Panchmahabhutas*, through these ancient geometric expressions.

Earth: It is symbolized by four sided rectilinear figure with four right angles. Following the evolution of Kashmiri mind, this right angular enclosure, with mental evolution, symbolized masculinity, the material world, physical energy, fertility, sexuality and procreation.

Water: Is symbolized by a circle which also later on signified wholeness, the spiritual perfection, feminine character and also formulated the base of architectural edifices of Megalithic cultures.

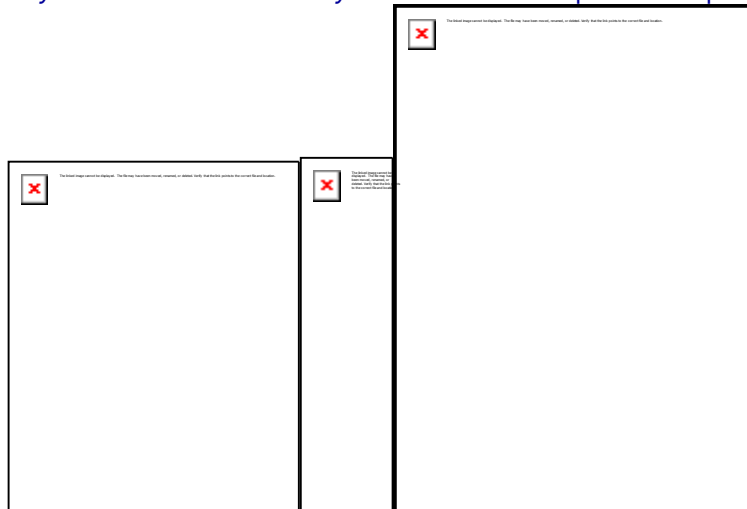
Fire: Is symbolized by an isosceles triangle with two longer sides with the apex at the top. Later on this triadic symbol represented the philosophic insignia for *Kalamukha*, *Pashupata*, *Shaivagamic* and *Adi Tantric thoughts*; thereby representing the triadic aspect - *Mind, Body, Spirit, Shiva, Shakti, Nara* and *Love, Wisdom, Power*.

Air: It is symbolized by the shape of a crescent.

Space: It is depicted by a drop with an apex upwards. The last two *Mahabhutas*, Air and Space, have been left uninterpreted due to subtle and finer experiences with these *Mhabhutas*.

While building up the edifice, the ancient artist assembled these basic symbols into a monument that became the basis of our future architectural multiplicities. He assembled, visualized and built the edifice as illustrated here.

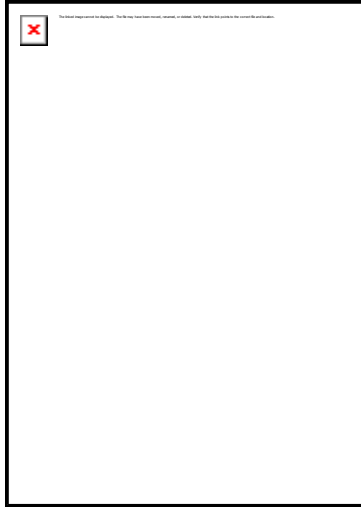
This *Agamic* structure was developed into various symbolic structures founded under the influence of *Pashupata*, *Shaivagama* and *Adi Tantric* philosophies. Some of the *Agamic* and post Buddhist examples in script and situational conditions indicate the course of development of the basic symbolic structure symbolizing the *Panchamahabhutas*. The examples still in situations at *Harwan Monastery* and at *Hemis Monastery* in Ladakh are complete examples of architectural



The impression of Harwan Style

development in thought and in the variegated materials employed in the structures through the passage of time. The Buddhist concept has rendered a change in the Triangle of Fire that has been changed into a spire of thirteen converging tiers surmounted at the top by an umbrella

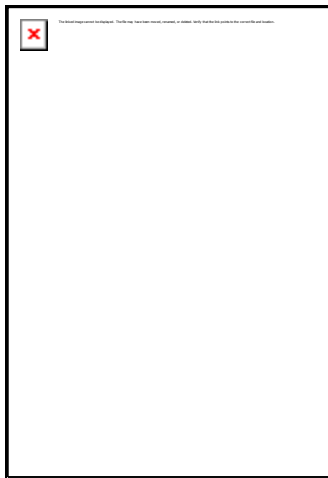
(lotus) with a sphere depicting Formless realm. Herein main materials used are wood with unbaked mud - brick fillings.



Timber and Mud-Brick Style

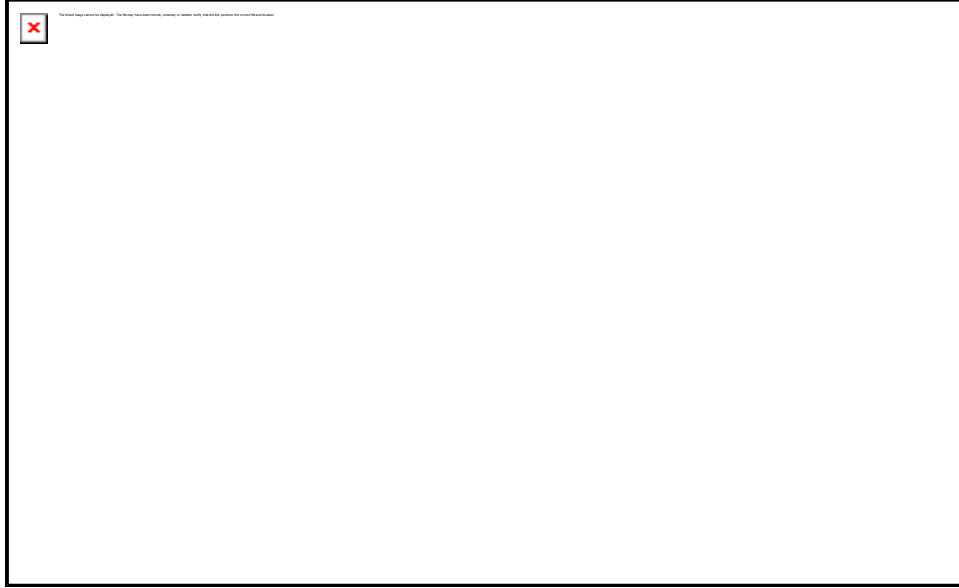
During pre Buddhist period the *Shaivic* thought traditionally used the wood and brick material. A lingering example of this structure is still existing in a remote village of south eastern Kashmir, that depicts the material employment of timber and unbaked mud - bricks. Although the multi - tiered spire, basically symbolizing fire, has been pigmied down through the course of the socio - phylosophical thought; but the *Shikhara* representing *Space* is duely poised at the top completing the Basic symbolization of *Mahabhutas*. Herein one can observe the structure built with timber and interspersed with mud - bricks.

The periods of *Karakota*, *Utpalas* and *Loharas* lasted from early eighth century to eleventh century. This was the period of expansions and conquests beyond the territories of Kashmir when powerful cultural influences were attracted into the seat of power. Architects and sculptors sought their occupations in *Pravarapura* and *Parihaspura*, wherein they brought change into the employment of basic raw material. These craftsmen from East - Mediterranean cultures of Grecian and Asia Minor trends had already found their root amongst the *Ghandharan* and *Gupta* movements of northern India. They knew the masterly use of stone as their traditional raw material. They brought in a radical change in the structural establishments of local architecture.



Timber and Brick Style

The tapering and sky - spiral slimness of Fire symbol was diminished to two - tier triangular roof due to the Hazardness involved in employment of massive stone blocks. No doubt, the change in medium of expression brought in massiveness and grandeur into the structures, but had to suffer the elimination of ethereal and spiritual heights and elevations. *Martand, Avantipur* and *Parihaspur* edifices wear the typical character of grandeur and massiveness but remain bereft of ethereal heights and elevations of spirituality.



Conjectural Restoration of Avantisvami Temple, Kashmir, 9th Cent. A.D.
By renowned artist and Art Historian Dr. Percy Brown.

The last vestiges of the local and traditional wooden architecture with its decorative excellence were reduced to ashes when the spiraling edifice of the palatial wood work of king *Harsha* (1089-1101 A.D.) was attacked and burnt down by rebellious masses. The palace situated in the vicinity of *Habba Kadal* was erected with forest wood from *Kathleshwar* and *Tashvan* forests.

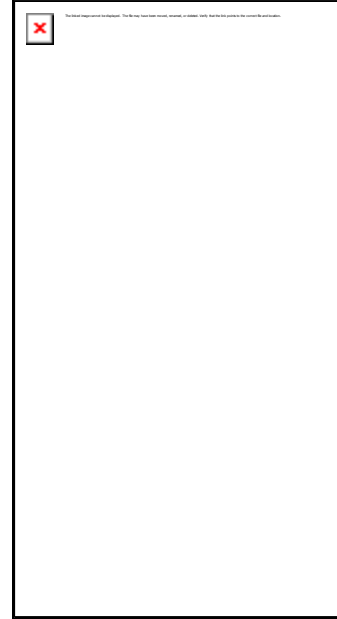


The Temple at Payar (massive stone)

By the end of eleventh century the mighty prowess and power of *Karkota - Utpala - Lohara* combine had fallen and had waned out. The Greco - Bhudhist and *Ghandharan* architects and sculptors had either migrated again or a major section of them having merged into the milieu and methods of popular architectural technology, and taken to the usage of timber and its cross - pier methodology with baked mud - brick insertions.



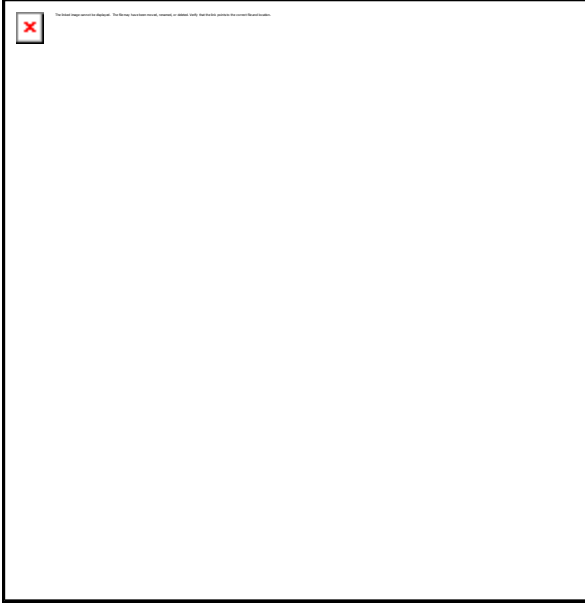
Traditional Style : 1. Roof top of birch bark overlaid with thick piling of earth 2nd, 3rd and 4th of timber with baked-brick filling 1st (Ground) stone work.



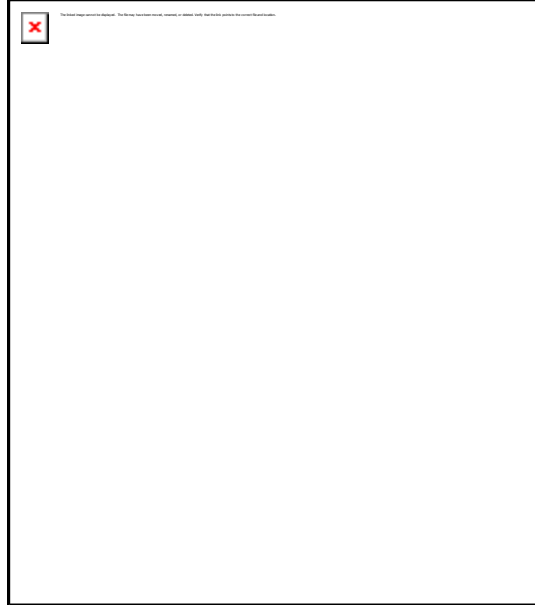
Adherence to five basic element, though in a changed form.

The popular movement of the design, the usage of method and methodology, being so much embedded into the socio - cultural pattern that even after the establishment of Islamic order, all the successive movements of importance continued with expressions of the basic architectural design evolved on the basis of five gross elements (*tattvas*) of materiality. These fine examples of architectural grandeur are majestically imposing over the vistas of the valley. The wood and brick structures of the citizen's homes form a reflecting bee - line on the banks of river *Vitasta* and on the fringes of the cool back waters and canals of the *Dal Lake*. While writing about these structures, observes *William Moorcroft* (1819-1825) that "The houses are in general two or three stories high; they are built of unburnt bricks and timber."

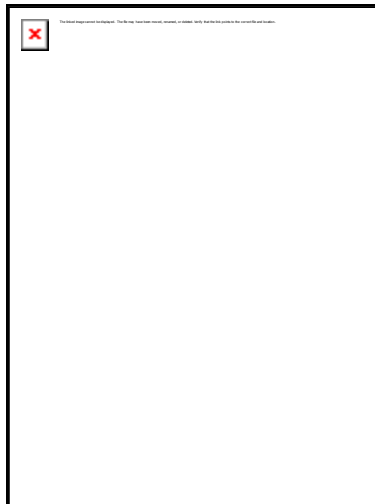
The well known *Jama Masjid* in the heart of *Srinagar*, presents a typical example wherein the symbolization, though varied in design, has been strictly adhered to the five gross elements of materiality - a) the main body, b) the balcony, c) the triangular spire, d) the lotus and e) the pinnacle (*Shikhara*). So is the case with other monumental and historic buildings of Rishi order, like the shrine of *Nund Rishi* (lately burnt down) at *Cherari Sharief*, the shrine at *Aish-Muqam*, shrine of *Janbaz Saheb* at *Barramulla*, the shrine of *Baba Rishi* at *Gulmarg* and the Rishi shrine at *Pampore*. The shrines of *Batta Mol* at *Khanyar* and the shrine of *Naqshband Saheb* at *Khawaja Bazar Srinagar*; all these monuments are master specimens of the architecture. Needless to elucidate that the entire valley is dotted with many such shrines which are deep rooted into the cultural pattern of village life. While treading through the narrow bazar at *Khrew* village, *Moorcroft* observes "It has a bazar and two *Ziarats* or tombs of holy men, *Shiekh Baba* and *Khawaja Maksud*. These are small low structures, chiefly of wood, with a sort of wooden spire, capped with brass".



The Jama Masjid - note the Five Elements



The shrine of shan Hamdan at Mata-Kalighat 3rd Bridge, Srinagar note the original birch-bark and earth roofing. Timber and baked brick.



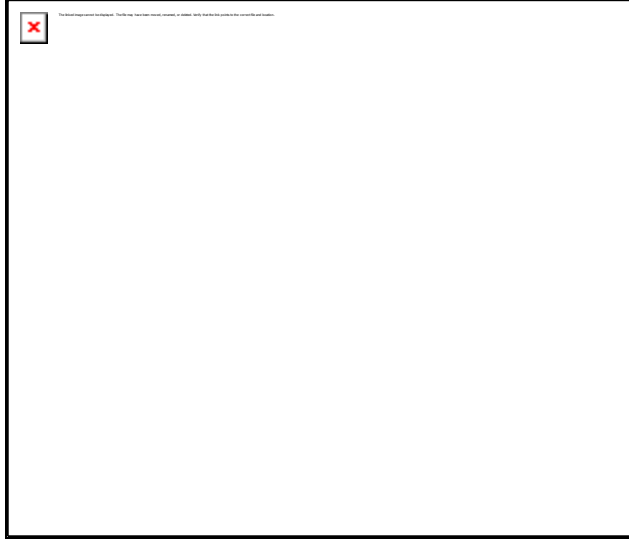
The Shrine at Pampore - note the Cross-piling of timber and baked brick filling.

Also note the Five basic Elements that constitute the structure.

The design and the Elements are strictly adhered in all the village and town shrines of the valley.

The Shrine of Dargah, Nasimbagh :

The typical structure presents an ideal derivation from the Kashmiri tradition, presenting yet another variation of the basic movement wherein all the five elements have been maintained excepting that the Earth symbol has been used for all the other four elements. This masterpiece of Kashmir order of Architecture, in by gone days, decorated the scintillating reflections of the *Dal Lake*. Instead of rebuilding a greater masterpiece on the basis of this tradition, this grand structure of historical lineage has been effaced, obliterated and snatched away from the lap of Mother Kashmir. Those responsible for this un-Kashmiri act and carnage stand accused, for which the human culture and history will never forgive them for this onslaught on *Kashmiriat*.



The Dargah of Nasim Bagh - Hazrat Bal

The author is one of the renowned artists of Kashmir.

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The Temple Legacy of Kashmir - An Account from Burried History
S. N. Pandita, New Delhi

Kashmir abounds with remains of temples of antiquity characterised by a combination of massiveness and simplicity and of solidity and grandeur which symbolises power glorified with piety. They also display refinement and art. Their ponderous solidity of structure being relieved by the grace of colossal sculpture coupled with an inexhaustible variety of architectural details have called forth admiration of many that included attention of great Chinese travellers like Hieun Tsiang (631-633 AD) and Oukong (759 AD). There are few temple ruins in India comparable to those found in Kashmir. So rightly observed Dr. Ernst Neve, the famous medical missionary of Kashmir, "Ancient India has nothing more worthy of its early civilization than the grand ruins of Kashmir which are the pride of Kashmiris and admiration of travellers. The massive, the grotesque and elegant in architecture may be admirable in parts of India but nowhere is to be found counterpart of the classically graceful yet systematically massive edifices as in Kashmir temple ruins."

Ancient monuments of very great archaeological interest which disclose the existence of a lost civilization are, as stated above, numerous in Kashmir. The devotion of kings, the reserves of the kingdoms and skills of master artists in the past combined, to raise the magnificent and the beautiful temple edifices in Kashmir. They were built to endure for all times. Their solidity of construction and their gigantic size strike one with wonder that man could have built them. Many kings have come and gone and civilizations have bloomed and vanished since they were built. People go and pace around them and gaze on them with amazement and awe - amazement inspired by the stupendous might and skill of their builders and awe excited by the ruins of these edifices which look as if weeping over the departed glory of their founders.

But the disintegrating hand of time and earthquakes and the vandalistic propensities of certain bigoted rulers have laid many temples of Kashmir to waste. The climate of Kashmir too has been peculiarly destructive to them added by the frosted snow lying long over them. One must appreciate that founders of these temples were wise enough to use sculptured stones of very large dimensions as smaller ones should have under these conditions crumbled and vanished long ago.

The Kashmiris in bygone ages were called *Shastra Shilpina* or architects, an epithet applied to them on account of their well known skills in building. The people had a religious past having deep rooted connection and notions of religion based on ancient traditions and sacred mandates. Even if the present finds, ruined temples, the fact remains that their lofty arches and massive blocks of masonry were quarried and erected bit by bit by a people who expended their best on buildings which were to be set aside for nothing but the noble purpose of worship. But alas! repeated devastations were done and havoc was wrought to them by cruel implacable zealots and vandals from time to time. It's a pity that formerly these most important and precious relics of the past glory of Kashmir were allowed to remain in a lamentary neglected condition. Unprotected from the destructive and disintegrating influences of weather the ancient temple monuments in Kashmir gradually crumbled to ruins.

In 1875, Hofrath Georg Buhler and after him several European Sanskrit scholars came and delved in the Kashmir soil. However, all honour goes to the late Lord Curzon who actuated by his great love for antiquities established an Archaeological Department in India and then the Kashmir Darbar caught the hint and instituted an Archaeological Department of their own in Srinagar. Yet the first nucleus of knowledge about Kashmir temple monuments came from the works of European Savants like Cole, Cunningham, Fergusson and foremost amongst the later source of information on these, names of Stein, Buhler, Vogel and Konow stand out. In the course of researches, Stein succeeded in identifying a large number of interesting spots with rare account of history. Among these were the famous city of *Parihasapur* built by Lalitaditya as his favourite residence and capital of Kashmir, *Shardavanna* (modern Harwan) where the great Buddhist

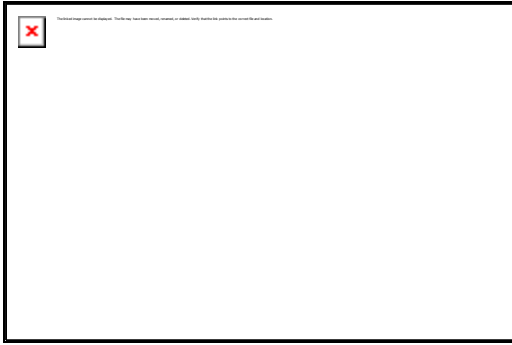
teacher Nagarjuna is reported to have lived and the temples of *Shiva Bhutesa* and *Siva Jeyshthesa* situated near the hamlet of Vangath. He also spotted *Kaptesvara* - modern Kother with its two temples and *Mamalaka* the modern Mamal near Pahalgam with its little shrine of *Mameswara Siva* built by Jeyshthesa in 1126-1128 AD. Stein also established that a ruined temple was converted into tomb of Peer Haji Muhammed in the city of Srinagar. This probably represented the temple of *Ramasvamin* attributed to Ranaditya. Buhler identified the ancient city of *Jayapura Dvaravati* founded by *Jayapida Vinayadita* grandson of Muktapida Lalitaditya, towards the end of 8th century AD with the identification of extensive remains near the village of Andrkoth. Vogel made known the remains of temple sites near a village called Malangpura which is situated about 3 miles southwest of Avantipura. Sten Konow identified for the first time the temple in the Firozpur Nala below Gulmarg. Alongwith these discoveries also came to light two representations of *Lakulisa* or *Luktapani* on the doorways temples of *Puranadhishtana* and *Payar*. Though Cunningham recognised in the temple of *Puranadhishtana* the temple of Meruvaradhan Svami-Vishnu, erected by a minister of Partha between 906-921 AD but presence of *Lakulisa* the form of Siva proved that this temple was a Siva fane.

The inner arrangement of Kashmir temples is essentially Indian yet the stepped roof of South and curved spire of temples in North are missing. The temples of Kashmir are either square or oblong. They are sub-divided into closed (*Vimana*) or open (*Mandapa*) type. The doorway of temples in Kashmir face in all directions but care is everywhere taken to place the water spout invariably to the left of image. The former practice is also at variance with the rule that Vishnu temples should always face towards the east. The temples of Kashmir without exception are what Ram Raz designates, as *Suddha* edifices i.e. composed of one kind of material from the base to the summit. The material employed in them is lime stone of somewhat bluish colour, fine grain and susceptible of receiving a high polish. Only one temple that of Buniar is built in granite stone of whitish colour. A porous kind of stone locally called as *Kanait* and similar to *Kanjur* of Taxilla was used for ceilings and also for foundations of cells. Brick has never been found in actual use as material for the ancient temple buildings in Kashmir. This fact is established on a Sarada inscription of Ramadeva which was discovered by Konow in the village of Arigoam.

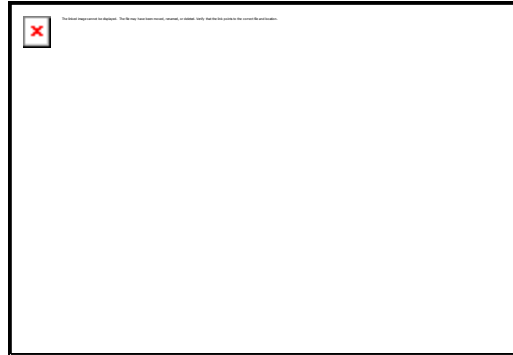
The ancient temples of Kashmir so far known to us range in date about the middle of 8th to about the 12th century AD. The only examples of a later period being small shrines of no architectural value. Fergusson could not discover any temple site in Kashmir of a later date than 1000 AD but Stein however, established that the temples of Kother and Mamal belong to 11th and 12th centuries. With the help of many Gandharva monasteries and other Buddhist buildings unearthed at Taxilla one can reconstruct a fairly complete picture of architecture of Kashmir of that period. Unhappily no buildings of that age have survived in Kashmir above the ground. Even in the days of Lalitaditya, earlier buildings had become scarce. However, Lalitaditya discovered by excavation deep under the ground two ancient temples with closed doors containing images of *Kesava* which on the ground of inscriptions engraved on their bases were interpreted as having been put by Rama and Laxmana, the heroes of Ramayana, a story which seems to show that the script of the inscriptions was not known to the pandits of Kashmir of Lalitaditya's time. The two images in question are stated to have been later installed in new temples at *Parihasapura*. It was Lalitaditya who imported into Kashmir for the first time, a Buddha image from Magadha.

The dedicatory inscriptions which most of the temples of Kashmir are said to have contained are lost and so has been the gradual loss of grandeur. The peristyle which was an important feature in the temples of 8th and 9th centuries disappeared in the temples of Payar, Mamal and Kother. A similar process is observed in the form of trefoil arch which gradually merges into the round arch and of the pediment which dwindles into a mere decorative ornament. The porticoes in the side walls of the sanctum which in the earlier times were equal in dimensions to that on the entrance side denigrate in later examples into small sized niches such as we notice in some of later temples near Vangath. It is to be noticed that much of this decay in the style of architecture must have been also due to weakness and comparative resourcelessness of the later Hindu rulers in

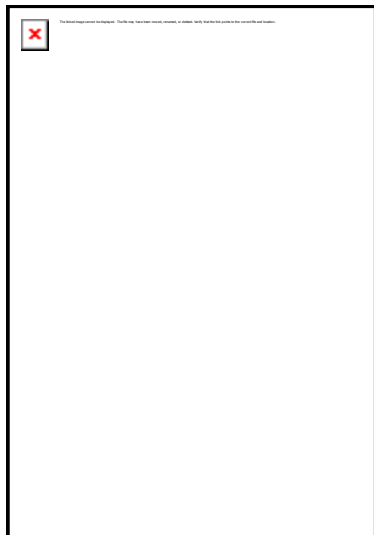
Kashmir, a few of whom were even driven to the necessity of robbing the valuable property of temples and other religious institutions.



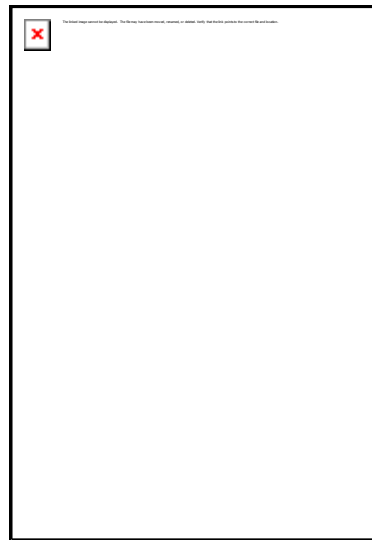
*Basement of Stupa at **Parihasapura****



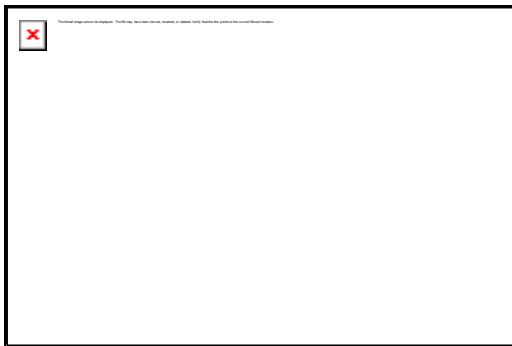
*Temple at **Pandrethan****



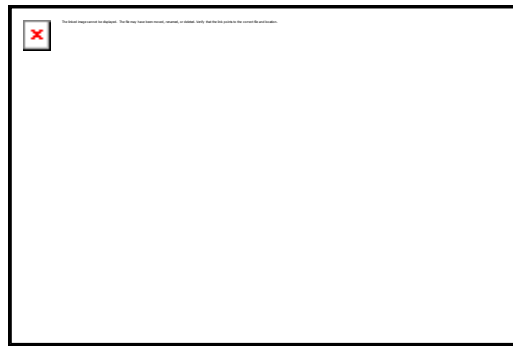
*Bodhisattva Discovered at **Pandrethan****



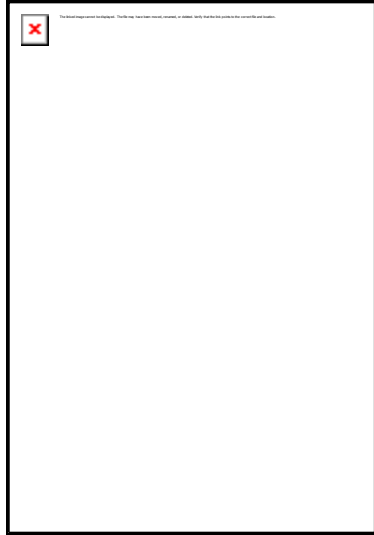
*Siva Linga at **Baramula****



*Tile-Covered Courtyard and Platform, **Harwan****



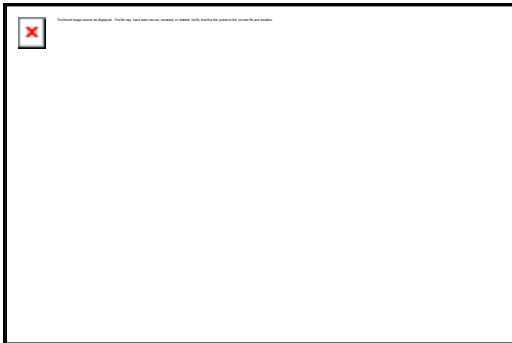
*Terracotta Plaques Showing Miniature Stupas, **Harwan****



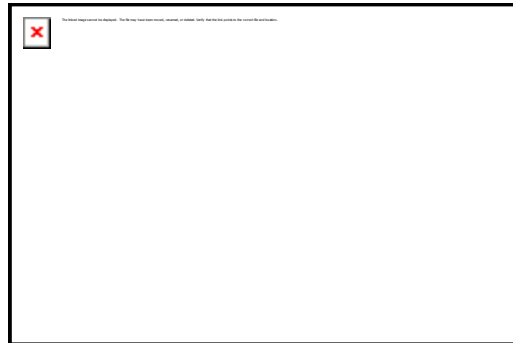
*Miniature Temple at **Patan***



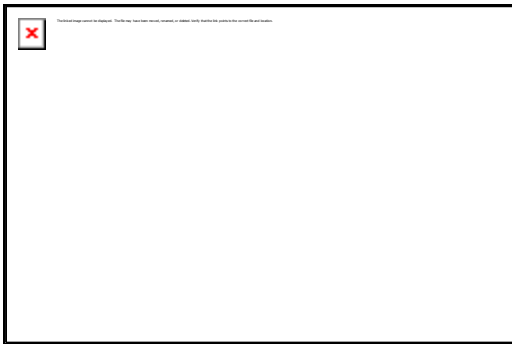
*Temple in Cave, **Bumzu***



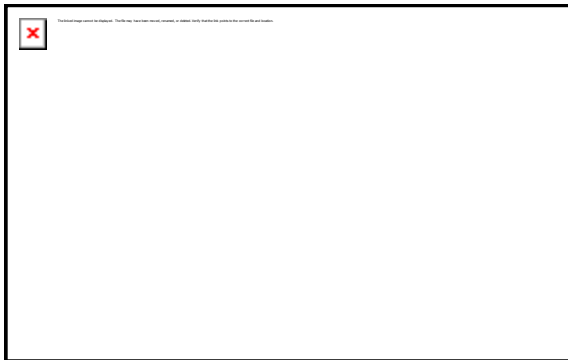
*Temple of Sankara-Gauresvara From West,
Patan*



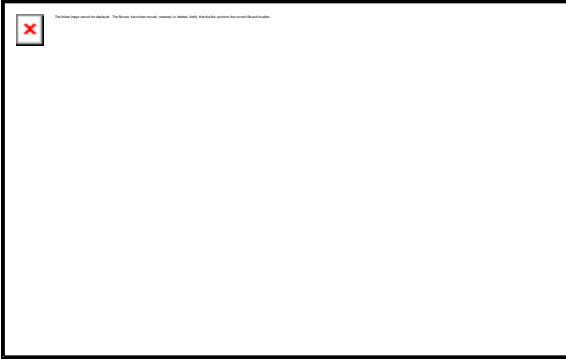
*Temple at **Wangath****



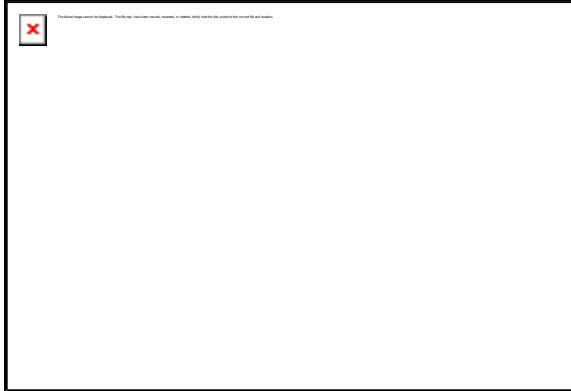
*Temple of Bhutesa, **Wangath***



*Temple at **Loduv****



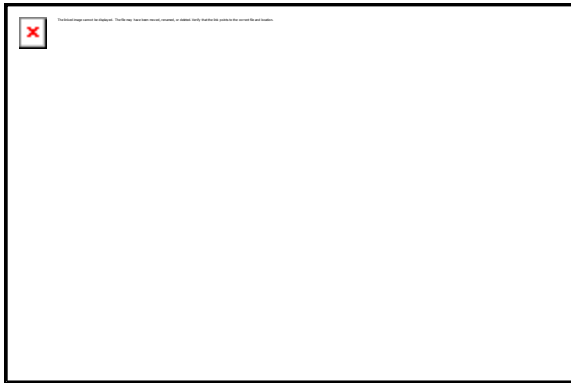
*Martand Temple, **Matan****



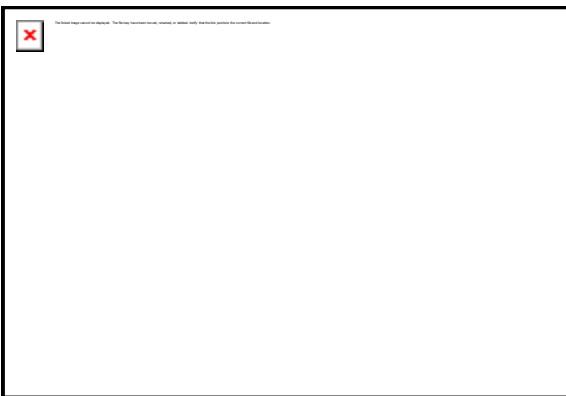
*Sankaragaurisvara Temple at **Patan****



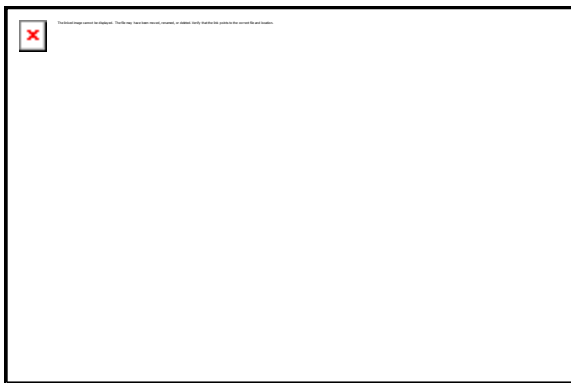
*Avantivami Temple : General View from the
Front
Avantipora**



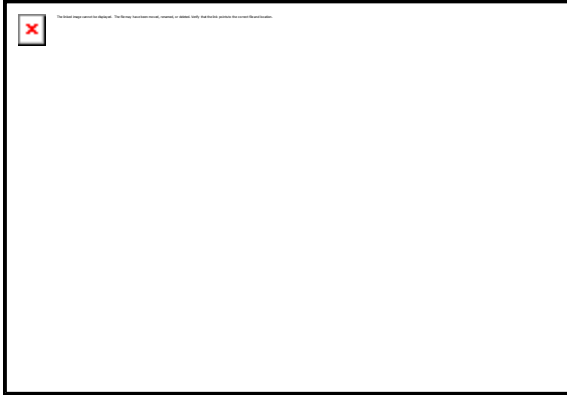
*Padmasvami Temple at **Pampor***



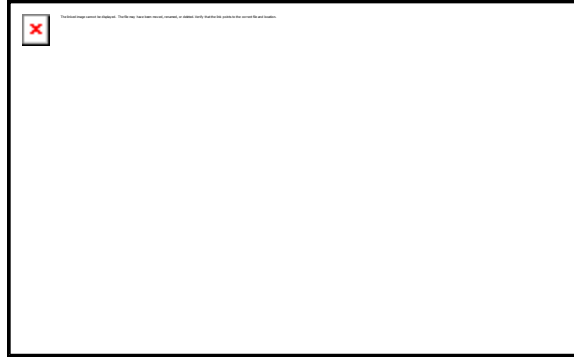
*Temple of **Narastan****



*Submerged Temple in the **Manasbal Lake****



Temple at **Buniar**



Temple of Sugandhesa, **Patan**



Temple at **Payar***

Stupas of the Maurya time existed in Srinagar which contained each a measure of relics of *Tathagata*. A tooth of Buddha 1^{1/2} inches in length is stated to have been enshrined in stupa attached to *Jayendravihara* in the same city. In another *stupa* which Kanishka erected in some place in Kashmir, he deposited sheets of red copper engraved with commentary on the three Pitakas. One of these, a *vihara* was erected at Arigoam in honour of Bodhistava Avalokitesvara. Parihasapura was the name of an ancient city founded by Lalitaditya in the first half of the 8th century AD. Already in the time of Kalhana, the city was in ruins and evidence shows that temples of *Pattan* were partly built with the materials carried away from this city.

From the ancient site of *Rajavihara* in one of the cells, a small earthen vessel was discovered. It contained 44 silver coins of Durlabadeva, grandfather of Lalitaditya Muktapida, Jayapida Vinayaditya, grandson of Lalitaditya and Vighrahatinga. The temples at *Parihasapura* were called *Parihasakesva*, *Muktakesva*, *Mahavarha* and *Goverdhanadhara*. Of these the temple of *Goverdhandhara* was identified by Stein at a village now known as Gurdan in Kashmir. The ruins of sacred image and fragment remains of stone lintel and a capital column is all that was located of which Vigne established that capital column had been carried away to *Puranadhithana*. According to later Persian chronicles of Narayan Koul and Mumammed Azim, the fragments of this column were still visible upto the early part of 18th century. It is now believed that this column was converted into the road metal of the Jhelum Valley road.

At the village of Vangath are situated two groups of ruins of temples with separate enclosures named *Rajadainbal* and *Nagbal*. Stein identified the principle temple of the Eastern group with

that of *Shiva Bhutesa* and the western group with that of *Shiva Jeyasthesa*. These shrines were places of pilgrimage from very early times. Ashoka obtained a son from this deity and Jaluka son of Ashoka made a vow that he would ever worship *Jeyasthesa*. A spring north to this temple site was also identified by Stein as the tank into which the minister of Avantiverman threw the bleeding body of Dhanva who had confiscated the lands endowed upon the temple of *Bhutesa*.

The temple situated two miles above Rampur, close to Jhelum Valley road and known by the name of Buniar (*Bhaniyar* or *Bhavaniyar*) due to its dedication to Goddess Bhavani is in fact, a temple attributable to the worship of Vishnu. It is by far the best preserved temple of Kashmir on account of two reasons, one it is built in hard granite rock and two because it was left untouched by the *iconoclast* Sikandar due to its remote location. A temple existed between Uri and Nowshera which Cunningham relying on Baron Hugel called as *Brangutri* a corrupted derivative of *Varnakotri* meaning Golden Durga. However, the local tradition was never familiar with this name. The temple was dedicated to Vishnu as fragments of life sized statue of this deity were found in the courtyard. But fortunately, the throne of the image has escaped destruction at the hands of a road contractor who though had taken it out and left in the entrance. It has now been put back in its original position against the back wall.

The modern town of *Pattan* marks the site of ancient city of *Sankarapurapatana* founded by King Sankaravarman (883-902 AD). Here the king erected a temple and named it as *Sankaragaurisvara* while his wife erected a temple which she named as *Sughandesha* after her own name. Sankaravarman's minister Ratanavardhana built a third temple and named it *Ratanavardhanesa*. Cunningham identified the temples built by the kings and queen. The third temple has perished and its materials today survive around the walls of baolis and near by Dak Bungalow. Cole took five pictures of these monuments. These were however, damaged only in an earthquake which took place in 1880.

The tomb of Zainul-ab-din is situated in a large enclosure on the right bank of river Jhelum below the fourth bridge of the city of Srinagar. The grave in which the remains of Zainul-ab-din lie buried is an insignificant one hardly recognizable from other graves around it but the enclosure wall surrounding it undoubtedly belonged to an ancient Hindu temple. The ancient name of this temple will perhaps never be known but there is no doubt that it was a temple of *Vaishnava* deity which was erected about the 9th or 10th century. A part of this complex encloses also in Muhammadan style structures built by Sultan Habib of Kashmir in 1573 AD.

At the village Tapar twelve miles onwards from Baramullah towards Srinagar are the ruins of a temple called *Narendrashvara* which was built by Narendraprabha queen of Pratapaditya-II who reigned Kashmir from 634 to 684 AD. It was ruined by Sikandar and his son Zainul-ab-din (1420-1478 AD) used the stones in the construction of the bund from Naidkhai to Sopur. In the Wular lake there is a small island called Suna Lank. The island contained a Hindu temple whose traces were available till recently. It was demolished and the island was raised and shaped with same materials by king Zainul-ab-din. Thereafter, he called the island as Zaina Dab after his name and extolled it as a delightful spot for pleasure parties. But the ruins will always tell a Hindu tale.

The shrine of *Tulamula* sacred to Goddess *Kshirbhawani* or *Ragina Devi* is most popular place of pilgrimage among the Pandits of Kashmir. A curious phenomena observed here is that the water of spring changes colours occasionally like purple, green and so on. The *Ragina Kavach* - a psalm in praise of the Goddess included in Sanskrit work *Rudrya mala tantra* proves the pilgrimage is an ancient one. The *jagir* of the priests of *Tulmula* was once confiscated by King Jayapida who ruled Kashmir from 753 to 784 AD and one of the priests of *Tulmula* named Ittila cursed him for his impious deeds when a golden pole of the canopy suddenly tumbled down upon the king from which he sustained serious injury resulting in his death. The Mahatmya of the shrine says the Goddess was originally in Ceylon in the house of Demon king Ravana after whose death, she was brought by Hanumana here but its account is not mentioned in Ramayana and Mahabharatha. This place of pilgrimage was not visited by the Hindus during the Muslim rule and

had been altogether forgotten by people until about 350 years ago when a Kashmiri pandit named Krishna Pandit Tapilu, whose descendents reportedly lived at Bohri Kadal in Srinagar until recent times about 50 years ago, by looking into a book called *Brihad Katha* discovered it and since then the people have again commenced visiting it. The offerings of the milk, rice and sugar that form the sediment in the spring was removed only twice within living memory. The first in 1867 by a man named Dewan Narsingh Dyal which followed a virulent epidemic of cholera. After that, nobody dared to do it again for the displeasure of goddess until the spring nearly disappeared with sedimentation when Pandit Vidhalal Dhar, the chief *rais* of Kashmir in 1902 decided to clear the spring. The digging unearthed an ancient temple in the centre built of large sculptured white stones with marvellous images of Hindu deities. Subsequently, the whole shrine was repaired in 1907 by Maharaja Pratap Singh with the erection of marble structure and fencing on the old site in the centre of spring.

The most conspicuous temple in the heart of Srinagar the Shankaracharya temple on the hill of *Gopadari* was built by King Gopaditya who reigned Kashmir from 308-328 BC. King Lalitaditya (701-737 AD) repaired it. Sikandar the *iconoclast* (1394-1469 AD) did not for some reasons destroy it. Zainul-ab-din repaired its roof which had tumbled during an earthquake. There were steps of sculptured stones leading from *Shudashyar Ghat* of the Jhelum river right upto the top of hill. With these stones it is said *Pathar Masjid* in city was built by Noor Jehan, queen of Jehangir. The *Siva linga* which is now worshipped in the temple is the modern one and was erected in 1907. The original image which existed was a *linga* encircled by a snake. A small renovation was done to this temple as late as in 1925 by the Maharaja of Mysore who during his visit to Kashmir beautified the temple by getting five electric search lights, erected around it and one more on the top of it. It was atop here that Shankaracharya during the time of Abhinav Gupta (993-1015 AD) composed the well known hymn called *Soundarya Lahari* in praise of Shakti.

Turning towards the east beyond the *Jama Masjid* is the temple of *Pravareshvara* built by King Pravarasena II. It is now utilized as *Ziarat* of Baha-ud-din Sahib. Below the fourth bridge on the right bank of the river Jhelum, was a five domed stone temple called *MahaShri* which was built by Pravarasena II. It is now converted into a graveyard of Muslims. There is only one large tomb inside the temple which is of Sikandar *Butshikan's* wife, and one's attention is arrested farther on by a large building on the right bank between the third and fourth bridges which is called *Shah-i-Hamadan*. There is on this spot, a spring called *Kali*. There was a Hindu temple over it which too was built by Pravarasena II (70-110 AD) and was called *KaliShri*. Today the locality is called as Kalashpora - a corruption of *Kali-Shri-Pur*. This temple was destroyed by Sultan Qutubdin (1373-1394 AD) and with its material he built the *Khanaqah* which though got burnt twice was rebuilt. Today, on the wall fronting the river Pandits have put a large red ochre mark and worship the Goddess Kali there. In front of the *Kali Shri* across the river, at the *Pathar Masjid* ghat stood the shrines of *Zayathesa Bhairava* and *Vishaksena Bhairava* at the Dalal mohalla. Both these shrines have been turned into graveyards.

To the west of *Jama Masjid* near *Kadi Kadal* existed a temple of *SadbhavaShri* built by Pravarasena II. It is converted into a *Ziarat* of Pir Haji Muhammed and later Sultan Qutub-ud-din was buried here. Near the 6th bridge at some distance from the right bank of the river towards the north are the ruins of the temple of *SkandaBhavana* now called *Khandabhavana* which was built by Skand Gupta, minister of king Yudhishtra II (170-209 AD). It stands converted into a *Ziarat* of Pir Muhammed Basur. There are also here near the river bank ruins of temple which was founded by Pravarasena II and called *LaukiShri*. The *ghat* of this temple is still called *Lokhari Yar* - a corruption of *Lauki-Shri-Yar*. Passing farther below exist the ruins of stone temple called *Tribhuvanavamin* which was built by Chandrapida who reigned Kashmir from 687 to 695 AD. A Muhammedan saint named Thag Baba Sahib was buried here and the place became to be known as Thag Baba Sahib.

Just opposite the above place, on the right bank near 7th bridge below Jhelum, Didda, Queen of Kshema Gupta built a *Matha* calling it *Didda Matha*. Today, it is called as *Didda Mar* while the

Matha has been converted into the tomb of Malik Sahib. About two miles near Vicharnag are the ruins of the temple *Vikrameshvara* built by Vikramaditya (523-565 AD). It was destroyed by Sikander who used its stone for the construction of a mosque that exists now there. About half a mile farther east one reaches the ruins of the temple of *Amritvbhavana* built by Amritprabha, Queen of Meghavana (12-16 AD). It is now converted into a *Ziarat* and burial grounds of Vantabhavan locality.

About two miles from Vicharnag towards the south was the temple of *Ranveshvara* built by King Ranaditya (223 AD). The ruins of this temple have to be looked amidst the precincts of mosque of Madin Sahib. Farther here there is a large Chak burial ground which has remains of many unknown temple monuments and now converted into a *Ziarat*. Historian, Manakha referred to this temple as an object of his father's devotion.

The famous *Jama Masjid* was built originally by Sikander in 1407 AD from the materials of a large stone temple called temple of *Tarapida* constructed by King Tarapida (696-700 AD). Beside this, numerous ancient remains of stone temples are scattered around this mosque. The site of the mosque was considered sacred by Buddhists also in earlier times and even till recent times people from Ladakh visited it. They called it by its ancient name *Tsitsung Tsublak Kang*.

The first ancient edifice that one may encounter in the city of Srinagar is the temple of *Narendrasvamin* which was built by Lakhana Narendraditya who reigned in Kashmir from 209-222 AD. It has been turned into a *Ziarat* and even the locality is today known as Narparistan. From Srinagar at a distance of eight miles towards the Sindh valley falls a village called Amburher. Queen Suryamati (1028-1036 AD) founded two *Mathas* here. Ruins of old temple found at this place are built into the *Ziarat* of Farukhzad Sahib and are scattered here and there.

Remains of ancient temple are found in several places near Gupkar founded by King Gopaditya. Large carved slabs are built into *Ziarats* and also into basement of other Muhammadan buildings in the village itself. On the road close to the *Ziarat* lay a colossal *linga* 10 ft. in diameter which it is regretted was cut and taken away by somebody for building purposes in 1929. About 7 miles from Srinagar lies the village Zewan which in ancient times was a place of high rise monuments and had a pool filled with pure water sacred to *Takshanaka* - Lord of Snakes. The pool existed even until recent times as *Takshanaka Naga* when pilgrims on way to Harshevara paid a visit to it. All this is lost now with the imposition of muslim traditions followed on the spot.

About two miles to the east of Zewan, lies the famous village of Khonmouh where lie ruins of some old temples in the middle of tanks found here and there converted into a *Ziarat*. Some distance from Khrew lies Pampur the ancient Padmapura found by King Padma in the 9th century. He built a temple here called *Vishnupadmasvamin*. From the scanty remains of this ancient temple was built the *Ziarat* of Mir Muhammed Hamdani in which even today are visible fine columns and ornamented slabs taken from this temple. Other smaller *Ziarats* of the town also show similar materials.

A mile away from Khrew is the village of Shar known in ancient times by the name of *Shanara* as an *agrahara* founded by King Sachinara father of Ashoka. It can today be identified only as *Ziarat* of Khwaja Khzir amidst several small springs which is built with the remains of the temple that existed here. About two miles to the left of the road leading from Pampur to Avantipura there are two temples at Ladu, one surrounded by water and a smaller one close by a little higher-up the hill side. The small square cella and other materials of these old temples have now been annexed to a neighbouring *Ziarat*.

Twenty nine miles from Srinagar lies the town of Bijbehara the ancient *Vijayesvara*. The town contained the famous shrine of valley attributed to Shiva built by great king Ashoka who also later built two temples called *Ashokesvara*. The old temple alongwith *linga* of *Siva Vijayesvara* was

destroyed by Sikander and the remains of destruction left over and available till recent times found their way in the construction of *Bade Masjid*. The stone receptical for temple offerings makes a part of *Ratna Haji mosque* and its pillar is found inside it.

In the Lidar valley at Mamal anciently called *Mamalaka* nestles the ruins of a small Siva temple of sculptured stones. The temple escaped destruction at the hands of Sikandar. A remarkable account describes its best. "Sikander went up the Lidar valley with the intention of proceeding to the cave of Amarnath and breaking the ice linga there and also the temple at Mamal enroute. On reaching Ganeshbal he broke the stone image of Ganesha standing in the middle of Lambodari river. It is said that when the knee of image was struck by Sikander with a hammer, a flood of blood flowed down. On witnessing this freightful spectacle, the *iconoclast* got terrified and thenceforth desisted, out of fear, from further destruction of Hindu temples and images. He then and there abandoned the idea of going farther to Amarnath and returned crest fallen, regretting his past sacrilegious acts and deeds. On his way back, on reaching Bijbehara, Sikander is said to have found a slab with an old inscription in Sanskrit in the ruins of *Vijayesvara* temple he had destroyed previously. In that it was stated, "*Bismillahi mantrena nashantea Vijayeswara*" meaning that with the pronouncement of *Bismillah*, (a phrase used by Muslims at the beginning of all actions), the *Vijayesvara* temple shall get destroyed.

Seeing that what he had done had already been predicted, Sikander was shaken for having been got identified and instrumental in the fulfillment of this inevitable Hindu prediction and what followed was that a few temples left were saved from destruction by him.

A small village hamlet about a mile north of the sacred springs of Mattan known as Bumzu contain three ancient temples which date to the 10th century AD. The most important among them is the temple now converted into Muhammadan tomb and known as *Ziarat* of Bamadin Sahib. The temple was erected by Bhima Sahi, maternal grandfather of Queen Didda in 950-958 AD. According to *Rishinama* this saint before his conversion to Islam bore the name of Bhuma Sadu. Another temple closeby has been turned into the tomb of Rukun-ud-din who died sometime after Baba Bamadin. These temples of great antiquity are besides the cave temples of Bumzu the vestiges of which still exist.

The temples described above were erected during the Hindu period of Kashmir history. More than these the rest must have been exceedingly numerous as is evidenced by the immense number of their ruins present in the foundations and walls of mosques and houses, besides ghats and embankments. A capital turned upside down, a broken shaft or an injured pedestal may frequently be observed embedded in a wall of ordinary office building made in stone. But such marvellous works of art, "denote the former presence in Kashmir of a people worthy of study. And the people who built the ancient temples of Kashmir must have been religious for the remains are all of the temples or sacred emblems and not of palaces, commercial offices or hotels and they must have at least held one large idea, else they would not have built on so enduring a scale. They must have been men of strong and simple tastes averse to paltry and the florid".

In 1339 AD, Kashmir passed into the hands of Muhammadan rulers when queen Kota the widow of the last Hindu ruler was murdered by Shah Mir. No Hindu religious buildings of any consequences were erected in Kashmir in Muslim period. The Hindu remains of this period are insignificant shrines constructed by private individuals of small means which one can frequently meet within the valley of Kashmir.

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Changing Capitals of Kashmir **Vijay Saqi, New Delhi**

Srinagar remained as the capital of **Kashmir** for a long period in different regimes. It has always been a centre of political, social and cultural activities. Rulers could not afford to create new capitals beyond the surroundings of Srinagar city. River **Jhelum** which flows in the midst of the city divides it into two parts. Since water transport was easily available, the people used it for their movements. River Jhelum also known as **Vitasta** has a rich water flow.

Hieun Tsang records, Srinagar was gifted with enough food-grains due to better irrigation facilities. He says this city was established by **Raja Parwarsen in 110 AD**. We have recorded history of Kashmir from **1184-BC** since **Raja Gunanad's** rule. It means that Srinagar came up and became a capital city **3500 years** ago. But the capital of Kashmir has been changing.

Chandarpur

Nilmath Purana records that an **Aryan** tribe who entered Kashmir in second century established a city called **Chandarpur**. Chandarpur is the area where **Wuller lake** is situated today. It was a place where an exiled **Naga tribal** leader **Sanigul** was living. Later, this city was offered by Aryans to Nagas under the name "**Mahapadam Saras**". Near Chandarpur, Nagas established another city called **Vishwagashpur**. It is believed that in ancient times a densely populated city existed in the area, i.e. Wuller. It was **Sindumath Nagar**. It is yet to be established whether Sindumat Nagar and Chandarpur are two different names of the same place or not. But one thing can be said with authority that Chandarpur was the first capital of Kashmir, while Vishwagashipur was the second. Legend goes that **King Sachi Nar** established a capital **Narpura** on the foothills of **Chakridara**. This city became the focus of Naga's fury and finally vanished.

King Ashoka who stretched his kingdom from **Afghanistan** to **Karnataka** ruled India from **214-237 BC**. According to **Rajtarangani** records **Kashmir** and **Nepal** were also under his rule. He established city of **Lakshmi** in Srinagar which had 96 lakh residential houses. If **Kalhan's** statement is to be believed then Srinagar must have been a very big city during Ashoka's regime. **Alexander Cunnigam** writes that **Pandrethan** was the oldest capital of Kashmir during Ashoka's period.

Pandrethan is the Kashmir version of Sanskrit word "**Purana Adhishtan**". The remains recovered from this area by Archeologists authenticate that Ashoka's capital city was in **Srinagiri** situated in the upper reaches of **Pandrethan**. Hieun Tsang also refers to this capital as the old capital of Kashmir.

The excavations at **Pandrethan** in the last two decades of 20th century, bring to the fore many hidden facets of Kashmir history. Some traces of old houses and references regarding Puranadhisthan have been found. They further reveal that **Jaisht-Ruder**, **Gopadri** and **Jaish Bhupeshwari** were the pilgrimage centers in Srinagari, presently a part of Srinagar city.

It is believed that Jaisht Ruder pilgrimage was in the south of Dal Lake. Rajtarangani says that the Sanskrit name of Dal was "**Jaisht Ruder Simmi Pistam Saras**" and the hills around Dal were known as **Jaisht Ruder Sampta Giri**. According to **Stein**, Jaisht Ruder temple was built by **King Jalak**. It leads us to believe that Srinagar city was once situated on the banks of Dal lake enroute **Aenta Ganj**. There is also a legend that **Damodar** hill locks, where Airport is located, was also a capital of Kashmir during the regime of Raja Damodar. It was **Raja Damodar-II**, who ruled Kashmir after King Jalak. It is said in Kalhan's Rajtarangni that Damodar had himself constructed the town. It is also mentioned in records that irrigation facility in the area was planned and a dam was constructed. The remains of Dam in **Gudushutu** village in **Badgam** district speak its history today.

Parihaspura

In 7th century **Karkoot King, Lalitaditya** established **Parihaspur** as capital which is on the South-West of **Shadipur** situated at hill top. Its ruins unfold the grandeur and charm of the capital city. Lalitaditya was known for his justice, administration and honesty. Creations of mansions, temples and khankas and goes to his credit. He is known for constructing the famous Sun Temple at **Martand**. Historian **Abul Fazl** reveals that **Sultan Sikander** was the last person to reduce Parihaspur to ruins.

Jayapur

After 60 years of Lalitaditya's rule, another Karkoot King **Maharaja Jayapeeda** established a separate capital **Jayapur**. It was like an island. Vitasta was flowing in the foothills of Parihaspur. According to Dr. Aurel Stein, last Hindu Queen of Kashmir, Kotarani was killed by Shahmir at Parihaspur. Jayapur is presently known as Inderkoot where ruins of some buildings are still available. According to Abul Fazil the place was known as "**Paragana Jayapur**" whereas another historian Shrivar records that this was known as **Jayapeedpur**.

When **Maharaja Avanti Verman**, became King of Kashmir in the 6th decade of ninth century he set up a new capital **Avantipura** about 38 km away from Srinagar, The ruins of this city are still available on Srinagar-Jammu National highway. According to **R. S. Pandit**, his regime was the golden era of Kashmir. During his period, the course of Vitasta was changed, resulting in green revolution paving way for peace and amity in Kashmir. Avantipur town falls between **Sangam** and **Letipur**. The architectural elegance of the two temples at **Avantipur** is testimony to the fact that Kashmir architecture was at its peak during that period. Though the king was **Shivite** yet he had constructed religious places for other faiths and sects.

It was **Badshah** who established a new capital **Zain Dub** 8 km from Srinagar near Shalimar. He also issued all the decrees in the name of Zain Dub to make his capital more prominent. After Badshah, the capital was again shifted to Srinagar. From Parvarpur to Pandrethan, Srinagari, and Zain Dub. all are the parts of Srinagar city today which is extending its frontiers.

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Ancient Temples of Kashmir
By Verender Bangroo, New Delhi

Kashmir is bestowed with nature's bounties and the mystical environment has fascinated people irrespective of caste, creed and language. Scholars coming from far and wide have carried away with them, its immense spiritual wealth shedding the shackles of this materialistic work and merging with the ultimate.

The Kashmir valley, blessed with the natural bounties, is rightly celebrated as the Valley of Gods. Apart from its natural beauty, an added attraction is the ancient stone temples of Kashmir, noteworthy for unique architectural elements and fine stone carvings.

The Hindu temple represents the cosmological symbolism in an aesthetic garb. The Hindu temple is a symbol or rather an aggregate of various symbols. It is ritually invested with human personality (Vastupursha) and conceived in terms of human organism, which is the most evolved form. The scriptures say that the temple should be worshipped as Purusa. The names of the various limbs of the human body from the foot to the crown of the head are applied in Indian architectural texts to different parts of the temple structure.

The door of the temple is its mouth, the platform terminating the trunk to the superstructure, represents the shoulder of the Purusa; the projection, the arms and down to the wall, the leg and to the very bottom, to the lower most molding-the feet.

The temple is Purusa and conceived by means of Prakriti the feminine form.

We talked about the perfect body-the Vastupursha, but it is lifeless without the resident soul. The image in the temple, the Pratima is the very life of the temple. The sanctum called **Garbhagriha** is the house of the womb, it is here the regeneration is effected and the higher self of the devotee is reborn.

A similar purpose is served by the superstructure, which is frequently designed as the mystical, Meru, Mandara or Kailasa - the function of which is to lead from a broad base to a point where all lines converge the ultimate one.

The conceptualisation and development of Hindu temple architecture was the result of the churning of cosmic ideas in the microcosm of natural setting. The temple was not a four walled enclosure but an embodiment of the cosmos and the energy, which propels it. The main sanctum sanctorum, which houses the Garbhagriha, the womb, is the personification of Purusha so as to define the relationship of cosmos and man. The image placed in the Garbhagriha is the atman-the soul. The temples were laid according to a well-defined plan. The temple building was a ritual and every stone laid was consecrated to God by the holy chant of the Brahmins.

Buddhism was introduced in Kashmir soon after the Buddha's demise and king Ashoka is said to have built stupas in the 3rd CBC. The Buddhist remains at Harwan, Hoinar and Hutamer have revealed unique tiles, depicting the fine workmanship.

With the background of Buddhist artistic tradition, Kashmiri artisans evolved a style of Hindu temple architecture with a distinct characteristic of its own. Kashmir temple exhibits a unique blend of foreign style and indigenous creativity that resulted in a distinctive architecture which was more suited to their geographic and climatic conditions.

The temple builders of Kashmir were way ahead of their contemporaries of the plains and peninsular India. The 8th cent. Temples of Kashmir were constructed of evenly dressed ashlar masonry. Built of mammoth boulders, the joints were put together with lime mortar which is seen at Wangat and also using steel dowels, used in the Martand temple. These engineering developments were in vogue in the neighbouring Western region of Kashmir.

These refined techniques could not stand up to the rigorous climate of the region and human vandalism and only a few of the vast number of temples described eloquently by Pandit Kalhana in Rajatarangini have survived.

Kashmir lies in the heart of Asian continent, its geographic location has been of decisive importance for trade and cultural exchange. All the main trade routes connecting eastern and central Asia with Eastern Europe countries of near-east lay across the territory. There was exchange on the cultural and religious fronts as it was meeting place of the cultural waves. The caravan routes from China, Central Asia and Tibet met and this led to the great impact on their political, social and cultural structure.

The temple at Lodhu situated 20 kms from Srinagar is in midst of a spring. The springs are considered to be sacred sites. This temple is said to be the earliest remaining stone structure.

The next stage in the temple architecture development may be studied in the Sankaracharya temple. In the Temple at Narastan in district Pulwama, the pediment and arch motif are a further step in the process of development. Triangular canopies, sunken Trefoil niches and the enclosure wall around with prominent gateway is an approach to the final form of Hindu temple architecture of Kashmir.

7th and 8th century marked the culmination of art during the reign of Karakota rulers. Laladitya Muktapada (724-71 AD) ushered in an era of glory and prosperity in the kingdom. After gaining victories over Punjab, Kananuj and Bihar, he turned his attention to the bordering territories of Kashmir. He led the victorious army to Dardistan, Ladakh and Tibet. During the Karakota rule there was a cross which brought an improvised style into being. We see a profound influence of Chinese, apparent from faces and dresses, which are typically Mongoloid. Building art was a product of influences from different classical schools viz. Greco-Roman, Gandharan, while as the sculpture iconography reflects the tremendous central Asian impact.

Laladitya built the famous and elegant Sun temple at Martand and Parihaskesva at his capital Parihasapura.

The Sun temple of Martand stands in the middle of a large courtyard having 86 fluted columns. The temple proper contains garbhagraha, antarala and mandapa, approached by a grand flight of steps. The plinth supporting the central shrine has two tiers, both with niches having 37 divine figures.

The second golden age of temple building was brought into being by the patronage of King Avantivarman the founder of Utpala dynasty. The king built two temples one dedicated to Shiva and other dedicated to Vishnu.

The final refinement of form and a more polished look may be seen in a group of temples erected by Sankaravarman who succeeded Avantivarman.

During subsequent years due to constant wars between the weak kings and kingdoms, temple activity gradually started receding. By the beginning of the 10th century the growth of style had come to an end but small shrines continued to be raised without any notable architectural development.

The off shoot of the Kashmir style of architecture is found in Northern Punjab and North West frontier. The temples at Amb, Malot, Bilot, Kafirkot (sites presently in Pakistan) exhibit some of the architectural elements like enclosed courtyard, pyramidal roof, and trefoil arches, fluted columns showing strong affinity with that of Kashmir. The influences are also found in the Western Himalayan architecture from Ladakh to Nepal.

The tradition never die. The elements of ancient Hindu architecture of Kashmir which were buried a millennium ago resurfaced in the form of Muslim shrines and residential houses in succeeding periods. The traditions together with the geographical conditions have played vital role in shaping the Kashmir character.

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Chinar Tree, "Bouin" of Kashmir- Symbol of Goddess Bhawani
Pran Nath Wanchoo, New Delhi

Plane tree, any of the genus *Platanus*, is a deciduous tree, native to temperate regions (Greece-Fargana & Kashmir)-Palmate Leaves, pendulous burr-like fruit. Species include Oriental plane (*P. orientalis*) London plane (*P. acerifolia*) American sycamore (*P. hispanica*) or Buttonwood, Water Beach (*P. occidentalis*). These are the various species known to the world. *Platanus* (ancient Greek name) six or seven species are known in N. America, in south at Mexico and from SE Europe to India (L. H. Bailey, Standard Encyclopedia of Horticulture 1930. Macmillan coy. London).

According to Pliny (natural history) Plane tree was introduced into Italy around 390 B.C. It has been a favourite shade tree of Greeks & Romans who introduced it into SW Europe.

Websters New International Dictionary (second edition-1935 USA) 3rd edition 1965 G&C Murren coy Publishers Springfield MA USA-defines plane tree-palmate meaning resembling a hand with the fingers spread as having lobes (round projections) radiating from a common point-Hindi-CINAR, Persian CHANAR.

P. orientalis Kashmiriana - `BOUIN'-Chinar-Cinar Plane tree of Kashmir is also catalogued in USA as *Platanus kashmeriana* family Platanacea listed in the GEN. INDEX Dec 23, 1993-Plant names-PMS Data base, by genus (USA) (Plant records management system). It has more deeply lobed (hand palm shaped) leaves, makes an even larger more spreading tree and is very long lived. Attains over 100 feet (30m) height if not pruned, with grey-white bark which peels off in patches. The alternate leaves are upto 10 inches in length with long stalks. The flowers are borne in dense spherical heads. There are usually 2 fruiting heads on each pendulous stalk.

In Kashmir it is aboriginally known as `BOUIN' a broken down word of Sanskrit `Bhawani', the Goddess who has been worshipped in Kashmir since inception (time imemorial). The large hollow trunks have been used by meditators for meditation over time and are thus considered sacred and planted generally at places of worship.

The origin of the tree in Kashmir is by inference of the recorded evidence in literature deduced to be very ancient. **It has been associated with `Maej Bhawani' - the Goddess of shrines in Kashmir** like - **Tulamla (Kheer Bhawani)** District Srinagar **Tekar** (Kupwara District), **Sharadaji** (Keran) Kashmir, **Kulwagishori** (Kulgam). **Devibal-Nagbal** (Anantnag) and several other, invariably around a `Nag' (Spring). The Chinar *Platanus orientalis* Kashmiriana is akin to the plane tree of the west (*P. occidentalis*) etc. yet it is different.

Some foreign travellers, who travelled in Kashmir valley during and before Mogul era have made mention of plane trees' (Chinars) existence in the valley. Akbar Nama of Abu-L-Fazl (History of the regin of Akbar including an account of his predecessors) translated from Persian by H. Beveridge ICS (Retd.) FASB volume III-Publishers-Rare Books, states :

Reference to the year 1589 June Page 329 Para 547 "on the 28th (Khurdad) he went to visit Shabbudin Pora (Shadipur). The planes (Cinaraha) there raise their heads to the sky and the verdure enchants the eye sight."

Page 956 Para 624 - "Srinagar the capital was brightened by his advent-on the way the soliders who had gone in advance, paid their homage. In accordance with orders, 34 persons entered into the trunk of a Cenar tree which had been hollow for ages. If they had sat closer, some more might have been accommodated"

Jesuit Preist Perre dU Jarric during Akbars time states-`that on the bank of the river, the waters of which flow through the lake, there is a species of very large tree, the trunk and leaves of which resemble those of Chestnut, though quite a different tree. The wood is very dry and has a grain like rippling water' (structurally and foliarly the chestnut has a resemblance with plane tree to a layman. This view also established the existence of Cenar, Plane tree then).

Likewise Kalhana does not mention `BOUIN' Bawani - CINAR, in his Rajtarangtani (12th Century A.D.) but does mention a large tree `VATA' which was then a sacred tree in rest of India resembling CINAR and mentions 1 Rt (BK V-101) that ancient trees are to be seen growing on the edges of the old canals (rivers) with marks of the boat ropes fastened by Nisadas. 2 BK IV-449-Jaipida "the day following he went - and awaited - beneath a mighty Vata-tree" (Vata means a very large tree in Sanskrit).

The species has been part of the geographic, rather plant, climatic growth of the region which thrived wildly amongst its kins of forest groves and foliages down through the slopes, nestling and penetrating into the village yards and enclosures in Kashmir.

Sir Walter Lawrence `the Kashmir Gazetteer (1889-1895 A.D.) Vol I Chap IV Flora, Page 79 mentions amongst the list of more common trees in the valley *Platanus orientals*, `Bouin' Plane or Chinar as a royal tree and like the walnut belongs to the state. Sir Walter Lawernce in his book `Valley of Kashmir' (1895) mentions of a boled Chenar in Lolab with a circumference (girth) of 63 feet 5 inches at about 5 feet from ground.

Francis Bernier a French physician who visited Kashmir in 1664 helps in establishing the fact that the majestic tree (plane tree) very much was a companion of wild forest tree and foliage of the Himalayan ranges and plains of the valley. He further establishes that the Chinar (plane tree) was not a part of Mughal Garden architecture then though poplars (aspens) were. `Lalla' 1320-1391 - called Chinar (plane tree) SHEAJ MAEJ (cool pleasant mother) synonym for `KASHEER'.

Sultan Sikander 1393-1416 A.D. ruled Kashmir and acquired notoriety as an idol breaker. He destroyed temples and shrines including those of Martand, Vijeshwari and Sureshwari. After their destruction he built mosques over the razed ground. **The Hindu shrines were associated with plantings of `Bouin' plane trees in Kashmir; these too must have been dealt with in the same way as temple structures.**

The rebuilding of temples and shrines including planting of `Bouin' Chenars and rehabilitation of Hindus was done by the great builder king of Kashmir, Zain-ul-abidin, 1420-1470 A.D.

Sultan Zain-ul-abidin gave a fillip to art and craft of Kashmir by inviting craftsmen from adjoining Samarkand. Paper machie, wood carving, embroidary etc. got a boost. The designs on these arts and crafts represented local fruit, flowers, leaves and twigs etc. Chinar leaf is most important of these impressions carried from ancient times to date, in wood carving, embroidary, Gabba and Namda making and needle work in Kashmir.

It is no doubt a beautiful majestic tree in its finest form every where in Kashmir. As a child I have drawn much pleasure from hiding in the hollow trunks of the magnificent specimens that occurred in gardens, camping sites and rural areas in Kashmir. At the confluence of rivers Indus and Jhelum (Vitasta) at Shadipur (Kashmir) known as `Prayag' a Chinar-`BOUIN' is growing since ages and this confluence is used for immersion of ashes (remains) of the dead by Kashmiri Hindus.

Late Shaikh Mohammad Abdulla an aboriginal Kashmiri has titled his biography Atish-e-Chinar whence by he too has established Kashmir synonymous with Chinar `Bouin'.

These facts should put at rest the belief that Moguls introduced `BOUIN' into Kashmir. Of course Moguls were great architects and they have made good use of Chinar trees in landscaping and Char-Chinarees.

The qualities, benefits and experiences of human relationship with this majestic tree grew through growth of human culture symbolising its magnanimous protective state with that of divine mother `Bhavani' and thus through the Kashmiri phonetic stance became `BOUIN'. One does not find another of this species growing this large and older anywhere in the world. Kashmir probably is singularly bestowed with this peculiarity amongst all the species of *Platanus*. The wood is heavy, hard, tough and of coarse grain generally. It is used for furniture and wood carving in a limited way, but is used in butchers' blocks, oil crushing well (mortars), hammers (hydraulic) for fixing down wooden poles for deep foundations in Kashmir besides firewood for bakers, furnaces and domestic heating stoves commonly.

I have not seen a Chinar (plane tree) in Kashmir withering away except when damaged mechanically. While the burning heat index (caloric value) of `BOUIN' Chinar is considered highest compared to other firewoods in Kashmir, the shade that a single tree `Bouin' provides in summer in Kashmir is the largest, coolest and healthiest. The tree with -stands moisture stress, wind and snow storms better than other trees in Kashmir. It is cool, hardy and grows luxuriantly upto 7000 feet asl in Kashmir. The plane tree (according to R. S. Hole-Manual of Indian Forest) "is able to withstand the injurious effects of coal smoke and grows well in smoky cities as do also as a rule Maples, Horse chestnuts and Elms" - (the aboriginal trees of Kashmir). The trees have been lately observed to be developing leaf spots on leaves causing yellowing and premature fall.

In Kashmir the propagation of *Platanus* (plane tree) is done through cuttings and rooted suckers in spring. Seeds are also used after stratification, but not commonly. In spite of government restrictions on felling of Chenar trees in the valley, the plant population has been declining over years of lawlessness in Kashmir.

A walk over fallen dry Chenar leaves makes a rustling musical sound until the dry leaves are gathered and burnt to make light charcoal for use in fire pots (Kangri's) in hard winter days.

Individual efforts have made it possible to grow Chenars-*Platanus orientalis* Kashmiriana in Jammu, Panchkula (HRY) and Shimla etc. in recent years. Late Dr. M.S. Randhawa (ICS) as Chief Administrator (Chandigarh)/Vice Chancellor PAU had obtained plane trees from Kashmir Department of Horticulture for being planted at Chandigarh and PAU Campus Ludhiana. Similarly, late Dr. L. S. Negi, Director Agriculture Horticulture H. P. Shimla had also procured plane trees from Kashmir Deptt. of Horticulture for being planted in Shimla. Couple of them do stand on the ridge Shimla.

Note : Supporting evidence establishing the aboriginality of Chinar in Kashmir is reproduced from Times News Network - Srinagar dated 7th Sept. 2001 (Times of India) : Asia's Oldest Chinar Discovered. "Srinagar : Researchers have found a chinar tree, which could be the oldest in Asia, in Chittergam Chadura village in Budgam district of Central Kashmir. The tree, which has a girth of 31.85 m at ground level and 14.78 m at breast height, was found on the premises of a mosque in the village, forest, officer Muhammed Sultan Wadoo, who made the discovery, said. It was believed that the Chinar was planted by Hazrat Syed Qasim sahib in 1374 AD and local people consider it to be holy, "Wadoo said. Earlier, a Chinar which was said to be planted by Dara Shikoh son of Shah Jahan, at Darashikwa Bagh in Bejbehara in Anantnag district in 1636 AD, was considered to be oldest Chinar in South Asia. The girth of the tree is 19.70 m at ground level. Wadoo recorded the girth of 1,055 chinars in Kashmir Valley and Doda districts during the last 30 years."

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Social Geography of Kashmiri Pandits-The ancient Kashmirians
Prof. K. N. Pandita, Jammu

Social topography sounds something unique or bizarre. In the context of ancient Kashmir, it certainly is of its class. Kashmir geography has a mystique of its own. That is about its scenic beauty and its pristine environs.

Kashmir's geography is something the like of which we find in Switzerland. But Switzerland is exclusively beautiful and attractive. Its beauty owes more to human love for nature and ingenuity of making it more attractive. This has not been the case with Kashmir. If her nature was not tempered with, that in its own place would have been a contribution.

Alas Kashmir's topography has been tampered with; its pristine purity and beauty have been vandalised and man's greed has made the nature pay a heavy price. Its lakes have been defiled, its streams have been dirtied, its meadows have been grabbed, its springs have been spoilt, its jungles have been dewatered, its indigenous fruits and flowers have been cloned and its mystifying picnic sites have been converted into commercial complexes. Nothing could be more disastrous for a heavenly place wrought by savage instincts of human beings. History will not spare the generations of Kashmiris who wrought such a havoc to this land of sages and seers.

Anybody seriously interested in the social geography of Kashmir should read the Ancient Geography of Kashmir by Aural Stein, the translator of Kalhana's Rajatarangini. One is wonder-struck by the manner in which ancient Kashmiris attached the element of sanctimony to the environs and objects of nature in Kashmir.

We do not find the like of Mahatmyas in the history and culture of any other people in the world. We do have the recorded description of shrines and holy places, but the Mahatmyas of ancient Kashmir are something unique. It may be given the name of social geography of Kashmir because these deal with various objects of social importance connected with particular manifestation of nature. We have the Vitasta Mahatmya giving the topography, route, place names, shrines, products, social functions etc. connected with the river Vitasta called Jehlum after the name of the town where the Vitasta meets with Chenab (Chandrabhaga), now in PoK. Likewise we have the Martand Mahatmya that gives us the details of the topography of Matan close to which place Martand sun-temple existed.

All mountains in Kashmir and valleys they form, hills and hillocks, heights and declensions were given a proper name by the ancient people of Kashmir. These names are generally embedded in Hindu mythology. Many of these are woven around the local folklore. Pilgrims to Amarnath cave or to Gangbal in northern Kashmir were required to perform particular rites at particular mountain heights. Rites were performed on the banks of lakes and springs to commemorate history of their origin. Not only that, even glaciers also received attention while pilgrims marched on to some holy destination.

It is of much significance to note that ancient Kashmiris developed familiar liaison with the environs in which they lived. The New Year (Navreh = nava varsha) day's celebrations remind us of the ancient Aryan tradition that has lingered on with the entire race of Indo-Aryans in one form or the other. In Kashmir, this day had a special meaning and a message because that was the beginning of enormously enticing spring season of Kashmir. It was the season of blossoms and vegetation in abundance. Therefore a visit to the adjoining garden or open green space became a part of social gathering.

Every spring close to this or that habitat in ancient times, became a place of worship. The essential purpose behind converting the spot into a place of worship was to maintain its purity

and cleanliness. By attributing some religious sanctity to the spring, it got insulated against defilement. This is how the ancient Kashmiris ensured ecological balance and cleanliness.

Tall and beautiful trees of Kashmir, particularly the fir and the conifer, were also made the objects of ritualistic sanctity. In particular "deodar" literally meaning the 'wood of the gods' elicited special care. It was magnificent and imposing; it had the maximum utility for the ancient Kashmirian who used timber extensively for construction. As such its felling was sacrilege. Ancient Kashmiris were the worshippers of Shiva and subscribed to the Shaivite philosophy. Shiva's abode is said to be in the mountain of Kailash. As such, the mountain that is made up of so many objects, the snow, running brooks, vegetation, flora and fauna, lightening, hurricane and snow storm - manifestations of Indira - is the most sacred of earthly objects. This gives river Ganges its sanctimony.

As Shaivites, ancient Kashmirian kept the *linga*, the symbol of Shiva in his home and worshipped it. One of the rituals is to pour water over the *linga* each morning when it is worshipped. The tradition says that the water poured on the *lings* was collected in a container and poured on the *lings* was collected in a container and poured over the roots of a sapling planted in the compound. This is how the ancient Kashmirian fraternised with nature and its objects.

The fierce and aggressive side of nature was not unknown to the ancient Kashmirian. He knew that once gods unleashed their wrath, immense devastation followed consuming humans, beasts and objects of nature alike. Thus an earthquake, a flood, a devastating fire or a massive avalanche were the manifestations of anger and wrath of the gods in heaven. When an earthquake occurred, the ancient Kashmirian poured a pitcher of water on the ground symbolising the concept of cooling down the anger of the bull on whose horns the earth rested.

It will be noticed that invariably, the temples and worshipping sites of ancient Kashmirians were situated close to the river bank, a spring, a running brook or a well. Water and fire have been the inseparable parts of his social life. Water is the very life-line on which the entire universe depends. That is why according to Hindu mythology life sprang from water. Fire is the greatest discovery man has made. Therefore fire (*agni* in Sanskrit, *ignus* in Latin, *atar* in Zend-Avesta) became the object of worship because it radically changed the life of man. It protected him against the ferocious animals, against cold and cooked his food. It entered into the veins of his ritualistic life. In ancient Iran, fire was distributed into three categories; the fire of royalty (*azar gushnasp*), the fire of soldiers (*azar apadgan*) and the fire of farmers (*azar barzin*). But the ancient Kashmirian did not make this distribution. Nevertheless, he went a step farther by declaring that none of his social functions, like the offerings to gods (*havan*), thread ceremony (*yagnopavit*), marriage, death rites, remembrances of the dead (*shraadha*), birthday celebrations (*janam divas*) etc. were complete without lighting fire and making offering to fire-god (*agnidevta*). Kashmir being a cold region with long and harsh winters of snow and blizzards, fire had special significance for its people. The saints and hermits, who generally renounced worldly life and lived in secluded places, always lit a big fire called (*dhuni*) raking the flames without interruption. Visitors sat round the *dhuni* listening to the discourse of the hermit. Thus the god of fire (*agnidevta*) came to be worshipped along with other gods. A few sites of hydrocarbon deposits that produce lignite were also known to ancient Kashmiris. They wondered that the god of fire manifested himself through leaping flames from the bosom of earth. It was given the name of *soyam* and *soyambhava* meaning the land with self-created flame. Thus the present corrupted form of the place name Bhumae (at a distance of about 6 kilometers from Sopor) has to be traced to *soyambhava*. There was a fire-worshipping shrine at Bhumae and people came to make offering.

Taking into considerations of the difficult and mountainous terrain of their land, a journey outside the confines of Kashmir to the plains was always considered a big ordeal. People avoided it as far as they could. Being part of the vast Hindu religious and mythological milieu, the ancient Kashmirian showed his ingenuity in creating all the important shrines (*tirthas*) of the Hindus within

the confines of the Kashmir. Thus we have Gangbal or the Gangotri in the mountains of Baltal and Zoji La, Amarnath the prototype of Mount Kailash of Shiva's abode, Prayag at the confluence of Vitasta and Sindhu near Sumbal and the prototype of Prayagraja, Kotitirtha (a thousand tirthas) at Baramulla on the banks of Vitasta etc. These are the holiest of holy shrines, the great symbols of social geography and topography of Kashmir.

The ancient Kashmirian social life is perhaps the most amusing example of pleasant harmony between man and nature. To divest him of his association with nature is unimaginable. He revered, loved, feared and worshipped nature. He sought refuge in nature from all calamities befalling him including natural calamity. Defiling the objects of nature like water, fire, vegetation, life, flora and fauna was among sins and asked for punishment.

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Swami Ashokanandaji Maharaj
Shri Ramakrishna Mahasamelan Ashram
Nagadandi, Achchabal, Anantnag Tehsil, Kashmir
Manmohan Dhar, New Delhi

In the early thirties, Kashmir was visited by a large number of well educated young sanyasins, mostly belonging to the Shri Ramakrishna Mission, from various parts of India. Local intellectuals, interacting with them, were impressed by their deep knowledge of the Vedas, Vedanta and the Gita and their spirit of renunciation. Kashmiri intellectuals, elite and the laity, had already got glimpses of the vision that Swami Vivekananda had woven for the whole world and of the panorama, depth and range of the spiritual, cultural and catholic heritage of India.

On the 11th of September 1893, Swami Vivekananda spoke as follows at the Parliament of World's religions in Chicago, USA-

The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita :

"Whosoever comes to ME, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to ME"

"Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this earth. They have filled this earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisations and sent whole nations to despair..."

(A retaste of the gruesome tragedy was experienced on the 11th September 2001 in New-York, after 108 years. If causes persist, effects persist too)

In his concluding speech on the 27th of September 1893 Swami Vivekananda thundered and declared as follows-

"...if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in-spite of resistance : 'Help and not Fight', 'Assimilation and not Destruction', 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissention'."

All this and other writings of Swami Vivekananda had made deep inroads in the mental make up of the intellectuals of Kashmir and they were, therefore, always on the look out for some-one amongst the visiting monks to the state, who would disseminate, at-least to some extent, the spiritual aura, effulgence and dynamism of Swami Vivekananda's personality.

With this rather detailed background, it would perhaps be pertinent to present a pen picture of a saint who appeared to be in the most ancient mould of sanyasins, who struck one as descending straight from the heights of Himalayas, naked save a loin cloth, lost in the awareness of the innermost self, exuding in his eyes ecstasy and bliss which was totally irresistible.

"few understand the power of thought. If a man goes into a cave. Shuts himself in, and thinks really one great thought, ...that thought will permeate the walls of that cave, vibrate through space, and at last permeate the whole human race. Such is the power of thought..."

The thoughtful silence of this young sanyasin was eloquent, speaking and hypnotic and his smile was soothing, full of love and compassion.

He was spotted, in Kathleshwar temple, at Zaindar Mohalla, Srinagar, Kashmir. The temple had broken dome and, therefore, was open to vagaries of weather. A makeshift tent was made of bushels of grass, inside the temple, where he was found resting his head on the 'pranali' of, the 'Shiva linga', lost in deep meditation.

When disturbed by cautious and respectful intrusion, he came down to the level of normal awareness, but still the hangover of divine intoxication was apparent in his blissful smile and his eyes, both giving impression of embers of spiritual fire burning within him. He commanded awe, affection and instant devotion. The word went round and men, women and children came to bask in his celestial presence.

Meanwhile, winter started setting in, but he did not light any log fires, as was wont with 'Naga' sadhus, who used to visit Kashmir on their pilgrimage to the holy cave of Amarnath. He stayed on in Kashmir and started moving to the hills at short intervals, in sun-shine, rain and snow. For reasons best known to him his favourite haunt was Naran-Nag, beyond Wangat, which is situated on the road to Sonamarg. Near Wangat he made contact with a Muslim mystic by the name of Sobur Sheikh. Between them, they used to communicate by exchanging (*naswar*) snuff powder. Being a predominantly Muslim area, he picked up a smattering of the Kashmiri language, which he spoke with a sweet Bengali accent. As time went by, he made deep inroads into the hearts of the local Muslims.

Although, at first with respectful and awesome caution, yet drawn to him by irresistible attraction, local people of all grades, of all communities of varying intellectual attainment, men, women and children gathered round him to sit in silence in his presence, to breathe and to feel the subtle waves of peace and spiritual elation, un-aided by words, speeches or discourses; yet at times words fell softly and sweetly from his mouth. They conveyed more than their meaning. A look, a touch, a smile was enough recompense after days of waiting or miles of trekking to sit in his soul-elevating presence. Such was the power of his love.

His movements were as unpredictable as of that wind, as he moved bare-footed, from high mountains to the far corners of the length and breadth of the valley, in sunshine, rain or snow. I have seen snow collecting on his bare shoulders. He wore no clothes, as stated earlier, but carried only two possessions : His 'Kashkole' a handy container made from the hard cover of a pumpkin, used as a begging bowl, normally carried by 'Naga' sadhus and a small bottle of snuff (*naswar*). One day when he left to go to the mountains he forgot to carry his 'Kashkol'. After traversing a short distance he suddenly found that he had no 'Kashkol' in his hand and retraced his steps to pick his major possession. Then, while crossing the nearby bridge on the river Jhelum, he could not reconcile with his attachment for his 'Kashkol' and dropped it into the river, never to carry it again.

Writes Swami Vivekananda, in his small pamphlet 'My Master'

"...in India, even an emperor on the throne wants to trace his descent from some beggar-sage in the forest, from a man who wore the bark of a tree, lived upon the fruits of the forest and communed with GOD. That is the type of descent we want, and so long as holiness is supremely venerated, India cannot die."

It was not surprising, therefore, that doors were flung wide open for him and with open hearts, he was sought for and received in every home. Considering what Swami Vivekananda has said, it appeared as if he had come to Kashmir straight from the Vedic Age.

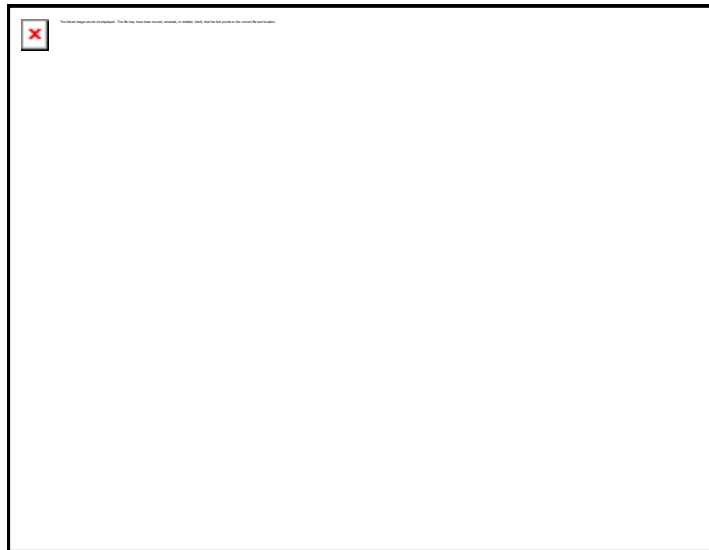
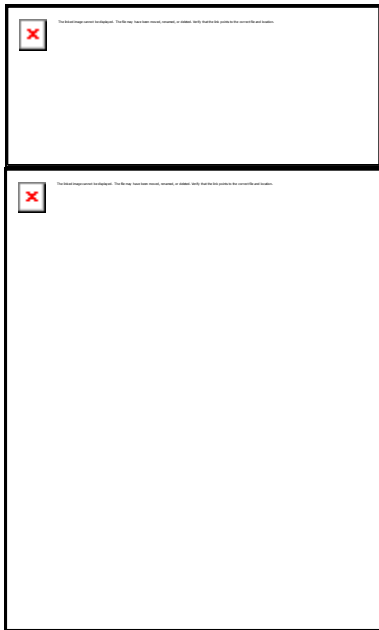
Such was Swami Ashokanandaji Maharaj for about twelve or thirteen years. During these year of silent communication, he gave stray hints of his mission and his, childlike, unconditional and complete devotion to Shri Ramakrishna Parmahansa. These were the years during which he

prepared the ground in Kashmir in which to plant the seed of the deepest, subtlest and pristine message of Shri Ramakrishna and the ideal of **Divine Motherhood**. Pictures of Shri Ramakrishna, Ma Sharada and Swami Vivekananda found their place, for daily worship, in the shrines in the homes of the devotees of Swami Ashokananda Ji. In small gatherings, particularly of youngsters, English version of the Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna was read. I, along with other young boys, to name a few : Manakakji Tarozdar, Trilokinathji Tarozdar and others, used to go into raptures of Divine fervour while reading the gospel. We would feel we were part of the crowd at Dakhineswar and felt recreation of the same atmosphere in Swamiji's presence, after a span of nearly 80 years.

Devotional and classical, vocal and instrumental music, was played in his presence. I still remember the classical songs sung by Babaji Rao, in ragas :

'Bihag', 'Kidar', 'Shankara', 'Malhar', 'Bhairao', 'Kamod' etc. Shri. Jialal Kharoo's Dilruba and Sitar playing became a daily feature and so did of my uncle, Vidhlalji Dhar and of Swaroop Nath ji Tarozdar's, with tabla accompaniment by Harinath ji Tarozdar's. Professor Kanjilal of Sri Pratap college, used to play Sitar in masterly depth and range. One got surcharged with divine fervour and lost in its ecstasy. One lost the count of people who got the privilege of sitting in his silent, smiling and spiritual presence. No discussions appeared appropriate. All that one needed was to be in tune, mind, heart and soul.

Looking back, I now feel, that Divine Shakhti, in her own mysterious way was working on Her own plans. Shri Harinath Tarozdar, an unflinching devotee of Swamiji, traveled all over the valley, to locate a place where a thatched mud hut could be built for a brief sojourn and rest for Swamiji Maharaj. In the lap of the mountains, amidst dense forests, with a small perennial fresh water spring tucked in, in an obscure corner; a place was found at Nagadandi, near Achchabal Mogul gardens and acquired a most beautiful mud hut with thatched roof and an 'L' shaped narrow verandah on the east and south side, was built.



Vivekanand Kendra, Nagadandi, Achchabal, Anantnag, Kashmir, India

Swami Ashokanandaji Maharaj
Photographed by Manmohan Dhar
in Calcutta in 1965

I have seen about a 12 ft. long snake, with skin of a beautiful pattern resting full length on the eastern side of the verandah. Seeing me it crawled into the gap in the mud plaster of the 2 ft. high railing. I never saw it again and took no notice of it. Swamiji Maharaj used to sit in the south-west corner of the same verandah. Right in front of him, on the front wall, was a foot long and beautiful likeness of Jesus Christ on the cross, in three dimensions. Devotees, of all communities, rich and poor, used to sit in front of Swamiji, on the south side verandah. It was not unusual to see Swamiji, playing sitar, sitting in the south-west corner of the verandah. His sitar playing, in classical ragas, transported the spiritual ambience of the forest surroundings to a higher plane of awareness of peace and fullness.

Discharge from the perennial spring, miraculously increased. On the down stream side two ponds, on two different levels, were built by devotees, with three picturesque water falls, delivering water from the upper pond to the lower one. Flowers were planted. A small temple was built, with likeness of Shri Ramakrishna, Sharda ma and Swami Vivekananda placed on the shrine. Swamiji Maharaj used to sit, in the open air, reclining on a stone sleeper which was supported on a pine tree. Visitors to Swamiji, in the salubrious and forest surroundings, presented a setting straight from the Vedic age. Evening and morning worship was conducted in the temple. Gradually, the whole set up assumed the semblance of an *ashram* and Swamiji Maharaj gave in the name of.

Shri Ramakrishna Mahasamelan Ashram

All this was not planned, but happened by **Divine Dispensation**, a mystery that can only be explained by the following expressions of **Swami Vivekananda Ji Maharaj** :

Describing Kashmir, Swamiji wrote to Srimati Indumati Mitra sometime in September 1897 :

"This Kashmir is a veritable heaven on Earth. No where else in the World is such a country as this. Mountains and rivers, trees and plants, men and women, beasts and birds-all vie with one another for excellence. I feel a pang at heart not to have visited it so long..."

On the 1st October, 1897 he wrote to Sister Nivedita :

"I shall not try to describe Kashmir to you. Suffice it to say, I never felt sorry to leave any country except this paradise on Earth; and I am trying my best, if I can, to influence the Raja in starting a centre here. So much to do here and the material so hopeful..."

And again on 3rd November, 1897 Swamiji wrote to Sister Nivedita :

'I have been here (Jammu) for fifteen days to get some land in Kashmir from the Maharaja. I intend to go to Kashmir next summer I am here and start some work here'.

But why was Swami Vivekanandaji Maharaj so keen to set up an ashram in Kashmir? Answer to this question is not within the capacity of a normal intellect to find. Could it be because Shri Ramakrishna said his next incarnation would be in the North-West.

Over the centuries Kashmir has been the cradle of cultures. Buddhism came here and the World got 'Mahayan' Buddhism. Kashmir Shaivism is the pinnacle of Indian philosophy discounting the belief that this world is false. Shankracharya came to Kashmir with the glow and fire of '*Aham Brahma*', but latter he wrote '*Saundaya Lahiri*' in praise of the Goddess Tripurasundari, and in one of the Shankracharya Ashrams the image of Goddess Shardha is being worshiped. This Murti was brought from Sharda peeth, in Kashmir, now in Pakistan. According to extensive research carried out by German and other authors, from the Christendom itself, Jesus Christ is

believed to have been in Kashmir before and after crucifixion. There is a mosque right in the heart of Srinagar, the summer capital of J & K state, where Jesus is supposed to have been buried. Sufism and Kashmiriat are an amalgam of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Over the millenniums Kashmir is and has been special on many counts apart from its geography and unparalleled natural beauty.

Swamiji's remarks, therefore, have indeed a Divine import and cannot be considered as random or casual.

Swami Vivekananda could not visit Kashmir again and thus his wish to set up an Ashram in Kashmir, where **'he had "found", so much to do and the material so hopeful'**; remained an unfulfilled dream. He had the vision of Maha Kali at Khir Bhavani, where he was inspired to write his famous poem, 'Kali the Mother'

It was at Achchabal that he 'suddenly decided to go to Amarnath' writes sister Nivedita. As he entered the cave, reports Sister Nivedita, it seemed to him as if he saw Shiva made visible before him. He said afterwards to sister Nivedita that in the brief moments he had received from Shiva the gift of *Amar*-not to die until he himself had willed it. His dream, however, though unfulfilled during his lifetime, was already registered in the cosmic time to be made a reality, under a divine dictate, by a source intimately, divinely and equally connected with Shri Ramakrishna.

In the divine scheme Kashmir, it appears, has had a role to play. And to appreciate the sudden appearance of Swami Ashokananda ji in Kashmir, in the above context, the following spiritual link and mystery appears relevant and self-explanatory.

Swami Ashokananda ji was the disciple of Swami Satchitananda ji Maharaj from East Bengal, who was initiated and given sanyas by Holy Mother, Ma Sharda. Their commitment to Shri Ramakrishna ideology was total. They operated outside Shri Ramakrishna Mission organisation, as do many others. The emphasis, however, has been on **man building and the propagation of Divine Motherhood**. Cosmic forces got to work to fulfill the celestial dream of Swami Vivekanandaji.

He, Swami Ashokananda ji, was also from East Bengal, and was born in a Mukherji family, on Friday, the 10th of February, 1911. His premonistic name was Deenabandhu Mukherji. His school mate was Shri Chandi Prashad Mukherji, an eminent Chartered Accountant and for several years **President of the Institution of Chartered Accountants, India.**

Mr. C. P. Mukherjee, particularly referred to his childhood and stated that right from his birth Deenabandhu gave the impression of being an outsider, very intelligent but lost in a world of his own. Naturally, his brother was totally disgusted with him and did not spare the rod and at the age of 8 (eight years) he sought shelter in the ashram of Swami Satchitananda ji Maharaj, who, as mentioned earlier, was an initiated disciple of the Holy Mother, Sharda Ma, spiritual consort of Shri Ramakrishna. He had to undergo severe regimen of spiritual discipline, which he did with utmost dedication and total surrender to Lord Shri Ramakrishna and ma Sharda. During, his stay at the Ashram, he was given sanyas and the monastic name of Swami Ashokananda.

His Guru Maharaj held him in very high regard and made no secret of the heights of spiritual excellence he had achieved. Swamiji Maharaj knew of absolutely no compromises in the spiritual path. One had to be perfect in his resolve, in his pursuit and in sadhana. One had to, he would say, combine the qualities of a prince and a *sadhak* of total surrender to his Ishta. He was at the ashram, from what we have been able to gather from stray hints thrown by him, during conversations; for about eight or ten years, with his Guru Maharaj. Later, he was sent by Guru Maharaj to Uttar Kashi for further sadhna. During his travels in the Himalayas, his body, mind, heart and Atma were tuned to a very high degree of spiritual fervour and he was allotted a hut

near Gita Ashram, next to Swami Shivananda ji Maharaj, who later on founded the 'Divine Life Society'. Ashokanandaji settled to a strict regimen of meditation and established continued presence of Shri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Ma Kali in him. He had visions and many experiences of conversation with Shri Thakur (Shri Ramakrishna). Some of these, recounted by him to me, are of deep spiritual and Universal import.

His Guru Maharaj, however, had plans for him. When he attained the age of twenty two or twenty three, he was ordered by his Guru Maharaj to go to Kashmir, shed his clothes, live there braving sunshine, rain and snow, without any external aid, or use of any of his Yogic powers to face the vagaries of weather and establish the presence of Shri Ramakrishna, Sharda Ma and Swami Vivekananda and their pristine message, in Kashmir more by example than discourse. His primary emphasis was on '**Divine Motherhood**'. This we came to know, gradually, in the fifties.

He landed in Kashmir in 1933 or 1934. He was spotted in Kathleshwar Mandir in early 1933 or 1934 and straight away found his way into the hearts of young and old, men and women and was, looked after well, as it were, like a child. His mere presence was peace, joy and unalloyed love. Words would limit the impact of his almost divine presence. The impact of beauty is instant, as that of the smile of a child, of a beautiful face. How much more then of a person whose presence reflects God within. Are words necessary? Isn't feeling enough. Such was Swamiji Maharaj, when he descended on Kashmir, as if from above.

He did not lay his hands on books yet the depth of his knowledge of Vedas, shastaras etc., about which he spoke rarely, was uncanny. His whole personality was, as it were, wrapped in mystery.

His love had and, I am fully aware now, a perennial quality. His life, his sojourn in Kashmir, where he attained Mahasamadhi on the 19th of December 1971; and even the establishment of an ashram at Nagadandi, is a mystery. During the turmoil of the last thirteen years the ashram has been visited and revered by Muslims, in large numbers. There is ample evidence at Nagadandi that there are no dividing lines between various religions and that all hands stretch themselves in prayer to the One And Only Almighty, in Divine and sincere human love and aspiration.

The following dream of Swami Vivekananda, who was an integral part of the combined personalities of Shri Ramakrishna and Ma Sharda, that vibrated through every nerve and heart beat of our Swami Ashokananda ji Maharaj and in whose name he established the Ashram.

Shri Ramakrishna Mahasamelan Ashram was being divinely ordained to be fulfilled. Is **Nagadandi Ashram** going to grow mysteriously enough, in Kashmir, where the prophetic words and the following dream of Swami Vivekananda are going to blossom into reality?

"We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran, yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran".

Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of The Religion, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

Kashmir's geography, its place in the cultural mosaic of India, the relevance of the Indian values in the survival of the human race, the emergence of religious fanaticism, in pushing the world civilisations to rid the world, by their joint will, of the conflict slammed on humanity in the name of God and the clarion call of Swami Vivekananda on the 27th September, 1893 at the parliament of religions held in Chicago USA, all these lead us to see a Divine Hand in the shape of things to come.

Jai Shri thakur, jai ma sharda

jai swami Vivekanandaji maharaj

jai guru !

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This article is an excerpt from the book, "Swami Ashokanandaji Maharaj : His Divine Message", by Shri Manmohan Dhar.

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Prominent Holy Places in Kashmir
Prof. Chaman Lal Sapru, New Delhi

The scenic beauty of Kashmir is famous all over the world, and attracts every year thousands of tourists who seek relaxation, enjoyment and the charms of nature. Few people outside the State, however, know that it also abounds in a number of pilgrimage centres. Indeed, a popular Sanskrit verse says, **'All the holy places of the world are found in the region of Kashmir'**. Living as they do in geographical isolation from the rest of India. Kashmiris have learnt to keep the roots of their culture alive by identifying their rivers, lakes and places with the holy *tirthas* of the mainland. Thus they see the Ganga in their own Gangabal, and Prayaga in the *sangam* (confluence) of their own rivers - the Vitasta (more commonly as the Jhelum) and the Sindhu at Shadipur.

From Vedic times to the twelfth century of the present era, Kashmir was one of the important centres of Hindu culture, religion and philosophy. The vitality of the past still survives in the faith, traditions and ways of life of Kashmiri Hindus. Every Hindu who believes in the Sanatana traditions worships God in the form of *Pancayatan*, the Five Deities (literally, the 'five abodes') namely, Ganesa, Siva, Visnu, Devi and Surya. We have in Kashmir temples and *tirthas* (holy places) dedicated to all these deities and also to Avatars like Sri Rama. Let us first note some of the important places of pilgrimage associated with these deities before taking up a general survey of the holy places in Kashmir.

Ganesa

Ganesa is worshipped as the *adi deva* (First Deity) in all Hindu rites. He is the son of Siva, and is considered to be *siddhidata* (the boon-giver) and *vighnaharta* (destroyer of obstacles). In Srinagar we have a prominent temple of Ganesa in the heart of the city. It was formerly under the management of the Dharmarth Trust, but is now managed by a local managing committee. An annual festival on Vaisakha Sukla Caturdasi is held in the premises of the temple, and a *mahayajna* by the Brahman Maha Mandal is performed on the Brahma Jayanti day. There is a legend that during the period of the Pathan rulers, several hundred years back, the original idol of Lord Ganesa had been submerged in the Vitasta by the Pandits to save it from desecration. During the Dogra rule the idol was reclaimed by the devotees and installed on the Vaisakha Sukla Chaturdasi in the temple. This ancient idol is placed in the outer temple by the side of the Siva *lingam*, and two bigger and more attractive idols, most probably donated by Dogra rulers, are in the main temple.

There is another important temple of Lord Ganesa at the foot of the hillock of Hari Parbat which every Hindu considers as his sacred duty to go round everyday. Lord Ganesa's temple is the first amongst the shrines strewn on this hillock.

Even the holy pilgrimage to Sri Amarnathji starts with the worship of Sri Ganesa at Ganeshabal near Pahalgam.

Sankara or Siva

There is hardly any place of worship in Kashmir where you will not find a *Siva lingam*. In the world famous cave of Amarnath, an *ice lingam* is formed to full size on the fifteenth of the bright half of every month, (Purnima), and is an object of reverential attraction to the devotees of all faiths. This holy place is visited on the Sravana Purnima every year by thousands of pilgrims from far-off places. The pilgrimage starts from the Dashnami Akhada of Srinagar in the form of a procession. The Mahant (*abbot*) of the Akhada carries the holy silver mace of Lord Siva and is followed by hundreds of Sadhus. They reach the cave on the full moon day of Sravana, which coincides with the popular Raksha-Bandhan festival of North India. Among the great men who have visited this holy cave, the names of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ramtirtha are note worthy; they

composed beautiful verses in praise of the Lord. Swami Vivekananda had a profound mystical experience in the cave. Afterwards he said to his European disciples, 'The image was the Lord Himself. It was all worship there. I never have been to anything so beautiful, so inspiring.'

Another beautiful stone-temple of Lord Siva is situated on a hill in the Srinagar city commanding a magnificent view. The temple is managed by the Dharmarth Trust. The hill, known as Gopadri in ancient Sanskrit texts, had the shrine of Jyestha Rudra on it. It is believed that the great Acharya Sri Sankara on his visit to Srinagar, meditated on this hill which now bears his name. Swami Vivekananda has given the following description of the temple : 'Look! what genius the Hindu shows in placing his temples! He always chooses a grand scenic effect! See, the hill commands the whole of Kashmir.'

The snow-clad peaks around the valley bear one or the other name of Lord Siva, like 'Mahadeva', 'Harmukha', etc. It was under the Mahadeva peak in the picturesque range of Harwan that the famous Sive-Sutras (the basis of Saiva philosophy) were composed. Devotees visit this place particularly on the same day on which the pilgrimage to Amarnathji is undertaken. They also visit the following places of worship connected with Siva on the same day : Dhyaneswar in Bandipur, Thajwor in Bijbehara and Harishwar in Khonmoh.

There are numerous temples of Siva in the whole valley. Among them Sadashiva temple in Purushyar and Someshwar temple in Habbakadal find mention in the famous histories and Puranas of Kashmir.

Visnu

The only holy place connected with Lord Visnu in Kashmir is Vishnu-Pada or Kaunsar Naga. This is a big lake situated at a height of more than 14,000 feet in Anantnag district. The lake is shaped like a foot and it is believed that Lord Visnu had placed his holy foot in the place where the present big lake is found.

Devi or Divine Mother

We have numerous places of pilgrimage dedicated to the Divine Mother in Kashmir of which Ksheer Bhawani, Sri Sharika Mandir, Mahakali Mandir (in Srinagar and Vadora), Jwala Mukhi (in Khrew), Shailapuri (in Nagabal, Baramulla), Baladevi, Sri Vaishnodevi and Sarthal Devi (in Jammu region) are well known. The most important among them all is of course Ksheer Bhawani.

The temple of Goddess Maharajani, known as Ksheer Bhawani, is situated about 14 miles away from Srinagar at the village Tulamula in the famous Sindh valley. The road leading to Ksheer Bhawani has also a spiritual significance. While going to Ksheer Bhawani first we reach 'Vicharnag' (the lake of discrimination). Then we reach 'Tyangal-bal' (the hill of burning charcoals) and *Kavaj-var* (the fire of cremation ground) and *Amar-her* (the immortal staircase). These names denote renunciation. The third place is Aanchar Lake, which derives its origin from *Aachar* (righteousness). After going through these places we reach the cherished destination, the holy place of the Divine Mother, the abode of love, pure and divine, and be with the Divine Mother.

An old Sanskrit text called the *Bhrngesa Samhita* carries a chapter known as 'Rajani-Pradurbhava' which gives a description of the origin of this temple. Ravana, the demon-king of Lanka, in order to attain unlimited power worshipped Mother Maha-rajani. The Divine Mother after being moved by the immense *tapas* (penance) performed by Ravana, bestowed upon him many boons. Soon after, Ravana began to lead a life of luxury, and after forcibly taking away Sita, prepared himself for a battle with Lord Rama. After watching the misbehaviour of Ravana, the Devi asked Hanuman to take Her to Satisar (Kashmir) along with 360 Nagas. Hanumanji installed

the Devi at the Tulamula village in Kashmir Valley. Here the Devi is being worshipped as 'Ksheer Bhawani' or Goddess Rajani. Only flowers, milk and sweets are offered to Her.

The Brahmins of Tulamula have been described in *Rajatarangini* as full with spiritual powers. For quite sometime in the past this important *tirtha* remained under flood waters, and it was only after a pious Brahmin Sri Krishna Pandit had a vision of it that the place was rediscovered. He was a great devotee of the Devi and composed the famous hymn the *Rajani Stotra*. Later on a beautiful marble temple was erected in the centre of the 'Kunda' (spring) by the Dogra rulers. This spring changes colours and is shaped like 'OM' in the Sharada script. Every year an annual festival is held on Jyestha Sukla Astami at this holy place.

During his stay in Kashmir, Swami Vivekananda visited this holy place twice or thrice. Soon after he had the stupendous vision of Mother Kali at a solitary place near Srinagar, Swamiji went to Ksheer Bhawani on September 30, 1898. There he lived a life of intense *tapas* and devotion to the Mother for a week. His biography gives the following details of his stay.

Before this famous shrine of the Mother he daily performed Homa, and worshipped Her with offering of Kheer (thickened milk) made from one maund of milk, rice and almonds. He told his beads like any humble pilgrim; and as a special Sadhana, every morning he worshipped a Brahmin pandit's little daughter as Uma Kumari, the Divine Virgin. He began to practise the sternest austerities

When he returned to Srinagar, he appeared before his disciples a transfigured presence, writes Nivedita 'No more "Hari Om!" It is all "Mother" now' he said, sitting down. 'All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it is only "Mother! Mother!" Mother said to me : "What, even if unbelievers should enter my temples, and defile my images! What is that to you? Do you protect me? Or do I protect you?" So there is no more patriotism. I am only a little child.'

One day at Kshir-Bhawani he had been pondering over the ruination and desecration of the temple wrought by the Muslim invaders.... It was then that he had heard the Mother speaking as above

In his meditation on the Terrible, in the dark hours of the nights at Kshir-Bhawani, there were other visions that he confided only to one or two of his brother disciples.....

At the same shrine, in the course of worship one day, the Swami was brooding with pain on the dilapidated condition of the temple. He wished in his heart that he were able to build a new one there in its place He was startled in his ruminations by the voice of the Mother Herself, saying to him, 'My child! if I so wish I can have innumerable temples and magnificent monastic centres. I can even at this moment raise a seven-storeyed golden temple on this very spot.'

Sun temple at Martand

Only five miles away from the town of Anantnag on the way to Amarnath, is a village known as Mattan or Bhawan. In ancient scriptures the name of this place is given as Martand (the sun). Here is a beautiful spring and a small rivulet flowing nearby known as the Chaka. On the banks of the Chaka thousands of devotees from northern India perform *sraddha* to their deceased ancestors in *adhikamasa* months and Vijaya Saptami. About 2^{1/2} km. from the spring are the ruins of a magnificent temple dedicated to the Sun known as Martand. The temple in Indo-Greek architectural style was built by Lalitaditya, a great king of Kashmir. Swami Vivekananda visited this place at least three times.

Other shrines

The two prominent places of pilgrimage of Muslims and Sikhs are Hazratbal and Chhatipadshahi. The Hazratbal shrine on the Dal lake facing east is known as the Second Mecca. The only relic of

Prophet Muhammad is preserved here. The Chhatipadshahi is a Gurdwara near Hari Parbat which had been visited by the sixth Guru of the Sikhs. Once upon a time the region of Kashmir was an important centre of Buddhism, the influence of which is seen in some temple sculpture. At present Buddhism is the dominant religion of Ladakh which is now a part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

It shall be noted that in this article we are dealing with only the holy places in Kashmir proper. Those in Jammu and Ladakh have their own distinctive features and have not been included here. Let us now have a bird's-eye view of the innumerable holy places found all over the valley of Kashmir.

Southern Kashmir

Amarnath : The natural cave with its huge ice Siva Lingam is the most famous centre of pilgrimage in Kashmir.

Vetha-Vatur : Here is the source of river Vitasta. Annual pilgrimage to this place is performed on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the Bhadra month.

Khana Barni : Dedicated to Divine Mother, it is near Qazigund.

Kapal Mochan : Annual festival on Sravana Sukla Dvadasi is held here and devotees perform *sraddha*. It is situated near Shopain.

Manzgam : A temple in the forest, dedicated to Mother Rajna. Annual festival is held on Jyestha Astami.

Anantnag : This holy spring after which the town as well as the district is named, is famous for its crystal clear water. Annual festival of Ananta Devata is held on the fourteenth day of the dark half of Bhadra month.

Thajiwore : It is situated near Bijbihara. An old Siva temple is found here and the annual festival is held on Sravana Purnima.

Gautama Nag : It is situated at about 4^{1/2} km. away from Anantnag.

Lokabhawan : Annual festival is held here and a *mahayajna* performed. It is 11 miles from Anantnag.

Uma Nagari : A temple and a spring of Goddess Uma is found here. Annual *mahayajna* is performed here.

Nagadandi : Sri Ramakrishna Maha Sammelan, managed by the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee of Kanyakumari, is situated here. An ancient spring and a few idols of some ancient temple are found here. An annual festival is held on the day Chhari (Amarnath pilgrimage) starts. It is 3 km. away from Achhabal.

Gosayeen Gond : An attractive neat and clean Ashram is found here. During Amarnath Yatra a number of devotees visit this Ashram and stay and meditate for a few days.

Vishnu Pad : Known also as Kaunsarnaga, it is about 14 miles away from Aharbal fall; the journey to it is hazardous.

Jwala Mukhi : This *tirtha* dedicated to Goddess Jwala (Flame) is situated about 20 km. from Srinagar in Anantnag district. A temple of Jwalaji is situated on a hillock there. Annual festival is held in Jwala-Caturdasi (fourteenth day of the dark second half of Asad).

Kurukshetra : It is near Pampore (famous for saffron, where the great mystic poetess of Kashmir, Lalleshwari or Lalded, lived). Festivals are held here on the occasions of solar and lunar eclipses.

Baladevi : This famous *tirtha* is dedicated to Bala Bhagavati (Tripurasundari). She is the family deity of the Dogra rulers, and the temple is managed by the Dharmarth Trust. This place of pilgrimage is situated in Balahama near Pampur.

Northern Kashmir

Koti Tirtha : It is situated on the right bank of the Vitasta (Jhelum) at Baramulla. It is believed that the holy waters of one crore *tirthas* reach here through the Vitasta and is therefore considered very sacred.

Shailaputri (Devibal) : This *tirtha* is situated on the left bank of the Vitasta at Baramulla. This is a miniature Ksheer-Bhawani.

Nandakeswar (Seer-Jagir) : A famous temple of Siva known as Nandakeswar Bhairava, situated on the left bank of the Vitasta at Sopore. The annual festival is held on Jyestha Amavasya here.

Nandakeswar(Sumbal) : An ancient place for worship of Nandakeswar Bhairava situated in Sumbal village.

Gophabal : Situated near Langet, Handwara.

Bhadrakali : This Tirtha dedicated to Goddess Kali is situated in a thick pine forest near Vadipora (Handwara).

Tikkar (Gushi) : Situated near Kupvara, this *tirtha* is dedicated to the Divine Mother (Maharajani).

Chandigam : Situated in the picturesque valley of Lolab in Sogam. A monastery of Sannyasins belonging to the Niranjani Akhada has been established here.

Gosayeen Teng : Situated on a hillock at Baramulla. Some springs dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra are found here.

Sharadaji : Now in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and situated on the bank of Kishanganga, it was a famous centre of pilgrimage throughout the country before partition. It is considered to be a *siddha pitha* like the Sharika Chakreshwar temple on Hari Parbat. It was once upon a time a great centre of learning, and students as well as scholars from far off places used to come here. Some monuments still exist there. The place was for centuries associated with the culmination of Hindu religious scholarship and authority which even the great teacher Sri Sankara had to acknowledge.

District Srinagar

Shankaracharya Hill : A beautiful Siva temple exists on the hillock called Shankaracharya Hill. Annual festival on the day of Amarnath Darsan is held here.

Hari Parbat : A hillock in Srinagar city, it has many temples around it. The main temple is of Goddess Sarika, the presiding Deity of Kashmir. Annual festivals on the first Navaratri and Asadha Navami are held here. This is considered a *siddha pitha*, a place of awakened Divine Presence.

Ksheer Bhawani : Twenty kilometers away from Srinagar, it is a spring in which a temple has been constructed dedicated to Mother Rajani. Annual festival is held on Jyesta Astami.

Gangabal : A lake situated near Harmukh peak; it is the most beautiful lake in Kashmir. Annual festival is held on the Ganga Astami in Bhadra month. People immerse the ashes of their dead relatives here and also perform Sraddha. The journey to this place is most hazardous but is much rewarding.

Guptaganga (Nishat) : Just adjacent to the Nishat garden. On the Vaisakhi festival devotees come from all over Kashmir to have a dip in the spring here. A Saiva Math is also attached to it where Sunday classes on Saivism were conducted by the well-known teacher Swami Lakshman Joo.

Jyeshtheshwara : A temple of Jyestha Devi is located in between Shankaracharya Hill and Chasma Shahi. A pilgrimage to this place on Thursdays in the month Jyestha is considered auspicious.

Gangajatan : Situated in the tehsil of Badgam. On Ganga Astami day people come here to have a dip. It is almost a dry spring but on this particular day, at a particular hour, water gushes out and devotees have their holy bath.

Badipur : Situated in the tehsil Chadura near Nagam, it is a miniature Ksheer Bhawani. Annual *mahayajna* on Vaisakha Sukla Astami is held here.

Mahakali Asthapan : Situated by the side of the famous Khanaqah of Shah Hamdan; it is believed that a magnificent temple of Maha Kali once existed here. The annual festival is held here on Pausa Krsna Paksa Astami.

Vaskur : Dedicated to the mystic poetess Rupa Bhavani, considered to be an incarnation of Goddess Sarika. Annual festival is held here on Sahib-Saptami, the seventh day of the dark fortnight of Magha.

Vichar Nag : Situated on Srinagar-Leh Highway at a distance of about 10 km. from Srinagar. The annual festival is held on *Caitra Amavasya*, the last day of the Kashmiri calendar.

The famous Kashmiri Pandit, Shriya Bhat, responsible for the change of heart of Sultan Zainulabidin, later known as Budshah (the Great Monarch), lived here.

Jammu

Vaishno Devi : This is as famous as Amarnathji and Ksheer Bhawani of Kashmir. Thousands of pilgrims mostly from northern India, visit this place. The Divine Mother in her Vaisnavi form is being worshiped here. The main temple is 11 km. above Katra, a town on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway-Devotees prefer to visit the shrine on Nava-Ratra days.

Sarthal Devi

It is situated in Doda district of Kishtwar. There is a popular belief that Mother Sarika (Hari Parbat) shifts during winter to this place.

There are many other places of pilgrimage in Jammu region such as Burha Amarnath, Sudh Mahdev, etc.(Courtesy : *Prabuddha Bharata*, March 1983)

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Shrines that Inspire
Mohan Kishen Tiku, Jammu

Kashmir is rich not only in scenic beauty, but also in historical remains which bear testimony to the architectural greatness and religious fervour of its people. No wonder, therefore, that besides being known as the **Abode of Snow**, Kashmir is also described as the **Temple of God**.

Places of worship, and centres of pilgrimage of historical interest abound in all parts of Kashmir.

The following are some of the more important of these.

Khair-Bhawani Temple :

The shrine is situated to the north of the Srinagar city at a distance of about 24 K.M. The shrine is dedicated to Goddess Ragnya Devi, popularly known as Khair-Bhawani. (Fig 1) There is a spring where the water occasionally changes colours and this curious phenomenon attracts a number of yatris every year.

As regards the age and the sanctity of this famous shrine of Kashmir, the award of the 'Tirth-Sangrahi' and the tradition is unanimously the same. This shrine of Kashmir is as old as the human being in Kashmir. It is said that it was during the period of Ramayana, that Goddess was moved from Lanka (Ceylon) to Satisar (Kashmir).

In Ceylon, Rawan began to perform penance for one thousands years. Goddess was pleased to see this, and gave darshan to Rawan. She as per request of Rawan selected North-Western corner of Lanka as Her abode, and sitting at the back of Anantserpent, the goddess appeared in the human form, and gave *darshan* to Rawan in nine different forms from time to time. Rawan, being now the devotee, was given Kingdom of Lanka. At the time of invasion of Lanka by Shri Ram, Hanuman was ordered to take away the Goddess on the back of Anant serpent to Satisar (Kashmir). The night when Maharaginya came to Kashmir is named as Ragni-Ratri and Goddess is worshipped as Maharagni.

For centuries people knew nothing of this sacred spring which was subsequently discovered by Pandit Govind Joo Gadoo of Bohri-Kadal, Srinagar. Goddess appeared to him in a dream and was ordered to visit the place. He arranged a boat and went to Tulla Mulla abode of Goddess with number of earthen vessels filled with milk, and when he reached the spring he poured milk into it. There is another version of process which is said to have brought the Shrine to notice One Kashmiri-Pandit saw a vision in which he was asked by an Angel that the spring of Khair-Bhawani lay among the swamps of Tulla Mulla village. The Pandit was surprised on this account. It was difficult task for him to reach the main spot of the holy spring. A voice came to him and asked Pandit to engage a boat near Shadipore and from this place a Serpant would guide him. As soon as the spot would be reached, the Serpant would jump in a spring which is the abode of Goddess. He did as was told and reached the main spot. Thus was the divine spring of Kashmir discovered. Krishna Pandit along with other persons from the city inaugurated worship of the Goddess - first of its kind. After the puja was finished, it is said that a piece of birch was seen floating over the water of the spring. The piece was collected, and to his great surprise, he found a 'Shaloka' written on it. Now gradually the place became known all over the Kashmir and outside too.

The main spring is dedicated to Goddess Khair Bhawani. It is irregular in shape being Septagonal with apex called *Pad* (feet) to the east. The Southern and Northern sides are a bit longer than the western side, commonly called *Sher* (Head). In the centre is an islet on which a temple is believed to have existed. Sikander Butshikan destroyed this temple also. Maharaja Partap Singh

got constructed the present marble temple under the supervision of Pt. Ved Lal Dhar, (father of Bal Kak Dhar - Rayis of Kashmir) in the year 1869.

On Durga Ashtmi, the 8th day of the bright fortnight of Chet and on Jeth-Ashtami, large fairs are held at this Shrine, which is attended by devotees. People going there for worship do not take fish, meat or eggs, and should take a bath before they enter the main place.

Muslims of this place offer flowers through their Pandit friends, while addressing the Goddess as 'Maej Bhagvati' (Mother Goddess). This Shrine is reached by road and by boat too. The Shrine is under the control of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Dharmait - Trust.

Raginya - Pradurbhava, in its last chapter, mentions about this shrine in detail. Last year the fair took place on 30th May. The Government had made all possible arrangements for the convenience of the pilgrims. From Jammu number of people (both Kashmiri and local) visited the shrine; people from Delhi and other places also visited this pilgrim centre in large numbers.

Historical References :

Kalhana's **Rajatarangini** is the oldest and recognised record of Kashmiri History. We find many references about village Tulla Mulla, and Khir-Bhawani Temple. **Ragyana Pradurbhava** in its last chapter mentions about this shrine in the section **Bringish-Samhita**. 'Ramayana' describes lucidly all about this island. We also find many interesting references in the famous historical treatise written by Abu-Fazal. This famous historian of Akbar, has also mentioned in his book "**Ain-i-Akbari**" about this Shrine of Kashmir. Charles Ellisian Bates has also written in his 'Gazette' about this famous spring - shrine.

In the summer of 1898 Swami Vivekananda visited this shrine. Swamiji became devotee of 'Mother', and said, "No more 'Hari Om';" It is all 'Mother now.' Maharaja Partap Singh built a marble temple on the old site in the centre of the spring.

The Khirbhawani Reconstruction committee has constructed some shelters for performing Hawan, and also laid two parks on each side of the entrance.

Hari Parbat Shrine :

The sacred shrine on the hillock of Hari Parbat (Fig. 2) is situated at a distance of 4 Km from Srinagar city. The hill can be seen from about 32 Km from the western side of the city. There is a legend associated with this hillock. Two demons lived near by. Both of them hid themselves in water near the place where the Hari Parbat stands today and harassed the *rishis*. The *rishis* prayed to Goddess Parvati to free them from the demons. The Goddess assumed the form of 'myna' (*har*) and dropped a celestial pebble on the two demons. This pebble grew into a hillock and the two demons were pinned to the spot for ever. Outside the Sangin-Darwaza of the fort, a depression in the ground is pointed out, as the spot where from the panting breath of the demons forced its way out. The Goddess in grateful memory of her deliverance took up her abode here, and is now worshipped here as Sharika. The hill is hence called Hari Parbat. There is a fort on the hillock which was built by Azim Khan, the Pathan Governor. In 1590 A.D., Akbar the great, built the outer wall at a cost of two crores. In the interior of the fort there is a temple of Goddess Sharika. Thousands of Hindus daily go round the hillock and offer prayers. On *Har Nawmi*, the 9th day of the bright fortnight of *Har* (June-July) a great festival is held here. There are two gates, Sangin Darwaza and Kathi Darwaza in the rampart of this fort.

Temple At Khrew :

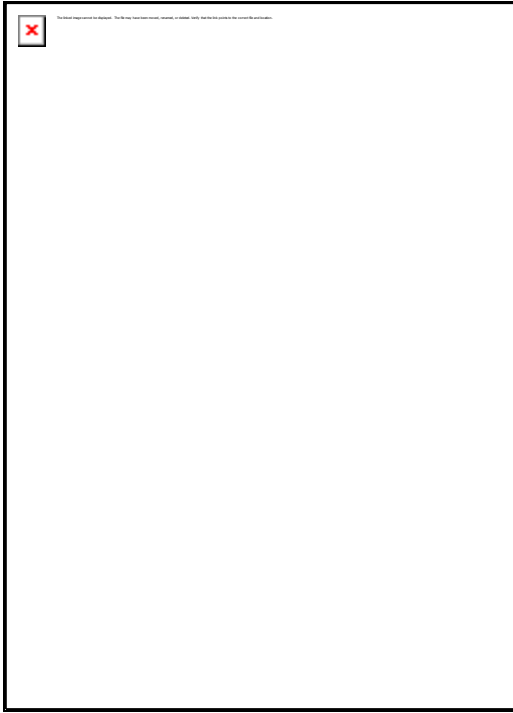
The village of Khrew is about 18 K.M. from Srinagar. Here on a hillock, presumed to be volcanic, is a temple which is dedicated to Jawala Bhagwati - the Goddess of fire. The temple is reached by a flight of stone steps. (Fig. 3) Mela Jawala Mukhi is held here annually on the 14th day of the bright fortnight of Savan (July-August) when pilgrims visit this shrine from all corners of the country. At top of the hillock is a beautiful spring where people take a dip before making the ascent.

Shankaracharya Temple :

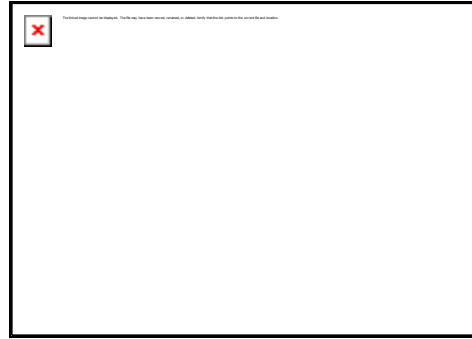
This is a conspicuous temple in Srinagar city. (Fig. 4) It is perched on the crest of the Shankaracharya hill. This hill is 6000 feet above sea level at the end of the Hotel Road on the other edge of Durragan Bridge. The hill is a detached ridge of an indigenous rock on the South East of the city, and rises to the height of about one thousand feet above the plain.

According to the local tradition the present name of the hill is called after the name of Shri Shankaracharya the great apostle of the Indian Monism who came here about ten centuries ago. A discussion took at this place between him and Swami Abinavgupta, the chief Preceptor of Kashmiri Shaivism. After the discussion Shankaracharyaji changed his ideas and became a disciple of Shakti cult. On the crest of Shankaracharya hill there is an ancient stone temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. The foundation-date of this temple is a matter of debate. Some say that Jaloka, son of King Ashoka, was the first man to have erected this religious edifice. The author of "Indian and Eastern Architecture", Mr. James Fergusson, says that the temple was constructed by some nameless Hindu in honour of Shiva, during the tolerant reign of Jahangir, and that the building was stopped at and the date engraved at the staircase as 1069 A.H." The hill is still regarded as a sacred one by Buddhists and they call it *Pas Pahar*. Some say this has been built by Raja Sandiman who reigned Kashmiri from 2629 to 2564 B.C. King Gopaditya (426-365 B.C.) also repaired this temple. This hill was also called Gopadari, the roof of temple, after the name of King Gopaditya. The temple is beautifully constructed on an octagonal plinth about 30 feet high. The basement is of thirteen layers of stone and is about 20 feet high on the solid rock. The square building of the temple is supported by this basement. The main building has got projections, and has got four octagonal lime stone pillars. The interior chamber of the temple is circular in plan and there is a basin where lingam rests. The main chamber is reached by the stairs. The dome of the temple is of modern masonry. The path that leads to the temple is rocky and zigzag. On *Puran Mashi*, full moon day of *Sawan* (July-August) Hindus make a pilgrimage at night. The pilgrimage of this day coincides with that of pilgrimage to the sacred cave of Amar Nath.

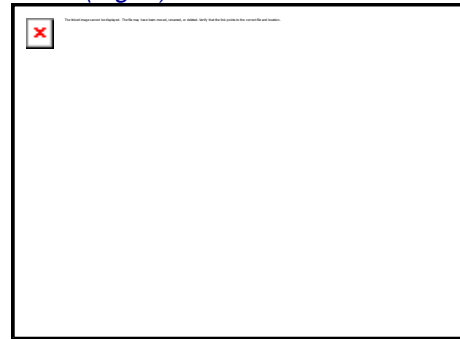
Shrines of Three Ishta Devis



(Fig. 1) Khir-Bhawani Temple



(Fig. 2) Hari Parbat Shrine



(Fig. 3) Temple at Khrew

Shrine of Kapalamochan :

This shrine is about 38km from Srinagar and is near the town of Shopian. An interesting legend is associated with this place. It is said that Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu had a dispute, each claiming that he was superior to the other. Finally they went to Lord Shiva for a decision. Lord Shiva asked Brahma to go up and Vishnu to go down the holy lingam, which he had created to find out its end. While Vishnu admitted his failure, Brahma told a lie from his fifth head. Consequently Lord Shiva cut off Bhramas fifth head and dismissed them both saying that neither of them was superior to the other. Lord Shiva performed many pilgrimages to expiate this sin, but in vain. At last he came to this beautiful spot of Kapalmochan, where he was ultimately able to rid himself of this sin. He was, therefore, pleased with this place and sanctified it as a place where deceased children could attain salvation through the performance of *Shradda* by their elders. There are three springs close to one another. On the 12th day of Sawan (July-August) a fair is held here and thousands of Hindus perform the *Shradda* of their deceased children and give ornaments etc. in charity.

Temple of Bhawan :

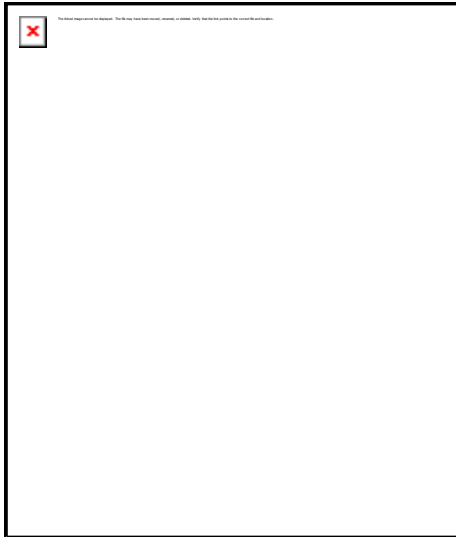
This monumental place is situated about 62 km from Srinagar on the Anantnag-Pahalgam road. This place is well known as Mattan or Bhawan. (Fig 5) In the year 1620 A.D. Asaf Jah laid a garden in front of sacred spring under the orders of Emperor Jahangir. The spring is dedicated to Lord Vishnu, who according to tradition splitted the mountain near Baramulla. Outside the entrance there is a giant Chinar tree. The small temple on the eastern side contains the image of Martand (Sun God). The spring is teeming with fish which are considered sacred and are fed on rice and chappatties by pilgrims. In every Hindu leap year, people come here on certain days to perform '*Shraddha*'.

Visitors to this place are asked by the priests to record their names in the Book maintained for them. The names recorded in Book go back to more than a century and half. The first name is dated 1827 and is said to be of some Russian gentleman. The legible entry starts from April 8, 1840. Shri J. L. Nehru was amazed to see the names of his uncle, father, etc. in this Book during his last visit to the Vale.

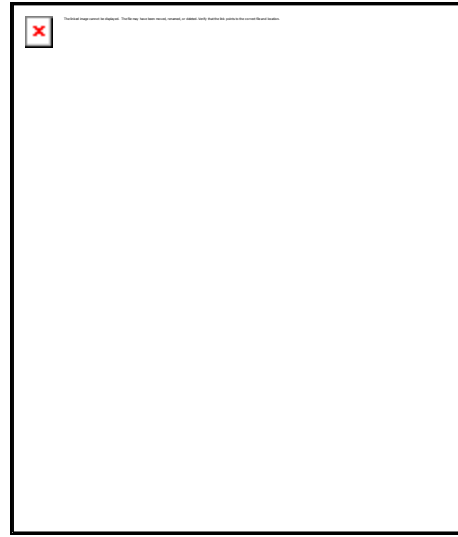
Cave Temple of Amar Nath :

Among all Hindu Shrines in Kashmir the cave temple at Amarnath with its mysterious Siva Lingam is the most sacred and famous. The cave is situated in the north-eastern valley in a long glacial gorge, at an elevation of about 14,000 feet above sea-level. The cave is about 56 K.M. away from Pahalgam, the main starting point of the pilgrimage to Amarnath, 96 Km all covered by a motor road from Srinagar. Many legends are associated with this sacred cave. From Kalhan's **Rajatarangini** it is gathered that even before the 12th century it was annually visited by thousands of people from all parts of the country. The *Chhari* (the holy silvermace) was given by Lord Shiva to Kashyap Rishi for deliverance and Lord commended that this *chhari* be carried to his abode at Amarnath, where he promised to confer His blessings every year after the full moon in the month of August. Some say that the cave was first discovered by a party of Shepherds.

Every time, the journey started from the Deccan. In Guru Arjan Dev's time, Amritsar was the starting point and then finally, since half a century, it is Srinagar.



(Fig. 4) Shankaracharya Temple

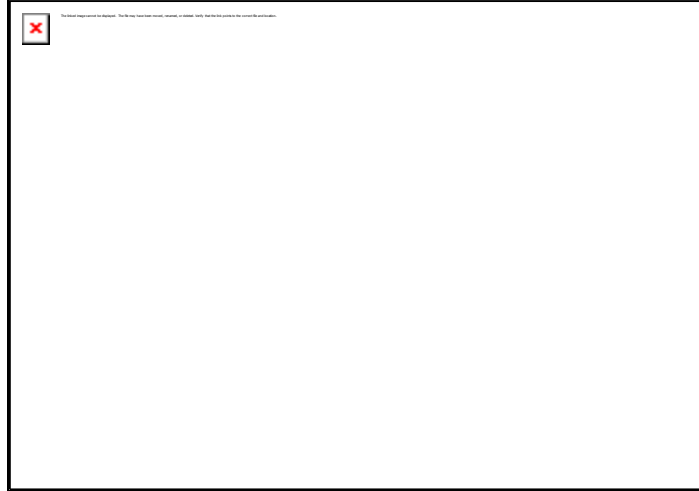


(Fig. 5) Temple of Bhawan

The sacred day falls every year on the night of the full moon in the month of Sawan (July-August); pilgrims from all parts of India visit this cave to have darshan of the mysterious self formed snow lingam of Shiva which increases and decreases with the waxing and waning of the moon. The ascent to the cave commences from Panjtarni, four Km from the cave, when pilgrims start early on the Raksha-Bandhan day. The cave is roughly 150 square yards in area, and contains three blocks of ice formed by the dipping water. At the farthest end of the cave there is the self-formed lingam of Shiva. The three blocks of ice represent the Hindu deities of Shiva, Parvati and Ganesh. A few doves are also seen inside the cave, and are regarded as hermits which were caught by Shiva himself while they were caves-dropping. Pilgrims offer flowers, sweets, etc. and chant hymns to the accompaniment of the chiming of bells, Cymbals and conch shells. The head priest of *chhari* conducts the religious performances. Arrangements for coolies and postal arrangements are made by the State Government.

Sister Nivedita, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda has recorded the impression of Swamiji who visited the cave in the summer of 1898.

She wrote, "and now, as he entered the cave, it seemed to him as if he saw Shiva made visible before him. Amidst the buzzing, swarming noise of the pilgrim crowd, and the overhead fluttering of pigeons, he knelt, and prostrated two or three times 'I have enjoyed it so much' he said. 'I thought the ice *lingam* was Shiva himself. It was all worship. I never enjoyed any religious place so much."



(Fig. 6) Shri Lingam in Amarnath Cave

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Home Land Pilgrim Centres of Kashmiri Pandits
Principal P. N. Lidhoo (Retd.) "Sopory", Delhi

Kashmir Valley, as the legend goes, was created by the great saint Kashyap Rishi. It is known as the abode of Rishis. Different rulers came to reign this paradise on earth and the Rishis laid their foot prints and reminiscences in the shape of temples, shrines and Viharas which have become important pilgrimages over a period of time.

As our holy places of worship, we have Sharika Devi & Ganesh Bal at the Hari Parbat, Raginya Devi at Tullamulla, known as Kheer Bhavani and Jawala Devi at Khrew on the top of a hillock. We have the Darshan of the ice lingam at the holy cave of Swami Amar Nathji, Sharda Peeth, the ancient university, at Sharda in PAK occupied Kashmir. We have Har Mukh, Zeethyar, Mattan and Verinag as important pilgrimages. Verinagh spring is the source of river Jhelum. The great Mughal King Jehangir fenced it and there is a temple outside to worship. Zeethyar is a far off place which is now linked with a road. We cannot forget *Reshimol* of Anantnagh. Nobody can even now take meat in that area. Similarly the shrines of Baba Rishi in Gulmarg and Sheikh Nooruddin of Charar are also important. In short, it is necessary to have the record of our pilgrim centres for our children who have to discover these when normal times return and for our progeny to realize their significance. Salient details are given below.

Sopore Area

Nand-ki-shor (Seer Jagir)

This is a famous pilgrimage of Kashmiri Pandits in the north Kashmir, situated on the left side of the river Jhelum carrying valuable timber from famous forests of Lolab, Trihgam, Magam and Kupwara etc.

Nand-ki-shor is an ancient monument with picturesque scenery of its surrounding seen on its walls. With a Chinara tree in the centre it has a huge compound for devotees. Long back, late Jagirdar Balkak Dar had appointed one pujari for puja and sacrifices of sheep were offered on every Saturday or Tuesday at this shrine. It has incarnation of "Shakti".

On Baishakh Amavasia a great **yagniya** and **mela** used to be held when every family of Sopore villages, Baramulla, Pattan etc. participated in large numbers. In its compound there is a covered big spring where from the crystal clear water gushes through an inner opening. The water falls in the artificial spring where devotees take bath. Local people come from miles on foot to collect fresh crystal clear water from this source. People offer donations. There is a big "**dharamsala**" and kitchen etc. here The Sadhus come from far off places to meditate here and they are served free food. On the same day a mela at Sumbal (shadipur) is held which is an old pilgrimage of 1000 years; known as Prayag, where the *Aasthis* of dead are immersed.

Vaskara - This is the place of meditation of Roop Bhawani. At this place were preserved, the personal belongings of this great saint as used by her daily, like black "*Kantope*" "*feran*", blanket etc. On Magh Krishen paksh saptami (Sahib Saptami), Roop Bhawani Jayant was observed here with great devotion.

Gangajattan/Sangramma :

Sangrama is a junction where traffic is directed towards Baramulla, Sopore, Srinagar and other places. This place was conquered by Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846 when he took the possession of Kashmir valley. A huge battle ended at this place in his favour. So it is called *âç»ýæ*, a

sanskrit word, meaning war. There is a muslim pious shrine at the top of the hill while at its base crystal clear water of Harmukh Ganga trickles on Ganga Ashtami day, once in a year. So Hindus assemble in huge numbers to have a bath in the showering water. Pujaris perform shradhas, offer puja and have fasts on this day. Hindus thus consider it a pilgrimage on that day. On this day the famous Harmukh Ganga Pilgrimage is held. It is a tedious journey to reach this place via Sonamarg road. The yatris used to ascend the mountain for three days continuously. The Govt. had provided no arrangements previously. It is situated on the Indo-Tibetan Road, rough and steep to climb. Afghan rulers had stopped this pilgrimage as once thousands of Hindus faced the Nature's calamity, snow, rains and shivering cold in the autumn days of September-October. No one returned alive. It is a hearsay. Now people go with full arrangements with warm clothing and prepared food material. There is a big spring where *shradh* is performed every year. Small worms, in colours, are seen in crores in the spring. They are considered as spirits of deceased who appear only at the time of *Shradh*. It is a paradox to believe. Anyhow believe for my sake, as it is an eye witness description. The same worms are put tight in bottles, drums and utensils but as soon as shradh is over these disappear with the Darshan of a pale snake in the Sheshnag spring. There is a "*dokhnagh*"/"*sokhnagh*" with cold and warm water. The Assthis of the dead were immersed here after Shrada, as in Hardawar. Harmukh Ganga is Shiva in real perspective, very different from other shrines.

So, I write with confidence and conviction for those who would study its importance as laid in Hindu scriptures. Yatris travel in buses to Sonmarg and stay at *Rapii Angan*, *Bart-bramsar*, *Hamsa-dwar*, *Brahma-Vishnu* springs, *Sheshnag*, *Harmukh-ganga*, *Jatta* etc. No trees are there for shelter to protect against sun, rain, snow or storm. The road is hilly and difficult to climb.

Reshi Peer - "*Peer Pandit Padshah har Mushkill Kusha Aasaan*":

It is situated on the right side of River Jhelum near the main Wazir temple in Sopore town. This place is venerated and worshipped, as this is the place of birth of Reshi peer - S/o Govind Ram Koul, R/o Batayar, Alikadal, Srinagar where his temple exists and where an annual fair and "Havan" was held. There is an interesting story how Reshi Peer was born, in a boat at Sopore after great meditation and prayer by his grandmother, who was hailing from a far off vilage, Gushi, in Kupwara area. She was meditating in the jungle of Tikkar near Kheer Bhawani. Her anxiety and concern were that her daughter should give birth to a son to sustain her daughter's life whose husband was rather elderly & frail. In course of time, Reshi Peer was born; while his mother was being carried in a boat to Srinagar to deliver the child. It was near Wazir temple in Sopore where she had to be taken for delivery and this became known, later on as "Reshi Peer" of Sopore.

Reshi Peer started meditation in solitude from his childhood at his house as he was a handicapped, crippled child. When he grew up, he used to give Parikrama of Sharika devi on his knees. In a dream the Devi blessed him with her *darshan*"and appeared to him as his "guru". Some say for 12 years he performed Parikrama under the guidance of Krishan Joo Kar. He became famous for his miracles. The emperor of those days, Aurangzeb, was informed by his governor about the miracles of the famous Reshi Peer addressed as "Padshah". So he was called to face imprisonment at Delhi. But to his great surprise, the emperor was greatly influenced by his vedantic and spiritual charisma; and so he was not only released but awarded a Jagir at Devsar at Anantnagh. Mullah Abdullah Badhak Shahi used to discuss the spirituality and Vedanta with him. The discussions held were translated in Persian language in a book, by his Pupil Dara - Shikoh. The name of the book is Sair-i-Akbari. Beside the Reshi Peer Trust, Shiva Hiranki Reshi Pir Kashmiri colony of migrants, has been established near Alipur, Delhi in his memory.

Zinpora Dooni (Bomai) - A famous pilgrimage of Hindus. It is famous, as the Dooni of a Yogi used to burn through out the year since ages past. This *Tirath* has a lot of assets, land, orchards etc. The Sadhus stay here for years with free board and lodging. Bomai, a Hindu village is at a distance of one mile from Sopore. There is lot of enthusiasm on Havan and yearly functions. After

raids in 1947 Swami Nand Lal ji was taking care of it. But he left for Tikkar to make this "Tirth" glorious after 1947 destruction. A social welfare committee would take care of these Tiraths from Srinagar and Dharam-Arth Trust and Sudhar Samiti along with the cooperation of local Hindu organizations would work together to uplift them and keep their assets under control. Sri Kanth Sopori, a retired Patawari had spent his precious life to safeguard Tiraths like Zinpora and Wazir Bagh of Sopore and the Reshi Pir Mandir over there. Annual functions were arranged and Hindus used to pay visits to these places. There is a lot of land possessed by Bomai Mandir with a school and shops attached to it.

Bandipore Area

This location is famous for its scenic beauty and strategic route to Gilgit via Astore and Gurez passes. The English tourists used to visit this area specially for its beautiful sanitorium, Sonarwami, on the bank of Nalla Madhumati and Bonar waterfalls in the jungle of Matergam. The people used to come and go to Gilgit on horses/ponies daily. Bandipor is famous not only for its fertile land but also for fertile brains. So, this area has produced well known saints, scholars, poets and philosophers. There is a Shardha Mandir, at a Hindu village Kaloosa, on the bank of Madhumati canal. The biggest lake in Asia, Wular lake, is nearby; the canal falls in this lake. Local Hindus from this town and adjacent villages used to hold Annual Hawan at this Mandir.

Kharapora-Arin Dardpora :

There is a famous cave in the jungles of Arin Dardpora about four miles from Bandipora. It is also known as "Chotta Amarnath". This cave has a wonderful stone work, with engravings on walls, carried out miraculously long long time back by some Hindu ruler. The cave has an ice Shiv Lingam and can accommodate 5 to 6 pilgrims at a time. To have the darshans, one has to crawl with torches in hand since inside it is dark.

Ram Takhat : It is situated on this plateau of Ramahal mountain near line of control. As per the legend, Ramchander ji, whilst in exile had his Durbar at this place in the jungle. There is a spring and a huge polished stone with peculiar engravings. It is known Ramji's stone - "*Tir*"; this hillock adjoins the plateau near Singhpora at Baramulla. People used to visit this "asthapan" from far and wide with great reverence.

Prayag and Pushkar : Shadipur is a town near Sumbal. Here the rivers Sindhu and Jehlum meet and the confluence; Sangham, is called Prayag. There is an island at this confluence where there is a Chinar tree believed to be thousand years old, in folk lore. Hindus used to immerse ashes of deceased at this Sangham. Once in a century, Dashhara is held at this place and the last one was in the year 1940 when the Hindus of the valley and from other places performed the Shradh in memory of their deceased kith and kim. Another pilgrimage in this area is Pushkar situated in Magam-Gulmarg region. There is a natural spring where Hindus have a "Tirth" and take a bath particularly on the eclipse days and on other auspicious occasions. With displacement of Hindus from these areas due to terrorism, all these places have lost the erstwhile importance as pilgrim centres.

Baramulla Area

Sheila Devi Pilgrimage - Sheila Devi spring is situated under the hill on the right side of the Jehlum valley Road. On the other side of the temple and the pious spring, the river Jhelum flows in high speed. Across the river and opposite to the temple there existed a Hindu populated colony. So, every Hindu generally used to take a bath in the hot water spring and offer Puja to Devi. People who are blessed offer Havans and other Pujas in honour of Devi. The Marble "*murti*" is placed in the centre of the spring. The spring area is big with a considerable space all around for *parikrama* and for assembly of devotees in front of Devi. There are a few Dharamsala for

Sadhus. Around this shrine and both sides of the river there was a thick Hindu population in an environment of solitude & peace. After migration the atmosphere has changed and it is sadness all around.

Kotti Tirath (Crore Tiraths) :

Ancient scriptures reveal that this place had the same importance as Mattan. People from earlier times would offer *shradha* here on the bank of Vitasta. Some would also immerse the Aasthis of dead over here. It is situated opposite to Sheila Devi pilgrimage across the river Jhelum. There is annexed a Sikh pilgrimage "Chatti Padshahi" of marble construction. Sikhs come from far off places especially on Sundays; Baisakhi, remembrance days of Sikh Gurus and other auspicious days. There is vast sikh population in Rafiabad, Baramulla, Singh Pora and other places nearby. Sikhs and Hindus have a great reverence for this pilgrimage and attend it regularly.

Gangnor :Under Gosaniteng hill, there is a natural water flow; water is hot in winter and cold in summer. All people with no consideration of caste & creed take a bath in the artificial spring and then proceed to their respective places of worship. The water flows from the natural source into the artificial spring through an iron channel (*nor*). It resembles Ganga & so is known by the name of "*Gangnor*". There is a wooden structure, with roof over the artificial spring.

Kanimoj - (Indra Bha - Pilgrimage) :

It is a pilgrimage specially for unmarried girls. Amidst the water in the hill region, 6 miles from Baramulla, there are structures resembling teats of cows; with gushing water, and the foot of a cow in the river Jhelum. People come down to offer puja, milk, kheer etc. in honour of the deity, observing fast on Thursdays in autumn. The Hindus consider it a yatra, known as Indra Bha.

Gosaniteng - (Ramkund - Sitakund)

This old temple is situated on a hillock on top of Baramulla town. Bhairav mandir is at the bottom. It was daily visited by the Hindus who worshipped it and offered "*naveed*" and "*prasad*". The importance of *Goswani Teng* is held up by scriptures. Sadhus throng there in summer as there is refreshing air, free from pollution and noise. It is a place of meditation for "yogis" and sadhus. There are seven *kunds* especially "Ram Kund", "Sita Kund", "Lakshman Kund", "Bharat Kund" etc.

Legend goes that Ram whilst in exile was here; he has left "*Ram Takhat*" in a village near Hari (LOC). Near by in the forest there was a famous place of meditation, "Goppa Bal", where there was an Ashram for sadhus with free boarding & lodging provisions.

Jawala Devi (Swayam-Vedar) :

There are some crevices in the land which underneath are burning. Mythologically it is of religious importance. People visit these on foot and prepare food etc. on these crevices Hundred years earlier it used to be a very important pilgrimage, in this area. Now the archaeological deptt. has found burning volcano here so it is under Govt. control and religious performances are prohibited.

Kupwara Area

Trihgam Spring - It is situated on the Kupwara-Kralpora local road. It has the "Samadhi" of a saint sadhu near it. The saint was known as the Trehgam Babajee and every one in North Kashmir received his blessings. There is a crystal clear greenish water in it with fish of golden

colour. It has a vivid scenery to look at. In 1946 there was only a primary school there but now a days there are colleges, with main market next to big trade centre, Kupwara, amidst the Lolab and Trehgham valley on the right and left sides. The road from Trehgham leads to Kralpora - LOC and on the other side across is the famous Krishna Ganga river.

Shardha Pilgrimage : This shrine is situated in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Reportedly it is well preserved; even muslims used to swear by "Shaarda Maa". It is believed that in the reign of Chander Gupta Vikramaditya there was a famous Sanskrit learning centre here and a library of rare snaskrit manuscripts. As per belief on the auspicious day, of "Gouri Tritya", on the Saraswati puja day, there used to be a convocation at this learning centre when certificates were given to scholars coming from near and far off places. It was a centre of Sanskrit and Sharda learning, the latter script is still in vogue for Kashmiri Pandit Panchaks and Janam Patris.

Chandigam (Lolab) : There is a spring at this place which has great religious & historical significance. Sogam town is nearby and this place is famous for walnut orchards. There is a big temple "Ganesh Bal" in this town, with huge landed property - which was managed by Sudhar Samiti. There was an Ashram also where saints from different parts of our country used to live.

Brahma Spring : On the top of the hill of Hamal (now called Rafiabab), amidst this forest, this venerated spring is situated. Nearby there is the sikh village, Sialkote; sikhs also used to visit this spring and worship it. There is a historical belief that this was an important Hindu religious place but now no Hindus live here.

Sadhumalan - Kandi village :

Kandi village is famous for its pilgrimage known as *Sadamalan*. All those who wanted to visit Shardaji and other Tiraths on this side had to assemble here for the board and lodging provided throughout the year. This shrine had huge cultivable land attached to it. It is a beautiful place for the meditation of Sadhus. Many well educated Hindu families lived here. But on 20.3.90 deceased Autar Kishan, engineer by profession, was killed by militants in his office as Dy. Director Food and Supplies, Srinagar. He was the son of a teacher. He belonged to this village and was its pride. Hindus immediately migrated after this tragedy for their safety and respect and are still in exile.

Badarkali Pilgrimage near Wadipora -

It is situated on Handawara - Wadipora Road only a few miles away from Wadipora. People used to assemble here for annual "Mela" on Ram Navami day. There is a legend that mother Kali came from Kolkata to chase the demons and killed all demons at Handwara known as Handawara now. There is a higher secondary school here. This temple has a wealth of orchards and cultivable land. Nalla Mawar flows here. Langate, Batagondu, Nagam etc. are near by.

Tikkar-Kheer Bhawani Spring : Earlier there was only a badly maintained wooden structure here in the midst of the jungle. But, now there is a marble *Murti* in the middle of the spring and its "*Parikrama*". There is a covered Puja hall, a *dharamsala* with a cold water well. Stream water is not available. On the adjacent hill there is a "*Tri-murti*", in marble, representing Swami Lal ji, Swami Nand Lal ji and Kral-Bab in an Ashram. Walnut trees are in abundance. There used to be a provision of free board and lodging for Sadhus, night and day, in the spacious Dharamsala. Jeth Ashtami was observed every year, with annual Havan, very auspiciously and remarkably. This *asthapan* is situated on Kupwara-Kralpora Road, leading to the famous shrine, shaardhaji, now in POK.

Anantnag Area

Martand (Sun Temple) :

Mattan is 5 miles away from Anant Nagn. A huge cave on the general road, on the right side, is also seen which is famous for its historical background, as per scriptures and of great archaeological interest. This village, where it is situated, is called Bamzahoom. It is said that it is a very long cave of unlimited destination. The Hindus perform Shraddha to deceased on the "Chaka" rivulet near the famous Mattan spring. On its South at a distance of 2^{1/2} miles, the famous ruins of structures are visible which depict the old Hindu culture and architecture. Lalitaditya king had constructed these temples. Similar ruins are seen at Awantipora. Among the famous temples of Kashmir, many are situated in Anantnag district. The vivid picturesque scenery of Nagbal is remarkable, having a fresh water spring with a Shiva temple amidst it and some "Dharmasalas" around. In the evening the Kashmiri Pandit women folk, girls & boys used to visit this place and offer Aarti. Muslims offered "Namaz" at adjacent *Reshmol Sahib*. No one, even muslims not, take meat, beef, chicken etc. here even now.

There are some well-known pilgrimages in this district. Brief description is given here for appraising the future generations. Important ones are as follows :

Veth Vatur - The birth of Vitasta, known as Veth. Annual fair is held on its birthday on thirteenth day of Lunar Bhadoon.

Kapal Mochan - The annual fair is held on Shravan solar twelfth day near SHOPIAN. Sharda of deceased new born babies was held there, to give peace to their precious souls.

Manzgam - It is situated near the jungles, in between Shapian and Kolgam. It had for locals the importance as that of Kheer Bhawani of Tullamula or Tikkar.

Jhajwor - Situated near Bijbehara with an ancient Shiv mandir; an annual fair is held on Shravan Purnima day.

Lok Bhavan - Eight miles from Anantnag. Annual Maha yagna is held here every year.

Gotam Nag - Three miles away from Anantnag. So many yogis meditated here to achieve mukhti. Swami Gasha Kak the famous saint of Kashmir had established his Ashram here. Pilgrims going to Amarnath used to halt here.

Uma Nagari - Swami Swayam Anand Ji made this Nagri a paradise on earth. As it is said that Devi Uma had appeared in person in a dream to him. All devotees donated for its development. A big "dharamsala" was constructed but now it is regretted that migration of Kashmiri Pandits has affected all these temples in Kashmir, some have been uprooted. May Maji Devi restore all 350 temples and a new leaf may turn in the history of this community.

Nag Dandi - Nag Dandi annual Havan is well celebrated. It is about 3 miles from Anant Nagn and 2 kms from Achhabal Mughal garden.

Jawala Devi (Khrew) - 13 miles away from Srinagar in the land of *Kessar* near Pampore, it is situated on a hill where about 108 stairs are to be climbed to reach the top. There is a "Sandoor" covered Shrine of Jawala Devi with a big bell (Ganthi). Annual fair is held on Ashad solar fourteenth.

Amar Nath goffa - Situated beyond Pahalgam, is the famous cave of international importance. Every year lakhs of pilgrims have its *darshan* on the auspicious day of Shravan Purnimas (full moon). The yatra starts from "*Sant Akada*", near Amira Kadal chowk and thousands of yatris participate some have pigeons on their heads and some have flags. People travel by bus upto Pahalgam. Then the journey is on foot or by "palkis", horses, ponies which are available. Inside the cave is a Shivlingam.

Chandan Vari - Sheshnag (lake), Vavjan Panchtarni, are "dhams", on pilgrimage to Amarnath where every sort of facility of lodging, boarding, medical aid, police security etc. is provided by Govt. authority and private Trustees.

The details of the pilgrim centres in **Srinagar and around**, as mentioned in the beginning of this article, are described in length separately in this publication.

As a teacher, I have served various corners of the valley of Kashmir and have seen all the shrines of this "Adode of Rishis" with great interest. Now at the fag end of my life, in exile, I am very fondly remembering these shrines. I record these, to the best of my knowledge and references to relevant literature, under utterly sad conditions, for our progeny who will, I pray, preserve these shrines in our beloved homeland, Kashmir.

The author is a renowned educationist and teacher having travelled extenswely in the valley.

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Pilgrim Centres/Asthapans - Potential Source of the Community
Prof. C. L. Sadhu, New Delhi

Pilgrim Centres/Asthapans/Devasthans, Temples and all places of worship are our viable, resurgent centres of religio-cultural heritage and potential source of the Kashmiri Pandit Hindu Community in the valley. Immediately after 1947, large number of Asthapans/Temples, with which were attached both cultivable and non-cultivable land and other immovable property, were largely under the control of J&K Dharmarth Trust. Swami Amarnath Shrine, Shiva Temple at Pahalgam. Ma Ragniya Bhawani Asthapan/Shrine at Tulle Mulla, Shamkarcharya Temple, Rugh Nath Mandir on the bank of river Vitasta (Jhelum) are the notable ones under its control along with host of other Asthapans/Temples with huge offerings (*chadawa*) all the year round besides already those in the Jammu Division.

Some few Asthapans/Temples were left to be taken care of by Suddhar Samiti Trust, purely a social organisation formed and started long back by late Shri Gopi Kishenji a renowned proponent of Kundlani Yoga Philosophy, with its full-fledged office, a destitute home, with a large ground & land housed in Shivalaya Temple, Chotta Bazaar Srinagar. Large chunk of construction land attached to the temple at Sulena (Rambagh), Cultivable land both at Nishat/Ishabar and also attached to the cremation ground Chinar Bagh (Safakadal) under its control was reported as disposed off before our migration/displacement from the valley. Purchase of a plot of land and construction of 2 rooms and a hall on it at Jammu is reported to have been undertaken by the acting President/Chairman of the Samiti Justice J.N. Bhat soon after our displacement from the valley.

With the take over of the Ramakrishna Ashrama Udhowalla, Bordhi Jammu set up of long by late Nirvan Shakti Chatanya Maharaj, by Ramakrishna Math, Belur Kolkata last year, the Ramakrishna Ashrama at Shivalaya Temple Srinagar within the premises of Suddhar Samiti Building Office Complex, constructed long back with the sole initiative of Prof. B. K. Kaul whole time devotee, is now consented to be the sub-centre of the Udhowalla Ashrama, Jammu. With honest, sincere and relentless persuasion and negotiation he has been able to acquire the surplus available land of the Samiti at a cost of Rupees 5 lacs paid to the acting President/Chairman of the Samiti at Jammu.

Whereas the Samiti has added to its revenue, it is appreciable that the entire area of Shivalaya Temple complex stands now the sub-centre of R. K. Ashrama, Udhowalla, Jammu. It is suggested construction of guest-house, 3-4 rooms and a dormitory at a suitable site within the complex shall be a great relief to the bonafide devotees and for monks of Ramkrishna order and Pilgrims visiting Amarnath Shrine. Donation to undertake this work can be a supplement to the appeal already made by the secretary R.K. Ashrama Swami Girijeshananda (Vijay Maharaj) at Udhowalla Jammu.

Durga Nag Mandir at Sonwar at the foot of Shankarcharya hill with large premises, buildings and land attached to it from either side of the road is separately governed by a Trust-Durga Nag Trust which at later stage was taken care of by late Shri S. K. Kaul of Prakash seed farm, MAM Road, Srinagar. The trust owns a large chunk of saleable orchard land around Swami Ram Kaul Mandir at the foot of Hari Parbhat under its control. A suit for injunction including the freeze of funds and operation thereof was filed by the activists of Devasthan Sukhrasha Samiti a decade and a half back in the valley before our migration, restraining the trust in negotiating the sale of portion of land even on lease basis within the complex which by now it transpires is vacated. Shri P. N. Taku being a member of the Trust, now Mumbai based, was nominated as its new President last year. It is reported two Yagnas have been conducted after a break of nearly a decade together with some developmental work by way of cleaning of the spring and some renovation and face-lifting of the precincts since last year. It is reported the Trust has laid down foundation stone for the construction of Yatri Bhawan in October 2001 which is perfectly in consonance with the aspirations of the displaced community members because of its central location and suitability.

Durga Nag Mandir with its number of buildings and a holy spring within its large premises has remained a prestigious place of K.P's and as such its K. P. entity should by all means be ensured to remain intact.

In July issue of the editorial in Sundervani an organ of Kashmiri Sahayak Sabha Chandigarh 'Call of the Valley' by Shri S. K. Kachroo, the most adventurous albeit risky tour undertaken by Sqn. Ldr. B. L. Sadhu (Retd.), Ex-President K. P. Sabha., Ludhiana, AIKS Steering Committee member at present based in Mohali, intensively involved with K. S. S. Chandigarh, who visited almost all the important Asthapan/Temples of District Srinagar in the valley, has described a desperate and dismal picture of their maintenance particularly of Ganpatyar, Zeethyar, Hari Parbhat, Shankaracharya Temple and Ma Ragniya Bhawani Asthapan Tulla Mulla. These have all become the shelter and refuges of the security forces and are safe and secure no doubt but no developmental work of any kind has ever taken at Shankaracharya or at Ma Ragniya Bhawani at Tulla-Mulla since 1990, when large number of devotees have been visiting these shrines for the last half a decade, despite the huge collection of offerings (Chadawa) by the Dharmarth Trust. It is reported that some K. P. Hindu Volunteers from A. G. Office and Civil Secretariat have formed Hindu Devotee Sanastha under Shri R. L. Bhan statistical Officer Education Department Civil Secretariat who have recovered to the tune of Rupees 20 lakhs from the Trustees through a court case part of which is presently expended for the overall development and renovation of the shrine(s), the priority accorded to the construction of big Dharamshalla and Havan Shall at Tulla Mulla, since the existing old Dharamshallas are reported to be under the occupation of the security forces. This is to cope with the rush of pilgrims on Zesht/Ashard Asthami which has touched nearly 20,000 this year.

Recently the legislative Assembly has passed the legislation allowing of a Shrine Board for Holy Amarnath on the lines of Mata Vaishnav Debi Board which it is reported has been constituted without any K. P. representation. Holy Amarnath Shrine, the holiest shrine of Kashmiri Hindus was looked after by Maharajas during Dorga rule, later remained under the control of Dharmarth Trust governed by their descendents and presently the sole trustee is Dr. Karan Singh. At one time the shrine was under the control of local K.P's of Martand and Pahalgam. Many Kashmiri pandits working in Dharmarth Trust in the valley were actively taking care of the shrine till migration. Kashmiri Pandits have to represent strongly for a proper representation in the Shrine Board. An intensive co-ordination is required between AIKS and its affiliates Kashmiri Samiti Delhi, K. P. Sabha, ASKPC and AIKPC at Jammu along with Math-Mandir protection committee (VHP) and other religious bodies at Jammu pleading strongly the concern of the community for adequate and genuine K.P's representation to the Governor and CM as well as the BJP leadership at the centre.

Construction of Yatri Bhawan at Pahalgam and also additional huts providing the maximum ancilliary services to the yatris at Chandanwari, Sheshnag, Panch-Tarni and near the holy cave including coopter and other innovative services to the yatris may be urgently attended by Shrine Board besides the usual developmental work enroute.

In September last year, however an 11 member Mandir Prabhandak Board has been constituted by the state Government under the convenorship of Prof. Satish Raina Advisor Minority affairs for the Management and Administration of all K. P. Hindu Shrines/Asthapan/temples in all the Districts of the valley in response to our long demand after our migration/displacement. Other members of the committee are Sarva Shri. T. N. Khosa, A. N. Vaishnavi, Lala Dharam Vir Batra, P. N. Taku, A. K. Deewani, Prof. T. N. Ganjoo, Dr. Surrinder Dhar, Prof. Neerja Mattoo besides I. G. P. and Divisional Commissioner Kashmir. It is reported the Board has deliberated in a sitting convened in October/November at Srinagar/Jammu. An amount of Rupees 1 crore has been earmarked for the overall repairs and maintenance of all places of worship.

Large number of Asthapan/Temple Trustees/Committee members who had sizeable cash balances before our migration/displacement from the valley and regularly accruing recurring

revenue incomes, by way of rent proceeds owing to either occupation of rooms/premises by the security forces or Banks or Government/Private offices or small scale industrial units or employees in the urban as well as in mufasil areas, are mostly in hibernation and stand unaccountable during all these years of our exodus. Somyar temple committee/Ganpatyar/Durge Shewri/Kathli Shewer/Bhairav Mangleshewer/ Shiva Temple Rainawari/Chakreshewer/Pukhribal/Zeethyar/Baba Dharam Dass/Shiv Temple Gaunkhan Vicharnag and host of other Asthapan/Temple Trusts/Committees are the notable instances who need now to account their transparency and stand committed to make the first hand appraisals to the community concerning their developmental activities including their updated assets both in Cash and kind.

The Mandir Prabhandhak Board is urged to assume central status and to acquire central powers delegated to it by Legislation/Mandir Prabhandhak Board Act for the Management/Administration of all the pilgrim centres/Asthapans/Temples and other charitable trusts by forming a suitable constitution outlining the appropriate rules and regulations for the genuine K. P. Hindu representations time-frame in the Board, assuming a legal status to monitor, scrutinize and verify/check the income expenditure including the Physical verification of the movable-immovable property of the Asthapan Trusts and Mandir committees. Some important cues can be noted with reference to S.G.P Board in respect of 'Sikh Gurdwaras' and also 'Religious/Charitable Endowment Act.'

There are some more important Trusts/Committees and MATHS located mostly in District Srinagar and some few in District Anantnag and Baramulla as Sanatan Dharam Punjabi Sabha Trust, Lal Chowk. Within its ambit falls the control of old large Marghat Bhoomi (Cremation Ground) Karan Nagar, Srinagar/Dashnami Akhara Math (Badshah Chowk), Shrichand Chinar Math (Residency Road), Narayan Math (Rambagh), Baba Dharam Dass Math (Upper Sathu), Nirvan 108 Ishwaranandji Giri's Math (Inside Abi-Guzar) and Parabhandak Committee Nagbal Anantnag and few others. Though there have been some complaints reported as an adverse tendency on the part of some Trsutrees and Mahants of Some MATHS in some cases being held unauthorisedly by wrong persons negotiating the sale of land/portion of land within their enclosed premises illegally and surreptitiously which urgently needs to be stopped by an ordinance through the Mandir Prabhandak Board by forming suitable constitution/laws including invoking of the relevant provisions of the Migrants Protection of Property and Maintenance Act and Distress Sales Act 1993; recommending to the state government, nevertheless the cultivable/non cultivable/orchard land within the control of these Trustees/Mahants located in remote areas of the valley which otherwise is not being looked after owing to insecurity, under the present dispensation there need be no reservation in disposing such remote assets at the prevailing market rates and under no circumstances under distress sale.

Mandir Prabandak Board is urgently needed to survey, identify and have access to the records of the Asthapan/Temples/MATHS and other Kashmiri Hindu Charitable trusts in all the Districts of the valley and locate the Managers/Management of the concerned Trusts/Committies/Maths, some of whom are reported to be in hiberation for long. This exercise has to be attempted by the concerned Deputy Commissioners through their revenue officers at Tehsil/Block levels to be assisted by the concerned social activists living mostly as campers/non-campers at Jammu/Delhi. All records of assets both in cash and kind, cultivable, non-cultivable and orchard lands including moveable/immovable properties, under the control of these Asthapan/Temple, Trusts/Committees/Maths/Charitable Trusts needs to be consolidated and a detailed inventory prepared. The immediate priority shall be to remove and vacate the encroachments wherever made with the help of Police/Revenue Departments. Steps need to be initiated to fix and execute the rent deeds with the concerned authorities and recover the rent retrospectively wherever the security forces or other agencies have occupied the premises. The Board need to disseminate periodically the complete information in respect of the inventory prepared from time to time together with the statements of Income/Expenditure of all Pilgrims Centres/Asthapans/Temples and Maths including the description of repairs/developmental works, framing of constitution,

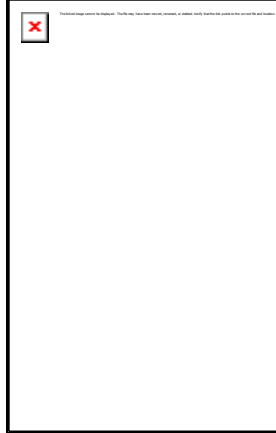
scheme of Management and Administration of all the places of Worship/Pilgrim Centres/Trusts through Bulletins, News letters/brouchures for the general appraisal of the displaced community.

The author has worked for long as Senior research officer/Teacher Educator in the state Institute & College of Education, Srinagar and has been an executive member, long associate of ASKPC Srinagar & K. P. Sabha Jammu. A committed founder member of AIKS Trust.

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Remembering Sahastri Mukhi Lingam of Shilagram

D. K. Babu, Jammu



5th of March 1998 will be remembered as a mournful day of exiled Kashmiri Hindus in general and in particular for Hindus of Shilagram now popularly called '**Shiligram**' a hamlet within the Tehsil Phalagam, district Anantnag Kashmir. **A rarest of rare Maha-Sahastri Mukhi Thousand eyed holy Shiv lingam** was on this day destroyed in a bomb blast not reported by the Govt. nor prominently covered by the media. The self claimed "**only Muslim Faithfuls of Allah**", iconoclasts, moving freely in Kashmir to complete the unfinished agenda of Sikander-Butshikan, a muslim zealot of historical gory, then claimed the responsibility for this massacre. Historically "Maha-Sahastri Mukhi" Holy Lingum then escaped his cruel hands. It is said that many pious Kashmiri Pandits on their run to escape the death and mayhem let loose by this marauder in the 14th century, took shelter for some time in "Sahastri Mukhi" temple, prayed there and then left for Amarnath cave for penance to stop death and destruction of Hindus in Kashmir.

"Shilagram" or Shiligam was a quiet cosmic celestial sphere upon earth in description, a God's ultimate choice on the foot of Swami Amarnath Ji surrounded by snow decked mountains and a stream bringing nectar like waters from "Amravati" washing its hems. It was the abode of magnificent Holy "Sahastri Mukhi" Shiv Lingam with thousand eyes spread on its body-one of the rarest "Lingas" in India-with immense celestial glammers and charms, captivating the inner souls of worshippers coming from far corners of India, immediately transmitting essences of spiritual blissful rhymes to them. Because of this spiritual and religious importance, there is a mention of Lingam in a book on Raj Tarangani Volume-I, edition 1st, pages 177-178 by Thakur Ashar Singh where it is stated that the holy "Lingam" was installed thousands of years back. It was because of its immense value for being the rarest that the Govt. of J&K declared it as Antique piece under Antiquities and Art Treasuries Rule 1973 under Govt. Order No. ROA/119-KN/168/81 dated 3.8.1981 - Registered No. JKA-727.

This majestic graceful and soul soothing "Lingam" of Mahadeva gave this calm village on the main road leading to Swami Amarnath Ji its name as "Shilagram" later called Siligam and was one of the important Dhams (halting place) for Swami Amar Nath Ji yatrees from time immemorial. It was after having Darshan and prayers at this temple that the yatrees would march towards the abode of Mahadeva where Lord Shiva manifests in the form of ice "Lingam" in the cave, known as Shree Swami Amar Nath Ji. It was only after 1947 with the coming of so called secular popular Govt. at J&K state that due to the apathy of administrators that many customary events connected with the Hindu Holy pilgrimages, were allowed to lapse. The temple in which Lingam was installed was on 7 marlas of land containing revenue Khasra No. 347/6 and has attached to it a big piece of land margined by old Chinar and Popular trees having revenue record nos. 349/1-6, 350/2-16, 357/0-5 and 351/0-7. It was in the year 1983 that Muslim Fundamentalists started raising their heads in open to have Corner meetings in the villages to canvas and convert muslims to fundamentalism and infuse in their tempers the bigotry against

Hindus and their religion and temples. Muslim Mullas started giving Futwas and administrators at the helm of administration started giving legal shape to change the names of villages having ancient Vedic names. In this charged scenario against Hindus, a conspiracy was hatched to grab the holy Hindu shrine along with land to convert it to a **Muslim Mosque with a dubious machinations through the channels of J&K Wakf Act 1978**. In a hush and dubious manoeuvrings, the temple and its land and large portions of public land was first marked as Wakf land and then its transfer and take over was approved in the cabinet and *SRO-702 dated 31-12-1984 got issued. The Wakf Judge in a follow up action issued notices to microscopic Hindu minority of village under the title of Chairman tehsil Aukaf Kashmir, Phalagam through Abdul Kabir Bhat V/S Bushan Lal s/o Sh. Gopi Nath R/o Siligam and others dated 4th July 1985 to vacate the land and temple to be handed over to Wakf. This struck terror in the microscopic Hindus of Siligam who then felt insecure to live in the village. The news spread far and wide amongst Hindus of Kashmir and a delegation with the woeful tale met the State Governor Sh. Jagmohan and a copy of memorandum was handed over to him. But the things had gone far beyond his power and as per the discriminative provisions enshrined in the Wakf Act no appeal against this transfer could lie in any court of law. The ramifications and designs of the enactment of the Wakf Act 1978, came to surface. It was found that under the cover of this Act large portions of public land throughout J&K was doled to Wakf Muslim boards, to raise huge immovable assets to guarantee regular incomes and with this Hindu community properties began to be usurped. With the active cooperation of Kashmir "Devasthan Surakhsha Samiti" under the leadership of Late Sh. Amarnath Ji Ganjoo and his dedicated team, the Hindus of Siligam, where in I was one of the petitioners, moved the Court of Law and a writ-petition was filed by the learned Advocate, Late Sh. K. N. Raina against the constitutional validity of Wakf Act 1978 and the execution of transfer of sacred temple was got stopped by the order of Division bench of the Hon'ble High Court, comprising of Justice Sh. M. L. Bhat & Justice Sh. S. M. Rizvi vide no. 378 of 22.8.1985. Thus then a well conceived design to convert an ancient Holy temple was foiled, but under-currents in the Muslim fundamentalist movements were on increase and the sudden upsurge to annihilate everything which is Hindu and Indian came to open with guns and grenades in their hands. The temple and the historic shrines in Anantnag were raised to ground and some Hindu houses in the selected areas were burnt. The trumpet call from the Minarets of mosques became louder, for Kashmiri Hindus to leave Kashmir. Devasthan Surakhsha Samiti conveyed the forecasts of coming events to Central and State Govt. saying "with such growing and repeated incidents and consequent intimidation the Kashmiri Hindus have lost their attraction to live in the Valley, and there is a genuine and widespread feeling among them that all these activities of the antisocial elements are a bigger conspiracy to force the minority community of the Valley to resort to mass exodus, thereby facilitating, their ugly dream-come true". Later on we again said "that a blueprint to subject Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley to economic strangulation, political subjugation and cultural annihilation is reaching to its culmination and final kick to oust the Hindu community from their land of birth is in the offing". And finally this came true in the year 1989-90 when Kashmiri Hindu community were sent on forced exile leaving all its heritages, religious, cultural and personal, alongwith properties. The State Govt. was again same apathetic, unconcerned and callous towards Kashmiri Hindus and their left over sacred shrines like one of the rarest of rare "Sahastri Mukhi thousand eyed Lingam" at Siligam. Govt. had no mind to guard it and watch the elements who were out in 1984 to grab it. A tear is not shed on the hundreds of temples, Hindu shrines and its properties/lands in Kashmir grabbed and destroyed; latest is the Holy Lingam at Siligam, striking a shock of gloom and mourning in the hearts of lakhs of Hindus in exilement. And outside J&K State, the Indian mind is set in delusion of mirage in Kashmir. Our Rashtrapita Mahatma Gandhi in 1947 saw a Ray of Light of secularism in Kashmir. But alas! the light now seen is that of the simmering embers from the burning bodies of Hindus and Sikhs who were brutally killed by the Muslim fundamentalist zealots let loose in Kashmir, to complete the unfinished agenda of Sikandar Butshikan. Destruction of Shilagram Lingam is one of such massacres, carried out in recent time, on which the ray of justice and Human Rights should penetrate.

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Temples & Shrines of District Anantnag with Some Historical Facts **H. L. Jad, New Delhi**

1. Anantnag

The town, Anantnag finds its place in Geetaji, that out of springs, "I am Ananta Naga". It has beneath one spring, called Inder Spring. It has two Sulphur springs. That there are about 7 temples in Anantnag (Anantnag Bhawan Complex). Two Shiva Temples, one Radha Krishen Mandir, one Durga Temple, one Ganesh Temple, Sita Ram Temple, Hanuman Temple, four Dharmshallas and one school building. Outside the complex in the town we have three temples - Ancient temples - Devibal, Shiva Temple at Nai Basti, and third at Hara Mohalla. All three temples outside complex were burnt and damaged during riots in February, 1986. All three temples outside complex were badly damaged and rebuilt with assistance of then Governor of J&K Shri Jag Mohan. Now both the Shivala temples outside complex are reported to have been damaged and partially burnt.

2. Martand Tirth (Mattan)

This holy place is just 4 kilometers from town Anantnag. It has chain of springs. It is Surya Tirath. People from all over country come to have dip in holy waters during *Mala Mas*, *Bana Mas*. That in whole of valley we have Surya Temple. The Mattan Nag is one of holiest springs. It has a share from Amar Nath ji offerings. About 2 Kilometers above in village Karawah we have Martand ruins (*Pandav Larries*) which was destroyed by some Muslim Emperor.

3. Vijawahara (Brijbahara)

This holy town is situated about 6 Kilometers from Anantnag town on Srinagar, Anantnag National Highway. It is an ancient town and annual calendar of Hindus would get published by Vijeshour Jantari Karyalia from this place. We have ancient temple on road side which is still under Dharmarth Trust and was damaged in riots of 1986 including Jaya Devi Temple on hill and Shiva Temple in heart of town. For now all temples have been desecrated and damaged. About 2 Kilometers away we have Thajiwara (Chotta Amar Nath) temple. This temple too has been damaged.

4. Gautam Nag

Gautam Nag is just 2 Kilometers away from Anantnag. It is said that Gautam Rishi had his penance here. It was controlled and looked after by Saint Mana Kak Goja and later on Swami Gwasha Kak Ji and in mid seventies by Swami Sarvanand Ji. It has landed property, orchard on hundreds of Kanals, one Dharma Shalla, a spring and one two storied Mandir which was burnt in February, 1986, rebuilt and now Dharm Shalla is reported to have been burnt. F.I.R. lodged in Police Station Anantnag.

Uma Nagari (Bari Aghan)

This Asthapan is situated about 18 Kilometers from Anantnag. It has about 184 Kanals of land irrigated. One orchard about 20 Kanals and about 1000 acres of forest land reserved by Pathan Ruler for Dhooni Baba. It had a beautiful spring Uma Spring constructed by Swami Anandji Maharaj. It was first looked after by Bawa Shiva Nandji Maharaj who had two lions on each side. Later his disciple Bawa Krishanand ji took charge. After his death Bawa Satyanand was in charge as Mahant. He also died in year 2000 at Jammu. It had 3 Dharmshallas which were reduced to ashes after December, 1992. The Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir vide Relief Order No. 237 of 1993 dated 08.12.1993 put conservative estimate of damage to 5 buildings at Rs.15,72,700/-. The pity

is, said Uma Nagari has been renamed as Sheikh Pura in revenue and Govt. records. The Dharmshallas were burnt in presence of Police guarding it.

Goswami Gund Ashram

This beautiful Ashram is situated just 12 kilometers from town Anantnag. It has land measuring about 200 Kanals (irrigated by tenants) and has self cultivable 18 Kanals as Orchard. It has beautiful lotus spring. It had one hall two three storied Dharam Shallas, one Shiva Temple, one Kitchen and modern bath and toilet.

It was founded by Swami Tota Kak who was called even by Muslims as "*Tota Kuda*". Later on he brought one person from Kulgam who was later on named as Swami Atma Ram Ji. Though Swami Atma Ram Ji, at the time when he joined Ashram, was a student of middle class, he became a classic example of a learned person. He was called ocean of learning. Even Yogi's would come from Banaras to have Shastra Arth and go satisfied. He had written so many books though unpublished but burnt to ashes now. Swami Atma Ramji had two disciples, Swami Sarvanand Ji and Swami Nath Ji. They had two disciples Brahamchari Prem Nath and Brahmchari Prithvi Nath Ji. Both of them are living at Bori, Jammu after displacement. The Ashram was known for *Sada Barth*; one could get meal all times. When morning meals was to be served a call "Hari Hari Maha Purshoo" would be recited meaning if there is any person around, please join us in meals. Till the day they left, the meals were served on ground after recitation of Geetaji. Both Dharmshallas were burnt, temple damaged, Murties stolen or taken away. They had purchased about one kanal of land and constructed 2 rooms; built one temple and two modern baths. They wanted to construct a hall. A Mandli is performed on each Sunday for night. The Ashram was burnt while police was present guarding the same.

4. Vethwatroo (Vetastha)

It is situated one kilo meter from Verinag, Anantnag. It is source of river Vitasta (Jhelum). It has about 23 Kanals in shape of orchards. It was maintained later on by Late Swami Ram Dass. It had two Dharmshallas, three storied. That said Dharamshallas were burnt after december, 1992. It has about 80 Kanals of irrigated land attached to it. Moni Baba would look after the Ashram after Late Ram Dass.

Verinag

It has a beautiful ancient temple in main Moghul Garden and one temple of Shiva on main Parakarima of Nila Nag (main hectagan) spring. That both temples have been damaged in February, 1986 and latter in 1992.

Lok Bhawan

This is called Tirth Raj Asthapan just 8 kilometers from Anantnag town. It has a big spring and temples and Dharmshalla. All temples were burnt, including Dharmshalla in February, 1986. They were rebuilt but again damaged in December, 1992 'Har Bagh' is celebrated on each year and person gets rid of all sins, if he takes a bath in spring on auspicious day.

Mirza Kak Asthapan

Mirza Kak Asthapan at Hangalgund, Kokernag, Anantnag. He was known for prophetic verses and a JAG is performed every year; now Mirza Kak Trust has been formed. They have constructed a temple at Nagrota, Jammu.

Durga Temple at Kakran

It was completely burnt after 1992 riots and was maintained by Dharmarth Trust.

Shiva Bhagwati At Akingam

This small village is still called in revenue records as "Maqan Shiva Bhagwati". It had a beautiful temple, with two storey, Dharmshalla and large chunk of forest land attached to it. This temple was burnt along with Dharmshalla in December, 1992 and confirmed by Govt. and F.I.R. No. 86/92 lodged.

Kulwagishiri Asthapan Kulgam

This ancient Asthapan is situated in heart of town Kulgam about 16 Kilometers from Anantnag town. The Asthapan had beautiful spring, one temple, Dharmshalla and Geeta Bhawan. All have been burnt during December, 1992 riots in presence of Police.

Triporsundari Asthapan at Khana Barnayan Devsar, Anantnag

This Devi Asthapan of Khana Barnayan is situated about 18 kilometers from Anantnag, about 2 kilometers from Devsar town. It had a *murti* of Tripore Sundari, a temple, a Dharmshalla and Havan Kund constructed by Swami Ram Das. All of these were reduced to ashes after December, 1992.

Liddar Syandhai Asthapan

This Asthapan is situated about 24 kilometers from Anantnag on hill top near Kaprun. The place is desecrated and is under occupation of Muslim community.

Trisandhia Asthapan

It is situated about 23 kilometers from Anantnag and 3 kilometers from Kokernag. During Chitra month water used to come after intervals and pilgrims used to take dip when water would come out. Sometimes water would come six times a day sometimes nothing for two days. It is now desecrated.

Gauri Temple at Pahalgam

This temple, which was completely burnt during December 1992, Asthapan at Maugam, A Devi Temple and Dharmshalla were completely burnt. There are more ancient Asthapans and temples but to narrate them all is not possible.

Shillagram Temple

This temple is situated at Shillagram on Anantnag Pahalgam Road, about 13 Kilometers from Anantnag. It was ancient temple and Amar Nath Charre Mubarak used to offer Puja on Shivlingam (Sahastri Mukhi Shiva). This temple was destroyed in 1998 and Shivlingam is still missing. It had thousand eyes.

Karkotnag Shrine

It is on hill top near village Salia, a Dharmshalla was burnt there. It is sacred shrine of Hindus.

Domtabal Asthapan

It is just 2 Kilometers from Kokernag and 16 Kilometers away from Anantnag. Ancient *murties* have been stolen which are priceless.

Guddar Asthapan

This Asthapan is just 3 Kilometers from Tom Kulgam. This is now in ruins and desecrated.

The temples which were burnt during riote of 1986 and 1992 are annexed herewith.

Temples Vandalised in Kashmir after December 6, 1992

Source : - Local eyewitnesses of concerned places

S.No. Name of Temple Location Remarks

Village/Town

1. Vamu Mandir Verinag Ancient idol publicly desecrated and then removed.
2. Temple on the spring Verinag Burnt.
3. Vetasta Mandir (Vetha-Vetur) Verinag Burnt. Temple as ancient as River Jehlum.
- 2 Dharam Shallas (3 storeyed)
4. Buna Gund Mandir Verinag Burnt.
5. Two Dharamshallas Tehsil Kulgam Known as Khir Bhawani Mandir. Burnt after at Manzgam Mandir removing whole moveable property.
6. Uma Nagri Mandir Brari Aangan See Swami Saymanand's letter.
7. Kantiyani Mandir Kakran Under Dharmarh Trust; blasted and damaged.
8. Mirhama Mandir Kulgam Burnt.
9. Two Shrines Chowalgam Burnt.
10. Kulwagishori Mandir Kulgam Idols desecrated, Dharamshalla burnt.
11. Devsar Mandir Kulgam Burnt.
12. Ancient temple Tripor Sondri Devsar Kulgam Burnt along with Dharamshallas
13. Luka Bhawan Larkipora Three temples and Dharamshallas burnt.
14. Botsar Mandir and Ashram Uttarsoo As per police control room written report, the temple, 8 houses, 2 cow sheds, 2 kothars of Hindus were set on fire.

15. Pahalgam Mandir Pahalgam Temple got gutted partially.
16. Shiva Mandir Sheer Gunj As per police written report the temple, 6 residential houses, 4 cow sheds, were set on fire on 8.12.1992.
17. Ashmuji Mandir Kulgam Burnt along Dharamshalla.
18. One Mandir Chatargul As per police temple was set on fire.
19. Areh Mandir Kulgam Burnt.
20. One Mandir Harad Chanan Police records confirm that militants attempted to set the temple on fire on 11-12/12/92 but was partially damaged.
21. One temple Palhalan (Pattan) During the 9/10 Dec. 1992 militants this.
22. One temple Karihama Burnt.
23. One temple Kleri Burnt.
24. Shiv Vishnov Mandir Baramulla Burnt. Shilputri temple damaged in 1990.
25. Nandkishwar Bairav Nath Sumbal Mandir Police control room reveals it was set on fire on 8-12-1992 but only minor damage took place.
26. Narayan Dass Mandir Tangmarg Burnt.
27. Narayan Bagh Shadipora Police report confirms fire by throwing Shadipora Mandir & Pathshalla grenades.
28. Kunzer Mandir Kunzer Burnt.
29. Karihama Mandir Karihama Burnt.
30. One temple Nowgam Burnt.
31. Bata Gund Mandir Handwara Burnt.

S.No. Name of Temple Location Remarks

Village/Town

32. Chogal Mandir Handwara Burnt.
33. One temple & shed Karan Nagar According to police control room, both gutted.
34. Magarmal Bagh Mandir Srinagar Burnt; in the vicinity of police lines. Srinagar.
35. Karfali Mohalla Mandir Srinagar Damaged.
36. Bairav Nath Mandir Karan Nagar Burnt by mob in broad day light. Nursing Garh

37. One temple Bana Mohalla Burnt by applying fire to varandah adjacent to the temple.

38. Sri Sanatan Dharam Sabha Srinagar As per Radio Kashmir. Kashmir Times, Daily. Buildings Amira Kadal Excelsior and eyewitness message the buildings were set on fire.

Note : Sl No. 1 _ 19 under Anantanag, 20 _ 28 Baramulla, 29 _ 30 Budgam, 31 _ 32 Kupwara and 33 _ 38 Srinagar District

Incidently the eyewitnesses evidence colaborates with the State Police report in many cases.

Temples Vandalised in Feb. 1986

Anantnag District

1. **Anantnag Town** : Two temples damaged and one looted.
2. **Achhabal** : One temple desecrated, idols rubbished.
3. **Moripura** : One temple burnt completely.
4. **Sagam** : One temple demolished.
5. **Naogam** : One temple partially burnt.
6. **Teelvani** : One temple partially burnt.
7. **Gautamnag** : One two-storeed temple burnt and Dharamshala damaged.
8. **Krangsoo** : Pujari Baba of a temple beaten.
9. **Akura (Mattan)** : One temple and its entire property looted, and shed set on fire.
10. **Dialgam** : One temple heavily damaged by stoning.
11. **Salar** : One temple set on fire.
12. **Aishmuqam** : One temple set on fire.
13. **Bijbihara Town** : Two temples looted; ancient idols, desecrated. (Jai Devi Temple)
14. **Wanpoh (Gasipora)** : Two temples, and Samadhi of Swami Dama Kak, burnt.
15. **Dhanav (Bogund)** : Two temples and one Dharamshala burnt.
16. **Chogam** : One temple stoned; its doors, windows and three pillars broken.
17. **Verinag** : One temple near the holy spring damaged, doors broken, idols thrown into the spring. *Pawan Sandhya*, converted into a place for construction of mosque.

18. Larkipora : Three temples of Goddess Durga, Siddha Lakshimi and Shiva completely burnt, idols broken into pieces.

19. Fatehpura : One temple completely burnt alongwith its entrance gate. Ancient Shiva idol broken to pieces.

20. Quill (Pulwama) : One temple damaged partially.

21. Trisal : One temple stoned, compound wall of another temple damaged.

22. Pawan Sandhya converted into a Mosque.

Srinagar District

23. Ganpatar (Srinagar) : Temple heavily stoned.

24. Jawahar Nagar : Shiv Mandir damaged along property.

25. Maisuma : Dashnami Akhara, from where *Chhari Mubarak* leaves for Holy Amarnath Cave, burnt down.

26. Raghunath Mandir : Damaged by stoning.

27. Tullamulla : One temple in the village burnt.

28. Waskura : The famous temple of *Mata Rupa Bhawani* partially burnt.

29. Gandherbal : Two temples burnt and two temples damaged.

Badgam District

30. Yachhgam : One temple partially damaged.

31. Badgam Town : Sharda temple damaged.

32. Chadura : One temple damaged.

Kupwara District

33. Tekpora : One temple burnt.

34. Lalpura : One temple burnt.

35. Handwara : One temple damaged.

Baramulla District

36. Baramulla Town : One temple partially damaged.

37. Vankura : One temple fully damaged.

38. Sopore : One temple partially damaged.

39. Bandipora : One temple partially burnt.

total 55 (fifty-five)

Sources :

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The Martand, Srinagar

Countless eyewitnesses

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Reminiscences
Mohan Kishen Ogra, Kolkata

Hailing from Budhgher a predominantly Kashmiri Pandit locality in downtown Srinagar, in the vicinity of Alikadal (5th Bridge) Maharajgunj, I am nostalgically reminded of several shrines in and around our locality. Firstly, I am tempted to start with my mohalla Budhgher which is said to have been known as Bodhghar in earlier times. When Buddhism travelled to Kashmir, it is said that some Bodh monks stayed in this area and it was named Bodhghar and over the time changed to Budhgher retaining the first part "Bodh" or "Budh" to illustrate the legend behind it. Of course, I have not heard of nor ever seen any Buddhist monks living in this locality. What I distinctly remember is that before my teenage some Buddhist monks would regularly pass through this area on way to Maharajgunj, the then main wholesale business centre of Srinagar. We would very smilingly ask them "Botta Kanas Poh" (Oh : Botta, where are you from?) and he would instantly reply "Ladakhas poh" I am from Laddakh. Botta term perhaps is the localised Kashmiri term for a Bodh, a follower of Buddhism.

Let me now relate about the main shrines in and around this area. I must begin with **Rishi Peer** - "Peer Pandit Padshah Har Dujahan Mushkil Assaan". The title suggests "A great kindly learned Brahmin saint capable of giving solace and relief to the people in distress". This shrine is believed to be the birthplace of Rishi peer, one of the Kashmir's greatest saints of his times. Inside the shrine there is one piece of holy *Khadawoon* lying on a well decorated and enclosed wooden bed of the Peer Sahab. It is said Peer Sahab had become a cripple in later years and he used *Khadawoon* with his hands for his movements. There is a saying that there was a devastating fire away from his locality across the river Jehlum and the affected people prayed to him for mercy and help and the Peer Sahab out of his compassionate feelings handed out to them one of his *Khadawoon* and asked them to throw it into the fire which in no time got completely extinguished. It is said Peer Sahab was brought up with great love and care by his saintly mother who was very keen to perform his Yugneopavit when he attained the age of twelve. Seeing his mother in a sorrowful state of mind on this account he took her along to Siddhalakshmi's ghat (a bathing ghat on river Jehlum) situated just near the shrine and told her to hold his clothes so that he could leap into water for a bath. The Rishi Peer did not know swimming then but with his spiritual powers he reappeared at the ghat after a gap with his head clean shaven and a holy "*Jenew*" on his neck tied round his right arm and yellow drenched *Angavastras* clad all over, reciting Gayatri Mantra. His mother anxiously looking for him in the meanwhile was pleasantly surprised and delighted to see him in this form. Rishi bowed before her and went back to his house where this news had already reached and the whole locality people assembled and worshipped the Peer.

At the shrine every year in the spring time a festival is held on the occasion of his Nirvana day when he left his physical body. People from far and wide come to the shrine on this occasion. Puffed rice is offered to all the devotees. Chaddhawa in cash is offered as Niyaz. Rishi was respected by followers of other religions who were also his devotees. It is said that Makdoom Sahib who was an elevated Muslim mystic saint once invited him to lunch which Rishi Peer readily accepted with a condition that he will take all his 111 disciples along and none of the food items consisting of chicken should be tasted by anyone before serving to Rishi and his disciples. This condition was accepted by Makdoom Sahab. Rishi arrived at the invitation place in time with his disciples. All of them took their allotted seats. The plates and food items were laid out. While the food laying arrangement was on, Rishi asked Makdoom whether the precondition of "no tasting the food by anybody before him" was maintained and the host in a cheerful voice duly confirmed observance. In a moment the Rishi sprinkled water on the laid dishes and lo! & behold! cocks and hens appeared alive in front of him but one cock was lame in one leg. The Rishi asked his disciples to disperse and declined to partake the lunch laid before him as Makdoom Sahab had broken his promise and someone had tasted one chicken leg. Makdoom realised Rishi's power and tearfully begged for pardon and thereafter they became spiritually very close. What was Rishi's name? I do not know. As a child he was devoted to his mother who was a very pious and awakened lady. The boy is believed to have recited Vedas and Shastras before he grew into

an adult. The family he was born, as I was then told, was a Khushoo or Sopori Pandit and in fact main Khushoo family houses are around this shrine. His direct disciples were titled as 'Peer' and they have been managing the shrine.

In my recent memory in 1982, when I was in Srinagar a devastating fire had stricken the locality with dozens of houses reduced to rubble and ashes. This holy shrine stood erect alone though the houses around just few feet away got burnt completely. To the amazement of all, this was a miracle or *Chamatkar*, so the people say.

Another memorable legend of his lifetime goes to say that his *yogini* mother expressed her desire to go to Shadipore for pilgrimage on Kumba day at Prayag. At Shadipur there is confluence (*sangam*) of two holy rivers Jehlum and Sindhu and this is known as Prayag. She was too old to travel. Realising his mother's keen desire Rishi took her to Siddhalakshmi ghat at dawn on the sacred day of sangam and made her take a holy dip and drop her stick and *kamandal* in the water flow. His mother watched the waves in the river taking these items along and in no time these were out of sight. Just at dusk Rishi and his mother came back for another holy dip at the auspicious time for the bath in the river at the same ghat and at that moment the stick and *kamandal* reappeared in the flow approaching and touching her feet. She felt a sensation and realised that her son Rishi had achieved supernatural powers and brought Sangham to Siddhalakshmi ghat for her holy dip.

Now, due to terrorism and consequent exodus of Kashmiri Hindus from the valley, this shrine at Alikadal is lying vacant unattended surrounded by empty and burnt houses. The holy symbol, *Khadawoon* has been brought to Jammu in early 90s where his descendant Peers have enshrined it and devotees from far and wide worship and assemble and offer Niyaz.

It may be interesting to mention here that for the fulfillment of any wish or desire, Kashmiris promise a Niyaz to the Rishi by tying a red thread at the shrine and when the desire or wish is fulfilled, Niyaz is offered and the Kulchas (baked wheat cakes) are given by the priest as Prashad which is considered very auspicious and distributed in the family.

Another shrine near our locality is that of "**Purna Raza Bhairav**". This shrine is situated little away from Rajorikadal. The shrine comprises of a holy spring, surrounded by flat stones on all sides, of green clear sparkling water, not very deep, shadowed by a thick mulbary tree. This shrine is surrounded by almond-orchards and vegetable gardens all around and access to the spring is through a small stretch of a brickpath. On the festival day once every year Hindus of Alikadal area including Batayar and Safakadal visited and made offerings and took part in mass Prasad usually non-veg lunch consisting of Tahri and Charvan (Yellow rice and cooked lever). This shrine was considered to be very forceful and boons prayed for by devotees would be granted. Muslim neighbours also believed in these powers of the holy shrine. In 1977 when I was in Srinagar I learnt that the Pujari had not been attending as the local people were creating disturbances and therefore the worshippers and pujari could not attend and the shrine was out of contact, but in 1979 when I visited Srinagar again I was told that the local people near the shrine had come in a group and pleaded with the Hindus in Alikadal area to restart the worship and the festival as usual. It is said that in the absence of the rituals, the "**Bhairav**" had appeared in dream to some neighbours in the area and asked them to persuade the Hindus to restart the Pujas etc. at the shrine without which the Bhairav felt unhappy and the consequences would be harmful for the locality. Thus the celebrations were restarted in 1979 after a gap of some years.

I will not dwell on **Roopa Bhawani** shrine, her birthplace half a kilometer from our house or "**Naranjoo's**" shrine which houses a very inspiring idol of Bhagwan Narayan picked up by a saintly Pandit who ordained in a dream by the Lord to pick the idol out from the river Jehlum deep bed near Batayar Ghat and also the sacred shrine of **Hari Parbhat** just less than a kilometre from our house as I am sure some details of these holy shrines must be appearing in this Vitasta Number elsewhere.

These are the reminiscences of my childhood memories before my teens and I beg to be pardoned for any conceptual inauthenticity or historical errors or omissions.

The author is a founding member and dedicated Patron of Kashmir Sabha, Kolkata and an ex-Editor of the Vitasta .

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Hari Parbat - the Reservoir of Religio-Cultural Strength
Opinder Ambardar, Jammu

The pious and sacred places of pilgrimages have deep roots in our socio-religious traditions. They are an inseparable part of our cultural heritage. Kashmir has been a cradle of spiritual and cultural rejuvenation since time immemorial. The shrines and holy pilgrimage centres located at every nook and corner of the valley are places of devotion and reverence for the entire Kashmiri Pandit Community. They are not only a great source of our spiritual inspiration but also the main strength of our faith and devotion.

Hari Parbat (the hill of Sharika) situated at the periphery of Srinagar city is an ancient and one of the holiest places of Kashmir. It is the abode of Mahashakti - the Divine Mother Jagatamba Sharika Bhagwati, also known as Maha Tripursundhari or Rajrajeshwari (locally called as Hari). The eighteen armed Goddess Sharika (Ashtadushbuja*, Fig. 1) is regarded as the Presiding Deity (Isht-Devi) of Srinagar city. The Goddess Sharika is manifestation of the foremost Deity and Supreme Mother of the Universe - the Goddess Durga. The Goddess Sharika is represented by a 'Soyambhu' Shrichakra (Mahamaha Shrichakra), also called Mahashriyantra, which consists of circular mystic impressions and triangular patterns with a dot (bindhu) at the centre. The mystic Shrichakra engraved on a vertical holy rock (shila) is located at the middle of western face of Hari Parbat.

This very *shila* smeared with a paste of lead-oxide or red lead (sindhoor) and decorated with silver foils (ropa-varak) and fresh flowers is the holy shrine of Chakrishwar. The Deity is known as Shri Chakrishwari (Fig. 2). The shrine can be approached from Deviangan by a flight of chiselled stones, numbering one hundred and eleven. It is perhaps due to the Goddess Shrichakra that the capital city of Kashmir is said to have derived its name of Srinagar (Shrinagra).

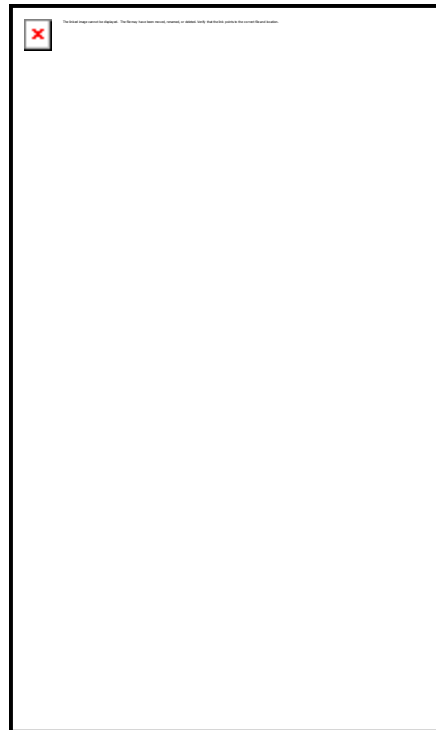


Fig. 1 : **Ashtadushbuja**

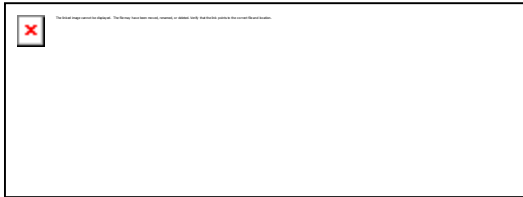
**Gratitude is expressed to Mrs. Bimla Rainaji for procuring and providing this rare photograph which is captioned as "The Centuries old idol of Goddess Ashtadushbuja, Mata Kaliji, stolen by some miscreants from an ancient temple of Hari Parbat in Srinagar.*

As for the `Visishtadvaita' doctrine, `Shri' is the Divine Consort of The Lord and is said to play an intermediary role between God and the human soul. The Shrichakra (Fig. 3) is a symbolic representation of the cosmic union of the Lord Shiva and Shakti. The Shrichakra is the most famous `Yantra' and *Yantra* is indispensable in the *Tantra* Worship.

Every Goddess is represented by an individual `Yantra' and among all the Yantras, the most famous and venerated one is the `Shri-yantra'. The *yantra* inscribed with specific *mantras* represents the Divine Mother, who is the cause of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the Cosmos.

These attributes of shakti are recognised by the great Vedantin Adishankaracharya. The very first line of the first *shaloka* of his famous hymn `Saundarya-Lehri', states clearly that Lord Shiva is powerless without the divine energy of the Shakti. Some of the selected shaloka's of `Saundarya-Lehri', `Panchastavi' and `Durga Saptshati' dedicated to the praises of the Divine Mother are recited regularly every morning by the devotees at the holy shrine of Shri Chakrishwari. The shrine of Chakrishwar has been a place of worship from the day, the Goddess Sharika manifested Herself in the form of a `shila' on the Hari-Parbat. Various names such as `Pradyuman Peeth', `Sidh-Peeth', `Shakti-Peeth', besides `Sharika-Peeth' have been assigned to the holy shrine of the Goddess Chakrishwari.

The devotees often recite the `Sharika Mahatmya' sholaka with faith and reverence during the circumambulation (*parikrama*) of the shrine. This sholaka clearly refers to the Pradyuman-peeth as being the sacred seat of `Shri-Chakra' on the Hari-Parbat.



A verse from the `Rudra Yamla Tantra' is inscribed on the marble slab installed above the holy `shila'. This verse speaks about the nature and form of Shri-Chakra - the Supreme Goddess Sharika.



The `Shakt Shastra' also admires and glorifies the Goddess Sharika as the most adorable and magnificent Deity with eighteen arms, who takes good care of the universe and Her devotees.



To worship the Supreme Goddess, the devotees would go to Hari Parbat regularly and reach the shrine of Chakrishwar to be at the holy feet of the Divine Mother in the wee hours of the morning. Phagun Krishna Paksh Ashtami (Hora Ashtami or Hur Aathum) and Ashad Shukla Paksh Saptami, Ashtami and Navami (Har Satum, Har Aathum and Har Navum) are the auspicious days for the devotional congregational prayers at the Sharika-peeth Chakrishwar.

Asad Navami (Har Navum) is said to be the Birthday of Sharika Bhagwati. On this day, the devotees make sacrificial offering of `Taher-charvan' (Taher - rice boiled with turmeric powder and mixed with oil and salt; charvan - cooked liver of goat) to the Supreme Goddess.

This ritual is locally known as `Chout Kharoun'. On `Navreh' (the New Year Day of Kashmiri Pandits), during the month of Magh and Navratra days' (Nav-Durgah), the devotees regularly visit the Hari-Parbat for special prayers and worship.

Earlier, the Birthday of Jagat Amba Sharika Bhagwati used to be celebrated by performing a `Mahachandi Yagna', which would commence on Ashad Saptami (Har Satum) and culminate on Ashad Shukla Paksh Navami (Har Navum) with a sacrificial offering of a lamb called `Raje-Kath'. Presently, `Har-Navum', the holy birthday festival of the Goddess Sharika is celebrated at Chakrishwar shrine with a night long singing of hymns and *bhajans* in the praise of the Goddess.

Some of the devotees prefer to do *parikrama* (prakrum) for the complete month of Magh right from the Lord Ganish's temple (Ganishon), passing through Devi-Angan right upto Kathi-Darwaza.

Pir Pandit Padshah Resh Peer, one of the greatest saints of Kashmir of 17th, Century is said to have performed circumambulation of Hari-Parbat (a distance of about three miles) on his knees for forty days in the wee hours of the morning.

A legend from the `Sharika Mahatmya' records that in order to save and free the residents of the valley (Satidesh) from the evil deeds of the demon, the Mother Goddess Ashtadushbuja Jagatamba Durga took the form of a bird (*Har* in Kashmiri and `myna' in Hindi).

On the day of Ashad Shukla Paksh Navami (Har Navum), it is believed to have carried a celestial pebble in its' beak and dropped it on the demon to crush it to death. A miracle happened and the celestial pebble is said to have assumed the shape and form of a hillock giving the name of Sharika Parbat or Hari Parbat to the hillock.

Subsequently, the Goddess Sharika (represented by the mystic `Soyambhu' Shrichakra), made Her permanent Abode on the Western face of the hillock (Hari Parbat) on a vertical rock (shila) to assure the native people of Her presence and protection.

The whole hillock of Hari Parbat is a hallowed place. A number of temples and holy spots representing the different Deities are located on its' all sides.

It is because of this belief that the devotees undertake a circumambulation (*parikrama*) of the whole hillock of Hari Parbat. The *parikrama* starts from the Lord Ganesh's shrine (*Ganishon*), which is located on the south-western corner of Hari Parbat. Inside the temple, the Deity is represented by a huge `shila', smeared with lead-oxide or red lead (sindhoor). The Principal Devta Ganisha (Adideva Ganesha) is also known by the names of Ganpati, Vinayak, Heramba, Ekadanta, Lambodara, Vignesa, Vighna-Hari and Gajanana. Believed to be kind, generous and calm, Lord Ganesha is always invoked before starting any auspicious event or religious ceremony. Ganpati is worshipped both in the form of an image and yantra. The `Swastika' is also regarded as a graphic symbol of Lord Ganesha.

From Lord Ganesh's temple, there are two *parikrama* routes; one, along foot-hill of the hillock and the other along the fortified stone wall locally known as `Kala'. The devotees have the option of taking either of the two routes.

The next place of obeisance on *parikrama* route is the `Saptrishi sthapna (Satresh), which is marked by an open space on slope of the hillock near a big boulder in the vicinity of a **Chinar** tree. It is at this very spot, that the devotees used to ascertain their luck (locally known as *phall*) by random picking-up of some rice grains scattered on the boulder. (even number for bad and odd number for good luck) The Saptrishi, also called `Praja-patis` are regarded as the mind-born sons (*manus-putra's*) of Brahma.

In the `Shatpath-Brahman', their names are given as *Gotama, Bhardwaja, Vishwamitra, Vasishta, Kashyap, Atri* and *Jamad-agni*. The seven Rishis are represented in the sky by seven stars known by the name of Great Bear. (Satresh).

Furtheron, the next holy spot to appear during *parikrama* is the "*thapna*" of the Goddess Kali, which is marked by a small temple adjacent to a **Chinar** tree. Mahakali, the consort of Mahakal, the eternal time represents one of the aspects of Shakti, the primordial energy, which comprises the creation (*Srishti*) and dissolution (*pralay*). Kali, the eternal symbol of the mother cult destroys the evil and showers blessings on her devotees.

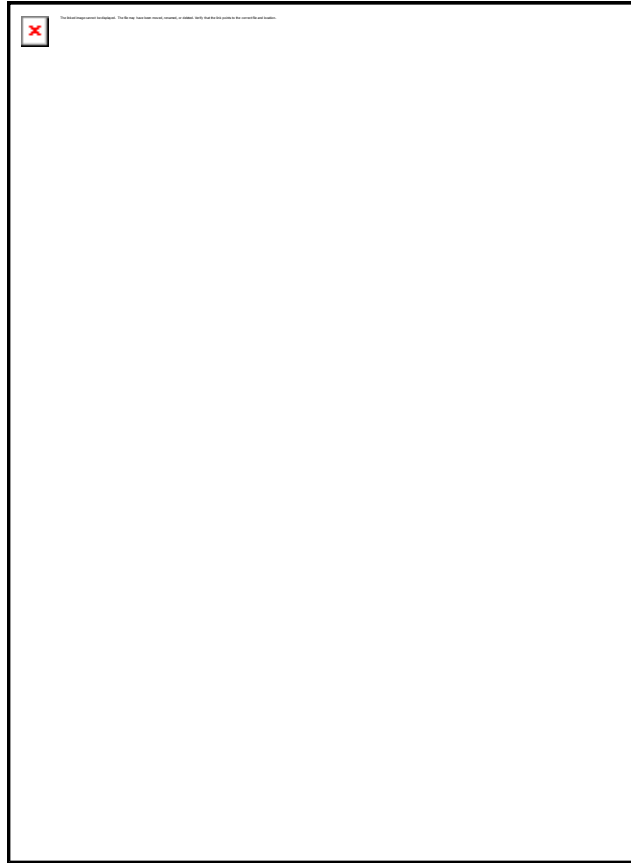


Fig. 2 : **Shri Chakreshwari**

In front of the Kali-mandir, a large flat chunk of land measuring about ten kanals or so is known by the name of `Sidh-Peeth' - A place of awakened Divine presence. The Sidh-Peeth is believed to be invested with strong divine spiritual vibrations. Usually, the devotees worship and chant the holy name of the Eternal Mother at the Sidh-peeth in the auspicious hour's of pre-dawn. (*Brahma-murta*). The great saints of Kashmir, Pt. Madhav Joo Dhar, Rupe Bhowani, Krishna Kar, Resh Peer, Sahib Koul and many others' are said to have meditated and succeeded in their spiritual pursuits here at the Sidh-Peeth near the **Chinar** tree. The Sidh-Peeth also commands a most picturesque and panoramic view of the whole area.

Next, on the *parikrama* route of Hari Parbat is a vast stretch of open space known by the name of 'Devi-Angan' - the playfield of the Cosmic Mother. It is studded with small hutments for the purpose of worship and meditation. Due to scenic charm and absorbing natural beauty, Devi-Angan is also a place for religious and social festivities.

Those of the devotees, who can not pay obeisance at the holy shrine of Chakrishwar, do pray and worship at the Devi-Angan. The holy shrine of Shrichakra with the adjacent open space known by the same name of Devi-angan is also present in TamilNadu.

Next holy spot on *parikrama* of Hari-Parbat is the "*thapna*" of 'Hari', represented by a rock (shila), located on the north-eastern face of the hillock. The *shila* is also smeared with sindhoor. Earlier a small dharamshalla used to exist near this *thapna*. The devotees after performing pooja at this spot, take a symbolic 'round-turn' *parikrama* in front of the shila, pronouncing loudly the holy words "*Hari (Maujee) Kartum Yari*" (The Mother Goddess bless me).

In front of Devi-angan, the two *parikrama* routes, one along the fortification wall (*Kalai*) and the other below the foothill, merge together.

From here, the devotees while performing *parikrama* pay their obeisance to the Goddess Mahalakshmi by salutations (*namaskar* with folded hands) near Mahalakshmi *thapna*, which is situated at a higher elevation near the *thapna* of 'Hari'. The devotees do not offer pooja here specifically, as Kashmiri Pandits have preferential adoration for the Goddess Saraswati - the Goddess of knowledge and learning rather than Laxmi - the Goddess of fortune and wealth.

Next and opposite to Mahalakshmi *thapna*, on the left side of *parikrama* route, there is a temple called 'Amber Kouls' mandir, though some people wrongly refer it as Ram Kouls' mandir. A little distance away from this temple is 'Waris Khan's *chah*.' Amber Koul's temple is believed to be the first Lord Krishna's temple in the valley. The devotees after performing pooja and meditation would enjoy a panoramic view of the Dal-lake, while taking rest on a wooden platform of the temple facing east. Next on the *parikrama*, falls the *thapna* of 'Vamdhev', which is located on the left side of the route. Vamdhev is regarded as the Divine Consort of the Goddess Raghnya. Previously, there existed a stone statue of Lord Vamdhev and a small "Dharmshalla". The devotees also perform *parikrama* here.

Pokhribal - the shrine of the Mother Raghnya is the next holy spot on the *parikrama* route. It has a holy spring inside the temple complex. A '*samput yagnya*' used to be performed in honour of the Goddess Raghnya especially on Shuklapaksh Ashtamis and other auspicious days.

A small Hanuman temple located on the right side of the foothill is the last holy spot on the *parikrama* route.

The circumambulation or *parikrama* ("prakrum") of the Hari-Parbat ends at "Kathi-Darwaga", which is one of the two main gates of the township around Hari Parbat, the other being "Sangeen-darwaza" towards Hawal. Hari Parbat is surrounded by orchards of almonds (called *Badam-Vari*) on its' three sides i.e. on north, west and east. During spring the 'badam-vari' presents the look of a fairyland and people visit it to enjoy the almond blossom, locally known as "*Badam phulai*".

A regular visit to Hari Parbat used to be an integral part of the socio-religious life of every Kashmiri Pandit. The devotees would flock to the holy shrine early in the morning for solace, solitude, self purification and spiritual pursuits.

It is rightly believed that those who worship at Hari Parbat are deemed to have worshipped all the Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu mythology.

Undoubtedly, the whole hillock of Hari Parbat is a hallowed place and a source of spiritual, religious and cultural strength. It is a place of devotion and reverence for the entire Kashmiri Pandit Community.

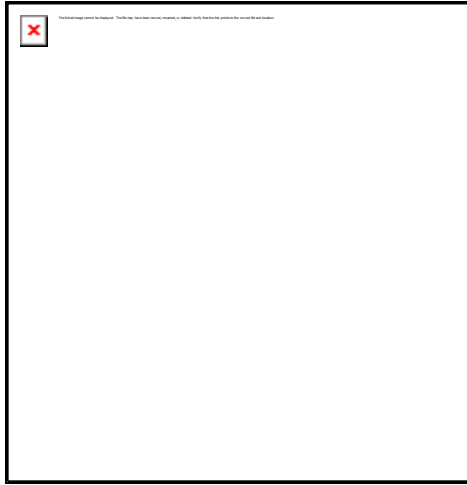


Fig. 3 : Sri Chakra

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Hariparbat and the Hindu Pantheon
(A Parikrama back in Time)
Dr. K. L. Chowdhury, Jammu

The vale of Kashmir is famous for its beauty, its exquisite scenic places and sacred pilgrim centers. Name a hamlet in Kashmir where you do not have an abode of God in the lap of a spring, on the bank of a stream, near a river ghat, on the ridge of a hill, inside a cave, in the hallow of a **Chinar** trunk, on a snowy mountain slope or a verdured plateau. God is truly omnipresent in Kashmir. But nowhere can you find nearly the whole pantheon of Hindu deities, domiciled close to each other as around the hillock of Hariparbat. The denizens of the city of Srinagar are truly blessed to be able to undertake a sequence of pilgrimages that lie within their daily reach on a five kilometer trail around Hariparbat along a track hallowed by tradition and time.

Nearly 5 decades back, when I was in my teens, thousands of pilgrims made that daily near 2-hour circumambulation, paying obeisance to their Gods and Goddesses as they strolled from one temple to another, going round in clockwise direction, chanting, singing, praying. The number of devotees dwindled over the years and shrank to a few hundred as people moved away from the downtown to the suburbs. They shrank further as religious intolerance caught Kashmir in its dragnet and the devotees shied away from that exhilarating morning constitutional cum devotional enterprise. In 1989-90 Islamic terrorism opened its fangs on the Hindus, driving them into exile and forcibly separating them from their beloved pantheon. All that remains of that daily festive scene of a stream of pilgrims going around Hariparbat is the abandoned and forlorn gods seeking their devotees who can now only afford a mental journey of that *Parikrama* made during those halcyon days.

Hariparbat (Mt. Hari) is a hillock in the heart of the old walled city of Srinagar about 7 kilometers from Amirakadal (the first bridge across river Vitasta). It takes its name from the goddess who changed into a myna (*Hari*) and picked a stone in her beak and threw it where it transformed into the hillock nearly 400 feet high, adorning the city like a shining jewel. Thus sanctified, this hillock became the abode of numerous deities worshiped by their admiring devotees down the ages. During their reign, the Moghul kings built a fort on the hillock and King Akbar, in order to provide a livelihood to his hungry subjects, ordered the construction of a high wall around the hill and adjoining large swaths of land. A number of gates puncture the wall in different directions. The wall called *Kalai* stands dilapidated but still functional in large stretches to provide a walkway. Two north bound streams of pilgrims starting much before dawn, men women and children, some barefooted, others poorly clad, most carrying rice to be given away as alms and flowers to be offered to the gods, from Rainawari and from the main city of seven bridges merge at Sangeen Darwaza (the stone gate). A large line of beggars, on either side of nearly 200-meter stretch of the road here provides a sorry spectacle. The devotees, as they move along towards the first stop at the temple of Ganesha, toss a handful of rice and a few pennies onto a small piece of cloth spread in front of each beggar.

The Ganesha temple is rightly the first in the pantheon here since Hindus undertake all tasks, religious or secular, by invoking the blessings of the lord. Ganesha is represented by a massive vermilion-smeared bossy, bumpy rock formation, symbolizing the elephantine head of the venerated god. A mere touch sends divine vibrations from the lord of wisdom up your arm to the very center of the head. In the rock are sculptured Siva, Parvati and Ganesh figurines. A Siva Lingum of granite is installed on the right side of the rock formation. Some pilgrims pray from outside the temple, standing in front of the grilled windows while most enter inside. Here they sit, anoint their foreheads with saffron and vermilion, and pray and sing hymns in praise of the lord, washing the lord with milk, ringing bells, lighting oil and ghee lamps, burning incense, offering flowers. On the right of the temple, almost flanking it, is the long flight of stairs leading to the Dargah of Mukdoom Sahib, a saint revered by both Hindus and Muslims. Milk, oil lamps, candy cones and flowers and the herb, *vena* is available for offerings from Muslim vendors near the

temple entrance. Begels, hot from the oven, are available from nearby bakers, to be fed, as another alms giving act by the faithful, to the mongrels loitering around the place. Wagging tails, they jump on their hind legs as they follow the crumbs tossed by the moving pilgrims and deftly catch them in their mouths.

The track from the temple of Ganesha leads through a meandering footpath along the hill and through strewn stones and sparse bushes to a small rectangular flat piece of land nearly 450 meters away and marked by a few **Chinars** and seven large granite stones that represent the seven sages (Sapt Rishi). The pilgrims walk around the Sapt Rishi in a *Parikrama* to pay obeisance and stop near a bigger boulder athwart the footpath with a scalloped top strewn with pebbles. This is the rock of fortune. Here they pick a handful of pebbles and count them. An odd count presages good luck while an even number evens out all the difficulties. Students often try their luck on this fortune stone after having taken their annual tests.

Nearby, in the foothills, the devotees walk to the temple of the black goddess, the demon-slayer, Kali, who grants protection from evil forces. From there you wade through sprawling fields, the almond grooves (*Badam vari*). The almond orchards slope down from the foothills to the wall (*Kalai*). They are most fabulous in spring in their pink-white blossoms, an invitation to the denizens of the city to say good bye to winter and come out with their mats, *samovars* and picnic paraphernalia, to sip cupfuls of steaming tea and to feast on chestnuts roasted on burning grass. All you have to do is to look for a couple of stones, a flat one on which to place the chestnut and a round one to beat it with so that the kernel is separated from the shell. You never tire savoring this delicacy till your hands are bruised with the effort and the mouths are black with soot. The girls thread the petals of almond blossoms into garlands. The boys break a few blossom studded twigs off the trees and flaunt them to each other and to the girls.

Some climb the hill to fly kites from the heights in the spring breeze while others try their hand at a game of cards. It is a festive crowd, all communities, and all age groups. There are the usual shopping delights and fun games and the merry-go-rounds, the balloon-sellers and the snake charmers, the magicians and the kaleidoscopists vending a peep into bollywood. The most frequented are the stalls of the confectioners dishing out the delectable *nadir munjas* (flour-dipped lotus stalk fried out of boiling oil) and *luchas* (loaves of fine flour fried out of boiling *ghee*).

From the Kali temple the pilgrim progresses to an archway that leads up a flight of 108 stairs to the Chakreshwari temple. Near the archway is a small Siva temple, which also houses some antique sculptures of deities. The old and infirm who find the ascent difficult face towards the Chakreshwari and invoke her blessings from here. Others climb the stairs and pass through an alley to enter a small courtyard. Here they ring the large bell hanging near the parapet on the retaining wall to announce their arrival in the august presence of goddess Chakreshwari and enjoy the breathtaking aerial view of the town in the distance and the mountain ranges far away that gird the valley.

The presiding deity faces you directly as you ascend another short flight of stairs and step on to a small stone-paved amphitheater. She stands there in hard rock pasted with vermilion, formless and flat with a wide base and the sides rising up to a relatively round top, striking instant admiration and wonder. While trying to capture the image of the deity seeking a head, a torso and even the limbs where there are none you soon realize that she is beyond ordinary imagination and that is why she is symbolized in this sacred rock so you could sculpt the goddess of your own imagination. Yes, she is Chakreshwari, so named and famed because of the emblem of Chakra engraved in the rock. In Tantra the geometrical configuration of Chakra with its triangles, rectangles and circles emanating from a central point relates to life and the cosmic forces. The philosophic and theological interpretation apart, Chakreshwari is the incarnation of Sharika, the 18-armed goddess, the benevolent deity, drawing devotees to herself, granting them boons and fulfilling their wishes when they come in pure faith. She comes down from her abode on the hill, on her mount, the lion, for a night stroll in the lawns below, the familiar Devi Angan (the

compound of the deity). It is here that pilgrims sit cross-legged in meditation for hours. It is here that she is said to have revealed herself to Pandit Madhav Dhar, one of her ardent devotees who never missed paying his obeisance to her every night while going round the hill in a *parikrama*.

'I am glad with your devotion, Madhav Ram. Name a boon and it shall be granted', the deity commanded. 'Your visitation is all I craved for and I desire no more boon except to be in your favour, my liege', he replied as he fell at her feet in ecstasy and wonder. When she insisted Madhav Dhar desired her to be born as his daughter and she was born to his wife 9 months later as Rupa Bhavani, the sage-poetess much revered by Pandits.

A large dome on four large pillars was erected in the sixties to cover part of the amphitheater in front of the deity to secure devotees from sun and rain. A small patch of land cultivated on her crown makes a delectable sight in flowers and green. A flight of stairs landing on this green flanks both sides of the vermilion-painted rock to enable the pilgrims her *parikrama*.

It is to Chakreshwar that the Pandits flock regularly and in large numbers on festive occasions. But the crowning moment is her birthday on 9th day of the moonlit (bright) fortnight of Ashada. They light lamps, burn incense, ring bells and sound conchs, chant mantras and sing devotional songs in praise of the deity. Some of them cook the deity's favorite dish of *Taher* (salted turmeric-spiced, fried rice) and *Charvan* (cooked liver). After prayers, oblations and offerings to the deity they themselves partake of the yellow rice and liver and top it up with Sheerchai (salted tea). Some devotees make a sacrificial offering of the lungs and heart of lamb or goat. Tradition demands that both the lungs as well as the hearts be torn into pieces by bare hands and flung to the circling kites high above. It is a veritable treat to watch the kites swoop down to catch the morsels in their claws and fly away to a nearby tree or a boulder to savour it and return to catch more. The sky turns into a play field for these birds, circling, swooping down on the food missiles, and furiously overtaking each other.

It is at Chakreshwar that the Pandit choir sang devotional Kashmiri songs on Saturday nights. In the sixties they started beaming devotional film music on loud speakers to set in process a race between the temple and the mosque in the abuse of loud speakers for religious practices. Along the ridge of the hill, a furlong away to the left is a cluster of big rocks, again painted with vermilion, representing goddess Hari who picked the stone in her beak to transform it into Hariparbat. But if you cross the ridge and climb up the hill to the right, it leads through a huge gate, fortified with iron spikes, up a long and winding flight of stone stairs to a terraced fortress on the top of the hill. There is a water tank, a bathing place, and a temple of Durga with her dark figure standing in the middle of the sanctum.

The fort is thrown open to public only on Navreh, the New Year of the Pandits, and for nine days following. Alas! nothing has been done to preserve and renovate this place from total ruin either by the department of archeology, Govt. of India, the custodian of this fort, or the Pandit community that holds this place very sacred.

From the fortress you can descend back towards Chakreshwari and trudge along the left and around the hill or take a shorter route along the back of the hill to reach the temple of Rama built by Pt. Amar Chand. The temple houses the idols of lord Rama, his consort Sita and his legendary and loyal brother Lakshmana. A small Siva Lingam stands on a pedestal in the compound of the temple. The view of the fort from here is beautiful and another almond orchard slopes down towards the *kalai* from here.

Just opposite the Ram temple, in the alcove of the hill, up a narrow flight of about thirty stairs is the temple of ***Sedalakhshmi***, the incarnation that assures fulfillment and success in all your endeavors. She stands rock-like in rock in her rocky benevolence, as all other deities of the pantheon on and around Hariparbat.

From the Ram temple the pilgrims go along a long trail of about a kilometer where it forks left towards Pokhribal, a few furlongs away. Pokhri means spring and Bal place, meaning the place of spring. This is a small square shaped clear-water spring with a Siva temple. Besides the Lingum there are other figurines of many deities in the temple. The water from the spring flows out into a small lake where devotees have a bath before they go in for audience with the deities. The lake joins the back waters of the Nigeen and Dal lakes and many people, while on a boat ride to the famous Mughal gardens of Nishat and Shalimar, rove on to this place and dock for a *dharshan* of Pokhribal.

Most devotees bypass Pokhribal and continue along the return trail to the exit gate in the *kalai*, the Kathidarwaza (the wooden gate which later seems to have been rebuilt in stone). Just before the exit is the Hanuman temple dedicated to that staunch devotee of Rama who fought his wars in exile and helped him vanquish the demon king Ravna and rescue Sita from his clutches. A statue of Hanuman, the god of strength, adorns this place.

At the Kathidarwaza the pilgrims pause and rest awhile on seats fashioned out of stone and exchange pleasantries before they fork into different directions to their homes, fully rejuvenated and blessed.

Just outside Kathidarwaza is the famous Gurdwara, Chattipadshai, sacred to the Sikhs where many pilgrims stop to pay respects and, on Sundays, partake of the *prasad* of wheat pudding.

Notes

1) Present status of the *Parikrma* :

Hariparbat epitomized the religious-cultural synthesis of Kashmir where Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs flocked every morning in huge numbers in a festive atmosphere not only to pray at their respective shrines but also to pay obeisance at each other's temples of faith.

Nowhere in Srinagar did we have a confluence of three religious and philosophical streams as here. The pilgrims, in a short span of about 2 hours and a distance of a few kilometers went through an elevating, physical, psychical and spiritual experience.

Alas! there is a very little of the *parikrma* left now. The Ganesha temple is locked most of the time. The whole land inside the *kalai* has been usurped partly by the Tibetan Muslim refugee and partly by the locals in connivance with the revenue officials.

Most temples are in a state of ruin and their property has been encroached upon. Fortunately Chakreshwari and Pokhribal shrines have been well maintained by the security forces, the BSF, who welcome the occasional pilgrim and even serve him with the traditional *prasad*.

There is no trace of the almond grooves and no *Badam Vari*. In its place we find tin-roofed concrete houses.

Very little is left of that dizzying trail as you find the large stretch between Ganesha's and Chakreshwar claimed by horse chestnut trees planted by the social forestry department.

Devi Angan has been leased to VSNL, which has installed a huge dish where once devotees sat in meditation.

The fort is out of bounds and dangerous to visit because it is tumbling down. Hardly anyone visits the temple of Durga there.

The premises of Pokhribal have been taken over for lift irrigation.

2) Seeking Indulgence. I seek the indulgence of the reader for any missing links, inaccuracies or explanations deviant from the accepted lore.

3) Acknowledgement : This Parikrama has been possible only with the help of my revered mother. Grounded in tradition and replete with detail, she has an amazing memory for peoples, places and the pantheon. I bow my head to her sagacity, devotion and love.

4) A thought : How do we restore Hariparbat and the Hindu Pantheon that it holds in its pristine glory?

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Hari Parbat - Symbol of our Cultural Heritage
B. L. Kaul (Chaman), New Delhi

As it is, Hari Parbat is the focal point in the Kashmir landscape, rising amongst historical ruins in its environs and commanding a panoramic view of the majestic and glistening hill tops girdling the extensive valley, the shimmering lakes which touch its boundaries as a mark of respect for its traditional associations and being a place of great sanctity in Kashmir. In ancient times, it was known as "Sharika Parvata", the hill of Sharika. The crowning glory is the "Shrine of Cakreshvari", the Almighty Mother Sati, the controller of the titanic forces of nature. The cognoscenti have seen the mystical Shri Chakra represented in the shrine which structures her magic and mystery in the cubes, triangles, squares and circles represented therein. This then is a place of special veneration since the dawn of history. Besides, what is important is that all the important deities of the Hindu Pantheon have a traditional seat for themselves in and around "Sharika Parvata" as a mark of obeisance for Almighty Sati who had delivered the valley from the depredations of the demon "Jalodabhava" residing in the lakes. Thus it is a shrine which has a unique place in the history of Kashmir, since millions of Kashmiris have been worshipping the related shrines since the day the valley became fit for habitation and life flourished. The legend adds that the deities in grateful memory of their deliverance took up their abode here, which accounts for the fact that every important individual stone or prominent rocky area is revered by the faithful.

At present important rocks depicting Jwala, Maha Ganesha are situated on the south-western side of the Parvat. Further on, the rock known as "Sapta-Rishi", with which the earliest scientific calendar devised by Kashmiris and now 5078 years old is associated, is worshipped. Thereafter, we have the shrines of Mahakali and Siddha Laxmi. The resting place of Abhinava Gupta, the well known founder of Kashmiri Shaivism is also associated with Sharika Parvata.

The deliverance of the valley from the depredations of Jalodabhava enshrines a geological phenomenon which is duly substantiated on the basis of lacustrine deposits. The Kashmir valley is a boat-shaped basin, 140 km long on 40 km wide. It is an intermountain valley fill, comprising unconsolidated gravel-and-mud succession, which appear as plateaus above the present plain of the Jhelum and its tributaries. The plateau - like terraces are the present day Karewas or Uddars. Despite continuous erosion, still about half the valley is occupied by Karewa sediments. The Wular and Dal lakes are the remains of a primeval lake known to the ancients as "Sati-Saras". There is a general consensus that due to the rise of the Pir-Panjal, the drainage got impounded and a lake about 5000 sq. kms. in area developed in the basin thus formed. To some of the earlier geologists, a nearly flat valley with steep hills all around appeared an ideal geomorphic setting for a lake to form. Due to further rise of the Pir-Panjal, the lake shifted to the Himalayan side.

This is the geological concept, but traditions associate the emergence of the habitable landscape due to the benign action of Mother Sharika who assumed the form of a bird (Maina) and taking a pebble in her beak dropped it at the spot where "Jalodabhava", the water demon was lying. The pebble swelled to gigantic proportions by virtue of her powers, crushing the demon by its weight. The pebble to this date survives as Hari Parbat and a depression in the ground outside "*Sangin Darwaza*" of Akbar's rampart indicates the place where he forced his way out as he was struggling under the crushing weight over him. The legend indicates that the Gods in grateful memory of their deliverance took up their abode in various pockets of Sharika Parvata.

As centuries rolled on, this area became the nerve centre of Pravarasena's "Pravarapura" in the 6th Century A.D. when he shifted his capital from Ashoka's "Pandrethan" (Puranadhisthana - the old capital), which clearly substantiates its growing importance. Close to the foot of the southern extremity of the hill is a rock which has from ancient times received worship as an embodiment of Ganesha. A legend related by Kalhana connects this Savyambhu image with Paravarasena's foundation of Pravarapura. It has to be emphasized that present Srinagar is ancient Pravarapura

and as such the legend is doubly significant. From regard for the pious king, the god is said to have then turned his face from west to east so as to behold the new city.

A short distance to the south-east of the Bhimsvamin rock and just outside Akbar's rampart, lies the Ziarat of Bahauddin Sahib, built entirely with the materials of an ancient temple. It contains numerous Hindu remains, constructed with massive blocks of stones with extensive dimensions. Noteworthy among these at the south-west corner of this cemetery rises a ruined gateway, built of stone blocks of considerable size and still of considerable height. It is the precursor of the massive gateway of the ancient Martand temple built during the reign of Lalitaditya in the 8th Century A.D. This structure is traditionally believed to have belonged to the temple of "Shiva Pravaresvara" which Kalhana mentions as the first shrine erected by Pravarasena in his new capital.

An old legend related by Kalhana and before him by Bilhana who flourished in the 12th and 11th centuries A.D. respectively makes the king ascend bodily to heaven from the temple of Pravaresvara. Bilhana speaks of the temple as "showing to this day of gap above, resembling the gate of heaven, through which the king Pravara bodily ascended to heaven." Kalhana corroborates this by stating that he also saw in the temple of Pravaresvara a gate resembling the gate of heaven. Its broken stone roof was supposed to mark the king's passage on his way to Siva's abode. Architecturally it belongs to the earliest monuments of Srinagar. It owes its preservation probably to the exceptional solidity of its construction and the massiveness of its stones. Blocks measuring up to sixteen feet in length with a width and thickness equally imposing have been found. The position of the remains is very central and might well have been chosen by the founder of Pravarapura for the prominent shrine in his new city. It also contains the graves of some of the most prominent personages of the Muslim period in Kashmir. What catches the eye is a tombstone which bears a bilingual Sanskrit and Arabic inscription which mentions the name of Muhammad Shah, the puppet ruler who was made king and dethroned not less than four times.

In the course of time many monasteries and Viharas were erected in its environs. One such vihara, called the "Amrit Vihara" was built by the queen of Meghavahana at Vicharnagh. King Meghavahana was reported to be native of Gandhara and was invited by the nobles of Kashmir to rule the valley. Kashmir and Gandhara were in such close proximity to each other as to be deemed a single political unit, as is clear from the Greek records. The Vihara at Vicharnagh (ancient Vanta-bhavana), a locality in close proximity was a flourishing area and was the terminal point of the Leh-Srinagar route. In its vicinity lies the suburb of "Sovura" (present day location of Sher-i-Kashmir Medical Institute) and is identified with king Surrendra who ruled the valley before king Ashoka.

In spite of the political upheavals during the early Muslim period, there were thriving settlements as is substantiated by exposed sections in "Malkhah area" outside Akbar's rampart, also indicating the density of habitation. In case some important sectors are properly excavated, it could throw a lot of light on the settlement patterns during the Sultanate period, and bridge a gap in the medieval history of Kashmir. The importance of the area is further indicated by the construction of two very important and imposing monuments in the area. The earlier one is the mosque and Tomb of Madin Sahib in Zadibal area. Built in 1483 A.D., it is one of the most important Muslim buildings of the pre-Mughal period built in a characteristic style of the early Islamic period. The base is built entirely of materials belonging to the plinth of a medieval temple. The architectural style is distinctive as it clearly indicates as to how remains of Hindu temples and shrines were utilized for construction of mosque and tombs. The architectural synthesis is distinctive and unique. Besides, the spandrels of the arches of the niches are decorated with beautiful tracery work. The wooden doorway is elaborately carved. The tomb of the saint is on the north of the mosque, and the wall surface is decorated with glazed tiles, a special architectural feature inducted into Kashmir in 15th century A.D.

Another important landmark in this thriving area was the Jama Masjid of Kashmir built in the characteristic wooden style, which developed in Kashmir and is also represented by the mosque of Shah Hamadan. The construction of the most imposing mosque in close proximity to Hari Parbat attests to its importance. Built initially by Sultan Sikandar But-shikan, who ruled Kashmir from 1390 A.D. to 1415 A.D., additions to the mosque were made by his illustrious son and successor, Zain-ul-Abidin. The later history of the mosque is the chequered one. It caught fire a number of times and was rebuilt with additions and alterations in later years. It is a mosque in the typical wooden style of the pre-Mughal period characterized by minarets and massive Deodaru pillars.

The importance of Hari Parbat area increased during the Mughal period. During Akbar's reign, in the 16th century A.D., an extensive rampart about 5 km in circumference was built. Although it is now in ruins, it requires protection as the only structure of its kind in the valley. It has been embellished with two imposing gates in chiselled stone - the *Kathi Darwaza* and the *Sangin Darwaza*. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Mughals brought into the Kashmir valley their own style of stone architecture which contrasts with the typical Hindu Architecture developed in Kashmir as represented by the mosque of Shah-Hamadan and the Jama Masjid. The stone gateways of Kathi Darwaza and Sangin Darwaza have their own importance. The Mughals mostly lavished their attention on the famous gardens in Kashmir.

The Kathi Darwaza seems to have been the principal entrance, two inscriptions in Persian have been put up here. It is a simple structure, comprising a domed chamber in the middle with two side recesses. External decorations are marginal. On the spandrels of the main arch are two beautiful medallions prominently brought out and flanked by rectangular and arched panels. By way of comparison, the Sangin Darwaza, the stone gate which leads to "Cakreshvari shrine" is more ornate. The exterior is decorated by typical corbelled windows, and there are two stairs, one on each side, which give access to the roof.

Another conspicuous monument in the Mughal style just near the Kathi Darwaza on the scarp of Hari Parbat is the mosque of Akhun Mulla Shah, built by crown Prince Dara Shikoh, son of Shah Jahan, in 1649 A.D. It is built in beautiful grey lime stone. It was built by Dara Shikoh for his tutor Akhun Mulla Shah.

In modern times, both Muslims and Hindus have appropriated parts of the hill for their respective shrines. The Ziarat of Hazrat Makhdum Sahib revered by both Muslims and Hindus alike is situated on the south-western side just above Maha Ganesha shrine referred to herein. People of all faiths offer their prayers here. Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Makhdum Sahib, meditated and lived till the end of the 15th Century A.D. and is buried here. He taught universal brotherhood and religious tolerance. Thousands of devotees, irrespective of caste, creed or colour, throng the mosque and offer their homage to him.

On the north-eastern foot of this hill near Kathi Darwaza is situated, the chief religious centre of Sikhs, known as Gurdwara Chhatti Patshahi. Not only the Sikhs but people of other faiths also revere it as a shrine of religious sanctity. Hence the area in and around Hari Parbat bears a living testimony of religious tolerance, communal harmony and brotherhood where Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs flock around the Hill and offer their prayers without any acrimony and with complete accord. Religious tolerance is thus a living phenomenon and this is perhaps one of the few centres where there is complete harmony amongst different faiths.

This has considerably influenced the social ethos in Kashmir, as is evident in the Badamwari festival which is a typical feature of the social gatherings. During almond blossom time in the early spring when chills of the winter fade away, blossoms bloom in a riotous colour in some pockets in and around Hari Parbat. Kashmiris who get hemmed in during freezing winters find themselves flocking around early spring blossoms to give vent to their pent up emotions through folk songs and classical Sufiana Kalam. It used to be a riot of colours, merry making and laughter

on holidays and throughout the spring season, when gaily attired people would throng the blossom area especially in Hari Parbat which provided a fertile soil for almond saplings. It seemed as if the whole city had overflowed into the gardens and broken all the barriers of caste, creed and religion, enjoying the colours and the invigorating environment. Thus all Kashmiris cherished the past legacy in harmony with the enchanting environment. It was a spontaneous people's festival in the real sense of the term.

The Badamwari festival is now only a nostalgic reminiscence of the past. Blossoms do not bloom, for the trees have been felled and new constructions have sprung up. Akbar's rampart is crumbling, slums have sprung up all over and sacred stones which bear the imprint of divinity and history are being used in the construction of gutters and slums. Constructions have choked up access to some of the shrines which once throbbed with religious fervour.

The cultural, architectural and religious heritage of Hari Parbat is vanishing fast. The historical and religious traditions which have inspired and moulded the aspirations of Kashmiris are getting submerged under a false veneer of modernization. To maintain the physical remains in whatever form these still remain is a valuable and urgent undertaking and needs to be attended to on a priority basis. The environmental and religious heritage of the hallowed area has to be preserved.

Tradition makes it that the valley became habitable because of Hari Parbat. Hari Parbat became the focal point of "Pravarapura", which was the city of Srinagar when Pravarasena II shifted the capital, ignoring the claims of Ashoka's Pandrethan because of its difficult layout. The Sultans of Kashmir and later on the Mughals embellished it with structures of their own. The Hill reverberates with the deeply enshrined religious aspirations of the people of Kashmir of all faiths. Their heritage as such has to be preserved under all circumstances.

Some of the emergent steps that need to be taken by Central and State Governments are listed below :

- (i) The Central Government should declare the whole of Hari Parbat, including the area and monuments between the rampart wall and the hillock and 500 meters area outside, as a protected area and a national heritage.
- (ii) Mughal remains in the form of rampart wall, Akbar's Nagar - Nagar, Mosque of Akhun Mulla Shah, the two stone gates of Kathi Darwaza and Sangin Darwaza should receive attention for proper preservation.
- (iii) All the vacant lands and slopes of Hari Parbat should be planted with almond trees, and the 'Sound and Light' show should be initiated to boost tourism and revival of interest of Kashmiris and outsiders in our secular traditions.
- (iv) There should be a high-powered committee of dedicated and enlightened representatives of the three major communities for preservation of the religious and cultural traditions and development of the area on mutually agreed terms. Local trustees of the shrines in and around Hari Parbat could be included in such a committee so that there is a broad-based consensus relating to proper development of this area and removal of unauthorized constructions and encroachments.
- (v) The Archaeological Survey of India along with the State Department of Archaeology and the Birbal Sahni Institute of Paleobotany should be asked to survey thoroughly the area from "Thanedar Bag" to "Khoja Yarbali" which skirts Hari Parbat and touches 'Nagin Lake' for possible prehistoric remains.

Editors note : The above paper was submitted in June, 2001, to various concerned Ministries of Government of India & J & K State Government, by Shri M. K. Kaw, President of KECSS, Delhi and the then secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development, for getting Hari Parbat declared as a National Monument. It is gratifying to be informed that accordingly this proposal, for which there was demand from various other Kashmiri organisations also, has received favourable consideration by Govt. and presently modalities for its implementation are being worked out.

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Jawalaji
Maharaj Krishen Raina, Mumbai

Jawalaji, the Goddess of Fire is another popular Ishtdevi of Pandits. Situated in the small village of Khrew, on the east of Zabarwan hills and about 20 Kms. away from Srinagar, Jawalaji is venerated as one more aspect of the Shakti. According to Kalhana, the village was known as Khaduvi in the ancient times. Above the village, a Svayambhu-Chakra or 'mystical diagram' was shown on a rock. The diagram has now faded away with the passage of the time.

The Shrine of Jawalaji was constructed by Dr. Bal Krishen in the eighteenth century. It is perched on the top of a 200 feet high extended hillock of the Zabarwan range. It is approachable by a flight of 360 Devri stone steps with more than a dozen landings. The octagonal shaped temple rests on an 18 feet high base. The Sanctum Sanctorum is an 8 feet x 8 feet square shaped structure. A six feet high, black stone image is placed here. It is said that the image turned black due to the occasional flames which sparked here from time to time. The flame is said to have been 2 feet high and was alight for about half an hour, when last seen in the year 1962.

According to Kalhana, there was an abundance of fine springs in and around Khew. Abul Fazl mentions these springs as the objects of worship and estimates their number at 360. Presently there is a big spring known as 'Bod Naag' near the Temple. There is no 'Linga' inside the temple but a number of Shivalingas exist around all the springs below. A 600 years old *moorti* of Laxminarayan exists in the courtyard of a house near this spring. Another *moorti* of Mata Ragnya is placed in the ground on the west of the Temple. This *moorti* is estimated to be 900 years old.

According to Tarreekh-e-Hassan, the King Driptadev constructed a temple dedicated to Jawalamukhi in the 671'st year of Kaliyuga. The temple is not in existence now. It is believed that the said temple was built near the Mandekhpal village, 2.5 Kms. away from the present temple.

A fair is held here on the 14th bright fortnight of Ashada (June-Jul) every year. An offering of Tahar (yellow rice) and Sheshanor (lamb's lung) are offered to the Devi and later served as Prasad.

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Khair Bhawani Spring
Samsar Chand Koul

Kashmir in the olden times was known as Reshi Bhumi or the land of saints. Cut off as it was from the outside world by its mountain ramparts, its means of communication were difficult. The people had developed their own script called, "Sharda" and their own literature and philosophy. They cultivated various branches of knowledge, and worked for humanity preferring action to theory.

Surrounded as the country is by the snow-clad high mountains, water absorbed in the soil gives birth to numerous springs scattered all over the country. Those springs are known as Nags (serpents). They are dedicated to different gods or goddesses, hence some of the towns are named after them, such as Anant Nag, Vetsar Nag, Tsandi Gam (after Tsandi Nag in the Lolab Valley) and Ver Nag in Anantnag district. Special days are set apart in the calendar to commemorate the story of those springs and fairs are held and public worship takes place on such occasions.

One of these mysterious springs is situated near village of Tulamulla. The whole place round Tulamulla is swampy and for miles around there are rice fields. By the side of aqueducts grow a large variety of wild flowers, the most common being *Mentha sylvestris* (Vena) which is used in worship and the sale of which brings money to the peasant population.

It appears that Tulamulla is a sort of floating garden, as the natives say that if they dig a whole in the ground, they find fish coming from the tributary of the Sindh which drains the place. The village is girt round by the tributaries of the Sindh which carry water from the Amar Nath and Gangabal glaciers. There is also a stream of pyre water which rises from the springs round the eastern side of the village and passing under a bridge enters into the Sindh canal (also called Gangkhai).

The numerous islets are covered with willows and poplars while the main island on which the spring stands is shaded with chinars, mulberry and elm trees. Lately, the place is paved with dressed sandstones, but there is much scope for the improvement and tidiness of the spot. Water and vegetation being very abundant, mosquitoes are ubiquitous in July and August. In summer, the birds nestling on trees produce melodious music at dawn. The golden oriole, the thrush, the ringdove, the paradise flycatcher, the bulbul are conspicuous by their song and plumage. In winter the wild fowl, the shoveller, the mallard, the gadwall, the widgeon, the teal, the paddy bird, the coot and such other birds are found in the Anchar Lake and round about the swamps.

Historical Reference

Mention of this place is made in the last chapter of the Ragyna Pradurbhava which is a section of the Bringham Samhita. It is stated there that during the early period of the Epic Age, King Ravana ruled Lanka, an island to the south of India. It was then a flourishing country having sixteen hundred towns. This island is beautifully described in the Ramayana. King Ravana in order to gain temporal power and glory worshipped goddess Parvati (Shama) who manifested herself to him in all her nine aspects. For sometime he remained sober-minded and worshipped the goddess with all devotion.

When Shri Rama King of Ajoydiya invaded Lanka and the generals of his army Sugrev and Hanuman killed King Rhvana's brother Kumbakaruna and his son Megnad, his wife Mandudhari entreated him to make peace with Shri Rama. He was kindled with rage and tried to invoke the blessing of the goddess by offering her various kinds of sacrifices. Thereupon the goddess, wrathful at Ravana's misdeeds, cursed him and ordered Hanuman to take her to Sati Sar (Kashmir) on her vehicle along with 360 Nags. Hanuman selected a spot in the northern side of

the valley within the space surrounded by the villages of Borus (Bhawanish), Ahatung (Tungish), Ladwun (Labdawan), Wokur (Bhageh). Here he installed the goddess with all her satellites. She was called Khirbhawani or Raji Ragyni, exclusively preferring milk, sugar, rice and all vegetarian forms of offerings. To quote from Stein's translation of Kalhana's Rajatarangini : "When he (Jayapida) was appropriating (the land of) Tulamulya, he heard, while on the bank of the Candrabhaga, that a hundred Brahmans less one had sought death in the water of that (stream).".....

Tulamulya is undoubtedly the present village, of Tulamul, situated 74 deg 48' long. 34 deg 13' lat. among the marshes through which the Sind River passes before joining the Vitasta. The large spring of Tulmul is sacred as the habitation of Maharajni, a form of Durga extensively worshipped among the Brahman population of Kashmir, and is accordingly to this day the object of frequent and popular pilgrimages. The name is written as Tulamulaka in Fourth Chron. 527, 531 and in **Rajnihradurbhavamah.**

In the midst of the wide water-logged tract of the Sind Delta we find the ancient Tirtha of Tulamulya at the village now know as Tulmul. The Purohita corporation of Tulamulya is represented as a well-to-do and influential body already under King Jaydpida. (A.D. 850 and 88) The large spring of Tulamulya is sacred to Maharajni, a form of Durga, and is still held in great veneration by the Brahman population of Srinagar. It is supposed to exhibit from time to time miraculous changes in the colour of its water, which are ascribed to the manifestation of the goddess. Owing to its convenient position the Tirtha attracts large numbers of pilgrims from the capital. Abu-ul-Fazal notices the place and its marshy surroundings. About two and a half miles to the east of Tulamul lies the village of Dudrhom on the main branch of the Sind which have become first navigable. It is repeatedly referred to by Srivara under its old name of Dugdhasrama.

"The worship of the `Mothers', which is identical with that of the Saktis, plays a great part in the Tantra ritual flourishing in Kashmir from ancient times.

It is said that Ravana's father Pulasti Reshi lived in Kashmir.

The land was all swampy, made as it were of floating gardens, it was light and bumpy, hence it was called Toola Mulla, from two Sanskrit words. `Tool' meaning `cotton' and `Mulla' meaning `value', `worth'.

A person aged about 90 (in 1948) told me that he knew the time when reeds were placed along the swampy foot-path from Hur Mengin Wor to enable the pilgrims to walk to the island. (Hur Mengan was a Spirit who sometimes possessed the bodies of the persons travelling during the night and he was a dread to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.)

After some time a road was constructed by Mahant Dharm Dass. Shah Radha Krishen, a merchant, paved the edge of the spring with Baramulla stones and Dewan Narsingh Dayal built the big dharmshala on the north of the spring during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. Later on, during recent times the road was metalled (macadamised) and made fit for wheeled traffic. The old dharmshala has been dismantled, new ones erected and the place made more beautiful.

There is a legend that a long time ago the goddess appeared to Pandit Govind Joo Gadru who arranged to go in a boat from Sowura Ghat to the swampy side of the Anchar Lake. He took with him a number of earthen vessels full of milk and when he found the spring, he poured milk into it. The following is another version of the process which is said to have brought the spring to light.

A pious Brahman Krishna Pandit saw a vision in which he was informed by a Deva (an angel) that the spring of Khir Bhawani lay among the swamps of Tulamulla. `How shall I be able to find out the spring?' He asked. `Engage a boat as far as Shadipor, and from there a serpent will guide

you. When you will reach near the spring, the serpent will jump into it. That is the spring', was the reply. He did as he was told, engaged a boat and came as far as Shadipor.

Khirbhawani

A snake was seen swimming over the water of the swamps. The boat followed the snake, which halted at a particular place where Shri Krishna Pandit fixed a long stick to indicate the position of the holy spot. After the snake moved in an oddly rectangular direction, the space thus covered by it was demarcated with the fixation of sticks over the marshy area. Thus was the divine spring discovered.

The swampy area around the spring was laid up with dry earth carried in boats for this purpose. Shri Krishna Pandit along with other persons and devotees from Srinagar started the worship of the goddess. At the conclusion of the puja, it is said that a piece of birch bark was seen floating over the water of the spring. Shri Krishna Pandit took it up and found the sloka written on it. The verse described the divine form of the goddess Ragni. This verse, in translation, read, "I make obeisance to that one goddess who, having taken the position of the Supreme God is the Queen in reality, whose form is made of light and is adorned by (the lustre of) twelve suns, who cannot be observed through senses, who is seated on a throne and is wrapped with serpents".

He composed a poem of as many stanzas as there were letters in the sloka and this poem is still extant. He would pay a visit to the spring on every 8th day of the bright fortnight as long as he lived. Gradually, this place became known all over Kashmir and people began to gather there to worship, while the people round the place sold milk, flowers and fuel to the pilgrims which gives them a good business.

Before we enter on the main island, we see two important places, one is the Ziarat of Mir Baba Haider, a Muslim saint and the other is the Samad of Lobu Shah who had miraculous powers and lived some 150 years ago.

Mention has been made in the Rajatarangani of Raja Jayapida (A. D. 850-88) confiscating the lands of the Brahmans of Tulamulla. The Brahmans troubled by the misdeeds of the Raja went in a body to see him. They were detained by the courtiers. Thereupon, they raised a hue and cry and were called by the Raja. They attacked him vehemently and one of them cursed him with the result that there and then a golden rod from the royal canopy fell on the Raja, causing him a wound which proved incurable and brought about his death.

Spring

The spring is situated in the centre of the island round which the Gangkhai a canal from Sind makes a circuit. It is said that this spring is surrounded by 360 springs. Most of these have fallen into oblivion and are covered with bushes and silted up.

Before the main spring came to be known the goddess was worshipped at Solur where under a **Chinar** tree a spring still exists. This spot is called *Devot Wol Buin*. One mile north-east of this island near Lodwan village is Ganesh Bal or Vodjen where Ganesh is worshipped. The other springs which are still known are : Ashta Rudhar to the south, Tsandar Nag to the south-east. Machi Nag, Naga Rad, Gokhin Nag are to the east.

The main spring dedicated to Goddess Khir Bhawani or Ragyni has an irregular septagonal shape with apex called PAD (feet) to the east. The northern and southern sides are longer than western side which is called SHER (head). In the centre is an islet on which a temple had existed once. There also grew a mulberry tree here. Now there is a small marble temple which was built

by His late Highness the Maharaja Partap Singh. The small flags and miniature silver umbrellas presented to the goddess by the votaries are placed in the temple.

Here is reproduced an extract from "Talks with Swami Vivekananda" about the Holy Spring. "Then Swamiji said, on the way back, he returned to Srinagar by the common route by which the pilgrims return. A few days after returning to Srinagar he went to visit Kshir Bhavani Devi and staying there for seven day worshipped the Devi and made Homa to Her with offerings of Kshir (condensed milk). Every day he used to worship the Devi with a maund of Khir as offering. One day, while worshipping, the thought arose in Swamiji's mind:" Mother Bhavani has been manifesting Her Presence here for untold years. The Mohammedans came and destroyed Her temple, yet the people of the place did nothing to protect Her. Alas, if I were then living, I could never have borne it silently". When, thinking in this strain, his mind was much oppressed with sorrow and anguish, he distinctly heard the voice of the Mother saying : "It was according to desire that the Mohammedans destroyed the temple. It is my desire that I should live in dilapidated temple, otherwise, can I not immediately erect a seven-storied temple of gold here if I like? What can you do? Shall I protect you or shall you protect me!" Swamiji said : "Since hearing that Divine Voice, I cherish no more plans. The idea of building Maths etc. I have given up; as Mother wills, so it will be" disciple speechless with wonder began to think "Did he not one day tell me that whatever I saw and heard was but the echo of the Atma within me, that there was nothing outside?" and fearlessly spoke it out also - "Sir, you used to say that Divine Voices are the echo of our inward thoughts and feelings". Swamiji gravely said : "Whether it be internal or external, if you actually hear with your ears such a disembodied voice, as I have done, can you deny it and call it false? Divine Voices are actually heard, just as you and I are talking." The disciple without controverting accepted Swamiji's words, for his words always carried conviction.

Natural Phenomenon

Such a mysterious spring is found nowhere in India. The water of the spring changes its colour from time to time. I have observed and found it rosy red, faint rosy, light green, lemon yellow, milky white and grey white on various occasions. There is no special time or definite period for this change of colour. Any shade of black colour is supposed to be inauspicious.

I have seen bubbles rising out of the water of the spring and, forming three lines round the islet not regularly complete, but a part here and a part there though in perfect order. These lines are said to be the Dwara of the Chakra.

Chakra or Yantra of Rajni Devi (Tulamulla)

What is a Chakra? It is a mystic symbol. Every goddess has her own Chakra. The Chakra of Kshir Bhavani consists of seven parts enclosed one within the other. The Chakra popularly known as Yantra embodies Mother Goddess with Her Shakties.

The people well-versed in various forms of Tantric cult take mystic symbol to represent the inward psychic centres of the body and concentrating on it under proper guidance are supposed to acquire various superphysical powers. Tantrikism is the content of the Vedas and Agamas and differs from one place to another challenging many syntheses. This is found amply in Agamas in different systems as invocations of female deities identical with Shakties. A special Power of goddess representing it is the time-honoured-form of worship. The worship offers a mystic blend of Brahmanical and Buddhi practices.

The Tantrikism has much influenced countries, all ages, all places and all systems of philosophic thoughts and all ritualistic practices. Innumerable are the systems of Tantric worship called by different names, forms and systems. It has its own mine of literature with its celebrated authors. A few of them are enumerated below :

Agama Tantrikism, Yamala Tantrikism, Samyachara Tantrikism, Vajrayana Tantrikism, Kapalika Tantrikism, Saiva Tantrikism, Siddha Tantrikism

Like all other metaphysical reorientations Tantrikism is a way of worship. Tantrik symbolism and rituals elevate a man to a state of bliss leading to salvation. The Tantrik psycho-physical discipline formulates the diagram known Chakra, Yantra and Yoga. Rajni Devi (Kshir Bhavani Devi) has Her prescribed diagram for worship in Tantra Shastra which is reproduced here. It embodies the system as right-handed Tantrikism. The following is the system of Rajni Devi's diagram (Chakra) with her Shaktis as borne by the descriptions in the relative manuscripts and available literature on the subject.

Puja of the Devi or Worship of Goddess Rajnidevi

Dwara (Gate) (Outer line) (Siddhis)

1. Animah Siddhi Namah
2. Mahima Siddhi Namah
3. Lagima Siddhi Namah
4. Eshata Siddhi Namah

Middle Line (Mudra)

1. Sarva Sankhobini Mudrayay Namah,
2. Sarva Vidrawani Mudrayay Namah
3. Sarva Karshani Mudrayay Namah
4. Sarva Vashankari Mudrayay Namah

Innermost line (Shaktis)

1. Brahmi Shakty Namah
2. Maheshwari Shakty Namah
3. Kumari Shakty Namah
4. Vaishnavi Shakty Namah

Ashta Dal (Adhishtatri Devis)

1. Brahmey Namah
2. Maheshwaryay Namah
3. Kumarey Namah
4. Vaishnavey Namah
5. Varahey Namah
6. Narsimhey Namah
7. Indriyay Namah
8. Chamundey Namah

Shath Kon

1. Saraswatayay Namah
2. Lakshmeyay Namah
3. Ashta Dash-Bojayay Namah
4. Ashta Bojayay Namah
5. Dashannayay Namah
6. Gowriyay Namah

Trikon

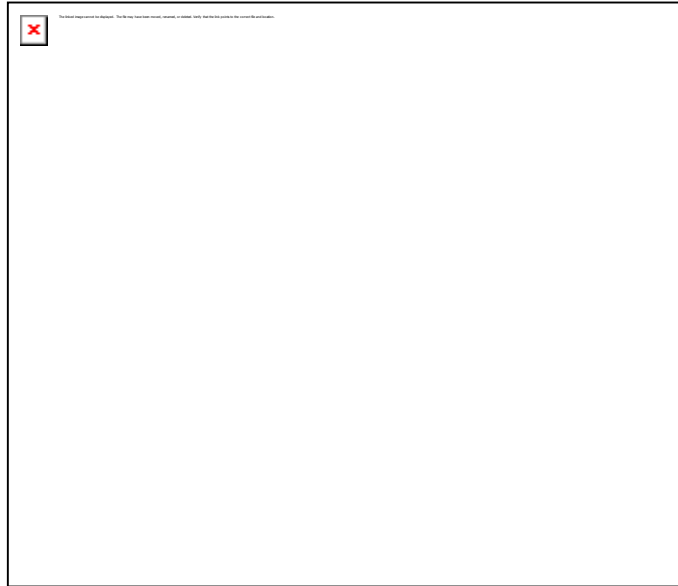
1. Maha Kaliyay Namah
2. Maha Saraswatayay Namah
3. Maha Lakshmeyay Namah

Bindu (The Point)

Shree Mah Rajniyay Namah
We meditate upon Shri Maha Rajni
"The Great Empress"
Who is the embodiment of peace and
Who is the giver of wealth that is sought

The people living round the island whether Hindus or Mohammedans have a great veneration for the goddess. They never eat meat when they have to go over there. They go there with their bodies and clothes washed.

1. Bindu A point.
2. Trikon A triangle with its apex (3 angled) downwards.
3. Shatkon Two triangles inverted. (6 angled) The vertices of the one resting on the side of the other.
4. Valai A circle.
5. Ashta Eight lotus leaves resting Dal on the circle.
6. Tri Valai Three circles.
7. Dwar Three lines with half (gate) triangles in the middle, enclosing all other parts and completing the Chakra.



According to a Sanskrit stanza by an unknown author, the discovery of the spring was made on Ashara Saphthami*, seventh day of bright fortnight in June-July, but pilgrims from all parts of Kashmir come here on every eighth day (Ashtami) of the bright fortnight of every lunar month, while the chief festival is held on Zetha Ashtami (about May). They light candles made from ghee (clarified butter), and bum dhup (incense), to the accompaniment of the music of ringing of bells played by the priest. The offering is Khir (preparation of rice in milk and sugar), with sometimes

admixture of ghee, raisins, dates, coconuts, and pieces of sugar candy in odd numbers. The recitation of Sanskrit hymns from scriptures along with offerings of flowers and rice in spring completes a form of worship. A portion of these offerings is distributed among relatives and friends.

At dusk, hundreds of people assemble round the spring with candles waving. The head priest also waves a candle, while the other priests blow conch shells and horns, beat timbrels, ring bells, and wave "morechells" (peacock's tail feathers). All pilgrims recite hymns, producing a singular mixture of sounds, and creating a religious atmosphere diffusing spiritual vibrations everywhere. The whole congregation standing in a devotional mood concentrates on the image of the goddess and seeks to merge itself in the Primordial Energy pervading the universe. I think, this united form of worship is more impressive if some set verses were selected and recited together than individual for sometime. After this had been done every person could follow his own way according to his own peculiar bent of mind.

Every Kashmiris' Hindu has his own Presiding Deity. When a child is born to him or when his son is married he has to take him to his Presiding Goddess for thanks offering. Khir Bhawani is the Presiding Deity of the majority of the Kashmiri Brahmins.

The spring has been cleansed twice within living memory and some of the idols (murties) taken out of it, have been placed in the temple. Once again the Khirbhawini Spring was cleansed. The operation which began on the 30th of January 1970 lasted till July 10, 1970. An electric pump conducted these operations round the clock. The mire and sediment which lay at the bottom were removed. A large quantity of water flowed out making the spring fresh and sparkling. As a result of this operation, the spring bubbled out in several directions. In the middle of the spring, milky water flowed out. While the mud and mire were being removed several golden ornaments and silver pieces offered by the devotees from time to time were collected, from the bottom of the spring. The spring was thus cleansed for the fourth time.

(* On this day the Brahmins of the Valley draw figures of the sun in all seven colours on the floors, kitchens, compounds of their houses. This is probably done to show that the sun occupies its highest position in the heavens on this day.)

The author of this article (late) Pt. Samsar Chand Kaul (1883-1977) has been a renowned educationist, ornithologist and environmentalist of that time. He has studied Jammu and Kashmir State in depth and has written the book, "Beautiful Valley of Kashmir", which has a remarkable foreword from the legendary C. E. Tyndale Biscoe, which is a tribute to the multifaceted personality of Pt. Samsar Chand Kaul. Besides, he was also a great scholar in Kashmiri Shaivism.

Excerpt from, "Srinagar & its Environs by Samsar Chand Kaul.

Courtesy: [Kashmir News Network \(KNN\)](#)

My Offering

The much that has gone by,
In years of honest endeavor,
Tension, strife, abiding relationships,
Success of jobs well done,
And many tasks waiting.
And now the little left,
Of years to come,
In content richer and fulfilling,
Fruition at last,
After long years of of travail and trails.
Clouds seem to lift now,
Over the mountain tops,
And the Sun is peeping through,
Giving message of joy,
Peace, love and compassion.
And with my hands stretched,
I stand at my doorstep, waiting,
For guests in need to bless me,
With their acceptance,
Of my offering.

*[Excerpt from **Life, Love & Joy**, a collection of Poems by Manmohan Dhar]*

Historic Construction Saga : a Prospective Revival Model

*[Given below are the excerpts from the publication "Samaj Sudhar Samiti and its Role", by N. N. Dangroo and Justice J. N. Bhat (Retd.). During the early preparatory stage of this Vitasta Annual, I took the opportunity of calling on Justice Bhat Sahib at Jammu who is regrettably bed-ridden & therefore unable to contribute an article on our Homeland Shrines. He was, however, kind enough to present me his publication from which a thought provoking and emotional piece on Khirbhawani is reproduced in this Annual. It is a homage to "dedication" of our elders who devoted their lives unsung and unmourned for the cause of preserving our homeland shrines. They are no more amongst us, yet, the **mantra of their dedication**, will ever remain, as the beacon light for our present survival in exile and future revival of our identity in our homeland. - Editor-in-Chief]*

Shri Khir Bhawani Construction Committee

It was the Jeth Ashtami festival in the year 1954, Yatris had assembled at the Asthapan in Tulamulla in maximum number for Pooja (offering prayers) and to celebrate the festival at the shrine alongwith children as was the usual practice. Pavitarasathan Prabhandak Vibagh joined together and a separate organisation under the name of Sh. Khir Bhawani Construction Committee was proposed and brought into existence. Raja Opendar Krishen Koul was its Chairman and Pt. Gopi Kishen its convener. Some members of the P. P. Vibagh were nominated as the members of this committee besides some others namely Bala Kak Dhar, Balkak Khodabali, Kesheo Nath Moza, Kashi Nath Koul, Sat Lal and a few more including Sh. Shridhar Joo Dhar and J. N. Daftari. This committee had several meetings. A party went to Tullamulla to have a survey on spot. The Dharmarth Department which was controlling the shrine and administrating its affairs and collecting donations, offerings made at the Devi's rosy feet, was still in exile subsequent to the Pakistan raids. So Sh. Khirbhawani Construction Committee took full interest in the improvement of Devi Angan premises; later on it acquired some more land in the close proximity of the shrine for raising Dharamashalla for Yatris.

It was decided that in the first instance the Island premises of the Devi Angan be saved from further deterioration. It had been turned into a descending slope all round with continued erosion by the Nalla. Pacca Stone wall was decided to be raised round the premises. The Devi Angan is surrounded by the Sindh Nala water which flows profously with speed throughout the summer months. This menace of the year to year erosion was to be guarded against for which a Pacca stone parapet wall was the only remedy.

Sh. Satalal Sadhu was again on the move. One Pt. Gana Lal Sadhu of Alikadal was called and asked to undertake on contract basis the building of pacca stone wall from the water bed raising two feet ground level to protect the entire Devi Angan and the shops. Parties went round to collect funds for the construction work. Donations were offered by devotees liberally. Pt. Kesheo Nath Moza was chosen to be the suitable person to look after the construction work and he was designated as the honorary Manager incharge of the constructions at the shrine. Sh. Shridhar Joo Dhar was the treasurer and Mr. Niranjan Nath as the Assistant Secretary. In this way the construction committee started functioning earnestly. Gana Lal Tikoo of Alikadal accepted the contract and during the course of the year a bulwork was raised round the Devi Angan from waterbed measuring six to eight feet high from bed level. The gaps were filled with dry earth The earth filling inside the wall was removed from the descending slope and this gave the premises a decent look besides providing space of several feet all round.

Land was available, on the other side of the nalla to the west, facing the Devi Temple. Shri Kesheo Nath Moza with the assistance of some well wishers of Tulamulla started negotiations for the purchase of some Kanals of land from the owners. It was not a single person or family, but several families who were to be tackled. The sagacity of Sh. Moza and his sobriety and social nature made it possible that within a period of a year or so some Kanals of land were acquired

from the owners by purchase at very moderate rates. Some part of it was donated by two Pandit devotees of Tulammula free of cost. A big piece of land measuring over 10 Kanals was thus acquired by the Shri Khirbhawani Construction Committee, facing the Ragniya Devi temple. It was a distance of some 20-30 yards which lay between the island and the acquired land and over it the flowing Nalla sometimes overflowed the land and it was somewhat marshy, because of its low height from water surface and kacha bank.

The land was taken over and the Sh., Khir Bhawani Construction Committee had several meetings for further planning. The first important decision taken was to divert the flowing Nalla, so that it could flow farther away from the Island Deviangan just parallel to its existing position leaving the acquired land quite adjacent to the Devi Angan without flowing water partitioning the entire area. Besides the Island Devi Angan, the Dharmarth Department controlled some more marshy land on the north east, covered by willow trees (called *nambal*) but it too was separated by the same nalla on the Northern side. So the Construction Committee planned to divert the course of the Nalla from upper stretch so as some portion of the *nambal* could also be covered to reach the Island and then *nala* flow over the acquired land on its western side just made parallel to its center course. This part of the plan was executed during winter months when the water flow is very meagre. The water in the newly dug *nala* started flowing in the following summer with its usual vigour and old course turned dry with the result that the damp acquired land and the *Nambal* area also became dry in the course of a few months. In this way the land acquired by the construction committee became a dry stretch of flat ground when some pits appearing here and there were filled with dry earth, during the course of summer months. Meanwhile funds were being collected from donors and Pt. Kesheo Nath Moza, was the leading person. Pt. Shyam Lal Saraf was the Forest Minister then and he was approached and persuaded to be a patron (if not a member of the construction committee). Some more bureaucrats were also enlisted as patrons. A sub-committee of technicians was formed to prepare a plan for construction of Dharamashallas on the land. Pt. Kashi Nath Koul (a sectional officer in State service) who was a member of the committee was made responsible and he devoted time and energy in preparing the said plans and estimates in construction with other technically qualified sympathisers. A telephone connection was also secured in the name of Sh. Khir Bhawani Construction Committee and installed in a room of Samaj Sudhar Samiti Headquarters at Shivalaya, that was occupied as the office for the committee in Srinagar. While all this process was going on, Bakshi Gulam Mohd, the then Prime Minister of the State was approached and requested to sanction free timber from the State Forest Deptt. for the constructions at Khir Bhawani Ji Ashthapan. The State Govt. had already sanctioned free supply of timber for Charari-Sharief and so a precedent had been set. The good offices of Sh. Shyamalal Saraf, Forest Minister proved quite helpful and the process was initiated. Those days Sudhar Samiti had come into prominence because of its role in relief work done by it and then its working for improvement at the Shri Khir Bhawani Ashthapan. The development at the shrine with the efforts of the Samiti's dedicated members and workers during the first decade of its existence brought appreciation from all quarters. During the period the Samiti secured also sanction from the State Information Department to issue a weekly paper of its own, named 'The Jyoti' and it was soon published with Shri Amar Nath Orgra as its printer, publisher and Honorary Editor. Pt. Ganga Dhar Bhat Dehati and Pt. Ram Chand Abhai were its working editors during fifties and sixties. During this period a conference of Kashmiri Hindus was held in the spacious ground of the Shivalaya, which was attended by delegates of the towns of Anantnagh, Sopore and Baramulla and also some prominent villages of the valley. The conference had its session and on the 3rd day it passed several resolutions in its primary session stressing the need for unity and social reform and pressing the Govt. to rehabilitate the dislocated Pandits still living as refugees. As a consequence a Dharam Sabha comprising one hundred prominent members of the community was also formed, which was required to meet regularly after spans of a fortnight or so. But unfortunately, it did not work and so did not last long.

Sudhar Samiti and Yuvak Sabha

The activities of Samaj Sudhar Samiti aroused jealousies. The representative body of Kashmiri Pandits namely All J&K Youngman Association (commonly known Kashmiri Pandith Yuvak Sabha) that had been the political body of the Kashmiri Pandiths since 1931, had become dormant soon after the National Conference took over the charge of the State Administration and ruled the State. It laid down that no other political organisation could stand to represent an individual community. Pt. Shiv Narayan Fotedar was the President of Yuvak Sabha at the time of Qabali raids and after. The members of the Yuvak Sabha did not see eye to eye with the Sudhar Samiti, when they saw that the latter was gaining field in the community and with the State Administration. The Dharmarth Department which went into exile, when Maharaja Hari Singh left the valley to settle in Jammu (and later in Bombay), was getting rehabilitated in the valley when Dr. Karan Singh took over as the Sadari-Riyasat of the State and also assumed the charge as the Sole Trustee of Dharmarth Department in place of his father Maharaja Hari Singh. The Dharmarth Department officials and employees did not favour the existance of the parallel body namely Shri Khir Bhawani Construction Committee to look after the affairs at Tulamulla shrine to improve the conditions there by adding more land and raising Dharamshallas. By word and deed these two rival bodies created difficulties here and there.

The sub-committee prepared a Master Plan for improvement and building up of a spacious two storeyed Dharmashalla, a few one storey Yagin-shallas and some smaller huts on the acquired land. It also proposed that the island Devi-Angan (in the shape of ellipse) remains an open landscape with the holy spring (as it was already) and the Devi's temple in the middle. It proposed also that the deteriorated ricketty Dharamshalla standing on the Devi Angan be demolished by the Dharmarth Department and a new one raised outside the land space just around its present site, but on the land of the Dharmarth that was available, due to diversion of the Nalla, and had dried up. A representative body of the Construction Committee met Dr. Karan Singh and explained to him the advantages of the proposed plan. He gave a patient hearing and promised to get it considered by his Dharmarth council; but neither any concurrence was received from the Dharmarth Department nor any written refusal. It was given out through some of its employees that Department had no proposal to demolish deteriorated Dharamshalla standing in the Devi Angan, so the Construction Committee was left to see to its own part of the plan and it concentrated its activities to collect funds and follow up the case for free supply of Timber by the State Forest Department.

It is quite heartening to put down here that the sincere efforts of the dedicated workers of the committee got, for carrying out its programme, whatever it cherished for in the name of Goddess Raginya Devi. They collected funds from liberal donors; received Govt. sanction authorising lifting of one lac cft of timber free of cost from certain forests in Baramulla District after paying normal royalty charges. But it is very painful to mention that at present, when this short description is being written very few from that batch of ardent heroes are living now. They have left, one by one for the heavenly abode earlier. The persons whom I named here are all gone and a few more namely Shri Janki Nath Daftari, Prof. Kashi Nath Dhar, Shree Janki Nath Bhan who cooperated with me in the affairs of the shrine in later years also passed away. Regretfully, I admit that I believe that I am the only founder life member of the Sudhar Samiti of the Shri Khir Bhawani surviving this time and staying in Srinagar.

So I resume my short description about the activities at the shrine. Pt. Kesho Nath Moza was the honorary Manager, staying on spot at Tulamulla. Pt. Shidhar Joo Dhar was the treasurer and he having been retired from Govt. service as a Conservator of forests, was an expert to advise about the lifting of the timber, its transport and stocking at the shrine. One Pt. Gopi Chand of Rainawari, who was a retired forest ranger was engaged on honorarium to look after the arrangement. Pt. Mukund Joo Tangnoo of Safakadal, a technical hand was also by the side of Pt. Kashi Nath Koul (technical advisor of the Samiti) to find and arrange parties of masons and carpenters to work at the shrine. Pt. Bala Kak Dhar was the Chairman of the construction committee (after Raja Krishan

Koul) and there was a rapport with Sh. Shyamlal Saraf who also evinced great interest at what was being done at the shrine. After the first consignment of timber was received, the sawers and carpenters were at work, for the major Dharmashalla measuring 80' by 30'. It was technically advised that the foundation be laid after the ground (which had been marshy) is made enough strong to bear the heavy structure. So five hundred Devdar Poles were piled into it when the foundation was laid. It was done in the presence of a big congregation of devotee members of the committee and other sympathisers and well-wishers of the Community so the construction work at the shrine began in full swing and parties visited off and on to know progress and meet the needs of the Manager and extend him cooperation at the site. The collected funds were deposited in the Punjab National Bank in the name of Sh. Khir Bhawani Construction Committee and were operated upon the joint signatures of Gopi Krishan (Convener) and Shri Shridhar Joo Dhar (Treasurer). All kind of materials that were needed for the purpose were available and the work progressed satisfactorily.

According to the plan after the main Dharamshalla was raised up at the North end of the plot, along the bank of the *nalla* flowing to backside, one more 2 storeyed building called Manager's Hut was raised in the same row at the southern end. In between the two buildings, one storeyed *Yagin-shalla* were raised, each comprising an open hall for performing the Yagias and 2 attached rooms for kitchen and store. In the open space left between the two buildings and the Devi Angan, a number of one room huts were constructed, where a Sadhu or a devotee could stay for some days for meditations. In a period of about 2 years the planned items were completed to the satisfaction of all concerned and the general public. Fingers were raised here and there, which aspect cannot be generally ignored. Among the labour class engaged during the construction there was a local youngman named Sona Bhat, in whom the Manager had confidence. The Manager put this man as the Chowkidar of the construction committee at the shrine - this Sona Bhat continues to be the Chowkidar there even at present and has been looking after the building and the willow plantations existing on the land, when all Hindu residents migrated from the village.

After the Construction Committee had completed the planned work, the Dharmarth Department perhaps felt humbled. It demolished the deteriorated Dharamshalla and ignoring the good suggestion of the Construction Committee to shift it some yards behind, they constructed it on the same site. The shifting of the Dharamshala would provide more open land with the Devi Angan for the facility of yatris. They reconstructed a two storeyed building and annexed one storeyed small *yagia-shalla* on the same site with extension, along the stone-bulwork raised by the Construction Committee to defend the Island-Devi Angan. The building houses the Dharmarth office, stores and the residential rooms of their Dharmarth Manager at the shrine and leaves very few rooms for its yatris to shelter. Any how, the constructions raised by the Construction Committee provided vast accommodation for the yatris and they have been using it all the time since these were constructed.

Soon the ill luck had its turn, a local *mastana* named Kashi Nath, occupied a room of the big Dharamshalla and continued staying there. What happened - only great Goddess knows it. One morning the room where the *Mastana* was staying caught fire and soon engulfed the building and reduced it to ashes. The sad news reached Srinagar Office in the afternoon and it caused grief and dismay in general and to the public in particular to dedicated members and sympathisers. The Construction Committee had little funds in hand to restart the rehabilitation of the gutted Dharamshalla. The manager Sh. Kesho Nath Moza with a few more members again camped on spot and had meetings to assess the loss. Fortunately Dharamshalla was insured against fire. The Insurance officials were approached and persuaded to settle the case expeditiously. Moza Sahib's efforts (peace to his soul), were admirable. He collected funds and meanwhile the Insurance money also became available. The technical advisor. Pt. Kashi Nath Koul with some more experts prepared a fresh estimate and a few months after the tragic episode the reconstruction of the Dharamshalla was undertaken. While on the previous occasion wooden material was mostly used in the construction because of its availability from the supply made by

the forest department, this time the work was done mostly in cement concrete. Even the stair-cases were raised in iron and cement; both storey has pacca open varandahas extended in front with proper tin roofing. The roof over the verandhas also was in cement concrete but it leaked after some time and it has been replaced of late by corrugated tin sheets, projecting the roof ahead. After Dharmarth Department built the Dharmshalla in the Devi Angan and somewhat restored its position at the shrine, it remained hostile to the Construction Committee and generally put hurdles to the committee's employees' in working there. To eclipse what had been achieved on the extended land provided at the shrine by the Construction Committee, the Dharmarth employees raised one storeyed hutments on the Devi Angan. Forgetting this aspect, the efforts of the Construction Committee have been appreciated by the general public, as it certainly provided space and accommodation for the Yatris, visitors and tourists, who do come and stay in the spacious rooms of the buildings and the four Yagia-Shallas, which usually remained in use for performance of havans/yagias by the devotees.

Starting from mid fifties, the Shri Khir Bhawani Construction Committee was an active body of dedicated workers for a decade or so. Sh. Janki Nath Daftari, a zealot social worker was an active member of the National Conference and in fifties had been holding some office of responsibility in the National Conference working committee. It was during the period of Sheikh Mohd Abdulla and Bakshi Ghulam Mohd that he remained very much attached with the Conference. He showed much interest in the activities of the Samaj Sudhar Samiti, but could not make himself physically available for active participation in early years. From early sixties he participated actively and was enlisted as a zealous member of the organization. He was brought on the working committee of the construction committee. Soon after that time onwards, he remained fully engaged in its affairs (while other responsible members of the committee had departed earlier) till his end came in 1987.

The sixties were over and the work of plantation, annual repairs and watch and ward arrangement at the shrine were going on according to a laid-down programme. Then started so to say disbandment of the dedicated members/workers. Pt. Gopi Krishan achieved a higher position and started his foreign visits as a preacher of `Kundalin', Pt. Bal Kak Dhar was no more active and had left for heavenly abode. Manager Kesheo Nath Moza was in Rajasthan (at Udaipur) and after a brief illness also left for heavenly abode in 1971. In seventies, the dedicated members, Amar Nath Ogra, Aftab Joo Wanchoo, Pt. Kashi Nath Koul (General Secretary) Kashi Nath Koul (Technical Advisor) parted from us one by one. Pt. Shridar Jo Dhar and Niranganjan Nath (myself), jointly operated on the funds of the Construction Committee, when Gopi Krishen's presence became rare. Sh. S. L. Saraf and Janki Nath Daftari, were two other members left from the band of dedicated score. As seventies ended Pt. Shridhar Joo Dhar left for his heavenly abode and soon after S. L. Saraf followed the same. Shri Dhar who had been maintaining the cash books of construction committee for all these years since its inception transferred the book to N. N. Dangroo (myself) while on his sick-bed asking him to maintain it, showing his inability to do so, any more, some months before his departure. Pt. Gopi Krishen generally stayed in Delhi after his foreign tours. In 1983/84 he came for a change to Srinagar after some serious illness and soon left for heavenly abode. Prof. K. N. Dhar who was associated followed the same way a year after. Pt. Sudharshan Koul advocate who was associated with Construction Committee was available for active participation Shri J. N. Daftari took ill in 1987 and so was almost incapacitated for active service, that was his usual hobby. He was on bed after a few months and then he also left the world stage in early 1988 for his heavenly home.

Later in the year 1988 in a general meeting, held at Tulamulla, besides some five local dedicated youths, six more members were from Srinagar elected to be on the Construction Committee. Pt. Sudharshan Koul Advocate was elected the Chairman of the committee and Shri N. N. Dangroo as Secretary-cum-treasurer as before. Shri Soom Nath of Tulamulla (a senior Govt. teacher) was the vice president in place of Pt. Kashi Nath Bhat of Tullamulla who was now sickly man. Shri Moti Lal Daftari was elected as the organizer and Publicity Secretary and Shri Soidama Koul (a retired well reputed artist from Kashmir Radio, who had taken his stay in a two room Chowki at

the shrine) was the Assistant Secretary and some more office bearers were named. The committee started working and some plans for development were taken in hand. But 1989 brought the disaster of Pandits in the valley and the entire Hindu population of Tulamulla migrated in early summer of 1990. Noble Sodama Jee breathed his last at the shrine, while the Pandits were still there and was cremated near the big **Chinar** standing on the land of the construction committee. Sodharshan Koul and other members also migrated to Delhi and Jammu. At present Niranjana Nath (myself) and Girdhar Lal Kakroo are in Srinagar and Sona Bhat Chowkidar (at Tulamulla) are the custodians of the Construction Committee assets at the Khir Bhawani Jee asthapan. So ends the tragic tale.

Great Goddess has been kind! I had the good fortune of bowing at Her Lotus Feet at the shrine this year on Jeth Ashtami (18th June 1992) after more than 2 years. It was a good congregation on this day at Khir Bhawani Jee. I went round and had a look at the Dharamshallas accompanied by Sona Bhat Chowkidar.

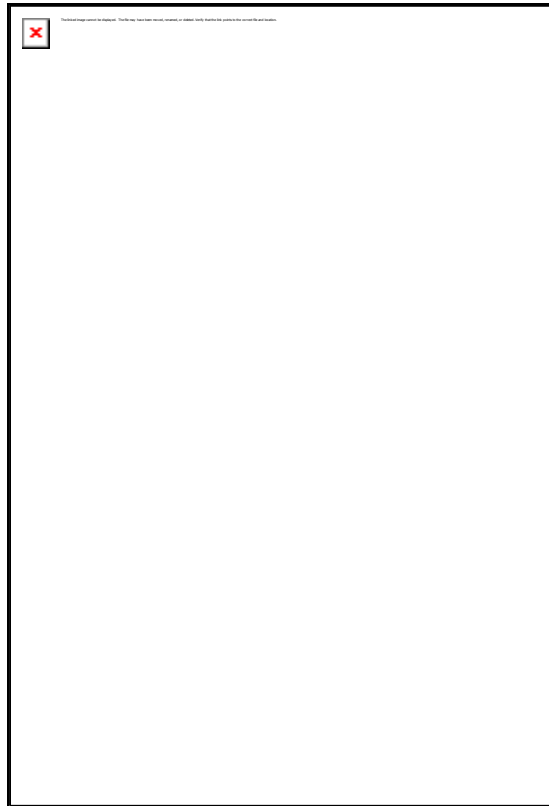
The author of this article is Shri N. N. Dangroo, an outstanding social reformer, Ex-General Secretary of Samaj Sudhar Samiti and the Patron of Samaj Sudhar Samiti Trust.

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The Mysterious Cave of Amarnath
Samsar Chand Kaul

Man's search after God began with the dawn of creation. This search has assumed various forms, some seekers have concentrated on the teachings of the great prophets of religions, and others have gone on pilgrimages to the birth places of saints and prophets and visited localities where the different gospels were preached. Thereby they seek inspiration to help them in their quest.

The grandeur of Northern India lies in its glorious mountain ranges . . . the Himalayas. It is on these ramparts of Nature that the prosperity of India depends. Shri Krishna says in the Bhagwat Gita, 'I am the Himalayas among mountains.' The Indians look upon them as the abode of celestial beings. It is said that in the caves of Himalayas live sages who have been in meditation for hundreds of years. They occasionally reveal themselves in disguise to pilgrims. Among the many holy places in the side-valleys of these mountains, two Kidar Nath towards the south and Amar Nath in the interior of Kashmir Himalaya's stand out prominently. There are also a number of mountain peaks which are dedicated to certain gods or goddesses. The most sacred spots in Tibet on the further side of the Indian border are Mount Kailas and the Manasarowar lake where adepts in spiritual lore are supposed to be living in their subtle bodies. These Masters are ever ready to guide the travellers on the spiritual path. I think one of the reasons why men go to these places is to see the Hand of the Creation in scenes of Nature's impressive grandeur. As these places are not easy of access, and as they are thousands of feet above the sea-level, beyond the dust and din of the world, man's soul gets elevated at the sight of their sublime beauty and thus he is brought closer to the object of his quest.



There are special days fixed according to the lunar calendar to visit these sacred places. The pilgrims assemble on a certain date in a certain place and start together. Such a rule is applicable

only to those places which lie in mountains and the going is difficult. The Government provide facilities as far as possible everywhere for pilgrims.

The most famous of these pilgrimages is the Cave of Amar Nath which is an All-India Holy Place. People visit it from every corner of India. Mention of it occurs twice in the Rajatarangini (the history of Kashmir), first where the King Ram Deva is stated to have imprisoned the debauch King Sukh Deva and to have drowned him in the Lidder (Lambodheri) among the mountains of Amar Nath about 1,000 B.C., and a second time where King Sandimati (34 B.C. to 17 A.D.) is described as visiting the ice-lingam.

This shows that this sacred spot was known to the people in very early times. One can only guess as to how this cave was discovered. The villagers of the Kashmir Valley generally send their flocks under a shepherd's care to the pastures in summer. Each shepherd has his own pasture which he inherits from his father. The word Pahalgam means 'a village of shepherds'. While grazing his flock round the pastures of Pansatarni, some shepherd may have lost some members of his flock. In search of these he may have climbed the mountain and found this cave with the Shiva-lingam in it and communicated the news to his brothers who in turn must have made it known to others. The Maliks as the guides to the cave are now called, have a share in the offerings to the deity. Formerly, in absence of tangas and lorries the whole journey from Srinagar was done on foot. There were a large number of springs, places and streams in the way where the pilgrims had to bathe, and drink water. Since the introduction of wheeled conveyances many of these places have been abandoned being out of the way, and much time is thus saved. For the information of the reader I give a detailed list of places which a pilgrim is expected to visit for a bath and other ceremonial purposes.

Old Route. According to the Amar Nath Mahatmya a pilgrim is expected to bathe or drink water at the following places before he enters the Holy Cave. As some of the places are not accessible to wheeled conveyance, they are not now visited by pilgrims.

Srinagar : Shudashi Khetor, the modern Shurahyar about 2.5 miles from Srinagar. It is said that in ancient times there was a stone staircase leading from this place to the top of the Shankarachar. Lately a temple has been built here.

Shivpor : There must have been a temple here, but there is no trace of it now.

Pandrethan : The old Panthdreshti about 1.5 miles from Shurahyar. There is a temple in the middle of the spring built by Meru the Prime Minister of King Paratha (921-31 A.D.). Kak is of opinion that this is the temple of Shiv Rilhanesvara erected by Rilhana, the Prime Minister of Jayasimha, about the year A.D. 1135.

Padampor : This was the favourite haunt of Rajank Acharyas the present Razdan family. It is 5.5 miles from Pandrethan. It was here that Shri Lalishwari lived. There is a spot here which is called Lalatrag.

Javati : The modern Zewan. It is 7 miles from Srinagar. The road is metalled. There is a spring here dedicated to Vasak Nag. There are regular buses running now.

Meshitoud : It means sweet water, the modern Petwan.

Avantiporika : It is known as Seda Khetor, the modern Avantipor. There are at this place old temples built by King Avantivarman (855-88. A.C.).

Barsu : There is a stream flowing through the village called Rudara Ganga.

Jaubror : There must have been a temple here in olden times.

Mahawarishwarn : The old Mahawaras.

Haridrak Ganapati : Known as Hari Ganish.

Belihar : Known as Belyar. This was known as Lakhmi Khetor.

Wagahama : The place is known as Hastikaran.

Tsakrish : The modern Tsakodar. This is a plateau on the right bank of the Vitasta near Bijbihara. It is 28 miles from Srinagar.

Dewak Tirth : The modern Dewakivar.

Hari Tsander : It is the southern ghat of the Bijbihara stone temple. It contains a huge stone lingam.

Sthalwat : The modern Thajwor. It is 2.75 Miles from Bijbehara and here water drips from the southern side of the plateau through maiden-hair on the Shivalingam.

Suryi-Gohawati : The modern Sriguphvara. It is 4.75 miles from Thajwor.

Lambodari : A stream in which the pilgrims have to bathe.

Sirhom : Here is a spring called Surya Ganga where worship takes place.

Bodrus : The place is sacred to Ganpat whose worship removes all obstacles.

Tsatrus Bodrus : The place is now called Hayi.

Shirshi Ashram : The Woter Nag Ganga flows by this Spot. It is 2 miles from Sriguphvara.

Sallar : Here the people bathe in the stream. The place is 3.5 miles from Tsatrus Bodrus and is reached by a pony track.

Bala Khelyan : Known as Vishna Khetor, the modern Bala Khellan.

Ganish Bal : 10.5 miles from Sallar. Here Ganish is worshipped. It is on the right bank of the Lidder below Pahalgam.

Mamalishwar (Shiva Lingam) : On the right bank of the Lidder is a spring and an old temple containing a Shiva Lingam at this place which is about a mile from Pahalgam. It is said that when Shiva removed His seat from Thojwara to Mamalishwar, Ganish who was his door-keeper did not allow devas to visit Him. Hence the name of the village Mamal - don't go.

On one occasion Indra sought permission to visit Shiva. Ganish did not allow him. So there followed a quarrel, Ganish became furious and thirsty. He drank the river which became dry. Shiva while playing at his tabor poked the stomach of Ganish with it and out flowed the stream again, hence Lambodari.

In my opinion the source of the Lidder is the Kolahoi glacier. A stream joins it at Lidderwat which is the corrupt form of Lambodar wat-a rock dedicated to Ganish who is also named Lambodar and it is from here that the river was named Lambodari the modern Lidder. This must have been a place of pilgrimage in the olden times. An affluent from Tarsar enters the river at this place.

Bragapati Khetra : It is a spring in Pahalgam. It is said that Vishnu was pleased with the worship of Brago whom He embraced. Brago perspired, which gave rise to a spring. This spring is behind the village.

Nila Ganga : It is about 3 miles from Pahalgam. Close by the foot of Pisu Hill was the tirth of Sthanishwar where pilgrims had to bathe. One day Shiva kissed the eyes of Parvati to which antimony had been applied. He washed her eyes in water which turned dark-blue, hence Nila Ganga. There was a great fight between the Devas and the Daityas. The Devas did not allow the Daityas to see Shiva. The Daityas were defeated and ground down to tiny bits. Hence Pisu Hill.

Sheshiram Nag : A certain Daitya's body was entirely made of wind. He became very powerful. He troubled the Devas every way. They all entreated Shiva to rid them of the monster. Shiva told them that he was his disciple, and that they should approach Vishnu, which they did. Vishnu sent his Wahan, Sheshi Nag who sucked all the wind from the Daitya's body and the Daitya was killed. Pilgrims bathe in the lake.

Vaovajen : Some of the Daityas still concealed themselves in the lakes around the place. These lakes, were dried and the Daityas were killed. Hence Hoka Sar (dried lake). The Deva's were told to build small houses of stones as a shelter against the wind. Hence pilgrims also make toy sheds of stones.

Pantsatarni : This is believed to represent plaited hair (jata) of Shiva from which the Ganga flows. It is said that Shiva told one of his Rudhragans to beat the drum every evening. He forgot to do so one evening. Thereupon he was cursed and turned into a mountain which is now known as Bairau Bal.

Garbagar : On the other side of the Bairau Bal is Garbagar popularly known as Garba Yatra. Nandi complained to Shiva that he could not stop the rush of Devas coming to visit him. He ordered Nandi to get a huge rock and make a hole through it, so that every one desirous of visiting him would have to pass through that hole while Nandi would be standing near the hole.

Amaravati : All living beings besought Shiva to disclose a method which would render them immortal. Thereupon Shiva rinsed His plaited hair (jata) and out flowed the Amaravati-the stream of immortality. Some of the drops fell here and there giving birth to some of the gods, while himself he turned into Sudhaling (immortal emblem) in a corner of the cave. Every one being satisfied praised Shiva.

Sangam : The confluence of the Amaravati with the Pantsatarni is the place where a pilgrim has to perform Shrada (a ceremony for the dead). He is required to make a pedestal of barley flour with four golden nails struck in the four corners and a pure pearl set in the middle which should be given in charity to a Brahman who is supposed to be Shiva's form. When returning from Pahalgam the pilgrims revisit Mamalishwar and bathe in the nine springs of Naudal.

Patal Ganga : This is the last place where a pilgrim has to bathe. This is a spring near Nishat Bagh.

Chhari Saheb : In the Bragish Sahita it is said that after Reshi Kashap Ji reclaimed the Kashmir Valley from the waters it became populated through the agency of Nag Raja Takhek. It so happened once that Bragish Reshi roaming through the Himalayas arrived here. It was he who

gave a clue of the cave of Amar Nath Ji to the people. He gave them a detailed account of the Tirthas and the places on the route to the cave.

After some decades the Daityas had the upper hand here and this place fell into oblivion, and the people forgot all about the route. Thereupon Bragish ji reappeared. He told the people that he had propitiated Bhagwan Mahadiv from whom he had obtained a sceptre which he had entrusted to Nag Raj Takhek. They should go and get this sceptre from Nag Raj, and while ruler of the country shall make arrangements for the Pilgrims who should start in a body from Srinagar with the holy sceptre in front. There would be no hindrance nor any trouble on the way. The sceptre called the Chhari Sahib wielded at present by the Mahant under the supervision of the Dharmartha Department has led the procession of pilgrims ever since.

In 1819 A.C. Pandit Har Dass Tiku founded the Chhawani Amar Nath at Rambagh where the Sadhus from the plains assembled and where he gave them free rations for the journey, both ways from his own private resources. This cost him about two lakhs.

The Mahants who wield the divine command of holy place have always been the carriers of two holy sceptres which symbolise that command. Wherever a Mahant visits a place and takes his seat with ceremony a man holding one of the sceptres stands on his right and the other on his left.

The whole Amar Nath pilgrimage procession is conducted under the auspices of the Chhari Sahib. No pilgrim is allowed to go ahead of the Chhari, which is guarded by the Dharmartha Department, Kashmir. I am told that the Chhari in Srinagar was first wielded by Mahant Atwargir near the present Shital Nath buildings. After some time Mahant Sarswatigir visited Kashmir and stayed at the spot Dashnami Akhara. He erected a platform and some buildings and began to entertain Sadhus who came from the plains to Amar Nath. He took the Chhari from Atwargir.

In the meantime Shivratananand Saraswati improved the Durga Nag Ashram to such an extent that most of the Sadhus bound for the pilgrimage stayed in his ashram and were much cared for and warmly entertained. He put forth the plea that the Chhari must belong to his ashram as he was the Shankarcharia of the place. Thereupon started a dispute over the Chhari Shivratananand Saraswati marched to the Amar Nath pilgrimage. A compromise was made between the two claimants and Mahant Saraswatigir considered Shivratananand a Sadak chela. The latter then naturally became the wielder of Chhari Sahib. Under his command the arrangements for the sadhus were excellent. There were enough tents and pilgrims were much cared for. But a section of the Sadhus of the place was not satisfied with the agreement. They protested to the Government and made demonstrations. After the demise of Shivratananand, the Chhari passed into the hands of a Chela of Saraswatigir who now wields it under the control of Dharmartha.

The Chhari generally leaves on the 4th day of the bright fortnight of Sawan. A state official is always present to perform puja at Dashnami Akhara on the eve of its departure. The carrier of this holy sceptre must walk on foot. They visit Hari Parbat and Shankarachar before departure. They go by stages as pilgrims did of old but by a different route by-passing the places of interest mentioned in Amar Nath Mahatmya. The first halt is, at Pampor. At Bijbehara all sadhus accompanying the Chhari are given a dinner by the pujari of the temple. Villagers call it 'Gosain Mela', the fair of hermits. **Bijbehara to Anantnag**-5 miles. **Anantnag**. A great festival is celebrated for the townspeople who come to see the sadhus. **Anantnag-Bawan** 4.5 miles. Here is the famous spring of Martand where in the intercalry month or on vijaya saftami shradhas are performed. **Bawan to Aishimuqam** 9.5 miles.

Aishimuqam to Pahalgam 11.5 miles.

Near Pahalgam village there are sheds for pilgrims. All pilgrims coming from various parts of India assemble here and wait for the Chhari Sahib. They arrange with contractors for ponies or coolies for their luggage. It is necessary to have a tent and some warm clothes. Religious-minded people abhor putting on leather shoes. If leather shoes are used they must be nailed. Formerly pilgrims generally used grass shoes. They are most useful in going over glaciers. In this journey however, there is only a small bit in the Cave Glen. A water-proof coat is very useful. A staff with an iron spike would prove useful. It is also advisable to keep handy some ready-made food. Cinnamon should be used along with tea.

Poorly clad people from the plains having no conception of the severe cold of the place, suffer a lot. The Government makes excellent arrangements for the convenience of pilgrims. A civil officer regulates the whole affair. Medical aid is provided and security measures are enforced. Some schools and colleges despatch batches of scouts to look after the weak. There is a regular bazaar held at the stage. The shop-keepers, confectioners, grain-dealers, vegetable-sellers sell their commodities at a high price. The contractors arrange for fuel. As the fuel is not available beyond Pisu Hill (11,081 ft.) it is advisable that the coolies or pony-men be instructed to carry one or two bundles of wood. No wood except juniper is procurable for the next two stages.

The Government allots about ten thousand rupees for the maintenance of the weak Sadhus and children and makes every possible effort to give them comfort and ease.

The Public Works Department looks after the upkeep of the road and the bridges over the torrents. Lately an excellent arrangement for the baths of men and women has been made near the cave. Also an iron railing has been erected round the Shivaling in the cave.

On the night of the 11th day of the bright fortnight of Sawan (July-August) all pilgrims assemble at Pahalgam. They all are now in full equipment including picturesque awnings of all sorts and forming an artificial village march like the Aryan of old, in a deeply devotional spirit, reciting the praises of various gods and of goddesses, introspecting and meditating the inward vibrations of their minds and this is the purpose of their journey. The procession is best described by Swami Vivekananda in the following words : 'The procession of several thousands of pilgrims in the far-away Cave of Amar Nath, nestled in a glacial gorge of the Western Himalayas, through some of the most charming scenery in the world, is fascinating in the extreme. It strikes one with wonderment to observe the quiet and orderly way in which a canvas town springs up in some valley with incredible rapidity at each halting place with its bazaars and broad streets running through the middle and vanishing as quickly at the break of dawn, when the whole army of gay pilgrims are on their march once more for the day. Then again the glow of the countless cooking-fires, the ashes covered Sadhus under the canopy of their large geru (orange) umbrellas pitched in the ground, sitting and discussing or meditating before their dhunies (fire), the Sanyasis of all orders in their various garbs, the men and women with children from all parts of the country in their characteristic costumes, and their devout faces, the torches shimmering at night fall, the blowing of conch-shells and horns, the singing of hymns and prayers in chorus, all these and many other romantic sights and experiences of a pilgrimage, which can be met with nowhere outside India, are the most impressive and convey to some extent an idea of the overmastering passion of the race for religion. Of the psychological aspect and significance of such pilgrimage, done on foot for days and days, much could be written. Suffice it to say, that it is one of those ancient institutions which have above all, kept the fire of spirituality burning in the hearts of the people. One sees here the very soul of the Hindu nation laid bare in all its innate beauty and sweetness of faith and devotion.

Pahalgam to Tsandanwari (9,200 ft.) 8.5 miles. The pilgrims rise early and in a long string walk one after another. Some old ladies are carried in palanquin. The palanquin-bearers sing in chorus to avoid fatigue. Some rich people ride on ponies, while most of the people walk. It is a good pony-track which runs along the right bank of the torrent. The mountain slopes are densely forested. The flow of the blue waters rushing against the rocks, making delightful pools and

dashing cataracts infuse new life into the onlookers. Occasionally they hear the sweet music of the whistling thrush or see the gorgeous plumage of the white-capped redstart or a dipper diving in the swift torrent to get its food. The shady path under the pines which emit delicious fragrance lessens the fatigue of the traveller. Some pilgrims take a little rest, against a huge fir and with closed eyes meditate on the beauties of the skilful works of the Author of the Universe. Others open their thermos flasks and while enjoying the beauties of Nature which abound in these lovely spots take a cup of tea to exhilarate themselves; while others again hold the hand of an old man to help him to go ahead. In the way they have to bathe at the Nila Ganga. Some pilgrims walk straight on and halt at Tsandarwari and pitch their tents there. It is a wise plan to be early at the stage, to pitch the tent, make a drain round it and get coolies to collect wood in good time. A small hatchet is of much use. Ponies carrying luggage should not be allowed to move away from oneself and coolies should not lag behind.

There are sheds at stages, but except during pilgrim traffic they are not well cared for. It would be desirable that the sheds at Pahalgam and Tsandanwari be placed direct under the Public Works Department and the sheds at Vaovajen and Pansatarni entrusted to shepherds living there for summer months. They should be paid for that. In that case the sheds will be kept clean, tidy and in good repair. I wish more sheds were built for the comfort of the pilgrims.

This stage presents a moderately difficult ascent. From Tsandanwari to the foot of the Pisu Hill (11081 ft.) is about 1.5 miles. There is a snow bed to pass over. The ascent up the hill is somewhat steep. It is better to make an early start, as with slow and steady steps, the ascent can be easily negotiated. When taking rest it is advisable to look below at the same time not missing the glorious panorama of densely forest-covered mountains and snowy peaks about which eagles and vultures hover in circles to find their food. Close at your feet, right and left, are nature's gems of various colours-flowers peeping from underneath trees and bushes till you reach the top. You are now above the tree-belt (in the alpine region). Take a little rest and have something to eat. The going from here to Sheshiram Nag is easy. In between about two miles from the top of the Pisu Hill is Zoj pal a nice camping ground. The path goes along the shore of Sheshiram Nag (11,730). The Nag lies in a depression surrounded on one side by mountains about 16,000 ft. high. There are two small glaciers on the flanks of these mountains and the water from these glaciers feeds the lake. The silvery streaks of water flowing over the worn rocky precipitous slopes move like the Shesh snake and disappear into the lake. The pilgrims bathe here and some of them prepare tea. The colour of the water is lovely to look at. The lake on one side is silted up. The stream from the lake has carved out a deep ravine covered with birch trees. One finds beautiful flowers peeping out of juniper bushes. Rhododendrons are not scarce. The account of the lake given in the first book of Rajatarangani and that occurring in the Amar Nath Mahatmya do not agree. At sun down the snow on mountains turns pink and its reflection in the lake makes the beholder mute.

It is said that once upon a time there was a man named Sodwani running a shop at Drugajen. To him children of the village would come for a pinch of sugar everyday. One day a boy asked him for a second pinch because he said that there was another boy riding on a bull coming to play with them. This statement excited the curiosity of the shopkeeper who told him to show him the boy. When the shop-keeper was taken there, the children did show him the boy but he could not see him. He entreated them to put in his hand the tail of the bull. So at evening when the boy went back, the shop-keeper caught hold of the tail and over bush, rock and rough path he was dragged. In the way, the boy told the shop-keeper that was not the proper way for him to go. He should come to Sheshiram Nag on Shivratri day and then he would take him along with himself. It was not easy for the shop-keeper to go such a distance and to a place at such a height in mid-winter when the snow lies very deep on the ground. However, he managed to sell all his belongings, went of Pahalgam and collected a large party of peasants. He paid them lavishly and told them to guide him to Sheshi Nag. In those days the path was very rough and snow fairly deep. The winters in those days were very severe. Somehow the peasants were able to guide him and they reached Sheshiram Nag. There he saw Shiva and Parvati waiting for him in a well

furnished shikara on the shore of the lake. They beckoned to Sodwani to get into the boat. No sooner he went in, than the boat disappeared.

An ascent of 500 ft. will take you to the camping site of Vavojen (12, 730 ft.) Due to its height above the sea-level and the exposed nature of the place the wind here is very strong. Hence the ropes of the tents should be tightened firmly and the body wrapt in warm clothes. The only available wood is juniper.

The Mahant of Chhari does not permit any pilgrim to go ahead of him. I remember that once we started at early dawn for the next stage. The Mahant shouted, 'Who are you? Where are you going?' 'We are confectioners and are making for the next stage', said we. 'All right.'

So a lie, sorry to say, saved us from a papal bull. My friends and I went straight to the cave. There we saw some Public Works Department coolies and some cowboys. The pilgrims build here toy huts of stone, as a propitiation to the forces of Nature to save them from the wind.

Vavojen (12230 Ft.) to Pantsatarni - 8.25 Miles

On the 14th day of the bright fortnight of Sawan (July-August), the procession starts under the leadership of Chhari Sahib. They ascend Ashad Daki then Mahagunas which is a plateau where the herb of the same name once used to grow. Physically exhausted and tired, making halts at short intervals, the pilgrims walk slowly when the gradual descent of the path takes place from Hokasar and Kalinar where the route from Pahalgam via Astanmarg which is four miles shorter meets the main route. From here two miles onward is Nagara Pal, a huge boulder, up which the pilgrims scramble with two pebbles in hand beating the rock as if beating a drum to proclaim their arrival. Walking one mile and a half they stand on the bank of the Pantsatarni stream. They take off their clothes and bathe in all its six or seven tributaries, the last being the main and the largest one. The water of some streamlets is pure because they rise from springs, while others come from glacial sources and hence contain minute sandy particles. When all these streams unite they form a mighty river which it is impossible to ford. If one had the time, it would be worth while to explore the main stream. I remember once camping here and suggesting to my friends to explore the source of the main Pantsatarni stream, but they were very anxious to see their friends at Pahalgam and so did not agree.

The whole region is rich in herbs. It is a pity that the sheep and cattle graze everywhere in it, hence the flowers cannot be much observed. The herbs can only be recognized by their leaves. Here and there one might find a flower which has escaped being nipped by an animal. Even then some people conversant with eastern medicines, get a lot.

On their arrival the pilgrims hasten to pitch their tents. Cooking fires are lighted; the smoke from the green juniper bushes rises higher and higher in streaks. There is hustle and bustle everywhere. The ponymen are shouting for their ponies, the masters are yelling at their coolies, the mothers are looking for their children, the clients are enquiring about their priests. Some people after having tea, have a look at the landscape round the valley. The sunset on the snowy peaks is marvellous.

Pantsatarni to Cave (12,729 Ft.) 4 Miles

On Purnamasi Sawan (July-August) the visit to the cave takes place. The old route has been condemned by the Government. The pilgrims used to climb the Bairau Bal and going round the summit reached the cave after descending the precipitous slope through Garba Yatra. The cave is at a distance of two miles from Pantsatarni.

The Present Route being easier, known as Sant Singh's route has been adopted for years past by the pilgrims. It is plain going for 2 miles and then there are 2 miles of very gradual ascent, part of it over a small glacier. Turning round the corner and looking up the glen one discerns a large hole in the mountains. That is the cave.

A narrow defile leads up to this cave which is nestled among mountains between 16,000 ft. and 17,000 ft. above sea-level. This small valley must have been scooped by glaciers which now have receded. A small torrent drains the valley, while a streamlet shimmers down from the top of the cave and joins the torrent below. This spot where Nature's basic material, rock and water are abundant, gives bliss to millions of Hindus. Their eyes marvel at the skilful hand of Nature, and this handiwork of hers the mysterious cave, the destination of their long, long journey. Their souls find peace. Every particle of sand, every drop of water, every thing hereabouts to them the emblem of Shiva a sign of peace. They direct their thoughts to things spiritual in this frame of mind they undress themselves. First they wash themselves in this torrent; then they bathe in the Amaravati and besmearing themselves with the chalky sediment of the stream, become all while. They put on new loin cloths and thus, so to say draped in white from head to foot enter the cave, in a way become for a moment one with the Supreme and having no consciousness of the physical world.

<verses>

Translation

Immersed with eyes closed in the bliss springing from inner love' would that I attained to Shiva-consciousness so that while I bowed to my own self as Shiva, I would also worship a blade of grass as a manifestation of the same Supreme Reality.

Returning to physical consciousness they look around the interior of the cave. Towards the north-eastern corner they see Sudha* Lingam (immortal emblem) of pure greenish-white ice in a recumbent position on a natural pedestal (peth). The water drops from the top of the cave fall on the pilgrims and in some places the images of Ganesh Ji, Kumar Ji, and Parvati are formed by these drops. The Mahant of the Chhari Sahib sits close to the Pedestal with two silver staves placed on either side of the Amar Nath Lingam (immortal emblem). The pilgrims offer to the deity, camphor, candles of clarified butter, raisins, candy sugar, black pepper, clothes, silver and gold ornaments. The recitations from the Vedas and Tantras echo through the spacious cave and snow pigeons which nest in the mountains make their appearance at this juncture and fly froth their peches. Seeing these birds the pilgrims clap their hands and shout : `Ishwara Darshan Pa'ya re (we have seen the manifestation of the Lord'). A part of the offering of raisins, crystalized sugar and black pepper they bring along with themselves in order to distribute the same among their relatives and friends. They also take silt from the Amaravati or limy pebbles from the cave as Babuti for their relatives and friends.

From this highly spiritual atmosphere steps are now retraced towards the material world. The descent to the lower altitudes now begins. The pilgrims do not go to Sangam where in olden times Shradhas were performed in memory of dead ancestors. The pilgrims return to their camps for breakfast (they eat only one meal on this day) and precipitately begin the downward march. It is a pity that people do not stay here for some time. There is a sea of glaciers on the north and east of the Amar Nath Range. Some of the peaks are much higher than Kolahoi. Hence this area is worth exploration. It is true that weather conditions are uncertain in these altitudes. A cloud passing from one mountain peak to another may bring a shower of rain, may discharge a hail-storm or envelop the valley in a snowy shroud. But such conditions do not last long and when we are well-equipped, a short stay at the place is well worth the hardship of weather.

The return journey via Astamnarg is prohibited by the Government. The Sasokot is not safe in bad weather : it is all sand and shale. So the pilgrims hasten their downward journey to Tsandanwari and the next day make for Pahalgam. It is said that the pilgrimage to Amar Nath Ji is not complete until the pilgrim washes himself in the nine springs of Naudal (nine leaves), which is 22 miles from Pahalgam via Bugmor pass.

(* It is believed to wax and wane according to the phases of the moon.)

Courtesy: Kashmir News Network (KNN), for providing this contribution written by the legendary teacher Pt. Samsar Chand Kaul.

Tirtha of Amreshvara
M. M. Munshi, Jammu

At the head of the Sind Valley in Kashmir, flanked on the North by great Himalayan range and *Sachkach* (Sasakat) mountains in the south is located the holy Tirtha of Amar Nath Ji Cave "Amreshvara". (34⁰.12' : 75⁰.01') at an altitude of 12, 720 ft. (3878m) where *Suaymbhu* (self-created) the only Ice linga in the world, has been worshipped since early historic if not prehistoric times. The earliest references pertaining to Holy Amar Nath Ji Cave are found in Bhrngish Samhita (1) Nilmat Purana (2) Kalhana's Raj Tarangni (3) Mahatmayas of Amarnatha (4) and Amreshvara Kalpa (5).

Mahatmayas :

According to Bhrngish Samhita the *Mahakala* approached the "Devatas" and told them that they would have to die. The devatas were troubled at this threat and proceeded to the abode of *Swami Surji* (Lord Shiva) and entreated his protection. Shiva appeared to them with bright countenance, showered upon them great favour and enquired about the cause of their distress. The devatas explained that Mahakala was about to destroy them and they dreaded his Power upon which Shiva with his great mercy and kindness bestowed upon them the water of immortality by which the "devatas" were freed from the persecution of *Mahakala*. After the devatas left, Shiva resumed his devotional abstractions and when he was again sought by the devatas they could not see him. They were, therefore, in great distress and lifted their hands in prayer and entreated him to show Himself. Shiva appeared in the form of ice linga and hence began the pilgrimage and prayers at Amreshvara.

The other view pertaining to the formation of Ice Linga is that Shiva's consort Parvati was eager to learn the secrets of life and immortality. She prayed to her lord to reveal the same to her. While moving with the Parvati over the Himalayas, Shiva rested in a cave and revealed the secrets of life to Parvati and got himself transformed into the Ice Linga. A pair of snow pigeons over-heard Shiva's discourse and became immortal. According to Bhrngish Samhita a person who bathes in the waters of *Amur Veth* (*Amuravati*) and rubs himself with the ashes gets *Moksha*. A person who performs Amarnath Ji Yatra after observing ablutions along the traditional approach route gets the same boons as one gets from Ashvamedha Yagya.

A pilgrim who performs ablutions at the sangam of Amur Veth and Panjtarnagini in *Kalyug*, gets pardon for crores of sins. Pilgrimage to Amarnath Ji is considered several times more auspicious than the pilgrimage to Kashi or Triveni. How Amarnath Ji cave could have been originally discovered I quote from the life of Swami Vivekananda; "I can well imagine how this cave was first discovered. A party of shepherds, one summer day must have lost their flocks and wandered here in search of them. What must have been their feeling as they found themselves unexpectedly before this unmelting ice lingam of white camphor, with the vault itself dripping offerings of water over it for centuries unseen of mortal eyes? When they came home they whispered to other shepherds in the valleys how they had suddenly come upon Mahadeva".

Physiography :

The mountain ranges in the area include Great Himalaya trending North West-South East isolating *Sindu* (Indus) basin (represented by Suru river) from that of *Vitasta* or Jhelum (represented by Sind and Lidar rivers), and *Chandarbaga* or Chenab basin (represented by Batkol-Marwah rivers). Saraibal a south westerly spur of great Himalaya isolates Jhelum from Chenab basin. Another spur called *Sachhkach* (Sasakat) of the Himalayas, bifurcating near Mushran, forms a water-parting between Sind and Lidar rivers. The Sachkach also follows a south-westerly trend and a Drun Nar or *Hangsatu* immediately below Sonamarg is traversed by

the Sind river forming a narrow gorge beyond which it is known as Sogput or North Kashmir range isolating Kishenganga from the Kashmir Valley. The triangular mass of mountains is bounded on the north by Sind Valley, on the east and south by Lidar Valley and on the west by main valley of Kashmir with peaks of Kolahi or Gashbrar, Mahadev and Suresvari. The latter, over looking Dal Lake with lakes of Tarsar, Marsar and Hodsar has no modern name but was known in ancient times as *Dudavana*.

A number of pilgrims and authors in the past and recent times have wrongly referred to the snow beds and snow fields along the Sind Valley, Chandanwari near *Panjtarangni* (Panjtarni), and *Amravati* as Glaciers. These snow beds (*Sheendob*) are nothing but fresh snow accumulated in depressions by snow fall snow creep, avalanches and drift snow in winter.

A glacier (*Handar* in Kashmiri) is a solid mass of ice moving down the slope along the valley with an average velocity of 1 to 3 feet per day.

However, the vertical 'U' shaped profiles of almost all the valleys in the upper reaches of Kashmir, including Sind and Lidar and their tributaries, have been carved by glaciers during pliestocene times. The glaciers have since retreated to higher levels, some have disappeared, while a few still remain like Kolahi, Koenjhar in the South East of Sheshnag, Machoi near Zojilla pass, *Harmukata* (Harmukh) in upper reaches of Sind and *Amuravati* near Mushran. In the area under review during the pliestocene times glaciers extended much below down stream of Gagganjir and Pahalgam in Sind and Lidar valleys respectively.

Routes :

The holy Amar Nath Ji cave though located in the Sind Valley beside a small tributary of Sind river called *Amar Veth* or Amuravati (Amar Nath Nar) has been approached traditionally from the Lidhari (Lidar) valley. According to Amreshvara Mahatmaya some of the important places where pilgrims had to perform ablutions while on pilgrimage where Anantnaga, Mach Bhawan



Route Map of Amarnath

(Mattan). Ganeshbal (Ganeshpora, 6,800 ft.) Mameshwar (Mamal 7,300 ft.) Nilganga. Chandanwari (9,220 ft.) Shushram Naga (Sheshnag 11,330 ft.), Panjtarangni (Panjtarni, 12,611 ft.) and Amuravati. Between Sheshnag and Panjtarni the pilgrims crossed from Lidar to Sind

Valley at the pass of Vayuujana or Mahagnus (VOWJAN) 13835 ft. The Sind valley route bifurcating from Srinagar - Leh Highway at Baltal was used in the past in early summers. During the late summers it used to become very difficult and sometimes impossible due to melting of snow bridges over the Sind river. But with the construction of a bridle path recently by the army and border roads organisation this route has become negotiable throughout the summer. Amarnath Ji cave is also approachable by a very short foot track from Zojilla pass which descends near the cave from the side of Amarnath Peak. Another track branching off from Kishtwar-Suru-route, Via Marwah-Wardwan Batkol Valley. Lidar valley via Gulol gati between Shesh Nag and Mahagnus (along which the redoubtable Wazir Zorawar Singh passed several times between 1834 to 1841 during the Dogra conquest of Ladakh, Baltistan and parts of Western Tibet) enters. The least known route through Saeki Pansal Pass is the most difficult route and has never been used by pilgrims.

History

Like the mention of glaciers along the Amarnath Ji route, the history of Amarnath Ji has also been wrongly documented. Numerous writers in the recent past have maintained that Amarnath Ji cave was lost for a very long time (like one saying 'for thousands of years') till it was rediscovered by Maliks of Batkot. It is said to have been 'rediscovered' according to some in 1775 C.E. and according to others by about 1600 C.E., quoting old Kashmiri Pandits and Maliks of Batkot without any authentic documentary evidence. Some have tried to give credit to the Maliks of Batkot for having originally discovered the holy cave for the first time in the middle of 18th Century C.E.

According to Kalhana's Rajtarangni, Tarang II, Samdimat (Arya Raja) 34 BCE-17 C.E. a great devotee of Shiva who rose from the position of Minister to be the King of Kashmir "used to worship a Linga of snow above the forests, which is not to be found elsewhere in the whole world during the delightful Kashmir Summers," He abandoned his kingship and retired to Nandiksethra (Nandkul) Sind Valley to join a hermitage where he was welcomed by old sages.

Kalhana further in Tarang I of Rajtarangni narrates the legend of *Naga Suravas* who bestowed his daughter Chandralekha upon a Brahmin youth who had helped the Naga in partaking the part of harvest from the fields. King Nara whose domain flourished around *Chakardara* (Tsakdar) near *vijeshvara* (Vijbror) cast an evil eye on the young Brahmin's Naga wife, which aroused the wrath of Naga Suravas resulting in death of Nara and destruction of later's kingdom. After completing the frightful carnage the Naga took his son-in-law (Zamatur, in Kashmiri) along and carved a place for him besides his own abode, *Shushram Naga* (Shesh nag). Kalhana says : "**It is seen to this day (i.e. 1148-49 C.E.) by pilgrims proceeding to Amreshvara". Upstream of Shushramnaga towards Koenjnar glacier is located a smaller lake cased Jamtarsaras (Zamtir nag)** the residence of this Brahmin son-in-law transformed into a Naga. The full translation of the verse 267 Book I of Kalhana's Rajtarangni, reproduced below leaves no doubt about the continuation of the pilgrimage to Amarnath Ji during the middle of 12th Century.

'The lake of dazzling witness (resembling) a sea of Milk, which he created (for himself as residence) on a far off mountain, is to the present day seen by the people on the pilgrimage to Amreshvara' Stein's, Translation.

The fact that Kind Zain-ul-abdin (1420-70 C.E.) the pious Muslim ruler of Kashmir, besides visiting a number of Hindu shrines, also visited Amarnath Ji cave, has been documented by his chronicler Jonaraja.

Francios Bernier, was the French Physician who accompanied Emperor Aurangzeb to Kashmir in 1663. After visiting *Trisandiya*, Verinag, Achabal, Wular lake, Sangsafed in front of Harmukh, he was just after two-days' march from some place in Sind Valley, in a magnificent cave full of wonderful congealations"; apparently Amarnath Ji cave. When he was called back by Aurangzeb.

The relevant para of the Bernier's book "Travels in Moghul Empire" is reproduced here. **"I was pursuing journey to a grotta full of wonderful congelations, two days journey from Sangsafed when I received intelligence that my Nawab felt very impatient and uneasy on account of my long absence".**

The 2nd edition of Bernier's book has been edited by Vincent A Smith who has observed, "The grotta full of wonderful congelations is the Amarnath cave, where blocks of ice, stalagmites formed by dripping water from roof are worshipped by many Hindoos who resort here, as images of Shiva; glaciers surround the which is considerably to the South East of ..."

Pilgrimage :

Vigne in his book "Travels in Kashmir, Ladakh and Iskardu" (1842) says; "The ceremony at the cave of Amarnath takes place on the 15th of the Hindu month of Sawan, 28th July . . . not only Hindoos of Kashmir but those from Hindoostan of every rank and caste can be seen, collecting together and travelling up the valley of Lidar towards the celebrated cave, which from his description must have been the place which Bernier intended to visit but was prevented."

Vigne himself, after returning from Ladakh and Tibet by 1840-41, **during the rule of Maharaja Sher Singh son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab attempted to visit Amarnath Ji cave along the traditional route via Sheshnag in late season, but was forced to return from Vowjan pass due to bad weather.** He has given a beautiful description of the pilgrimage, gathered from others, which indicates **that pilgrimage was in good vogue before 1840-41. From his narrative we can easily conclude that pilgrims from the plains, outside Kashmir, visited Amarnath in great numbers.**

From this it is clear that Amarnath has been visited in regular memory, the Yatra has been continuously undertaken not only by Kashmiris but also Hindus from other parts of India. Even if it is assumed that the holy shrine was 'rediscovered' by Maliks of Batkot, for which no authentic document is available it can be easily surmised that Amarnath Ji cave was not 'lost' for 'thousands of years, The pilgrimage may have been disrupted due to political upheavals and persecution of Hindus during Muslim rule in Kashmir for a period varying at the most from 50 to 125 years.

Lawrence in Valley of Kashmir mentions that pilgrims to Amarnath were joined by Brahmins of Mattan and further up at Batkot the Maliks used to take charge of the pilgrimage. According to Lawrence the Maliks were supposed to keep the track in order, guide, escort the pilgrims and carry sick ones and ensure nothing was stolen, and received one third of the offerings at the Amarnath Ji Shrine. The other two shares used to go to Pandits of Mattan and Giri Mahants of Amritsar who used to and still lead the pilgrimage with *Chari Mubarak*, Lawrence does not mention any where that share of offerings to Maliks was in lieu of their having 'discovered/rediscovered' the cave. There is no mention of receipt of *ransum rahdhari* from pilgrims nor grants from the State Govt. for the services rendered by Maliks. Apparently the share seems to have been received by Maliks for the services rendered.

'Rediscovery'

Besides Lawrence, earlier travellers and authors in Kashmir have also not mentioned about 'rediscovery' of Amarnath Ji cave by Maliks. It is not difficult to conclude that Amarnath Ji cave could not have been lost during the short span of 50 to 125 years during which the yatra might not have seen the traditional pomp and show, and may have remained a low-key affair in view of the adverse political climate.

The theory that the Maliks having `discovered' or `rediscovered' the Amarnath Ji cave in or around 1775 C.E. is also **constrained by the adversity of that time. At that time Kashmir was ruled by Afghans (1753-1819 C.E.) who persecuted Kashmiris in general and Hindus in particular. Afghans would not have taken kindly to Maliks, or anybody else, claiming to have `rediscovered' any Hindu or Buddhist shrine. Such a `discovery' even if it had been made would have been kept under wraps.** It is also highly improbable to presume that pilgrimage to a `lost' Amarnath Ji cave could have been resumed during the Afghan rule for reasons mentioned above. Moreover, all the passes and routes with the exception of Baramulla-Muzafarabad route which they needed for direct communication with Kabul were closed for traffic during the Afghan rule and hardly any Hindu pilgrim from plains could have entered Kashmir and reached Amarnathji.

According to Prof. O. N. Chrungoo, the Amarnath Ji cave was rediscovered by Maliks of Batkot by about 1600 C.E. i.e. during the rule of Emperior Akbar, that pilgrimage again remained in abeyance during the Afghan rule ((1753-1819) and was resumed only after Maharaja Gulab Singh arrived on the scene in 1846. Maliks themselves claim that they discovered the cave by 1775 and Pervez Dewan in his article Discovery of Lord Shiva's cave temple in Daily Excelsior also states that the rediscovery of cave was made some times between 1750-1775. **All these claims are contradictory and can not be accepted as factual. As already indicated pilgrimage was going on during the Sikh rule long before Gulab Singh appeared on the scene.**

Maliks :

In order to arrive at a logical conclusion we have to understand the history and background of the institution of Maliks. According to Baron Von Hugel, Malik is a title of honour and distinction given to successors of *Devarpatis*, *Margesas* (later called Magres) holding charge of watch-cum-military stations on feudal basis on the important routes and passes, entering and leaving Kashmir, by the independent Sultans of Kashmir and also to other clans like Chaks, Rainas, Dars for latter's loyal service. After the annexation of Kashmir by Mughals in 1586 C.E. most of the Maliks of Raina, Magrey and Chak clans etc. who had fought against the former were hunted out killed and banished from Kashmir. Some of them escaped to remote and inaccessible hills and valleys to avoid persecution. But those who latter submitted themselves before Akbar and took the oath of loyalty were allowed to resume the duty of guarding the routes, administration and even judiciary. All routes except the Baramulla-Muzafarabad route remained closed during the Afghan's rule.

With the advent of Dogra rule in 1846, opening up of all the routes and gradual establishment of police posts at vulnerable places, **the ancestral occupation of Maliks came to end. Since the latter part of 19th century the Maliks had to content themselves with guiding, and escorting the pilgrims to Amarnath Ji, Harmukh, probably to Sharda in Kishenganga valley and other places of pilgrimage. The allotment of a part of offerings, as at the Amarnath shrine, could have been in lieu of these services.**

Since all the arrangements including maintenance of track, erection of sheds enroute, medical care and protection for pilgrims are now made by the government and several voluntarily non-government organisations, **the receipt of the one third of the offerings by the Maliks is a historical relic, comparable to now abolished Jagirdaris and privy purses.** Further research would have to be carried out as to how old was the settlement to Maliks at Batkot as it is located on an unimportant route through which no invasions of Kashmir were attempted or expected nor trade carried out.

Prof. Chrungoo in his article has stated that "some people interested in anthropological or geological research have said that it is an encrustation of lime; chalcedony and archeological research by Pandit Anand Koul has revealed otherwise." It is true that several observations made by people about Amarnath Ji cave are not factual including one in "Tirtha" published by CMC Ltd.

(11) that Amarnath is an ice covered linga, "Similarly chalcedony is a variety of silica with waxy lustre and can not get assimilated by water or ice under any circumstances.

However scientifically speaking ice linga is somewhat like an icicle and may contain dissolved bicarbonate of calcium (lime) which cannot be visually seen. **Anthropology is the science of physiological, physiosocio logical and racial study of man while as archeology deals with things used, or made, by man from prehistoric to medieval times both having absolutely no scope for research at Amarnath Ji cave.**

A news item under the caption, "Another cave Shiva temple in upper Pahalgam" appeared in the Daily Excelsior of 28th August 2001 stating that another cave not far away from the Amarnathji cave, which is being visited by over one hundred thousand pilgrims every year, had been discovered. The news report reiterated that old Amarnath Ji cave was discovered by Malik in 1775 and ruins, besides the (new) cave, suggest that a Dogra Governor of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule attempted to build a Shiva temple at the spot in 18th century. Firstly the presumption of a Dogra Governor having built a temple during the 18th Century is the height of imagination of the correspondent. All the governors during the Sikh rule in Kashmir without exception were Sikhs or Punjabi muslims; Sikhs ruled Kashmir between 1819-46 that is 19th century and not 18th century. As already discussed Amarnath Ji cave was known centuries before 1775.

Return Halt :

Pervez Dewan has hypothesised that the newly rediscovered Shiva cave temple near Hapatgund could have been a base camp for Amarnathji yatra. That postulation too, **does not stand scrutiny, as the new cave is not located along the traditional route along which lie the different tirthas at which performance of ablutions was a must for a merit-ful yatra. According to Vigne (1842) and Gates (1872) the pilgrims used to approach Amarnathji cave from Panjtarni and Bhairabal and after having darshan returned passing down the Amurveth upto its Sangam with Sind, from where they found their way back to Pahalgam by a different route from the one by which they arrived via Hatiara Talab (where scores) of pilgrims have perished. They crossed the water shed between Sind and Lidar valleys by a pass West of Sachkach (sasakot) peak, Astanmarg and Zanin, The Hapatgund cave temple which lies along this route could have been a halting place on the return journey. The spring described by Parvez Dewan is well known and is shown on the survey map of the area. Swami Vivekananda also returned via this route in 1895 and described the Hatiara Talav as celebrated lake of death. This route was abandoned in early 20th Century for being the most difficult and dangerous one.**

Regarding newly discovered temple at Hapatgund (Slaiv Van) the identification of top-knot on the head and serpent coiled round the neck of the idol, and presumably a trisul and a yoni shaped tank some distance away from the caves, leaves no doubt that the cave houses an ancient Shiva temple.

Since the idols according to Pervez Dewan are in situ i.e. rocks in original position, not transported by natural or human agencies and presence of **such a large number of Shivlings in a limited space and their damage by water indicate the possibility of the idols and shivlings being natural stalagmites formed by percolation of calcium bicarbonate bearing water and subsequently sculptured by man.** Wind action can carve rock shelters and not caves in areas under review which receive moderate to high rain or snowfall. Neither the caves nor the rocks inside can be carved by wind but mostly by percolation of carbon dioxide laden water and occasionally by joining and fracturing. The sculpturing and **carving of idols inside the pre-existing caves and construction of yoni shaped tank might have been possibly done as a token of thanks giving by pilgrims returning from a successful yatra of Amarnathji. A number of temples built at Wangat in Sind Valley by pilgrims, after returning from Harmukh shows that such, indeed, was the practice.**

Present Status :

Despite the turmoil of militancy prevailing for more than a decade, Amarnathji continues to be one of the most popular Tirthas of Kashmir, and lakhs of Pilgrims from all parts of the country visit the shrine **inspite of the fact that a few of them fall victim to militant attacks.** The number of aspirants for pilgrimage has always been more than the Government does allow for security reasons.

Conclusion :

The only Ice Linga in the whole world, at the Amarnathji cave, has been visited and worshipped by pilgrims since early historic if not prehistoric times. There is conclusive historic evidence that pilgrims were regularly proceeding to the holy cave via Sheshnag during the middle of 12th century and in middle of 15th century. The Shrine was well known even during the rule of Aurangzeb when Bernier attempted to visit it but was prevented. There is no evidence to prove that the Amarnath Ji cave was 'lost' for thousands of years until it was 'rediscovered' by Maliks of Batkot some time between 1750-75.

The pilgrimage to Amarnathji might have been disrupted during the political upheavals for period varying between 50 to 125 years. Full pilgrimage was resumed after annexation of Kashmir by Sikhs and since then the Giri Mahants of Amritsar have been associated with the Yatra; the track might have been retraced by Maliks. Maliks have been receiving one-third of the offerings of the shrine for keeping the track in order, guiding and escorting the pilgrims etc. rather than for 'discovering' or 'rediscovering' the cave.

The newly discovered Lord Shiva's cave temple near Hapatgund could not have been a base camp for Amarnath Yatra but a halting place on the return journey. The cave temples are man-made only to the extent of sculpturing of pre-existing stalagmites.

Despite the disturbed condition prevailing in Kashmir pilgrims in large numbers still throng the Shrine.

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The Splendor that is Amarnath
Chander M. Bhat, Udhampur

Almost every part of India is known for many a sacred shrine, but the *Amarnath* Cave embossed in the snowy valley of Kashmir reveals the unique sight of natural Ice *Linga* of Lord Shiva perched on a glacial gorge which waxes and wanes with the movements of the moon. According to a common belief, it reaches the maximum height on *Purnima* in the month of *Shravan* (July-August), when Shiva is supposed to have divulged to *Parvati* the secret of Salvation. On this day thousands of pilgrims negotiating the most difficult ridges arrive at the holy cave for *Dharshan* of the Lord. "The pilgrimage of thousands of devotees to the far away cave of *Amarnath*, nestled in a glacial groups of the western Himalayas, through some of the most charming scenery in the world, is fascinating in the extreme. One is stuck with wonder at the quiet and ordinary way in which a canvas town springs up with incredible rapidity of colours and of all shapes and sizes and broad streets running through the middle, and all vanishing as quickly at the break of dawn when the whole army of pilgrimages set out on the march again. The glow of countless cooking fires, the ashen smeared *Sadhus* under the canopy, discussing or meditating before the *Dhunis*, the *Sannyasins* of all orders in their various garbs, the men and women with children, from all parts of the country in their characteristic costumes and their devout faces, the torches shimmering at nightfall, the blowing of conch-shells and horns, the singing of hymns and prayers in chorus - all these are most impressive, and convey to some extent an idea of the over-mastering passion of the race for religion."

Amarnath literally means the Immortal Lord. Lord Shiva stands for Deathlessness. He confers this boon on his devotees. Deathlessness does not mean preserving the physical sheath for ever but in growing so fearless as to look at death in its face! The truth of this will be evident to one who undertakes a pilgrimage to Amarnath the hallowed pilgrimage center of Kashmir.

The Present Kashmir valley was, according to the chronicler *Kalhana*, a lake called *Satisar* which the sage *Kashyapa* converted into a beautiful valley. Kashmir as the name *Satisar* indicates is believed to be the abode of *Parvati*. The whole valley is studded with holy places associated with Shiva and *Parvati*. It is the cradle of many philosophical systems such as the *Trika-Saivism* and the *Pratyabhijna* School. Even *Pancharatra* school is supposed to have its origin here. Pippalada rescension of *Atharva Veda* is also known as Kashmirian rescension as the only manuscript available was found here. This was again the center of Sun Worship. Here was the famous *Sardapitha* which now lies in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. The great *Sankaracharya*, according to his biographers, came here and ascended the *Sarvajnapitha* the throne of omniscience after having been acknowledged as the philosopher by the great scholars belonging to various schools here. Even today here is an ancient hill with a Shiva temple on the top named *Sankaracharya*. Kashmir is full of history, legend, philosophy and religion apart from being described as a paradise on earth, the truth of which has to be experienced to be believed.

In olden days the route was via Rawalpindi (Pakistan) but now a direct train is there connecting rest of India to Jammu, the winter capital of the State. The best part of journey is between *Guru Purnima* and *Shravan Purnima*. The Government of Jammu and Kashmir makes all arrangements for the comfort of the pilgrims for undertaking the ritualistic journey for visiting the shrine on *Shravan Purnima*. But the highly unpredictable weather of the mountains should be more obliging before *Guru Purnima* as rains would not start. There is a bus service from Jammu to Pahalgam (7,500 ft.). At Pahalgam the pilgrims arrange for coolies or ponies to carry their food and clothes etc. Everybody remains busy making arrangements for the *Yatra*. The golden glow of sun falls on the turbulent river at *Pahalgam*. Pahalgam in Kashmiri means the land of shepherds.

The journey from Pahalgam commences towards the first halting station Chandanwari (8,500 ft.) which is ten miles away. With the bright sunlight reflected in silvery snow-clad peaks above, and gurgling river meandering through the valley below, the pilgrim already is in a different world. The trekking undoubtedly is slow but not boring as the scenery alongside is most picturesque.

Early the next morning the caravan again proceeds further towards a straight two mile climb towards Pisutop (12,200 ft.) from Pisutop one has to cover seven miles to reach Seshnag (13,148 ft.) next halting station. Ascent is stiff and steep, climbs are difficult to negotiate. The path is clear but at some places the glaciers become slippery. It is here where a stick carried by a pilgrim becomes useful and in some cases saves ones life. Before entering the small pilgrim camp one gets the enchanting sight of blue still waters of Seshnag lake. One has to walk a mile to take a refreshing bath. The lake is very deep and is fed by the melting snow of the glaciers above and water is bluish green below. It is believed that some one has seen *Adishesha* the many hooded serpent streaking through these waters. Whatever may be the explanation, it is true that one experiences an invisible presence of some super power near the lake. The mountains are fully covered with snow and its peaks resemble the seven heads of the mythical snake. The quiet place looks so thickly populated then, that everybody, despite intense cold, appears in high spirits, probably feeling proximity to the divine. The roaring sound of gushing streams, the gigantic snow clad mountains, the moonlight beaming through foggy enclosure, the neighing horses and the dim tent-tops all around presents an indelible impression. One feels nearer to God and in such a blissful environment.

From Sheshnag one reaches Panchtarni, the valley criss-crossed by five rivulets. The journey is most difficult as one has to climb to a height of 14,500 ft. and then to descend. The highest point is *Mahagunus* which means the great serpent. There is no vegetation at this height and one begins to feel lack of oxygen. It is said that the fragrance of the herbs in *Mahagunus* is so alluring that the pilgrims are warned not to have any rest at this place and *Ponywallas* are very careful not to allow their horses to graze here which otherwise is fatal for these animals. The four miles descent from *Mahagunus* to *Panchtarni* is slippery especially after a rain which is a common occurrence. The night is spent in great expectation so reaching the cave in the morning. The journey starts early in the morning. Again a steep ascent to *Sant Singh Top* (13,500 ft.) and a slippery descent until one reaches the low lying glaciers over which are seen the pilgrims walking in a row. At last one reaches the *Amar Ganga* where one takes his bath in ice-cold water and climbs up the steep to the cave. This bath and steep climb are final tests of devotion.

The holy cave is approximately 50' long 25' wide and 15' high. When one reaches the cave, he becomes over struck at the sight of Ice *Linga* completely filling the right corner of the cave, the top of the *Linga* touches the base of the cave. The base of the cave is also covered with ice, like a carpet. Here Shiva is worshipped by nature in the purest way. The cave is the nature's temple and is undefiled by human touch. Shiva is snow-white and pure. *Linga* is formed by drops of water falling from the top of the cave and two other small ice *Lingas* are also formed, believed to be the symbols of Goddess *Parvati* and Lord *Ganesh*. On early morning a white pair of doves (believed to be *Shiva* and *Parvati*) appear at the cave corner. Austerity and strenuous mountain climbing with all its attendant risks are soon forgotten and one gets a sense of grand fulfillment here.

After having darshan one climbs down with a heavy heart casting "a longing lingering look behind" and slowly starts returning. The river Amar Ganga flows with a gentle murmur Shiva, Shiva and the tall peaks echo it to be heard by the Heavens.

Himalayas around Kashmir have their special grandeur. Even a loud shout is sufficient to dislodge a huge boulder or rock, precariously hanging on the tip of the mountain, and bring it hurling down, leveling everything, pilgrims and every thing. Rarefied atmosphere again burns the exposed skin of the face with its ultra violet radiation. At every step death stares in the face! But who cares? One can return through the same route or by a different route which takes a short time but is very risky.

Despite innumerable difficulties and hindrances the pilgrimage to Amarnath provides not only adventure and spiritual solace but an ineffable experience that abides for ever.

Fillers

1. Pahalgam "the valley of shepherds" surrounded by snowy mountains in the lap of dancing streams and deep forests.
2. Chandanwari, first halting station is famous for its snow bridge. Chandanwari literally means Orchard of Sandalwood the abode of sweet fragrance. By fragrance we mean sound and light, which imparts attainment of self realization.
3. Sheshnag Lake is an emerald lake surrounded by mountains from all of its sides. The true nature which indicates life and which revolves on two wheels `Shivas' and `Prashivas' emanates eternal peace which is symbolized with a stream whose origin is a big lake having fresh and beautiful waters of *Ananda*. This is supreme factor in attaining the true nature.
4. Five senses that work on the behest of mind is the confluence stretched and symbolized with *Panchtarni*. Mind is the whole object which if controlled beats one to eternal peace. Five rivers meet in this beautiful valley surrounded by five mountains which resemble the same mythical guard of Lord Shiva five headed serpent.
5. When one controls his senses, mind and hearing, he obtains light that is only possible when he travels different terrains, gorgy and steepy places enroute Amarnath. On reaching the *Barav Bal* one gets full glimpse of *Shiva Linga*.
6. Amarnath : "The Original, eternal, supreme power of the whole universe."

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Sarada Temple in Kashmir
P. N. K. Bamzai, New Delhi

*That Kashmir has been a part and parcel of Bharatvarsha from time immemorial has been testified by Pandit Kalhana by recording in his Ragatarangani that pilgrims from Kashmir used to visit holy places from Rameshwaram to Badrinath and Dwarka to Puri and that devotees of Durga and Shiva from all over the country would flock to the holy shrine of Sarada and the sacred cave of Amarnath in Kashmir. The author, the renowned historian of Kashmir, describes the importance of the Sarada Temple which now lies in Pak-occupied Kashmir : **Editor***

From time immemorial Kashmir has been known all over India as **Saradapeeth** or the abode of Sarada the goddess of learning and fine arts. Every orthodox Brahmin in South India, for instance, on rising from his bed in the morning faces north and with folded hands offers salutations to goddess Sarada.

"Namaste Sarada Devi, Kashmiri mandala vasini"
(Salutations to Goddess Sarada who resides in Kashmir).

The place of pride which the Valley acquired in Sanskrit language and literature as well as in humanities like medicine, astronomy, astrology, philosophy, religion, law and jurisprudence, music, art and architecture is attributed to the grace and benediction of the goddess who revealed herself in all her divine grandeur to Muni Sandalya at Saradavana in the Upper Kishenganga Valley in the north of Kashmir.

No wonder, the holy spot became a sacred shrine to which thousands of devotees not only from the Kashmir Valley but from distant parts of India were attracted to seek blessings from Sarada Devi, the goddess in her three aspects of Sarada, Narada or Saraswati and Vaghdevi.

The exact location of the shrine where, in course of time, a huge temple complex came up, is indicated by Kalhana himself. He has occasion to speak of the siege of Sirahsila castle (Raj. viii-2556-2706) which took place in his own time. His references show clearly that the shrine was in close proximity to this hill stronghold. Various indications gathered from the general description of the locality pointed to the Upper Kishenganga Valley.

An earlier source, the Sarada Mahatmya, narrating the origin of the tirtha mentions the various stages of the pilgrim route. The Muni Sandalya, son of Matanga, was practising austerities in order to obtain the sight of the goddess Sarada, who is a Sakti embodying three separate manifestations. Divine advice prompts him to proceed to Syamal (the present Kupwara district).

There at Ghusa, Mahadevi appears before him and promises to show herself in her true form as Sakti in the 'Sarada Forest'. The goddess vanishes from his sight at Hayasrama, the present village of Hayahoma situated about four miles to the N.E-E of Ghusa.

The Muni next proceeds to a spring now known as Krishna Nag in which he bathes. Thereupon half his body becomes golden, emblematic of the approach to complete liberation from darkness. The spring situated above the village of Drang is shown on the larger Survey Map as quite close to Hayabom and is undoubtedly the Drang mentioned by Kalhana (Raj 2607-2702). The place is nowadays usually designated by the local Brahmins as Sona-Drang.

From thence Sandalya ascends the mountain range to the north on which he sees a dance of goddesses in a mountain meadow known as Rangavatika which lies below the pass by which the route leading from Drang towards the Kishenganga crosses the watershed.

He then arrives at Tejavana, the residence of Sage Gautama on the bank of the Kishenganga. The Mahatmya then relates how the sage after crossing a hill sees on the east the god Ganesa and arrives in the Saradavana. After reciting a hymn in praise of her triple form of Sarada, Narada or Saraswati and Vaghdevi, an account is given how the goddess revealed herself to the Muni at the sacred spot and rewarded his long austerities by inviting him to her residence at Sirahsila.

Pitras now approach Sandalya and ask him to perform their *shradas*. On his taking water from the Mahasindhu for the purpose of the tarpana rite, half its water turns into honey and forms the stream now known as Madhumati. Ever since baths and shradas at the *sangama* of the Sindhu and Madhumati assure to the pious complete remission of sins.

The Brahmins from the neighbouring districts who till recently performed the pilgrimage to Sarada, avoided the difficult gorges through which the route above described, debouches into the Kishenganga Valley.

Starting on the pilgrimage on the Sudi 4th Bhadarpada, the day when, as the Mahatmya says, special holiness accumulates at the tirtha, they satisfied themselves by bathing in the rivulet which comes from Drang, instead of visiting its source at the Krishna Nag. They then proceeded to Ghusa where they visited a little grove of walnut trees and chinars situated by the side of the Kamil river known by the name of Rangavaar as a substitute for Rangavatika. From there they marched by the ordinary route to Dudinial on the Kishenganga over the Sitalvan pass. Ascending the river on its left bank they reached Tejavana and finally Sarada on the 4th day.

The sacred spot where the goddess appeared in her divine form is marked by a stone slab seven feet long, six feet wide and half a foot thick. The stone is supposed to cover a Kunda or spring cavity from where the goddess rose and finally vanished.

Through the course of centuries it has been the object of worship and devotion of a large number of pilgrims who annually visited the spot. The slab has ipso-facto become the sanctum sanctorum of the temple which came up here on the model of the Aryan order of Kashmir architecture. Though in ruins now the entire complex inspires a sense of grandeur and awe.

The cella of the main temple is 22 feet square. The entrance is from the west. The other three walls have blank refoiled archway standing to a height of about 20 feet from the base to the apex of the arches. The entrance is approached by a flight of a few steps. On each side of the porchway are two square pillars about 16 feet high and two feet six inches apart. The capital of both the pillars seem to have been hewn from a single stone.

The interior of the temple is square and perfectly plane. There are scarcely any traces of the usual pyramidal stone roof. Bates (1873) noticed the temple covered by a low shingle roof having been "recently erected by Col. Gundu, Maharaja Gulab Singh's Ziladar of Muzaffarabad".

The temple occupies the centre of a quadrangular court 142 feet long and 94'6" broad. The quadrangle is enclosed by a massive wall six feet thick and eleven feet high from the level of the court to the projecting rim at the foot of the coping. The latter rises in pyramidal form to a height of eight feet above the top of the wall, giving it a massive look.

Seen from outside, the walls of the enclosure appear still massive and imposing, as they are raised on basement walls built to equalize the different elevations of the ground.

The entire complex stands at the foot of a spur which rises above the right bank of the Madhumati stream and slopes up gradually for some distance until it culminates in the precipitous pine-clad mountain which is traversed by the direct path leading towards the Kashmir Valley.

The temple with its enclosed quadrangle is approached by a staircase about nine feet wide of stone steps sixty-three in number, having on either side a massive balustrade fallen into ruins. The stair-case leads to the entrance of the quadrangular court. This gateway occupies exactly the middle of the west face directly in line with the porchway leading to the sanctum sanctorum of the main temple.

Judging from the fame which the shrine of Sarada enjoyed not only in Kashmir but far beyond it, the number of pilgrims must have been considerable. Kalhana himself in his account of Lalitaditya's reign (8th century AD) refers to certain followers of a king of Gauda or Bengal, who had come to Kashmir under the pretence of visiting the shrine of Sarada, but in reality to avenge the murder of their king by Lalitaditya. This particular reference to Sarada shows that its fame had spread to far off regions.

A witness to the fame of Sarada is Alberuni (10th century AD) who describes its position in "inner Kashmir about two to three days journey towards the mountains of Bolor" (upper Indus between Gilgit and Ladakh). He speaks of the shrine as much venerated and frequented by pilgrims and mentions it along with the most famous ones like those of Surya at Multan, the Visnu Chakraswamin of Thaneswar and the Linga of Somnath.

Bilhana whose literary career falls into the second half of the eleventh century also mentions the *tirtha* of Sarada, in his panegyric description of Pravarapura or Srinagar. Written when he was a Deccan far away from his home, he ascribes the patronage of learning, claimed for that city, to the favour of Sarada. The goddess is said to resemble a swan, carrying as her diadem the glittering gold washed from the sand of river Madhumati.

In a more legendary light the temple of Sarada figures in a story related to the great jaina scholar Hemacandra (1088-1172 AD), in the Prabhavakacarita. Commissioned by king Jayasimha of Gujarat to compose a new grammar, he requested to be supplied with necessary material in the shape of the older grammars which could be found complete only in the library of Sarada in Kashmir. Jayasimha sent at once high officials to Pravarapura to obtain the manuscripts. Arrived there they proceeded to the temple of the goddess and offered prayers. The manuscripts were delivered to the king's-envoys and brought by them to Hemacandra, who, after perusing them, composed his own grammatical work, the Siddhahemachandra.

The Sarada shrine was known in distant parts of India, long before the composition of Prabhavakacarita (middle of the 13th century) and hence the author must have known that at the temple of Sarada was a massive library housing learned works of authors who had been blessed by goddess Sarada.

Another curious reference to Saradapeeth is found in Jonaraja's chronicle wherein he mentions that Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin visited the shrine perhaps in 1422 AD to witness the miraculous manifestations of the goddess. From Jonaraja's account it appears these were the appearance of sweat on the face of the image of the goddess, the shaking of the arm, and a sensation of heat on touching the feet.

We see from this account that a miracle-working image of Sarada, probably the same of which Alberuni had heard was yet in existence in the early part of the 15th century.

In the 16th century the temple of Sarada must have enjoyed yet considerable reputation in Kashmir itself. Abul Fazl's notice of the site (Ain ii-p. 365) : "At two day's distance from Hayahom is the river named Madhumati, which flows from the Darda country. Gold is also found in this river. On its banks is a stone temple called Sarada, dedicated to Durga and regarded with great veneration. On every eighth *tithi* of the bright half of the month, it begins to shake and produces the most extraordinary effect."

The notice of gold being found in the river clearly applies to the Kishenganga, which drains a mountain region known as auriferous to the present day.

The number of pilgrims was ever increasing while Kashmir was under the rule of Hindu kings. They maintained the temple complex in a spick-and-span condition. With the advent of Islam (First quarter of the 14th century) it lost the royal patronage. But the flow of pilgrims was quite sizeable even during the Sultan, Chak and Mughal rules. Fortunately the destructive hands of Sikandar Butshikan did not reach the shrine and its temple, because of its location at an isolated spot where perhaps his writ did not run.

But it was the politically disturbed condition of the Upper Kishenganga Valley during the later Mughal and Pathan rule that has had much to do with the neglect into which the shrine of Sarada has fallen.

Karnah and Drava were then in the hands of the government of the Kashmir Valley. Unable themselves to maintain order among the warlike and turbulent hillmen of their territory, they allowed them to make frequent raids into the Kashmir Valley.

Conditions improved but little during the Sikh rule, and even as late as 1846 Kashmir was raided as far as Srinagar by bands of restless Bombas. It is evident that during this long period of anarchy the pilgrimage to the distant shrine on the Kishenganga could have no attractions for peaceful Brahmins of Kashmir.

Under one of the Karnah chiefs the temple is said to have been used for the storage of gunpowder, the explosion of which blew off the original roof.

The temple was subsequently repaired by Maharaja Gulab Singh under whose orders Col. Gundu, the Ziladar of Muzaffarabad erected a shingle roof over the temple for its protection. The Maharaja also settled a small bounty of seven rupees 'chilki' per mensem on the family of Gotheng Brahmins who claim the hereditary guardianship of the temple.

According to the traditions of the Gotheng Brahmins it was only since the establishment of the Dogra rule and the peaceful settlement of the Upper Kishenganga Valley that the temple of Sarada became once more open for regular pilgrim visits.

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Sarada-Mai : a Forgotten Cultural Link
(Goddess Sarada)
Dr. V. N. Drabu, Jammu

A painting of goddess Sarada assigned to the 19th century (Goswamy, 1998, pp. 142-143)¹ corresponds to its iconographic description in *Silpa-sastra*. The five-headed goddess is seated cross-legged on a double lotus, resting against a huge bolster. The heads are arranged in tiers with lateral heads attached at various levels to a vertical column of heads. This reminds us of the polycaphalic figures seen in the Ladakh murals and painted book-covers as also of the gigantic stucco figures of Bodhisattvas inside the Seemtsek at Alachi. The central head is seen full face and others in three quarters. From the nimbus emerge golden rays. With an attenuated torso, the goddess is depicted holding a *trisula*, an *ankusa*, a *pasa*, a *sankha*, a *cakra*, a decapitated head and two full bloomed lotuses so placed as to appear like the sun and the moon. Usually in Kashmiri paintings multiple arjuns are shown fanning out from the elbows instead of from the shoulders. Here they fan out slightly from behind the shoulders and appear stiff and schematic. The central pair of arms are crossed across the chest. Each of the heads has a third eye, vertically placed on the forehead. The goddess is adorned with pearls and golden necklaces. She wears a short *choli* and a long *dhoti* that covers her crossed feet. Her stylized *vahana* is shown with a pointed beak and decorative wings and tail. At either side stand the devotees, a couple, the male figure on the right wearing a *dhoti* and *kantop* and the female on the left dressed in a skirt that covers the upper part of her body and the back of her head. Their ethnic traits speak of some common lineage of our highly cultured race in the heart of Asia.

Legend has it that pleased with the austerities of `Sandilya, Saraswati, called `Sarada' responded to his prayers and descended on one of the mountain peaks facing the bank of Madhumati, joined on its course by the Krishan Gnaga in Kashmir, to ensure *bhoga* and *moksa* for the *sadhakas*. Perhaps no other place could be better suited for the descent of the goddess than *Sardi*, at the confluence of the Krsna-Madhumati, that commands a panoramic view of the alpine forests wending their way through the majestic mountains and the enchanting serpentine streams and rivers to the vast uplands of Central Asia and the Mansorovar beyond. Man and animal are so intertwined in the warm embrace of Nature as to fully comprehend the mystery of *parapara* (supreme knowledge or *samvid*) that is obtained through the five syllabled (*pancakari*) Sarada. She is *devadevi*; she is *mahavidya*; she is *paratattva*. She is the goddess of learning, music and beauty. She is pure consciousness. She is the eventide energy of Gayatri. She grants rhythm, order and auspiciousness of knowledge. She is the seedbed of sixteen *matrkas*. To the true devotee she manifests herself as a white, a yellow and a green *myna*. Sometimes she may appear as *sabda* (*nadarupa*), the essence of a poem, on a *Sardi* stone slab adorned with the precious gems of poetry that verily establish the splendour and sparkling garland of *varna mala* (the rosary of alphabets). Both Bilhana and Kalhana wax eloquent in their ecstasy at the sight of saffron and the ever-flowing stream of Madhumati in the shape of the sweet speech (*vani*) of the poets. *Vagdevi* (the goddess of speech) thus signifies the creative sound of the Universe. She represents the ultimate reality in the form of sound (*sabdabrahman*). Often in our fantasy our unconscious minds tend to draw upon our common pool of archetypal images. We mirror our mental images in the image of the archetype of `Sarada' who may thus appear as a princess or protectress. Our myths, beliefs, metaphors construct a reality which is vital to our life and living. The worship of Sarada assists us in getting into harmony with the Universe and stay tuned with it. With her grace we acquire a coherent sound that helps transmission of ideas, wisdom and culture. Such speech is not mere verbal expression. It is associated with rationality and refinement. Goddess Sarada enables her worshippers to be both creative and communicative, whereby they make a significant contribution to society and culture. In fact, like Athena of the Greeks, the goddess helps us in understanding the communication patterns of our culture in its religious and philosophical context. A badly mutilated image of Athena in the SPS Museum, Srinagar, would suggest how close contacts with the Greeks, since very early times, must have led to an interaction of far-reaching importance between the two cultures in the distant past.

The shrine of Sarada stands on a hexa-angular spring (19'X13') which is covered with a stone slab². Now in Pak occupied Kashmir, the pilgrims approached it through two principal routes of Muzaffarabad and Kupwara in north Kashmir. The pilgrims from Kashmir took the most frequented route from Kupwara to Sarada, covering the whole distance of nearly 40 miles through Ladaarana, Jumgund, Navanagalle hill, Dudaniyal in different stages upto Kel. The other one from Muzaffarabad followed the upper course of the *Krsna-ganga*, the pilgrims from the plains covering a distance of about 100 miles, from Titwal, Karnah, Keran, Dudaniyal to Sarada. The whole area from Jumgund to Kel was known as *Drova* (dwar or entrance) which would suggest that this whole belt of about 60 sq. miles opened negotiable passes for merchants and missionaries making their way to Kashmir and Central Asia and back to north west India³. Sarada obviously appears to have been an important centre in Drova, attracting the Greeks from Bactria and Taxila and artists and scholars from other parts of India. The explorations of Sir Aurel Stein would suggest that Ser India symbolized the efflorescence of an indigenous culture with the stamp of Greek thought refined and sharpened by Indian aesthetics. Sarada as one of the centres, may have provided nourishment to the flowering of such aesthetics with its abstruseness.

But to argue that Sarada was a university par excellence, specializing in certain branches like the six systems of Indian philosophy, is to stretch our imagination too far. For certain we don't know when and how *Gauri-tritiya* came to be celebrated here and what kind of degrees were awarded by a university the like of which never existed in Sarada. But what seems to be more plausible is the fact that the *Sarada* based on the *bija-mantras* of Sarada *varnamala* proved quite rewarding and was successfully used by Adi Sankara. Such a *tantric* was *sadhana* defined as *matrka* or *Malini*. As such the Sarada script came to be known as *Siddhamatrka* and is even now called *siddham* in Bali. It became quite popular with the Baudha-tantric *sadhakas* in Japan.

On the confluence of the Madhumati-Krsna, pilgrims would offer oblations to their manes (*pitris*) in the bright fortnight of *Bahadrapada* on *Ganga satami* followed by animal sacrifice of goats on the 9th (*naumi*).

This reminds us of the legendary king Mankan of Kupwara (Mallapura) who is said to have been defeated and who got killed in one of the battles by his enemy. His minister is stated to have carried his dissected body to Telyan where he stopped to get some food. In his absence birds of prey settled on the mutilated body and set it afloat in the river. Dismayed, the minister continued his march to Sarada where he was astonished to see his master Mankan alive and in full armour, offering prayers to Goddess Sarada. Mankana next wanted to make an offering of his whole treasure of jewels and pearls as a mark of thanks giving for being restored to his principality. The Goddess dissuaded him from doing so; instead she desired that the spring be covered with a stone-slab. Does this anecdote imply that the Raja who might have been badly wounded in battle found a safe refuge in Sarada, the miraculous healing powers of the spring having restored his vigour, courage and determination to fight back the enemy with success? One thing is clear. She is not only a city or river goddess, but may be identified as the goddess of warriors too who sought her refuge in wars and battles. Sarada, therefore, assumes the form of Athena or Roma - a young woman, wearing a helmet and carrying a spear. Some of these attributes of the goddess are mentioned in the *Rudoayamala tantra*. If the iconography of this goddess dates back to the second century of the Christian era, it would seem reasonable to assume that our goddess Sarada had by that time established her reputation not only as a goddess of war but also of learning and wisdom. She is not only the embodiment of ten *vidyas* (*dasavidya*); she is also the slayer of *daityas* or Candi. It is in this form that our benign and benevolent goddess appears in *Sarada sahsranama* in the *Rudra yamala tantra*. Obviously our goddess affirms the strength of the warrior community who were more attracted by its martial aspect than by the austere side of the *tantric sadhakas* or dry logicians. Metaphorically the sacrifice of goats on *naumi* would imply how the true spirit of worship is sacrifice (*sariram havi*) which, in the final analysis, leads to attainment of psychic energy (*parasakti*).

Except the remains of a fortress and a rampart 15' high and 35'X30', there are practically no remains other than a few terracotta tiles scattered in the vicinity of the shrine. The enclosure of the shrine contains a number of cells, most probably meant for *sadhakas* interested in *tantric* lore. There is nothing to suggest the existence of spacious halls or a well-equipped library of manuscripts within the precincts of the shrine or any evidence of degrees having ever been conferred on those who came to Sarada more as aspirants in quest of spiritual fulfilment than as students. The *tirtha* did not advocate any monastic life nor have any colossal ruins survived as to bear any mute testimony to the energy and creativity of the early centres of learning in India like Taxila or Nalanda. The universally accepted form of address was Sarada Mai, the mother, which denoted a 'relation', an emotive attitude of the devotees to the creative sphere of nature and the self-fulfilment of the *sadhaks* in a certain pattern of *martka*-worship in a region which was designated as *Sarada-mandala* of *Sarada desa*⁴.

Notes and References

1. Karuna Goswamy, Kashmiri paintings, 1998, Delhi.
2. I owe all this information and what follows to my brethren from Batargam, Sarvashree Pt. Niranjannath, Kashinath, Amarnath who were visibly moved while describing the shrine of Sarada to me and their close association with its adjoining area, collectively known as Drova (द्रोवा).
3. Trade in wool, kuth, crocus was carried on an extensive scale, bringing the merchants and missionaries together on their way to the marts of Rome and trading stations in Central Asia upto far off China in the month of Asvina (Asu).
4. Interestingly several other pilgrimages can be spotted to exhibit a Kashmiri Pandit's love for spiritual attainment through a highly advanced form of *sadhana*. *Goosi* in Kupwara, *Tikar* near Kanihama, *Bhedagiri* (Budabrar) in Kelar-Pulwama may be cited as a few instances. At all these places we find Gojars taking an equal interest in offering sacrifices to the Goddess to increase their flock of sheep.

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Sarada Legends - Different Versions Dr. Romesh Kumar, Jammu

So integral is Sarada tradition to Kashmir, that Kashmir is more often called by the name of *Saradadesha*. Goddess Sarada is the presiding deity of Kashmir. Besides Kashmiri Hindus, Saraswat Brahmins, presently scattered along the Western Coast of India, Venerate Goddess Sarada as their principal deity. The puranic literature is replete with details about goddess Sarada's journey to Kashmir.

Two Sarada *mahatmyas* are presently extant. These describe the significance of pilgrimage to Sarada. One is a part of Bhrngisa Samhita, while the other is based on Adipurana. Pandit Sahib Ram's excellent composition, Tirthasamgraha is also a valuable source on the history of Sarada Tirtha. An attempt is made in this article, to reconstruct the origins of Sarada pilgrimage, based on the oral tradition, collected from the Pandits of village Gushi (ancient Ghosa) and Lidderwan, the villages intimately connected with Sarada pilgrimage.

Origin of Sarada Tiratha

Ravana was a great worshipper of Lord Shiva, who had bestowed him with extraordinary powers. Goddess Parvati was also kind to Ravana. One day Parvati told Lord Shiva, "We don't have a house of our own," and desired one. Lord directed Vishwakarma to construct a house for them in Lanka. During the Greh Pravesh ceremony, Ravana was also among invitees. Ravana wondered why a godly saint with ashes smeared all around his body needed a house of his own. He asked Lord to hand over the house to him. So long as the Lord was in the house, he ignored Ravana's pleadings. After the Lord and Parvati left the house, Ravana was asked to take over the house.

Meanwhile Ravana was engaged in war with Rama. The former asked Lord Shiva for his blessings. The Lord gave him a *Shivling* and told him that "so long as it remains with you, no body can defeat you". He warned him not to put it on ground. Narad, an old man happened to pass by : Ravana went somewhere and handed over *Shivling* to Narad. The latter told him that he had a curse that he could not stay at a place for more than half an hour. Ravana agreed and said he would return quite soon, but more than thirty minutes passed. Narad put the *Shivling* down and left. On return, Ravana became sad on finding that *Shivling* was missing.

Knowing that Lord Shiva was angry with him, Ravana turned to Goddess Durga. She asked him to perform Yagna but told Lord Rama, "If I stay here, you cannot destroy Ravana. Take me from here to Utterkhand". Lord Rama asked her, "How could I take you". She replied, "You have Hanuman". Hanuman was called but he refused, arguing he would not take a female along with him. Parvati replied, "I will go in the form of water. You have only to lift the Kamandal and drop me where I ask". Hanuman agreed. In a slightly different version, it is said that it was after Lanka (*Lanka dahan*) was set on fire that Parvati asked Lord Rama to take her out of Lanka.

Hanuman took the Handawara (ancient Hantwara) route to Gushi, passing by Masabhavan spring. As he crossed the place where Masabhavan spring is situated, a drop of water from Kamandal fell down to form the spring Masanag (Masa literally means fish). After resting a while at Gushi, Hanuman went to Tikr. Here again a drop of water fell down from Kamandal to form Devibal spring. The water of the spring demonstrates different colours at different times, like the famous spring of Khirbhawani. A little above the Devibal spring, Parvati asked Hanuman to stop a while. Goddess rested here. This place presently has seven **Chinars**. There is a temple of goddess Sarada, along with Srichakra.

The next destination of Hanuman was Hayhom, eight miles away and Krsnag, Hayhom spring has an area of hundred square feet but is not much deep. Sarada yattris take bath at Krsnag. From Krsnag Hanuman went to Tehjan. There is also a spring here. Three miles ahead, on the banks

of Madhumati on a hillock, Parvati asked Hanuman to end the journey and keep the Kamandal down. She asked Hanuman to leave.

The place, where Hanuman kept the Kamandal is the Sanctum Sanctorium of Sarada shrine. Originally a spring, presently it is covered by a large rough slab, measuring 6 by 7 feet, with a thickness of about half a foot. This spring or Kunda is the object of special veneration for pilgrims. There is another spring which lies a little higher up but within the precincts of Sarada shrine. It is said that water from that spring flows into Sarada Kund. Same story is told about Masabhavan spring whose waters are reported to reach Sarada spring. A legendary account of Dandhori is given in this context.

This story is based on the oral tradition conveyed by Sansar Chand Raina of Gushi and Nand Lal Pujari of Sarada to his descendants. Masabhavan spring is a large spring with an area of seven hundred square feet. Its good depth gives the water a blue hue. There are two big *Shivlings* in the spring. The sanctity of *Shivlings* in the spring has been validated by a unique incident in recent times. Jagarpur village is irrigated by the waters of Masanag. In early seventies local villagers wanted to clean the spring but could not do it fully. They asked Pandits of Nagari village to shift the *Shivlings*. They complied and *Shivlings* were shifted to a nearby temple. Incessant rains followed, leading to flash floods. Jagarpur villagers got worried and went to seek intervention of a Kraal Derwish, Qadir Saab at Heer, four miles away from Kupwara. Acclaimed as a good *antaryami*, he told the villagers, "I cannot do anything, when you have removed it." People could not discern its meaning.

Meanwhile, DC Baramulla in a dream saw somebody catching him by the neck. He told him, "If you do not put me back in the spring, even your smell will not stay." DC woke up that very moment, 12 O'clock in the night and rushed to Jagarpur. He called the villagers and asked them to put the *Shivlings* back in the spring. He warned them, "If you fail to do so, you will die along with me". The *Shivlings* were brought in a truck and under the direct supervision of DC, these were lowered into the Masabhavan spring. Rains stopped immediately in the morning and villagers heaved a sigh of relief.

Pt. Shamboo Nath Thusu of Lidderwan gives a different version of the legend, which explains the origin of Sarada spring. Pandit Ganmalo of Seer Jagir (Nandkishwar) was a *Pujari* at Sarada, appointed by Dharmarth Trust. Ganmalo was well versed in scriptures and a poet also. In 1940, when he had put ninety years behind him, he retired. He often talked about the origins of Sarada *tirtha* to his nephews, Satlal and Niranjan Nath and to Nandlal Pujari at Sarada in 1947. Pt. S. N. Thusu heard this story from them.

Once Samundar Mathan (cleaning of ocean) was under-taken by fourteen *ratans*, with an objective to get Amrit. In the process, Amrit fell into the hands of *dyats* and not *devtas*. It was a fearful situation. *Devtas*, thought of a compromise. Goddess adopted 'Mohini Roop' and agreed to distribute Amrit. As expected *dyats* fell out. In the process the goddess left along with Amrit to Sardaji. Goddess Mohini poured it over a place, now known as Sarada spring. *Dyats* would come and desecrate it. Goddess put a *shila* over it to prevent desecration.

Legends of Muni Sandilya

There are two different versions on how Muni Sandilya reached Sarada. The first version is based on what Sansar Chand Raina and Nand Lal Shardi relate. The other version is based on Bhrnghisa Samhita and is recorded by Sir Aureil Stein, in his translation of Rajatarangini.

Rishi Agastya was a *brahm rishi*. He performed *tapasya* in a forest. Rishi was childless. One day his wife told him that she desired a child. Rishi kept quiet. When she persisted, Agastya suggested to her that she should seek the divine intervention for this. He advised her, "you get up

at 2 AM and pour eleven tumblers of water over *Shivling*, everyday for forty days. You may get a child after that." Rishi however told her that no one else should see her performing this unique puja. A Coirmaker overheard this conversation. He too was childless. He was on way home from the forest. As it rained heavily, he took shelter under the cover of roof projecting out. Matanga, the coir-maker went home and asked his wife to try this `formula.'

Soon both ladies gave birth to sons. Matanga's son Sandilya, was of a very dark complexion. As he grew up, he would frequently visit men of religious merit and thus came in contact with Acharya Agastya.

Sandilya began visiting Rishi Agastya frequently. The latter told his wife that though Sandilya was born in identical circumstances as her son but he was higher in wisdom. When he reached ten to twelve years of age, Sandilya asked Rishi Agastya for `*Guru Shabad*'. Rishi told him, "You cannot get it. Only those who have undergone Yagneopavit ceremony qualify for it." Sandilya in his innocence asked the Rishi to perform his Yagneopavit ceremony. Agastya told him that only Brahmins can undergo Yagneopavit ceremony. Sandilya did not relent. Then Agastya suggested, "There is a way out. You go to Sarda and offer penance to the goddess. If she is kind enough, then your Yagneopavit ceremony is possible". Agastya told Sandilya that the goddess lived in Utterakhand.

Sandilya began wanderings in search of the goddess and found out from people that the goddess lived in Kashmir. It took him two years to reach this region. He followed the track taken by Hanuman in carrying goddess Parvati. Sandilya took the traditional bath at Krsnag and came to Tehjan. He mistook Tehjan spring for that of Sarda and camped here. Goddess Sarda came to him in a dream.

This confirmed the authenticity of her abode. Sandilya began his *tapasya*. Goddess came to him and asked what he wanted. Sandilya told her, "I need no riches. Nobody is agreeing to perform my Yagneopavit ceremony. Only you can help me. For my Yagneopavit ceremony you be the Jajmanbhai and rishi Agastya the Brahmin." Goddess Sarda, the incarnation of Parvati agreed. Yagneopavit was performed and Sandilya received `*Guru Shabad*' from Agastya. Thus it is on the soil of Kashmir that caste system was delegitimised by none other than the presiding goddess Sarda. Caste system remained extremely weak here. Its historical significance is outside the scope of this story. Devtas, had lost contact with goddess Parvati, when she escaped from Lanka. It was Sandilya, who led them to Sarda.

Sir Aureil Stein gives a different version of the legend, based on Bhrangisa Samhita. Muni Sandilya was practicing great austerities in order to obtain the sight of the goddess Sarada. Divine advice prompts him to proceed to Syamala, Maharashtra, the present region of Hamal, Dengiwacha. At Gushi Mahadevi appears to him and promises to show herself in true form in the Sarada forest. The goddess vanishes from his sight at Hayasirsasrama, present Hayhom, four miles from Gushi. Sandilya next proceeds to Krsnag and takes bath in the spring. After emerging from the spring, half of his body turns golden. This is interpreted by Stein as complete liberation from darkness. Since the Krsnaganga is situated above the village of Drang, local Brahmins also call Drang as `*Sona-Drang*' or `*Gold Drang*' (Suvarnardhangaka in Mahatmya).

While ascending the mountain range to the north, Sandilya sees a dance of goddess in a forest called Rangavati. He then passes the Gostambhana forest and arrives at Tejavana, modern Tehjan, the residence of rishi Gautam. Then Sandilya crosses a hill and sees the God Ganesa and finally reaches Saradavana. It is at the Sarada spring, the sancutm sanctorum of the shrine, that the goddess appeared to Sandilya. She rewarded his long austerities by inviting him to her residence on Srisaila.

Pityrs also approached Sandilya and asked him to perform their Sraddhas. On his taking water from the Mahasindhu for the purpose of the Tarpana rite, half of its water turns into honey and forms the stream hence known as Madhumati. Mishra (Gangetic Plain), Saproos, Sadhus (Kashmir) trace their Gotra to Sandilya.

Places of Sarada Pilgrimage in Kashmir

As per religious tradition in Kashmir, Gangashtmi is observed every alternate year as *Saradaashtmi*. On Gangashtmi day, Kashmiri Hindus visited Gangabal lake to immerse ashes of the dead and offer *shraddhas*. Many of the pilgrims who could not reach Sarada shrine on *Saradaashtmi*, would however visit places connected with Sarada goddess in Valley proper itself. Presently there are five such places in the Valley proper, two of these being in and around Bandipore town itself.

In the *Saradamahatmyas*, only *Sardakunda* at the village of Tsatsa, close to Harvan and Sarada at Khuyhom is mentioned. The former is located about one and a half miles from the north-east corner of the Dal Lake. Stein has recorded this Sarada and says, "owing to the place being so near to the city and easily approached by boat, large crowds of pilgrims assemble from Srinagar to pay their devotion to Sarada". This spring was visited on *Saradaashtmi* day only.

Sarada at Khuyhom, Bandipore is recorded by Pandit Sahibram in his *Tirathasamgraha*. While Sahib Ram describes its location in village Kulyandi, Prof. Buhler mentions the place as Horil, also in Khuyhom. Kashmir's celebrated historian, Hassan, who lived in 19th century belonged to Khuyham.

In Yachkoot, near Budgam and slightly away from the Pandit locality is a grove of 5-8 Chinars. In the hollow of a Chinar is housed the idol of Sarada goddess. A clay wall encloses the Chinar grove. This served as a local temple. On *Chitrashtmi* and *Navmi*, Pandits of Yachkoot and surrounding villages performed *havan*. Pandits describe the place as *asthapan* of Saradamaji.

Traditions linked with the origin of the above mentioned places, connected with Sarada worship seem to have been lost in the folk memory. It is only incase of Saradabal at Kaloosa, Bandipore and at Tigr and Gushi that the tradition is still well preserved.

Sardabal at Kaloosa is located on the right bank of Madhumati. The river on which the historic shrine of Sarada is situated is also known as Madhumati. Kaloosa's old name was "*Kalash*". Sarada *asthapan* in Kaloosa has a big spring with two shilas on two Celtis (Brimij) trees. There is a fencing of stone wall with a raised platform. The temple on its left was constructed in 1925. Previously Pandits used to perform *havan on any day during the year*. For the last forty years *havan* is performed only on the day of *Saradaashtmi*.

The legend describing the origin of Sardabal is not dissimilar to the ones describing the emergence of Venkur and Saadmalinu as places of Ganges worship. Pandit Akalal's ancestor was a great devotee of goddess Sarada. He visited Sarada on every *Saradaashtmi*. When he grew old, the goddess came to him in a dream. She told him, "Now you are old. You need not come here. I myself would come and reside at your place." The devotee was astonished and asked her how would that be possible. She replied, "there would be heavy rains, followed by floods. In a mulberry garden, you have to watch the movement of a crow resting on the branch of a tree. The moment the crow starts flying, you begin pulling the branch of the tree. A spring will emerge, with two small pebbles in it. Take these pebbles home and put these in a Puja room - Thokur Kuth, duly cleaned for the occasion. Thokur Kuth is not to be opened for seven days."

The devotee complied with the divine message, but his strong curiosity drew him to open Puja room only after three days. Pebbles did grow in size but remained small. These shilas are

worshipped in Sardabal temple. As per the tradition prevalent, the Goddess told the devotee that he would not have son for seven generations, for not complying with her instructions fully. Pandit Manohar Bhat is the direct descendant of this family.

Gushi and Tikr are the places, where Sarda goddess took rest, while on her way from Lanka to Sardi. In Gushi the sacred site is situated a little above the groove of Rangvor. There is a small walled enclosure, which houses ancient idols. At Tikr on the sacred site there are seven *Chinars* besides a temple alongwith Sri Chakra.

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".....Remember that I am present in thee
And lose not hope;
Each Effort, Each Grief,
Each Joy and each pang,
Each call of thy heart,
Each aspiration of thy soul.....
all, All without exception.....
Lead thee towards me....."

-The Mother

Three Forgotten Tirthas in Shambles Arjan Dev Majboor, Udhampur

Kashmir has been a place of attraction from centuries. Dr. Raghu Nath Singh who translated Jonaraja's Rajtarangini into Hindi says that there were three hundred famous *Tirthas* in Kashmir, visited by the locals and pilgrims from India and other Foreign lands.

Kalhana, the famous historian, mentions eight very important Tirthas while starting his world famous Treatise. These are `Papsudan' in which Shiva is seen in disguise. This Tirtha is called **Kapteshvara** (Saloka 32). The other Tirthas are : Sandheya known as **Trisandheya**. It was visited by the King Jahangir and Famous French traveller - Bernier in 1665. This tirtha is situated a few kilometres from Kukarnag. The third one is **Svambhoo** (Saloka 34), situated south west of village Nichome, in Machipur Pargana. It was visited by Stein in 1892. It is mentioned in Aini-Akbari and "The Valley of Kashmir" by Lawrence.

The fourth one is of the Goddess of Learning Saraswati at **Gangodbedha** in Pulwama district. The fifth is `Nandi Khetra' (permanent abode of Shiva (Saloka 36) of Raj Tarangini by Kalhana). It has also been mentioned in Nilmata - `High Alpine Valley at the foot of the east Glaciers of the Harmukat Peaks, which contain the sacred Kalodaka Lake, popularly known as *Mundkol*.

The sixth Tirtha of world fame is **Sharada** (Saloka 37), now in occupied Pakistan. When visiting this Shrine one reaches the rivers named Madhumati and Saraswati.

Seventh and eighth are of **Kesava** and **Siva** at `Chakdar' and Vijeshar (Present Bijbehara) (Saloka 38).

In this article, I am going to deal with two of the above mentioned Tirthas and **Narastan** or **Narayanastan** in Holda (Present Tral Area). Kalhana mentions this Tirtha in the second volume of his history at page 461. What tempted me to see **Kapteshvara**, **Gangodbheda** and **Narastan** is the Nilmata which says :



"O protector of the man all the sacred places which are on the earth are there, thronged with the hermitages of the sages, (it is) pleasant in heat and cold and is auspicious."

While eleven years away in exile from my home land, I have not forgotten these and all other places of historic and cultural importance. Going down my memory lane to a vivid picture of the above mentioned three places, I shall give references also from the books mentioned above.

Kapteshvara

This very beautiful spring (now in shambles) is situated in Tehsil Anantnag. It is about three kilometres from the famous village, Nowgam (Shangas). I have visited this place in 1955. Nilmata in saloka 1171-73 says :



Brahadasva (replied) "O! King on the sacred bank of Drasdavati in Kurekhetra, there stood in great penance, crores of sages to have a sight of Rudra - the lord of the Gods. Due to this devotion the venerable highest lord told them in dream O! quick going ones, go soon to Kashmir, where there is a spacious and immaculate abode of the Naga. There I shall be visible in disguise."

There is a story about "Gowrparashar Rishi" in Nilmata, who remained on fast for Sankara, who gave him darshana in the form of a log.

The Kapteshvara is 'Kothar' in Kashmir now. It was one of the parganas of Kashmir in Mugal period. Pargana is division of area. Rajtarangini lists forty two parganas of Kashmir in volume two. Out of these forty two parganas; 24 are in Maraz i.e. southern part of Kashmir and eighteen are in Kamraz i.e. Northern division of Kashmir.

In 1955, when I saw **Kapteshvara**, now called Kootheer, it was a village and while entering the village one could see a clean brook coming out of a spring, which was half dry.

About the place Nilmata says :



Thus he advises the Sages to go soon to Kashmir.

There is a detailed description given by Stein in his English Translation of Kalhana's Rajtarangini when he visited this Tirtha. In 1891 he saw this sacred **Papsudana** spring at Kutheer. According to his article in **Vienna Oriental Journal** p. 347, Bhoja had constructed some enclosures around this spring. He further says that - "The lather now rises in a circular tank of at least sixty yards in diameter which is enclosed by a solid stone wall and by steps leading down to the water. The depth of the spring seemed considerable."

"The local tradition of the Purohits of the Tirtha as communicated to me by an old Sadhu (Mahadev Koul) residing at the spring maintains that the tank and its stone enclosure were constructed by the Raja from the Dekkan called Muchkunda".

The King had grown horns and wanted to cure them. He saw a dog whose leg was bleeding, crossing the stream arising out of the spring. The dog was cured. The King followed his example and was cured of the trouble. There-upon he constructed the tank. To same king is ascribed to have constructed the temple, situated to the east of the tank and of several still smaller cells, the ruins of which are more or less well preserved, and found close by.

There is one Kashmiri proverb :

"Makan Razas Mashivi kan

Tim Kati balanas kutheer Von"

Translation : "The Makan Raja has the ears of a buffalo, where will these be cured? - At Kutheer forest". This is how a language preserves the history.

At the time of my visit, the spring was half filled with mud and from the other half, the water was gushing out in a stream. The water was of blue colour and sweet to drink. There were some stone

walls round the vegetable gardens of the people. No Kashmiri Pandit was living in the village at the time of my visit. I sat at the spring and saw a small plank on the water. There was no image on this plank. The area must have been very sacred and beautiful in the olden times, as there were fir and other trees, though reduced to small numbers when I visited the place. My imagination travelled to the centuries back, where I could see visions of a golden era - people coming from far off places to visit this Tirtha of great importance. I returned with a heavy heart. The Pandit organisations should take steps to preserve this Shrine of Shiva.

Gangodbheda

This ancient Teertha according to Stein was lost to Pandits, when he went to discover it in September, 1895. Stein first camped at varnag (Zainapora) while coming from Anantnag. From Zainapora he went to Chitragam, where a Brahmin Suraj Koul met him and told him that he could show him the tirtha he wanted to explore afresh. It must be taken into consideration that worship of particular deities has been shifted from its original site to more convenient locations in their neighbourhood. Suraj Koul showed Stein the temple of '**Bedai-bal**' at Hal-Mogalpur. This was not really the actual site of the Tirtha. Later, one Khaira Gujar gave him the clue of the site. The seventy five year old Gujar had spent forty summers at the spot.

In Nilmata (S. 1359) the mention of this tirtha is given as below :



"By taking bath in Gangodbheda near Bheda Devi, a man obtains the merit of bathing in the Ganga and is honoured in Heaven".

It was in 1987 that I after collecting written material about this place decided to visit the place situated in a forest. I with my friends, Shri M. L. Goja artist and Shri P. N. Bhat a writer, started from Shopian. We reached Pulwama at 1 P.M. and then boarded a bus leading to Kellar. We reached here at 2.30 P.M. We tried for horses but could not. Later a driver friend of Mr. Goja took us in a truck to the place. We were passing through Shakroo Pargana. The Birni stream, as people call it, came in the way. This is the corrupted name of "**Vaitarini Nadi**". A small stream with clean water. Purohits of Kashmir used to charge a fee of a cow for carrying the dead across the stream Vaitarini, to the other world. As soon as the forest started, it began to rain and the truck slipped off and on till we reached the Bheda Devi, now called as **Buj-Brore** by the locals. Brore is the corrupted form of Bhatarika, meaning a devi.

There is a plain land with heights. The big timber trees are seen on the hill-tops. We first saw the spring. A tank is attached to it. A *Murti* was in the tank having its back side out of water. So we could not guess the sculpture.

In his visit, Stein had not been able to find any sign of Saraswati here as mentioned in Nilmata. I searched here and there and saw a big stone in the vicinity. It was broken into two. I washed the whole stone with water and grass and lo! it appeared as the **Saraswati** riding on *hansa*. I was glad to discover the carving. Shri Goja made a painting of the carving, which he later could not get along with him at the time of exodus.

There were brick plinths around, which showed that there was a big hermitage or Gurukula to teach the students or saints who lived in these structures.

The spring has some underground warm water which does not allow the snow to remain on the sides and is melted at once.

Some Gujars from Tangmarg had come to bathe in the water which comes out at some distance from the tank. They said that the water cures troubles of joints etc.

I asked one local Gujar the reason of the broken stone. He said that it was due to some thunderbolt. He also said that some locals had once polluted the place. He found his bull dead when he entered the cowshed. From that day people fear the place and they place occasionally yellow rice (Tehar) at the bank of the tank reverently. It was getting late, but the place was so charming that we remained here upto 6 P.M. As there was no Rest House to stay, a Gujar invited us to stay with him. We thanked him and decided to return.

According to Gangodbheda Mahatmya, mentioned in RajTarangini Volume II by Stein Page 273, Rishi Pulusteya, when performing long penance in the 'Land of Sati' and had made the divine Ganga gush forth near him from mount Himavat for the purpose of his sacrifice. When the sage wished to discharge the river after completing his worship, he was stopped by a divine voice from the sky, that of Saraswati. It proclaimed to him that where the stream had issued from the mountain in the forest called bheda, there would arise the holy Tirtha of **Gangodbheda**.



After indicating the great spiritual benefits to be reaped from the pilgrimage to this sacred spot, Mahatmya abruptly turns to mention about the following neighbouring Shrines or images.

- (i) Goverdhandhara Vishnu (at a distance of 125 hastas)
- (ii) A miraculous image of Yema, called Aujasa.

The Mahatmya closes with more or less fragmentary references to *Tirthas* at **Ramasrama** (112) **Ramsu** (113) and the hermitage of the **Seven Rishis** (114) and **Vaitarini River** (118) These Tirthas are evidently intended to be visited in conjunction with the **Gangodbheda Pilgrimage**.

Khaira Gujar told Stein that he had seen Pandits coming to **Bujbrore (bheda devi)** in Chaitra, but perhaps due to heavy snow in Chaitra they discontinued this pilgrimage and by and by it was forgotten. I came to know that some Hindu youth of Shopian had started to come to this place in Chaitra as the snow-falls were very less. The path leads from here to Piranchal and Rajouri.

The place is cool and one forgets all worries and peace comes to greet from all sides.

Narastan

The mention of this place has first been made in Neelmat Purana :



"A man surely obtains the world of Vishnu by bathing in the water of the Vitasta at Narastana".

Stein in his translation of Raj Tarangini says in Vol. II page 461:

"Of old remains in Vular lake, the interesting temple of Narastan at the Northern extremity of the district Holda (34° 3' Lat, 75°-10' longitude) deserves notice. Unfortunately I am unable to find any clue to its name or history. Excavations made by me at the site in 1891 brought to light interesting sculptures, but no evidence as to its name." The large village of Sotur to the south-west of Narastan may possibly account for the entry-Satrava' in the Lokprakasas list of Parganas.

I personally went to see this shrine, with the help of my close relatives, Mr. B. N. Pandita and Mrs. Phoola Koul, probably in 1985. We reached Satur from Tral. From here we had to go on foot as the bridges on the track had broken down. After about 4 kilometres walk we reached the place on the river under the feet of a Hill named *Brari-Bal* (Bhatarika Hill or the Hill of Goddess). The temple at Narastan though in shabby condition was looking grace-fully to the skies. The architecture of this temple is quite different from that of all the temples of the Valley. The outer wall is about seventy feet long. The image of Narayana was not there in the temple. Who knows what had happened to it. The temple is in a circular style and is completely made of stone. The style is Gandhra plus Indian. The age of this temple is said to be about fourteen hundred years. Mr. R. C. Kak has given a photograph of this temple in his book titled "Monuments of Kashmir".

A stream of water gushes down near the front of the temple. The Chowkidar appointed by the Government was not present. The front portion of the stone-wall was broken. I think this temple being far away has not come under slaughter.

The importance of Narastan is due to the sculpture art of the Hindu period. It is said that images of various deities were supplied from here to the whole of Northern India. One can find coloured stones in the stream flowing near by. The stones are hard and useful for making images.

A potter's wife living near the temple was kind enough to give me a hand of Narayana (image) with a small dagger. This had been broken away from the image. The nails of the small hand were very hard and the whole piece was artistically very beautiful. The colour of the stone was maroon. The potter-lady related me a story about her own daughter, who after her marriage had no issue. Both mother and daughter took a *Trami* (Thali) of '*Tahar*' to the temple and requested the deity for a son for the daughter. The daughter, next year gave birth to a son and she flourished with wealth. When six male children were born to the daughter of the potter, she came to her mother and said that now she wanted no more children. Both went to Narastan and begged the deity to give riddance from further deliveries of the daughter. It was granted to them in a dream.

The potter-lady had promised me to give more pieces of images, which she would gather from the bed of the stream. But due to changed circumstances in Kashmir, I couldn't visit the places again.

The artistic hand-piece was also left in my Almirah, when I left my library and all belongings of my home, which was later burnt down to ashes by the terrorists I can't say what the present position at Narastan is. But it has been a place of pilgrimage in the past, there is no doubt about it. One old man told me that there was some thing which would shine from evening till morning but it was taken by some visitors who camped here some time back for few days. I can't say whether the legend is true or not.

The architecture, the sight, the natural bounty of the area, the hill and the stream with colourful stones charms the onlookers and the visitors. Very few people used to go to this place when I visited the site.

This temple needs protection by the Government as well as the Pandits living in Kashmir or in exile. As far as this monument is concerned, it sings the glory of Kashmir in temple art. It shows that the taste of the builders of temples and Shrines in Kashmir was very high. The stone

available was very hard and this is why that temple like Narastan was not in a very dilapidated condition. We should be proud of such places. I am reminded of the remarks of a German tourist, who met me at Gomteshvara (Karnataka) and told me that - "We have no such stone art which is very interesting and charming". Let me stop here and let the time come soon when we shall visit these places of utmost charm once again.

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The Foot Prints of Our Ancestors in Tehsil Tral
Dr. Rajiv-Gairoo Niwasi, Jammu

While travelling between Anantnag and Srinagar, it is not possible to miss the grandeur of the Avantisvamin temple lying in ruins at village Avantipur, situated on the right bank of the river, Vitasta. King Avantivarman ruled Kashmir between 855 A. D. to 883 A.D. That wise king before obtaining sovereign power, built the shrine of Vishnu-Avantisvamin. And after his accession to the throne, constructed the temple of **Shiva-Avantisvara**. The two ruined temples have been described in detail by European travellers like Forster and Moorcroft. Cunnigham in 1848 has made efforts to identify these temples otherwise left entirely in shape of overturned and confused pile of stones. While **Avantisvamin** temple has been identified as the one standing in the midst of the Avantipur village and the larger one which is about half a mile to the North-West and close to the hamlet of Jaubror, has been identified as **Avantisvara** temple.

Further ahead, lies the village of Barus about 3 miles below Avantipur on the right bank of Vitasta. This village has been identified to be the site of **Visvaikasara**, mentioned in the Raj Tarangni - Chapter V. This village was visited by M. A. Stein in September, 1891 and found a fine Linga over five feet in height standing near a small Naga called Rudraganga, which was visited by the pilgrims to Amarnatha. This Linga though stood on the river bank till early fifties of the twentieth century, it is not traceable any more. No pooja was being performed nor any rituals carried out at these three sites anymore.

A link road takes off from the National Highway at Avantipur towards south-east and proceeds to Tral. After travelling a distance of 2 kms., you come to a village **Gyur**-now known as Noorpora. Habitated by about 800 Muslim families and 52 Hindu families, the name itself was derived from **Gauripur**. In this village a fine Naga was dedicated to Mata Gauri Shori. With a large amount of pure clean water gushing out all the time, the spring was home to a large number of fish. A temple, housing the Shiva Linga seated on its ornamental stone pedestral - the *Bhadra-pita*, had been constructed by the side of the spring under foliage of three gigantic **chinars** providing shade to the temple as well as the spring. Hawan was performed annually on the auspicious day of Veth Truvah and it was not unusual to find a gold coloured fish making a round in the spring. The devotees would be blessed by having the Darshan. All the Sadhus who would be travelling on foot from Srinagar to Amarnath would make a night halt at this picturesque place and the local Hindus were always pleased to serve the Yatries.

Thank God - the temple is there, Nag is there and so are about 20 families of Hindus who ensure the upkeep. This particular village was home to one of the outstanding leaders of the Kashmiri Pandit community - Late Pt. Kashyap Bandhu, who breathed his last after drinking the Amrit from the **Gauri-kund**.

A kilometer ahead towards Tral is the little known Tirtha - **Pap Haran** - close to village Doonigund, where 3 Hindu families used to reside. Water used to flow out of a beautiful Nag and devotees from neighbouring villages would reach here on *Baderpeth Mavas* - also known as *Derb Mavas* - take bath and collect *Derb* for use back home. Alas! this Tirtha has reportedly been completely encroached upon.

To the east of this village taking a detour of about 4 Kms. is village Hari-Parigam. A large **Ganesh** is carved on the mountain rock with Sindhoor pasted on it. About 12 Hindu families lived in the village surrounding the rock temple. Yatris would visit the shrine on Ganesh Chuterdeshi.

Another 4 Kms. from this village towards Tral, a village named as Kamla is situated. A fine spring, stated to be fathomless, exists there. *Shradalus* (devotees) from the neighbouring villages would visit with "*Tahri*" on Navreh Mavas, take bath and offer Pooja. No Hindu family lived in the village

and the Spring has now been completely encompassed in the premises of a neighbouring mosque.

Nearing Tral, we come across village **Navdal**. All Kashmiri Pandits are in know of the *Mahima* of this *Tirtha*. It is said that the Amarnath Yatra is completed only after having a dip in the holy waters of **Nav-Dal**. As the name goes - the Tirtha consists of Nine springs, which are drained in a single stream wherein Yatries would take bath. A large six feet tall Shiv ling was also there at the head of the large spring. The Yatra used to be accomplished on Baderpeth Chorum (Navdal-chorum). The springs are there as on date also, so is the Shiv linga but alas! nobody has been offering pooja there since 1990.

The **Mahakali Asthapan** at Tral was a Tirtha of great importance for the Hindus of the Valley. This very Tirtha was converted into a Khanqah and Ziarat by Shah-i-Hamdan. The Bhagwati's idol had then been placed on the bank of a small spring nearby. While the Muslims offer prayers within the Khanqah, the Hindus used to offer prayers in front of the idol placed nearby. The spring is within the Khanqah as well. But Hindus would not be permitted within.

Narasthan is a village about eight Kms. from Tral, situated in the lap of the mountains on three sides. The western side being the approach towards the valley. The Narayan-Sthan has been referred to many a time in Raj Tarangani. Out of a number of ruins, the main temple stands still. The Shiv-linga has been displaced but the stone pedesdtal - the **Bhadrapeth** can still be marked by the presence of a water out-flow ornamental stone resembling *Gao-mukh*. Pooja was not being performed but people used to sing Leelas in the name of the Narayan at Narasthan.

***Narasthan Chuy Navnaran
Zeevo kon Chukh Tut Laraan
Sorrie Vat gat Rozzee Ne Laar
Kamlavati Jai Jai Kaar.***

The author is a veterinarian scientist and a dedicated scholar who has grown under the guidance of the great Kashmiri Leader, Kashyap Bandhu.

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Life, Love & Joy
(A Collection of Poems)
Manmohan Dhar, New Delhi

Life

A lonely journey,
Of experience, unfoldment and wisdom,
In a world of relationships,
Of love, abiding faith and commitment,
Or barren-sans love, joy and understanding,
A mixed fare of all sorts.
And at the end of it all,
Standing alone at the edge of depth,
Facing the vast infinitude of nothingness,
Where life's achievements, successes,
Failures and fears dwindle,
Into a few shades of distant memory.
A moment of self gathering dawns,
Leaving behind the burdens of the past
And standing naked like a child,
Ready to enter the realm of the Unknown,
From where he came,
Completing the journey of life.

Essence of Living

Where eyes glow and lips smile,
Where joy is yours mile after mile.
Where spring is forever and love like a stream,
Is all around you, as in a dream.
Feel not pain when friends falter,
Your efforts fail or plans alter.
With a happy heart and sinews strong,
Hold on patiently as you get along.
The essence of life, is how you live,
Not how much you get, but how much you give.

Unfettered Love

Unbroken chain of memories,
Unstable eddies of thought,
Like misty winds of morn,
Tease one out of sort.
Life loses all meaning,
When loving a thin cover,
Of base and mean desire,
A tinsel wrapping on things sour.
When faith, love and sympathy,
Are just words, empty and hollow,
One's deepest streams of feeling,
Get lost in sandy shallow.
Ah! In this night of betrayal,
Where can a man go?
In the storm of suffering,
Who will his boat toe?
Look at the birds flying high,
Unmindful, whether they live or die,
Replete with feeling of joy,
Gliding on in infinite sky.
With no thought of tomorrow,
Of pain, hunger or sorrow,
Moving in unfettered space,
With gay abandon and grace.

Surrender
(Sharnagati)

My defenses have fallen,
Like a pack of cards,
And me like a drop of dew,
Lies helpless on a fallen leaf.
And my `self' lies in quiet love,
Floating on waves of time.
A few more years and my heart,
Would have done its day,
And me like a piece of clay,
Will be lost in elements.
Memories will linger for a while,
And then will exist no more.

The author, besides being an internationally renowned engineering expert, is a man of versatile genius; a writer, poet, melodious singer, outstanding musician and above all a person of extra-ordinary humane qualities. The above poems are from his collection of poems entitled "Life, Love & Joy". His another publication on "Swami Ashoka Nandaji" was recently released by Dr. Karan Singh at India International Centre, New Delhi.

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Gudar
Prithvi Nath Bhatt, Delhi

Kashmir is surrounded by high mountains of the Pir Panjal range on all sides. Due to heavy snowfall and difficult passes, it used to remain cut off from the outer world for about nine months of the year. Two roads, one from west and the other from north-west, approached it. The former was known as the salt route and it passed through Poonch and Rajouri on the other side and through Poshun (Pushen of Raj Tarangini), Kellar, Romooh (Romosh of Rajtarangini), Damodar high lands (Damodar Udar) and thence to Srinagar. The other road passed through Rawalpindi, Kohala, Uri, Baramulla (Varamoola of Rajtaringini) and thence to Srinagar. The latter road became known as the Jhelum valley Road during the Dogra rule while the former was known as Banihal Cart Road.

Kashmiris could not go on a pilgrimage to the sacred places in India due to geographical and climatic conditions. If they ever ventured to do so, most of them either perished during the long and perilous journey or did not return at all. This made the people to establish most of the places of worship in Kashmir itself, except, of course, Ayodhya, Mathura and the four Dhams established by Shankracharya himself. Stories and legends were woven around these places of worship so that the people's faith and devotion did not waver or diminish. Kings and Queens also built temples and Viharas where people thronged to worship them. Kapalmochan of Nagbal (Digam, Shopian), Swami Amarnath and Martand (Bhavan, Anantnag) are the only places of worship which do not exist outside Kashmir.

Kashmir has been the seat of Shaivism and Trika philosophy. Therefore, the places of worship of Shiva and His consort Parvati are almost at every place in Kashmir, though Sikander (1389-1413 AD) the iconoclast, did not spare even sacred places of Hindus in Kashmir in the 14th century when he, at the instigation of Amir Kabir of Hamdan, massacred Kashmiri Hindus in thousands at their resistance to conversion into Islam. Now, at almost 90 percent of such sacred places stand mosques, Khankahas and graveyards. Malla Khah and Jama Masjid of Srinagar are glaring examples of such tyranny.

Out of so many places of worship, **Gudar** is no less important in any way. It is situated on the *Gudar tull*, which lies at a distance of four kilometers to the South-West of Kulgam, named after **Kulwageshwari** on the right bank of Veshav (Vishoka of Nilmatpurana). The village on the hill is also known as **Gudar**.

Gudar hill, about 300 feet above ground is a part of the Southern Pirpanchal range. On its back high, snow-covered mountains arise forming a very beautiful background. Beyond those is the Udhampur district of Jammu Province.

There is a small spring above Gudar village in the midst of a large number of pine trees and the rock having the formation of a cow's mouth through which water flows down into a pool. This is the Gudar tirtha of great importance. It's water flows down the hill to meet the Veshav river at the foot of the hill. This confluence of the two waters is called the Sangam where a pilgrimage is made after every twelve years like the one held at Haridwar, Allahabad etc.

Gudar is a small village of sixty odd houses, five of which belong to Kashmiri Pandits and the rest to the Muslims. The village is situated at 75.1° longitude and 33.6° latitude. It was a part of Devsar (Devsaras) Pargana before becoming a part of the present Kulgam tehsil.

Godavari Mahatmya narrates the appearance of the Godavari on earth as follows :



"Rishi Gautam prayed to Mahadevi (the consort of Shiva) for the water of the Ganga. She was pleased at the penance of the saint and appeared before him. She rent the Gudar hill, water oozed out. The spring as well as the brook formed by its water became known as Godawari. Ever since, this place became *tirtha* of great fame.

Kalhana in his Rajtarangini also makes a mention of this sacred place as under :



King Surendra built a Vihar called **Saurasa**, present Chorus in Pulwama district. This King died without an issue. Godara, the scion of another family, became the King and protected the earth with finest of the mountains. He bestowed the *agrahara* (Jagir) of Godhara-Hastshilla on brahmins. After him his son Survarna brought the Suvarnamani the present Sonaman canal to Karol (Karol-Vaishya pargana), the present Adwin Pargana.

So the present Godhavari or Gudar is a very ancient place of worship built between 620-70 Laukik Samvat or **2450-2500** B.C. approximately. Close to the west of the village, the Veghav is joined by the water of the Gudar spring and is known Sangam. At this confluence, the pilgrim bathe and worship Goddess Godawari. By bathing, all the sins are believed to be washed away and the pilgrim receives the benefit of Gopardan (cows given in alms).

According to a local tradition, King Godara founded a town at Gindar. M. A. Stein could not find any remains of it when he visited the place in 1891 A.D.

Hastishala of Rajtarangini is the present Asthel village on the right bank of the Veghav just below the Gudar village across Hanad Chawalgam. Here Muslims and Rajputs (Mias) live even to the present day.

Godavari means the land of cows. It was a meadow where cows tended as the hill had dense forests which has now been denuded by the residents. The land so acquired has been transformed into orchards of apple & walnut trees that have been a source of good income to the villagers.

Gudar village is reached on foot or horseback as there is no motorable road.

Nilmatpurana also makes a mention of Gudar when King Nila enumerates the famous places of worship to Kashmir to Brahmin Chandradeva. It says :



The Gudar pilgrimage is made after every 12 years. It starts on the first of Navratra of Chetra month (lunar) and ends on Chaitra *Poornamashi* (full moon) the next year. The pilgrimage is not made every day but on Thursdays only just as pilgrimage is made on Sundays after every three years of Malmasa-Banamasa at Matan (Bhavan or Martand) near Anantnag. It is presumed that Godavari might have appeared on a Thursday.

Pilgrims ascend the Gudar hill through the Gudar village to reach the holy spring. They smear the mouth of the cow through which water comes out of the rock, with *Sindoor*. After prayers they shower flowers with grains of rice and barley. They burn *dhoop* and *agarbatis* to incense the place. They drink water from the pool and after making a round (*parikrama*) come down the hill on the left side to reach the *sangam* down below. There they bathe at the ghat and perform Shradha Kriyas of the dead. They keep a fast that day. By ascending from the left and coming down beyond the Gudar spring, a full *parikrama* (circulatory walk) is made of the "tirtha".

Gudar tirtha was last done in 1993 of the past century after the forced exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir, their ancestral home.

In 1954 Swami Laxman Joo, his sister and Sharika Devi made pilgrimage of Gudar after staying at Pt. Sat Lal Wali's house at Hanad Chawalgam.

Gurdar has lost its religious importance now as the Kashmiri Pandits living in far and near villages of the *tirtha* have almost left for safe places of Jammu and other parts of India due to militancy over there. There are a few Kashmiri Pandits still living in Thusoo, Manzgam, Damhal-Hanjipora, Kakran, Begom, Hanadchawalgam, Kulgam, Chowgam, Devsar etc. Some Rajput (Mia) families live in Nandmarag, Chogulpora, Mirhama, Asthel, Tengbal and Malvan. Can they now muster courage to perform pilgrimage of Gudar? What a great tragedy?

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The Prominent Shrines of Kuthar and Breng Valley
Ravinder Ravi, New Delhi

India has attained an appellation of being the land of spiritualism. Its crown, Kashmir has been described as valley of sages and saints and shrines. Almost all the shrines are named after great saints, incarnations, goddesses etc. There is hardly any area, where a shrine does not exist. These are held in great reverence and esteem by everybody. Walter Lawrance in his book "The Valley of Kashmir" says, "Every Kashmiri believes that saints will aid if men will call and they think that a dead saint is more efficacious than a living priest obeisances are made and with barefeet the Kashmiri draws near the doorway and smears his throat and body with the holy dust of the sacred precincts."

Every Kashmiri is God fearing and respects every shrine whether it belongs to muslims or to hindus. **Springs**, shadowed by **shady trees, big rocks, trees, torrents**, etc. are usual accomplices of shrines, where hindus pay their obeisance, kneel down in prostration and have abulations. It is given in Ainiakbari that Hindus regard all Kashmir as holy land. 45 places are dedicated to Mahadeo and 64 to Vishnu, 3 to Brahma and 22 to Durga. In 700 places there are carved figures of snakes, which they worship." Fairs are held at these shrines and offerings are made. Pilgrims throng in big numbers to these shrines. Conches are blown and religious hymns are chanted.

Again Walter Lawrance says, "It is dangerous to discuss so great a mystery as the Hindu religion, yet I cannot help noticing the important part which water springs and snakes play in the Kashmiri mythology. Nor I must omit the fact that the Hindus seize with avidity on any abnormal display of the powers of nature. The intermittent springs in R. S. Pura where the water rises and falls in an unaccountable manner at fixed periods; the Gangjetton hill side in Donsu, dry all the year till september, when it becomes a waterfall; the subterraneous fire at Soyam in Uttar Machipora where people cook their food over the hot soil, attract numerous pilgrims and are ranked among the holy places of Kashmir."

These shrines assume great significance following miracles by deities and incarnations and great saints of these splendid places. These shrines are great centers of spiritual eminence, miracles and forecasting. These shrines have the unique distinction of enjoying the esteem of every community alike. Pilgrims make their way toward these shrines in good numbers belonging to different races and ethnic groups. They wish to pay obeisance and get their wishes fulfilled. The great mystic poet and saint Nund Rishi (Shezanand) had travelled through the length and breadth of Kashmir. He came to Breng Pargana also, praised this area and said "*Breng chu sonu sund Prang.*" In this beautiful south Kashmir Breng valley and Kuthar Pargana, there are some prominent shrines of great importance. These follow as under -

Trisandhya : French Doctor Francois Bernier came to Kashmir and during his stay in the valley he toured various places of interest. Among these places **Trisandhya** is one. This shrine is situated beyond famous tourist resort of Kokernag on Anantnag - Ahlan Gdole Road. This holy spring is situated south of Devalgam a populous village in Breng near *Magam Sundbrari*. This is an ebbing and flowing spring. It has a small basin. It is about five feet deep and about five yards wide. It remains dry almost all the year except Jeth-Har. During this period water appears in the spring automatically and it goes dry again. The process of ebbing and flowing of the water in the spring continues for some time. At first the water springs out continuously for many days but gradually gets absorbed and reappears after intervals. This intermittence occurs several times a day. In *Jeth-Har* people swarm to Trisandhya. They wait near the spring for rising of water. They go in for prostration; praying it to re-appear when water starts surfacing, the pilgrims exclaim *sand, sand, sand* with this the pilgrims perform ablutions and take nectar with them. The pilgrims are happy over performing *sand* and feel optimistic and their wish is fulfilled. Many poets including a persian poet have composed lyrics in praise of this spring.

Dumatabal : This ancient shrine is situated at the edge of the forest on the right side of Hangulgund on Naru_Watnar Road, which is traversed by the path between Vernag and Soaf. This shrine houses a Laxmi Narayan temple with a beautiful spring whose water continuously flows. Its waters join the rivulet which drain rest of the area. Mahatma Shiv ji was its chief priest and warden till 1990. After Kashmir Pandits were hounded out by Kashmiri Pak Muslim fundamentalists from their motherland, this shrine like other shrines was left behind. Mahatma Shiv ji went to heavenly abode at Udampur. Now his son Shri Nath ji is looking after religious matters.

Annually a *havan* is performed on *Wahika Zoon Pach Kah - Baisakh Krishen Paksh ikadashi*, at Dumatabal. This is called "*Narda Kah*". Yattris first take holy dip at "Naran nag" in "Naru" and ascend towards Dumatabal where final holy dip is taken in the sacred waters of Dumatabal. People in large numbers attend the "*havan*" and take part in the fair organised on the occasion.

merza kak shrine : This shrine is located in Hangulgund about 30 km. from Anantnag. There is a *Smadhi* of great mystic poet of Kashmir, Merza Kak, popularly known as "Kak Sab". Merza Kak has done miracles. He has seen the oppression and tyranny of Pathan rulers. He too was not spared from "Begaar". The locals had prayed "Pathan Kardar", that Kak Sab was a saint and should be released. They even begged Pathan not to force Kak Sab into "Begaar" but Pathan Kardar did not agree and ultimately this great soul was forced to drop the "begaar" at Khanabal. With a bundle put on his shoulder, Kak Sab left for Khanabal. While trekking down the arduous way he felt tired and lay down for rest. Sweated, Kak Sab went in deep sleep. Meanwhile Mata Sharika, in disguise, came into being and dropped a slip duly certified by the Ghat Munshi of Khanabal into his hand and disappeared. After some time Kak Sab woke up and found a slip duly certified by the Ghat Munshi at Khanabal. He was indeed a great *Aatma to know* what had happened. The bundle also disappeared. He returned with the slip and delivered it to Pathan Kardar. Kardar was astonished to see this but said he will get it verified from Khanabal. This proved to be a truth. Pathan Kardar felt ashamed of what he had done. He bowed down before Kak Sab and became his disciple.

On "*Zeth GataPachi Do*" a "Havan" is performed in Hangulgund. Hangulgund is a Hindu populated village. A large fair is also held at this place on this occasion. Popularly known as, "**Kak Sabun Jag**" devotees come from every nook and corner of the valley to attend this Jag. Kak Sab created "*wakhs*" which are considered best technically as well as linguistically. After Lal Ded and Nund Rishi hardly such kind of *wakhs* are heard. Even Muslims from the area join Pandits in celebrating this Jag.

Kungam Nag : There is a spring in this hamlet. This spring is situated two Kms away from Soaf, on Hangulgund_Kachwan Road. The spring remains full of water round the year. Hindus worship there. Better known as Kumar ji's shrine. On "Kumar Shyam⁶", "Navreh Trie³" and "Chitra Zoon Pach Akdoh" devotees make their way towards this sacred spring. On these days a coloured big fish in the spring raises its head out of water. The devotees take this spectacle as a good omen. This spring is surrounded by hills and flowers are abundant.

Gajander Nag : This is also a shrine. It remains dry almost all the year. It is situated on the west side of Soaf on the banks of river Brengi. It is being said that an iron slab has stopped its waters from flowing out, and once it is lifted, it will flow out continuously, thus draining whole area. Devotees had been ascending to it on *Ganesh Chaturthi* with "*Tahar*". It contains shady trees, among them walnut trees are in abundance.

Budey Nag : This holy spring is situated near Panjgam 4 Kms from Suftashali, surrounded by willow trees. This spring not so deep, is full of water. It is on the bank of River Korel. Near by lush green fields with mulberry trees add to its beauty.

Baba Alak Ram Samadhi : It is situated at Irakimmi a Hindu populated village near Kokernag. Baba Alok Ram had been a great monk and a seer. A mausoleum under Chinar tree bears the testimony to this great saint. People from different walks of life do come to pay their obeisance to Baba.

Man Shah Baba Shrine : This shrine is located at Bidder on Anantnag - Kokoernag Road. Man Chand was a great saint who preached universal brother-hood and peace. People especially Hindus make offerings at the shrine of this noble soul. *Tahar* is distributed at the mausoleum among the needy and destitutes. A fair is held annually at the shrine in which "*bands*" from Mohipora perform their traditional *Pather*. Similar fairs are held at Soaf and Gohen also.

Shiva Bhagwati Shrine : This shrine is situated at a distance of about 15 Kms from Anantnag. This famous shrine is situated in an historic village Akingam. This village is situated at the extremity of the range of hills and lies south east of Anantnag. A fair is held annually on Chitra Zoon Pach Navam and a *Yagya* is also performed. This shrine attracts devotees from every nook and corner of the valley.

Swami Ashokananda Ashram :

This Ashram is located near Achabal. This Ashram houses a Yoga Kendra also. It is surrounded by pine and cypruss trees, orchards and maize fields.

kothair : This historic village is situated near Shangus in the mountains and lies south east of Anantnag. There is an old sacred tank and some ruins. This shrine is situated a few miles away from Achabal. Kothair is also rich in iron mines. On "*Wahika zoon Pach Trie-Baisakhi Krishen Pakh Tritiya*" a fair is held at this shrine. It is called *Achan Trie Yatra*.

Brariangan : Bariangan was once a Hindu dominated village with well to do Pandit families. This is also called Uma Nagri as there is a shrine of Uma Bhagawati. It is an historic village in the Kuthar Paragana lying east of famous Achabal Mughal Garden. There are several springs also in this village. The largest one contains the temple of Uma Bhagawati. This is held in esteem by Kashmiri Pandits. Swami Syam Anand Ji developed this shrine and it was due to his ceaseless efforts that Uma Nagri was expanded. Pilgrims come from every part of Kashmir. A Maha Yagya is performed every year. Thousands of devotees join in Maha Aarthi on this occasion.

Brari Maej of Village Murran
Chander M. Bhat, Udhampur

Murran is located within the jurisdiction of Pulwama District. The village is about two kilometers to the west of Pulwama town. The original name of Pulwama was pulwangam which comprised four *patties* namely Malikpora, Dangeropra, Chatpora and Dulipora. At some stage, Pulwangam became to be called as Pulgam which with the passage of time changed to the present name Pulwama. Two kilometers to the east is village Matrigam, the birth place of renowned patriotic poet Pirzada Ghulam Ahmad '*Mahjoor*'. There is a hamlet of Haarpur.....the last abode of ascetic Nidhan Saab nearby. The Natural scenery of Murran is very charming. Surrounded on all sides by green pastures, untrimmed meadows, trees and shrubs and paddy fields, the village breathes a typical rural atmosphere.

The temple of Brari Maej is situated in the north-west of the village in Mohalla Brarimaejpur. The word Brari has developed from *Bhattarika*, the venerated. Brari Maej is synonymous to Divine Mother Uma. This Temple came into existence when the Bhat dynasty migrated from village Sumbal to this village in 1775.

Sumbal.....A beautiful village in North Kashmir, was the birthplace of the great-grand ancestors of the Bhat dynasty. This village used to be often submerged during the rainy season. Pandit Bhawani Bhat (1760-1840), a pious and orthodox person, had a celestial dream on *Magh Aishtami*. A diving effulgence filled his muddy room, as the Divine Mother looked affectionately at Pandit Bhawani Bhat, beckoned him to approach and said : "Your great devotion has made me happy. The time has come to shift you from this place, as you are facing a lot of hardships during the rainy season here. Early the next morning, there will appear a cat in your compound. Pack up your belongings and follow her and settle down where she will give you an indication. That will be your next place of settlement. But, remember, your seven generations will live at the new place of settlement with dignity and honour and your eighth generation will no longer stay here." The Divine Mother disappeared after revealing the story to Pandit Bhawani Bhat.

Early next morning, the divine cat appeared in the compound of Pandit Bhawani Bhat. By that time he had already packed up his little belongings and followed the cat till both of them reached a village.

The Divine Cat gave an indication to Pt. Bhat by waving the tip of her tail and disappeared. When she was gone, a small spring emerged on the spot. The spring was afterwards expanded by laying a single piece of stone (*Pather Kein*) and a temple was built on it. This was later called Brari Maej (Cat Mother) and an icon of the Divine Mother was installed by Shri Loket Bhat (1801-1876) in 1875 on it.

This is a beautiful temple surrounded by mighty **Chinars** all around with a big, and beautiful spring having crystal clear water having a diameter of about 15 meters. The temple is facing towards the east of the upper bank of the spring. The spring is attractive at every hour, in every season. Whosoever sits on its side in a devotional prayer gets entranced and spiritually transformed. Some years before 1947, a great saint Swami Ramji spent some two decades at Murran. He was transformed and became an exalted soul. Swami Madhavananda Ji was Swami Ramji's contemporary. He came from Varanasi and spent much time practicing Yoga here. It is said that Adi Shankaracharya had also spent some five years in a cave behind this temple while practising different paths of God realisation. The cave is still existing in the temple.

Adjacent to the Brari Maej temple is a *Shivalaya* dedicated to Lord Shiva. Behind the main temple, there is a marshy land locally known as *Saar*. There are two *dharmshalas* on the right side of the main entrance built for the accommodation of the pilgrims, wandering monks, *pujaris* and other wayfarers. There are many walnut and almond trees in the premises of this temple

comprising about 10 kanals of land. On one side of the marshy land, there is a "breadmushuk" (*Salix caprea*) tree, the flowers of which were used to be procured a day before Navrah or Soanth for placing these for the traditional, "thaal barun" ritual and to have its first glimpse on the morning of Soanth and the New Year's Day (*Navreh*).

The annual Yagna, which also included the cleaning of the spring after autumn, was performed here. The stock items needed for this purpose were collected from amongst the villagers, especially the Pandits. The *Uma Natak Mandli* used to stage a drama on this occasion. Prior to migration, it was a routine for the elderly members of the community to perform the daily *puja* at the temple.

Many people have experienced spiritual experiences here while many had the darshan of Goddess Uma. Many have seen the spring in its divine glow at the dead of night.

One day a cow belonging to Pandit Sarwanand Bhat (1901-1977) did not return from the pasture and at dusk all the members, excluding the womenfolk, went for its search. Late in the evening his wife, Smt. Sampakaj, went herself to search for the cow. As she reached near the Brari Meaj temple from *Devspat* paddy fields (back side of the temple) in her search, to her surprise, she noticed some little girls all in silk playing in the temple and amongst them was a most beautiful girl. The atmosphere was so bright that the light reflected onto her eyes. As she went ahead after giving humble salutations to the Divine Mother, who was playing with the little girls, she found the cow some yards away from the temple. She went home with the cow with a gratitude-filled heart.

Prior to partition, all the womenfolk of Murran used to go to the temple very early in the morning before the menfolk would go there. It was the tradition with every woman of the Pandit family to give *brandeh fash* (cleaning of the stairs) to their houses early in the morning. The practice was also applicable to the temples and other sacred places in the Valley and the womenfolk would vie with each other to perform this sacred act first. One day Smt. Haarmal, wife of Pandit Zinda Bhat (1876-1917), woke up in the wee hours of the morning and thought that she was late. Since there were no watches at that time, she rushed towards the Brari Meaj temple, washed her face and went to the spot where the "*liven dul*" (cleaning pot) was being kept. She put some fresh water into it and started rubbing the "*braund*". Afterwards she went inside the temple and paid obeisance to the Divine Mother.

Smt. Haarmal was not aware of the fact that she had come too early. After leaving the temple, she noticed a little girl all in silk near the gate of the temple. The girl directed her not to come too early henceforth and disappeared. She rushed towards her home and told the story to her husband. It was later disclosed by the elderly persons of the village that the little girl was no other than the Divine Mother Herself.

In dark nights, under the shade of the *chinars*, the sacred places present an atmosphere where one becomes one with God. And in moonlit nights, devotees experienced something mystic all over in the temple of **Brari Maej**.

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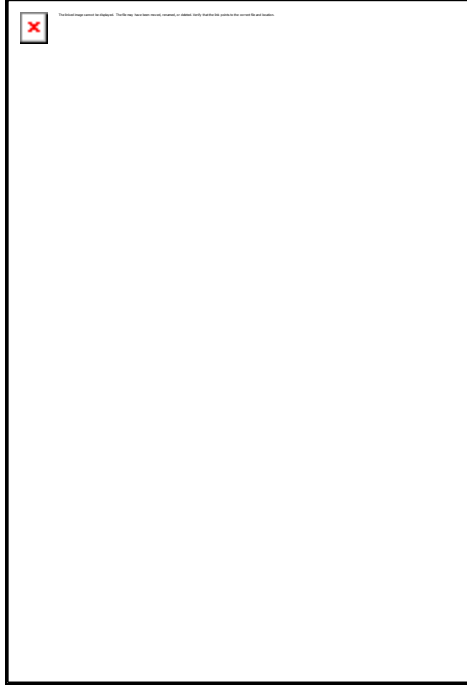
Bada Shivala of Rani Katra
Dr. B. N. Sharga, Lucknow

The various "Asthapans", shrines and temples of the Kashmiri Pandits that exist in Kashmir Valley and in other parts of the country are not only of religious and historical importance but are actually a symbol of their distinct cultural identity. So they must be preserved and protected at all costs. Because they represent not only our centuries old customs and traditions but also reflect our existence as a distinct ethnic group in this sea of humanity. The Kashmiri Pandits, who came out from the Kashmir Valley under different conditions and situations in 18th and 19th century being basically Shaivites, built a number of Shiv temples and "Shivalas" in different big cities of North India to preserve their composite culture and to maintain their distinct ethnic identity in completely new surroundings where the circumstances had forced them to live just to earn their bread and butter. These exclusive religious places used to serve as centres of their social activities not only to strengthen their community bonds but also to bring about a better understanding between the community members through mutual interaction between them on festivals and other religious functions which were regularly organized at such places. This system actually helped our ancestors to a great extent in preserving their separate ethnic identity for about 300 years without any dilution. These shrines played a key role in obtaining those objectives.

Lahore, Delhi and Lucknow used to have a big concentration of the Kashmiri Pandits' population in those days outside the Kashmir valley. So, naturally these cities have a very large number of Shiva Temples and Shivalas built by the Kashmiri Pandits in different times to carry out their rituals, customs and traditions without any hinderance. The number of such temples and "Asthapans" of Kashmiri Pandits will be very large. It is a subject of separate interesting research to have the details of these shrines, based on authentic sourcing. From my personal information available at hand, it is noteworthy that Raja Dinath Madan built a Shiv temple in Wazir Khan Chowk in Lahore. He also built the shrine of "Dhooni Sahib", at Gujrat in Punjab, in memory of a famous saint of Kashmir, "Mansa Ram Razdan". Dewan Radhe Nath Kaul built a magnificent Shiva temple in Kangra in the Punjab. Pandit Bishamber Narain Haksar built a big temple of Lord Krishna, at Mathura, in the last quarter of nineteenth century. Raja Dila Ram Kaul built a Shiva temple in Kamao, U.P., Mrs. Shyam Rani Sharga *nee*, Radhika Atal, built a shiva temple in Benaras (Varanasi). A big shrine of "Khatkhate-Baba", was built in Etawah.

Similarly a big shrine was built in Cuttak, Orissa by Pt. Mehtab Rai Suthu, who had left Kashmir in 1804 and formed Kila Darpan state at such a far away place. In then Lucknow district, Pt. Suraj Narain Kaul built a huge temple, known as "Gopal Mandir" at Chanpahian in the 17th century; Pt. Durga Prasad Taimni built a Shiva temple in village, Bhitani and Pt. Bishan Narain Kaul Bakshi built a huge temple in "Sheetla Bagh".

Lucknow has its own importance in the history of Kashmiri Pandits as this city gave direction and played a key role in the various movements of the Kashmiri Pandits out side Kashmir valley, which were launched from time to time in the 18th and 19th centuries for their due recognition in the society and to bring about certain social reforms in the community. A large number of such Shrines and religious places were built by the Kashmiri Pandits at Lucknow in different localities for social awakening in the community. One such outstanding shrine of great historical importance is "Bada Shivala" located in Rani Katra which has now become famous as "Sankata Devi ka Mandir" to a very large number of devotees.



This magnificent edifice of great architectural importance was built by Pandit Jwala Prasad Kaul Tankha who came to Lucknow from Kashmir valley during the rule of Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula (1775-1798) and subsequently became a *dewan* in his court. It is said that when Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula started the construction work of Asafi Imambara around 1777, his *dewan* Pt. Jwala Prasad Kaul Tankha simultaneously started the construction work of "Bada Shivala" in Rani Katra where he used to live at that time and which had a sizeable population of Kashmiri Pandits.

This "Bada Shivala" after its completion became a big attraction for the Kashmiri Pandits of Lucknow who used to throng at this place in large numbers on festivals to pay their obeisance. This 300 year old historical marvel, apart from its unique architectural beauty, has the biggest 'Shivlingam' in the whole of North India (Figure). How such a huge "Shivlingam" was taken inside the sanctum sanctorum of the temple for its installation in those days is still a big riddle as there are different views on this score. This rare single piece "Shivlingam" carved out from a black stone has no match anywhere.

The other most important and significant feature of this temple is that it has a life size statue of Raginya Bhagwati a goddess of Kashmiri Pandits. This is perhaps the only statue of its kind of Ma Raginya Devi outside Kashmir Valley with great spiritual power which has now become famous as "Sankata Devi" among the local devotees. It is said that whosoever comes to pay obeisance to this deity with a pure heart, his or her wish is generally fulfilled. So the people have coined a new name "Sankata Devi" for this deity meaning thereby a goddess who removes all the worldly problems. The devotees from far of places come to pay their obeisance to this deity because of its spiritual power and sanctity.

On every "Navratra" and "Shivratri" this Bada Shivala attracts a very large number of devotees from all parts of the city, because of its historical and religious importance. It is one of the most ancient temples of the city and an important landmark of its history. So the state government is contemplating now to make it a tourists' destination to earn foreign exchange. In absence of proper management and maintenance of this important Shrine either by the Kashmiri Pandits or by their organisations, the members of the other communities are now desperately trying to grab this valuable property either by hook or by crook for monetary gains and benefits. The legal owner of this place Pt. Ratan Narain Tankha which is mentioned in the records of Lucknow Nagar

Nigam as H.No. 407/68, now lives in Mumbai. The other important Shrines like 'Gopal Mandir' etc. built by the Kashmiri Pandits at Lucknow worth crores of rupees have already been grabbed by the members of the other communities who are fully enjoying their fruits leaving the Kashmiri Pandits high and dry.

In the nineteenth century, the Kashmiri Pandits of Lucknow used to celebrate, "Rishi Peer Ka Jag", annually with great fervour and devotion in the loving memory of **rishi peer**, a 17th century spiritual saint of Kashmir, who became famous as "rishi peer padshah", because of his supernatural powers among his innumerable devotees. Kashmiri Pandits of Lucknow used, to assemble in very large numbers, on this day, in the historic "*Ganjoo Walon Ka Shadikhana*", which was built by Pt. Daya Nidhan Ganju, in Kashmiri Mohalla, when he became Tehsildar of Lucknow in 1856. It used to be a big event for the *Biradari* members for maintaining their distinct identity. Every member of the community used to participate with great zeal and enthusiasm.

After the mass exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley in 1990 due to terrorists' violence a number of duplicate shrines have come up at a huge cost in different parts of the country, but somehow I personally feel that their story would be the same after another 50 or may be 100 years, as already there is a sharp division in the community over the administrative control of these shrines and their assets. The plain truth is that there is dearth of selfless people with missionary spirit to look after these 'Asthapans' properly as every body is interested in projecting his own image and is busy in filling his own kitty in the name of doing social service. There is an old saying that every cause has its effect. I think that the same is true with our community. The following lines of Hindi poet Onkar 'Gulshan' are very meaningful in this context.

***"Roothi hui kismet ko sawanra jaye,
Ankash ko dharti per utara jaye.
Shayad meri awaz per mur kar deikhen
Ekbar unhein aur pukara jaye."***

The author, a retired Professor of Chemistry, Lucknow University is a scholar and writer besides being a veteran patron of Kashmiri Samaj Lucknow and Sr. Vice President of AIKS. Presently he is working on the contributions of Kashmiri Pandits in Diaspora and has already brought out 3 volumes of, "Kashmiri Panditun Ke Anmol Rattan."

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Creating Symbols of Hope - Hari Parbat at Faridabad

Anangpur is a small suburban village on the outskirts of Faridabad. In fact alongwith Mehrauli and Tugluqabad it constitutes the triangle of historical importance in the National Capital Region of Delhi. Tugluqabad was the Centre of Delhi during the reign of Mohd Bin Tagluq and Mehrauli is believed to be the place where the first Delhi was created. Anangpur was founded by Raja Anangpal and the famous King of Delhi Prithvi Raj Chauhan lived here. Anangpur also has the distinction of having the first school of SOS chain in India for orphan children. The creation of the school in this village has transformed the life of people living there by bringing modern education and latest health care to the doorsteps of villagers.

It is this village which is now witnessing another transformation these days. The people of the village are helping in creating a replica of Hari parbat on one of the hillocks on the boundary of the village with a temple of goddess Sharika on the top, as a token of solidarity with the displaced Kashmiri Pandits.

The entire idea of developing 'Hari Parbat' at Faridabad germinated in the mind of Sh J. N. Koul, the founder chief of the SOS schools who is a household name in Anangpur. He, as the President of Kashmiri Sevak Samaj of Faridabad and All India Kashmiri Samaj, started many vocational, educational and self help schemes for displaced Pandits. Few years back he and his wife were struck with the urge of creating a temple for goddess 'Sharika' on one of the hillocks adjoining the Anangpur village. They visualised transforming the hillock into a replica of Hari parbat so that the entire area is transformed into a meditational centre. He broached the idea with the village elders but a responsive cord was struck only after some villagers had strange spiritual experiences during their sleep. As per the common talk in the village some villagers saw goddess in their dreams extolling them to construct a temple on the top of the hill. These experiences inspired the villagers, who to the last person have been staunch Arya Samajists, to donate the hillock for creation of a temple for the goddess Sharika. They appealed to 'Papa Ji' (Sh. J. N. Koul) to immediately start the construction of the temple. Sh Koul immediately entrusted the job to the experienced project consultant for SOS village Sh C. K. Dass.

With the voluntary help pouring from all sides of the village and elsewhere Shri C. K. Dass started the work of constructing steps to the hill top. Initially 60 steps were built from west to the east. And with the construction of these steps the entire concept of transforming the hillock into the abode of Sharika started concretising.

After a year of work now, a total of 211 steps have been built to reach the main temple at the top. The temple constructed at the top has a height of 33 feet from the top of the hill. As the construction of the 'Sanctum Sanctorum' neared its completion it was felt that the initial marble deity 'Sheran Wali Maa' brought from Rajasthan was relatively smaller for the size the temple had assumed. So the project team decided to instal a bigger deity. One nationally reknowned sculptor from Orissa Mr. Maharana was assigned the task of sculpting the deity. Mr. Maharana happens to belong to the family of sculptors who built Konark Temple and is recipient of the President's Award for sculpture. He sculpted the statue of goddess in the sand stone of Orissa. And the deity was subsequently placed in the sanctum sanctorum.

The deity has remarkable features which are not traditionally seen in the north Indian statues. The flavour of the sculpture is mainly of East and South India.

With the completion of the temple the other main work of 'Land Scaping' of the hillock has begun and it is just a matter of time when the entire area would be transformed into a beautiful meditation centre.

For last few years 'Hari Parbat' Anangpur has become a place where 'Kashmiri Pandits' in and around Delhi observe their 'Nav Reh' festivals. Thousands of villagers of Anangpur, as a true mark of national integration, join them on the day and together they rise up to hillock to pay obeisance to the deity. The creation of 'Hari Parbat' is one more example of the effort of the displaced community to build symbols in exile to protect their identity.

However, significantly this effort has helped transform a village into tourist spot. 'Aap Ne Is Gaaon Mein Raunak Layee' ... you have brought new light to the village-say the villagers with pride. Women folk of the village are happy in particular for two reasons. One that their 'Maan Sheran Wali' has come to their door step and second that it has helped to introduce an element of religiosity amongst the village youth many of whom unfortunately are alcohol addicts. 'The religious atmosphere will certainly help in improving the habits of our youth', said the village elders. Experiencing happiness after the creation of the temple the villagers have come forward to donate one more hillock to be transformed into temples of Shiva. 'You have created Hari Parbat. Why don't you create a Shankara Charya Temple here'.

[Courtesy: [Kashmir News Network \(KNN\)](#). This excerpt appeared in the Sentinel 15-30 April 1999. Despite many requests, the updated write up did not become available. However, the photograph is a recent one, circulated on Navreh, 2002. The Holy Sri Chakreshwari has been carved in stone, in the temple dedicated to Maa Sharika. -Editor-in-Chief]

Petals from Lotus Poisy
Smt. Bimla Raina, Jammu
English Translation : Sh. T. N. Hangloo

Gushingly flows a stream of nectar limitlessly,
Drink of Gods effuses and trickles calmly,
Luminosity evinces and radiates the refulgent,
Enthroned dazzlingly on thousand pettled
lotus is the supreme pair.
Hoarding gold, wealth and treasures into
lockers,
How are you going, to give a slip to death ever
operative,
Provision of victuals, eatables, you may
garner in bins,
How are you going, to overcome, vanishing of
the breath.
Illuminer illumined the hidden cave,
Subtle appeared with immanance and
brilliance in subtility,
Having cast off, and donning a purified instar,
Falling into silence, I imbibed in a draught
Amrit in notime.
Let us attain purity and piety at trikutathe
cavernous pleux
There lies the great fountain head of shakti,
That turns all baser elements into gold,
Ascending thereafter, greets radiating
effulgence,
Hamsivera & Hamseverie became my
learners,
Hamsas Enlightned & made meconversent
Through out, Moulding and atoning all my
atoms, I rythemed with it,
Soon I found myself lifted & exalted in
Absolute. One who sheds off sleep from his
eyes,
One who becomes insouciant of his casual
(Karan) body,
Fastens his tounge on to his palatal roof
above,
Restraining garbage through gullet,
can sip soma through tounge measure.
Ringing in my ear set me thinking deep,
It revealed on to me essence of truth,
It carved indelibly on my *chit* (mind),
Setting disarrayed left me in wonderment.

He who will bear live coal,
Who will pound his ego,
He will draw nectar from above,
And he will realise early with consummate ease.
Adjust ears to see and fix eyes to listen,
As to where from ringeth the divine melody,
Sharing it with none eare for awaking,
Then alone shall dawn theprecocity and
maturity.
Uproot the attachment of one and all,
Don't fall drawn to weave the webs,
The dark valley of death will whisk you away,
Don't claim that here you own any coffers.
Bhakti is not available readily on any shop,
May you spend wantonly at its top,
It emerges and kindles inside spontaneously,
The self only needs to aspire with an agonising
awe.
Manifested by manifestation and then into
hiding,
Off setting the state of wakefulness,
Embedded in the self indiscernibly,
Offering Floarals Personally to the'self.
With every breath recite mantra
Care with alertness that no thread gives in,
Tune the musical strings of your inner orchestra,
Then alone, mountains of hurdles will not block
the path
Concentrating on Bija-mantra assiduously,
Went on fathoming deeper depths with blazed
illumination,
Identifying myself, I mused joyously in its
beauteousness,
Thus ripended my repository of gems of bliss.
Youth saw me in external celebrities busy,
I moved unmindful of ultimate reality,
Woke up on the day of reckoning,
Found rendered just foible amid complacency.

Smt. Bimla Raina, the author of this poem in Kashmiri, is a great poet of Kashmir. Her latest contribution, "Reshi Malyum Myon", comprises of 300 "vaks" which have been held in highest acclaim by the contemporary litterateurs of Kashmiri language.

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Posha Pooza

(late) Pt. Krishen Joo Razdan

Translated into English verse by Shri Triloki Nath Wanchoo, New Delhi

The devotional lotuses are abloom in the lake of love :
For showering the flower petals on *Shiv Shanker*.

1. Meditating on *Shiva* as narrated in *Vedas* :
The *Devtas* and *Karans* bless us with *Amrit*
Our abodes are turned into *Vaikuntha* :
For showering the flower petals on *Rameshwar*.

2. For being near *Amar* at the *Amar Nath* ;
Our Pilgrimage starts, resultant of past good deeds :
All the boons of pilgrimage are bestowed on Kashmir :
For showering the flower petals on *Mukhteshwar*.

3. But let us first bow to *Adideva* ;
Bathe him, he being the first in the lineage :
This bearer *Hal* and *Mosal* with waters of *Ganesh Bal*;
For showering flower petals on *Lambhodar*.

4. I offer my head to *Amreshwar* at *Navdal*;
Pray before *Shanker* at *Thajiwore*;
I go around *Chakdher* at *Bhijibror*;
For showering flower petals on *Vijyeshwar*.

5. On hillock I sing praises of *Totla* ;
Take bath in the month of *Magha* in the springs of *Anant Nag*;
Indira was amazed to get rid of the course thus :
For showering the flower petals on *Vishembhar*.

6. Pray to *Bhargashakha* with *Aragya* & flowers ;
By reaching *Mattan* get rid of all the sins;
The *Pitras* get *Mokhsha* there instantly;
For showering the flower petals on *Shri Bhaskar*.

7. With profound love of *Shiva* I pray at *Kar Kuthi Naga* ;
In bathing at *Papapaharan Naga* my sins

13. *Divsar* being the real abode of *Devas*;
My Salutation at the feet of all the *Devas*;
I attain peace by bathing at *Vasuki Nag* full of lotuses;
For showering the flower petals on *Saikuncha*.

14. I go with full *Bhakti* to *Kapala Mochan*;
All my sins and curses will vanish at *Shapa Mochan*;
By surrendering the self to *Kapala Mala Dhar*;
For showering the flower petals on *Trishul Dhar*.

15. I will go to *Ganga Jatan* to ask for boon from *Hara*;
So that he makes me drink the *Amrit Dhara*;
I am awaiting, solely depending on his benevolence;
For showering the flower petals on *Jata Dhar*.

16. Daily in company of kiths and strangers;
In deep reverence of *Shiva* I bathe in *Priyag*;
In *Kooti Tirtha* I will offer flowers to *Ishwara*;
For showering the flower petals on *Tripushkar*.

17. On my own I shall go to show my love;
To *Kalagna Rudra* and *Bhadharakali*;
Sincerely shall I pray before *Kapalamaladhar*;
For showering the flower petals on *Kala Shekhar*.

18. In recognition of my *Satguru* in *Tula Mula*;
I will pray before *Raj-Rani-Mata-Ragnya*;
I will offer *Dhoop, Deep & Chamar* to her;
For showering the flower petals on *Bhuteshwar*.

19. With my mind & soul shall I pray *Har* at *Ramaradan*. Will wait upon him at the doorsteps of *Harmukh*. I will climb *Barathal* & reach *Brahmsar*.
For showering the flower petals on *Jagdishwar*.

20. I will cross over *Hamsdhar* & reach *Kolasar*;
In love of *Shiva* I shall bathe in *Ganga*;
Recognising the *Visheshwar* as *Vishwa-Roopa*.
For showering of flower petals on *Gangadhar*.

21. Arjan Deva in company of *Yudhishtira*;
Prayed at *Naran-Nag* & meditated there;
In the temple of *Mana* the *Shridhara*.
For showering the flower petals on *Damodhar*.

22. In *Parbatl* shall sing praises of *Sharika*;
Vamdeva will protect me under his wings;

are washed;

As did *Bhimsen* in company of *Haldhar*;
For showering the flower petals on *Hari Har*;

8. Crossing over the hillock with the garlands of love ; Reaching the golden area of *Uma* & Shower flower on her;
She will pardon all my sins, as I meditate on her;
For showering the flower petals on *Umadhar*.

9. I go around the lake of *Koot-Heer*;
Which is equally sacred as *Koti-Tirtha*;
I rely upon the boon of *Shanker-Shan*;
For showering the flower petals on *koteswar*

10. I climb up after taking leave of *Zindakeshwar*;
To offer flowers to *Shiv at Shiva*;
To *Parmeshwari* as well as to *Parmeshwar*
For showering the flower petals on *Jumbhakeswar*.

11. I fast and pray daily to all the three to appear;
My salutation at the feet of all the three of them;
(*Tri-Sandhya, Ladra-Sandhya, Pavna-Sandhya*)
In *Sunda Brari* I offer my existence to *Shyam Sunder*;
For showering the flower petals on *Pitambhar*.

12. Filling the *Thali* with *Kheer & Khand*;
I wish to feed him with my own hands with love;
In *Neela Nag* the *Neela Kantha Dighambhar*;
For showering the flower petals on *Neelambhar*.

He will annihilate the *Asura* of *Sankat*.
For showering the flower petals on *Chakreshwar*.

23. The blossoms of flowers are aglow at *Pampore*;
Offer them to *Balika* as well as *Jwala*;
(*Balahome & Khrew*)
To *Shri Mahadev* as well as *Bhasmadhar*;
For showering the flower petals on *Harshishwar*.

24. To how many *Nagas* one can go in this *Bhavsar*;
Better to put mind and soul on *Naga Nath*.
I will pray in my own *Mana* to *Shiva*.
For showering the flower petals on *Atma-Roop-Hara*.
25. The *Shiva* will offer his *Charas* of love to *Krishna*;
He will bestow on him the boons of *Tirthas* while at home;
He will show him his *Roopa* instantly;
For showering the flower petals on *Shadhakhshar*.
(*Om-Nama-Shivaya*)

*Nati, Lachhali, Gratan, Aakashan, Taari,
Noan, neerith, Won, Chon, Mahima,
Parma, Shakhati, Maninak,
Shankarachari,
Haaray, Parbatchi, Haariye.
Shiv-Shakhati, Roopa, Zaanit, Chopari,
Guli, Gandith, Wonnay, Mya, Yaari, Kar,
Hyeth, Nakhas, Neenakh, Manzi,
Kashtwari,
Haaray, Parbatachi, Haariye.
(Krishen Joo Razdan)*

*Pitcher, Broom, Grinding-Mill,
Firmament & Latch;
Came out and Sang praises of
your Venerableness;
Shankracharya accepted your
powers as Param-Shakti;
The Haari of Hari Parhat.
Recognising you as Shiva's Shakti of Universe;
With folded hands he prayed to you, to bestow
your
benevolence on him;
He took you away on his shoulders
through Kishtawar.
The Haari of Hari Parbat. (Translation by T. N.
Wachoo)*

The translator of this poem, Shri T. N. Wachoo is Gen. Secretary of A.I.K.S.

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"Enchanting World of the Infant"

Dr. K. L. Chowdhury, Jammu

1. Time Encapsulated

Was Time ever made captive
as when I conceive you
my little one,
and made use
of every infinitesimal second
in shaping you, my darling,
from the primordial egg
to the merry embryo
and to a vibrant foetus?
I weave at my will,
every waking moment
and every sleeping wink,
the pattern of time
into matter and space
to give you form.
Time is in my grasp.
Time is at my command.
Time is encapsulated within me.
Time is incarnate in my offspring.
My blood waters the seed of
Time
to bring it to fruition
and make the miracle of life
possible within me.

Feb. 1999

2. No Perfumes for My Child 3. Let Tears Flow

Mother,
do not anoint your child
with lotions and liniments,
do not dab his tender skin
with sweet scents,
do not burn incense.
See how naturally he smells
his sweet innocence,
the fragrance of the unpolluted
self,
the aroma
that derives its essence
from divine munificence.
Mother,
do not sprinkle rose water
nor spray perfumes
on your little infant.
See how he exudes
a subtle redolence
that feeds on ambrosia,
the milk of your love's
abundance.
The magnolia lends its secret
grandeur at the break of
dawn,
the rose blushes
with the morning flush,
the *champa* and *chameli*
titillate the senses for the day,
and the *rat ki rani*
tingles the nostrils
under cover of darkness,
but the sweet fragrance of
your
infant
is there for you to savor
all day and night
throughout the year.

June 1999

Do not worry and wonder
little mother
at the flights of mood
or a slight flicker
on the visage of your toddler.
Through his language of signs
he unravels clear and true
his innermost thoughts to you.
Do not panic mother
because he weeps and cries,
nor tear your heart out
when in crying sometimes
he holds his breath to lividity
for what seems an eternity.
Crying gives his limbs and
lungs
the much needed exercise
and breath holding
is the first lesson
in that self discipline
of which yogis have oft spoken.
Do not fret and fume mother
when tears well up in his eyes
and flow down his cheeks in
streams.
They are the cleansing nectar
that wash his eyes
of the unsightliness of this
world,
they brim over for thee
in the first leavening of love.

July 1999

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Navreh aav
Dr. Veena Dhar, New Jersey, USA

Navreh aav, navreh aav
Kulan ta poshan bahaar hay aav
Kathi tan, kathi tan jand vand draav
Navreh aav, navreh aav
Yambarzal ta gulaab posh pholne draav
Panpompur hay graayan tsav
Baagan bagiichan sabzaar aav
Navrah aav, navreh aav
Na-av, na-av poshaak chiv kya shuubaan
Sa-rii samaan asaan gindaan
Maalayn ta bhaayan yaavun aav
Navreh aav, navreh aav
Kukilaa chi lanj pe-eth bol bosh karaan
Aabshaaran manz paan paraan
Maajan, benyan chuy kya chik chaav
Navreh aav, navreh aav
Baadaam vaaree samaavaar chaay
Tsakrii-shwaras dodh paav bhaav
Paan Bhagvaan hay parvat aav
Navreh aav, navreh aav
Gil ghos sa-rii masharaviv
Paanava-an miltsar bagraviv
Soray rozi yathi tay, aasi nii vaav
Navreh aav, navreh aav

The author is a renowned and an acknowledged Physician in U.S.A.

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"Blessed Kashmir, My Home"
Ashok Manvati, Noida

Hours have passed and days have passed,
But I have not reached my Home.
With throbbing hearts and eager eyes,
Mystical mind and murmuring thoughts,
Years have passed and years have passed,
But I have not reached my Home.
Virkem, Tekbatni and Yamberzal,
Perhaps lost to the baking Sun,
Frolicking snow flakes romantic fun,
Lucchi, Telwar, Kehwa, a joy, none.
The meandering ways, the silvery streams,
Glittering peaks and Heavenly Whites,
The whiff of Lakes and song of Birds,
The thought of home hangs like swords.
The *Chinar* shades, the Willowy breeze,
Blissful blues and earthly Greens,
Ambrosial Pines and nurturing fields,
Yet I am far from my general Home.
The Magical land and mystical Man,
Nestling Mother and affable wife,
Open Windows and open mind,
Just a thought puts me in a grind.
Bustling woods under terrorist guns,
Bulbuls lost, their whistling Runs,
The chant of *Koels*, anthem of nuns,
In the cemetery of lenity, Mom's sons.

Political ends and personal Chairs,
That have thrown me into jitters,
Ever will they feel yearning pains?
God knows when healing rains.
The thoughts shiver like fluttering waves,
Snaking through the meadow graves,
Distorted cultural rainbow rays,
By spineless, insipid, Extremist Gays.
Ascetic azans and temple rings,
Waiting in wings to lustrate winds,
The murky Lakes & trembling brooks,
Torpil Kingfishers & Daffodil blooms.
Riders fall and ride again,
Wounds too heal again,
It is hope that takes them through,
Only those, run, do reach their Home.
Milestones may come in way,
For events may have a say,
Glacial streams do make a way,
However steep the boulders may.
Wheel of Time does make a round,
Thunders are followed by silent sound,
May not be me, my future will be,
Safely landing on Homely Ground.

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Sharika Bhagwati, artistic version,
in Kashmiri Panditani attire,
Kashmir Sabha, Kolkata Contribution.



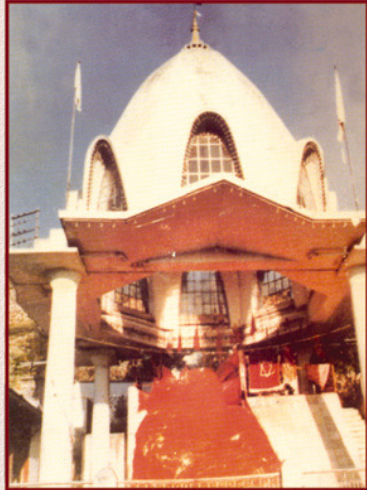
Mahatma Krishen Joo Razdan

(1850-1926)

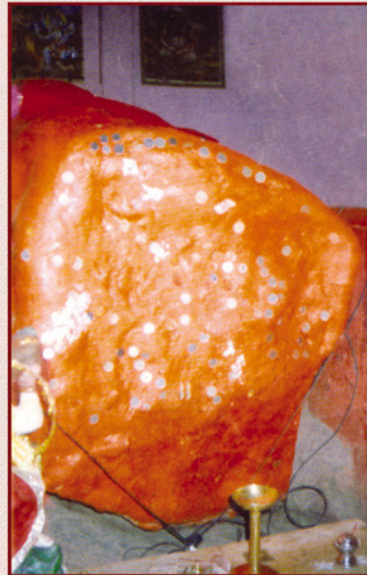
[The Vitasta and Kashmir Sabha, Kolkata, pay homage to saint-poet Krishen Joo on his 75th Nirvan Jayanti. J&K Vichar Manch have dedicated year 2002 as Krishen Joo Razdan Year. On December 23, 2001 a Mahayagya was held in his memory at KECSS ground, Pamposh Enclave wherein Minister of State, Shri I.D. Swamy formally inaugurated the whole year's programme of remembering Razdan Saheb. I was, also invited and had the privilege of participating in this function. Three volumes of the Bhajans and Leelas namely "Krishan Darshan", "Shiv Lagan", and "Krishan Vani" were brought out based on the well known contributions of this saint-poet. For the whole year, 2002 there is a programme of meetings, lectures, seminars, cassette releases, video shows etc to commemorate this great son of Kashmir whose Bhajans & Leelas are very popular amongst Kashmiri pandits. The Vitasta, whilst remembering him in its 35th Number, 2002, pays the most respectful homage to this saint-philosopher-poet of Kashmir.

Editor -in-chief]

SHARIKA & JAWALA ISHT-DEVIS, SRINAGAR, KASHMIR



Sharika Bhagwati, Chakreswari,
Hari Parbat, Srinagar.



Jawala Devi, Sanctum Sanctorum, Khrew.



Mata Jawala Temple, Khrew.

RAGINYA ISHT-DEVI, TULLA MULLA, KASHMIR



← Raginya Sanctum Sanctorum,
Kheer Bhawani, Tulla Mulla.



Kheer Bhawani Temple,
Tulla Mulla →



← Kheer Bhawani Temple,
Tulla Mulla, (1907)
[Tree in the centre
of the ancient spring ;
construction of the
temple and
Dharam-Shalla
in progress.
[Courtesy Ishwar
Ashram
Trust, Jammu for
the photograph].

REMEMBERING TEMPLES ON VITASTA, SRINAGAR



Ganesh Sanctum Sanctorum,
Ganpatyar Temple, Srinagar.

Vitasta river and Temples
on its banks. Condition?
(Hanuman Mandir,
Ganpatyar, Somyar,
Purushyar, Raghunath
Mandir, Maha Kalli,
Battayar.....temples to
remember some).

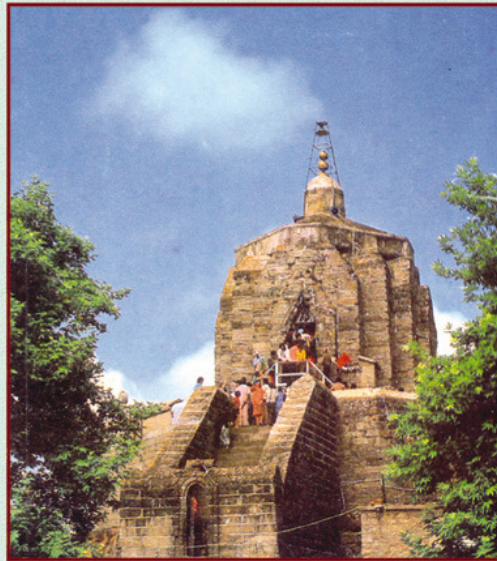


Reshi Peer Shrine, Srinagar.

REMEMBERING SHIVA, SHIVA & SHIVA



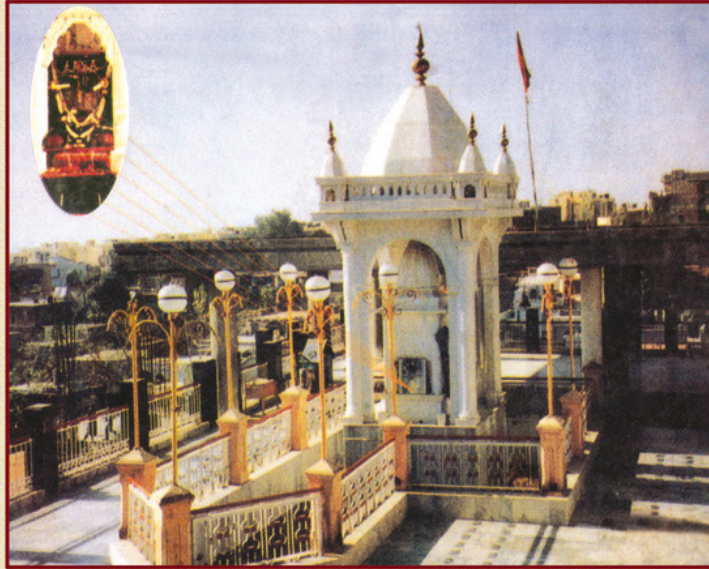
Shiva Lingum, Amarnath.



Shiva Temple,
Shankaracharya, Srinagar.



SYMBOLIC MODELS OF IDENTITY PRESERVATION IN EXILE



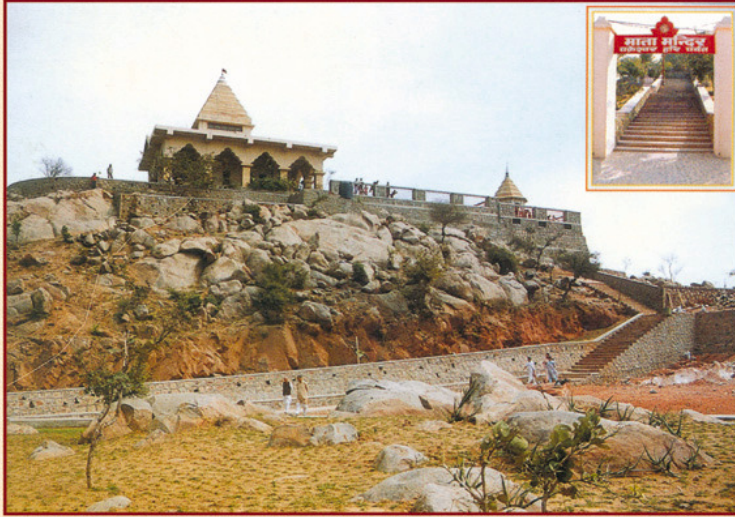
Kheer Bhawani Temple
in Jammu.



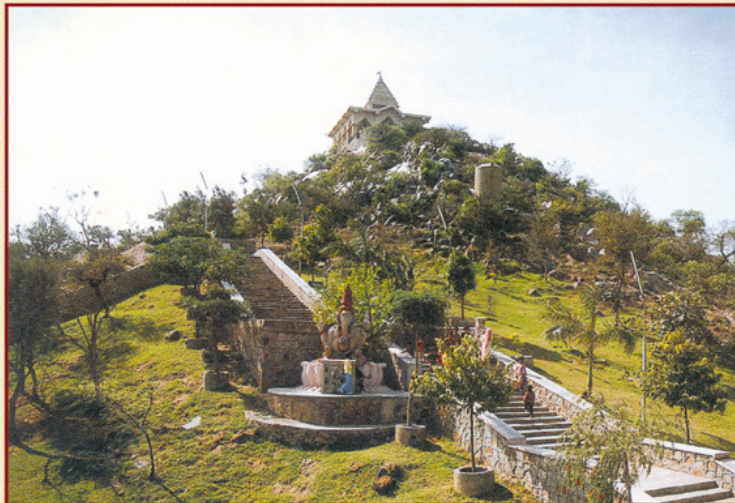
Thousand years old Murty
from Sharda, preserved
at Purkhu Camp
(Courtesy Dr. R. L. Bhat).



SYMBOLIC MODELS OF IDENTITY PRESERVATION IN EXILE



Maa Sharika Temple, Anangpur, Faridabad.



Hari Parvat, Anangpur, Faridabad.