

Qabali Raid in Kashmir, Oct. 22, 1947

I have not read a more thorough description of the 1947 Qabali Raid than what Shanti Swarup Ambardar has given in his book, *Day of Destiny, A Memoir*, published in 2014. He was in Srinagar at that time and closely followed the raid. He even interviewed some survivors of the St. Joseph's Convent and the Mission Hospital at Baramulla, which bore the brunt of the attack at Baramulla.

I am attaching here below the entire chapter of Ambardar's book, '*Qabails' at the Door*, 13 pages long.

I strongly recommend KP's to read Shanti Swarup Ambardar's book *Days of Destiny*, as it reflects on their or their relatives' lives before and after their tragic forced diaspora from Kashmir. It will make them re-absorb the veil of the rich cultural tapestry they lived under, their serene and nuanced existence in the land of their forefathers and gods. Others should read it to understand why Kashmiri Pandits are so pained to leave their motherland, when other people in history who were also forced to undergo that have borne it relatively calmly. The book's 565 pages may daunt some, but they should then think of it to be two books on Kashmiri Pandits' culture and ethos. The fateful tragedy of Kashmiri Pandits as narrated in this book moves you deeply.

1. Read my complete review of the book:

Book Review : *Days of Destiny* by S.S. Ambardar - Maharaj Kaul | Kaul's Corner

**Book Review : Days of Destiny by S.S.
Ambardar - Maharaj Kaul | Kaul's...**

2. The following link will take you to the book website where you will find a tab to order the book, the author's bio, some chapters of the book, etc.

<https://ambardar.wixsite.com/ambardar/excerpt>

3. The most important part of this posting, Ambardar book's, 13 pages long chapter on the Qabali Raid of Oct. 22, 1947, “ ***‘Qabails’ at the Door***” is in the following link:

<http://bit.ly/qad-dod>

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Kashmiri Pandits’ Rendezvous with Destiny

Kashmiri Pandits’ civilizational pinnacle receded, perhaps, a thousand years ago, by the end of Utpala Dynasty (855 - 1003). Their glory has been especially in

steady decline since the advent of Sultanate in 1339. As they became a minority after volitional and forced conversion to Islam, their life became one long road of survival, even though they were still prized for their intellectual powers in high government circles. This psychology of survival became a permanent feature of their personality. They became individuals first and community members later. An outline chronology of Kashmir history has been attached as a ready reference.

Some Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) were shocked in 2014 by the withdrawal of the Modi government's project of creating three composite cities in Kashmir to rehabilitate them. Some wonder what their future is going to be. But here is the irony: even if Modi plan had been implemented how many KPs would have been its takers? Very few. But why are they crest-fallen about the project's death? It is because they still fantasize about returning to their ancestral land of 5,000 years and living their myths and mythologies about it and their lives in it. Once the inner-music is broken the world looks meaningless.

Even if Article 370 were lifted and the life in Kashmir would consequently change significantly, more conducive to KPs living there, they would still not return to their homeland in significant numbers. This is because the dream of returning to their paradise has been shattered. What has shattered it? Their experience. The 1989 experience of death, forced exodus, destruction, cruelty, humiliation, and threats to their lives has damaged the fabric of their love of and belonging to their land. Their dreams and myths about their lives have died, so there would be no point in returning.

The exodus of KPs was already under way in form of their new college graduates wanting to work outside Kashmir. But this process was natural and did not cut the umbilical cord with it. Overall, the younger generation of KPs (under 30's or so) were in the process of slowly drifting away from Kashmir because of the economic and political conditions in it. They wanted to work in modern companies, generally technology companies, who paid a decent salary, and live in a friendly environment, which were unavailable at home.

KPs have with fortitude and grace met their ordeal. The die of their new life has been cast but their wounds have not yet healed. Now that KPs are not the inhabitants of Kashmir, will they survive? Of course, they will survive. Human history is replete with migrations, both planned and forced ones. How should they live as a community now? While the economic forces have scattered them round the world but India will continue to be their bastion. To keep their ethos alive is their greatest challenge. Efforts are under way in India and different parts of the world in that direction. Gaining political power is essential to their community survival. But they are not very political people, even though they have the mental tools to understand politics very well. Also, their meager vote-bank is against them.

Over years, since India's independence, KPs did not cultivate a political network in New Delhi. The reason being their inaptitude for it. Politics requires consolidation of a group's assets and willingness to strike mutually advantageous compromises with other groups. But these are areas they are not good at. They have always wanted to live in their cocoon, negligent in paying proper attention to the political forces outside it. KPs, equipped with their intelligence and intellect, could have created some political influence during the long stretch of time since the advent of Islamic rule in Kashmir in 1339. This apathy to face reality outside their homes in full-blooded manner made their lives more miserable than they were.

In different parts of the world efforts have been made and are being made to keep alive the KP ethos, or a reasonable semblance of it, but every year it has become harder to do that. This is because KPs are single-harnessed horses, they do not move in tandem. They are essentially not community-minded people but a concatenation of individuals. They are good and sharp people but not revolutionaries and dreamers. Whatever success that has been achieved so far in keeping the KP ethos alive is due to the work of some highly motivated people, and not with the help of the community at large.

An emigrated people have to learn to live with the people, culture, and the place they migrate to. That is what some 700,000 (the estimated world-wide population of KPs) KPs are presently doing. It will take generations before they will get absorbed in their new world. And in the process they will inevitably lose their KP-soul and create a new one. This is the price you pay for migrating, especially the forced one, from your milieu to a foreign place. There is nothing you can do about it.

Take the case of young people who were born outside Kashmir, who neither know Kashmiri or have visited Kashmir or know the KP ethos. How can we call them Kashmiris? But, they will nevertheless call themselves so, because there is a psychological need in human beings to have a connection with their roots. But in spite of this there would still be a lot of KPs living in Kashmir had the political turbulence in Kashmir not enlarged as much as it did.

Some people have suggested that KPs should change their name to Kashmiri Hindus. I believe that would be a mistake. While the name change would accrue the benefit of being part of a much larger community, thereby diluting their image of aloofness and cursedness, but the loss of their special identity would detract something invaluable from their soul. On the practical plane it would be insignificant.

According to Henny Sender, as described in his book *The Kashmiri Pandit: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, (Published in 1990 by Oxford University Press), a Kashmiri *Bhatta* (as Kashmiri Hindus were called until then), Jialal Bhan, proposed to then Mogul emperor Farrkhsiyar (reigned 1713 - 1719), in his court, that *bhattas* be called Pandits because of their distinct identity. The emperor accepted his suggestion and thenceforth they were called Pandits.

KPs have been dealt with a bad hand by destiny but they are doing the best they can do with it. So, in a few decades from now, there will remain a KP community

in the world, but it will be very different from the one we have known. But civilizations have changed with time and we cannot fight time, although in case of KPs it was forced to change prematurely.

But on the bright side of the situation younger KPs are excelling in their vocations and with their ingrained resilience their future is sanguine.

As Soren Kierkegaard said, "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards," let us look at the future of KPs with imagination but supported with earnestness.

Walking down the fossilized time,
Revisiting high pinnacles and green lakes
Of spirituality and learning,
Today the old native of Kashmir,
Kicked out of his natural habitat,
Wanders the far corners of the world -
To start a new life, a new community,
To heal his wounds, to follow the old light.

Cut off from its spiritual center,
The community wanders in silent grief,
To find a mooring,
To revive the luminosity that once brightened its universe,

To rekindle the fire that bound it together,
But unable to be reborn,
It gradually drifts into the unnamed universal melting pot,
Turning its hallowed past into history,
Its vision into unborn hopes.

(Anguish of Kashmiri Pandits by Maharaj Kaul, 10.14.2010)

Note: This article has been adapted from my article, Future of Kashmiri Pandits,
May13, 2015.

An Outline Chronology of Kashmir History

Suffern, N.Y., January 13, 2018

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What Is Kashmiriyat?

Kashmiriyat is a cruel joke designed to sprinkle salt on the wounds of KPs. Kashmiriyat in the sense of tolerance among KPs, KMs, and Sikhs has been a mythical conception, with little reality to it. It was created by some Kashmiri poets, saints, and dreamers. History of Kashmir is inundated with foreign invasions, whose raison d'être was greed and power for material success. There was never any love lost between local and invading communities.

Ever since Islam anchored deeply in Kashmir in 1339, there has been no rest in the occupier-occupied relationship between KPs and KMs. KPs were forced out of the Valley seven times due to the tyranny of Islamic rulers and people. The last one in 1989 was the most epic and brutal.

Kashmiriyat concept in its modern avatar is a cruel joke slapped in by Vajpayee's gutlessness in managing the Kashmir Problem for political upmanship.

It is not only apparent but hugely manifest that Kashmiriyat, in a paraphrase of Shakespeare's famous lines about life, is "A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

An Outline Chronology of Kashmir History

Sources

1. Nilmatpurana
2. Kalhana's Rajatarangani
3. Jonaraja's Rajatarangani
4. Jaina Rajatarangani by Srivara Pandit
5. Rajavalipataka by Prajyabhatta
6. Chaturtha Rajatarangani by Suka

Written in 6th - 7th Cent. (Oldest extant text)

Written in 1149 - 1150

Covers 1150 - 1459

Covers 1459 - 1486

Covers 1486 - 1512

Covers up to the arrival of Asaf Khan

(Shah Jehan's, 1628-1657, Prime Minister)

Chronology

Ancient Hindu Era

3120 B.C. - 598

Kalhana

3,718 years

92 kings (chronology speculative - based on Kalhana and Ghulam Hassan Shah (1832 - 1898), in Tarikh-i-Hasan. The only source of 47 Lost Kings, based on Ratnakar Purana, compiled by Anand Kaul.

Kalhana starts with King Gonanda I

Karakota Dynast

Utpala Dynasty

600 - 855 255 years

855 - 1003 148 years

Hieun Tsiang visits Kashmir (631 - 633)

Suyya, the great engineer. Sopore named after him

Lalitaditya Muktapida, built Martand Temple.

Avanti Varman (855 - 883). Built Samarsvamin

Temple in Avantipura.

Vasagupta, founder of Kashmir Shaivism

Ksemgupta (950 - 958). Married Didda.

Didda (980 - 1003)

1st Lohar Dynasty

2nd Lohar Dynasty

1003 - 1101 98 years

1101 - 1339 238 years

King Harsha (1089 - 1101)

Pandit Kalhana wrote Rjatarangani during

Jayasimha's reign (1128 - 1154)

Suhadeva (1301 - 1320). During his reign Dulcha,

Rinchana, and Shah Mir came to Kashmir

Rinchana (1323 - 1323). Converted to Islam.

Udyandeva (1323 - 1338), brother of Suhadeva

Kotarani (1338 - 1339). Murdered by Shah Mir. Lal Ded born in 1335

Total Ancient Hindu Era

4,457 years

Muslim Era

Sultanate

1339 - 1561 222 years

Shams'Din (Shah Mir) 1339 - 1342)

Sikandar Bhutshikan (1389 - 1413) -

Most tyrannical to KPs. Forced conversion
of KPs to Islam

Zain-Ul-Abidin (Budshah) 1420 - 1470

Most secular Muslim king. Death of Sheikh

Nur-ud-Din Rishi

Chaks

Moguls

Afghans

1561 - 1586 25 years

1586 -1752 166 years

1752 - 1819 67 years

Habba Khatoon

Rupa Bhavani (Shah Jehan's reign 1628 - 1657)

Most brutal era for KPs

Parmanand born in 1791

Arnimal

Total Muslim Era

480 years

Modern Hindu Era

Sikhs

Dogras

1819 - 1846 27 years

1846 - 1947 101 years

Treaty of Amristar

Britain sold Kashmir to Gulab Singh for 75 lak rupees

Master Zinda Kaul

Total Modern Hindu Era

128 years

History of Srinagar

The city of Srinagri was founded by King Ashoka (273 - 232 B.C.) at the present-day village of Pandrethan, about 3 miles of the present-day Srinagar. (Panderthan was called Purnadisthan until 14th cent.). Present-day Srinagar was founded by King Pravarsena The Second (Gonandiya Dynasaty) and used to be called Pravarpura. When the name Srinagri changed to Srinagar and replaced Pravarpura is not known.

Suffern, New York, Original 2003; Rev 1: 2010; Rev 2: January 29, 2017; Rev. 3: Feb. 28, 2017; Rev 4: March 4, 2017; Rev. 5: June 24, 2018

The Future of Kashmiri Pandits

As some Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) are reeling from the recent withdrawal of the Modi government's project of creating three composite cities in Kashmir to rehabilitate them, they are worried what their future is going to be. But here is the irony: even if Modi plan had been implemented how many KPs would have been its takers? Very few. But why are they crest-fallen about the project's death? It is because they still fantasize about returning to their ancestral land of 5,000 years and living their myths and mythologies about it and their lives in it. Once the inner-music is broken the world looks meaningless.

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How Kashmiri Pandits Got Their Name

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Eternity And Now: Self-inflicted Wounds In Kashmir

It seems some places are destined to remain sorrowful, in spite of the best efforts of some of their people to make them otherwise. Kashmir is one of them.

Over thousands of years Kashmir has been a prey to the attackers from many foreign lands: Afghanistan, Mongolia, Turkey, Tibet. Sometimes I think that if Kashmir had not been as beautiful as it is, it would have had a more peaceful history than it has had, because its Shangri-La image has been an enormous attraction for the empire builders, adventurers, looters, and religious zealots. If Kashmir had been a place looking like any of the other states of India, Pakistan would not have vied for it with the same passion as it has. Kashmir's beauty turns it into a spiritual place, a clarion call for one's deepest religious or artistic sensibilities.

The majority of the local people of Kashmir started as Hindus, then changed to Buddhism, then reverted to Hinduism, and then changed to Islam. The history of Kashmir is tempered with extreme changes, long foreign occupations, extreme material lust, wanton killings, and religious persecution. A place pregnant with ethereal serenity and covered with enthralling beauty has been soaked with blood and hatred over many stretches of its history.

This contrast between Kashmir's natural and historical faces struck me with stunning intensity during my recent three-week trip there. The Kashmir of nature is still awesomely inspiring but the Kashmir of history is a wounded being, struggling to come back to life.

Dal Lake, a tapestry of tranquility and gracefulness, charisma and style, is both sensually intoxicating as well as spiritually tranquilizing. Its mystery and mystique transcends common understanding. It stands adjoining the other Kashmir, Old Srinagar, where a large number of people live. I visited its decrepit, mean streets, its rickety morose houses, punctuated sometimes with new houses, its abandoned crumbling Pandit houses. The creased faces of the people of Old Srinagar are etched with a million memories. They remember the revolution against the unfair Dogra rule, they remember repulsing the Pakistan government backed tribal attack of October, 1947. The promise of Naya Kashmir burned bright at that time.

It was the first time in thousands of years that the political power in Kashmir was in the hands of its people. A new star appeared in the firmament of Kashmir, it was in the form of a tall, lean, and strong-minded Kashmiri leader named Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, popularly known as Sher-i-Kashmir. In 1931, this born-leader challenged the might of the Dogra king Hari Singh, for equal opportunity for the majority of the state population, Muslims, with Dogras and Pandits. He also challenged the absolute monarch to change his government to a “responsible” government, which looked after the welfare of all the people and the integrity of the state. But his biggest war front was for the fair treatment of the landless peasants, the majority of whom were Muslims. His revolution in Kashmir ran parallel with the ongoing revolution for the freedom of India from Britain, spearheaded by Indian National Congress. He was mesmerized by its leaders Gandhi and Nehru. When the partition of India became a plan, he chose India to be Kashmir’s partner, rather than Pakistan. He rejected Pakistan, on the basis that it was going to be a religious state, with not much care for the landless peasants, much to the bitterness and disappointment of its leader, Jinnah. His people unequivocally supported him in this.

A few years later the dream of Naya Kashmir started to unravel, as its chief architect, Sher-i-Kashmir, started to have another dream, that of an independent nation of Kashmir. Arrested on Aug. 9, 1953, due to his malfeasance, Sher-i-Kashmir’s fall plunged Kashmiris into a new sorrow, so deep and intense that its shadows still haunt the people, even after its occurrence 58 years ago. Sher-i-Kashmir’s dream of an independent nation of Kashmir was the greatest self-inflicted wound for Kashmiris. Even though, after regaining political power in 1975, after spending 13 years in Indian jails, he abandoned his dream, but the shadow of mistrust, engendered by his break-up with his commitment to Gandhi and Nehru, between Kashmiri Muslims and Government Of India, has remained a dark and impregnable cloud on the horizon.

Kashmiri history is replete with self-inflicted wounds. We let many foreign invaders in Kashmir, many without even a token resistance. Granted that in those times it fell to the ruling monarchs to defend the land, but the equanimity with which Kashmiris accepted the foreigners is deeply troubling. When Rinchin

usurped the throne of Kashmir, the reigning monarch Sahadeva was hiding in Kisthawar, having given the responsibility of the defense of the throne to his commander-in-chief Rama Chandra.

After the end of thousands of years of rule by kings, sultans, and governors, many of whom were cruel, barbarous, cut-throat opportunists, plunderers, good-for-nothing rascals, racists, and nincompoops, we stumbled upon the incredible opportunity of democracy in Kashmir, helped by the Indian freedom movement against the British, in which the role of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was that of the chief architect. Naya Kashmir was the answered prayers, liberation from thousands of years of tyranny and slavery. What did Kashmiris do with it? They ruined it by the lack of scruples, greed, and blindness.

Within five years after Kashmir gained democracy, its chief architect started dreaming of an independent nation of Kashmir, whose feasibility he well knew was impossible. If the leader lost his brains, why did the masses have to lose them too? Kashmiri Muslims were also lured into the Lotus-eaters mood of freedom. What happened after that? Kashmir's relations with India soured badly. Who suffered the more in the test of the wills; of course, the Kashmiri Muslims?

In 60s and 70s Kashmir let itself be swept with the Islamic fundamentalism. Whatever happened to the famous Kashmiri sense of survival? Leaving survival far away, Kashmiris plunged into a suicide, they became contemptuous of India. Pakistan's attack on Kashmir in 1965 removed any illusions of the continuation of the 1947 status-quo between it and India. If Pakistan was really keen to have Kashmir, why did it not go for an all-out war for it, and extricated it from the greedy clutches of India? Pakistan was not willing to go that far, as it did not want to hurt itself that much. But why did not Kashmiris see the selfish and weak will of its suitor?

Kashmiris let themselves be drifted aimlessly, without embracing Pakistan fully,

or without rejecting India fully. Can a people survive decently in such a double-handed game? Kashmiris have let themselves be humiliated, used, and mistreated by Pakistan. What happened to Kashmiris' honor and pride? Kashmiris lost their touch with the ground, floating in fantasy and fear.

In 1989 war with India, assiduously hatched by Pakistan over several years, Kashmiri Muslims fell for the call for the consolidation of Islamic people. They forgot that they could not win against India and that they were being used by Pakistan. The result, after twenty-two years of civil war, is that Kashmiris are isolated and hanging dry. They are living tormented lives, at the mercy of India and Pakistan, and losing their Kashmiri Pandit brethren. 400,000 Pandits ran for their lives, leaving behind their jobs, homes, and friends, and a culture woven over several thousand years, becoming refugees in their own country.

Kashmiris no longer want to merge with Pakistan, having come to know of its benightedness, but are now gripped with a demonic passion for an independent nationhood. They forget that their only genuine leader, Sheikh Abdullah, spent thirteen years in Indian jails without realizing it, ending up giving up that suicidal dream. Why have Kashmiris lost their capacity for reasoning? India cannot give them freedom, because there is not a single M.P. in the Indian Parliament who will vote for that. And for a good reason. Even if, hypothetically, Kashmir were given independence, any fool can see that within six months Pakistan will capture it. So, why would India give independence to Kashmir, when it would amount to handing it to Pakistan on a platter? Giving Kashmir to Pakistan is not an option for India, as it would bring the northern international border of India closer to its capital by 300 miles, and it will destabilize the 170 million Muslim community's ties with India. Also, the terrorist culture of Pakistan and its unstable political climate will be breathing closer over India's neck. Let us imagine that somehow India gives independence to Kashmir, which is followed inevitably, within a short time, with Pakistan's usurpation of it. Will Kashmir then call India to help it defend itself, as it did in 1947? And if Kashmir were to do that, would India oblige it?

Many idealists scream that people have an inherent right for freedom and that is why Kashmiris should be given it, but they forget that while a divorce between married couples is granted in many civilized countries of the world, but the mankind has not yet reached a state of development when a part of a nation can get a divorce from the nation. Once a part gets integrated with a nation, economically, politically, and militarily, and has historical ties with it, a separation is almost impossible. In exceptional cases when a divorce has taken place, it has been at the cost of a lot of blood. Kashmiris are not revolutionaries by any stretch of imagination. They have to make best of what they have. After 64 years of waffling it is high time for peaceful living.

Lots of different groups have suffered in the war of 1989: Indian military and Jammu and Kashmir Police, Kashmiri Pandits, and Kashmiri Muslims. But the group that has suffered the most has been Kashmiri Muslims. There have been families who lost their main providers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, relatives and friends. The greatest sufferers of the calamity have to be the children. The children who were raised in the state of mayhem, gloom, and mental depression. Studies on the children of World War II soldiers have reported their constrained emotional and psychological development. The Muslim children will carry their traumas deeper and longer in their lives, compared to the children of other groups, because their traumas are magnified by the largeness of their group. They will grow with fractured emotions and stained psychologies. Such a heavy price for their parents' lust, first for a union with Pakistan, and then for independence. When a thing is impossible to achieve, how long can you keep on bashing your head against a rock? Young, bright Kashmiri Muslims will hit glass-ceilings when they aspire for higher level positions in their jobs outside Kashmir. For generations to come Kashmiri Muslims will be ostracized in social, professional, and political spheres outside Kashmir, because of the image of religious fanaticism and disloyalty toward India they have created by their war with it.

After my customary walk on Boulevard every morning, one day I decided to have my morning tea at Zabarwan Park restaurant, a government-run business. I found no customers in it, in fact I saw a man sleeping on the floor. I had just about-

turned when I suddenly saw a man walking toward me. He told me I could only have a cup of tea at that time. We ended up sitting on a table in the lawn outside the restaurant, and started talking, without the help of tea. I was surprised that he opened the subject of Kashmir Problem. He seemed to be looking at a large historical landscape. He told me how Kashmiri Pandits were the original inhabitants of the Valley. He stated that they had to leave their homeland because of the recommendation of then Jammu and Kashmir governor, Jagmohan. I interjected his thesis by telling him how in 1989-90 Muslims commanded them to leave or else die. This rude awakening of his memory by me set him on a fairer assessment of the Kashmir Problem. He asked why there was so much army in Kashmir. I explained to him that the army was sent to Kashmir on Maharaja Hari Singh's request in the first place, when Pakistan attacked it in October, 1947. After Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah started cooling toward Kashmir's integration with India, after assuming Prime Ministership, Indian army had to be more vigilant. This was followed by Mo-e-Muqqadas episode, which was followed by Pakistan's 1965 attack on Kashmir. Most of the presence of army in Kashmir is due to Pakistan's continuing machinations. Had Kashmiris remained a steadfast partner of India and peacefully worked out their differences with it, the presence of army would have remained at about 1947 level, unless Pakistan had intensified its military posture at the border with Kashmir. Listening to the outline of the genesis of Kashmir Problem from me, he turned philosophical, and said what did Muslims get out of the twenty-two years of the civil war? Then he said wistfully that Pandits should return to Kashmir. He seemed to me symptomatic of a tide of the fresh thinking among some Kashmiris that their war against India was totally misconceived and had rocked their lives destructively. Another person I talked Kashmir Problem with, lot more educated man than the earlier person, told me why was India so scared about holding the much ballyhooed and maligned plebiscite in Kashmir, as election after election, National Conference, a staunchly pro-India political party, had won the plurality of the votes?

The whole edifice of Kashmir Problem rests on airy columns of Islamic purity and consolidation of Islam round the world. Such ideals have no feet to stand on in the multiculturalism and internationalism we live in. The world is becoming a global village, where religious identity is no longer the highest level identity. Islam has never been difficult to practice in Kashmir. If there would not have been some

foreign and a few local deluded, selfish, and vile hands exciting Kashmiris to religious fanaticism, they would have lived peaceful, constructive, and prosperous lives since 1947. Imagine how much happiness has been lost. A few rotten apples have turned the whole barrel into a malodorous and unsightly lot.

Gods gave a stunningly beautiful and bounteous land to Kashmiris, but they turned it into a political wasteland, a cancerous body, a sorrowful place.

Here are two faces of Kashmir: one eternally soul-uplifting and the other doomed by self-inflicted wounds.

In the folds of Kashmiri mountains resides the solemnity of gods,
In the swirls of its breezes plays the music of the universe,
Kashmir is the eternal enigmatic smile of God,
Disturbed now by some selfish and rude outsiders and insiders,
A dagger thrust in the grand design,
My tears flow to wash its wounds.

Suffern, New York, 9.28.11 www.kaulscorner.com

The Illusion And The Reality - The Demise Of Kashmiri Pandit Culture

The Illusion And The Reality

The Demise Of Kashmiri Pandit Culture

Maharaj Kaul
Suffern, New York

“Walking down the fossilized time,
Crossing high pinnacles and green lakes
Of spirituality and learning;
Today the old native of Kashmir,
Kicked out of his natural habitat,
Wanders the far corners of the world -
To start a new life, a new community;
To heal his wounds, to follow the old light.”

- m.k.

We are looking at Kasmiri Pandit (KP) community and wondering how long will it survive, as we have known it. Several years ago the question of survival would not have arisen, as the community was well anchored in its ancestral land of thousands of years. Although, it had changed quite a bit from what it was a hundred years ago, but no upheaval was expected - it was going through the natural modifications due to the ascent of the industrialization of the humankind and its socio-economic consequences. With the passage of the time there were also political perturbations in Kashmir strong enough to change a KP's position there from an indispensable intelligentsia in government service, education, culture, arts, and society to a second class citizenship, living on the circumference of these fields. But still he was in the land of his ancestors and the continuation of his culture seemed assured.

After the forced and substantial exodus of KP's in 1989 and beyond, the KP

horizon trembled, and its future took a path of uncertainty. We are still on that shaky trajectory. What will happen to KP's as we have known them? This is a painfully significant question in the minds of the thinking people of KP community, whose answers are more often carelessly avoided than zealously focused on.

A community is a fine embroidery of history, culture, values, personality, myths, fantasies, and contradictions. A work of thousands of years of evolution and accident. When it is subjected to extreme pressure, it can start changing in some unknown directions. KP community experienced cataclysmic pressure in the political events of 1989 and beyond, such that its ongoing fragmentation is apparently hard to analyze, making it difficult to make a projection of its future. A withering impact suffered by a thousands of years old culture seems like a stellar collision in the outer space, where the shattered pieces of the stars, physically and chemically, can get modified to the extent of having no resemblance with their original character.

What the coerced and vast exodus of KP's from Kashmir unmistakably showed was that they had almost no political power there and they were and are sacrificial lambs when Government Of India (GOI) has a need to display its support for their arch nemesis Muslims. They also have had no economic clout for quite a while. The 1989 civil war was the tremendous explosion that shattered almost all the illusions that KP's had been harboring for decades about their security in Kashmir. For generations they thought that though they were a minority, they still were respected by Kashmiri Muslims (KM's), (the majority community in Kashmir, with no love lost between them and KP's), and were independent enough to continue their legendary life in the fabled Valley. Any intelligent person could have discerned that their security was nothing but a thin veil of conventional politeness set up by KM's, ready to be cut asunder by them at a moment's notice. Why would an intelligent community like KP's fool themselves so long? The answer to this significant question lies in that human weaknesses can transcend reason. Human beings are often fooled by political and cultural realities, even though the concerned people possess good intelligence, because they do not want to accept the reality. KP's lived in a fool's paradise for a long

time, thinking GOI would never forsake them. The lesson learned is that KP community intelligence is vulnerable like any other community's.

Since this KP diaspora has a high dimension and a finality to it, which makes it the most significant since the diaspora in the fourteenth century, under Sultan Sikander (1389-1413 C.E.), which was later reversed. What have the four hundred thousand refugees done since they were forced to leave their birthplace? Immediately after the exodus, most of them landed in Jammu Refugee Camps. At this point personal resources and the government allowance saw them through this period of great mental and physical anguish. Slowly, many of the refugees found jobs outside the state government, allowing them to quit the degrading camps. Over years, the camp population has dwindled to a few thousand. Many a young KP is said to be doing very well in his or her job outside the J & K Govt. Some KP youngsters were able to migrate to countries outside India. So, economically most of the refugees are doing all right, with good prospects for future growth. While the older KP "exiles" still suffer the pangs of separation from Mother Kashmir, youngsters, generally, do not feel the same way. This is because many of them had already fixed their dreams and goals away from Kashmir. In the decades before the civil war, the KP youngsters were already moving more and more out from the Valley, because of the limitations of the good professional jobs, unfairness of the Government, and the slow growth of the modernity. The civil war only gave a tremendous boost to the trend.

There are no more than 700,000 KP's in the world. Jammu has the highest KP population for one city. Not more than 30,000 live abroad. In most of the cities they live in, in India and abroad, they have a community organization, which organizes some of their festivals, and promotes interaction among them. There is talk among the older members of the survival of the KP culture. The younger members do not feel as much heartbreak in the demise of Kashmiri culture. This is because they have not had a strong link with it. Culture is a dynamic experience - either you live it or you are not in it. With the younger KP's moving out of J & K State for quite a while, for the reasons indicated above, the requisite dynamic interaction has receded. People living in large metropolises acquire a new unnamed culture, which is cosmopolitan, modern, and practical. This culture is

based on the modern notions of the individuality, freedom to choose among various equally valid lifestyles, and to a good extent on the scientific perspective of human life. The younger KP's do not know much about the high achievements of their forefathers thousands of years ago. They do not have a good knowledge of how Kashmir used to be a Hindu, and later a Buddhist center of learning. That in ~1-2 C.E. 4th Buddhist Council was held in Kundalvan (perhaps the present day Haravan), which was an international conference, with about five hundred participants from many different parts of the world. Also, it was from Kashmir, the scholars of Buddhism traveled to different parts of the world to spread its message. Such subjects were not a part of their curricula in schools or colleges. Pride in Kashmiri heritage is downplayed while a KP is living in Kashmir, it only takes high value when he is out of it. The core of a modern KP personality is that of a practical person, focused on survival, competition, and materialistic success. KP children jump on this worldly road much earlier than their fathers did, because of much higher competition and individual dynamism that exists now than in their times.

Another significant factor contributing to KP children's coolness toward Kashmiri culture is due to their not being taught Kashmiri at home. A good number of KP's unconsciously feel the inferiority of the old life back home, and so they do not feel compelled to teach their children their ancestral language. There is this contradictory double personality in a common KP: on one hand he is unconsciously proud of his heritage, on the other he wants to keep away from it. Consciously, a KP wants to be a practical person, living in this world, with his feet on the solid ground below, and during these times. His pride for the old Kashmir and its culture is purely a tapestry hanging around his history, but of no practical value. A KP is not a dreamer or a preacher. He lives most of his time in the reality manifest by the material world. Young KP's generally take practical professions like engineering, business administration, medicine, and accounting, not professions in arts and research in various fields. They can not be called scholarly, philosophical, idealistic, or artistic in disposition. Surprising, even shocking, it may seem to many people to know that a good number of KP's are not truly religious. They possess a religiosity in some aspects of their lives, but they are not day to day practitioners of the classic Hinduism. Most of them do not understand Kashmiri Shavism. Modern KP's are almost true non-conformists. So,

the bonds of young KP's with the traditional Kashmiri culture are tenuous - more a projection of their social responsibility, than an inspiration in their minds and a thud in their hearts. Some young KP's in U.S. wondered in one of the annual KP Camps (organized by KOA), if not knowing Kashmiri made it difficult or impossible for them to be KP's. Although we know, from the experience of other migrant communities, that the lack of knowledge of their ethnic language did not prevent them from becoming that ethnic. Language is the deepest channel of emotional communication between an object and a mind. So, the identification with a group is much easier with it. Also, the younger people, more than the older people, feel the obstacles that community boundaries make in their sense of belonging to the more inspiring and enlightening notion of belonging to the humankind and to the world.

No group of KP's is larger outside India than the KP's in US. It is estimated to be 2000 families large, which is about six thousand people. The organization that binds them together is Kashmir Overseas Association (KOA), that was founded about twenty-seven years ago. It is the richest KP organization in the world. KP's in US donate about \$ 75,000 annually to the destitute KP's, mostly in Jammu, mostly for the education of their school and college going children, and for the medical and economic calamities. Also, the fire in the bellies of US KP's for the plight of the KP refugees, and the propagation of some form of KP culture, is the strongest among all the KP groups in the world, including those in India. This has made KOA an organization to watch. GOI is aware of this, as is Pakistan Government. The KP groups within India lack the fire in their bellies and the cash in their pockets. From the much lauded Panun Kashmir group, based in Jammu, much was expected, as it was given the charge of influencing GOI to be more helpful to KP's than it has been. But it has failed to unite KP's even in Jammu, not to speak of the rest of India, or rest of the world, to present to GOI a strong group, which has been ethnically cleansed, determined to fight for what is their due. Such a failure has been very discouraging for KP's worldwide. They do not believe GOI can give KP's the kind of security they need, to those who wished to return to their ancestral homes, for living or for a visit. Majority of the KP's believe that for all practical purposes they have lost their homeland, even though it continues to be a part of India. So, having lost faith both in GOI and KM's, KP's are fighting hard to adopt to their new surroundings. The fight for the survival of

their culture only comes after their survival for life, and that too generally among the KP's fifty or older. For younger KP's cultural survival has a much lower priority.

Life for KP's after Sultan Shams'd Din started a long era of Muslim rule in Kashmir in 1339, had been difficult, at times perilous, not conducive for a group formation. Particularly the persecution of KP's under Sultan Sikander (1389-1413 CE) (when KP's had to pay Jazia -tax- for not being Muslims and when they could not use a tilak on their foreheads, etc.) , when they left the Valley in large numbers, to the extent that at one point only eleven families were left there. KP's have generally throughout their history, after Sikander's rule, been not good at being together on a sustained basis, to give their cruel rulers something to worry about. Most likely because of their numbers, lack of resources, and mental makeup, they could not group against their tyrant oppressors. KP's have more often tried to live with their problems (which can take a lot of character) than tried removing them. This sense of accommodation, right up to the modern Muslim rule in Kashmir, has not been helpful in their plight. No wonder, even today we find KP's hard to unite, to fight the common enemy together. Efforts to unite KP world over as a cultural group, so far have not succeeded. KP's see themselves more as individuals than a group. This personality dynamic is against the survival of their culture.

Recently, the KOA presidential election in US got so sordid because of accusations and counter accusations of the two dominant groups (West Coast KP's and East Coast KP's) that it was with sheer luck that KOA survived. Many people in the groups did not care for the survival of KOA but only for their egos and images. Similar things happened to Panun Kashmir in Jammu, resulting in a multi-group split, which obviously weakened the community. Fights within KP groups in some other cities of India and other countries of the world are not uncommon. All these organizations are poorly resourced and basically only serve the role of organizing the two cherished KP religious festivals of Shivratri and Diwali annually, and providing their members the opportunities of networking. So, what do the people fight on? Their interests, their egos, their images .If KP's do not have a group personality how can they fight GOI for fairer treatment of the

KP refugees and more concessions for them and how can they carry on their traditional culture, both enterprises heavily exhorted by their leaders to work on? Conditioned by hundreds of years of persecution of the Muslim and Pathan rule, KP's ancient personality has warped, such that it does not trust a fellow KP in a group structure. KP's also generally lack leadership qualities. Both these lacks come from the high lack of the psychological security - a basic quality that is not easy to acquire and repair, as it needs sustained corrective actions, over time

Some KP's compare themselves with Jewish people, when considering their tribulations, gift for survival, and perpetuation of culture. Jewish people are lot more tenacious in fighting for their causes, have more resources, and are more in numbers than KP's, making them better in both survival and perpetuation of their culture. KP's are only three quarters of a million, while Jewish people about eight million. They are far, far richer than KP's. They have a tremendous group identity and have been fighting very hard for what they believe is theirs. We can not say the same things for KP's.

All communities in the world are changing because of the tremendous success of science and technology, big strides in political life, and economic globalization. The world is turning to a global village. The old concept of a community is changing. Man's self image is changing. The incredible demands on the energy and time of modern man has forced him to abandon some of the old notions of family, work, society, and self. In the flow of change, KP's can not afford to be behind other people. They neither have a political base nor an economic base, and the worldly cultural base they have, they are not sure if that can carry them through the world. But the spiritual base they have, they are more confident about it. To carry it on needs conviction, work, and resources, which they have a dearth of. Because of this, with time, their culture will effectively attenuate, leaving only its wrapper, when the gift within it has withered away. Community organizations can not hold the tide of change, unless they are committed, resourceful, active, and forward looking. Essentially, the cultural preservation must be a deeply held emotion among the people, for it to be effective. If the emotion is weak or missing, no amount of resources and community organization work will be able to maintain the culture.

The question is what will KP culture be like a hundred years from now? Some of the last names, after modifications, may survive in the KP world outside India, but the first names will be replaced with foreign names in most of the cases. Kashmiri language will not be spoken anywhere except in a few places in India (chiefly in Kashmir). Shivratri will be celebrated in foreign countries where KP's live, though with modifications. In India it will survive well, as it is also celebrated by other Indian communities. Kashmiri calendar will not be used abroad, but in India it may be used on a meager scale. Minor festivals will disappear. KP music will slowly fade away among the KP's living abroad. KP artistes will go for non-Kashmiri Indian music, while the Kashmiri music from the KP's and the KM's in Kashmir will be heard by a small number of KP listeners. Kashmiri Shavism will perhaps survive because of its philosophical appeal to some people in the world. Time will gradually kill many KP myths and much folklore, as it will change many social customs. A hundred years from now KP's will be integrated with the non-KP Hindus of India. In fact, KP's will call themselves Hindus, except for a small number of them still clinging to the name KP.

Einstein defined education as something that remains, when everything one learns at college is forgotten. Same could be said of culture. It is something that remains, when traditions, customs, festivals, and language of a group of people change. So, even after a hundred years from now, a person of Kashmiri origin may retain certain philosophical inclinations, social behavior, and tastes in arts, etc., as his forefathers did. But for all practical purposes most of the KP's after a hundred years will not be possessing the KP culture as we know it now. Some of the other groups like Muslims and Jewish people have made strong efforts to retain their cultures and the results show their success. If KP's were more in numbers, had more resources than they have, and had greater ambition than they have, KP culture would continue, although in a modified form.

Cut off from its spiritual center,
The community wandered in silent grief,
To find a mooring,

To revive the luminosity that brightened its world,
To rekindle the fire that bound it together.
But unable to be reborn,
It gradually drifted into the unnamed universal melting pot,
Turning its hallowed past into history,
Its vision into fossilized hopes.

-m.k.

The Spirit Of Kashmiri Pandits

Historical Outline From The Ancient Times Through The Beginning Of Muslim Era

The American writer William Faulkner wrote, "The past is never dead. It is not even past."

Our past is a powerful element of our consciousness, besides the history it provides of events that we must know to understand the world we live in and learn from. Beyond the factual mosaic of events that history attempts to be, it is the irrigator of our consciousness, whose fertility we very much depend upon for the richness of our present and future. We are living carriers of our personal and historical past. If we only learnt from history keenly the world we live in today would have been a more peaceful place.

Ancient histories of different parts of the world are wrapped in a lot of fog, particularly those in India, where history gathering art and craft was not considered a significant intellectual activity in the distant past. However Kashmir

has been an exception, where good records of the times were kept, though some of them got lost.

For much of the Kashmir ancient history we depend on Nilmatpurana, the oldest extant book on Kashmir, and Pandit Kalhana's Rajatarangini. Nilmatpruana was written between 6th and 8th centuries and Rajatarangini around 1149. Later work is very significant because it is the first history written in India and also because of the way it is written. Kalhana approached history in a scientific and democratic way, giving the kings and the common men the same importance while assessing the causes and significance of the events of a period under consideration. He saw the transitoriness in the material and the political power . Here was a historian with a spiritual vision of human existence. He was a Kashmiri Brahman and wrote Rajatarangini in Sanskrit verse. His book is one of the most widely used references of the ancient Indian history. After his death his work was carried on by other historians, till almost the start of the Mughal era in Kashmir.

Nilmatpurana records (in the 6th to 8th cent. period) that Kashmiris were a religious people, upholding the sacredness of the land, and leading generally a happy life. Unlike some of the other parts of India, women enjoyed considerable freedom and were looked upon with respect and honor.

The name Kashmir is found in unbroken form in ancient Hindu texts like Nilmatpurana, Ashtadhyayi , Mahabarta, the Puranas, and the Braht Samhitta over a period stretching to 2,300 years. Legend has it that King Gonanda The First of Kashmir and his son Damodra lost their lives fighting in Kureva-Pandava war of Mahabarta.

From the earliest historical times Kashmir was ruled by Hindu kings. This lasted till 1339, when Sultan Shams'd Din, popularly known as Shah Mir, an émigré from Swat (which is in the present day Pakistan),laid the foundation of the Muslim era.

The earliest known rulers of Kashmir were Gonandiyas, a Hindu dynasty which ruled for about 3,049 years. Some records were kept during this era but unfortunately they were lost. Kalhana's history is only accurate from around Karkota Dynasty onwards, before that he is supposed to have used his imagination. Following this long stretch of Hindu era was Buddhist era brought on by King Ashoka (273 - 232 B.C.)

King Ashoka founded the Kashmir capital Srinagri, about three miles from the present city of Srinagar, during the time when his kingdom covered Kashmir. The city developed rapidly and became prosperous and important. He constructed a large number of temples in Kashmir. After King Ashoka's brutally Pyrrhic victory in Kalinga, Orrisa, in 261 B.C., he turned Buddhist and made Kashmir the northern center for the development and diffusion of his new religion. This was the time Buddhism flourished in Kashmir. It is said that Buddha himself had thought that Kashmir's environment was suitable for the meditative practices of Buddhism.

But with history's unexpected turns Buddhism receded from Kashmir for about 200 years when Ashoka's son Jaluka, separating from his father's kingdom, founded an independent state, which practiced Hinduism. It was in King Kanishka's empire that Buddhism was brought back to Kashmir and it flourished then much more than its significant success the first time around. During this time an international Buddhist council, called the 4th Council, was organized just outside the present day Srinagar, in a place called Kundalvan, which is perhaps the present-day Harwan. This council, which lasted six months, was attended by some 500 Buddhist and Hindu scholars from different countries, under the chairmanship of a Kashmiri Brahman named Vasumitra. One of the momentous results of this council was the development of Mahayana Buddhism. The council was a watershed event in the diffusion of Buddhism outside India, like to Central Asia, Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan. Renowned Buddhist missionaries Kumarrajiva, Yasa, Vimalaksha, Sangabuti, Gautamasangha, and others started from Kashmir. Also spread abroad in the process were the stories of Mahabarta and Ramayana . So it was from Kashmir that Indian culture and Sanskrit literature traveled to some of the parts of the world.

One of the bright stars in the pantheon of kings was Lalataditya (699 - 736). Here was an ambitious conqueror of lands, an astute administrator and statesman, and a prolific builder. In his thirty-seven years of rule he expanded Kashmir's control over Tibet, Badakhan, Punjab, and Kanuj. He created several towns, viharas, stupas, and temples, the foremost of which is the grand sun-temple Martand, built over Mattan village in Kashmir. Martand's architecture and its location are greatly admired.

Hiuen Tsiang, the reknowned Chinese monk, came to Kashmir in the seventh century via Varamullah, present-day Baramulla, and stayed for two years. He found Kashmiri scholars of high intellectual caliber.

For some two thousand years Kashmir was the prime source of Sanskrit learning and literature. It was a center for scholarly exchanges. Some of the significant scholars and poets of Sanskrit were Kashmiris: Kalhan, Bilhan, Acharya Bhamba, Udbhata, Acharya Kutanka, Mammata, Anand Vardhana, Vamana, Rudrata, Kshemendra, Abhinav Gupta, Rojanak Shitianth, and others.

One of the most significant contributions that Kashmiri Hindus have made not only to the resplendent oeuvre of Indian philosophy but to the world philosophy has been the development of Kashmir Shaivism. Shaivism is a system of thought which prescribes the attainment of moksha (the absolute freedom) in Shiva. Although Kashmir Shaivism and Advaita Vedanta both teach nondualism, the nondualism of the former is quite different from the latter's. In Kashmir Shaivism this universe is real and true but Advaita Vedanta considers it to be the other way. In Kashmir Shaivism Lord Shiva is connected with the real world through the expansion of his shakti and the universe is a reflection through him, as if in a mirror. Shiva and shakti are the same. Lord Shiva has three energies: Para, the supreme energy, Parapara, the medium or cognitive energy , and Aparā, his inferior or objective energy. A human being lives in the inferior state of Shiva's energy and Kashmir Shaivism teaches how to attain Shiva's supreme energy.

We learn from the ancient Kashmiri history that fires were once lit somewhere in time in Kashmiri psyche for learning, for the pursuit of the truth of life, and for the devotion to God, which we know are still smoldering. We learn that a Kashmiri was always a lost soul in the clamorous world around him and he needed tranquility of the surroundings and a feeling of brotherhood with the fellow human beings to survive. The relationship between Kashmir and India had been like that between two brothers, separate but belonging to the same family - a situation which has been further reinforced through the time stretching to the present.

Attached to this presentation is a chronology in the ancient Kashmiri history.